

# Radical bid to stop teen drink and drug abuse

## Proposals include curfews, free leisure cards and parents' education pledge

By Ian Duncan  
i.duncan@spp-group.com

A RAFT of drastic measures including curfews is being considered in a bid to reduce the harm done to youngsters by drink and drug abuse.

Free leisure cards to get teenagers active are also among the ideas being considered as national figures are expected to show a dramatic rise in the number of drugs deaths in the past year.

Based on a model already being used in Iceland, parents could also be asked to sign a pledge to educate themselves about substance abuse and how to reduce the risks for their youngsters.

Discussion of the new

approach came during the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership's (HADP) annual conference in Inverness, ahead of the release of new figures expected to show a record high of up to 1200 drugs deaths across Scotland in the past year.

In 2017, the most recent year for which regional figures are available, 24 lives were lost to drugs in the Highlands, up from 15 the year before.

A workshop on the Icelandic Prevention Model, also known as Planet Youth, proved to be among the most popular for delegates at the HADP conference.

The organisation's co-ordinator, Debbie Stewart, said: "Although different in many ways, Scotland can learn from

our Nordic cousins who have successfully reduced drug and alcohol use among young people over a 20-year period."

Taking a "whole society approach" she said the potential for piloting elements of the model in the Highlands was discussed by delegates.

"HADP is seeking partners to discuss how these elements could be adapted for piloting in a Highland context," she said.

While some aspects including any curfew measures would require legislative change - which could make them difficult to implement - she said: "The underlying principle that it is good for most families to spend more time

TURN TO PAGE 3

# 'Let's use Icelandic model to save our teens from drink and drugs'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

together and for parents/carers to be aware of where young people are and what they are doing was useful.

"People also liked the idea of the parental pledge as they recognised parents/carers play a key role and can do a lot to increase protective factors and reduce risk factors for drug and alcohol use by young people.

"Keeping young people occupied with positive activities had overwhelming support from attendees. They were impressed that every young person (in the Icelandic programme) has a leisure card.

"Attendees discussed that the success of the Icelandic prevention model is that all elements have been well resourced

and systematically implemented. Not one element is more important than any other. It is a whole community approach - a partnership between young people, parents/carers, schools, leisure providers, public services and local communities."

While the hope is to get wider political support for the programme going forward she added that there was also a drive to continue working towards better outcomes across the Highlands under the current set up.

"Government support would be ideal, but it was agreed by most participants that doing the best we can, whilst learning from success in other countries, will help Highland to reduce drug and alcohol-related harm," she said.