

Reducing the harm from alcohol in Canterbury Sports Clubs

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What issue did you act on?

Reducing harm from alcohol in and around sports clubs.

How did you act?

In 2017 we were looking at what approach to take around sports clubs as a setting for higher risk alcohol consumption. At the time, the **Game On** programme was being used in Dunedin, and pockets of central Otago and inland Canterbury. We obtained some funding to work in the club and alcohol space with Game On and contracted someone to engage with the clubs. Unfortunately, this approach did not gain traction due to club priorities being focused elsewhere and prolonged management changes at the club.

After months of little progress, a small but key group of organisations started meeting to reignite the project. The members of the group included Sport Canterbury; health promotion and licensing staff from Public Health; Council Licensing Inspector with clubs; and the Christchurch Alcohol Action Plan (CAAP) coordinator. We all wanted to make a difference with alcohol consumption on and off the field with sports clubs. We worked out a joint approach to reducing alcohol harm in sports club settings using the recently released **Alcohol Game Plan** for sports clubs <https://order.hpa.org.nz/search?q=game+plan> from the Te Hiringa Hauora (Health Promotion Agency/HPA). Game Plan had resources for both club committees and bar staff, but it hadn't yet been tested 'on the field' in Aotearoa New Zealand. It seemed like a great opportunity to use the resources to develop a workshop sports code by sports code. We met and planned out a process and workshop for approaching each sports code. For successful engagement and buy-in from the sports clubs, we wanted involvement from club and code management, coaches and volunteers.

The first sports code we worked with was rugby league. This was a good starting point, as there were not too many clubs within the code, and the clubs and management readily came on board through the wonderful George Lajpold. Rugby league were motivated to get involved with reducing alcohol related harm because they had a big issue with player turnover, with 34% turnover every year undermining many aspects of the game.

Rugby league believed that the reason behind this high turnover was influenced by alcohol, with families not feeling safe and occasional fighting on the sidelines. Thus, we had similar goals in terms of working together to reduce harm from alcohol: club sustainability, player retention, families feeling good about being involved with the club and the positive future of the club.

Together we developed a workshop for players, management and others with club involvement, to be held at their clubrooms with the following general format:



- Joint welcome by Chief Executive of the sports code and Sport Canterbury/Healthy Families.
- DHB alcohol health promoter with a short presentation on the culture of alcohol and sports clubs, sponsorship, physical effects of alcohol on player's performance and positive reasons to manage alcohol at clubs.
- Code management and club coaches on what's going on with alcohol and their clubs and efforts to support better practices.
- Licensing inspector from Council with a detailed presentation on how to practically improve the club environment to adhere to the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012, leading to a smoother license renewal process.
- Resources available for clubs, for example signage, lanyards for bar staff (that we had made up with the questions bar staff need to ask of visitors and signs of intoxication) and templates for club alcohol policies and club alcohol management plans.

We have now run workshops for Canterbury Tennis, Canterbury Cricket, Canterbury Bowls and Canterbury Rugby, in addition to the first workshop with Canterbury Rugby League.

What worked well?

- Collaboration between the 3 organisations: Sport Canterbury/Healthy Families, Community and Public Health and the Christchurch City Council – we all have different roles and contacts.
- Joined up communications from the sports codes/clubs and organisations.
- Having an easy process to follow for engagement with the sports codes and workshops.
- Shared goals between the sports code and organisations: a safer environment and closer adherence to the law.
- Co-hosting the workshops with the sports codes and organisations.
- Holding the workshops at the Code's clubrooms so it is their place and more engaging.
- Supplying kai and hot drinks at the workshops.
- Giving information and answering questions shares knowledge, good practice and practically helps with alignment with the Act.
- Having resources such as signage and lanyards to give out at workshops and to clubs around Canterbury is helpful, as people always like free things!
- Not coming at it with an antagonist attitude of 'no alcohol' but just how can your club have a safer environment and comply with the law better. This approach helped get buy-in.
- Understanding the reasons for sport code interest.

In addition to what worked well for this project, we have had some related wins from our engagement with the sports codes. These include:

- Canterbury Rugby League approaching Christchurch City Council to get a temporary alcohol ban on their sidelines and clubrooms. After a year, they applied for this to become permanent with community and organisational support. Canterbury Rugby League enforce the *permanent alcohol ban* with police back-up.
- Rugby league has written a brief intervention for coaches and players about how to have *confident conversations around mental health*.
- The project team developed *lanyards for bar staff* at clubs to wear, with the 4 signs of intoxication on one side and the 4 questions bar staff need to ask visitors to club bars on the other (this template is available to get printed elsewhere).

What did not work well?

- The first approach without a collaborative working group did not work. Having 3 agencies collaborating and working with the sports code rather than individual clubs has been fantastic!
- We haven't had a meeting for a year so the momentum on this project has been difficult to keep going during Covid times (although we are making moves to work with Canterbury Football next).
- Sometimes there can be differences between goals sports code management and club management around making changes in the alcohol space which may delay progress and cause some tension.
- Alcohol sponsorship of sports clubs is a big issue (with almost all rural clubs and many rugby clubs being funded by the alcohol industry).

Top tips for others learnt from this experience

- Collaborations between Council, Health, Sport Canterbury/Healthy Families and the sports codes are essential for success.
- The Council Licensing Inspector role is invaluable.
- Identify the person in the sports code who is your gateway into their sports clubs – our Sport Canterbury rep knew who to speak to and did the initial contact for us. Once management is involved and on board, it's easy!
- Resources like the lanyards, signage and policy and management plan templates to give out help with buy in – we want clubs to succeed.
- There are real advantages for clubs taking the drinking inside to their managed premises as they can make some much needed finances from the sale of alcohol at the bar and aligning alcohol consumption with the Act.

Next steps for this project

- Get momentum going again with Football and following up with individual rugby clubs.
- Looking at more in-depth follow up with codes around issues such as alcohol and mental health.
- Carrying out some scoping work on alcohol sponsorship of clubs and working out an approach.

Useful links and documents

[Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency resource store | Alcohol Game Plan for club committees - Managing alcohol in clubs \(hpa.org.nz\)](#)

[Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency resource store | Alcohol Game Plan for bar staff - Managing alcohol in clubs \(hpa.org.nz\)](#)

[TemplateClubWorkshopAgenda.docx](#)

[SportsClubsAlcoholPolicyTemplate.docx](#)

[AlcoholManagementPlanForClubsTemplate.docx](#)