

Underage and over the limit

At a birthday party last year a friend of a friend got really drunk, ended up in an alcohol-fuelled rage and smashed a glass around her boyfriend's face leaving him to get stitches just under his eye. But is violence and vandalism always the consequence of underage drinking?

It is just a minority of young people that are strewn across our tabloids and used as a negative representation of all underage drinking teens. But, the majority of teenagers who drink do so in moderation without causing trouble for anyone else.

Drinks can range from half-a-can of beer, to half a bottle of vodka. The regularity can range from social occasions, to 2-3 times a week. Some have permission, some don't, however, research shows that young people with permission are less likely to drink irresponsibly.

Statistics from a 2006 survey suggest that the amount of underage drinking in the UK far surpasses that of all other countries in Europe. Of the 10 - 17 year olds in this country over half have had an alcoholic drink in the last 12 months with the majority drinking beer and Alco pops. But, although over half of the

young people surveyed have drunk alcohol, this does not mean to say that they have drunk irresponsibly.

There are lots of reasons young people drink, a lot drink because they've got nothing to do, congregating in parks with no other alternative than to spend their free time at home. Some young people have to deal with personal issues using drink to cover a problem. The example, though, is set by those older than them, those they look up to. Teenagers are surrounded by a drinking culture created by adults who spend their weekends in pubs and clubs drinking to excess.

Adults binge drink, so what do they expect from their youth?

So when the adults are looking for solutions to the problems of underage drinking, they should perhaps look at themselves and their own behaviour first.

Maybe the answer is to trust the majority of youths to drink responsibly. Maybe, as no other alternative is seen by youths to do with their evenings, then it is not the young people acting irresponsibly but the adults?

Written by Mary Van Kesteren and Leah Francis



Following its recent opening the new Gurdwara in Leamington has been an area of interest to many people with its beautifully grand exterior it has certainly put Leamington on the map. Those who visit the temple will feel instantly welcomed regardless of their faith and the temple is open to everyone throughout the community to visit. At the temple there is a strong emphasis on openness based on the belief that racism is due to ignorance. The temple has been inundated with visitors with many people from a variety of areas around the country travelling to worship or to simply visit.

The temple has a variety of activities to offer anyone who visits, from religious musical instrument classes to martial arts. Young Sikh people who regularly visit the temple are encouraged to take an active role in the community by teaching younger children Punjabi and musical instruments such as the Tabla. Throughout every day the temple is constantly alive with prayers being read, classes being taught and delicious food being served in the Langar Hall. The Sikh community is currently playing a key role within the Leamington community and visiting is certainly a must as the vibrant and exciting Gurdwara has so much to offer everyone.

Written by Beccy Marsh and Anwyn Williams

Life as a young parent

With a negative stereotype and a guaranteed public opinion, young parents don't have it easy. Throughout Warwickshire there are many young people with children who remain in education, contribute positively to society, rely purely on themselves to raise their children and whose voices are not heard. So what is life as a young parent really like?

Hannah Fletcher of Leamington Spa was 19 when she had her daughter, Amelia. During her pregnancy she struggled with pressure from friends, family and Amelia's father. She now faces opinions from strangers who don't know her or her situation.

Hannah left university to become a mother, but despite the stereotype, is planning to reapply in September. She cares for her daughter excellently and the pair of them are very happy. Hannah is a perfect example of how wrong the 'young parent stereotype' can be.

In today's society there is a strong prejudice against young parents.

Hannah believes 'you get judged by people on the street'.

Young parents are 'labelled as bad people' but this is unfair and unjustified as they do take their parenting roles



Hannah, 19, with her daughter Amelia

seriously. They are as capable as more mature parents; many attend relevant programmes and classes everyday. Hannah states 'we're not as stupid as everyone thinks.'

Young parents have become a prime subject for television, but these programmes misrepresent the good work that many young parents do. Hannah said 'The way

the media portrays us can be quite offensive, especially when it makes the community think even worse of young parents'. However, X Factor's Stacey Solomon is a good example to the public. 'She's a real life young mother who still has hopes and dreams.

The others on television dramas are pretend.'

As well as the challenge of looking after a child, young parents have to deal with the prejudice against them. 'It is disheartening but you become a person who rises above it...

You don't realise you're going to have to overcome the little things like people being rude or seeing friends less.'

Within Warwickshire young parents have support. Bubblicious is a place for young parents to meet and SureStart sell affordable baby products to under 21s.

There is also financial and health support available. Hannah thinks 'there should be more support with parenting, like parenting classes for younger parents' and she strongly believes in 'helping and encouraging teenage parents back to education.'

Life as a young parent is far from the stereotype. They face many disadvantages but Hannah says 'every teen mum I know is 100% dedicated to her child.'

These negatively judged young parents are strong. They do everything for their children, because above all else they are PARENTS, it is unfair that they are criticized so frequently. Isn't it time that the judgements end and the reality of their struggle is realised?

Article by Beccy Marsh and Anwyn Williams

Who cares?

A poem by 18-year-old Sarah Owen about her experiences living in care for over 3 years

I don't know where I'll be in 5 long years.
I don't know how to wipe away my dreadful tears.
I don't know why the grass is opal green.
I don't know why parents can be so bloody mean.
I don't know about stupid football.
I don't know very much at all.
I don't know why the sky is damn high.
I don't know why people lie.
I don't know why I'm so flipping fuming.
I don't know why people are always looming.
I don't know why we feel such emotion.
I don't know why I'm moving in slow motion.
I don't know why the big world began.
I don't know why I opened the bloody can.
I don't know what I'm having for lunch.
I don't know why my parents like to punch.
I don't know how to use this sharp knife.
I don't know much about everybody's life.
I don't know why I live in error.
I don't know why parents hold so much hatred
terror.
I don't know much about long lasting happy
smiles.
I don't know why I run for so many long miles.
I don't know much about silly laughter.
I don't know how to be looked after.
I don't know why I was put into care.
I don't know why people think it was fair.
I don't know why lilies sit in the cold pond.
I don't know what's held beyond.
I don't know why I feel so sacredly lost.
I don't know why people care about the damn
cost.
I don't know why I don't feel safe and secure.
I don't know why I don't feel pure.
I don't know why people go above.
I don't know why I don't feel so loved.
I don't know why people are so mean.
I don't know why people are so keen.
I don't know why I have the horrible feeling.
I don't know why I'm left feeling reeling.
I don't know why people pick on me.
I don't know why I'm made to sit on dad's knee.
I don't know why I get hit around the head.
I don't know why I'm full with such dread!

By Sarah Owen

Guide to exams

Is stress getting the better of you when trying to study for your exams? More people feel like this than you realise so here are a few tips to help you manage this dreaded revision process. When conducting your revision it's important to have a revision timetable so you know what you are going to revise and for how long you are going to revise it. Again don't spend hours on this. Be strict with yourself and spend no longer than an hour at a time on each subject. Also remember to take regular breaks... take the dog out for a walk and have some fresh air, have a drink or do some reading.

Managing time

Sitting at a desk for hours on end writing reams of notes may not be that helpful for you. There is no point persisting on cramming an entire textbook into your head. Instead why not try index cards or post it notes and just jot down important points - these will make things easier to remember.

Spider diagrams and coloured posters can also be useful, stick them on your wall where you're most you're likely to see them everyday. Trust me these things work a treat!

Be sensible

In the run up to exams it is important to eat and drink properly! For those girls out there who are trying to diet when studying...this is the worst time to get into this mind set. This will distract you from what is important. So if you need to fill your face with chocolate, do it! It helps, it really does!

Also if you're revising properly, there should be no need for you to sit up all night either. Be strict with yourself and aim to finish at a certain time every night. Get a good night sleep especially the night before an exam so that you have a clear head and are feeling fresh in the morning.

And...

Never leave revision until the last minute, like that last week or even the night before an exam, because your results will come back and bite you hard.

The more revision and work you do in good time before an exam, the smaller the workload becomes. This way you will feel more relaxed and will be able to approach the exam with confidence.

By Gemma Davies