



SCOTCH WHISKY
ACTION FUND

MANAGED BY



Absafe SCIO



@ScotchWhiskySWA

Organisation: **Absafe SCIO**
Date of Award: **2019, 2021, 2022**
Amount Awarded: **£63,260**
Project Name: **Alcohol Safety (2019),
The Safe (2021), Magic Potion Myth (2022)**



Absafe is a creative charity to help generate safe, happy, healthy people, and communities. The goal is to inspire a culture of safety and pro-social behaviour through education to achieve its mission of saving lives, preventing harm, and reducing crime in the local community. They teach the basics of personal safety from a facility in Aberdeen (Absafe Community Hub) where visitors learn the vital skills to keep themselves safe and alive. The dedicated team of staff and volunteers teach the next generation about risks, and how to avoid them covering a range of topics from traditional ones, like fire safety, to more unconventional ones, like the risks of alcohol, vaping, and cyber awareness.

Alcohol Safety Project:

In 2019, Absafe received a grant of £13,260 from the Scotch Whisky Action Fund (SWAF) towards developing and running a newly designed alcohol safety education 'set' for pupils by creating a new pro-social behaviour room with a park environment setting. Using several visual exercises to engage young people in discussions on peer pressure and the impact of alcohol on communities and families, young people learn how to recognise the dangers of drinking alcohol, consider the myths of alcohol and practice informed decision making. The aim being to empower young people with the confidence and resilience they need to understand alcohol and some of the challenges they may face among peers, as well as understand the negative effect alcohol consumption can have on communities.

As a result of Covid the plans for the project had to be amended significantly. The SAFE was unable to open and therefore Absafe acted quickly to move online. Working with the Psychology Department of Aberdeen University, and three very talented students, they designed and delivered unique learning materials for use on online platforms which were shared with all the primary schools in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire area. The target audience for the alcohol awareness materials were P5-P7. This was a huge learning curve for Absafe which was met head-on working with the curriculum for excellence officers and headteachers.

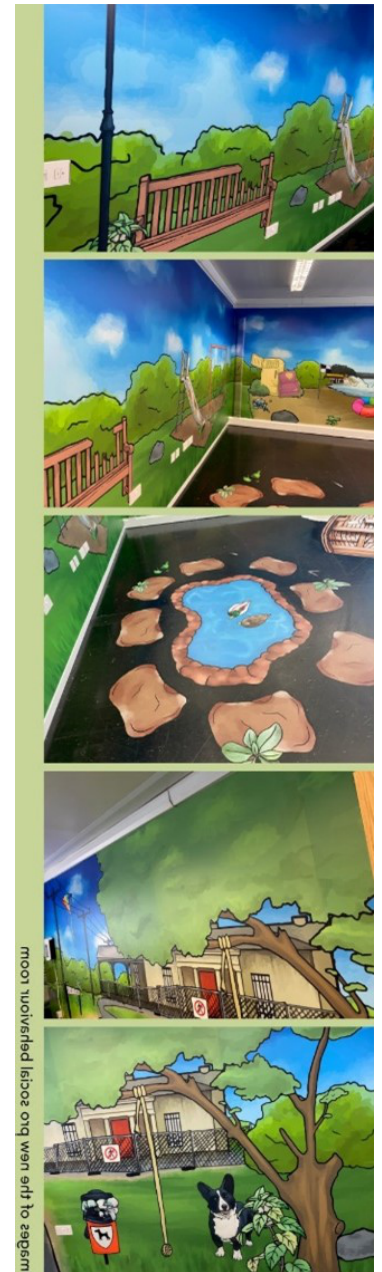


Examples of the alcohol awareness materials that were developed

Working with volunteers remotely gave Absafe another perspective and exposure to working in new and creative ways. It encouraged Absafe to be more innovative and review their social media platforms to increase the audience for the alcohol education materials. They were able to be flexible in the crisis, supporting young people to understand how alcohol can impact your judgement and actions, which can lead to other risks and dangers. The challenges due to COVID were substantial but overall positive and gave Absafe an opportunity to look at sustainable improvement and implement some 'change' ideas. For example, working flexibly using innovation and young people to lead the teaching of younger people kept the work relevant and focused on the needs of the younger people.

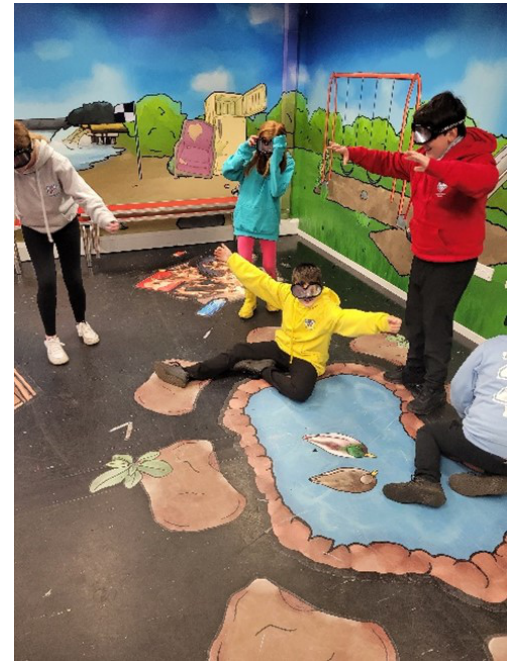
The Impact:

- By delivering online 3,000 pupils were reached.
- The materials developed are now on Google Classroom and other learning platforms for both Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils, through their education departments.
- 500 hours of education was provided.
- The pro social behaviour room was completed and is now available for either face to face or online learning.
- Commissioned a play by young people to discuss the dangers of consuming alcohol and how it affects the decision making and inhibits the ability to make good safe decisions. This will be performed at 'The Safe' or in schools with the learning materials.



The Safe Project:

In 2021, Absafe received a continuation grant of £25,000 from SWAF to continue delivering workshop sessions around alcohol safety in the new classroom that was created in 2020 called, The Safe, which has the setting of a playpark. Using several visual exercises to engage children and young people in discussions on peer pressure, the impact of alcohol on communities and families, as well as beer goggle challenges to complete whilst "drunk". The sessions also dispel myths around alcohol and ensure children and young people have accurate information for making future decisions around consumption, and how to be safe. To continue to do this and expand the sessions, Absafe required funding to recruit a new dedicated part time worker to deliver the sessions which was supported in full by SWAF for 16 hours per week for one year.



The Impact:

The sessions moved online until September 2021 when they were able to develop, test, and re-develop and deliver in person again at The Safe. The new dedicated project worker delivered lessons in the park set to 1,448 children from twenty-eight schools. Over hundred children highlighted the park as their favourite set with feedback such as "I enjoyed the drunk goggles and learning the dangers of alcohol", "I learned how people can act when drunk. I enjoyed the drunk goggles", "I loved it, and it was fun!", "alcohol safety was my favourite".

Absafe have been able to expand and offer the sessions to school groups and The Safe was visited five times by the Middlefield Community Hub for 10 to 16 year olds to tackle the rise in underage drinking and anti-social behaviour in the local area of Middlefield (most deprived area in Aberdeen).

To measure the impact of the sessions Absafe used a quiz at the start and at the end to record the results to check improvement in knowledge, and to see if any changes needed to be made to the content if the desired improvement isn't achieved. In addition to this, 97% of children said they learned something that could save someone's life and 98% said they learned something that could save their own life. With the main aim of Absafe and its sessions being to save lives and reduce harm, these stats are really encouraging.

Overall, Absafe exceeded its own expectations reaching a total of 2,154 people who have never used the service before. This figure mainly included children aged 9-12 years old.

Feedback from Teachers:

"Your service is a hidden treasure chest that needs to be shouted from the rooftops for more children/families/schools to benefit from. Keep doing what you are doing, shout your company from the rooftops! Fight for funding and let's get all P7 children in Aberdeen City and Shire to visit. Literally, you are lifesavers! On behalf of P6/7 and myself, thank you very much for a fantastic visit!"

- Teacher from Skene School.



"The whole class were buzzing when they returned to school after their visit to The Safe. They all learned so much great life-saving skills as well as having fun- they haven't stopped speaking about it. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers."

- P7 Teacher from Dyce Primary.

The Magic Potion Myth Project:

In 2022, Absafe received a third and final grant of £25,000 to deliver The Magic Potion Myth project. The grant enabled the continuation of the dedicated part time project worker funded in 2021 to deliver this project along with sessional worker costs, premises, administration, advertising, and publicity costs.

The media's sometimes glamorous portrayal of alcohol can, to many young people, make them believe drinking will make them cool, popular, attractive, and happy with research showing young people who expect such positive effects are more likely to drink at an early age. However, Absafe help to combat these myths by talking about TV shows and films and discussing how alcohol is portrayed in them. For example, television advertisements for beer often show young adults having a good time, giving the impression drinking always puts people in a fun mood. The aim of the Magic Potion Myth project is to discuss this openly with young people in a safe space about the different ways alcohol can affect people and, in some cases, bringing on feelings of sadness or anger rather than carefree high spirits.

Another area covered in this project is 'How to Handle Peer Pressure'. Simply telling young people they should avoid alcohol does not have the desired effect and can have the opposite effect and therefore, project staff help with this through discussions; what can they say when they go to a party and a friend offers them a beer? Or what they should do if they find themselves in a home where kids are passing around a bottle of wine and parents are nowhere in sight? What should their response be if they are offered a ride home with an older friend who has been drinking? Exploring and giving young people strategies on how they might handle these, and other difficult situations, and make clear Absafe, and others, are willing to support them. The more prepared they are, the better they will be to handle high-pressure situations which involve drinking and keep themselves safe.

The Impact:

- Worked with 1,500 children and young people from fifty schools, in addition over 200 young people from out of school groups.
- Recorded an average 85% improvement rate across the classes following the sessions.
- Police Scotland Youth Volunteers use Absafe every Wednesday for an hour and half to learn about alcohol safety. Around 25-30 young people benefit every week.

"Without this funding we wouldn't have been able to provide the excellent experience for the young people in our community. We know that the fun education we deliver has a positive impact, reduces harm, and save lives! Thank you!"

- Louise Richardson, CEO