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Drugs Scene: an evaluation of a drugs prevention project in South London

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BRIEFING

‘Drugs Scene’ was developed in five London boroughs and aimed to complement the drugs education being delivered in schools by running initiatives within the community. The project targeted 14 primary schools and nine youth projects across Wandsworth, Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich.

A theatre-in-education company was contracted to train teachers and youth workers, providing them with skills for delivering drugs education. The training involved the use of a specifically developed teaching resource pack to deliver active learning techniques, including drugs education through the visual and performing arts.

A session for parents was offered to every primary school, which informed parents of the school’s approach to drugs education and introduced them to ways they could support and complement what the school was doing. The central feature of each session was a performance delivered by the trainers on the theme of communication in a fictional family, in which the audience were able to participate and influence the outcome of scenes.

The study examines whether the integrated package of education, training and resources for the community added value to drugs education delivered in the classroom.

THE STUDY AT A GLANCE

The project ran from 1995-1998 and was managed by partnerships made up of representatives from statutory education, the youth service, health promotion and voluntary agencies. Components included:

- a five-day training programme for teachers and youth workers;
- teaching resource packs for teachers and youth workers;
- sessions for parents;
- production of 6,000 drugs handbooks for parents and 2,000 handbooks for youth workers; and
- two Drugs Scene Events (1996 and 1998), including an exhibition of art work and performances by young people around drug-related issues.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

GOOD PRACTICE POINTS

- Presenting parents with evidence of children's knowledge, understanding and attitudes to drugs at different ages effectively demonstrates the need for drugs education.
- Backing resources with training increases their impact and the likelihood of them being used successfully.
- Youth workers find training relevant and useful, but need an opportunity to put this learning into practice for an initiative to add substantial value to the work of the youth projects. Some youth workers do not get this opportunity because they are part-time or sessional workers; they may lack support and contact with colleagues, and be subject to cutbacks and reorganisation.
- The local contacts of partnership members are vital to the implementation of a multi-faceted project such as Drugs Scene. Where there are gaps affecting certain sectors or local areas within the partnership, there are likely to be corresponding gaps in the project's coverage.
- Employing a single contractor to deliver all the elements of the integrated programme to schools (producing resources, delivering training and performing at parents' sessions) provides added value.
- Any initiative to support teachers and youth workers is likely to have the greatest impact where existing conditions are favourable. For schools, this means those that have made some progress in drugs education or policy already. In the case of youth work, a stable group of young people and supportive work environment are essential preconditions.
- A multi-faceted initiative such as Drugs Scene, can revitalise drugs education and policy development, enabling schools to gain further benefits from skills learned by teachers, resources provided by trainers and improved communication with parents.

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If you would like to read more on 'Drugs Scene', the full report, whilst not being published as an independent DPAS paper, is available on request from DPAS HQ.

This briefing, and other DPAS and DPI publications are available on the DPAS website at: <http://www.dpas.gov.uk> together with additional information about DPAS.

Free copies of DPAS & DPI publications are also available from our distributors – 01787 467013. For any other enquiries, contact DPAS at:

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An earlier report (DPAS Paper 4) presents initial findings from an evaluation of a multi-component drugs education project called 'NE Choices' and was aimed at secondary school children and parents. DPAS Paper 5 is an evaluation of drug prevention programmes involving parents and Paper 6 presents findings of research on peer approaches to drugs prevention. Briefing Paper 8 describes an evaluation of training professionals in drug prevention. Briefing Paper 10 describes a 'Family of Schools' Project that aimed to establish greater consistency in the drugs education delivered by secondary schools and their primary feeder schools.