

Preventative Education – School-Based Programmes

There are three levels of intervention within prevention frameworks: primary prevention, which is aimed at preventing violence and abuse before it ever occurs, for example school-based prevention programmes targeting the whole child population; secondary prevention, which involves the response immediately after violence or abuse has occurred, for example teachers' and professionals' response following a disclosure of existing abuse; and tertiary prevention, which is the longer-term response with the aim of harm-minimization for example therapeutic interventions with individual pupils. Because research and evaluation into effectiveness are limited, there is no 'blue-print' for success, however there *is* a shared agreement in the literature that successful programmes promote healthy behaviour and relationships, help pupils identify risk factors and build resilience, inform pupils how to seek help when they do not feel safe and are developmentally appropriate (in terms of audience, content, delivery and timing).

Examples of Prevention Programmes

Keeping Ourselves Safe (New Zealand) – for example Briggs and Hawkins (1996)

Aim: to inform pre-school, primary and post-primary pupils about positive safety and child sexual abuse prevention with a focus on developing the skills to recognize unsafe situations and how to avoid it, for example seeking help.

Safe Dates (United States) – for example Foshee et al. (2005)

Aim: targeting post-primary pupils, the aim of this programme is to reduce and prevent primary and secondary dating violence, change social norms associated with partner violence, decrease gender stereotyping, teach conflict resolution skills, provide information about support services and promote positive help-seeking behaviour.

Stay Safe (Republic of Ireland) – for example MacIntyre et al. (2000)

Aim: to teach school-aged children and young people how to deal with potentially unsafe situations, including bullying and sexual abuse. It is part of the school curriculum and, consisting of 10–12 sessions of 30–40 minutes each, is delivered nationwide.

Sexual Ethics (Australia) – for example Carmody (2006)

Aim: to raise awareness among young people aged 16–24 about sexual ethics, sexual intimacy, understanding other people's desires and needs, consent, behaviour, bystander intervention and skills to negotiate healthy relationships.

Zero Tolerance (Scotland, UK) – for example Henderson (2002)

Aim: to promote relationships based on equality and respect among primary and post-primary school children and in youth organizations.

References

Briggs, F. and Hawkins, R. M. F. (1996), *Keeping Ourselves Safe: A Survey of New Zealand Children Aged 10–12 Years and Their Parents*. Report for New Zealand Policy and Ministry of Education: University of South Australia.

Carmody, M. (2006), 'Preventing adult sexual violence through education?' *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 18(2): 342–56.

Foshee, V., Bauan, K., Ennett, S., Suchindran, C., Benefield, T. and Linder, G. G. (2005), 'Assessing the effects of the dating violence prevention program "Safe Dates" using random coefficient regression modeling'. *Prevention Science*, 6(3): 245–58.

Henderson, S. (2002), *Evaluation of the Zero Tolerance 'Respect' Pilot Project*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office.

MacIntyre, D., Carr, A., Lawlor, M. and Flattery, M. (2000), 'Development of the Stay Safe Programme'. *Child Abuse Review*, 9: 200–16.

Research and Practice Example – 'Preparing Pre-Service Teachers for Child Protection: A Case Study from Northern Ireland, UK'

The Programme

The Pastoral Pathways Programme (McKee, 2009) is a comprehensive child protection training programme available to students at Stranmillis University College, a College of Queen's University Belfast. The aim of the programme is to help students learn about and understand the context and impact of abuse and violence on children's and young people's learning, behaviour and relationships. Delivered through a mix of discrete units, for example elective modules dedicated to the topic, and integrated units, for example embedded within existing compulsory modules, the programme adopts the 'discipline specific knowledge base for preparing future educators' described by Walsh and Farrell (2008, p. 582) and, set within the legal and policy child protection context, is framed by a children's rights perspective (UN, 1989). The Programme addresses six key features identified in international theoretical and legal frameworks: the realities of abuse and violence in a local and global context; risk factors and the importance of resilience; early indicators; the impact on children and young people; child protection and safeguarding in practice; and the legal and policy context.

The Pilot

The programme was delivered as a pilot between 2004 and 2007 and offered to students in Teacher Education (primary and post-primary), Early Childhood Studies, and Health and Leisure Studies (n=216). Using an adaptation of the Early Years Questionnaire on Child Protection [EYQCP]

(McKee, 2003), students were assessed before (pre-test), during (mid-test) and after (post-test) the programme to see if their knowledge of the topic developed and was sustained. Baseline assessment tests (pre-test) indicated that, understandably, first-year students lacked knowledge of all six key child protection themes and that there was a need to differentiate the training needs of different student groups (McKee and Dillenburger, 2009). Once the programme was refined and delivered, post-test assessment scores indicated that student educators' knowledge of child protection had increased significantly and was maintained 3 years after the programme commenced.

The Outcome

Since time dedicated to child protection content in teacher education programmes is, on average, 7 hours (Arnold and Maio-Taddeo, 2008; Baginsky and Hodgkinson, 2000), the Pastoral Pathways Programme exceeds international recommendations in terms of location and coverage (see, for example, Walsh et al., 2011). Additionally, and in consultation with key stakeholders through focus groups (teacher educators; Department of Education, Northern Ireland [DENI], NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit [CPSU], Education and Library Board [ELB], Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety [DHSSPS] and Area Child Protection Committee [ACPC] officials; and students), the Programme was formally approved as a successful pre-service child protection training programme for educators. To date, the programme has been successfully integrated and delivered in two Teacher Education programmes, Primary and Post-Primary, and continues to be developed and evaluated for effectiveness (McKee and Dillenburger, 2012 in press).

Sample of content and location in teacher education post-primary programme

Sample of content	Location and coverage
The emotional context of child protection, recognizing adversity in young people, responding to concerns during school-based work, legal reporting responsibilities, working with other professionals	First Year Compulsory Unit – 2 hours – 'Personal and Professional Learning'
Healthy relationships and sexuality, equality and respect, diversity and inclusion, personal development, integrating safety skills into Learning for Life and Work curriculum content, personal safety	Second Year Compulsory Unit – 8 hours – 'Learning for Life and Work (LLW)'
Special risks and assessment, communicating about sensitive issues, teaching strategies with young people, communication difficulties and how to address them in the classroom	Third Year Compulsory Unit – 2 hours – 'Managing Difference in Post-Primary Schools'
Adversity, trauma impact on learning, behaviour and relationships, trauma-sensitive whole school approaches, teaching strategies, bullying, domestic violence, abuse, bereavement	Fourth Year Elective – 48 hours – 'Contemporary Issues in Pastoral Care'
Understanding adversity (mental health, violence, abuse, poverty, exclusion, disability) and the impact on pupils' safety and psychological well-being	Fourth Year Elective – 48 hours – 'Working with Disadvantaged Pupils'

References

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Responding to Disclosures of Abuse

Direct disclosures of abuse are not common (abuse is more commonly identified through behavioural or physical appearance) but they can and do occur in various situations. If a child/young person discloses (or begins to disclose) abuse, following these points will help with your response.

Provide Space

A child/young person might begin talking about abuse or abusive experiences in a crowded place or during a group activity. Try to move them away from other pupils where you can hear them properly. Inform the child/young person that this is because you want to be able to give them your full attention, therefore somewhere quiet is best.

Believe

False disclosures are very rare, therefore reassure the child/young person that you believe them. It is the role of other professionals, such as Child Protective Services (US) or Social Services

(UK), to investigate the allegation; the role of the teacher is to support the pupil and respond appropriately.

Reassure

Reassure the child/young person that telling you is the right thing to do and that you are not angry with them for disclosing the information. Reassure the child/young person that they are not at fault and that they have done nothing wrong.

Listen Rather Than Question and be Honest

When children/young people disclose directly to an adult, such as a teacher, it usually means that they trust you and simply speaking to you will be helpful. Listen supportively and avoid excessive questioning. A child/young person will only disclose what is comfortable and you may not be informed of the 'whole story' initially. Allow the child/young person time to talk to you using their own words. Do not put words into their mouth as the conversation may be required later for legal proceedings. Aim to ensure an appropriate response and if in doubt, it is better to be honest with the child/young person and answer 'I don't know the answer to that but I'll find out for you'.

No False Promises

Because most abuse involves secrecy, a child/young person might ask you to keep their disclosure a secret. You must not keep such a secret. You can, however, promise to be there for them and to help in any way you can.

Report

You must report a child protection concern of any nature, even if you do not have evidence of abuse. Because you have a legal and moral duty of care, you should inform the child/young person that you have to forward the disclosure to an appropriate person. While terminology will vary between countries, schools will have an appointed person to respond to child abuse disclosures for example Designated Teacher (UK), Designated Liaison Officer (Republic of Ireland), School Counsellor or Administrator (US) etc. Confronting the alleged abuser (even if a parent) can potentially place children/young people at further risk of harm, therefore it is imperative you report this to the designated person *only* and without delay.