

# The principles of good drug education

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'THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD DRUG EDUCATION'

This briefing paper is **part of a series** produced by the Drug Education Forum, for schools and others involved in drug education or informal drug prevention.

## The Drug Education Forum

The Drug Education Forum was funded by the Department of Education between 1995 and 2012 to inform and improve drug education in England. The DEF has been a reference hub of best policy and practice, analysing complex data and providing expert analysis and commentary for smaller and non-specialist organisations, as well as national members.

The DEF contributed extensively to government consultations, and was involved in key developments in drug education. As a free expert resource for practitioners nationwide, it also had significant impact at local level.

This briefing paper is one in a series of six published in March 2012. The series comprises:

- The principles of good drug education
- Principles for supporting school drug education
- Beyond the lesson plan: Drug prevention and early intervention
- Engaging parents in drug education
- Learning from life skills programmes in drug education
- Legal highs

Further copies of these papers can be downloaded from [www.drugeducationforum.com](http://www.drugeducationforum.com)

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**Choosing the best approach to drug education is a key task for educators. There is no shortage of guidance, information, and materials but choosing the most relevant and supportive for the group or groups you lead depend on a number of factors.**

This document aims to help you understand the principles that lie at the heart of good practice; those that follow have been adapted from the latest best-practice evaluations carried out in the UK, Canada, Australia, the USA, by the United Nations and in other countries.

## The Principles

1. **Environment:** Good drug education is...
  - Underpinned by a whole school approach
  - Enhanced by family-based prevention programmes
2. **Planning:** An appropriate curriculum is...
  - Relevant and responsive to the developmental stage and circumstances of the children and young people (see Needs Assessment below)
  - Taught in the context of other personal, social and health issues.
  - Manageable given available resources
  - Informed by programmes that produce achievable outcomes



- Developmental: re-visited, consolidated and extended throughout childhood and youth
- Supported by appropriate training
- Evidence based and/or evaluated

**3. Practice:** The educator...

- Creates a comfortable classroom climate
- Uses interactive teaching styles
- Is responsive to different cultural views and realities
- Includes a normative component

**4. Content:** The selected materials and activities...

- Explore attitudes to drugs and drug users
- Provide children and young people with opportunities to develop social skills
- Use credible, reliable and up-to-date sources to explore, contrast, and, where appropriate, support (or challenge) attitudes to self and others, to drugs, to drug use and non-use - and to drug users and non-users
- Strengthen protective factors
- Minimise risk factors

**5. Evaluation:** The programme is informed by...

- Assessment
- Monitoring
- Impact evaluation