

Street Talk⁹

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What is Street Talk?

Street Talk is a pioneering national partnership between Mentor, the drug and alcohol protection charity and Addaction, the UK's leading specialist drug and alcohol treatment charity, the project is funded by the home office.

Working with voluntary and community organisations across five areas of the country (Lancashire, Halton, Cornwall, Brent, and Bournemouth), Street Talk will reach 3,000 young people who are at risk from substance misuse and associated offending.

The project target young people who are deemed 'at risk' for a number of reasons, including:

- Being excluded from school
- Persistent absenteeism from school
- Being involved in sex work
- Living in the care of a local authority
- Having mental health problems
- Having parents or carers who have substance misuse problems
- Experiencing abuse within the family
- Experiencing homelessness
- Being involved in gang activity (either themselves, or through family members or friends)

The project will train the staff and volunteers of our local partners to deliver brief interventions that aim to reduce substance misuse among young people, and associated risks including criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.

In addition, organisations will be supported to build their capacity to deliver this interventions, as well as to influence local commissioning through:

They'll be able to do this through:

- Embedding appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes into their practice
- Developing a local evidence base
- Developing marketing and communication plans
- Developing links to relevant local and national networks

transforming the lives of young people affected by drugs and alcohol



Welcome

I am excited to be working on Street Talk which is a highly innovative project to support 20 voluntary and community organisations across the country in delivering evidence based brief interventions to vulnerable young people. Working with our local partners we aim to reduce their substance misuse and associated risks including criminal activity and anti social behaviour.

My background in drug prevention and treatment makes me passionate about delivering high quality, effective, services to young people. I believe that the partnership between Mentor and Addaction will increase the ability of our local partners to meet the needs of the young people they work with.

I believe that the Street Talk project has the potential to transform the lives of the young people that we will work with. I look forward to keeping you informed about the progress we make.

Best wishes

Sheryl Dago
Addaction, Street Talk National Manger

...through engaging with Street Talk, John has made many positive steps



Addaction and Mentor – working together

In the current financial climate, it is more important than ever to make sure that everyone works as effectively as possible. That's why it makes sense for charities with the same aims to work together where they can – something that brought Addaction and Mentor together in this case.

Mentor is the country's leading charity working in the field of drug and alcohol prevention. Part of an international grouping of research charities, Mentor uses the freshest evidence to implement truly effective preventions programmes. Recently, it has called for compulsory, evidence-based drug education to be made available in every UK school.



Mentor is the country's leading charity working in the field of drug and alcohol prevention



Set up in 1967, Addaction now runs over 100 projects nationwide, transforming the lives of people affected by drugs and alcohol. What's more, the charity also supports the loved ones of those battling addiction. A examples of this 'family approach' is Addaction's Breaking The Cycle programme, which works with families where a parent or carer has a drink or drug problem.

It is on this shared foundation of experience and expertise that Street Talk has been created. Such partnerships can make charities stronger. The pooling of resources, attractiveness to funders, and the ability to increase the size and scope of such projects are a few of the benefits working together can bring.

By joining forces on this new project, Addaction and Mentor are excellently placed to make Street Talk a real success.





Case Study: A young person's story from Brent

'John' grew up in the London Borough of Brent, on the periphery of 'postal code rivalry' and gang culture.

His father has been absent throughout the majority of John's teenage life, and John attributes many of the negative experiences in his life to this absence, particularly his turning to friends and older males for guidance and support.

However through engaging with Street Talk, John has made many positive steps in addressing both his drug use and behaviour, and in just a short space of time, he already feels more able to make better informed choices around his drug use and behaviour.

John also used 'skunk' excessively; due to peer pressure, coercion from older gang entrenched peers and as a way of coping with the emotional problems he was having. This had a significant effect on his concentration, memory and motivation – impacting on his grades at school.

What do we mean by a Brief Intervention?

Brief interventions that aim to reduce the risks associated with problematic use of drugs and/or alcohol amongst adults have been evidenced in substance misuse literature for some time.

Over the last decade an evidence base that advocates the use of this approach with young people has emerged. For example, brief interventions delivered in the Emergency Department of hospitals to young people with alcohol or other drug problems have been associated with an increase in the uptake of community based treatment, an increase in wellbeing and a decrease in alcohol related injuries and social problems (Tait et al, 2004).

Similarly, Project CHAT, a brief motivational interviewing approach has also achieved positive outcomes when applied in community and primary care settings.

Street Talk is using an approach that combines this motivational interviewing approach with web-based, hand-held technology, to engage young people in developing an awareness and strategies to more effectively manage social and health risk behaviours.

The Street Talk outcomes analysis will focus on wellbeing, self esteem, an intention to change behaviour and social behaviour development, following the participation of young people in this brief intervention.

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Why Street Talk is right for Halton

Lee Rimmer works as the Street Talk coordinator for Halton in Merseyside.

Although he is quite new to the area, it's already clear to Lee that parts of Halton suffer from significant deprivation, and the reasons behind those problems are quite diverse.

'It's why I'm so keen for this kind of multi-partnership work to take off here. There are lots of young people who are putting themselves at risk and getting in trouble with the authorities. We can't pretend there's a single, magic bullet to solve all of those problems'

Lee previously worked in the criminal justice system, and is excited about getting involved with Street Talk due to his past experiences.



To listen to the full interview with Lee, visit the Street Talk website at www.street-talk-choices.co.uk

For more information and news on projects

Visit

www.street-talk-choices.co.uk



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