

Principles for supporting school drug education

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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

For further information, please contact:

Andrew Brown
Director of Programmes, Mentor
67-69 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6PU
andrew.brown@mentoruk.org

Principles for partnership working

Recent research carried out by researchers at Hallam Sheffield University found that over half of secondary schools and a third of primary schools work in partnership with at least one external provider to deliver drug education.

Children and young people often find visitors to school a useful and informative part of their learning, but equally we know that for visits to be successful there needs to be shared understanding about the nature and content of the session/s.

Government guidance has been that schools should exercise caution with the use of visitors as there is some evidence that particular messages can have a detrimental impact on young people's intentions to resist using drugs including alcohol. Particular caution should be used when visitors have had firsthand experience of problematic drug use.

This short briefing is intended to set out principles that visitors and schools should consider applying in ensuring a good experience and outcome from using external support in a school's delivery of drug education.



Our Principles

Visitors

- should be aware of the key principles of effective drug education (<http://bit.ly/gUGTFi>).
- should be aware of national and local approaches to drug education and PSHE and be able to show that they use evidence based strategies.
- should avoid shocking images and inappropriate descriptions of drug use and be sensitive to any distress shown by pupils during the session.
- should reflect on the learning from the session with the teacher and other staff and where possible with students.
- should ensure that they are using up to date resources and data.
- where the visitor is from the police service they should ensure that they are working to ACPO's Joining Forces guidance (<http://bit.ly/lpkTee>).

Schools

- should negotiate content with the visitor, to take account of class needs and ensure relevance.
- should ensure that visitors have a clear understanding about the aims and objectives of the session and they have seen and understood the school's drug education policy.
- should ensure that visitors have been briefed on any particular sensitivities that there may be in the student group – these may include identified drug issues by particular students or their families – as well as any broader needs within the group.
- should ensure that where visitors are used that the content of the session is linked back to the broader drug education and PSHE delivered by the school.

Teachers

- should be present at all times when a visitor is in the class, and be ready to be an active participant in these sessions.
- should ensure that they reflect on the learning from particular sessions with pupils and visitors, assessing the learning, and building skills and pro-health attitudes.
- should follow up any unresolved issues and, whenever needed, extend the learning begun by the visitor, in a subsequent lesson.
- should be alert to any distress caused or concerns raised in the session and ensure that appropriate support is given.