

Quality standards:
**Delivering effective
alcohol and drug
education in the
classroom**

Who these standards are for:

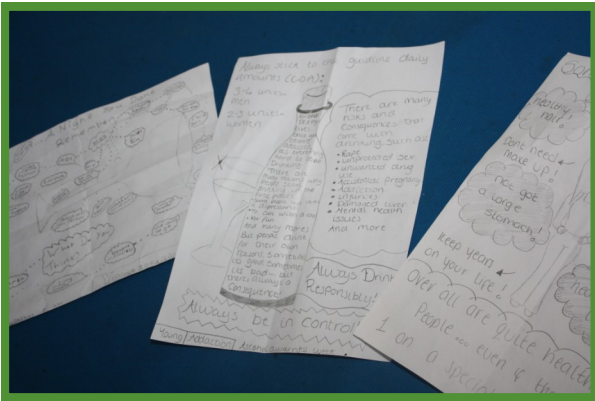
Primary and secondary
schools,
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Introduction

Who these standards are for

Primary and secondary schools, independent practitioners and anyone delivering alcohol and drug education, in formal or informal environments.

Characteristics of effective alcohol and drug education



Good alcohol and drug education develops pupils' knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to enable them to live safely in our society.

It is most effective when combined with programmes that address other risky behaviours that are common in adolescence and other wider measures, such as a supportive school environment and clear school rules [see the standards on [School Context](#)].

Effective alcohol and drug education:

Evidence suggests incorporating the following in an alcohol and drug education programme has the potential to have preventative effects:

- Using interactive methods;
- Delivered through a series of structured sessions (typically 10-15) once a week, often providing booster sessions over multiple years;
- Delivered by trained facilitator (including also trained peers);
- Provide opportunity to practice and learn a wide array of personal and social skills, including particularly coping, decision making and resistance skills, and particularly in relation to substance abuse;
- Impact perceptions of risks associated with substance abuse, emphasizing immediate consequences;
- Dispel misconceptions regarding the normative nature and the expectations linked to substance abuse.

Evidence base

These standards draw on two main sources of evidence. Firstly, there is the literature on the elements of effective PSHE education, in particular the PSHE Association's guidance and Ofsted subject-specific guidance for PSHE education.

Secondly, there is international evidence reviewing the characteristics of prevention programmes which have been shown to have an impact on young people's alcohol and drug use, reducing risky behaviours such as binge drinking. [See 'Further reading and resources' below to access these documents].

Providing a safe learning environment and avoiding harm

A skilled educator can help pupils explore sensitive issues in the classroom, and this is an important part of children and young people's learning. However, in order to do so, it is essential that appropriate safeguards are in place, such as establishing ground rules for discussion, to ensure a safe learning environment.

It is also important to ensure information is appropriately pitched, remembering that pupils of the same age range may differ widely in their life experiences.

Social norms

Many young people believe that alcohol and drug use is more prevalent than is the case. It is important that educators do not unintentionally reinforce this perception and instead challenge it.

The 'social norms' approach is a significant element of some evidence-based programmes. National or local statistics or, ideally, an in-school survey can be used to compare pupils' perceptions about their peers' behaviour against actual use.

More information on this approach is available under 'Further reading and resources' below.

Characteristics of programmes associated with no or negative prevention outcomes

The available evidence indicates that the following are associated with no or negative outcomes for young people:

- Non-interactive methods, such as lecturing, as a primary delivery strategy;
- Information-giving alone, particularly fear arousal.
- Based on unstructured dialogue sessions;
- Focus only on the building of self-esteem and emotional education;
- Address only ethical/ moral decision making or values;
- Use ex-drug users as testimonials;
- Using police officers to deliver the programme.

Source: UNODC International Standards for Drug Prevention (2013)



The Standards

Clear and relevant learning objectives and learning outcomes are set and assessed.

- Earlier learning is built on and links made between different statutory subjects, ensuring continuity.
- Learning objectives are shaped by needs assessment.
- Learning objectives encompass pupils' understanding, attitudes, communication, skills and confidence as well as their knowledge.
- Pupils' learning is assessed against the objectives and outcomes.

Learning is interactive.

- Active learning strategies are used such as group discussions, problem solving, pupil led research.
- Pupils develop and practise personal and social skills.
- Pupils have the opportunity to think about their feelings, beliefs and values.
- Pupils have the opportunity to reflect on their learning.
- Each session is delivered to a small group of pupils, and annual events or class assemblies are used only to enhance the regular timetable.

Positive social norms are reinforced.

- Misconceptions about how widespread and acceptable risky behaviours are among peers or older young people are identified and corrected.
- Pupils have the opportunity to compare their feelings, beliefs and values with those of their peers.

Resources are appropriate for their audience, providing accurate and relevant information.

- Information given is factually accurate.
- The main emphasis is on truth and not fear arousal.
- The situations, language and images are appropriate for pupils' maturity, understanding and knowledge.
- The situations, language and images are up-to-date and relevant to pupils, including consideration of cultural and religious diversity.
- Special educational needs are taken into account.

Clear strategies are in place to ensure a safe classroom environment.

- Ground rules are set out covering issues such as teachers' and pupils' right to privacy and respect, and the boundaries of discussion.
- Pupils are made aware of the school's confidentiality policy, and ways they can seek support.
- Distancing techniques are employed when engaging pupils on sensitive issues.

- Staff are confident in discussing sensitive issues and dealing with difficult questions appropriately.
- Clear policies are available to safely introduce relevant external specialists or experienced contributors to the classroom.

Approaches are evaluated for effectiveness.

- Data from initial needs assessment and assessment of learning are analysed to help understand which approaches are effective.
- Delivery is monitored to assure teaching quality.
- Delivery is ideally based on a programme which has been formally evaluated, either for impact on behaviour or for intermediate outcomes such as skills or resilience. (NB fidelity to the original programme is important).

Further reading and resources

- Centre for Analysis of Youth Transition (CAYT) <http://www.ifs.org.uk/centres/cayt>
- DrugScope and Alcohol Concern, Assessment in Drug Education, a briefing paper for Teachers and other Drug Education Practitioners, Drug and Alcohol Education and Prevention Team, June 2006 <http://www.drugscope.org.uk/Resources/Drugscope/Documents/PDF/Education%20and%20Prevention/assessmentbriefing.pdf>
- FRANK <http://www.talktofrank.com/>
- Mentor ADEPIS, Identifying and supporting children affected by parental substance use <http://mentor-adepis.org/identifying-supporting-children-affected-parental-substance-use-resource-schools/>
- Mentor UK, Drug prevention programmes in schools: What is the evidence? <http://www.mentoruk.org.uk/2011/11/drug-prevention-programmes-in-schools-what-is-the-evidence/>
- Mentor UK, Response to PSHE Review <http://www.mentoruk.org.uk/response-to-pshe-review/>
- National Healthy Schools Standard <http://www.education.gov.uk/vocabularies/educationtermsandtags/3566>
- Ofsted subject-specific guidance for PSHE education <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/generic-grade-descriptors-and-supplementary-subject-specific-guidance-for-inspectors-making-judgement>
- PSHE Association criteria for resources <http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1048>
- Social Norms Guidebook <http://www.normativebeliefs.org.uk/Guidebook.pdf>
- UNODC prevention standards <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/prevention/prevention-standards.html>

About ADEPIS

The Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Information Service (ADEPIS) has been commissioned by the Department for Education with the aims of:

- Developing a high quality information and advice service for practitioners; and
- Supporting the development of local capacity by promoting evidence-based programmes known to have an impact and building practitioner confidence.

To achieve these aims ADEPIS will:

- Make available differentiated support to practitioners building on practitioner needs, emerging trends and evidence of impact;
- Provide a two-way channel between policy makers and practitioners to ensure policies and strategies are translated effectively and that concerns from the field feed into policy;
- To use the best of national and international evidence to inform all work.

ADEPIS is a partnership between Mentor, DrugScope and Adfam. Further resources available on <http://mentor-adepis.org>

