

PEER ALCOHOL EDUCATION PROJECT WITH SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

In July 2003 Tacade was funded by Diageo Great Britain to work with four secondary schools in England and Wales to develop effective models of alcohol peer education. The work with these four pilot schools - in Cardiff, Melbourn, Leicester and London - was informed by a review of relevant literature and a scoping activity to identify existing examples of alcohol peer education work with young people. The substantive work with schools began in January 2004 and much of the peer educator's work will continue into the Autumn term (2004). An evaluation of the work was carried out by an Independent Evaluator.

This briefing paper provides a summary of the learning from the project to date. It is intended to inform practitioners in schools and professionals supporting schools in similar work. A further briefing paper and peer alcohol education toolkit for schools will be published by Tacade in 2005 thanks to further funding from Diageo Great Britain.

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug amongst secondary school students yet alcohol education is often subsumed within the broad focus of drug education. 60% of 11 to 15 year olds drink alcohol. 18% of 11 to 15 year olds drink alcohol at least once a week. Only 9% of boys and 5% of girls aged 11 to 12 consider themselves regular drinkers. 39% of young men and 33% of young women aged 15 to 16 consider themselves regular drinkers (1).

KEY LEARNING

- ❖ A dual approach of peer alcohol education and teacher led alcohol education lessons can provide a comprehensive programme of alcohol education that meets the differing needs of secondary school students.
- ❖ The selection of peer educators is crucial. In our experience the three projects that invited selected students to take part and the project that asked for volunteers were both successful in retaining enthusiastic, committed teams of peer educators.
- ❖ It is essential that students feel a strong sense of ownership for the peer education project. This will help students to maintain their commitment and enthusiasm for the project. One way of helping to enable students to have a sense of ownership is to allow them to decide the direction of the project within explicit parameters.
- ❖ Staff involved have a sensitive role to play providing support, interest and commitment in an unobtrusive and empowering manner. In particular, the lead member of staff has a crucial role to play in helping to sustain the project. The support of Senior Management is essential.
- ❖ There may be a danger that peer educators focus on conveying knowledge at the expense of skills development and exploration of attitudes. This is an important issue to address in the training of peer educators, as is the issue of behaviour management.
- ❖ A project will benefit from having a clear action plan with explicit aims and objectives and proposals for sustaining the work in future years.
- ❖ Training for staff and students by an external agency/organisation will provide an important initial stimulus for a new peer education project, but may not be necessary once the expertise within the school community has been utilized or developed. Schools appear to be more confident when supported by external agencies/organisations, both with resources, ideas and finance.
- ❖ The Tacade alcohol education materials - *'Respect It'*, *'Alcoshots'*, *'Sex, Drugs and Alcohol'* and the *'DrinkDeal'* card game - can provide a useful springboard for alcohol peer education work. The photographs in *'Alcoshots'* and the cartoons in *'Sex, Drugs and Alcohol'* were particularly useful in enabling students to explore issues of concern and interest.
- ❖ Peer educators, students receiving peer education and staff seem to feel that ideally there should be a two or three year age gap between the peer educators and the recipients. This helps peer educators to have confidence and credibility amongst recipients.
- ❖ Where sessions with peer educators are enjoyed, and the peer educators are respected and trusted, younger pupils may use them as a source of support and it may help enhance an ethos of student empowerment and responsibility.
- ❖ Peer alcohol education could be developed as part of an enhanced citizenship programme. There is for example scope for peer educators to work with feeder primary schools.

THE LANCASTER SCHOOL - LEICESTER

The Lancaster School is an urban comprehensive with 1,250 male students from a variety of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds including white, south Asian and Somali. The school had not previously been involved in any peer education work.

Nine young men from Year 9 were invited to become peer educators. They were chosen by the staff for their 'street cred', communication skills and ability to commit to a process. Initially, Tacade facilitated two, two hour training sessions with the students and one awareness session with the staff involved (teachers, school nurse and a learning mentor). Five out of the original nine students selected chose to become peer educators, along with one additional Year 9 student recruited by the peer educators. The students created the '**BOB = Boys on Booze**' peer education team. A variety of staff, particularly the Assistant Head and the Head of Year 9, supported the peer educators. The school also had strong support for the project from the Leicester City Advisory Teacher for Drugs. The '**BOB**' team has met twice a week after school to carry out research. They feel that they are reliable, represent a range of personalities and have 'street cred'. They have designed and distributed '*Pink Elephant*' factual fliers about alcohol to staff and students. In September 2004 the peer educators plan start the year with a PowerPoint presentations to Year 7 students in Assemblies. This will be followed up by interactive peer education activities. The '**BOB**' team plans to be involved in training new peer educators during 2004 - 2005 and want to set up an information point in the school.

Views of the peer educators:

- ❖ The peer educators enjoyed being part of the '**BOB**' team. Their own attitudes to alcohol and behavioural intentions had changed as a result of their involvement with the project. For example, '*I'd be less inclined to get drunk - I think it is less normal now I know all the stuff behind it*'; '*I've changed a bit. It's become more of a drug than a fun thing*'; '*I'd be more inclined to say no*'; '*I've used the skills to set boundaries to parties*'; and, '*It's made me more cautious - made me think more*'.
- ❖ The peer educators felt it was important that there was a couple of years age gap between them and the recipients of the peer education: '*Year 7s look up to us more - we're only a few years older*'; '*Younger kids, a majority, can see us as role models*'; and, '*The smaller age gap is less effective whereas Year 7s look up to us*'.
- ❖ The '**BOB**' team have given a lot of thought to the way they would engage with younger students: '*Try to give them a broad mind - all aspects good and bad - a balance*'; '*Think how people receiving will respond - will they listen*'; '*If we give knowledge they can make their choices*'; and, '*If they realise it young, before parties, it will help. That's why we've targeted Year 7*'.

The peer educators appreciated the staff support they had received, feeling that staff were positive, interested, there for them but unobtrusive and discreet.

Staff views:

Three teachers in particular, the Assistant Head, the Head of Year 9 and a Learning Mentor, provided the '**BOB**' group with support and guidance. The staff were very pleased that the peer educators had taken very rapid and confident ownership of the project. They felt the training offered by Tacade as '*external trainers*' was important, providing both quality and credibility: '*quite inspiring - just enough not to remove creativity and imagination*'.

Staff had seen how the students had benefited from their involvement in the project and felt that peer education was one important approach to alcohol education that could complement other approaches.

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LANRUMNEY HIGH SCHOOL - CARDIFF

Llanrumney High School is a mixed comprehensive with 800 students aged 11 to 19. The students are drawn from a white working class community which experiences considerable economic deprivation. The school has run peer drug education projects for the past two years, which have won a number of both national and local awards including the Princess Diana Award and a Crime Beat Award.

Ten Year 9 students are involved in the peer education project, which is being facilitated by the School Inclusion teacher and the Youth Inclusion Project worker, with no specific training input from Tacade. This project provided staff and students with an opportunity to focus on alcohol issues. The Year 9 students volunteered to take part in the peer education project. Eleven volunteers attended the first days training (out of school time) and ten of the students went on to attend a residential training weekend, funded by the project budget. By July 2004, the peer educators had facilitated workshops with both Year 7 and Year 8 students. The peer educators plan to develop a mini-drama to use with Year 6 students in 2004 - 2005, and to train future peer educators.

View of students:

- ❖ Year Seven students valued the workshops facilitated by the peer educators: *'Peer educators are more patient. They don't make you feel silly, they understand'; 'You understand them more. You're all kids'; and, 'They're young too. It's better'*
- ❖ Other students in year 7 described advantages to teacher led sessions: *'Teachers are older - more knowledge. That's better sometimes'.*

Views of the peer educators:

- ❖ Students volunteered for the project for a variety of reasons. For example, *'My brother did it...told me about it'; 'Something to do with your spare time... learn some stuff too'; 'Chance to work with kids'; and, 'Friends said it was good'*. They appreciated that there was a need for the project because drinking is a major part of young people's culture in the area: *'There's lots of drink at parties - some like to look big'; and, 'My friends are all drinking - this causes problems'*.
- ❖ The students thought very highly of the residential training: *'The residential was good, no distractions, spare time and then stuff in the evenings - presentations'; 'It was good to get to know teachers on the residential'; and, 'We rushed into team stuff, good fun. The point was to bond'*.
- ❖ They felt that they had learned a lot: *'First Aid I'd not really thought about that... important really'; 'I've learned loads, more aware of facts'; 'Working together helped us to help others'; and, 'I'm not shy but I didn't feel confident, but I am now'*.
- ❖ Some of the students had been able to use the knowledge and skills to make informed choices about alcohol use: *'I'm able to say no. I'm fine when I'm offered.. all the time.. my friend's dad pressured me at a party after a couple of drinks.. I said no, I'm fine thanks'*.
- ❖ Despite being self critical about their own practice the peer educators felt they had a lot to offer younger students: *'Teachers use big words.. kids not understanding. You can be more down to earth with kids'; and, 'If I meet someone who's depressed I'll know facts and stuff and be able to help'*.

Staff views:

Paulette Hanscombe, the lead teacher for the project, highlighted that:

- ❖ Volunteer peer educators should not be taken out of lessons in order to ensure a genuine commitment to the peer education work rather than a desire to miss lessons.
- ❖ Peer education projects may need initial input/presentation from outside agencies to help develop staff confidence.
- ❖ Peer educators need support from staff, but this must be offered sensitively so that students retain a sense of ownership of the project
- ❖ Sustaining impetus for peer education is important to ensure the benefits of the project are built upon.

For further information contact: Paulette Hanscombe on telephone: 029 2076 6763 or
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MELBOURN VILLAGE COLLEGE - CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Melbourn Village College is a mixed comprehensive with 600 students drawn from a white, mainly middle class, rural community. Staff consider that the use of alcohol is much more of an issue among students than the use of illegal drugs. The College had not been involved in any previous peer education work.

A group of eight Year 9 students were invited by staff to train to become peer educators (an equal mix of young men and women). The students were selected on the basis that they had *'street cred'*, and that some were members of the School Council. The project was launched with a two hour training session for staff facilitated by Tacade. This involved teachers, a Connexions Personal Adviser, a youth worker and the school nurse. This was followed by two, two hour training sessions for the peer educators, again facilitated by Tacade. Seven students chose to become peer educators as a result of the training. The lead teacher supported the peer educators to work with students in Year 8 to design a questionnaire to inform the approach and the content of an alcohol education programme for the following academic year. This was followed up with several workshops facilitated by the peer educators during Activities Week in the summer term.

Views of the peer educators:

- ❖ The peer educators gained a lot from their involvement in the project: *'It made us more positive and confident'*. Although some of the peer educators found it difficult to deal with behaviour issues, others felt that this had not been a problem: *'Getting only a couple who mucked about is a really good result'*.
- ❖ The peer educators were confident that they had a lot to offer: *'They are about our age, we use the right language. It influences people more'* and, *'The whole thing is a really good idea. Kids will listen to kids. With teachers it feels like your parents are nagging you'*.
- ❖ They were keen to recommend other young people become involved as peer educators: *'It's good fun and enjoyable. You learn lots from it'* and, *'I've learned how to work in a group'*.

Views of students:

- ❖ Students in Year 8 who had been the recipients of the peer education had mixed feelings. Generally those interviewed felt that was tremendous value to working with peer educators: *'It's easier to talk to young people'*; *'You feel you can say more than with teachers'*; and, *'The younger ones understand.'* They also felt that peer educators are able to present realistic situations to explore in the workshops.
- ❖ For some students, working with the peer educators had helped them to reflect on their own behaviour: *'It made me think about responsible behaviour'*; and, *'It's made me think about it being easier to say no if a friend does'*.
- ❖ However, there was some concern about how the peer educators managed the behaviour of students and whether they had sufficient knowledge.
- ❖ In conclusion the students felt that a dual teacher/peer education approach would be most helpful.

Staff views:

Chris Davies, the Deputy Head and lead teacher for the project, concluded that:

- ❖ The Tacade materials are a good springboard.
- ❖ There is more credibility the greater the distance in age between the peer educators and the recipients.
- ❖ Lead time needs to be built in so that a range of staff can be brought onboard with the project and it can be integrated into planned programmes of study.
- ❖ More time was needed to realise the full potential of the project.
- ❖ And, interestingly, *'It is easy to create an impetus with the peer educators where they take responsibility for their input with an enthusiasm which sometimes eludes teaching staff'*.

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SKINNER'S COMPANY'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS IN HACKNEY, EAST LONDON

Skinner's Company's School for Girls has over 900 students aged 11 to 18 from Asian, African, Caribbean and European descent, speaking over 30 different languages. Hackney is one of the poorest of London's inner city boroughs. The school has a five year history of peer education, which has focused on different areas of the PSHE curriculum.

Fifteen students in Year 9 were selected by staff to train as peer educators. The young women were chosen because of their active participation in citizenship lessons. As with all four schools, initially Tacade met with key staff to discuss the project and agree a project process. Tacade facilitated three, one hour and fifty minute training sessions with the students. As a result of the training facilitated by Tacade, thirteen students decided to participate in the project. The lead teacher then worked with students to help them plan their peer education work. The students chose to work mainly in pairs to explore different approaches to alcohol peer education, such as assemblies with Year 7 students, developing leaflets, developing a questionnaire, producing a magazine and working with local primary schools. As with all the schools, work on the project had to be paused while students studied for and took their SATs.

Views of the peer educators:

- ❖ The peer educators enjoyed the training and found it useful: *'The training was good. What it (alcohol) does, units, most of us didn't have a clue';* and, *'Gave us more thought for alcohol - taught us the consequences'*. Students had not known about the project when they were invited to attend the training. They felt that this worked well because it avoided them coming to the project with preconceived ideas.
- ❖ Students felt their knowledge levels had increased significantly as a result of the training and one student had been able to make use of her increased knowledge and skills in a particularly dramatic situation: *'It happened to me yesterday. This Turkish man collapsed and vomited. I got him into the recovery position and I ran to this shop and got an ambulance'*.
- ❖ The young women also felt their skills and attitudes had changed as a result of their involvement in the project: *'I know my limits now'; 'Now I'm a bit more cautious';* and, *'Fine in moderate use but no binge drinking'*.
- ❖ A lot of the young women currently have very little contact with alcohol outside family occasions. The students have used their training to raise the issue with family members: *'I'm much more confident to take on family members - more knowledge on binge drinking'; 'I educated my mum'; 'I say to my auntie - don't drive';* and, *'Young Muslims are hiding drinking'*.
- ❖ The students were very confident that they had a lot to offer young pupils: *'Very important that children our age get out to younger ones. We're more enthusiastic than adults'; 'People here look up to older kids';* and, *'We have the skills to talk to people'*.

The peer educators felt it was important that there was a couple of years' age gap between them and the recipients of the peer education.

Staff views:

Yaa Agyrea the lead teacher for Citizenship took on a leadership role for this project. Yaa felt that it:

- ❖ Was essential the girls had ownership of the project and that they decide the direction of the project within guidelines.
- ❖ Was useful that the nature of the project was unknown to the students prior to the training.
- ❖ Would have helped the girls' ownership of the project, if they had received a pack of materials in addition to the handouts given out.
- ❖ A combination of peer education and adult input would work well together.

Yaa felt the young women at Skinner's had *'put their all into the project, it's their project'*.

For further information contact: Yaa Agyrea, Skinner's Company's School for Girls telephone: **020 8806 3128**

PEER ALCOHOL EDUCATION PROJECTS IN THE UK

Many peer education projects focusing on sexual health promotion and drug education have been developed throughout the UK over the last 15 years. However, only a few projects appear to have focused specifically on alcohol education. Some recent alcohol peer education projects with secondary school students are highlighted below.

Teenage Alcohol Project (TAP)

Cardiff University is working with nine schools to adapt a peer education model developed in the United States with bar staff to promote safer sex. The TAP project involves training young people in Years 8 and 9 who are considered 'influential' by their peers. These influential peer educators are encouraged to promote alcohol education through informal conversations with friends.

For more information on the project www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/cishe/pages/projects/tap.html

North Somerset Peer Education Project

This drug peer education project has been running since 1997, working with several schools in North Somerset. A multi-agency approach has been used involving health promotion, the police, youth service, teachers and the LEA. Year 10 students attend training sessions over a weekend in preparation for working with Year 7 and 8 students. Each school develops their own approach to peer education. This has included drama performances in assemblies, interactive lessons, plus sessions with parents and governors.

Some of the schools have focused on alcohol peer education. For example, in Nailsea School the peer educators produced 'Think before you drink! A Little Book on Booze', a high quality, colourful booklet for fellow students.

For further information about the peer education work in North Somerset contact: Dilly Taylor (Peer Educators Co-ordinator) on **01275852251**; or Sue Walker (the LEA Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator) on **01934 634778**

City of York Peer Education Project

Six secondary schools in York were involved in a peer education project that ran for three years. Alcohol education was an integral part of the project. Four Year 10 students from each school attended two weekend training sessions run by youth workers. In addition, students received support from the lead teacher in each school and youth workers back in school. The peer educators worked in two teams delivering a play and two interactive workshops for Year 8 students. This was part of a planned drug education programme in which teachers taught support and follow up lessons before and after the peer education intervention. The peer educators gained a great deal from working in teams across schools, but it was very difficult to timetable.

Clare Barrowman (Drug Education Consultant, City of York LEA) can provide further details
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Alcohol and Drug Peer Education in Newham

This project was established in 2002 and ran until March 2004. Thirty thirteen-year-old students from two schools have been trained as peer educators. The project is run by a local drug and alcohol service [DASL] and is funded through Children's Fund. The peer educators have worked with a total of eleven primary and secondary schools and with seven youth and community groups. The peer educators also took part in the Consultation Board of the DASL project. They found the Tacade resource 'Respect It' particularly useful in helping them to plan and deliver alcohol education sessions.

Sam Diwan (Drug and Alcohol Service for London [DASL]) can provide further details
email: SamDiwan@dasl.org.uk or Telephone **020 8257 3068**.

Members of the Tacade Peer Alcohol Education Project Advisory Group

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Helen Bird	PSHE and Citizenship Team, Department of Education and Skills
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LITERATURE REVIEW

Government guidance for schools recognises the value of peer education. For example, the English guidance states that *'Peers are often seen as a credible source of information and advice...research shows that often the pupils who benefit most from peer education are the peer educators themselves'* (*'Drugs: Guidance for schools'*, DfES 2004). In addition, other documents have noted that *'There is some suggestion that peer-led prevention programmes can enhance teacher-led programmes'* (*'Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England'*, Cabinet Office, 2004). The Welsh guidance states that *'Research shows that young people value approaches that provide access to peers and credible adult experts, in addition to teachers/youth workers.'* (Welsh Assembly Government. Circular 17/02).

The Alcohol Concern website provides a range of informative factsheets providing statistical information. *'Young People's Drinking'*(1) is particularly useful www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

There are very few relevant publications on peer alcohol education. In general the literature on peer education (focusing on sexual health and drug education) indicates that young people view peer education positively. Peer educators feel they benefit from their involvement particularly in relation to improved self-confidence, self-esteem and an increased sense of engagement with their school or community.

The following are some resources that do not specifically focus on alcohol, but may be useful guides for practitioners wishing to develop a peer education project:

'Involving Young People in Peer Education: A guide to establishing sex and relationships peer education projects' written by Adam Crosier, Joanna Goodrich, Dominic McVey, Simon Forrest and Catherine Dennison (published by the Teenage Pregnancy Unit, Department of Health in 2002). While this report focuses on sex and relationships peer education, it contains some useful information for professionals developing peer education work in other areas. It contains particularly interesting information about partnership working and linking peer education projects into local health promotion strategies.

'Words to the Wise: succesful peer education with young people' written by Kirstie Lilley (published by Youth Work Press in collaboration with National Youth Agency and Somerset County Youth Service in 2001, ISBN 0 86155 243 1). The manual is written predominantly for youth workers interested in developing drug peer education projects although the material could be adapted to other topics. It provides very practical activities and materials that can be used to develop and implement a peer education project, including details of training programmes, evaluation tools plus background information about the ethos of peer education. It is presented in a very clear and accessible format.

'Doing it for Themselves: an evaluation of peer approaches to drug prevention' written by Michael Shiner (published by the Drug Prevention Advisory Service, Home Office in 2000, ISBN 1 84082 513 8). This paper presents the findings from the evaluation of eight DPI managed peer education projects located in three parts of England. It provides good practice recommendations for ensuring that peer education interventions are effective, and concludes that peer education can have an important role in a co-ordinated drug prevention strategy.

'The PeerAid book approaches to setting up and running young people's peer-education projects' written by Amanda Brodala with Jim Mulligan (published by The IBIS Trust and CSV in 1999, ISBN 0 907829 74 0). This resource provides very detailed information about setting up a peer education projects in schools and in Colleges of Further Education. Section One provides information about the processes and different requirements from the perspective of both the school and peer educators. Section Two is a toolkit of checklists and training tools. Section three contains useful information about twelve peer education projects. Unfortunately only one of the projects addresses substance misuse and alcohol education is not specifically mentioned.

'Tried and Tested, A practical manual, based on the cascade model, for developing youth-led drug awareness programmes' written by Helen Thompson and Len Mackin (published by Cascade and Crime Concern in 1999, ISBN 872079 35 0). The manual contains information and materials to plan a youth-led peer education programme and activities to train young people as drug educators. It is clear and easy to follow.

Tacade will be producing a *Peer Alcohol Education Toolkit* by Summer 2005. The development and publication of this resource has been funded by Diageo Great Britain.

The following Tacade alcohol education materials can provide a useful springboard for peer alcohol education work.



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COMMITTED TO
YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH

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