

Evaluation of the UK D.A.R.E. Primary Programme

Summary of Final Report

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Any errors or omissions are the authors' responsibility.

This summary is a precis of the information contained in a full report prepared independently by Professor A. Tseloni and Dr Emily Evans. The findings shared in this summary are a condensed version of the findings of the full report.

For detailed tables, explanations and results, please contact Stuart Longcroft at Life Skills Education C.I.C. for a copy of the full report.

Introduction

This summary report presents a precis of the results from the evaluation of the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme operated by Life Skills Education C.I.C. The evaluation used an online survey of primary school pupils across the East Midlands delivered both before and after delivery of the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme to a randomly assigned group of trial and control schools to assess changes in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.

The full report outlines the findings from a review of the relevant literature before describing the details of the current evaluation and its methodology.

This summary report presents findings from the evaluation reporting both analysis in the change in responses to the survey and the results of a regression analysis undertaken to understand the effect of the various different aspects of the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme.

Methodology

This evaluation of D.A.R.E in the UK is the first conducted in this country. It involved randomly selected primary schools in the East Midlands and pupils in **Years 5 and 6** (aged 9-11 years). This evaluation used an online questionnaire (hosted by Smart Survey) to ask pupils about the following topics:

- Knowledge of topics on the D.A.R.E. curriculum including drugs and substances
- Confidence and behaviour in particular situations
- Personal exposure to substance use
- Personal experience of substance use.

The **purpose** of the questions was to assess the extent to which the current UK D.A.R.E Primary programme achieves its learning outcomes, which are to enable pupils to:

- Improve their communication and listening skills
- Deal with bullying and peer pressure
- Manage personal stress
- Get help from others, including the police
- Assess the risks and consequences of their behaviour
- Make safe and responsible choices.

In addition, developing knowledge about substances, both legal and illegal, to achieve the above is an implicit learning outcome. It is with regards to these learning outcomes that the results of the evaluation are presented.

The survey was developed by the researchers in consultation with Life Skills Education C.I.C. which operates the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme locally. A pilot survey was undertaken in three schools (7 classes, 166 pupils) to allow alterations to be made.

Invigilators were present each time the survey was completed by pupils. These were independent and recruited externally by Life Skills Education C.I.C. from two local schools and came from their pool of exam invigilators. Invigilators were provided with training prior to the administration of the survey which included describing the UK D.A.R.E. Primary programme and why the evaluation was being conducted.

The evaluation uses a pre and post comparison design with a trial and control group of pupils selected at a school level which were **randomly selected** to each group. The two survey responses are matched on an individual pupil basis.

It was not possible to ensure that the pupils in either group received no other relevant intervention during the period of the evaluation. For example, most primary schools in Nottinghamshire follow the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) curriculum which includes work on making friends at the start of the year leading up to Anti-Bullying Week in November and covering falling out and bullying. In addition, the county council also offers input to schools around online safety and prejudiced related bullying including Transphobic bullying.

The survey was run for the first time in **September 2015**, at the start of the school year and again in December, after those in the trial schools had received the D.A.R.E. programme. In total 213 primary schools in the East Midlands region run the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme, of which 91 were running it in the Autumn term (trial schools) and 122 in the Spring or Summer terms (control schools). From these two groups, 30 schools were picked at random, 60 in total, using an alphabetised list and a random number generator. These schools were approached to take part in the evaluation, with 54 schools providing responses in the pre survey (27 control and 27 trial schools), and **51** in the post survey (25 control and 26 trial). The results are based on analysis of pre and post responses for the same individual and are based on results from this latter group of 51 schools.

Most schools only had one class take part in the survey, but a small number had more than one class take part (control schools – 3 schools has 2 classes take part, 2 schools had 3 classes take part; trial schools – 10 schools has 2 classes take part; one school had 3 classes take part). In total **1,496 pupils** took part in both the pre and post survey (648 from control schools, 848 pupils from trial schools).

Twelve pupils were removed from the analysis because the data collected to identify pupils within the research (which maintained their anonymity) was not able to distinguish between them as they had the same initials and data of birth and were in the same school and class.

Sample Characteristics

Schools

The UK D.A.R.E. Primary programme is delivered in schools in four different formats:

- 100% D.A.R.E officer delivery: a trained D.A.R.E. officer delivers the full 10 week course and attends the graduation ceremony. The teacher is required to be present at all times but has no direct input on the delivery of the course.
- 50/50 delivery: The D.A.R.E. Officer delivers every other session and attends the graduation, with the teacher delivering the other half of the sessions. Teachers are able to attend specific training events on delivering D.A.R.E and drug and life skills education provision in general.
- Teacher Led Plus delivery: The D.A.R.E Officer delivers the first lesson and attends the graduation, the teacher delivers the rest of the course.
- Teacher Led delivery: The teacher delivers the whole course, there is no D.A.R.E Officer involvement.

The majority of the schools in the trial sample delivered D.A.R.E using the 100% D.A.R.E officer method, 57.7% of these schools delivered the programme in this way. The next most common delivery type was a 50/50 model with teachers and D.A.R.E officers delivering the programme together.

Pupils

The majority of the pupils responding to the surveys were in Year 6; 94.6% in the trial sample and 70.1% in the control sample. The pupils responding were split fairly evenly between boys and girls and were most commonly of the White (English/ Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British) ethnicity, around 79% across both samples. Over half of pupils in both samples reported having no religion, with over one third reporting being Christian.

Pupils were asked if they received free school meals, with between 10-12% stating that they did across the two samples. The survey invigilators also gathered data from teachers on pupils who both receive free school meals and who have SEN, but this data was not received from every school and where it was could not in all cases be matched to those pupils who had completed the survey. It is therefore not reported here.

Finally, with regard to their family situation, pupils were asked who they lived with. The data in the table below presents the results from the more recent post survey, and as pupils were able to answer with a variety of responses, the percentages below do not equal 100.

Family situation of pupils (post survey)	Trial		Control		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mother	826	97.4	636	98.1	1462	97.7
Father	668	78.8	506	78.1	1174	78.5
Mother & Father together in same house	652	76.9	498	76.9	1150	76.9
Step mother	16	1.9	22	3.4	38	2.5
Step father	77	9.1	66	10.2	143	9.6
Grandmother	37	4.4	27	4.2	64	4.3
Grandfather	27	3.2	22	3.4	49	3.3
Other family	36	4.2	34	5.2	70	4.7
Local authority care: foster home, children's home	2	0.2	2	0.3	4	0.3
Total	848		648		1,496	

Teachers

Locally a survey of teachers in schools delivering D.A.R.E is used to assess their satisfaction with the primary programme. The survey uses the Mentor-ADEPIS quality standards underpinned by the international standards set out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), which in turn underpin the design and delivery of the D.A.R.E programmes. The survey asks teachers to rate the delivery of the programme on issues such as the programme’s content, delivery and resources.

To date **25** responses have been received from **teachers** and the results from this sample show that teachers are overwhelmingly satisfied with the way the D.A.R.E programme is designed and delivered rating it in most cases as either **good or outstanding**.

Conclusions

Drawing upon the ways in which the likely effects of the D.A.R.E. programme have been operationalised in previous studies, the evaluation of the current D.A.R.E. Primary programme delivered in the UK uses a pre and post comparison design with a trial and control group of pupils to assess its effect. It examined changes across the learning outcomes of the school based UK D.A.R.E. Primary programme before and after the intervention and between control and trial samples. The examined learning outcomes refer to:

- improving communication and listening skills
- dealing with bullying and peer pressure
- managing personal stress
- getting help from others and attitudes towards the police
- assessing risks and consequences of behaviour
- making safe and responsible choices
- knowledge about drugs, alcohol and substance abuse
- and personal experiences with drugs, alcohol and substance abuse.

The findings presented in this summary report have delineated the characteristics of the sample of schools and pupils and shown the nature and frequency of responses from the two samples with regards to the learning outcomes of the current UK D.A.R.E Primary programme and curriculum.

This evaluation has shown a positive change between the pre and post survey and significant differences in the extent of change between trial and control samples with regards to a number of the programme's learning outcomes (communication and listening skills, getting help from others excluding the police, making safe choices and knowledge about drugs, alcohol and substance abuse).

This evaluation has shown marginal change with regards to few learning outcomes (assessing risks and consequences of behaviour, attitudes towards the police, and managing personal stress).

The learning outcomes where the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme has had statistically significant effect are listed below in descending order of the magnitude of their respective effect.

- Getting help from others excluding the police: Pupils in the trial schools had a pre- post-intervention score difference at least **5.4 times greater** than that of the control group, regardless of the programme's delivery method;
- Improving communication and listening skills: Pupils in the trial schools had a pre- post-intervention score difference at least **3.4 times greater** than that of the control group, varying **between three and 7 times greater** improvement across delivery methods;
- Knowledge about drugs, alcohol and substance abuse: Pupils in the trial schools had a pre-post- intervention score difference **2.4 higher** to that of the control group with no discernible variation across delivery methods; and
- Making safe and responsible choices: Finally, pupils in the trial schools had a pre- post-intervention score difference **twice** as high as that of the control group, whereas the Teacher-led plus delivery method showed fourfold improvement.

There were however a few exceptions to the general effectiveness of the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme with regards to the above learning outcomes on specific questions. In particular, the difference between the trial and control sample was not statistically significant with regards to whether they tried to help others in the past 30 days in the post survey, notwithstanding the general positive effect of the intervention on the overall learning outcome of getting help from others excluding the police. There were also non-significant effects with regards to confidence in ignoring wrong advice. This is regardless of the overall effectiveness of the programme on making safe and responsible choices. A final exception to the overall effectiveness of the programme with regards to knowledge about drugs, alcohol and substance abuse was evidenced in relation to the specific topic of whether 'it is ok for someone your age to smoke cigarettes' only.

The learning outcomes where the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme has had only a partial effect are discussed below. Based on limited evidence considerable effectiveness of the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme has been evidenced when delivered via **Teacher-led plus mode** with regards to the learning outcomes listed below.

- Assessing risks and consequences of behaviour: Pupils in the trial school nearly tripled (2.8 times higher) their risk aversion compared to the control sample after the intervention (high statistical significant effect); and
- Attitudes towards the police: Pupils in the trial school had more positive attitudes towards the police by about triple to 4.4 times the respective score of the control sample (weak statistical significance);

However due to the small sample size of pupils belonging to only one school who received Primary Teacher led delivery in the trial sample this requires further examination. Some effectiveness of the UK D.A.R.E Primary programme has also been evidenced when delivered via **Primary 50/50 mode** with regards to managing personal stress: Pupils in the trial schools had a pre- post- score difference **5.3 higher** than that of the control sample (weak statistical significance). Furthermore, the trial sample gave more correct answers than the control sample in the post survey (with a statistically significant difference) with regards to the learning outcomes of managing personal stress and defining consequence (within the generic outcome of assessing risks and consequences).

Overall the current evaluation evidenced that the D.A.R.E Primary programme delivered in the UK has an uncontested positive effect on half the learning outcomes it aims to achieve, a conditional to delivery mode positive effect on another two and a half (attitudes towards the police being the other half of getting help from others) learning outcomes and the remaining learning outcome (dealing with bullying and peer pressure) and personal experiences with drug, alcohol and substance abuse. Further replications are required to discern the qualified effects of delivery mode across different schools and improve the effectiveness of the programme on specific questions.