

Prevention Through Brighter Futures

Believe in
children



Barnardo's
Northern Ireland

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realising
ambition

Findings from Barnardo's delivery of the
All Stars Programme in Schools in NI



Introduction

All of Barnardo's work is driven by the vision that the lives of children and young people should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination. Our purpose is to help the most vulnerable children and young people transform their lives and fulfil their potential.

Barnardo's NI is committed to a whole system approach to health and well-being. Alongside our work in child protection and family support we have been developing school and community based early intervention to improve children's outcomes. A decade ago we made a commitment to embed more of our work in schools and local communities and now work in over 200 schools throughout NI. We lead the implementation of a number of evidence based, early intervention programmes and are committed to building capacity to make prevention approaches sustainable.

We believe in helping children and families take greater control over their lives to create healthy, safe and united communities. For us, this means addressing the factors that impact on health and well-being in NI - before they become problems or as early in the process as possible.

In achieving our purpose we strive to implement innovative, high quality, informed approaches with clear positive outcomes for children and young people.

This short briefing paper highlights outcomes from the "All Stars" Programme – a universal programme designed to prevent risky behaviours and help young people envision a brighter future.

How All Stars was funded



In 2012 Barnardo's Northern Ireland received a grant from the Big Lottery Fund "Realising Ambition" Programme to adapt and implement the "All Stars" Programme in Northern Ireland over a four year period. "Realising Ambition" is a UK wide initiative designed to help young people fulfil their potential and avoid pathways into offending. Realising Ambition is supported by a Consortium led by Catch 22, including The Social Research Unit, Substance and The Young Foundation.



Why we need prevention

Risky behaviours such as substance misuse have immediate, short term impacts on a young person's outcomes. However there are wider societal impacts also. Addressing misuse of alcohol costs NI an estimated £900 million each year; and diseases where smoking could be a contributory factor – another £164 million¹. Substance misuse is also strongly associated with poor mental health, with earlier use associated with a high risk of serious health problems.²

Risky behaviours can also disrupt education, bring young people into contact with the justice system and reduce future life opportunities such as employment. Addressing these issues in future proves more costly than preventing or delaying the initial onset.³

Preventing poor choices in relation to risk-taking behaviour (such as substance misuse or fighting) and building children's self-belief and resilience through universal prevention programmes can be cost effective for society and improve outcomes for our young people.

About All Stars

All Stars is a school-based, early intervention and prevention programme for young people aged 8 to 14 years. It was developed in the US by Dr Bill Hansen and is based on almost 30 years of prevention research and practice. All Stars has two key aims:

- » Preventing risky behaviours (e.g. drug use and anti-social behaviour)
- » Helping young people build bright futures

However All Stars does more than prevent risky behaviour. By working on the two primary aims in tandem, the programme helps young people realise their potential by also promoting positive personal characteristics.

¹ Public Health Agency (2013) Making Life Better: A whole system strategic framework for Public Health 2013-2023 www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

² National Institute on Drug Abuse, Principles of Adolescent Substance Use Disorder Treatment: A Research Based Guide www.drugabuse.gov/publications

³ Chowdry, H & Oppenheim, C (2015) Spending on late intervention: How we can do better for less, Early Intervention Foundation, London

What is different about All Stars?

During adolescence, young people grow and mature. The transition through adolescence increases social awareness and peer influence as young people develop a desire to fit in, to gain personal identity and have social status. All Stars uses the research and evidence base of adolescents lived experience and matches programme content to the social and cognitive development of young people^{4,5}. The programme focuses on developing the specific attributes that we know prevent young people getting involved in risky behaviour – these are called ‘mediators’.

All Stars Key Mediators:

- 1 Normative beliefs:** challenging common mis-conceptions about how common/acceptable risky behaviours actually are.
- 2 Idealism:** encouraging young people to visualise and develop an ‘ideal’ positive future and to understand how risky behaviour could prevent this being achieved.
- 3 Commitment:** focus on achieving their preferred vision of their future. Young people who make commitments to their vision of the future (and share these with other people) are more likely to strive to reach that vision and therefore less likely to engage in risk taking behaviours.
- 4 Bonding:** establishing positive connections to school or other supportive group where the above mediators can be supported and encouraged.
- 5 Parental / carer attentiveness:** (or that of other positive adult): supporting and developing relationships and communication to help young people make positive choices.

All Stars in Northern Ireland

Adaptation Process

The grant from Realising Ambition enabled Barnardo’s to offer All Stars to schools in Northern Ireland – the first time the programme had ever been delivered outside of the US. As the programme is delivered by class teachers as part of the regular school day it was vital the programme content was aligned to the curriculum. To achieve this Barnardo’s worked with Stranmillis University College to align All Stars to the ‘Learning for Life and Work’ and ‘Personal Development & Mutual Understanding’ curricula.

This included substituting US spellings and terminology and introducing a plenary session and learning intentions as per good classroom practice. Barnardo’s liaised regularly with teachers to capture when and if further adaptations were needed. The team from Stranmillis also worked closely with the programme developer to ensure the programme logic model and fidelity were unaffected.

All Stars delivery in Northern Ireland

The programmes for Post Primary pupils are designed to be sequential, each one builds upon the last. Typically young people participated in Core in Year 8, Booster in Year 9 and Plus in Year 10. The two Primary School programmes have been delivered in classes from P5 to P7 and are not sequential.

In total All Stars has reached over 7000 young people. It has been delivered in 20 Post Primary Schools, reaching almost 4000 young people, mainly in the Greater Belfast area. The programme has also reached over 3000 children in 35 Primary Schools in Greater Belfast, Antrim, Larne and Ballymena. Almost 2500 young people participated in at least 2 All Stars programmes and a further 450 of this group participated in 3 programmes.

Delivery through capacity building training

All Stars is delivered in schools by the classroom teacher – as part of the regular school day. Rather than training Barnardo’s staff to deliver All Stars, capacity building was at the heart of the replication model. Capacity building involves sharing of information, knowledge and skills with a view to increasing impact in a sustainable way. Through the funding provided, Barnardo’s was able to offer high quality training from the All Stars National Trainer, Kathleen Nelson-Simley. Both the All Stars Trainer and Developer travelled to NI once or twice per year to train teachers, visit schools and meet with the team in Barnardo’s. This training along with on-going technical assistance from Barnardo’s ensures that teachers have the skills and resources required to deliver the programme themselves. To date over 260 local teachers have taken part in All Stars training.

⁴ Bostrom, M. (2000). Teenhood: Understanding attitudes toward those transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Washington, DC: Frameworks Institute.

⁵ McNeal, J.R., Hansen, W.B., Harrington, N.G. & Giles, S.M. (2004). How All Stars works: an examination of program effects on mediating variables. Health Education Behaviour, 31(2),165-78

All Stars Core

The Core programme consists of 14 interactive sessions of 45 minutes duration, followed by a class celebration. The teaching manual clearly sets out the various sessions and activities, each of which focuses on a targeted mediator. Activities include group work, art, discussion, games and 4 home-link activities.

Activity	Description	Purpose
Opinion survey	An anonymous survey to find out opinions on a variety of different topics	To reveal that a majority of pupils have opinions that support positive norms about risky behaviours
Inventing the future	A group based task where pupils invent something that will be useful to them in 20 years	To assist pupils in starting to think about their futures. To emphasise that the future is exciting and full of new ideas and technologies
Envisioning ideals	Discussion of ideal, vision, hope, knowledge and effort	Pupils envision an ideal future that is achievable with effort and responsibility
Understanding good habits	'Habits That Make it Happen' worksheet and associated discussion	Pupils understand what habits they need to support their ideals and commit to developing these habits
Good citizenship	Discussion on social norms and violating social norms	Pupils establish the rules of good citizenship which include not using alcohol and tobacco

All Stars Outcomes



This paper highlights outcome data from All Stars Core programme. All Stars Core was the first All Stars programme implemented in NI schools and as such reached the greatest numbers of participants.

In total 3815 young people participated in the Core Programme between 2012 and 2016. Of this group 3175 completed a questionnaire, of whom 54% of participants were male, 42% female and 4% chose not to specify.

After initial data cleaning, full data sets were available for approximately 60% (n=1900). Of these young people 44% were female and 56% were male. The majority (92%) were in Year 8 with a smaller number (8%) in Year 9, giving an age range of 11 - 13 years. Most young people were 11 years old at pre-test and 12 years old at post-test.

Measuring Impact

The impact of the All Stars Programme has been tested using a bespoke All Stars Questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed by the programme developer and is used extensively in the US. The questionnaire was adapted for use in Northern Ireland by amending US language and spelling and adding additional standardised measures as recommended by the Realising Ambition consortium. The questionnaire is completed by young people before and after participation in the All Stars Programme. Items on the questionnaire include demographic information (age and gender) and key issues including substance use, physical aggression and the targeted mediating variables (normative beliefs, idealism, bonding, parental attentiveness and commitment). The items are answered on a Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Data was collected in both quantitative and qualitative format including case studies and focus groups.

All Stars Core Results

Quantitative Findings

Results indicate an overall positive improvement across all measures and improvement in both understanding / attitude and in behaviour (Table 3):

- » 96% of participants reported an **overall improvement**
- » 86% of participants reported an improvement in their **commitment to avoid alcohol, tobacco and drugs**
- » 87% of participants reported an improvement in **commitment to avoid violence**
- » 90% of participants reported improvement in **understanding the impact of negative behaviour** on their future lifestyle
- » 89% of participants reported an improvement in **understanding that fighting has consequences** for their future lifestyle
- » 91% of participants reported an **improvement in parental attentiveness**
- » 86% of participants reported an improvement in **understanding that substance use is unacceptable**
- » 77% of participants reported an improvement in their **understanding that violence is unacceptable**
- » 2% had ever tasted alcohol at pre-test and 2% at post-test

This level of overall improvement is consistent across a number of different factors, for example:

Table 3

Percentage of young people reporting improvement by gender and school type

Gender:	Boys:	96%
	Girls:	94%
School Type:	Single Sex:	95%
	Co-ed:	96%
School Sector:	Maintained:	96%
	Controlled:	95%
	Integrated:	96%

Qualitative Data

What do the young people say about All Stars?

Young people were asked several informal questions about their All Stars experience.

Did you learn anything about yourself or your classmates?

- » "I learned I'm braver than I thought I was"
- » "I've learned that I never want to smoke"
- » "I've learned there are things I want to achieve in my life, like the things on the stickers, I would never have thought of those"
- » "I've learned about myself - about things I want and what I want to avoid like bullying and smoking"
- » "I learned that you need to be brighter about the future"
- » "I have learned about how to deal with stuff"
- » "I have learned about my ideal future and how I want my life to be"

Has All Stars changed the way you think about the future?

- » "I'm committed to never smoking, drinking or bullying and to caring for people. I want to look after people; it's a good way to get to know people too"
- » "I didn't know what I wanted to achieve from school before but now I do"
- » "It has helped me set out goals that I want to achieve - like I want to work with people - and so I know that I need to act in the right way"

Has All Stars made any difference to your relationship with your parent/trusted adult?

- » "Mum has learned more about my life and how I want to live it"
- » "I have a better relationship with my mum now, we've bonded. She likes hearing how my life is going (which is well). I wouldn't have it any other way"
- » "At the start when I brought the homework sheets home she would say 'Can you not do it yourself' but now she's happy to do them with me"

What do the teachers say about All Stars?

Feedback was collected routinely from teachers - post-training, during delivery and through focus group sessions at the end of each school year. Feedback from teachers was very positive, highlighting the effective training, high quality and well laid out materials, useful support from Barnardo's, high levels of pupil engagement and strong fit with curriculum and school ethos. Teachers did highlight that time was frequently an issue (e.g. some schools have shorter lessons than others and completing one session per class was not always possible which meant delivery was spread over a longer timescale).

All Stars Core Teacher feedback

- » "Engaging tasks allowed the pupils to think about their futures regardless of their background. Each pupil was treated the same and given the same opportunities"
- » "Training, support and follow-up all excellent"
- » "This has been a fantastic course for myself and my Year 8 students - they have really benefited and it has been a great way for me to engage with my class. Excellent activities. Thank-you!"
- » "A very worthwhile programme which we are very happy to be involved in"
- » "It is student led and you are not spoon feeding them"

Teacher feedback on All Stars Core training

- » "I came very negative and not knowing and am leaving very optimistic and enthused with the programme"
- » "Made me visualise the lessons and understand the outcomes"
- » "Put things in the perspective of the students - made me think!!"
- » "Explained how one lesson leads to next so all activities must be done - don't skip".

Summary of Key Learning

- ✓ All Stars delivery in NI successfully achieved improved attitudes across all targeted mediators with the vast majority of participants.
- ✓ Improvements were consistent across gender and different school types.
- ✓ All Stars provides consistent and integrated tools for prevention which have a strong fit with the regular school day.
- ✓ All Stars reaches young people during the years of greatest vulnerability.
- ✓ All Stars achieves prevention goals by focusing on the key factors that influence behaviour and choices.
- ✓ All Stars targets things that matter to young people, using strategies that engage and inspire pupils.
- ✓ By investing in people and systems (rather than direct delivery) Barnardo's aims to maximise impact and ultimately maximise long term positive outcomes.

Conclusion

Given that this is the first delivery of All Stars outside of the US these initial findings are promising. In addition to achieving positive impact across all the targeted mediators there is evidence that the programme is highly suitable for implementation in local schools and could be scaled up using a similar capacity building model. The results suggest that the All Stars programme is well received by teachers and pupils and has the potential to influence norms, address social ideologies and promote commitment and resistance. By doing so All Stars has the potential to prevent harmful behaviours and facilitate positive futures and wellbeing.

Recommendations

The Northern Ireland Executive should consider:

- 1. Developing an integrated model that promotes children's well-being and mental health.** This model would provide a continuum of universal prevention programmes, pastoral care, school-based counselling and more specialist interventions where needed.
- 2. Promoting closer working between the health and education sectors, to provide a more co-ordinated approach to prevention and other programmes within schools. This approach should focus on reinforcing:**
 - » the evidence base of services and programmes
 - » rigorous outcome measurement
 - » efforts to reduce duplication
 - » effective school-community links
- 3. Incentivising local services to work together through the creation of early intervention networks, including:**
 - » a focus on place-based initiatives with universal and targeted responses
 - » pooled budgets and information sharing
 - » use of data to reach and prioritise the most vulnerable

Contact Details

Barnardo's is keen to work with schools and funders to sustain and widen implementation of the programme and look forward to hearing from anyone interested in All Stars.

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