**Ruth Joyce**

Blueprint National Drug Education Research Programme: an update

The Blueprint Drug Education Research Programme was set up to ensure that future drug education policy was based on tested and tried evidence developed in England.

Blueprint is funded by the Government and is a partnership between the Home Office, the DfES and Department of Health as part of the National Drug Strategy.

The full results are due in 2007, but there are interim findings that will be shared as Blueprint progresses.

**Research evidence**

Blueprint was developed by gathering evidence about what ‘works’ from international and national contexts. A comprehensive literature review identified a number of common elements on which the programme was built. Research indicated that effective drug education programmes:

- are research-driven
- are developmentally appropriate
- have a broad skills base
- include normative education
- include social-resistance skills
- use interactive teaching styles
- include teacher training
- have adequate interpersonal coverage
- are culturally sensitive
- include added components such as schools, parents and families, community, health policy and media
- are rigorously evaluated

**Five areas of work**

Blueprint was designed using the above points as the foundation with 5 broad areas of work: Schools, Parents, Media, Community and Health Policy.

**Schools Programme**

10 x 30 minute lessons are delivered in year 8:

- introduction and setting
- what we know about drugs and why people use them
- finding out more about drugs
- facts and myths about drugs and use
- values and attitudes about drugs
- drugs and advertising
- raising occasions about drugs
- reducing pressures
- creating presentations about our learning
- giving presentations

5 x 30 minute lessons are delivered in year 8:

- viewing back, looking forward
- tests, risks and effects
- is everyone doing it?
- alcohol, risks and effects
- reducing the risks, getting help

All the lessons were developed with very clearly identified learning objectives and used active learning principles of ‘do, review and reflect’. The ‘do’ element of the lessons consisted of a range of activities including competitions, board games, cards, role play, prioritising activities and continuous exercises. All lessons were structured to ensure that pupils had the time to review their learning and reflect on what the gained learning was for them.

Materials were all trialled and tested by schools before being used in the national roll-out and feedback from the use of ‘Drav and Write’ techniques informed the lesson content.

Teachers all received 6 full days of customised training which included detailed interactive sessions and offered chances to experience materials and methods similar to those used in the lessons themselves. Five central themes ran through the training.

- drug awareness
- beliefs, values and attitudes
- skill building
- review and reflection on learning
- ethics

Over 50 classroom materials were reviewed by the highest quality. They have been much appreciated by both pupils and teachers as one of the very high points of the whole programme.

School Drugs Advisers were also used to support teachers in the delivery of the programme, proving a great advantage to many of the teachers who valued the benefits of having some team teaching and mentoring opportunities.

**Parents and families**

Parents and carers were seen as integral to the Blueprint Programme and substantial efforts were made to provide them with information and support and to offer some guidance on ways that they may communicate effectively with their children on many issues, drugs included.

In both years of the programme parents received information booklets on drugs and drug use. It is an important message designed to help them understand and work along side their children on the topics covered in the lessons.

Drug awareness sessions were run at all Programmes schools when those who attended were invited to come along to workshops on building skills talking with their children.

The seminars all offered transport, childcare and play areas, food and free videos and were supported in varying degrees by all the Local Agreement.

**Media**

Blueprints media component is essential in backing up work with schools, parents and the community. It establishes cohesion and enhances the message about drugs and drug use. A media company was used to deliver these regional messages and in the two years of the work over 50 positive media pieces were in the press.

**Health Policy**

This component had two main pieces of work. All schools have reviewed their drug policy with the involvement of parents and pupils and the tool produced by Blueprint. This has been published on the website of the Drug Education Forum for all to see.

The second part of the work was the development of a local ‘Alliance in Drug Education’. This was designed to be used with external drug contributors who were working within the 11 points of effectiveness.
Vincent Ichoku

Application of Self-Directed Learning in Health and Social Care Education: Report of a case study

Mature students freely negotiated methods for achieving their individual learning goals and this approach is probably the most successful in helping them to achieve their full potential.