

Pamela Vannan is the Senior Health Promotion Officer for Sexual Health and Mary Scott Watson is the INTER-ACT Education Worker at the Health Promotion Department, NHS Forth Valley, Stirling. For correspondence email: pamela.vannan@nhs.net or maryscottwatson@nhs.net

Pamela Vannan and Mary Scott Watson

Feel Think Do - a sexual abuse prevention programme for primary pupils

Feel Think Do is a sexual abuse prevention resource designed to help children talk about their feelings, assess risks and to keep themselves safe from sexual abuse. The programme consists of an interactive DVD and lessons aimed at Primary 6 and 7 pupils (age 10 -11), to be delivered by the class teacher.

The development of Feel Think Do (FTD) was in response to a request by local primary schools for a resource that addressed the issues of sexual abuse in a sensitive and proactive way.

A new resource

As part of the development process, NHS Forth Valley Health Promotion Department carried out a review across Scotland of sexual abuse prevention resources to identify any useful programmes being used by primary schools.

In reviewing these resources, we found a need for a new prevention programme. NHS Forth Valley Health Promotion in partnership with Open Secret, a charity that offers support for survivors of child sexual abuse, and Stirling and Clackmannanshire councils established a working group to take forward the development of the new resource.

In the pilot stage, Health Promotion staff led the development of a live theatre in education performance, portraying scenarios that explored issues of emotional literacy, risk taking, personal safety and sexual abuse. This live performance was piloted and developed into an interactive DVD resource.

Feel Think Do is delivered over eight lessons using the DVD to explore situations involving risk with regular pause and trigger points to stimulate discussion amongst pupils.

Lesson aims

The aims of these lessons are:

- ~ to promote confidence and assertiveness in children
- ~ to promote emotional literacy in children
- ~ to help children understand risk assessment and understand the nature of risk taking
- ~ to define sexual abuse for children
- ~ to equip children to keep themselves safe from sexual abuse
- ~ to encourage disclosure if a child feels unsafe
- ~ to help children create a network of adults from inside and outside the home that they can talk to if they are worried or concerned about anything

Launched in January 2007, FTD is now being implemented by the 3 local authorities in Forth Valley, central Scotland and has now been embedded in their sexual health and relationships curriculum. FTD is delivered following the sexual health and relationships programme so that the children have learned about positive relationships before discussing the more challenging area of sexual abuse.

Staff development

A staff development day for teachers

explores why children may be reluctant to disclose abuse and our responsibility as adults to listen. One of the core messages, and part of the Protective Behaviours Philosophy the programme is based on, is that every child should create a network of 5 adult friends they can talk to.

Fun and informative

FTD develops life skills for a whole range of experiences. Teachers have evaluated the training day and delivery of the programme positively.

Some staff concerns, that the subject matter may cause fear or be age inappropriate, have been alleviated.

We also have had good feedback from the pupils that the programme is fun and informative.

In rolling out this programme we found it important to support staff, schools and parents.

With strong child protection procedures in place, most schools are well equipped to deal with a disclosure from a child. It is also essential to make sure teachers and parents have support networks in place if they need to disclose abuse.

Our partnership with Open Secret has been integral to creating a programme that

teaching staff feel confident to deliver.

Before FTD is delivered in the classroom, parents and carers are invited to an information evening where they are provided with an overview of the programme.

Information on how to run this parents evening is detailed in the pack with a specific 15 minute programme for parents included on the DVD.

We have found that parents are reassured and happy for their children to take part in the programme with very few incidents of parents/carers withdrawing their child.

National support

The Scottish Government's 'A Curriculum for Excellence for 3-18 year olds' and the The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act, 2007, support the inclusion of programmes like Feel Think Do. They empower children to become confident individuals who understand what sexual abuse is, how to prevent it, and who to talk to if they feel threatened.

NHS Forth Valley and its partners are delighted with how well received Feel Think Do has been across Central Scotland and are looking for the opportunity to share it nationally in Scotland and across the UK.

www.sheu.org.uk

31 years of Lifestyle Surveys about Young People

Visit 'What's New' to discover more about SHEU
including
articles from Education and Health
available
as pdf files