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# Young people challenging the culture of binge drinking

Peer education is an excellent way of involving and empowering students at the same time as prioritising alcohol education. Tacade is working with over thirty secondary schools to develop effective models.

Tacade is a leading voluntary sector organisation in the field of personal, social, health and citizenship education, with over thirty years of experience supporting alcohol and drug education with young people.

Tacade ([www.tacade.com](http://www.tacade.com)) provides support for professionals, professional groups, parents and carers by delivering effective training, consultancy, project management and publications.

### Alcohol education

The organisation is working with over thirty secondary schools to help them develop peer education projects focusing on alcohol education. Young peer educators in these schools recognise that alcohol use is a major issue for many teenagers. They want to help challenge the culture of binge drinking.

For many years the focus of drug education in schools has been on illegal substances yet alcohol is the most commonly used drug amongst teenagers. The Tacade project aims to increase the focus on alcohol education.

### Effective method

Studies have shown that peer education can be a particularly effective method of drug education. The Health Development Agency 'Drug use prevention among young people: a review of reviews' (2004), noted that, 'Overall, research results appear to be positive and suggest that peer-led approaches are more effective than other approaches'.

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). Alcohol Concern, [www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk), provides a range of informative factsheets providing statistical information. 'Young People's Drinking' is particularly useful.

### Effective models

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 alcohol education work with young people. The substantive work with schools began in January 2004 and much of the peer educator's work continued into the Autumn term (2004).

### Lancaster School

The work at the Lancaster School in Leicester is described here as an example of how the effective models of alcohol peer education were developed.

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.

### Boys on Booze

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 started the year with a PowerPoint presentations to Year 7 students in Assemblies. This was followed up by interactive peer education activities. The 'BOB' team plans to be involved in training new peer educators during 2005 and want to set up an information point in the school.

### The BOB team

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 at parties', and, 'It's made me more cautious - made me think more'.

### Role models

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.

### 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.

For further information contact: Sue Webb, Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral/PSHE) at Lancaster School email: [swebb@lancaster.leicester.sch.uk](mailto:swebb@lancaster.leicester.sch.uk)

### Briefing paper

Tacade had undertaken a scoping activity to find out what peer alcohol education work was already taking place with young people in the United Kingdom. This established that, while peer education projects about drug education and sexual health are prevalent, very few projects focus on alcohol education. A briefing paper outlining the learning from this first phase of the project has been disseminated throughout the UK. A pdf of the 'Peer Alcohol Education Project

with Secondary School Students 1st Briefing Paper' is available from Tacade's website at: [www.tacade.com/Resources/Newsletter.pdf](http://www.tacade.com/Resources/Newsletter.pdf)

Chris Davies, Deputy Head at Melbourn Village College said, '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.'

Tacade is continuing the peer alcohol education projects in the pilot schools in Cardiff, Cambridgeshire, Leicester and London. The focus of their work in 2004/5 is with secondary schools in Barnsley, Manchester, Salford, Portsmouth and West Sussex. A toolkit providing practical tools for developing peer alcohol education projects in schools will be produced by Summer of 2005.

### Partnership

Partnership working has been crucial to the success of the project. Local Education Authority Advisory Teachers have provided the schools with ongoing support and guidance. Within the schools a variety of staff and students have been involved including teachers, learning mentors, Connexions Advisors and school nurses. The work has also been funded by Diageo Great Britain.

### UK Peer Alcohol Education projects

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 here.

#### Teenage Alcohol Project (TAP)

Cardiff University is working with nine schools to adapt a peer education model developed in the United States with barstaff 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 visit their website: [www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/cishe/pages/projects/tap.html](http://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 youthworkers.

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 both for 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 email: [clare.barrowman@york.gov.uk](mailto:clare.barrowman@york.gov.uk) or Telephone 01904 553010.

#### 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' ([www.tacade.com/pub12.htm](http://www.tacade.com/pub12.htm)) particularly useful in helping them to plan and deliver alcohol education sessions. Sam Diwan (Drug and Alcohol Service for London) can provide further details email: [SamDiwan@dasl.org.uk](mailto:SamDiwan@dasl.org.uk) or Telephone 020 8257 3068.