



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report Improvement Aim 12.2: to decrease the number of 13 to 15 year olds who have reported using substances in Aberdeen to below the national average by 2023
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Governance Group	CPA Board – 29 November 2023

Purpose of the Report
This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 12.2 which sought to decrease the number of 13 to 15 year olds who have reported using substances in Aberdeen to below the national average by 2023 seeks approval to end project.

Summary of Key Information
<p>1 BACKGROUND</p> <p>1.1 Reducing the use of and harm from alcohol and other drugs is one of the top five public health priorities for Scotland. The Scottish Government have published two national strategies for drugs and alcohol: The Alcohol Framework (2018) , Rights, Respect and Recovery: alcohol and drug treatment strategy (2018). Aberdeen City Alcohol & Drugs partnership delivery Framework (2019-2022) identifies that there is an increasing recognition of cross-cutting themes related to vulnerable populations such as stigma, resilience, adverse childhood events, deprivation and social isolation. Many of our most vulnerable people will have multiple life challenges, of which drug or alcohol issues may be one. The consequence of this increasing awareness is the recognition that we need to work in greater partnership.</p> <p>1.2 Between January 2021 – January 2022 there were 31 requests for assistance for children and young people with factors relating to substance misuse.</p> <p>1.3 In line with the requirements of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) all Aberdeen City schools are required to deliver a Health and Wellbeing Curriculum. One of the six organisers within Health and Wellbeing is Substance Use. It is vital that colleagues responsible for the delivery of these programmes have access to high quality, current information and this is delivered consistently across all schools. The Scottish Government Personal and Social Education Review (2019) in its conclusion highlighted the importance of providing teachers with effective and up-to-date resources. As part of the review, young people said that substance use education in PSE classes was outdated and did not focus on the issues that young people were concerned Early intervention works to reduce the risk factors and increase the protective factors in a child or young person’s life. For this to be successful a ‘Whole</p>

Family Approach' is required as part of an overall plan for supporting young people and should include strong multiagency partnership. There is a need to ensure that all children and young people are offered consistent support and appropriate interventions in relation to their understanding of and use of substances both personally and within the family home. We also need to ensure we have appropriate resources, policies and protocols to manage the issues safely and effectively on a partnership basis.

2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1 In February 2022 the CPA Board approved the [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to decrease the number of 13 to 15 year olds who have reported using substances in Aberdeen to below the national average by 2023, through curriculum delivery and a whole population approach.

3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

- 3.1 As a multi agency project team based on data; research and information from community engagement the following changes were identified and tested:

1. Development of a new procedure for reporting substance use incidences in school

This was launched in May 2023. Based on an existing model, it streamlined and improved existing processes for accessing information, support and referral. This was to ensure that official reporting was being accessed more readily by school staff and that we had appropriate policies and protocols to manage the issues safely and effectively on a partnership basis.

2. Development of a Programme of Substance Use Resources

In the academic year 21/22 schools we developed a single programme of substance use resources to ensure that all children and young people are offered consistent support and appropriate interventions in relation to their understanding of and use of substances both personally and within the family home. In 22/23 they were provided with further access to the resources from The Daniel Spargo Mabbs foundation and the COSLA award winning programme 'I am me' from Renfrewshire Local Authority. Schools are given the freedom to use and implement this according to their own context.

3. Pilot test event and programme on substance use prevention and harm reduction for pupils

In February 2023 in conjunction with the Daniel Spargo Mabbs foundation a pilot test event on substance use prevention and harm reduction which was focused on a real life drama presentation and workshop and was held with senior pupils at Lochside Academy. A second presentation was held with staff and professional stakeholders encourage uptake across Grampian. The foundation provides a year-long education programme on substance use prevention and harm reduction to complement the curriculum which already exists in schools. ACC worked with the foundation to ensure that the programme carefully matched the expectations and outcomes required by the Curriculum for Excellence. The pupil response to the test event was highly positive. Following this and based on Police intelligence and pupil survey data three schools were selected to begin the year long programme which began in September 2023. The three schools are Northfield, St Machar and Lochside. Headteachers have welcomed the programme and are committed to its implementation across the school.

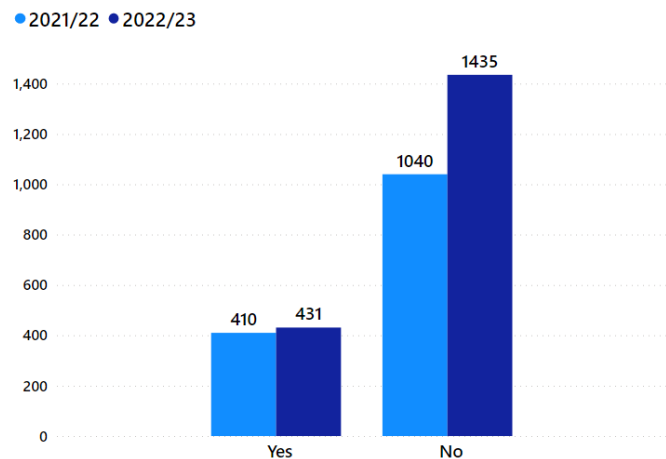
4. Substance awareness workshop for parents/carers of P5-S6 pupils

In September 2023, a substance awareness workshop for parents/carers of P5-S6 pupils delivered online by Alcohol and Drug Action as part of ACC Stronger Families Series programme .

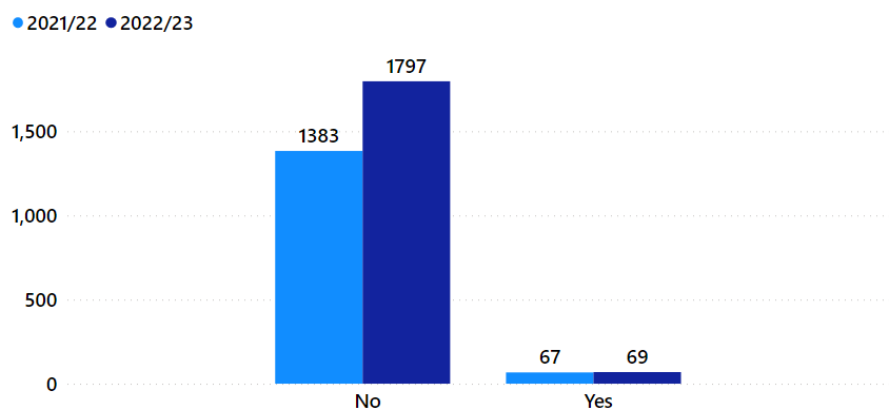
4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

- 4.1 Yes, our data shows that the aim has been achieved as there has been a 5% decrease from 28% to 23% of 13-15year having had a drink and a 0.9% decrease from 4.6% to 3.7% of 13-15year old who have tried drugs between academic years 21/22 and 22/23. When compared to the closest available national data, this shows that Aberdeen is 5.9% lower than the national average. In Scotland, 9.6% of S4 pupils had tried drugs and for Aberdeen 3.7% of 13-15 year olds had tried drugs. Whilst, in relation to alcohol in Scotland 43.9% of S4 pupils had tried alcohol and for Aberdeen 23 % of 13-15 year olds had tried alcohol.
- 4.2 Please note that the collation of national data in relation to substance use has changed and has now moved to the Health and Wellbeing Census – whilst Aberdeen does use the Census it has its own health and wellbeing survey where the same questions in relation to drug and alcohol use are asked.

Have you ever had a proper alcoholic drink - a whole drink, not just a sip?



Have you ever taken illegal drugs, drugs formerly known as legal highs, solvents or prescription drugs that ...



- 4.3 As well as achieving the overall aim we have seen positive impacts from the changes tested, specifically:
- 4.4 There was a 24% reduction (31 to 25) in 2022 for requests for assistance (RFA) for children and young people with factors relating to substance misuse. Following the new programme and the mechanism for reporting, half yearly reporting from Jan 2023 to May 2023 places the number of RFA 14 which could indicate arise by the end of 2023. A rise in referral can be as a result of improved awareness and reporting systems and ensures that children and young people with factors relating to substance use are being identified and referred for support. For these young people, other factors which were identified through the referral process as having an impact were, 7 with Family issues and 8 out of the 14 children demonstrating Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs and 6 with identified Mental Health Needs.
- 4.5 School counsellors work with children and young people to support mental health and wellbeing and at the beginning of the project the number of young people who reported concerns around substance use was 20 recorded between January 2021 –

Time Period	No. of pupils presented for counselling with substance use highlighted as one of the reasons for requesting support
Jan – June 2021	20
July – Dec 2021	21
Jan – June 2022	13
July – Dec 2022	40
Jan – June 2023	60

This data may count the same young people twice across reporting periods if they continued to receive support.

- 4.6 The data shows that access to counselling for substance use has risen by 29% in 2022 compared to 2021 and by 200% when comparing Jan-June 2023 and Jan-June 2021 which can be viewed positively and negatively. On one hand substance use is being reported more often. But the rise, given the alignment with the changes both in reporting and resources for staff being introduced would also show that help is being more readily accessed because a need for support is being more easily recognised by school staff, the individual and/or their families. This would also align with the feedback from school staff, as well as parents.
- 4.7 During support visits to academies in September 2023, 100% of staff interviewed were aware of the new procedure and 1 academy cited an example of how the improvements had helped them to support a pupil more effectively:
'We found the DUST tool really helpful in determining the threshold for referral and sourcing the right support for a particular pupil who had been causing concern'
- 4.8 Positive impact was also seen from the substance awareness workshop for parents/carers. 151 parents expressed interest in attending the workshop held in September 2023, although only 59 attended in live time. In the feedback survey 88% of attendees stated they were somewhat or extremely confident in discussing substance use with their child after attending the event. This compares with 66% reporting confidence pre event. Substance use awareness workshop recording has already been shared with schools, social work and Family Learning and will be available on Stronger Families Series website for all to access.

4.9 One Parent commented : ‘Excellent workshop. Even as a former youth worker I feel it was such a valuable workshop to refresh my memory and as a reminder to remain vigilant. We like to think it will never be our children but I think being informed can only be a good thing either way in case the worse happens.’

5 HOW HAVE OUR COMMUNITIES/PROTECTED GROUPS PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT AND THE IMPACT OF THIS

5.1 Feedback both qualitative and quantitative from pupils, staff and families have supported development of the change ideas. Across all of the changes these, have been tested with small groups of either staff, families or pupils and the feedback received has supported further development of the changes in advance of being embedded as business as usual. The impact and views of the groups on each change reflected in the section above. Engagement is rated as ladder of empowerment level 5 : Engaging

6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR AND SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

6.1 The changes have now been embedded as usual with systems in place to review and monitor their effectiveness as follows:

- The substances use guidance for schools will be revised every 3 years to ensure it is providing the best support for schools.
 - Quality improvement visits by education officers will continue to monitor the impact of the curriculum.
- Data for the overall aim, as well as the requests for assistance will continue to be collected on annual basis and reported to the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.
- The ongoing test of the year-long education programme on substance use prevention and harm reduction in three schools will be reviewed at the end of the year and impact reported on accordingly.

6.2 Whilst we are comfortable that improvement will continue there is a proposal for more targeted improvement activity to reduce cannabis and polydrug use in 13-15 years olds within the LOIP being refreshed for 2024.

7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

7.1 It is possible that the Daniel Spargo Mabbs foundation Programme be carried out in all academies in Grampian should the pilot prove successful. However this would be subject to funding being available. The resources could also be useful to third sector and community groups working with children and young people.

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

1. agree that testing is concluded and that this improvement project is brought to an end on the basis that the aim has been achieved and the changes embedded; and
2. to note that there is a proposal for more targeted improvement activity to reduce cannabis, ketamine and polydrug use in 13-15 years olds within the LOIP being refreshed for 2024.

Opportunities and Risks

Opportunities

Pupils to lead the peer learning about substance use, resilience and informed choice
Schools have increased awareness of Naloxone and staff are being trained storage and in administration

DSM project to be carried out in all schools in the city

Risks

There will not be enough funding to continue the DSM foundation project work with all schools.
The changing trend in drug use means that education and training need to be refreshed regularly

Consultation

Simon Rayner, ADP

Michelle Crombie, ADP

Derek Bain, Police Scotland

Pupils from Aberdeen City Primary and Secondary Schools

Senior staff from Aberdeen City Secondary Schools

Parents from across Aberdeen City

Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

CPA Management Group

Background Papers

None

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