

# Real Life Experience: Results and Recommendations

from Year 2 of the  
**Amy Winehouse Foundation Resilience Programme**



**addaction**





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## Who we are

Addaction helps people change their behaviour to become the very best that they can be. As one of the UK's leading and largest specialist drug, alcohol and mental health treatment charities, Addaction believes that effective treatment needs to be tailored to the individual.

The Amy Winehouse Foundation works to prevent the effects of drug and alcohol misuse on young people. The foundation also aims to support, inform and inspire vulnerable and disadvantaged young people to help them reach their full potential.

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**The evidence couldn't be clearer. The work we're doing in schools is having fantastic results. Reading about the effect of the Resilience Programme on young lives – it shows that more can and should be done across the whole country.**

”

**Mitch Winehouse**  
Amy Winehouse Foundation



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This is one of largest research studies of its kind, evaluating 17,000 young people engaged with the Resilience Programme. The results show the vital importance of skills development programmes around alcohol and drugs. Parents everywhere should join with us to insist the Government puts effective, evidence-based prevention work in place across all schools to improve young people's life chances.

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**Simon Antrobus**  
CEO, Addaction



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## Introduction

The Amy Winehouse Foundation Resilience Programme, run in partnership with Addaction, provides universal and targeted alcohol and drugs education to pupils in secondary schools in England. It also delivers sessions for parents and training workshops to teachers, all thanks to a £4.3m grant from the Big Lottery Fund over a period of five years. This report details a range of impressive results drawn from an independent evaluation of the programme's second year, led by a team based between Harvard University and the University of Bath.

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**All of the students were sitting in silence and were totally absorbed. The details Brian gave about his life captured Year 11 and the questions they asked afterwards showed they had fully understood.**

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**Brett Barker**  
Form Tutor, Lincoln Castle Academy



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## Summary

The programme is delivered to school pupils through assemblies, which include life shares from people in recovery from personal drug and/or alcohol addiction. Life shares focus on thoughts, feelings, behaviours and underlying issues that can make some young people more susceptible to substance misuse.

The aim is for young people to gain a better understanding of the effect substance misuse has on physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing, relationships and future achievements. Smaller classroom workshops then focus on developing skills to deal with peer pressure, risky behaviour and self-esteem, so that young people can make better informed decisions.

Pupils identified as at risk of being affected by substance misuse are given targeted support through a six session Skills for Change Programme or through one-to-one support from a local substance misuse treatment organisation.

The teams include a specialist alcohol and drugs practitioner, a volunteer co-ordinator and a team of volunteers who are in recovery.

In year two, the programme engaged with young people across Bournemouth, Derbyshire, Halton, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Liverpool, London and South Yorkshire.

**45,651** pupils engaged with assemblies.

**30,602** pupils attended workshops.

**309** pupils completed a 6 week Skills for Change programme.

**17,206** pupils provided informed consent to participate in our universal evaluation.

In light of the impressive evaluation results, sections of the findings are being prepared for submission to journal publication during years three and four of the project. As a consequence, full details of the evaluation methodology have not been detailed in this report but a discussion with the evaluation team can be arranged on request.



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## Our results: drug and alcohol education in schools

The Resilience Programme aspires to increase young people's awareness of the effects of alcohol and drugs.

**89%** of pupils said they found the programme useful to them.  
Only **4%** said it was not useful.

**76%** of young people said their knowledge about drugs, including "legal highs" had increased.

**73%** of young people said their knowledge about alcohol had increased.

**75%** of young people said they were more confident about making safer decisions about drug use and **73%** said the same about alcohol use.

The Programme helps participants to develop skills to manage self-esteem, risky behaviours and peer pressure. The evidence shows that ability and confidence to manage these areas plays an important role in young people's decision-making around substances.

**91%** of pupils said they were now well informed that they could seek confidential help in the event of being concerned about substance use, peer pressure or bullying.

**79%** of pupils said that they would be more likely to avoid risky behaviours relating to substance misuse.

**83%** of pupils said they would seek out support for alcohol or drug issues.

**77%** of pupils said they would definitely not use drugs in the next six months.

Young people are told about the risks associated with substance misuse through the prism of people's real life experiences. Rather than only providing information or taking a "scared straight" approach, young people look at the underlying causes and, the consequences of substance misuse, and hear about volunteers' recovery journeys.



“

It was good that someone was talking to us who had actually experienced drugs and what they do, instead of just saying 'drugs are bad, you will die'. I've learnt that it's okay to say no and I've also changed my opinion on addicts. I used to think they were bad people, but they're not – they've just made a mistake.

”

Student  
Lincolnshire

## Recommendation 1

All schools should provide high quality and responsive PSHE programmes with drug and alcohol education delivered as part of a skills development programme, and with signposting to specialist support services.



## Our results: high quality evidence

The Resilience Programme was designed with a small pragmatic cluster randomised control trial (RCT) embedded in the evaluation. The RCT uses a lag design by which a Waiting Room Group receives the programme interventions 8 weeks later than an immediate group. This asks the question: would young people receive the same benefits regardless of participating in the programme?

### Pupil's disclosure of substance use over the last 12 months (n=536)

	Immediate Group - Alcohol	Immediate Group - Cannabis	Immediate Group - Drugs
Pre Intervention	<b>51%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Post Intervention (12 months later)	<b>41%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>2%</b>

	Waiting Room Group - Alcohol	Waiting Room Group - Cannabis	Waiting Room Group - Drugs
Pre Intervention	<b>50%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Pre Intervention (8 weeks later)	<b>54%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Post Intervention (12 months later)	<b>36%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>3%</b>

The findings are extremely encouraging. The Waiting Room Group showed little difference in the substance use disclosed over the 8 week period they waited to begin the Programme, but both groups reported reduced substance use 12 months after receiving the Programme. This suggests an increase in young people's awareness of risky behaviour, and their confidence to make more informed choices in the context of substance use.



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**Scientific research supports embedding universal drug prevention actions in wider strategies that aim to support healthy developmental and wellbeing in general.**

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ACMD Recovery Committee Prevention Briefing, Feb 2015

The RCT is particularly crucial in light of the evidence that has accumulated since the Programme launched. Reports in recent years have highlighted the lack of clear evidence for “what works” in drug and alcohol prevention programmes, notably the ACMD’s Recovery Committee Prevention Briefing (Feb 2015). In an environment of potentially counter-productive approaches, it is essential that any prevention programme demonstrates its effectiveness, and contributes to the evidence base in this still under-researched field.

## Recommendation 2

Local commissioners must ensure that drug and alcohol education is provided as part of a structured programme, which has an existing evidence base or is able to demonstrate effective outcomes. Research funders and charities should support high-quality evaluation research.



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## Our results: intensive support

Young people who were at risk of being impacted by their own or someone else's substance misuse received targeted intervention in the form of a six session programme called Skills for Change. The programme comprises an assessment process, six group work sessions, one-to-one support and onward referrals on a needs-led basis. The group work provides a platform that empowers young people in relation to low self-esteem, peer pressure and risk behaviours. The sessions focus on team building, self-esteem, goal setting and healthy choices, alcohol and drug awareness, first aid and a group review that considers barriers and enablers to learning.

“

**The whole prospect of admitting to what goes on seemed scary at first, but the workers made me feel so comfortable talking about the issues. The group sessions helped me see that other people in school were going through similar problems, which made me feel less ashamed about it. The sessions were a perfect release of a build-up of emotions that I normally struggle to show.**

”

**Student**

Albany School, London

- This year, **44%** of participants were referred to the programme as a result of a family member's substance use, and **56%** due to their own substance misuse
- **81%** of young people felt that they had made significant progress while engaging with Skills for Change, working actively to achieve their personal goals and showing increases to mental wellbeing and resilience scores.
- On average, most change occurred for young people in feeling they could adapt to unexpected events, could see the humorous side of situations and felt better able to manage unpleasant or painful feelings, such as sadness, frustration or worry.

The emerging evidence shows that Skills for Change is an integral component of the Resilience Programme, offering an important route for pupils to be signposted, assessed and receive support aligned to the PSHE curriculum and individual school safeguarding policies. We anticipate that further results will continue to show that early preventative and targeted interventions reduce the harmful outcomes that are typically associated with substance misuse.

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## Our results: volunteers with real experience

Volunteers are a vital element of the Resilience Programme. People become members of the team by graduating from an accredited 10 session training programme. In year two, 85 volunteers participated in training sessions and delivered the programme to students. Volunteers must be fully abstinent, in stable recovery and all undergo disclosure and barring checks (DBS).

- Volunteers said their experiences with the programme could be applied to further training opportunities (**82%**), further and higher education (**87%**), and paid employment opportunities (**84%**).
- **75%** of volunteers said they were more confident and **76%** saw improved self-esteem following participation.
- Volunteers reported improved planning skills (**62%**), interpersonal skills (**75%**), presentation skills (**64%**) and communication skills (**71%**).

“

It's one of the best things I've done in four years of volunteering. All the work I'd done previously was geared toward helping adults already in addiction so I'm very grateful to have had the chance to maybe help even one young person avoid that. I'm now in full time employment working with adult offenders but I wouldn't have got this job if it were not for the experience and support I was given by the Amy Winehouse Foundation and Young Addaction.

”

Former Volunteer

Halton

These findings provide clear evidence that volunteers in recovery gain confidence and self-esteem, improve their presentation and interpersonal skills, and increase their access to training, education and employment.

### Recommendation 3

Local services and commissioners must ensure that needs-led volunteering activities are available for people in recovery. Volunteer programmes should be accredited with Investing in Volunteers and should be evaluated against an outcome of increased employability.



## Our results: positive parenting

The Programme delivers workshops that aim to increase parents' knowledge of the effects of alcohol and different drugs, and help them to identify and support young people who could be at risk.

- **98%** of parents said the session they engaged with was useful.
- **63%** of parents cited an increase in knowledge about alcohol.
- **87%** of parents cited an increase in knowledge about drugs.
- Of the 141 parents who took part in the evaluation, **99%** said that as a result of the parents' session they would be confident having conversations with their children about substance use.

Parents can play a vital role in educating young people about the dangers associated with drug or alcohol misuse, but they are badly underserved by the resources currently available to them.

Resources should involve parents in design and development, they should provide practical tools, and should pay particular attention to the needs of those parents experiencing the most difficulties, with increased access in the criminal justice system, early help teams, children's homes and foster parents. It is essential that online resources provide access to live support from trained substance misuse specialists and should be rigorously evaluated to evidence their impact.

### Recommendation 4

**The Government should review and improve the information, advice and support available to parents with particular attention to online resources.**



## Our results: training teachers

The Programme also provides brief intervention training for teachers, closely aligned to PSHE. The training explores teachers' existing knowledge about alcohol and drugs, and provides practical information to identify and support young people who may be at risk of substance misuse. Topics covered include hidden harm, safeguarding, disclosure policy, barriers to engagement, signposting, referral processes and multi-agency working. During the year, 2,007 teachers received training.

- **88%** of teachers said they found the workshop sessions useful.
- **65%** said their knowledge about alcohol had increased as a result of the sessions.
- **88%** said their knowledge about drugs had increased as a result of the sessions.
- Overall, between **73%** and **89%** of teachers agreed that the workshop sessions they engaged with would help them identify and support young people.

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**I feel that this has enriched my teaching of the subject and I have no doubt that this will be the case for all of the teachers who attended the training.**

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**Frankie Arundel**  
Humanities, Firth Park School, Sheffield

### Recommendation 5

**Teacher training on drugs and alcohol should form a mandatory part of PGCE and should be refreshed on an annual basis.**



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## Summary of Recommendations:

### Recommendation 1

**All schools should provide high quality and responsive PSHE programmes with drug and alcohol education delivered as part of a skills development programme, and with signposting to specialist support services.**

Schools face a range of competing pressures, which can affect their ability to schedule drug and alcohol education sessions, or facilitate group work for young people at risk. However, the evidence shows these programmes can help to improve general health and wellbeing, and contribute positively to wider educational outcomes.

Schools should ensure that potential sources of support for students are widely promoted and publicised to encourage early intervention. In addition, all schools should have a referral pathway in place with their local young person's substance misuse service.

### Recommendation 2

**Local commissioners must ensure that drug and alcohol education is provided as part of a structured programme, which has an existing evidence base or is able to demonstrate effective outcomes. Research funders and charities should support high-quality evaluation research.**

As our findings show, a structured programme of drug and alcohol education can increase knowledge and awareness, support young people to make better and more informed decisions about their future drug or alcohol use and access any support required at an early stage. This is both cost effective and will help to reduce the future burden on health services. As such, the commissioning of evidence-based preventative work in education should be prioritised as part of local public health strategy. It is essential that all prevention programmes rigorously demonstrate effectiveness, and contribute to the evidence base.

### Recommendation 3

**Local services and commissioners must ensure that needs-led volunteering activities are available for people in recovery. Volunteer programmes should be accredited with Investing in Volunteers and should be evaluated against an outcome of increased employability.**

For people in recovery that are looking to move forward into stable employment, opportunities can often be limited and there may be a number of potential barriers in their way. Our experience has shown that high quality volunteer placements can be an effective means to help individuals increase their knowledge, build confidence and develop skills, which significantly improves their long-term prospects.

The Department for Work and Pensions may subsequently wish to consider the role of volunteer placements, and their potential value in supporting individuals into long-term sustained employment, and consider creating incentives within the benefits system to encourage such placements.

### Recommendation 4

**The Government should review and improve the information, advice and support available to parents with particular attention to online resources.**

Resources should involve parents in design and development, provide practical tools, and pay particular attention to the needs of those parents experiencing the most difficulties, with increased access in the criminal justice system, early help teams, children's homes and for foster parents. Online resources should provide access to live support from trained substance misuse specialists and should be rigorously evaluated to evidence their impact.

### Recommendation 5

**Teacher training on drugs and alcohol should form a mandatory part of PGCE and should be refreshed on an annual basis.**

The Department for Education should also continue to emphasise the importance of drug and alcohol education and PSHE in schools, as well as providing up to date information and guidance on the evidence-based programmes available.



AMY WINEHOUSE  
FOUNDATION

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# **Resilience Programme** LOTTERY FUNDED

The drug and alcohol awareness programme for schools

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If you would like more information about the Programme please contact the Amy Winehouse Foundation Resilience Programme team on **0300 30 30 177** or e-mail us at **resilience@amywinehousefoundation.org**  
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