

PROGRAMME IMPACT REPORT



This programme successfully demonstrates our Test – Learn – Scale methodology. It was based on learning from a similar drugs programme we delivered in Bolton

Hugs Not Drugs

March 2025

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Safer Lancashire
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Report Type: Final evaluation and impact report

Investment Body: OPPCL / Christal Foundation

Town/City: Burnley

Programme Duration: 01/05/2023 - 31/05/2024

Why was the Investment needed?

In partnership with KPK, the Foundation has a proven history of working closely with the Pashtoon community in East Lancashire, focusing on various welfare, education, and empowerment projects. The primary goal is to offer a comprehensive range of programmes that support this diaspora, ensuring they have access to vital resources and opportunities for personal development. A key concern identified through previous consultations was the growing impact of drugs on young Pashtoon children, especially those aged 11-17, which became a focal point for the Foundation's efforts.

A significant consultation was held in January 2023, involving 15 Pashtoon boys from Burnley who formed a youth guardian group. During the session, the young participants voiced their concerns about the pervasive issue of drugs. Many shared their fears about the easy accessibility and promotion of illicit substances, as well as the peer pressure they faced. They spoke about being approached to transport or use drugs, drug-related incidents within their families and peer circles. One of the most significant discoveries was the lack of knowledge among these young people regarding the risks, legal consequences, and long-term effects of drug use, highlighting a critical need for education on these issues.


In response to these concerns, the youth guardian group collaborated in the co-design of a series of workshops aimed at raising awareness about drugs, their effects, and the associated legal risks. These workshops, delivered over three months with the support of the Christal Foundation, helped equip young people with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions and avoid exploitation. This initiative allowed for a flexible, test-and-learn approach, refining the programme along the way. The work was further expanded with funding from OPPCL, enabling the Foundation to deliver additional sessions in cultural, sports, and other out-of-school settings in Burnley. The broader "Hugs Not Drugs" campaign was launched, and bi-lingual specialist counselling was offered to those affected by the issues discussed. This holistic approach has been pivotal in addressing the needs of the Pashtoon youth and empowering them to make safer choices.

Expected Outcomes

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the broader harms associated with drugs and illegal substances.
- Encouragement to engage in alternative, structured activities that promote positive development.
- Contribute to a reduction in the risk of exploitation for vulnerable individuals.
- Trained champions will offer basic support and effectively signpost individuals to appropriate resources and services when needed
- Where required, access to targeted mental health support from specialised professionals.

Output - Data Dashboard

 sessions delivered
27

 out-of-school settings engaged
23

 young people engaged
586

 % CERI backgrounds
100%

 young people target
600

 drug champions trained
11

 % of targets met
95%

 engaging in such activities for first time
90%

 young people accessed counselling
64

 % post-workshop satisfaction rate
81%

Impact

The programme has had demonstrable impact by providing beneficiaries with critical knowledge about the risks and consequences associated with drug use. By educating beneficiaries about the dangers of drugs, it helped to dispell myths and misconceptions, enabling them to make more informed choices. The real-life stories, interactive discussions, and the involvement of health professionals with a licenced drug box from a local authority drug team, created a more engaging and relatable experience. This was demonstrated in the high levels of satisfaction expressed post-delivery. As a result, many young people reported feeling more empowered and confident in their ability to resist peer pressure and make healthier decisions when it comes to drugs. The programme also fostered open dialogue and created a supportive environment where young people felt comfortable discussing sensitive topics related to substance abuse. This sense of understanding helped to reduce stigma, making it easier for those who may have been impacted by the issues discussed to seek help from our specialist counselling service.

Outcomes



78%

better understood the harms posed by drugs and illegal substances



84%

learnt why involvement in drugs was a gateway to exploitation and crime



12%

of accessed our specialist counselling service



5%

put a plan of action in place to attend a weekly locally run, structured activity



90%

better understood the range of support that was available to them



11

drug champions were trained to continue to cascade awareness and learning

What worked well?

Lived experience volunteers talking during sessions reinforced messages.

Involvement from a local authority drugs team with a licenced drugs box.

Inviting parents to take part in sessions ensured that messaging was cascaded further.

What we learnt?

When approaching out-of-school settings always be clear about the aims and objectives of sessions.

Researching local structured activities on offer allows young people to make better choices about what they want to get involved in.

Community leaders, parents always need to be onboard to ensure success.

How has the investment positively impacted community cohesion

The programme has fostering a sense of shared responsibility and understanding by educating youth about the dangers of drug use and its potential impact on both individuals and society, it promoted healthier decision-making, reducing the likelihood of substance abuse thus creating stronger, more supportive networks. As young people become more informed, they were better equipped to make positive choices, encouraging peer support and reducing social isolation. The programmes focus on community engagement also strengthened relationships between young people, families, schools, and local organisations, creating a more connected and resilient community.

Legacy

The learning from this programme and connections it has created amongst our staff and local young people has allowed for a range of sports inclusion and empowerment projects to take place with them. The connections we have made with local out-of-school settings has allowed us to plan further workshops on topical issues to be delivered within these network of venues.

Quote from Beneficiary

'I am was really saddened to hear about the way drugs ruined the life of the speaker, its got me thinking long and hard about making the right choices in my life and keeping good company.'

Ateeq, 16, Hugs Not Drugs Workshop Participant