

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

SJR(2) –13-06(p5)

Date: Wednesday 4 October 2006

Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm

Venue: Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Preventing Substance Misuse & Other Problem Behaviours - The Strengthening Families Programme (SFP 10 – 14)

The Family Support Development Project based at Cardiff Alcohol & Drug Team is leading on local development of the Iowa Strengthening Families Programme for Parents and Youth aged 10 -14. (SFP 10-14)

Brief Programme Description

The Strengthening Families Programme for Parents & Youth 10 – 14 is a universal, very well evidenced, highly structured DVD and manual based intervention delivered over a 7 - week curriculum. Significantly, it is designed to bring parents together with their 10 to 14 year old children, with the goal of reducing & preventing substance misuse and other problem behaviours in youth. The program is delivered within parent, youth and family sessions using narrated DVD's and other learning materials that portray typical youth and parent situations.

The programme is very accessible in terms of literacy levels. Sessions are highly interactive and include role-playing, discussions, learning games and family projects designed to:

Improve parenting skills

Build life skills in youth

Strengthen family bonds

Evaluation

Large-scale longitudinal evaluation of the Strengthening Families Programme in the U.S.A. has shown positive results for families across a range of indicators including reduction of alcohol & drug misuse problems. A further and more recent Cochrane Collaboration Systematic Review undertaken by David Foxcroft and colleagues at Oxford Brookes University (2003) has also indicated real potential for further research and development of the programme in the U.K.

Outcomes

Bringing parents and youth together in such a programme has been particularly effective in building parent skills, youth skills, and changing behaviour. A controlled study demonstrated that both parents and youth who attended the programme showed significant positive changes. Youth who participated in the study had less substance use, fewer conduct problems, and better resistance to peer pressure. Programme parents were better able to show affection and support and set appropriate limits for their children. According to programme theory, these parenting skills help parents protect youth from becoming involved in substance abuse and other problem behaviours. Comparisons between intervention and control groups has shown significantly improved parenting behaviours. Analysis of youth substance use and use-related child outcomes (e.g. gateway substance use, problem conduct, school-related problem behaviours, affiliation with antisocial peers, peer resistance) has demonstrated positive outcomes at follow up assessments.

Compared with youth in the control group, those in the SFP 10-14 group showed statistically significant delays in initiation of alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis use. Positive results, differences between youth who attended the programme and the control youth, actually increased over the 6 years of follow-up assessment.

"Far from fading away, the gap between strengthening families and control group children seemed to widen the older they got"

Spoth R.L. et al "Randomised trial of brief family interventions for general populations: adolescent substance use outcomes 4 years following baseline." *Journal of consulting & clinical psychology*: 2001, 69(4)

Partnership

"Doing It Together" - collaboration between and across agencies is the key to successful development and delivery of the programme in Cardiff. The numerous stages of programme development that have taken place have provided a vehicle for such collaboration to begin. Agencies working in the substance misuse, family support, education & education welfare, community development, youth and youth justice fields are, for the first time in Cardiff, actively working together toward a shared goal. The following agencies have come together to form this partnership:

Cardiff Alcohol & Drug Team (CADT)

NCH Children & Youth Parenting team

Barnardo's 5 – 15 Project

Cardiff Education Welfare Service

Cardiff Community Focussed Schools Initiative

Cardiff Children's Services Support & Intervention Team

Cardiff Youth Offending Team

Cardiff Women's Aid

Cardiff YMCA

Newlink Wales

LLanrumney Healthy Living Centre

Playbus Cardiff & Vale

A Partnership has also been formed with colleagues at Oxford Brookes University and Cardiff has acted as a pilot site for development and evaluation of new programme materials more closely designed for use in the U.K. We now have use of the most up to date, adapted and tested programme materials available in the U.K. Through this partnership with Oxford Brookes University Cardiff has also been identified as a site to take part in a future large scale European randomised control trial and further development of the programme.

Following a very successful period of development, a full time programme co-ordinator has recently been appointed, initially for a period of 3 years with funding from Cardiff Community Safety Partnership. This appointment is hugely significant as it symbolises the confidence in, and commitment to, the Strengthening Families Programme in Cardiff.

Grahame Howard
Family Support Development Worker
Cardiff Alcohol & Drug Team
House 54 Cardiff Royal Infirmary
Newport Road
Cardiff CF24 OSZ

Tel 02920 468555 e-mail GHoward@cardiff.gov.uk

For more detailed research and background information please see:
www.mystrongfamily.org