Adapting the ASSIST model of informal peer-led intervention delivery to the Talk to FRANK drug prevention programme in UK secondary schools (ASSIST+FRANK): a pilot cluster randomised controlled trial

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Background

What is the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of using peer support to prevent illicit drug uptake and use in young people?

- **Prevalence of illicit drug use**
  - Lifetime use: 24% 11-15 year olds, increases with age
  - Use in the last year: 7.9% cannabis, 4.4% glues, gases and aerosols

- **Harms**
  - 10% cannabis dependency, drug-related offences, school exclusion, educational outcomes, future employment

- **Peer-led interventions**
  - Limited evidence of effective school-based drug prevention
The ASSIST+Frank study

- **Stage 1: Intervention development**
  - Adaptation of ASSIST intervention
  - ‘ASSIST+Frank’ and ‘Frank Friends’

- **Stage 2: Small-scale delivery and refinement**
  - Delivery in one school each
  - In-depth process evaluation

- **Stage 3: External pilot cluster RCT and process evaluation**
1) Scoping                               2) Co-production                               3) Prototyping
Consultation with ALPHA
Evidence review
Focus groups (Y9)
Stakeholder consultation
Focus groups (Y8 - ASSIST)
Observations of current practice

Meetings with delivery team

Agree content

Discuss content

Refine

Feedback

Feedback

DRAFT INTERVENTION MATERIALS PRODUCED

Expert review of materials

Minor refinements

Test materials with ALPHA

Train delivery team

Researchers' evaluations of training sessions

TRAINING MATERIALS PRODUCED

Researchers' notes from training sessions

Stage 1: Intervention Development

Stage 1: Intervention Development

- Frank Friends – mirrors ASSIST model:
  - Nomination of peer supporters, 17.5% receiving most nominations recruited
  - 2-days peer supporter training
    - Risks of drugs, communication skills
  - 10-week intervention, with 4 follow-up visits
    - Peer supporters have informal conversations with peers
  - Acknowledgement of contribution
  - ASSIST+Frank – Y9 adjunct, reduced contact
Stage 2: Intervention refinement

• Each intervention field tested in one school
• Process evaluation determined early acceptability and feasibility / implementation issues
  o Recruitment, training, follow-up sessions observed
  o Post-training, post-intervention peer supporter evaluation forms
  o Interviews with peer supporters, teachers, trainers
  o Attendance records, peer supporter diaries
• Finalised intervention materials for pilot cRCT
Stage 3: Pilot cRCT methods

- 12 schools, 4 arms
  - Baseline and 18-month student survey

- Pre-specified progression criteria
  - Intervention/Trial methods acceptability, feasibility, fidelity

- Process evaluation
  - Mirrored Stage 2 methods
  - Plus parent interviews, and public health commissioner

- Exploratory effectiveness analysis
Stage 3: Pilot cRCT results

• All progression criteria were met
  o All 12 schools retained at 18-months, 93% response rate to student survey
  o Low levels of missing data on key pilot primary and secondary outcomes
  o Both interventions acceptable, FF preferred by students and trainers

• Indicative primary outcome
  o Baseline lifetime drug use was 4.2%, 18-months was 11.6%
  o Marginally lower in intervention arms than usual practice

• A full-scale cRCT of Frank Friends is warranted
Thank you for listening 😊

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