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# Sharing the impact of the GRAMPIAN DRUG EDUCATION PILOT

## Interim Report June 2024

### Background

#### The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation

The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation is a drug education charity founded in 2014 by Fiona and Tim Spargo-Mabbs in response to the death of their sixteen-year-old son Dan from an unintentional overdose of MDMA. The DSM Foundation works with young people, parents and caregivers, teachers and professionals working with young people in schools, colleges and community organisations across the UK. They provide a multi-component programme of drug education consisting of workshops for young people, workshops and webinars for parents and caregivers, training for professionals, a Youth Ambassador programme and a spiral curriculum of planning and resources for teachers to deliver in PSE (Personal and Social Education) lessons for every secondary year group.

They also have a Theatre in Education (TIE) production of 'I Love You, Mum – I Promise I Won't Die', a verbatim play by award-winning playwright Mark Wheeller, commissioned by the DSM Foundation in 2014. This TIE version, specially adapted by the playwright, has been touring schools professionally since 2017 as part of the DSM Foundation drug education programme, with interactive workshops with the cast to follow performances. The full published play (Bloomsbury/Methuen, 2017) has been a GCSE Drama set text in England and Wales since September 2022.

**Fiona Spargo-Mabbs OBE** is Director and Founder of the DSM Foundation, and an award-winning author of books for parents. With over two decades' experience working in education as a teacher, manager and national lead in her specialism working with vulnerable families, Fiona is now considered a leading expert in drug education. As well as working directly with young people, parents and professionals herself, Fiona is also regularly asked to speak on various national platforms and in the media about issues relating to young people, drugs and decisions, and she has delivered a TEDx talk: 'Why drugs education is vital'. She is involved in policy work with government, police, academics and other agencies, working closely in partnership to influence change nationally. In 2023 she was awarded an OBE for services to young people.

## **Evidence-based and evaluated programme**

The DSM Foundation programme is based on international evidence of effective practice in drug education, and it has been delivered in schools, colleges and community settings across England since 2015, with schools further afield accessing digital drug education teaching resources. It is reviewed and updated annually in response to emerging trends, shifts in use, and most recent local and national research and data.

In addition to the drug education programme being internally evaluated on an ongoing basis through feedback surveys, the DSM Foundation has also been an Associate Member of Middlesex University Drug and Alcohol Research Centre since 2017, and an initial assessment of three elements of the DSM Foundation programme was published on the university website in 2019. In 2023 they were jointly awarded UK Government funding committed under the current drug strategy, through the NIHR Phase 1 Innovation Fund to Reduce the Demand for Illicit Substances, to evaluate the drug education programme in schools across England. Phase 1 was completed in 2023, Phase 2 will take place from September 2024 for twelve months.

## **DSM Foundation Grampian Drug Education Pilot**

### **Background**

In 2022-23, Police Scotland funded and supported the DSM Foundation to deliver a series of drug education showcase events across Scotland, after officers witnessed the impact on pupils of seeing the play performed in a school in Edinburgh earlier that year. As a result of attending the showcase event in Edinburgh, DS Scott McKay, Police Scotland NE Division, and Carol Muir, Project Manager Community Justice (Alcohol & Drugs) at Aberdeenshire Council, approached the DSM Foundation to plan a pilot of their drug education programme across the Grampian region, in order to strengthen and update the current provision in schools.

**Feedback from the showcase event at Lochside Academy in Aberdeen** in February 2024, when the pilot was officially launched, was incredibly positive. Having seen the play and workshop and heard more about the work of the DSM Foundation, 93% of pupils who attended the event (42 responses) felt the play would help other young people understand the risks and possible consequences of taking drugs, and 95% thought introducing the resources provided by the DSM Foundation would enhance drugs education in their school. Only one in five professionals (26 responses) felt drug education in schools was currently adequate to meet the needs of local young people, but they unanimously stated the DSM Foundation would be effective in enhancing provision, and 92% said that if CPD was offered by the DSM Foundation it would help make them more knowledgeable and confident around drugs education. Every parent/carer (8 responses) felt what the DSM Foundation offers would be valuable in preparing their child(ren) to negotiate the risks, harms and consequences of taking drugs and alcohol.

### **The Grampian pilot programme**

From August 2024, nine schools across the Grampian region, three in each of the Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray local authorities, have been taking part in a pilot of our full multi-component drug education programme. This has been supported throughout by Police Scotland, who selected schools based on local data and in discussion with local authorities and other stakeholders in order to represent the range of communities across Scotland, including rural, coastal and urban. **Funding** was provided through grants from Scottish

Government, Police Scotland via Aberdeen City Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK Government Levelling Up Fund), Aberdeenshire Council and contributions from the pilot schools.

All the DSM Foundation drug education resources were adapted for the Scottish school framework and context, and the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme mapped to Curriculum for Excellence.

**Schools taking part in the pilot:**

| <b>Authority</b>     | <b>School</b>         |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Aberdeen</b>      | Lochside Academy      |
|                      | Bridge of Don Academy |
|                      | St Machar Academy     |
| <b>Aberdeenshire</b> | Porlethen Academy     |
|                      | Meldrum Academy       |
|                      | Banff Academy         |
| <b>Moray</b>         | Elgin High            |
|                      | Keith Grammar         |
|                      | Buckie Community High |

**Evaluation of the Grampian pilot – University of Aberdeen**

**During the pilot, each school received:**

- staff training in September, with an optional second training session before delivering PSE lessons in Spring term;
- a Theatre in Education performance of ‘I Love You, Mum’ play for students in each school with workshops to follow performances, plus a community performance in each authority for parents, carers and families open to all the schools;
- webinars for parents and carers (three during the year open to all schools plus a recorded session sent to all parents and carers);
- student workshops for every year group;
- PSE lesson resources delivered by guidance teachers;
- Youth Ambassadors’ programme.

Evaluation was carried out using self-assessment surveys also used in English schools (multiple choice and free text components) conducted with students, staff and parents/carers, pre and post intervention, in order to evaluate experiences and impact and identify any refinements that may need to be made in order to improve the resources for wider roll out. Data has been analysed by Dr Haruna Musa at the University of Aberdeen as part of his MSc Applied Health Sciences placement programme, overseen by Dr Heather Morgan, Dean for Enterprise and Innovation and Senior Lecturer in Applied Health Sciences.

## Initial findings

### Identifying needs: Teachers

Pre-training teacher feedback (46 responses/ 25% sample size)

Which are the main substances causing issues for the young people you work with, if there are any?

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Alcohol   | 100% |
| Cigarettes  | 76%  |
| Vaping  | 74%  |
| Nitrous oxide                                     | 57%  |
| Cannabis/ weed                                    | 43%  |
| Cannabis edibles                                  | 29%  |
| Ketamine  | 29%  |
| MDMA / ecstasy                                    | 21%  |
| Cocaine   | 19%  |
| LSD   | 17%  |
| Magic mushrooms                                   | 5%   |
| Benzodiazepines                                   | 2%   |
| Steroids  | 2%   |
| Anti-depressants                                  | 0%   |
| Non-medical use of OTC or prescription medication | 0%   |
| Other   | 0%   |

**Which of the following would you find useful in the training session?**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| How to approach conversations with young people  | <b>74%</b> |
| Practical strategies for young people to use to help them stay safe                                | <b>69%</b> |
| Harm reduction advice - general  | <b>55%</b> |
| Risk factors affecting young people's misuse of drugs and alcohol                                  | <b>50%</b> |
| Adolescent brain development in relation to risk and choice  | <b>50%</b> |
| Where to go for more information, support and advice   | <b>50%</b> |
| Current data on young people's exposure to drugs and alcohol, access and availability              | <b>48%</b> |
| How to pitch lessons to make them appropriate for young people with different levels of experience | <b>48%</b> |
| Young people's motivation for using drugs and alcohol  | <b>43%</b> |
| Effects and risks of specific substances   | <b>40%</b> |
| Harm reduction advice (specific substances)  | <b>31%</b> |
| Drugs and the law  | <b>31%</b> |
| Safety advice for specific events or occasions e.g. festivals, holidays, university                | <b>17%</b> |
| How to address difficult questions   | <b>14%</b> |

**Identifying needs: Pupils**

**Pre-workshop feedback from S5 & S6 pupils** (234 responses/ sample size unrecorded)

**Which are the main substances people in your year group use, if they do?**

|                          |            |
|--------------------------|------------|
| <b>Vaping</b>            | <b>97%</b> |
| <b>Alcohol</b>           | <b>92%</b> |
| <b>Cigarettes</b>        | <b>79%</b> |
| <b>Cannabis/ weed</b>    | <b>78%</b> |
| <b>Cannabis edibles</b>  | <b>43%</b> |
| <b>Ketamine</b>          | <b>33%</b> |
| <b>MDMA / ecstasy</b>    | <b>27%</b> |
| <b>Cocaine</b>           | <b>27%</b> |
| <b>Magic</b>             | <b>15%</b> |
| <b>mushrooms LSD</b>     | <b>11%</b> |
| <b>Steroids</b>          | <b>10%</b> |
| <b>Nitrous oxide</b>     | <b>8%</b>  |
| <b>Other (Mcat, 2CB)</b> | <b>5%</b>  |
| <b>Benzos</b>            | <b>4%</b>  |

***“It's not really a problem for S6. When you're in S4 and S5 you use more.”***

**What attitude do you think people your age have towards substance use?**

| Substance        | OK to use regularly | OK to use occasionally | OK to try | Not OK |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Vaping           | 68%                 | 10%                    | 14%       | 7%     |
| Alcohol          | 41%                 | 46%                    | 12%       | 1%     |
| Cigarettes       | 31%                 | 22%                    | 31%       | 15%    |
| Cannabis / weed  | 22%                 | 31%                    | 32%       | 15%    |
| Cannabis edibles | 16%                 | 33%                    | 33%       | 19%    |
| Ketamine         | 7%                  | 8%                     | 32%       | 54%    |
| MDMA / Ecstasy   | 5%                  | 10%                    | 33%       | 53%    |
| Magic mushrooms  | 4%                  | 10%                    | 38%       | 48%    |
| Steroids         | 4%                  | 8%                     | 25%       | 63%    |
| Cocaine          | 4%                  | 9%                     | 32%       | 55%    |
| Benzos           | 3%                  | 3%                     | 30%       | 64%    |
| LSD              | 3%                  | 5%                     | 35%       | 57%    |
| Nitrous oxide    | 1%                  | 2%                     | 43%       | 53%    |

**Which of the following do you think needs to be included in a drug and alcohol workshop for your year group?**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| First-hand stories and accounts  | 57% |
| Understanding addiction  | 56% |
| Understanding the workings of the teenage brain in relation to risk and choice | 55% |
| Event-specific advice on staying safe (eg. parties, festivals)                 | 50% |
| Effects and risks of drugs in general  | 48% |
| Strategies to manage peer pressure   | 46% |
| Effects and risks of alcohol   | 45% |
| Substance-specific advice on staying safe                                      | 45% |
| General advice on staying safe   | 44% |
| Drugs and the law  | 44% |
| Effects and risks of specific substances                                       | 41% |

**Other (please specify)**

- I think the workshop should include all of the above.
- All should be considered as they are all important topics.
- Effects and risks of ketamine, ecstasy, cocaine etc. the harder drugs.
- Effects and risks of weed, cigarettes and magic mushrooms.
- None - the majority believe it is a waste of time as it is bound that a fair amount of people try drugs, me included.
- We have heard it all before so people that do it won't change their mind just because you repeated it.
- Teach how to stay safe - in reality you can't and won't stop people from trying things.

8%

**Do you have any other suggestions or comments that would help us make sure the workshop is as useful and effective as it can be for you and your year group?**

- Don't make it distressing (like safe drive stay alive) but make sure it is impactful, possibly interactive with people to ask with personal stories.
- I think it would be useful to give first-hand accounts on how substance abuse has affected people's (especially young people's) lives in general, such as their social lives and overall health.
- When you are trying to move out of addiction of the various drug what alternative would you use, for example cigarettes, you would use a lollipop when you feel like smoking.
- I don't think a workshop is going to change anybody's mind about drugs/alcohol, the people that don't abuse them don't need a workshop, and the people that do will most likely not listen.
- Nope:) don't really think any workshop will stop some people doing it, so I don't know how useful one would be:) maybe stuff like in the earlier questions about general staying safe.
- Advice on how to speak to someone you think has a drug addiction and how to support them to get help.
- I feel like people aren't going to change their actions, but I want people to know that what they're doing is dangerous and actions have consequences.
- More detail and up to date sources to see and learn from (not videos from 20 years ago).
- Understanding drug use not just that its illegal.
- Really focus on vaping use and why people shouldn't vape in the toilets/corridors.
- Literally anything would be better than what we get now. We get NO education about drug and substance abuse, it's appalling.

## Identifying needs: Parents/Carers

Pre-webinar feedback from parents and carers (85 responses/ 86% sample)

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| To learn some practical strategies to help my child stay safe  | 84% |
| To learn more about factors that affect young people's decision making including adolescent brain development  | 81% |
| To get some ideas about how to have conversations with my child at home about drugs and alcohol  | 74% |
| To find out about signs to look out for to tell if my child is using drugs   | 74% |
| To learn more about the effects, risks and risk factors of drugs and alcohol   | 64% |
| To know where to go for more information and support   | 52% |
| To learn more about the law in relation to young people, drugs and alcohol   | 47% |
| Other (please specify): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Language and terminology used by young people, slang around drug names and using</li><li>• Everything looks good</li></ul> | 2%  |

### Questions:

- Vaping - how do we tackle that as parents? Nip it in the bud quickly or worry that vaping is the start of something bigger?
- What are the first signs a parent/carer should look out for when a child uses drugs or other substances?
- How to persuade someone to stop taking drugs.
- How can I help my child when her friends are taking drugs? She gets a hard time for speaking out, and as a parent I have discreetly taken action but nothing has come of this, the issue's still going on, and my child carries on with the fear her friends might end up dead. It's stressing her out.
- Why do schools appear to not be able to do anything about young people vaping?
- Where to go for keeping up to date with trends? tricks? the terms used? What is the best UK or Scotland example of a community of young people being safe not using drugs & alcohol - what are some of the key determining factors, what are they doing and how can we implement here?
- Are there certain steps you follow to find out the circumstances a child could potentially use drugs or alcohol?
- Does cannabis cause permanent mental health problems, especially when starting to take as a teenager?

## Feedback: Teachers

Feedback from teachers following initial staff training September 2023 (19 responses/ 10% sample):

- **100%** felt they knew more about the current context for young people in relation to drugs
- **79%** reported knowing more about the effects and risks of the drugs young people may use
- **79%** said they understand the factors that can increase risk of young people using and developing problems with drugs.



"I like that it had practical applications in terms of e.g. knowing risk factors to look out for and signs to look out for that young people may be taking drugs."

"I am really looking forward to the input with the pupils."

"Nice to know there are ready made resources to help with this difficult subject."

"The training was some of the most powerful and engaging that I have participated in in a long time. Thank you."

#### **Recommendations from teachers:**

- More information on the specific drugs and names, how pupils access drugs etc but do think we will get this.
- More information on the relationship between the misuse of drugs/alcohol and care-experienced young people.

#### **Teacher feedback about play performances and workshops:**

*"This was a really powerful and moving performance, delivered in a way that was accessible to the pupils and really held their attention."* **Meldrum Academy**

*What was best was "the fact that it was real and told from the point of view of those who were Dan's friends and family and others who were interviewed. It was very powerful and had real impact that it was in their words - hearing from the friends and seeing the messages made it more accessible and relatable for the pupils."* **Meldrum Academy**

*"Without exception, all young people of all age groups who have watched the play have been deeply impacted. The feedback has included that young people felt that they got to know Dan. Young people felt personally connected to both Dan and his family through the style and delivery of the play. Young people also quickly related the events of the play with their own experiences. Senior pupils in particular shared personal examples of being the young person at a party with exposure and opportunity to experiment with substances that are readily accessible.*

*"The young people who watched the play responded with an equal measure of quiet reflection and contemplation along with empowered sense of the importance of upskilling and providing excellent learning opportunities to protect lives in the future. The workshops after the play were brilliant as young people loved being able to meet the cast, engage, ask questions and devise alternative endings for the train scene. This real time solution focused technique really engaged, interested and challenged young people to think for themselves and consider that there is always another way-or way out."* **Lochside Academy**

### Recommendations from teachers:

- The performance is incredibly engaging for the adults who are supporting. I found that S3 pupils we had watching overall struggled because of their maturity levels. Whilst grasping the attention of these learners is important, I do wonder if a slightly older audience (S5 possibly) would listen and react more effectively.

### Feedback: Pupils

#### S1-6 pupils' feedback following 'I Love You, Mum – I Promise I Won't Die' and TiE workshops with TiU Theatre (207 responses/ 11% sample):

- **89%** said they'd learned more about the risks of drugs from the play and/or workshop
- **90%** said they'd learned more about the possible consequences of taking drugs
- **90%** said they'd learned more about the impact of drug use on others
- **83%** said the workshop had given them useful information and advice
- **84%** said they knew where to go to find out more
- **90%** felt they'd be able to cope with negative peer influence better
- **91%** said they would use some of the practical strategies they learned to stay safe

### What was best about the play?

“Hearing from the family themselves and seeing the life the boy lived”

“The best thing about the play was the impact it had on me and how it made me aware of the consequences of taking drugs.”

“The use of real words from people involved”

### Recommendations from pupils:

- If anyone had different ways of coping with the impact
- If anyone knew different ways to get help or get out of things they don't want to do
- For both pupils and actors to ask more questions at the end If there was more characters and not the same people playing different characters,
- I got confused at the start
- More information on what you can do if someone you know is taking drugs If the play lasted a while longer

## S1 – S4 pupils' workshop feedback (684 responses/ 9% sample)

**Percentages of pupils who reported knowing more about the following than they did before the workshop:**

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| The risks and effects of alcohol                                      | <b>88%</b> |
| The risks and effects of drugs  | <b>92%</b> |
| The impact of drug and alcohol use on other people                    | <b>90%</b> |
| Strategies to manage negative peer influence                          | <b>83%</b> |
| The law around drugs and alcohol                                      | <b>87%</b> |
| Practical strategies I can use to stay safe around drugs and alcohol  | <b>85%</b> |
| Where to find reliable and useful information about drugs and alcohol | <b>86%</b> |
| Where to go for support if I need it                                  | <b>88%</b> |

- **95%** said the information was useful, clear and easy to understand
- **86%** said It tackled some misunderstandings about drugs and alcohol
- **79%** said It changed how they see the possible risks of using drugs and alcohol
- **79%** said it changed how they see the possible consequences of using drugs and alcohol
- **88%** feel more confident about managing risks safely when they're with their friends
- **89%** will use some of the strategies they learned to keep themselves safe
- **81%** feel more confident to talk more to their parents or carers about drugs

**Has the workshop changed your ideas about using drugs?**

|                                      |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| I never intended to use drugs anyway | <b>84%</b> |
| I now never intend to use drugs      | <b>4%</b>  |
| I am now less likely to use drugs    | <b>5%</b>  |
| Prefer not to say                    | <b>7%</b>  |

### **Recommendations from pupils:**

- Maybe explained how many people die and what can happen if children took it.
- More activities to learn.
- Maybe more interaction and little bits to volunteer for.
- Maybe put us in smaller groups so we could listen better.
- Go more into detail on where to look further into stuff like this.
- A microphone to make the speaker louder.
- Include more explanation videos.
- Different people talking and helping in the presentation rather than just one.
- Make it slightly shorter, we all got restless quickly.
- If we could have more time to ask questions.
- To be shown photos of the drugs because a lot of people don't even know what they look like and could take it not knowing.

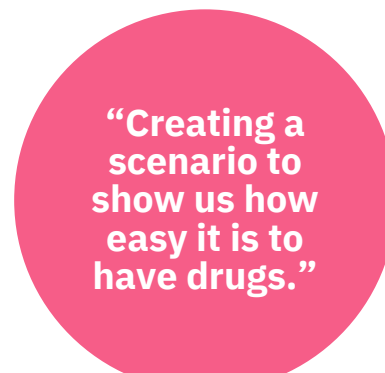
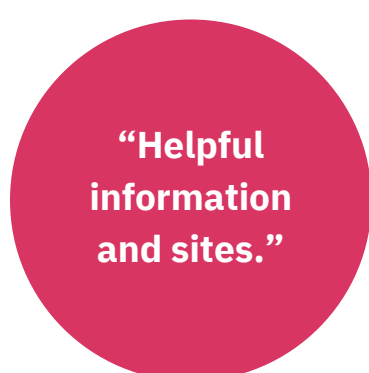
**S1-4 pupils' feedback following PSE lessons** (112 responses/ sample unspecified – year group numbers not disaggregated in data):

**Of those that covered the content specified, the percentages below reported knowing more than they did before the lessons about:**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| The risks and effects of alcohol                                       | <b>99%</b> |
| The risks and effects of smoking and vaping                            | <b>98%</b> |
| The risks and effects of cannabis                                      | <b>92%</b> |
| The risks and effects of other drugs                                   | <b>96%</b> |
| Impact of drug use on friends, family and society                      | <b>97%</b> |
| Strategies to manage negative peer influence                           | <b>97%</b> |
| The law around drugs and alcohol                                       | <b>98%</b> |
| Practical strategies I can adopt to stay safe around drugs and alcohol | <b>97%</b> |
| Where to find reliable and useful information about drugs and alcohol  | <b>94%</b> |
| Where to go for support if I need it                                   | <b>95%</b> |

- **95%** said information was useful, clear and easy to understand
- **95%** had the chance to think about their feelings, beliefs and values, and **85%** to share these with those of their peers
- **95%** said it tackled some misunderstandings about drugs and alcohol
- **83%** said it changed how they see the possible risks of using drugs and alcohol
- **85%** said it changed how they see the possible consequences of using drugs and alcohol
- **95%** felt more confident about managing risks safely when they're with their friends
- **74%** said they'll use some of the strategies they learned to keep themselves safe
- **83%** said they'd been able to talk more to their caregivers about drugs

***What was best about the lessons?***



### Recommendations from pupils:

- More interaction and questions
- Make more teamwork tasks
- More videos
- Cover a wider range of things I didn't already know

### Feedback: Parents/Carers

Parents' and carers' webinar feedback (61 responses/ 62% sample):

**Before/ after the workshop, on a scale of 1-10, how well equipped did you feel in supporting your child to make safer choices about drugs? (1 - not at all, 10 - very)**

Before = avg 5.3

After = avg 8.2

- **84%** know more about the substances available to young people today
- **79%** know more about the risks and risk factors of drugs
- **84%** understand better the factors that affect young people's decision making
- **59%** know more about the law in relation to young people and drugs
- **82%** feel more confident to have conversations with their child at home about drugs
- **80%** know what signs to look out for to tell if their child is using drugs
- **84%** will use some of the practical strategies learned to help their children stay safe
- **84%** know where to go for more information and support

**"Thanks so much - I've been on loads of drugs awareness and this has been the most informative."**

**"Really useful session, thank you. I did not feel like I had up to date knowledge about drugs or how to broach the subject with my children. I now feel more equipped in how to try to have discussions."**

**"Such a comprehensive and valuable webinar. I thought it was all brilliantly helpful but particularly the practical strategies for helping my child have confidence to get out of dangerous situations."**

**"It was absolutely packed with information and really useful and practical advice. It was presented in a very empathetic manner."**

### **Recommendations from parents:**

- Any local police information about any particular drug that is causing issues in our own areas.
- Maybe have a small break halfway through as it's a lot of information to take in.
- Longer time.

## **Discussion Points**

### **Staff**

- How to pitch PSE lessons is an issue – various needs have been noted and supported by the pilot programme.
- Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers engage most, with others too, which creates multi-layered knowledge and a support infrastructure, but also demonstrates institutional ‘buy-in’. Staff were more confident after workshops – we need to
- Explore what makes a difference in greater detail.

### **Pupils**

- Alcohol/vaping are the biggest problem according to self-report, but various drugs are also on their radars.
- The programme clearly has an impact, but what is having that impact remains unclear/mixed – we need to dig deeper into what works, for whom and in what context.

**Parents/Carers** Various priorities were identified – parents ranked different aspects of the programme as most important, but felt more knowledgeable after participating. In terms of future programme development, interests in local trends on substance use and support available were highlighted.

### **Additional feedback**

#### **Olwen Fraser, Quality Improvement Officer, Aberdeenshire Council**

“Instantly taken by the quality of all the elements but also the commitment and passion of everyone involved to make a difference. As an educator, what strikes me most is quality of the programme, the wide range of resources and the learning experience for the young people as a result. DSM provide input and support that allows schools to deliver a high-quality universal level of learning & teaching in relation to substance use, peer pressure and choices. Learning that is necessary for all young people but, we know, will be essential for some.

It is clear that this work has been developed and designed by a teacher and people that understand what young people need. The attention to detail and evidence base, and the research the sits behind it both in relation to what is known about substances and substance use but also pedagogy, learning, teaching and age appropriate approaches. The layered approach provides training and information for parents, teachers and adults working with young people at different times, and wraps around direct DSM input in the form of the play and workshops.

The quality, knowledge and commitment of all of the team and the way they build relationships and create a safe trusting environment for learning is first class. The actors are much more than that – they are skilled facilitators that are relatable and responsive to the young people in front of them.

The feedback from the teachers and young people themselves has been universally positive. Schools find the resources and live work relatable; the play has been contextualised for a Scottish audience. The messaging is right with an emphasis on choices & building capacity to make decisions and choices that can be broadly applied, rather than on the substances themselves.

The young people themselves are building on the work and taking forward action that they see is needed in their communities: One school (ambassadors) are developing a toolkit with sign posting to resources for their peers (will be shared). With my colleagues, we are sharing our learning and experience this year and planning how we will build on the success of the programme and growing the reach of this important universal offer.”

**Hannah Scriven, Guidance Teacher, Lochside Academy, Aberdeen**

“The impact of the DSMF Pilot Programme this year has been phenomenal. I have never been involved in a programme of work that has resonated with everyone on both a personal and professional level with recognition for the importance of protecting, empowering and working with our young people at their level, meeting them where they are to help protect them from harm.

This is by far the most impactful, positive, research informed, practical and pupil driven learning opportunity that I have been involved with. Fiona is an incredible driving force for good, that despite such personal anguish so many lives have been helped to make informed choices to preserve lives.”

## Youth Ambassadors

All the schools have embraced this programme very positively, and those that were unable to implement it this year have recruitment plans in place for next year. Recruitment and training fits well into the end of the summer term when pupils have moved up into their next year groups. Some of the Aberdeenshire schools had previously involved younger pupils in Crew 2000 Just Say Know training and have used the YA programme as progression for these pupils. Schools that also provide Mentors Against Violence are introducing the DSM Foundation YA programme alongside this as an option for seniors. One school is planning to align the programme with their new anti-bullying policy, and two of the schools are considering YAs running workshops for younger year groups next year.

### **Examples of some of the activities of Youth Ambassadors during the pilot include:**

- Delivering DSM Foundation Mission Transition workshops to P7 pupils in three local primary schools;
- Producing input for S1 parents' evening, and displays for other parents' evenings;
- Going out on patrol with prefects and being the 'eyes and ears' for staff, picking up any issues, e.g. snus;
- Holding an evening for the community to talk about their role, and inviting people like local coaches, guide leaders etc;
- Creating a booklet of signposting and advice for young people;
- Being involved in training up the next year's cohort of YAs.

“The senior pupils who signed up to be Ambassadors felt that it was almost a duty of care to themselves and younger students to increase awareness around the risk and importance of personal decision making and having a way out of opportunities/external pressures to experiment. Some of the young people who ‘signed up’ had personal experience through their own families, their boyfriend/girlfriend, friends being impacted by reliance on substance use and felt strongly about helping others. The uptake of Ambassadors has been the greatest in numbers out of any comparable leadership roles on offer in the senior phase reflecting the personal impact and mission to empower others.

Something important to the senior Ambassadors has been to be there for their age-related peers as well as ‘youngers’. They were clear that their role was to be there for others, be a source of information but also to be clear that they had check-in support from the school lead in relation to disclosures and passing on concerning information disclosed. A platform and group meeting context has been important to share experiences, conversations and challenges as a group for mutual support and an open platform to reflect on their own personal journeys.

It has been an honour to support young people and wonderful to see the pride, the passion, the drive and determination of young people for how important this Programme is. Rarely do young people have exposure to learning opportunities that evoke such an emotional reaction but also kindle a fire of passion for moving forward and what they can do as individuals and collectively.” **Hannah Scriven, Lochside Academy**

### **Dissemination event, University of Aberdeen, 6th June 2024**

On 6th June 2024, the DSM Foundation hosted a dissemination event at the University of Aberdeen to share the outcomes of the Grampian pilot. 74 attended in person and 39 attended online. In addition to presentations from Dr Haruna Musa and Dr Heather May Martin as the University of Aberdeen evaluation team, delegates also heard from Fiona Spargo-Mabbs, Police Scotland, a local authority, school staff and pupils.



# Schedule

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 11:00 - 11:05 | <b>Welcome and opening</b><br><b>Dr Heather Morgan Dean</b> for Enterprise and Innovation, Senior Lecturer in Applied Health Sciences, University of Aberdeen   |
| 11:05 - 11:10 | <b>Ministerial keynote</b><br><b>Christina McKelvie</b> , Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy   |
| 11:10 - 11:20 | <b>Introduction</b><br><b>Fiona Spargo-Mabbs OBE</b> , Director and Founder, DSM Foundation   |
| 11:20 - 11:35 | <b>Police Scotland perspective</b><br><b>DC Stuart Ritchie</b> , SCD National SOC Interventions Unit, Specialist Crime Division. <b>DS Scott McKay, North East Division</b> – Interventions and Crime Reduction, Partnerships, Preventions, Interventions and Events. <b>Senior Police Scotland representative.</b>   |
| 11:35 - 11:55 | <b>Evaluation of the DSM Foundation Grampian drug education pilot</b><br><b>Dr Heather Morgan</b> , Dean for Enterprise and Innovation, Senior Lecturer in Applied Health Sciences, University of Aberdeen and <b>Haruna Musa</b> , MSc student, University of Aberdeen.  |
| 11:55 - 12:20 | <b>Students, schools and local authorities' feedback</b><br><b>Olwen Fraser</b> , Quality Improvement Officer, Aberdeenshire Council, Education and Children's Services<br><b>Ian Jackson</b> , Headteacher, Meldrum Academy.<br><b>Lynn Jex</b> , Guidance Lead, Keith Grammar School, Moray<br><b>Hannah Scriven</b> , Guidance Lead, Lochside Academy.<br><b>Youth Ambassadors</b> – Banff Academy, Aberdeenshire; Buckie High School, Moray; Portlethen Academy, Aberdeenshire. |
| 12:20 - 1:25  | <b>'I Love You, Mum – I Promise I Won't Die' – a play by Mark Wheeler</b><br>Premier showing of Scottish filmed production by Tie It Up Theatre <b>With David Chafer</b> , Co-Founder and Producer, TiU Theatre   |
| 1:25 - 1:55   | <b>Lunch, networking and visiting stands</b>  |
| 1:55 - 2:15   | <b>Q&amp;A, and pannel discussion</b>   |
| 2:15 - 2:20   | <b>Future Plans</b><br><b>Fiona Spargo-Mabbs</b>  |
| 2:20 - 2:25   | <b>Action planning</b>  |
| 2:25 - 2:30   | <b>Close and thanks</b>   |

## Feedback: Delegates



All respondents believe drug education is extremely important (95%) or important (5%) as part of wider work to prevent drug-related harm in Scotland, and that it's important to involve parents and carers in drug education.



Less than a third (29%) of respondents consider drug education currently prepares young people in Scotland to make safer decisions about drugs, and 55% felt it is ineffective or very ineffective.



Less than one in five (19%) of respondents think teachers feel well trained and equipped to deliver drug education effectively in schools, and only one in four (24%) felt other professionals working with young people are well trained and supported enough to enable them to make safer decisions about drugs.



### How do you think the DSMF drug education programme could benefit children and young people in Scotland?

|  | Strongly agree/ agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree/ strongly disagree | Don't know/ n/a |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| It would be effective in enhancing current provision   | 98%                   | 2%                         | 0%                          | 0%              |
| It would benefit my school/ families /organisation/ local authority                                  | 96%                   | 2%                         | 0%                          | 2%              |
| CPD offered by DSMF would make me more knowledgeable around drug education/ issues for young people. | 96%                   | 2%                         | 0%                          | 2%              |
| CPD offered by DSMF would make me more confident around drug education/ issues for young people.     | 94%                   | 2%                         | 0%                          | 4%              |



“Great programme and should be available across educational establishments in Scotland.”



“Thank you, will be recommending to everyone to see the play and get involved in this incredible foundation.”



“Remarkable courage from a Mum who has lost her son but turned his tragic death into a life preventing this from happening to others.”



“Fantastic film with the Scottish cast. Every school needs DSMF drug education!”

## Future plans

Planning meetings with each of the pilot schools are underway, with all of the pilot schools intending to continue to deliver the programme in the coming academic year. An autumn tour of the Scottish production of the play with Tie It Up Theatre from October 2024 is currently taking bookings, with its duration dependent on potential sources of funding.

A new part-time DSM Foundation Drug Education Coordinator (0.4FTE), Don Thomas, will begin in August 2024, based in Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire. Don will work directly with schools, develop and strengthen networks and connections, and extend our work in Scotland, working alongside the core team based in London who will continue to provide leadership and to coordinate bookings and play tours as part of our overall provision.

The University of Aberdeen is exploring potential funding opportunities and partnerships with a view to devising a fully-funded research project in 2025. The Applied Health Sciences placement programme will continue to work with the DSM Foundation in the meantime.

## Report authors

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