DSM Foundation unveils new values: compassion, connection, quality

Tuesday 27 May, 2025

Compassion, Connection, Quality – the values that define who we are, and how we do what we do.

As a charity founded in response to the loss of a young life to drugs, the work of the DSM Foundation has always been driven by a strong sense of values – a belief that harm to young people can and must be prevented, and that our work can and must do that, and do it as well as we possibly can. The Foundation was born out of love – the love of parents for a boy who should never have died, and their passionate commitment to spare any other family going through anything similar. And what better day to launch our refreshed values than on that boy's birthday.

We worked on our values a couple of years after starting the DSM Foundation, and came up with three words that we felt best encapsulated our work – Engage, Inform, Empower. We engage young people through creative approaches and effective drug education. We provide them with evidence-based, relevant information about the effects and risks drugs can have. We empower them with decision-making skills, and safety and support-seeking strategies. However, although this remains a very valid description of *what we do*, we wanted to develop this further to communicate *who we are* - our identity as a charity.

Having taken time aside with the trustees and the team, to reflect, consider and discuss together what's most important to us all, the long list of words we drew up to start with was honed down to three clear concepts: **Compassion, Connection and Quality**.

Everything we do is driven by **compassion** – we care deeply about young people staying safe, and prioritise a non-judgemental, trauma-informed and respectful approach at all times, recognising the unique strengths and vulnerabilities of adolescence.

We work through **connection** – first and foremost creating the connection with young people that will enable us to make the most difference for them, and with the important adults of influence in their lives, in their homes, in their schools and colleges, in their community. We want to establish strong connections with every setting and organisation and stakeholder we work with, and we want to create meaningful connections between the people we work with too. We can do what we do so much better when we do it together.

Finally, and equally importantly, **quality** is of vital importance to us – ensuring our practice is evidence-based, and evaluated, and validated, that it uses the most reliable, current data and research, and that it listens to the voices of young people, so we can know what we're doing is as effective as we can make it. It's too important not to do it as well as it can be done - we may only get one opportunity to make a difference to any one young person.

This is who we are – a small charity with a big heart, that values compassion, connection and quality. We are Team Dan.

Information for editors:

The DSM Foundation is a drug education charity established in 2014 following the death of 16 year old Daniel Spargo-Mabbs from an accidental overdose of ecstasy. His family felt that he simply hadn't known enough to be able to make decisions that would keep him safe, and realized there was a huge gap in the resources and support available to schools, so set up the charity in order to spare other families going through what they had experienced.

The aim of the DSM Foundation is to provide young people with relevant, age-appropriate, up to date and evidence-based information about drugs so they develop the skills to make choices that will keep themselves and their friends as safe as possible. To this end, the charity is currently working in almost 750 schools, colleges and community organisations with children and young people, and also provides workshops for parents and caregivers, and training for school and college staff – the two groups shown by NHS survey data as the most likely sources of information about drugs and alcohol sought out by 11-15 year olds. Educational settings are also able to access "I Love You Mum, I Promise I Won't Die", a verbatim play by Mark Wheeller that was commissioned by the charity to tell Dan's story in the words of his family and friends, through studying the work itself (sometimes due to it being a GCSE Drama set

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text on the Eduqas syllabus), or booking a Theatre in Education performance. Schools and colleges can also download age-appropriate, relevant, up to date and evidence-based drugs education lesson resources free of charge from the DSM Foundation website for delivery by teachers through PSHE/PSE provision.

For more information about the DSM Foundation, go to https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/.

Media enquiries about this press release or the work of the DSM Foundation should be sent to media@dsmfoundation.org.uk.

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