

The Risk-Avert Evaluation Executive Summary

The Training Effect funded an independent evaluation of the Risk-Avert Programme, an early intervention programme designed for year 8's.

The evaluation was completed and published in January 2017.

This pack contains the evaluation's executive summary, an illustrative overview of the key findings and biographies of the evaluation team.

To read the full evaluation report please [click here](#).

If you would like to find more about Risk-Avert please contact us:

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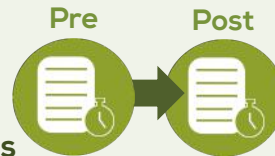
The Training Effect funded an independent evaluation of its award winning Risk-Avert Programme.

Risk-Avert is a **targeted early intervention programme** designed for **year 8 pupils** (aged between 12 & 13)



The evaluation of Risk-Avert used a **mixed methodology approach** where **qualitative** and **quantitative** data was collected

Academic measures were completed **before and after** Risk-Avert by **young people** and **professionals**



Focus groups were held to gain the **thoughts and experiences** of **young people** and **professionals** following their participation in Risk-Avert

For young people

They had a more **informed perception** and **awareness of risk**



They had an **improved understanding** of the **early warning signs** and showed **improved solutions** to **real-world problems**



They **understood the decision making process** better and **took more responsibility** for their actions



The impact of Risk-Avert

Of the young people who completed Risk-Avert



For schools



Teaching staff and pupils identified greater affiliation to a **shared school culture** and **more connectedness** within their schools

Staff and pupils both agreed that their **relationships had improved**, citing **growth in communication, confidence and trust**



The Risk-Avert Executive Summary

The Programme

- Risk-Avert is a six session programme that contributes to the health and well-being of young people by empowering them to manage risks to achieve positive outcomes. This innovative approach focuses on the drivers behind behaviour and on supporting young people to develop practical skills to effectively manage day to day risks that they encounter in their young lives. In doing so, it represents a departure from traditional 'information deficit' assumptions about young people's abilities to cope with risks.
- Risk-Avert comprises an online screening questionnaire and six sessions of classroom workshops that are delivered by teaching staff. It is designed for year 8 pupils (aged between 12 and 13 years) and aims to facilitate an increase in awareness and informed decision making about engaging in risks. The programme also hopes to support young people to achieve increased self-efficacy, well-being and resilience, where these psychosocial outcomes are compromised in the first instance.
- Risk-Avert integrates into the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) national education curriculum that is delivered in secondary schools in England. A training programme and set of evidence based resources are available for school staff. Schools can access valuable information about the risks that their pupils take in individual, school, family and community contexts via infograms. Currently local authorities and schools in the UK can commission the Risk-Avert programme.

The Evaluation

- An evaluation was conducted between 2015 and 2016 via independent researchers who have honorary positions at the University of Bath and the University of Suffolk.
- It was essential that the evaluation was embedded into everyday practice and did not adversely impact on teaching or school activities. A before and after evaluation design was used to enable change over time in the programme outcomes to be measured. Published questionnaires, interviews and focus groups were used as methods for data collection.

- The pupil and teaching staff samples were drawn from seven secondary schools based in Essex and Medway. In total, 68 pupils participated in focus groups and 59 were also able to complete the outcome measure questionnaires. A total of 14 interviews were conducted with teaching staff.

The Findings

- There were statistically significant increases in well-being and in resilience – the pupil's perceptions that they can cope with life's stresses and thrive in terms of relationships and personal functioning. These outcomes strongly suggest that when integrated into the wider PSHE curriculum, the Risk-Avert programme makes an important contribution to young people's social and emotional development.
- When schools engaged fully with staff training and supported the delivery of Risk-Avert, especially at senior managerial levels, the findings indicate strong support for the programme. A pattern emerged where pupils who engaged fully with the programme reported a newly informed perception and greater awareness about risk, alongside the confidence to manage negative and positive risks. In addition to salient changes in risk management, on average there were also improvements in self-efficacy – the pupil's belief that they can cope with tasks or adversity in life.
- Further additional benefits were also found for schools and staff. The evaluation found that as a result of Risk-Avert delivery, teaching staff and pupils identified greater alignment to a shared school culture and more connectedness with their schools. Improved communication, confidence and trust between staff and pupils were cited with specific examples to underscore these positive outcomes in focus groups and interviews
- Overall, the evaluation advocates continued delivery and evaluation of the Risk-Avert programme as a useful and relevant resource to support pupils to manage risks effectively and therefore to be better prepared to engage with opportunities, responsibilities and experiences for later life.

The Evaluation Team

Claire Russell

Claire Russell is a researcher who trained at the University of Bath and Harvard University. With a background in foreign aid work in South Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Claire has been enthusiastic about the application of evidence-based practice to the development of health interventions that successfully meet people's needs at the point of delivery.

Whilst studying at Harvard University, Claire worked as a senior research assistant and teaching fellow. On return to the UK, Claire was a researcher at the University of Bath Mental Health Research and Development Unit. With a focus on alcohol and drug interventions Claire's key research skills included conducting evaluations, needs assessments and systematic literature reviews. She is particularly interested in mixed method qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Currently, Claire is an honorary lecturer in the department of Psychology at the University of Bath and a founding member of the Child and Adolescent Risk and Resilience Research Group, which is chaired by Dr Joiner.

She has worked as an independent consultant on a project with prisoners, at-risk families and young people who experience problematic substance use, homelessness and domestic violence. The projects were funded by the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Health and the Home Office and the findings have been disseminated at international peer reviewed conferences. Claire enjoys collaborations and is a lead evaluator on the Amy Winehouse Foundation Resilience Programme. This is a five-year alcohol and drug education programme that is delivered in secondary school pupils in England. By embracing online and mobile app completion of outcome measures, Claire includes a culturally relevant approach to engage young people and previously hard to reach cohorts in social research which have the ambition of applying the outcomes learned from projects to inform psycho-social and educational interventions and service development for young people.

Jenny McWhirter

Dr Jenny McWhirter is an independent researcher and author. She has nearly 30 years of experience in research, curriculum development and evaluation in primary and secondary schools, mainly concerning PSHE education and other interventions promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Jenny taught at the School of Education and in the Medical School at Southampton University, and was responsible for the multidisciplinary MSc in Health Education with Health Promotion. She was also a member of the secondary PGCE team, contributing a special study on Citizenship and PSHE education.

Subsequently Jenny has worked in the voluntary sector as education adviser for two national charities. Jenny particularly enjoys working with teachers and other practitioners whether in the classroom, in youth work settings or in drug and alcohol services. Recently her research has been with children and family members affected by substance misuse.

Jenny is recognised for her innovative research with children and young people. She is the co-author, with Nick Boddington, and Adrian King, of a book 'Understanding PSHE Education in Primary Schools', which was published by Sage in April 2014. The companion book, 'Understanding PSHE education in Secondary Schools' was published in November 2016.

Andrew McWhirter

Andrew McWhirter is a teacher, writer and researcher. Having spent a number of years as a primary school teacher in South London, Andrew now works for the Hackney Pirates, a literacy charity focused on raising the attainment and confidence of young people in the Hackney Borough. He recently completed an MA in Children's literature at Goldsmiths University for which he received a distinction. His MA focus on qualitative research into the perspectives of children and young people on their multi-ethnic communities lead him to this position as an evaluator with Risk Avert.