



The Evaluation of Speak Out Stay Safe (TESSE): Briefing Paper for Primary Schools

Who is this briefing paper for?

This paper summarises the findings from the independent evaluation of the NSPCC's Speak Out Stay Safe Programme (SOSS) and is aimed at primary school Head Teachers and Safeguarding Leads. It will also be useful for all those involved in commissioning, designing and delivering Relationships Education and PSHE.

Why is it important?

Relationships Education or its equivalent is delivered in schools across the UK and became a statutory part of the curriculum in primary schools in England in September 2020. Learning from this evaluation can assist schools in delivering this important aspect of children's learning and development.

The NSPCC's Speak Out Stay Safe (SOSS) programme for primary school children aims to increase children's awareness and understanding of abuse and harm and enable them to seek help from a trusted adult. It consists of a manualised programme comprising a school assembly for Key Stage 1 (KS1) children and Key Stage 2 (KS2) children followed by a one-hour workshop for KS2 pupils only *. Different assembly presentations are delivered to KS1 and KS2 children by NSPCC staff or trained volunteers.

TESSE examined the impact of SOSS on children's understanding of abuse and harm and their help-seeking behaviour. The UK-wide evaluation involved more than 1500 children from schools across the UK. Schools where children received SOSS were matched with comparison schools that did not receive the programme. Outcome data was collected at three points: at baseline (40 intervention and 34 comparison schools); immediately post-programme; and at six-months follow-up (19 intervention and 17 comparison schools). The evaluation also captured the experiences of children, teachers, NSPCC volunteers and staff.

* Different terminology is used in Scotland and Northern Ireland to describe children in the age groups 5-7 years and 7-11 years who also receive the SOSS programme and who participated in this evaluation.

Children's Outcomes - Key Findings

- Prior to the SOSS programme, some children had gaps in their knowledge of harm and abuse, particularly neglect and sexual abuse.
- Six months after the programme was delivered, KS2 children who had received SOSS had improved their knowledge of different forms of harm and abuse, especially neglect, and this change was attributed to the SOSS programme.
- KS2 children who had received SOSS were also more likely than children who had not received SOSS to be able to identify a trusted adult who they would tell about abuse or harm.
- Both KS1 and KS2 children improved their knowledge of the Childline helpline number due to SOSS.
- KS1 children did not however experience the same benefits as KS2 children, this may be because they received a shorter version of the programme.
- Readiness to seek help also improved for a substantial minority of children who had particularly low knowledge of different types of harm and channels of support beforehand.

Children's and School Staff's Experiences of SOSS

- Children and school staff described the SOSS programme as important and relevant. One child commented:

"...everybody needs to know because it [can] happen to everybody".

Another noted:

"...some people in our class have been going through sort of things like wanting to phone Childline and such."

- Children and teachers found the programme's visual and interactive approach engaging. One child noted that:
"Assembly could be boring, but they added games into it, they added like questions that everybody got a chance to answer, so everybody did answer. They didn't say 'no I've not got time for that', everybody got to answer..."
- Older children spoke positively about the support they received from teachers who attended the workshops with them.
- Headteachers and safeguarding leads interviewed six months after the programme suggested that children felt more confident in speaking to a member of staff regarding concerns following delivery of SOSS.
- The study also found evidence that SOSS succeeded in strengthening the confidence and skills that teachers need to respond effectively to children who ask for help with their experiences of abuse or harm.
- Although NSPCC facilitators provided schools with pre-programme information, classroom staff were often unprepared for SOSS. School staff also stated that more follow-up materials would enable SOSS messages to be sustained.

- The SOSS programme had most impact in schools where children saw their school positively and reported that they could talk to staff if they had a problem and would expect to receive help, indicating the importance of a 'whole school' approach.
- The TESSE study recommended that teachers be engaged more fully in programme delivery as this would enable them to repeat and embed programme messages.



Please contact **Professor Nicky Stanley** (NStanley@uclan.ac.uk) for more information on the evaluation. SOSS is now available online for all primary schools in the UK and Channel Islands, to allow for safe and flexible delivery in the classroom. Sign up to access an online assembly introduced by Ant and Dec, plus supporting teaching materials with plenty of engaging activities, at: nspcc.org.uk/speakout

The full report and executive summary are available at:
<http://clck.uclan.ac.uk/39660/>

