

Kidscape ZAP assertiveness course for children who have been bullied

1. Why support children who are bullied?

Children consistently rate bullying as one of the most important personal issues facing them. It infringes their rights and damages their childhoods. For those caught up in it, the consequences for their education, health, safety, positive social engagement and economic well-being can be serious and may be severe and long-lasting(1) (Taken from 'Journeys; Primary age children talk about bullying', Report by the Children's Commissioner 2006).. Recent research by Ofsted (No place for bullying, June 2012) suggests that bullying is the second most common worry that pupils said they had felt before joining their secondary school.

2. What is Kidscape ZAP assertiveness skills and why should we train children in these skills?

The course was developed by Kidscape in 1999 using a range of assertiveness skills that were well known. It is a one-day intensive session providing young people with the skills and support to prevent them from being bullied. It is most appropriate for children in Year 5 upwards. The many components can be presented as several small sessions

After ZAP, Kidscape suggest that children should have:

- (a) more strategies for dealing with conflict and cruelty
- (b) greater likelihood of success in personal relationships
- © enhanced self-esteem
- (d) reduced likelihood of truancy or self-harm and
- (e) a more active role in school and wider community.

Kidscape's research based on 179 children from Greater London area who took part in ZAP in 2001 found the following key findings:

- 79% of ZAP participants reported that they were no longer being bullied.
- Of those still bullied, 80% were bullied less and 90% felt more able to deal with it
- 94% said they could stand up for themselves better
- 65% felt more confident
- 83% reported an improvement in self-esteem
- 87% said they had used the skills learnt during ZAP, and encouragingly 44% went on to develop anti-bullying strategies of their own
- Truancy was reduced significantly. Only 2% stayed away from school after ZAP compared with 50% before
- The number of children who reported feeling depressed reduced from 92% to 35%

Norfolk was involved with Kidscape in a DCSF Project in 2010. Rita Adair has subsequently trained over 200 staff (teachers, teaching assistants, voluntary organisations and PSAs) to deliver Kidscape ZAP training with children and young people. In addition about 220 children have been provided Kidscape ZAP training by Rita Adair. In addition staff who have been trained by Rita have provided training to children and young people. Many high schools include a component of ZAP training on their Year 6 intake days as they realise that many children will be anxious about bullying on transfer. Some Parent Support Advisers (PSAs) have trained Year 6s in their cluster prior to high school and commented that schools think this is an excellent way of preparing children for high school. Other staff have advised that they have provided the training for vulnerable children in school in smaller groups to ensure they have the practice they need.

In Norfolk those children who have trained with Rita Adair have been asked to comment on the usefulness of the training directly after the training and 3 months after. Our results confirm the findings of Kidscape and indicate that 80% of those who responded had not been bullied again. See Appendix of a Norfolk child and parent's evaluation of ZAP training.

Norfolk is committed to becoming a Restorative Authority by 2015 (CSP p. 65). Kidscape ZAP is a restorative approach as it teaches children to deal with bullying in an assertive rather than an aggressive way. It is therefore an approach we should be promoting with children and young people.

How can ZAP support children in your cluster/school?

There are different training packages on offer for schools in Norfolk. These are as follows:

1. Small group training

Full day training session for up to 8 vulnerable pupils i.e. those who have been severely bullied. The training would involve parents/carers as well and there would be an expectation of at least two support staff attending. Costs need to include a pizza lunch for both children and parents who attend.

2. Training for a whole class.

This could be a whole morning activity or a whole day's activity. It is particularly useful for Year 6 children in preparation for their high school transfer.

3. Training for staff to enable them to deliver the skills to children in your school

This would need at least a three hour session of training. Maximum group size would be no more than 25.

If your school would like a further discussion on ZAP training for children or staff. Please do get in touch with Rita Adair

Contact details

Rita Adair, Senior Lead Educational Psychologist

Email: rita.adair@norfolk.gov.uk Telephone: 01603 307567

Appendix 1: Child's and parent's response to ZAP training delivered in August 2013

Emily:

"The Zap course was brilliant! I've always find it so hard to find the confidence to talk to people who I don't know very well, especially people who are nasty to me. The course was hard because I had to do things that I try to avoid doing, like looking people in the eye and thinking of things to say back and practice doing it in a way that sounded like I meant it. This was really difficult for me, but all the people who helped at the course were so nice that I tried my hardest. It was helpful to meet people who felt the same way as me and talk about how some people are just nasty to you for no reason or because they are just not nice people, rather than there being something wrong with me. Starting High School has been scary, but much easier than it would have been if I hadn't done Zap. I read through the stuff we were given the day before I started so I could remember it, and it really helped. I was more confident and found it easier to talk to people I had not met before. I think people would not find it so easy to bully me now".

Parent:

"As a parent I have found it very difficult to support my child through challenging friendship issues; which have on occasion developed into bullying. I worry that my daughter doesn't seem to have enough confidence and self-esteem to think people would want to be-friend her, let alone stand up to those who are using her as an 'easy victim' for their bullying. Zap gave my child the chance to develop some practical skills such as eye contact, body language, tone of voice etc. It also gave her the opportunity to put those skills into practice in some mock-confrontational scenarios, without feeling under threat from an actual bully. It was amazing as a parent to return in the afternoon and watch my daughter putting into practice what she had learned, and be talked through some very useful tips to be able to support her more effectively at home. She has seemed so much more confident starting High School than I could have imagined. I really feel that Zap is to thank for this. She has even been making new friends because she has developed the social skills and confidence to approach people and talk to them. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"