

## Kidscape ZAP assertiveness training for LAC children

### Background Information

*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 (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.

Children who are Looked After are a particularly vulnerable group to bullying. Research indicates that children who have been abused or neglected by their parents are consistently more likely than others to experience bullying, discrimination, or being made to feel different by their peers. For example, 70% of those who were sexually abused by parents were also bullied by other children. 60% of those who were physically abused by parents, and 58% of those who experienced absence of physical care, also reported being bullied Cawson, P (2002).

Following on from the success of Kidscape ZAP assertiveness training for children who are bullied and training of staff to teach children these skills, it was felt that a number of LAC children would benefit from such training and following discussion between Rita Adair, Senior Lead Educational Psychologist, EPSS with Tricia Ciappara, Deputy Head for the Virtual School for Children in Care, in the spring term 2013, it was agreed that Rita would run two day courses (one primary and one secondary) for such children in the summer holidays 2013.

### How was team involved?

Rita has trained over 250 staff who work with children in an adapted version of the Kidscape ZAP course which teaches bullied children the assertiveness skills to deal with it. Since 2009 there have been courses run in holiday times for children who have been identified as being severely bullied. Referrals tend to come from school staff or occasionally parents.

### Methodology

ZAP assertiveness courses are generally one day courses although school staff tend to break up into smaller sessions. Tricia Ciappara requested potential referrals from parents, foster carers and social workers working with children who are Looked After. An application form was completed and sent to Rita Adair. Only children who it was felt fitted the brief of being bullied were invited to attend the day course. Parents/carers/social workers are invited to join for a pizza lunch and to stay for the afternoon and learn about how they can support their child in using some of the assertiveness skills taught.

Rita Adair  
Senior Lead Educational Psychologist  
November 2013

Children learn all the skills in the morning through a practical workshop and then practice the skills in the afternoon before showing their parents what they have learned. They are given packs to take away which hopefully reinforce the skills they have learned. Questionnaires are given before and after the training and there is follow up three months later to find out if they have retained the skills.

Skills taught include:

- (a) Knowing how to keep safe in their environment i.e. improving their visual skills and shouting 'No!'
- (b) Non-verbal behaviour and how to use to their bodies to make themselves appear confident
- (c) Knowing what to say to verbal taunts. Skills taught include fogging, broken record and creative responses.
- (d) Knowing how to seek help from adults and peers

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 bullying. 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.

## **Partners involved**

Listed below are the partners involved. Tricia was instrumental to organizing the overall event with Rita. All bar Tricia supported the training of the children on either one or both of the days. Such is the interest in supporting these children that two Teaching Assistants asked if they could attend to improve their training skills.

Rita Adair, Senior Lead Educational Psychologist

Susan Wilkinson, Educational Psychologist

Jo and Ruth, Teaching Assistants, George White Junior

Tricia Ciappara, Deputy Head for the Virtual School for Children in Care

Specialist Support Assistants: Sheena Canning, Claire Seiboth, Maureen Steward

Parents/Foster Carers/Social Workers

## **Evidence of impact**

### **(a) Changes in confidence as rated by the children**

Children complete questionnaires before and after the training. On the basis of this all children commented that they were more confident about being able to deal with bullying, helping someone who is being bullied and knowing how to deal with bullying at high school. Of the 11 children who attended (8 girls and 3 boys aged from Year 6 to Year 10) the results are as follows:

#### **(i) If you were being bullied how confident would you be about dealing with it:**

5 children – moved from 'not confident' to 'very confident'  
4 children – moved from 'not confident' to 'confident'  
1 child – moved from 'confident' to 'very confident'  
1 child remained not confident before and after training

This suggests that 91% increased their confidence as a result of the training

#### **(ii) How confident do you feel about helping someone who is being bullied**

2 children moved from 'not confident' to 'confident'  
5 children moved from 'confident' to 'very confident'  
3 children remained confident  
1 child moved from confident to not confident

This is interesting because apart from one boy, most children in the group suggest they are confident about helping others. 64 % shifted in confidence level and the biggest shift was 19 % who changed from being 'not confident' in supporting to be able to support others.

#### **(iii) If you were bullied at high school how confident are you that you could deal with it?**

5 children moved from 'not confident' to 'confident'  
2 children moved from 'not confident' to 'very confident'  
3 moved from 'confident' to 'very confident'  
1 child remained confident

I.e. 91% shifted their confidence level and of these 64% moved from not being confident to either confident or very confident.

## **After the training I received the following quotes from a parent and their daughter:**

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!"

**Josie Wells | Healthy Norfolk Schools**

## **Improved outcomes**

Children were asked to advise if they knew how to use certain skills:

9 out of 11 children i.e. 91 % who answered 'no' to all the different skills prior to the training, gave a 'yes' to all the areas after the training i.e.

- Keeping safe in your environment
- The right eye contact
- Confident body language
- Shouting 'No'
- Broken CD
- Fogging
- Using creative responses

Of the other two children, one said 'yes' to everything except 'shouting no' and the other child appeared to copy exactly what they had said prior to the training suggesting they did not fully understand the question.

## **How was the voice of the child included?**

The training is interactive and as children become more confident they are asked to give specific examples of how they are bullied. There were diverse reasons: race, bereavement (two of the children who attended had parents who had died recently), issues relating to appearance such as size, hair and facial features and being in care.

The whole group then helps them by coming up with scripts. Children are given frequent opportunities to practice the techniques they have learned in a safe environment. Part of the agreed rules is that there are 'no put downs'.

At the end of the training children are asked to evaluate the training they have received. Their responses below indicate how much they both enjoyed and learned from it.:

"It was really interesting and fun and it has helped me with bullying and how to be in the future".

"The activity was enjoying. The food was amazing".

"It was good and I found that it really helped".

"I think all the strategies about bullying really helped me and it was all wonderful".

"It was very good because I learnt how to react and what to say when I am being bullied".

"Excellent".

## **Further comments**

This was a small cohort of children but it was an incredibly powerful day and the changes in the children were very visible to all those who supported the training. At times it was very emotional given the children's circumstances but even children who initially were reluctant to participate joined in fully by the end and one boy who had been quite difficult to manage behaviourally gave Rita a 'high five' at the end. This was also a boy who nearly broke down when he admitted that he was teased because his father had died.

Further training for other LAC children is planned next summer holiday.