



STUDY REFERENCE: C/ADEPIS08

Programme name

Risk-Avert Programme

Contact details

Mark Bowles,
Director
The Training Effect
mark@thetrainingeffect.co.uk

Programme Description

Risk-Avert was developed by Essex County Council and The Training Effect (a provider of school-based interventions focusing on risk-taking behaviours, emotional health, wellbeing and PSHE). It is a multicomponent school based intervention targeting secondary school children aged 12 and 13 years old. The programme seeks to contribute to the improvement of young people's health and wellbeing, empowering them to effectively manage risk and achieve positive outcomes. The programme focuses on the drivers behind behaviour and on supporting young people to develop practical skills to enable them to effectively manage risks they may encounter in everyday life.

Programme Delivery

Targeted students complete an online screening questionnaire that focuses on risks across four domains: individual, school, family and community. This serves to identify risk profiles for students who require a higher level of support. They are then offered to attend a six-session intervention programme delivered by trained school staff. In addition to the targeted element, the rest of the year group is also offered general support through PSHE lessons, resources and delivery of social norms interventions. Training and online resources are available for school staff who run the programme and schools are also provided with support to implement and evaluate the programme.

Target Population

The programme targets year eight pupils aged 12 and 13 years old.

Expected Outcomes

The programme aims at equipping young people with:

1. Increased awareness of risk and related decision making processes
2. Improved ability to recognise risk
3. Improved self-efficacy, mental well-being and resilience

4. Decreased risk-taking behaviours (anti-social behaviour, offending, substance use, poor school attendance and fixed school exclusion)

Study Reference

Russell, C.; McWhirter, J. & McWhirter, A. (2016) *Evaluation of the Risk-Avert Programme*. Unpublished Manuscript, University of Bath, Bath

Study Details

Risk-Avert was commissioned by Essex County Council and co-developed with The Training Effect. It was initially piloted in 2013. Seven schools across Essex and Medway councils participated in this study. The evaluation was conducted by independent researchers from the University of Bath between 2015 and 2016.

Study Sample

Seven schools participated in the study with 68 year eight pupils taking part in the focus groups and 59 completing outcome measure questions. 14 members of staff were also interviewed.

Methodology

A before and after evaluation design was conducted in order to measure any change over time occurring during the implementation of the programme. Evaluators used questionnaires, surveys and focus groups to collect data and qualitative and quantitative analysis was conducted to evaluate the data.

Results and Impact

- **Awareness and decision making:** Findings from focus group discussions showed that young people taking part in the Risk-Avert programme developed a newly informed perception about risk, a greater awareness about it and more confidence in managing positive and negative risks.
- **Self-efficacy:** Pre and post tests showed significant improvements in self-efficacy indicating that young people experienced and maintained positive self-efficacy for the duration of the programme. At the end of the programme there were small increases across the various dimensions of self-efficacy with problem solving showing the greatest improvement.
- **Mental well-being:** There was a statistically significant increase in the wellbeing of programme participants. Young people scored highly on wellbeing before the start of the programme and similar scores were maintained for the majority of young people over the course of the programme.
- **Resilience:** Young people showed medium resilience before the start of the programme. Although there was a statistically significant increase in programme participants, overall averages remained stable with no decrease in any aspect of resilience.
- **Behaviour:** Young people showed stability or increase in relation to behavioural outcomes (emotion, conduct, hyperactivity, peer problems and pro social behaviour)

Impact: Grade 2

Overall quality of evidence

The study shows an innovative approach to prevention of risks, focusing on the drivers behind behaviour and supporting young people to manage risk. The evaluation employs a single before and after (pre and post) analysis to assess any changes that may have occurred during the implementation of the programme. Mixed method analysis is conducted, allowing for the combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

The evaluation uses propensity score matching but no control group is identified. Because of the lack of statistical correlation analysis we cannot be certain positive outcomes can only be attributed to the Risk-Avert programme.

Evidence: Grade 3

Appendix

Grading system for impact and quality of evidence

Impact grade	Description
0 (none)	No relationship between the youth service and the outcome in question.
1 (low)	Provision of the youth service may be positively related to one but not all outcomes or just for sub-groups of the target population.
2 (medium)	The youth service has moderate impact on all outcomes and sub-groups or high impact on some outcomes and sub-groups.
3 (high)	The youth service has high impact on all outcomes and sub-groups.

Score	Type of study	More Description	Example of a study	How to improve the quality of evidence
0	Basic	Studies that describe the intervention and collect data on activity associated with it.	A study that describes the intervention and states how much it cost or how many hours of services young people received.	Collect some "before and after" data on the outcome of interest for those receiving the intervention. If it is too late for that, collect outcome "after" data for the group receiving the services and try to compare these outcomes with comparable youth using other sources of data.
1	Descriptive, anecdotal, expert opinion	Studies that ask respondents or experts about whether the intervention works.	A study that uses focus groups or expert opinion or indeed surveys those who received the intervention after they received it.	Collect some "before and after" data on the outcome of interest for those receiving the services. If it is too late for that, collect outcome "after" data for the group receiving the services and try to compare these outcomes with comparable youth using other sources of data.
2	Study where a statistical relationship (correlation) between the outcome and receiving services is established	The correlation is observed at a single point in time, outcomes of those who receive the intervention are compared with those who do not get it.	A study that conducts a survey only after the services have been delivered and concludes that youths who received the services responded more positively than those who did not.	This evidence does not allow for the fact that prior to the intervention youths who received the service may have been different from those who did not. Collect some before and after data on the outcome of interest for those receiving the intervention. If it is too late to do that, see if you can compare outcomes for a clearly defined comparison or control group using other "before" data sources, such as administrative data.
3	Study which accounts for when the services	This approach compares outcomes	A study that conducts a survey before and after the program.	If you have before-after data you can measure the change in a particular outcome after the services were delivered. Try to determine whether you can compare this gain in the

	were delivered by surveying before and after	before and after an intervention.		outcome for those who received the youth services to the gain for a similar group of youth who did not receive the services. You might use administrative data for this.
4	Study where there is both a before and after evaluation strategy and a clear comparison between groups who do and do not receive the youth services	These studies use comparison groups, also known as control groups.	A study that matches two locations where both individuals and areas are comparable and surveys them before and after the program e.g. pilot studies.	You have most of the data you need. Contact an expert on statistics or econometrics and they will be able to apply various statistical methodologies to improve the robustness of your results e.g. matching methods to define a better control or comparison group. NOTE: this is the minimum level of evaluation quality applied by the Social Research Unit et al (2011), which also stipulates that any such study fulfil various quality criteria.
5	As above but in addition includes statistical modelling to produce better comparison groups and of outcomes to allow for other differences across groups	Study with a before and after evaluation strategy, statistically generated control groups and statistical modelling of outcomes.	A study that uses a statistical method, such as propensity score matching, to ensure that the group receiving the youth services is similar to the comparison group and a statistical model of outcomes (e.g. difference in difference).	Short of a random control trial, this methodology is the most robust. To improve confidence in the results try to collect additional data, perhaps from administrative sources, on the comparison group to determine any differences between them that may have pre dated the intervention.
6	Study where intervention is provided on the basis of individuals being randomly assigned to either the treatment or the control group.	Study that compares results from two independent randomly generated groups (one receiving the intervention and the other not) and uses statistical analysis to determine the programme's effectiveness.	A study which conducts a Randomised Controlled Trial, taking into account the following criteria: <i>i)</i> a fair and independent evaluation has to be conducted; <i>ii)</i> ensuring the transferability and generalisability of the programme; <i>iii)</i> statistical power of the analysis; <i>iv)</i> ensuring minimum bias	The gold standard. It is challenging to run RCTs, with cost, ethical and practical issues arising. Even with RCTs you have to think about how generalisable it is to other situations: for example, if an RCT only looked at a youth service for males, it cannot indicate how well the youth service would do for females.
7	Various studies that evaluate an intervention which has been provided through random allocation at the individual level.	The intervention has been evaluated more than once and its effectiveness is assessed through more than one RCT showing high level of statistical analysis and reporting high quality of evidence	A series of studies which conduct RCTs on a particular intervention programme, taking into account the following criteria: <i>i)</i> a fair and independent evaluation has to be conducted; <i>ii)</i> ensuring the transferability and generalisability of the programme; <i>iii)</i> statistical power of the analysis; <i>iv)</i> ensuring minimum bias	The same challenges of level 6 apply here. To strengthen the evidence, conduct meta-analysis or systematic reviews of RCTs, comparing the results from various studies involving experimental analysis.