



Chair's Report

Stephen Burgess

The annual report from the Chair of the Drug Education
Forum

2010

Chair's Report

With Eric Carlin's departure from the Drug Education Forum in August this year we lost a fantastic advocate for drug education and I pay tribute to him for the legacy he left: a Forum of over 30 members, able to influence government policy and seen as the authoritative voice on the subject.

I also want to recognise the work of other long serving members of the Forum who have moved on: in particular, Hajra Mir, George Ruston, Helen Lee, Dave Reck and Simon Antrobus each of whom made a real contribution to our thinking and organisation.

This year has seen us deliver two seminars, with a third planned for April, exploring contemporary issues in drug education with academic, policy and practice experts; enhancing our understanding of what is effective and being able to draw on exciting and fruitful research from the UK and beyond.

Forum meetings

The Forum met three times this year:

- In March the Forum launched our film on drug education.
- In July we heard from the NTA's Tom Aldridge and discussed the consultations that were taking place on the primary curriculum and the decision to make PSHE statutory.
- In October we heard from Dr Patricia Conrod who discussed her drug prevention research and David Chater, the head of substance misuse at the DCSF.

Drug Guidance for Schools

Throughout the year the DCSF has been developing new guidance for schools to bring up to date and replace the 2004 guidance. The Forum has played a leading role in supporting the development of this guidance, providing two members of the Advisory Group, being consulted on drafts and running a workshop (with our sister organisation the Drug Education Practitioners Forum) once the draft had been published.

Speaking as the draft was published for consultation I said on your behalf:

Children want much better drug education and we must respond.

Schools have a hugely important part to play in making sure that the information that children and young people receive about all drugs is accurate and credible. We are sure that this guidance will be welcomed by all those that work to help children and young people avoid the harms that drugs can do.

I really enjoyed the afternoon and will disseminate the information to colleagues and we will submit a response to the consultation.

Attendee, Drugs Guidance for Schools workshop

The Drug Education Forum welcomes the renewed focus on alcohol in this guidance. We know that while fewer young people are drinking those that do are doing so more heavily than before. Schools should be confident that children and young people see teachers as one of the most important sources of information about alcohol.

Our understanding of what works in protecting children and young people continues to develop and so it is timely that there is new guidance which incorporates the latest lessons in preventing drug misuse.

The consultation on the guidance has just closed and I hope that our contributions individually and collectively have strengthened schools abilities to develop and deliver drug education and deal with drug issues.

Seminars

As a new string to the Forum's bow this year we have begun hosting seminars focusing on contemporary issues for drug education and prevention.

Effective Approaches to Drug Education and Prevention

In November 2009 we focused on the elements of effective drug education and prevention.

Dr Tim Legrand and Matthew Scott, of Tonic Consultants, spoke about the research they had conducted on behalf of the Drug Education Forum which has focused on the principles of effective drug prevention, the process for putting those principles into practice and the programmes that have a good track record.

Peer van der Kreeft, the head of prevention services for De Sluettel, Belgium's biggest drug charity, spoke about the EU-DAP programme, Unplugged. He explained the theory behind the successful implementation of the programme, the results they had been able to achieve and how it was now being delivered beyond the 7 original countries involved.

Dr Conrod shared the results from her programme including results which suggest that the intervention – which worked with 40% of pupils in mainstream schools – had also seen positive results with illegal drug use and mental health problems.

The final presentation was from Dr Nicola Newton about research carried out in Australia where an internet based drug prevention programme has had positive results in reducing harms from alcohol and cannabis.



Thanks for organising such a great meeting yesterday. It is a great forum and something that is needed back in Australia. I'm looking forward to the next meeting!

Dr Nicola Newton

Out of School Drug Education



I found the meeting thoroughly interesting, no: educational. What a great choice of presenters just the right mix.

Andreas Cebulla, Research Director, National Centre for Social Research

In February 2010 we held our second seminar, this time out of London at the National Youth Agency and focusing on supporting drug education in out of school settings.

Andreas Cebulla, Research Director from the National Centre for Social Research, spoke about the research that lay behind the report on young people's social activities and their decision making about risk, with a particular focus on alcohol and smoking.

Richard McKie, from the NYA, spoke about the value of health education in non-school settings, focusing on the value that non-formal approaches to drug education can bring to statutory PSHE.

Jack Tonkin spoke about the online drug prevention programme that Mentor International launched this

year. He told the meeting how the website has been designed to assist parents with easily manageable chapters providing basic information about drugs, trying to bust some myths about teenagers and drug misuse, and giving tips on how they can protect their children.

David Chater, the head of the substance misuse team at the DCSF, talked about the Why Let Drink Decide? campaign and at how the department is hoping that drug educators and those interested in young people's health will work with the campaign to inform parents about the risks their children run.

Information Provision

The Forum continues to send out a weekly newsletter, directly informing over 200 individuals about the latest research, reports and data available around drug issues for children and young people. A further 200 have signed up to receive daily, automated, updates from our website, and we know that many of us ensure that the emails are sent on to colleagues making this one of our most effective means of informing the field about developments.

Our website has had over 10,000 unique visitors over the last year, with over 30,000 page views and is a repository of a huge amount of information.

In this year we have published a briefing on delinquent youth groups and offending behaviour, as well as providing an analysis of the Smoking Drinking and Drug Use statistics.



Visitors to the Forum's website

The Forum was also asked to host the executive summary of Blueprint's final report on our site and was given permission to host an article looking at the effectiveness of fear based messages in drug education.

Future Plans

As I write legislation is being considered by Parliament which may make PSHE statutory and if passed the Forum will want to play its part in making sure that drug educators are prepared for its introduction as a compulsory part of the national curriculum.

We know that the general election will take place before June and whatever the result we are likely to see further change to the policy landscape in which drug education is delivered.

Nevertheless, the issues and choices that children and young people face in relation drugs remain and their need for sound drug education cannot be in doubt. It will be the Forum's job, individually and collectively to remind policy makers and practitioners of children and young people's entitlement to drug education.

I want to be an inclusive and listening Chairman ensuring that we leverage the combined influence of our organisations to provide a strong and independent voice for drug education in this country.

I plan to spend much of my time talking with members; to make sure the Forum reflects all our needs and find ways we can work together to achieve our common goals.

Finally I would like to thank members for their engagement over a year which has seen much change and which promises to lead into one where many of our long term ambitions reach fruition.



Stephen Burgess
Chairman

February 2010