

LifeSkills Training: School Information Sheet

An overview of LifeSkills Training

LifeSkills is a highly effective evidence-based early intervention and prevention programme for children aged 8-14 years. A universal programme designed for whole class delivery, Life Skills concentrates on a preventative approach which shares age appropriate information with children, providing them with skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to make healthy choices. The Essential LifeSkills Training curriculum has been sequentially designed to use with children from 4th to 6th class.

LifeSkills has been delivered widely within the UK and Northern Ireland. From 2016-2018, a pilot of LifeSkills was undertaken in eight primary schools in Ballyfermot Dublin, funded by Family Matters ABC with financial support from the Local Drug and Alcohol TaskForce, with positive results for children in the Irish education setting.

The three core strands of LifeSkills are:

1. **Self-management skills:** To help students with problem solving, decision making, critical thinking and how to regulate emotions.
2. **Social competence:** Involves teaching students how to communicate clearly, make friends and develop healthy relationships.
3. **Resistance training:** To help students develop strategies for resisting peer pressure.

Sessions cover a range of issues including:

Self-esteem	Communication skills	Advertising
Decision making	Social skills	Assertiveness
Dealing with stress	Smoking	

The LifeSkills curriculum is taught with a variety of proven training techniques to include facilitation, coaching, assessment and behavioural rehearsal. Children receive a copy of their own workbook called LifeSkills Student Magazine which is full of activities and exercises that reinforce what they have learnt with the facilitator in class. There are also letters available as part of the programme to send home to carers so they can reinforce the techniques being used.

Who is funding LifeSkills?

TESS has secured funding through the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) 'What Works' initiative www.whatworks.gov.ie to enable Barnardos Northern Ireland (the holder of the UK & Ireland LifeSkills Training licence) to deliver training to 25 SCP projects nationally to enable them to deliver LifeSkills to primary school children in Ireland in 2020/2021.

TESS are centrally funding the training and all necessary programme resources to deliver the programme. There is no cost to schools or SCP projects.

How is LifeSkills delivered?

The LifeSkills programme comprises of nine sessions, ideally delivered once a week for nine weeks. Each session is no longer than 60 minutes duration.

The SCP Coordinator or Project Worker of the SCP project which supports your school is responsible for delivering the programme. The class teacher is requested to remain in the classroom during delivery.

Who gathers consent?

SCP are responsible for gathering consent from parents/guardians for their child to participate in the LifeSkills. This may be done in partnership with the school/class teacher. This written consent to participate will also obtain consent for the child to participate in pre and post questionnaires, and for this anonymised data to be shared with LifeSkills Coordinators, Barnardos NI & TESS. Please find attached a sample consent letter.

How will I know if LifeSkills is working in my school?

A key element of the LifeSkills is the ongoing evaluation of the impact of the programme on children. In the first and last session of the programme (Session 1 and Session 9), children complete a pre and post questionnaire which illustrates their learning from the programme with regards to their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Examples of questions include:

- Cigarette smoking can cause your skin to wrinkle True/False
- When you feel stressed, there is nothing you can do to stop it True/False
- How likely would you be to say hello to someone you don't know well Not likely/ Somewhat likely/Very likely

This data is then anonymised and uploaded on a database by the SCP Coordinator or Project Worker. This anonymised information is reviewed by two SCP Coordinators who have been appointed by TESS to provide Technical Assistance to SCP projects before being forwarded to Barnardos Northern Ireland. Barnardos Northern Ireland will provide outcome data for participating classes. Results will show impact of programme and improvements in children's knowledge, skills and attitudes. SCP will then share this report with schools and class teachers.

Data Storage

Each SCP project is responsible for storing all information relating to this programme (consent forms, questionnaires etc.) in line with their Data Protection Policy.

What is the evidence for LifeSkills?

There is substantial international, UK and emerging Irish evidence for LifeSkills.

LifeSkills is one of the most evaluated early intervention and prevention programmes in the world. LifeSkills is rated as Model Programme in the Blueprints for Violence Prevention (its highest rating) and is rated by the Early Intervention Foundation in the UK as being Level 3+. This means that LifeSkills has been independently assessed and shown to have the highest standards of evidence of effectiveness.

With more than 30 years of research, including multiple Randomised Control trials, LifeSkills has been proven to reduce risk taking behaviours by 75% with effects lasting up to 12 years. It has shown to be consistently effective with different groups of children across different locations. It has been successfully scaled up and has appropriate supports in place to ensure effectiveness is maintained when it is rolled out with new populations.

Alignment with SPHE Curriculum

LifeSkills aligns with the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum for Primary Schools, most particularly with the three strands: Myself, Myself and Others, Myself and the Wider World. LifeSkills has three core components: self-management skills which help students with problem solving, decision making, critical thinking and how to regulate emotions; social competence which involves teaching students how to communicate clearly, make friends and develop healthy relationships; and drug resistance training to help students develop strategies for resisting peer pressure. The programme particularly contributes to the development of personal attributes and skills, such as learning to manage feelings, how to resolve conflicts and how to cope with new and demanding situations.

Feedback from Children who participated in LifeSkills in Irish schools

'I learnt how to better deal with my stress'

'I learnt how to control my emotions'

Feedback from Irish schools

Staff from 8 schools in Ballyfermot, Dublin 12 where LifeSkills was piloted praised the programme:

'It is a very interactive programme and it gives the children a safe space to talk about tough topics such as low self-esteem, smoking and bullying.'

'I would certainly recommend this programme to other teachers and schools (...) The LifeSkills programme ensures children learn the adequate skills needed to deal with situations that may arise as they grow and move through life.'

'All of the topics covered were of utmost benefit to the children. The programme allowed the children to explore a range of topics that are equally applicable to them as children as in adult life.'

'Pupils looked forward to doing LifeSkills each week. All feedback has been very positive.'

'I would highly recommend the LifeSkills programme. It deals with some very relevant choices and decisions that the pupils will encounter at an early age'

Dear Parent / Guardian,

Your child's class has been chosen to take part in the LifeSkills Training programme. LifeSkills aims to develop children's emotional health and wellbeing. The programme takes a preventative approach by sharing age appropriate information with children, providing them with skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to make healthy choices.

LifeSkills will be delivered by School Completion Programme staff in class for one hour per week for nine weeks as part of the school day. Your child's teacher will be present in the class at all times.

To make sure the work we are delivering is being effective we collect a range of information. This includes pupil pre and post programme questionnaires, and may also include feedback from teachers, pupils, principals and parents. We use this information to improve the service, and to create class reports on the programme.

We share anonymised information on the impact of the programme with our funder (Tusla Education Support Service), with the LifeSkills Coordinators and Barnardos Northern Ireland who create the class reports, and with the school. We keep your information safe, as we:

- Do not share any personal information like names or addresses
- Make all information anonymous; and
- Make sure all children cannot be identified

Your child's personal details will be kept confidential in all reports. The information will only be used in broad statements such as:

- 88% of pupils showed improvement in overall knowledge
- 72% of pupils showed a marked increase in their Life Skills
- Teachers highly recommend the programme

School Completion Programme is the controller of this information and all information relating to your child is held in line with the Southill SCP Data Protection Policy.

Please complete the permission slip below if you would like your child to take part in this whole class Programme and the associated feedback activities.

Should you have any questions please contact me.

Kind regards,

Christy McLaughlin

SCP Project Worker