



SCOTCH WHISKY ACTION FUND

MANAGED BY



Barnardo's



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Organisation: **Barnardo's**
Date of Award: **2017, 2021, 2022**
Amount Awarded: **£23,368**
Project Name: **CHOICES**



Barnardo's is a nationally recognised organisation supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable children, young people, parents, and carers. Service provision is carried out across its 800 services across the UK and activities range from early intervention, fostering and adoption support, positive wellbeing services and advocacy and political lobbying.

The Project: CHOICES 2017

In 2017, Barnardo's received a grant of £6,743 from the Scotch Whisky Action Fund (SWAF) to cover the cost of delivering the CHOICES project in primary schools in East Ayrshire, to P6/7 classes, which takes a prevention/early intervention approach to reducing the risk of alcohol-related harm. By delivering participatory and innovative activities they are equipping children with the information they need to develop a responsible attitude towards alcohol. It will build their ability to make informed and healthy decisions about the safe consumption of alcohol. The grant helped to cover the cost of staff travel, a project worker, staff training, resources and learning and development packs for teachers.

The Impact:

The following ten schools participated in CHOICES, benefitting 398 pupils:

- Auckinleck Primary School P6 – 23 pupils. P7 – 10 pupils
- Crosshouse Primary School P6 – 24 pupils. P7 – 18 pupils
- Kilmaurs Primary – x1 P6 Class – 25 pupils. x1 p6/p7 – 25. x1 P7 class - 17 pupils
- St. Sophia's Primary – x1 Class – 18 pupils
- Patna Primary – P7 – 24 pupils. P6 – 20 pupils
- Shortlees Primary – this was postponed twice due to illness – rescheduled
- Dalmellington Primary – 28 pupils
- Lonehead Primary – P7 – 33 pupils P6 – 36
- Littlemill Primary – 8 pupils
- Netherobertland Primary – P6 – 45 pupils. P7 – 44 pupils.

Once the project had finished, the Head teacher of Auchinleck Primary approached Barnardo's staff regarding working with specific pupils on a one-to-one basis as it had become evident that some young people were affected by alcohol within their family unit. Barnardo's staff (Excel Project) is now working with four young people within this primary school. Another school asked for staff to return to continue the work around peer pressure as this is a significant issue identified by many schools.

The young people were very engaged and keen to take part in the creative and innovative delivery methods used by the CHOICES staff. These methods sparked lots of good discussions and raised many questions by the young people. All the pupils surveyed post-delivery stated their alcohol awareness knowledge had increased, including both the impact alcohol can have on their own behaviour as well as others, and the risks involved in terms of their own and others immediate safety, as well as the risks to their body and overall health and wellbeing. The young people were also able to identify, with support, key social factors where social pressures to drink alcohol could affect them and how best to manage these situations.

Case Study

The Head teacher of Auchinleck Primary School had informed Barnardo's staff that the classes may be difficult due to the behaviours that can be displayed. Some young people would find it difficult to engage and remain within the class. The head teacher insisted the class teacher be present during delivery and evaluation to ensure pupils were supported if they required to leave the class.

Staff found that when the input began the pupils were very keen to talk about alcohol and tell their stories; young people were very open and honest about their experiences within the family unit and their community. Staff adapted the programme to allow for a lot of discussion as this appeared very valuable to the pupils.

One young person who had been particularly struggling to remain in the class became more settled during this and joined in all the activities. A massive part of the success of the input was that the young people all worked together during the activities, without adding risk or harm to themselves or each other, to the extent that the teacher felt comfortable at leaving the room, this allowed for further discussions to take place and the young people feeling safe to do so.

The decision for the teacher to leave the room was a very positive one as this resulted in a higher level and more positive interaction between pupils and Choices staff. The classroom assistant couldn't believe how well young people were interacting and engaging in group activities and having such a positive experience throughout. The assistant was so impressed with the young people she took it upon herself to retrieve the Head teacher and Deputy and bring them to the room to show how well the young people were doing. Both head and deputy teachers highly praised the pupils for their hard work and commitment to the Choices programme.

The feedback from the pupils showed how much they had enjoyed the programme and how they had learned, this is a small selection:

- "I learned more about alcohol when Barnardo's came in".
- "Very good, better than all the other experiences from all the other teachings".
- "Before the visit I hardly knew anything about alcohol but now I know a lot".

The Project: CHOICES 2021

Due to lack of funding the project couldn't continue beyond 2018/19. However, in 2021 SWAF awarded a further grant of £10,000 to re-start the project. The aim in this year was to develop and grow their existing work in school settings by delivering thirty, group-based, alcohol awareness sessions across ten East Ayrshire schools. CHOICES also enables Barnardo's staff and teachers to identify children at risk of/affected by alcohol-related harm at home and signpost them to specialist support at the earliest opportunity.

The project also included: an Annual Safe Choices Roadshow with alcohol awareness sessions for pupils during their secondary school induction days; 'What's in a Bag' one-off alcohol awareness sessions for primary 7 children; and Excel Project - intensive 1:1 support for primary school children aged 10-12, affected by their own or parental alcohol misuse. The grant helped cover the same costs as the previous year.

The Impact:

- Staff promoted the CHOICES programme to all primary schools in East Ayrshire and enrolled ten schools to the programme.
- Staff worked with enrolled schools, agreeing session dates, attendance, and provided taster sessions for 60 teachers.
- Staff delivered 30 group-based alcohol awareness sessions reaching 396 P6/P7 across the ten participating schools situated in Darvel, Kilmarnock, Mauchline, Galston, Auchinleck, Littlemill, and Crosshouse.

The three, full day, sessions per primary school for between 26 and 30 children consisted of the following modules:

Understanding Impact on Behaviour: focusing on the impact alcohol can have on people's behaviour, senses, coordination, and the risks this can pose for themselves and others. Activities included 'Beer Goggles', simulating the common effects of alcohol, such as visual distortion, confusion, slowed reaction, and lack of physical coordination. Children wearing the goggles were asked to walk in a straight line, pick up loose change, put a key in a lock, dribble a ball between cones, play catch, and write their name.

Risks of Alcohol Misuse/Healthy Lifestyles: using creative means to discuss the importance of healthy organs, children learnt about the physical impact of harmful alcohol use on the human body. Activities included drawing the outline of a body, colouring body parts and labelling them with the effects that alcohol has on them.

Social Pressures to Misuse Alcohol (Peer Pressure): this session focussed on social factors which encourage/pressure children and adults into excessive and risky alcohol consumption, and how to manage these pressures.

Topics included:

- Understanding key social pressures to consume alcohol excessively.
- Understanding actions and consequences.
- Building decision-making skills and confidence to manage such situations.

You and your community/keeping safe: exploring the importance of understanding the area in which we live - identifying who drinks alcohol, where, when, and how they get it. During this session they discussed personal safety, walking alone and avoiding shortcuts. Activities included a scenario-based workshop on coming across a drunk person who has fallen and how to deal with the situation.

It was important to involve the children and teachers in the evaluation of the CHOICES programme. Barnardo's held one evaluation day per school and provided creative activities to encourage feedback. These activities included:

- Recap and discussion around the activities the children had taken part in.
- A group quiz around alcohol.
- Feedback wall.
- A poster competition.

Prior to receiving the alcohol awareness input the children were asked to complete a questionnaire to gather information regarding how much they knew about alcohol. They then repeated this at the end of the evaluation day.

Children rated the following questions/statements on a scale of 1-5 (1 = know nothing about, 3 = know some about, 5 = know a lot about):

1. What do you know about alcohol?
2. I understand how alcohol affects the body.
3. I know the law around alcohol.
4. I know how alcohol can affect others.
5. I know what to do if someone has too much alcohol.

The average score across a sample of four schools was 3.2 before taking part, which increased to 4.4 after.

Quotes from Pupils and Teachers:

Pupil feedback:

- I had no clue what it was like to be drunk, and I learned lots.
- I now know what to do to keep someone safe. We learned the recovery position.
- I learned there is lots of different effects when it comes to alcohol.
- When you are old enough to drink you must be sensible
- Alcohol can be dangerous if you drink too much.
- I learned a lot and I thought it was very nice I could join the conversation.

Staff feedback:

- The CHOICES alcohol awareness sessions allowed children to talk about alcohol with peers and see for themselves what alcohol can do to their body. It gave them knowledge to help them to make smart choices.
- Barnardo's CHOICES staff interacted very well with the children and spoke to them as equals – not dictating. The children responded very well to their positive approach and kindness.
- This is a first-class service offered to our young people. The staff represent Barnardo's superbly and the children benefitted greatly.

The Project: CHOICES 2022

There were some significant changes in education across East Ayrshire and many schools increased to having two classes in each year, resulting in a further two P6 and P7 classes. These additional classes couldn't benefit from the CHOICES programme in 2021 due to a limited budget, therefore Barnardo's were only able to provide input to one P6, and one P7 class within each of its chosen schools. This meant teachers had to choose what classes received support. This prompted Barnardo's to apply for a third and final year of funding from SWAF to which they received £6,625 to enable them to deliver the sessions to the additional classes that missed out.

The Impact:

This year CHOICES continuation programme was delivered in seven primary schools over East Ayrshire from central Kilmarnock to rural areas.

Within these seven schools, 30 to 80 pupils per school over two delivery days attended, which ranged between two to three classes of P6 and P7s.

Day 1

The day began with CHOICES staff introducing themselves and the programme to the class, going over some ground rules and asking them what they already know about alcohol by completing a small questionnaire.

The class are then split into two groups and took turns to complete the rest of the programme:

Agree and disagree activity: An icebreaker to get the class talking and on their feet. 'Agree' and 'Disagree' signs were put on opposite walls and read out several statements, for example: "Have you seen a drunk person before?". We then asked the group to choose whether they agree or disagree. They could then say how they knew that person was drunk. Their answers usually ranged from telling staff certain things they have seen or acting out things such as stumbling over or being sick.

Long-term and short-term effects: Children contributed through discussion and roleplay, exploring the impact that alcohol misuse and unhealthy lifestyles can have on the body.

The Law: A fun spin on learning about Scottish Law was introduced. Children were asked questions such as "What age do you need to be to legally drink alcohol in Scotland?" This sparked good discussion and debate between the group.

Scenario based roleplay: Using different scenarios, children took part in roleplay activities around how alcohol can affect mood, behaviour, and co-ordination, and the risk this can impose on themselves and others. They were also taught about first aid and CPR and what to do in an emergency.

Session end: All children took part in an activity with beer goggles which simulate the effects of alcohol such as slow reaction time, confusion, and poor co-ordination and vision. Staff set up different activities such as obstacle courses to give children a chance to experience these affects.

Day 2

Starting with a recap of Day 1 to see how much the class had learned the children repeated the questionnaire to see if they had gained more knowledge and confidence than they had previously.

They were then asked to give feedback about what they did and didn't enjoy about the programme and what they had learned from it.

To finish day 2 and the programme, the class took part in a poster competition where they displayed the information they had gained from the sessions, this was a very popular activity which they put a lot of effort into.

Overall, the CHOICES programme continues to be a huge success with lots of positive feedback from both teachers and children which includes:



November 2023

“The kids couldn’t wait for you to come back for day 2, they were so excited for the poster competition. I thought it was great how interactive and fun it was made for my class as they thoroughly enjoyed it and learned a lot.” – class teacher.

“I learned that drinking too much can damage your body” – young person aged 11.

The children who participated gained knowledge and confidence around making healthy and responsible choices in relation to alcohol.

Whilst delivering the pre/post questionnaires were simplified by changing the number scale from 1-3 instead of 1-5 as it had been in the previous years as we found this was overly complicated.

In two of the seven schools, some behaviours from pupils were challenging which impacted on the facilitation of the sessions. Staff dealt with this by trying to deescalate the situation and involve the young person in role play activity or support from the class teacher. There was also an agreed safe/quiet space assigned at each school if it got too much for any pupils.

Case Study

Whilst facilitating a planning meeting in one of the Primary Schools the Barnardo’s staff team asked teachers to highlight any children or behaviours to be aware of e.g., those with additional support needs. This would allow them to be prepared and divert attention and support to individual children as required. It was at this point they were made aware of Peter (not real name) who struggles to participate and may become disruptive during sessions. Teachers concluded that Peter would simply refuse to engage and would inevitably walk out. However, staff requested that he should be given the opportunity to participate.

On the day of the delivery, Peter was quite disruptive during the introduction and ground rules session and at that point his teachers tried to remove him. The team intervened speaking directly to Peter asking him to give the session a chance and if he later decided not to engage then that was ok. Peter was made aware of the programme content over the next two days, and he seemed more interested. However, he continued to be very disruptive when his peers were filling in their questionnaires.

Barnardo’s staff team agreed a strategy that would engage him and asked if he would like to be their helper for the day, taking part in role play and handing out things to classmates. He immediately agreed to this and as a result he stayed with the group and experienced the CHOICES programme with his classmates.

Peter didn’t usually attend school on Fridays, which was day 2 and the evaluation day, but he did attend on that Friday to finish up the activities. Peter’s teachers and headteacher were very pleased about this and thanked the CHOICES team for keeping him engaged and included.

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