Delivering Accident Prevention at local level in the new public health system

Part 2: Accident prevention in practice

Case Study: Learning about safety by experiencing risk

Reduced Risk of Injury
CASE STUDY: Learning about safety by experiencing risk

Public Health Outcomes Framework Indicator 2.7: Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in under-18s

Learning About Safety by Experiencing Risk (LASER) is an approach used by schemes such as Crucial Crew and Junior Citizen. Practical, about interactive scenarios teach children aged 9-11 how to deal with hazards in a positive and practical way. "Learning by doing" benefits children hugely throughout life as it teaches them to assess risks and become more independent and enjoy activities.

LASER uses the following definition of high quality practical safety education (HQPSE) to go beyond the delivery of knowledge, understanding and skills to help children develop risk competence, appropriate for the age (or developmental stage). HQPSE should be empowering for the child and help to develop resilience as part of their overall wellbeing. It should be relevant to the child, but also based on evidence of need and effectiveness in the approach adopted.

(McWhirter and Vallender, 2010)

According to "Better Safe than Sorry", accidental injury among under-15s results in two million visits to A&E by children each year, costing £146 million.

Accidents are the most common cause of death in children over one year old. More than one million children under the age of 15 attend A&E every year after injuring themselves in and around the home.

Evidence shows that LASER teaching methods enable children to retain information such as rescue procedures more effectively, and for longer periods of time, than classroom-based study (see references at end).

About 200 LASER schemes operate around the UK. Some run all-year-round at permanent venues, such as Bristol's Lifeskills centre, DangerPoint in Wales, the Risk Factory in Edinburgh or Safeside in Birmingham. Others are annual schemes delivered by local partnerships.

The business case for permanent LASER centres

Permanent LASER centres can have considerable set-up costs unless they are mitigated by local partners. The impressive premises used by the Safeside centre in Birmingham were built as part of the redevelopment of the headquarters for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service (WMFS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital costs for Safeside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital cost of the building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of creating the scenarios, computer hardware/software and fitting out the building. Not included in the cost is the value of all the donations of essential elements of the scenarios including a double-decker bus, the train, a road crossing, a retail shop, ‘phone boxes and a car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total capital cost</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual running costs for Safeside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent staff – to fundraise, administer, train and manage volunteers, run the accounts, carry out routine maintenance, fundraise, evaluate, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff clothing/uniforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises (heating, lightning, water, rates, etc.) Covered by WMFS HQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion to local schools, cubs/brownies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance (secretariat, expenses and meeting space for the directors/board of trustees) Nil: carried out in house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total annual running cost</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another, similarly sized LASER centre, Bristol Lifeskills, rents premises owned by Bristol City Council and enjoys a significant rent subsidy.

At £300,000 in the 2011/12 financial year, the annual running costs for Bristol Lifeskills are typical of many permanent centres. Lifeskills employs four permanent staff and enjoys the support of 70 volunteers. Thanks to their efforts, 9,339 Year 6 primary school children were able to visit the centre during the year, bringing the cumulative total since the centre opened in January 2000 to 100,000 children. Extensive fundraising has allowed the centre to keep the entry fee to £6 per child. Lifeskills also runs programmes for older people and those with special educational needs.
The Lifeskills gallery, showing the wide variety of purpose-designed scenarios:

- Full of real-life situations
- Designed to be realistic and engaging
- Perfect for children to learn in a safe environment

Taking fixed and variable costs into account, LASER centres report an average overall unit cost per visitor of £15-30. This compares favourably with the cost to the NHS of treating the victims of unintentional injuries.

Most LASER centres operate as a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. They rely on an extensive network of support from national charities and private sector sponsors. These organisations pledge their financial support and resources.

Programme: LASER centre logic model
Situation: Safety education in a permanent centre
Unit cost per student: approximately £15–30 (includes fixed and variable costs)
Aim: Make a contribution to reducing the number of preventable deaths from injury among 10-11 year olds through safety education

Objectives:
- Children aged 10-11 will learn about safety in a fun and practical way
- Children will know how to keep themselves and others safe in familiar environments
- Children will be able to keep themselves and others safe in a range of situations
Through its accreditation scheme LASER is able to advise practitioners on how to develop high quality practical safety education programmes. The scheme includes:

**Key area 1 – Partnership**
- Mission/purpose
- General aims
- Learning outcomes

**Key area 2 – Programme management**
- Feasibility study
- Business plan
- Funding strategy
- Diversity and disability policies

**Key area 3 – Evaluation**
- Pre-planning
- Methodology
- Implementation
- Analysis
- Review and dissemination

### References

1. **Bristol Lifeskills:** [http://www.lifeskills-bristol.org.uk/](http://www.lifeskills-bristol.org.uk/)
3. **Injury Minimisation Programme for Schools (IMPS):** [http://www.impsweb.co.uk/](http://www.impsweb.co.uk/)
9. **SafeSide at Eastside:** [http://www.safeside.org.uk](http://www.safeside.org.uk/)

12. **Danger Point:** [http://www.dangerpoint.org.uk](http://www.dangerpoint.org.uk)