

Start

the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme for children and young people

Growing-up in Britain today can be an exciting and fulfilling experience. It can also be a challenging one with children and young people exposed to risks and pressures. Research has identified the factors associated with poor outcomes for children and young people, such as low self esteem and limited skills in dealing with risky situations. Research has also identified a range of protective factors, such as strong and nurturing relationships with parents, that are often associated with happy and successful children who make the most of their opportunities and contribute to their families and communities.

The experience of the *Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities* parent education programme has shown that promoting the protective factors may be particularly successful, if it is done in the context of promoting a positive ethnic identity.

By aiding the development of children and young people who are socially competent and have strategies for dealing with risky situations, we should see better outcomes for children and young people. Further, by boosting self-esteem and strong and supportive relationships competence children and young people will play a productive role in the lives of their families and communities.

Start, the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme for children and young people

The Start programme aims to engage children and young people in:

- exploring their relationships with their peers, families and their communities in order to develop supportive relationships;
- exploring their identity to develop a positive sense of themselves;
- developing their self-esteem and active citizenship skills;
- developing appropriate strategies for coping with stress and conflict;
- identifying risky behaviour and developing strategies for dealing with these, including solution building.

Start does this by using a range of methods, including providing children and young people with:

- opportunities to receive and explore information on healthy lifestyles and healthy relationships;

- exercises to understand and develop a positive self-image, including the ethnic and cultural roots;
- role play, videos and other exercise to explore strategies for dealing with stress and conflict;
- opportunities to identify community resources and how to access them.

This is combined with a specific skills based activity that allows them to put into practice their learning from the programme, such as:

- learning a team sport like basketball;
- or developing skill like photography;
- or increasing the safety of the journey to school through an environmental project.

The programme runs for 13 weeks. Children and young people meet every week for two hours and then a further hour is dedicated to the skills based activity.

The Start programme was developed with an advisory group which involved children and was piloted in three areas in London. Start has been run in school and community settings since 2003.

How to become a facilitator

To become a Start facilitator you need to first answer these questions:

- Do you have an empathetic approach to working with children and young people?
- Have you completed the Enhanced Disclosure Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check?
- Have you completed the five-day Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities facilitator training?

If you have answered yes to these questions then, you can attend the two day Start facilitator training. The training provides you with an introduction to the concepts, approach and curriculum of the Start programme. A range of teaching methods are used to build on your skills and experience to prepare you to effectively and safely implement the Start programme with children and young people.

Further information on Start and the facilitator training is available from Amina Lone on 0161 839 9799 or amina@racefound.org.uk.