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education & training through theatre

Evaluation of Theatre in Education Tour in Sandwell on Child Exploitation & Knife Crime Prevention 2024 – 2025



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Evaluation Report of Theatre in Education Tour in Sandwell on Child Exploitation and Knife Crime Prevention 2024/25

Introduction

This evaluation report feeds back on a theatre in education project that took place from December 2024 to March 2025. The aim of the project was to help reduce exploitation and knife crime amongst children and young people by raising awareness of the issues, giving them the knowledge, confidence and skills to recognise and report it and keep themselves and each other safe from harm. The tour was delivered in Sandwell educational venues, using Loudmouth Education & Training's Theatre in Education (TIE) programmes.

Key successes included:

- 1,795 children and young people reached across 18 sessions, in 4 secondary schools, 4 non-mainstream settings and 9 primary schools.
- Education that supported key areas of schools' RSHE curricula in an impactful and innovative way that teachers said could not be achieved in regular lessons.
- Increases in knowledge of the facts around online safety, grooming, child exploitation, knife crime and county lines, and where to go for help and support around these issues.
- Increases in students saying they would act differently as a result of participating in the sessions.
- 3 disclosures from students, resulting in help and support from the schools' safeguarding teams.
- 100% of students and staff saying they would recommend the programme for next year's students and other schools/organisations.

The tour was funded by the Safer Sandwell Partnership using Community Safety Funding allocated by the West Midlands Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

"This was a highly engaging session which covered sensitive and "heavy" topics in a way that the young people could resonate with and engage with."

Teacher, The Brades Lodge School

Established in 1994, Loudmouth Education & Training is a theatre company that supports schools and other organisations with their RSHE. and Safeguarding work. Loudmouth's aim is to help children and young people to have healthy, happy and safe relationships. The company uses drama, interaction and discussion to explore issues that affect children and young people. Loudmouth's education and training programmes are proven to help learners, both young and old, to challenge attitudes, gain new skills and increase knowledge.

Executive Summary

- From December 2024 to March 2025, Loudmouth Education & Training ran 10 sessions of their theatre in education programme Helping Hands on staying safe in on and offline relationships for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in Sandwell primary schools.
- Loudmouth also ran 8 sessions of their programme Working For Marcus on child exploitation, knife crime and county lines, in Sandwell secondary schools and SEN settings.
- We worked with a total of 1,795 children and young people across the tour, from 8 to 13 years old (a full breakdown of sessions can be found in Appendix 1).
- We received 3 disclosures during the tour.
- 100% of all students evaluated as part of this tour said they would recommend the programme to the next year's students.
- After participating in the Helping Hands session, 95% of pupils could name all five of the NSPCC PANTS rules.
- After participating in the Working for Marcus programme, 92% of students stated that their awareness of knife crime and child exploitation was 'Good' or 'Excellent'. This is a rise from 50% before the sessions.
- For teaching staff at each school, Loudmouth sent a link and log in details to access a range of free, comprehensive lesson plans on a range of related RSHE topics. Details on these can be found in Appendix 2.

Programme Content & Evaluation – Methodology

The tour was commissioned by the Safer Sandwell Partnership using Police & Crime Commissioner funds as part of their knife crime prevention / reduction programme. To contribute towards the reduction of exploitation and knife crime, we aimed to increase knowledge of grooming, child exploitation, knife crime and county lines and increase skills in reporting these and identifying where to go to for support.

The Loudmouth programmes are designed to enable participants to gain knowledge, learn new skills and challenge attitudes. A sample group of 15 students at each venue was asked to complete post-session evaluation forms (handed out at random) and venue staff were asked to complete post-session evaluation forms. Here is a summary of the programme content and key findings from the evaluation.

The evaluation had a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions. A few examples of quotes were included for illustrative purposes as representative quotes; further quotes are also included in Appendix 3. If anyone would like to see the full list of qualitative responses, then please contact us at enquiry@loudmouth.co.uk.

Helping Hands

Helping Hands is a gentle programme for Years 4-6, (8 –11 year-olds). The programme explores child exploitation and abuse, online safety and domestic abuse. The performance is a montage of scenes to illustrate the NSPCC PANTS rules.

<https://www.loudmouth.co.uk/programmes/programme/helping-hands>

Loudmouth's "Safe Team" guide the year group through the rules, with drama scenes in between. Pupils talk to a character from the drama to give them advice using the PANTS rules they have learnt. In the workshop the pupils go over the PANTS rules and the feelings the characters in the dramas had when they didn't feel safe, including what physical signs their bodies were giving them. The facilitators gently explore with the children the different types of abuse shown in the play, including child exploitation (county lines and child sexual exploitation), child abuse, domestic abuse and inappropriate touch. The children learn how to create their own support network on their hands. The session ends with the children learning where to go for support if they feel unsafe.



- After the Helping Hands sessions 95% of pupils could correctly name all 5 parts of the NSPCC PANTS rule. This was an increase from 19% before the session. 98% of pupils could name 4 or more parts of the PANTS rule.
- The most popular service that students could identify after the session was Childline. 72% of students identified Childline, a rise from 42% before the session. This is the key organisation we signpost to in the sessions.
- 100% of students stated that they felt that the Helping Hands session helps people to stay safe.

"Children can worry when they don't know what to do, but it will put children at ease."

Year 5 student, Hargate Primary School

"It talked about safety online with scenarios that could potentially happen to us and provide examples of how we could deal with it. Offline as well. "

Year 6 student, Bearwood Primary

"It is easy to learn through the songs and performances rather than explaining it because many children may not understand some words."

Year 5 student, George Betts Primary Academy

- 73% of students stated that as a result of the Helping Hands session they would act differently in the future.

"I would learn to face things that I'm nervous about and do the following steps (the PANTS rules)."

Year 6 student, St James CE Primary School

"I know that I will speak to an adult if I feel unsafe or worried and I will not keep bad secrets."

Year 6 student, Victoria Park Academy

"I feel more confident about what is right or wrong."

Year 6 student, Rounds Green Primary School

- 100% of all students evaluated as part of this tour said they would recommend the Helping Hands programme to the next year's students.

Working For Marcus

Working for Marcus is a theatre in education programme designed for Year 8 (age 12) upwards. It uses drama and discussion to raise awareness of child exploitation including child criminal exploitation - county lines, child sexual exploitation and grooming.

The programme uses two well researched dramas - one is about Jay, who tells how he was groomed into running county lines, about the gang culture, selling drugs, violence and carrying a knife and now that he is out of it, he can see how he was targeted and groomed.



The second drama follows the story of Caz, 15, who believes in her boyfriend, Marcus. It shows the process of how Marcus grooms her into child sexual exploitation and how Caz comes to recognise the situation and eventually leaves. The dramas highlight how perpetrators target young people's vulnerabilities, how victims and perpetrators can be anyone e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, and the laws around coercive and controlling behaviour.

The students have the opportunity to ask Jay and Caz questions about their experiences to help raise empathy for victims of exploitation. The workshop explores the stories further to help the students spot the signs of grooming, see the impact of child exploitation, and know where to go for help and support if needed.

<https://www.loudmouth.co.uk/programmes/programme/working-for-marcus>

- After participating in the Working for Marcus programme, 92% of students stated that their awareness of knife crime and child exploitation was 'Good' or 'Excellent'. This is a rise from 50% before the sessions.
- As a result of Working for Marcus, 93% of students stated that they felt 'Confident' or 'Very Confident' about spotting signs of child exploitation. This was an increase from 50% before the sessions.
- The most popular service that students could identify after the session was Childline. This was the key service highlighted in the session. Awareness of Childline rose from 26% to 93% as a result of Working for Marcus. Awareness of Fearless rose from 0% to 29% and awareness of Face Up 2 It rose from 0% to 19%. These are also services we signpost to in the sessions
- 95% of students stated that they felt that the Working for Marcus session helps people to stay safe from knife crime/child exploitation.

"It shows us clear signs and examples of exploitation."

Year 8 student, Ormiston Forge Academy

"They tell you signs that you could experience and how to get help."

Year 8 student, Shireland Collegiate Academy

"They give important information and help you feel confident to speak up."

Year 9 student, Holly Lodge

- 67% of students stated that as a result of the Working for Marcus session they would act differently in the future.

"I would not carry a knife."

Year 8 student, Shireland Collegiate Academy

"I will think before talking to unknown people and be able to act accordingly."

Year 8 student, Ormiston Forge Academy

"I would see the red flags. "

Year 11 student, Impact Independent School - Sandwell

- 96% of all students evaluated as part of this tour said they would recommend the programme to the next year's students.

Disclosures

During the tour we had 3 disclosures from children and young people who participated in the Loudmouth sessions. Two of these were in primary settings and one was in a non-mainstream secondary setting. The disclosures were on the following concerns – child criminal exploitation, bullying and domestic abuse at home between adults. All of these disclosures were recorded by our safeguarding trained staff and the Safeguarding Team at the schools were informed.

Staff Evaluation

We asked staff who were present during the sessions to complete post session evaluations.

- 100% of staff rated the programmes as 'above average' or 'excellent', with 86% rating it as 'excellent'. Examples of the reasons given are show below.

"Really engaging - The kids loved it! Powerful messages delivered in a fun, entertaining and memorable way!"

Year 5 Lead, Devonshire Junior Academy

"The presenters were very likeable and engaging. The children were hooked from the start. There was a lot of interaction and the children felt comfortable participating."

LSP, Victoria Park Primary Academy

"This was a highly engaging session which covered sensitive and "heavy" topics in a way that the young people could resonate with and engage with."

Maths Teacher, The Brades Lodge

- 100% of staff said they would recommend the Loudmouth programme they saw to other schools and organisations.

"Covers a lot of issues in one go. Age appropriate. Touches on difficult subjects at correct level."

Head of School, St John Bosco RC Primary School

"Super important message - the theatrics really help children to remember it!"

Year 5 Lead, Devonshire Junior Academy

"Through drama, students will empathise with characters and have a better understanding."

Teacher, Shireland Collegiate Academy

- 96% of staff who answered stated that the programmes had 'High' or 'Considerable' impact on their group. Examples of the reasons given are show below.

"The young people handled the session well considering the topics covered. They asked thought-provoking questions that gave great answers. Engagement was great and I think our SEMH students will have taken a lot from this approach."

Maths Teacher, The Brades Lodge

"Students were interested and asked loads of questions. Themes are a big "need" in our area."

Deputy Headteacher, Holly Lodge

"Students learnt about joint enterprise. Acknowledgment of how easy it is to be groomed and the impacts on their lives."

Head of Year, Shireland Collegiate Academy

- 96% of staff who saw the programme recorded that the session had had 'High' or 'Considerable' impact on them as staff. Examples of the responses are shown below:

"I think having a context to deliver lessons with the sensitive content will be really helpful."

Year 6 Teacher, Bearwood Primary School

"I now have a better understanding of how PANTS can be used in such a wide variety of situations and by children of varying ages. Scenarios were useful tool for staff to draw upon in further class discussions."

Teacher, Rounds Green Primary School

"It was good to physically see now the grooming process starts."

SEMH, Impact Independent School - Sandwell

Staff were asked to complete the following sentence: I feel this Loudmouth session will add value to the school's Relationships / RSE and Health Education by.....

The responses are shown below.

"Interacting with the children in a different way than teachers usually do and giving teachers space to interact and deal with what may come forward."

Teacher, George Betts Primary Academy

"Encouraging the children to talk to someone, feel safe and understand that if anything feels wrong or make them feel uncomfortable or upset, there is support at any time day or night, always."

LSP, Victoria Park Primary Academy

"The content complements the curriculum well, seeing scenarios play out brings the reality of situations to life and provides context to how this can happen to anyone. Children see how these situations filter into real life."

English Teacher, Dudley Port School

Conclusions and Recommendations

The tour has proved to be very successful. The quality of the theatre in education programmes and delivery were commented upon with 100% of students recommending the work for future year groups and 100% of teaching staff saying they would recommend the work to other organisations. The tour reached over 1,700 children in Sandwell primary, secondary schools and non-mainstream settings.

When we were collating the data for this report, we were really pleased with the impact of the programmes. The evaluation forms showed that the programmes had clearly had an impact on the learners and their staff and the learning objectives of the programmes had been met. As a result of the programmes, there have been increases in knowledge of the facts around online safety, safe relationships, grooming, child exploitation, knife crime and county lines and where to go for help and support around the issues.

Staff commented that the programmes were highly engaging and effectively communicated important safety messages to students, particularly around personal safety. They commented that the work was well-pitched for the age groups, with realistic and relatable scenarios that kept the students' attention throughout. The use of drama to act out real-life situations allowed students to connect with the content and reflect on key issues such as grooming, knife crime, county lines, consent, and online safety. The performance was age-appropriate, and the characters and stories were believable, helping students better understand how to recognize and respond to potential risks.

School staff said Interactive elements, including a Q&A session, provided opportunities for students to ask questions, further deepening their understanding. Despite some initial awkwardness, students were actively involved and engaged with the content, demonstrating the lasting impact of the messages. The session successfully encouraged reflection on personal boundaries, safety, and how to seek help when needed, while also generating discussions on sensitive topics like peer pressure and consent.

It was commented that the session was particularly beneficial for students with SEMH needs, offering an engaging and supportive way to address difficult subjects. It complemented the schools' curriculum and provided valuable scenarios for both students and staff to use in future discussions. Staff also gained confidence in delivering lessons on sensitive topics, such as the PANTS rule, and felt more equipped to engage students in conversations about personal safety.

Overall, the sessions provided a unique and impactful approach to addressing sensitive topics, leaving students with a better understanding of how to stay safe, recognise dangerous situations, and who to turn to for help. It successfully reinforced key safety messages, encouraged active participation, and made a lasting impression on students' awareness of these important issues.

Loudmouth staff really enjoyed working in the schools we are very grateful for their participation.

For this tour in 2024/25, the schools received 100% funding for the sessions. In future years we propose charging the schools a percentage contribution towards the sessions. The purpose of charging schools a financial contribution is to encourage them to plan for sustainability of the work. In other areas, Loudmouth have worked with

local authorities to secure funding on an annual basis, staircasing the school contributions each year and moving them towards paying in full for the work in future years as an integral part of their RSHE provision.

We are delighted that the Safer Sandwell Partnership was able to provide funding for us to run this tour and are very keen to carry on this effective and impactful working relationship in future years.

For more information visit our website at www.loudmouth.co.uk or email us at enquiry@loudmouth.co.uk or phone on 0121 446 4880.

For commissioners: <https://www.loudmouth.co.uk/programmes/commissioners>

APPENDIX 1: Summary of Activity

Below is a full breakdown of the sessions that were delivered in the schools:

Date	Programme	Format	School	Year Group	Number of students
17/12/2024	Helping Hands	Drop down format	St James CE Primary School	6	60
10/01/2025	Helping Hands	Drop down format	Victoria Park Primary Academy	6	89
22/01/2025	Helping Hands	Class size session	The Brades Lodge School	7	11
22/01/2025	Helping Hands	Drop down format	Rowley Hall Primary School	5	90
14/02/2025	Helping Hands	Drop down format	George Betts Primary Academy	5	60
25/02/2025	Helping Hands	Drop down format	St John Bosco RC Primary School	5 & 6	60
26/02/2025	Helping Hands	Drop down format	Devonshire Junior Academy	5	90
20/03/2025	Helping Hands	Drop down format	Bearwood Primary	6	60
21/03/2025	Helping Hands	Class size session	Hargate Primary School	5 & 6	30
31/03/2025	Helping Hands	Drop down format	Rounds Green Primary School	6	58
16/01/2025	Working for Marcus	Drop down format	Holly Lodge	9	280
23/01/2025	Working for Marcus	Class size session	The Brades Lodge School	KS3/4	12
12/02/2025	Working for Marcus	Drop down format	Shireland Collegiate Academy	7	250
14/02/2025	Working for Marcus	Class size session	Dudley Port School	KS3/4	25
20/03/2025	Working for Marcus	Drop down format	Shireland Collegiate Academy	8	270
24/03/2025	Working for Marcus	One hour assembly format	Ormiston Forge Academy	8	310
26/03/2025	Working for Marcus	Class size session	Impact Independent School	10 & 11	20
27/03/2025	Working for Marcus	Class size session	Sandwell Community School, The Bridge Campus	9 & 10	20

Programmes

[Helping Hands](#) is a gentle programme for Years 4-6, (8–11-year-olds). The programme explores child exploitation and abuse, online safety and domestic abuse. The performance is a montage of scenes to illustrate the NSPCC PANTS rules.

[Working for Marcus](#) is a theatre in education programme designed for Year 8 (age 12) upwards. It uses drama and discussion to raise awareness of child exploitation including child criminal exploitation - county lines, child sexual exploitation, grooming, modern slavery and trafficking.

APPENDIX 2

For teaching staff at each school, Loudmouth sent a link and log in details to access a range of free, comprehensive lesson plans on a range of related RSHE topics. The link to these resources can be viewed using the link below.

[Online lesson plans](#)

APPENDIX 3

There were many extra quotes from children, young people and staff for the report. Below are some further examples that highlighted what participants felt about the various elements of the tour.

Helping Hands – pupils' quotes

"They made it fun but they told us how to keep safe." Year 6 student, Rounds Green Primary School

"We now know Childline number (0800 1111) and the PANTS rule helps children to stay safe." Year 6 student, Rounds Green Primary School

"I have learnt more on how to stay safe if I am ever in a situation like this." Year 6 student, Rounds Green Primary School

"It helps you to be safe online and off-line." Year 6 student, Hargate Primary School

"Children can worry when they don't know what to do, but it will put children at ease." Year 5 student, Hargate Primary School

"It will help us remember when we get older." Year 6 student, Hargate Primary School

"It teaches children that they can make their own decisions and that there are people who you can talk to if you feel unsafe." Year 6 student, Bearwood Primary

"It informs people about different dangers of the world and how people you meet online may not always be who they say they are." Year 6 student, Bearwood Primary

"It tells children what to do if they don't feel safe and in danger. " Year 6 student, Bearwood Primary

"They describe how to stay safe in a fun way." Year 6 student, Bearwood Primary

"It talks about different situations you could be in and teaches children that these things may or can happen and it teaches us to stay aware." Year 5 student, George Betts Primary Academy

"The PANTS rules help me know the rights I have." Year 5 student, George Betts Primary Academy

"We can learn valuable life lessons that can help us in the real world." Year 5 student, St John Bosco RC Primary School

"It gives good advice and it shows every action has consequences." Year 5 student, Devonshire Junior Academy

"It helps you understand what can happen to anyone and shows you what you can do to stop it." Year 5 student, St John Bosco RC Primary School

"It tells children to speak up and don't be scared because someone or somewhere help you." Year 5 student, Devonshire Junior Academy

"It tells you what to do when you're uncomfortable." Year 6 student, Victoria Park Academy

"It can help people learn to not always believe what people say they can lie." Year 6 student, St James CE Primary School

Working For Marcus – pupils' quotes

"They tell you the signs of knife crime and child exploitation." Year 8 student, Ormiston Forge Academy

"As it teaches ways of exploitation and shows clear examples." Year 8 student, Ormiston Forge Academy

"It gives you information about it and gives you ways to prevent child exploitation and knife crime from happening." Year 8 student, Shireland Collegiate Academy

"It shows the signs of kids being groomed and what it's like." Year 7 student, Shireland Collegiate Academy

"I would rather know this because I didn't know this could happen to me." Year 7 student, Shireland Collegiate Academy

"They give important information and help you feel confident to speak up." Year 9 student, Holly Lodge

"It shows consequences of what could happen if you are a victim of this. " Year 9 student, Holly Lodge

"They make us aware about the danger of knife crime." Year 9 student, Holly Lodge

"Raises awareness and provides help." Year 9 student, Holly Lodge

"Good and realistic scenarios." Year 11 student, Impact Independent School – Sandwell

"It can help young people know when the red flags occur." Year 11 student, Impact Independent School – Sandwell

Staff Evaluation from young people's sessions

"Messages regarding safety were very clear. Engaging. Children felt comfortable with performers."

"Children were engaged and enjoyed the session. Clear message behind the performance."

"The acting flowed naturally, really interesting content and relevant to today's society."

"Stories were really believable, the students were engrossed. Brilliantly acted."

"Very informative and real."

"Engaging performance, pitched at the right level for students."

"Perfect for year 8 and considering the local area in particular."

"Children engaged throughout, topics that were covered in the drama, PANTS rule."

"Covered all areas. Scenarios realistic and acted out. Child age appropriate."

"Really engaging performance. You delivered the messages loud and clear. Thank you."

"Engaging for the children and they really enjoyed the play and then the workshop! Really engaging - The kids loved it! Powerful messages delivered in a fun, entertaining and memorable way!"

"Great timings - short and informative- kept children's attention 100% - very engaging performance."

"Staff had excellent rapport and engagement with children - children very engaged in scenarios."

“The presenters were very likeable and engaging. The children were hooked from the start. There was a lot of interaction and the children felt comfortable participating.”

“Engaging, interactive and pacy session which addressed a number of different scenarios teaching children how to be safe and who is there to help them.”

“Very engaging and informative, tailored well to the age group for the children to potentially relate to the situations.”