

Risk Watch Scotland

Background

Risk Watch is a school-based safety education programme to develop the risk assessment skills of children aged 3 to 14 years. The programme provides a multi-agency approach to delivering risk awareness, as opposed to risk avoidance with the overall objective of improving the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of young people.

Risk Watch is designed for maximum flexibility so that injury prevention and risk awareness can be taught as a stand-alone unit or easily integrated into core curriculum subjects such as numeracy, literacy, writing skills, science or health promotion. The programme is based on the developmental stage of the children and the risks faced by them. It provides an experiential learning process with a chance to practice prevention behaviours, following guided decision making.

Risk Watch also provides a link between the classroom and the home environment which enables parents and carers to be involved. This involvement may lead to the home environment being improved by the provision of safety equipment or in a change of carers' behaviours and attitudes. It is compiled to provide an enjoyable experience for the child and the teacher based on evidence that fun events are more likely to be repeated and remembered.

The eight areas of teaching are as follows:

- Motor Vehicle Safety
- Fire and Burn Prevention
- Choking, Suffocation and Strangulation Prevention
- Poisoning Prevention
- Falls Prevention
- Weapons Injury Prevention
- Bike and Pedestrian Safety
- Water Safety

Risk Watch can be delivered in a number of ways:

- A nine-hour Intensive Programme. Teachers spend one hour per week to present information for one risk area, followed by one activity from *Risk Watch in Action*¹.
- A 20-hour Comprehensive Programme. Run throughout the school year, this covers one risk area for one to two hours per month, followed by activities from the *Risk Watch in Action* section and visits by safety experts from their community.
- A Variable Programme. This is a student-centred approach combining student learning from *Risk Watch in Action* with teacher input from Risk Watch content information.

In addition, teachers are provided with resource boxes containing extra material for each topic are provided. For example, the fire and burns box may contain a smoke alarm, telephone, oven gloves, flammable materials, match boxes, a range of safety booklets and posters, and information on the local Ambulance Service.

The classroom teacher is supported in the programme by a local community coalition comprising of professionals who link into the teaching objectives. The core group usually consists of representatives from Health, Police, Fire and Education Departments. As they form a working group and start to formulate a strategic and local implementation plan, additional co-opted members from other appropriate community groups and businesses are encouraged to assist. The vision is that the coalition is the driving force in a community, providing support and direction to teachers, soliciting help

¹ *Risk Watch in Action* is a series of complementary extension activities.

from the public and business sector, and then effecting change in surrounding environment to make it safer for children in local communities.

Policy Background/Driving Force

The Highland Council, in partnership with Highland and Islands Fire Brigade and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service decided to take action and become involved in the first phase of the UK pilot of Risk Watch because of the alarming injury statistics among children. Accidental injury is the leading cause of death for 0 – 14 children in the UK. Children from poorer families are five times more likely to die as a result of injuries as those from a wealthier background. Road crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injury among children and young people. (Almost 5,000 children (under 15 years) were killed or seriously injured on British roads in 2001). An average of 50 children under 11 years old are killed in fires every year and over 1,600 are injured. The cost of home accidents in the UK has been estimated at £25 million per year.

Risk Watch also meets a number of national priorities, including those in relation to Community Planning; Community Safety; Youth/Social Justice and Health and Safety Commission's strategy of early education in risk assessment skills.

Risk Watch is intended to impact upon the high incidence of anti-social behaviour in and around schools, helping to meet the objectives of the Scottish Executive's Social and Youth Justice Agendas and its commitment to improving community safety at neighbourhood level.

In addition to meeting many of the current educational priorities, it helps address Health and Safety Executive targets to ensure a reduction in accidents and injuries for school leavers going into industry by equipping young people to identify and reduce risk.

The Fire Service thematic review of 'Working With Young People' highlighted that Fire Service personnel would gain in terms of staff development, from working on projects such as Risk Watch by providing a positive role model to children and, ultimately, children are a powerful way of spreading the fire and safety prevention message to family, friends and other people.

Partners

With funding from the Scottish Executive and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, The Highland Council, in Partnership with Highland and Islands Fire Brigade and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service redeveloped Risk Watch (which originated in the United States) for use in the United Kingdom.

The national project is being monitored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) overseen by a Steering Group made up of members from Fire Authorities participating in the Phase 2 pilot and other key stakeholders in Health and Education.

In Scotland, a Steering Group has been formed to oversee the extensive Phase 2 Pilot covering schools throughout Scotland. Its membership includes:

- Chief Fire Officers' Association (Scotland) CFOA(S)
- Scottish Executive Fire Division (Scotland)
- Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) ACPO(S)
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
- Maritime & Coastguard Agency
- Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN)
- Scottish Road Safety Campaign
- HMI Education in Scotland
- Health Promoting Schools Unit
- Learning and Teaching Scotland

Aims & Objectives

- To teach children and their families the skills and knowledge they need to reduce the risk from unintentional injuries.
- To change the attitude and behaviour of young people towards personal safety.
- To improve the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of Young People

Evaluation

Over 1,000 children in seven primary schools participated in the Phase 1 pilot for the evaluation during 2003/04¹. Teachers followed the nine-hour Intensive Programme described above, with support provided by Safety Agency and/or Coalition members. In addition, a Schools' Coordinator was appointed to liaise with schools and safety agency members, and support teachers.

The evaluation included twelve focus groups with a total of 87 students. In addition, each student participating in Risk Watch was pre- and post-tested. Parents were invited to school meetings to present their views on the programme. Interviews were completed with 21 Coalition members. Feedback was also obtained from teachers and other representatives of the education system.

Students provided very positive feedback, indicating great enjoyment and learning from the Risk Watch programme. Many pupils reported feeling empowered by the programme, and felt able to help should an emergency arise. Where pre- and post testing was rigorously carried out, statistical findings were indicative of a promising effect on children's performance on the test.

At the end of the Phase 1 pilot, pupils and teaching staff attended a national one day conference in Inverness to feedback their experiences of using the programme. A similar conference was held in Nottingham. Following a very positive response at both evaluation days, the Scottish Executive and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service agreed to extend the programme to a broader range of schools.

A DVD of the conference has been used as a marketing tool.

In Scotland, this meant that it was offered to schools in every region, giving a much more robust sample to gauge its success.

Independent evaluation of phase 1 was also carried out by East House research on behalf of the ODPM

The Phase 2 pilot will be evaluated using a range of methods in each of the pilot areas, including:

- In-depth study into behavioural change
- Measuring knowledge at and experiential safety centre
- Teacher/pupil feedback forms

Key Steps

Set up a multi agency Safety Coalition
Examine local accident/injury statistics
Select schools
Provide training for schools and Community Coalitions
Monitor and Support delivery of programme
Examine feedback
Share results

Lessons Learned

The programme needs to be targeted at schools in areas where risk is highest. Teachers are under great pressure to deliver core curriculum subjects and preparation and teaching time limited. Risk Watch has been developed by teachers to fit in with core curriculum subjects and relevant teaching materials already provided.

The key to its success is continued co-ordination and cooperation of coalition members and continuity of funding.

Facilitators

- Education Service
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Fire Authorities

Advice to Countries/Transferability

The Risk Watch concept was originally developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in the USA and adapted by Primary teachers for use in the UK.

Flexibility was allowed by NFPA in adapting the content of the programme to suit localised safety advice and safety needs.

Close liaison with NFPA Europe representative is highly recommended.

References, Additional Information

1. East House Research. (2004). Risk Watch: Findings from a pilot study in the UK. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Available at:
http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_fire/documents/page/odpm_fire_031223.pdf
2. NFPA USA carried out a three-year Longitudinal Evaluation of their programme. Results of this can be found at:

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