



# Coram Life Education

## Evaluation of Coram Life Education in Wessex and Thames Valley

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September 2019 – August 2020



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### **1 Summary**

Life Education Wessex and Thames Valley helps children in Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Hampshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and East Swindon make healthy choices. We are a recognised Delivery Partner of the UK's leading health and drug education programme, Coram Life Education.

Coram Life Education and its Delivery Partners reach over 400 000 children every year in over 2000 schools, teaching life skills through fun, interactive and age-specific activities. Over 30 000 teachers subscribe to our online 'SCARF' resources, supporting their year-round PSHE provision.

Coram Life Education helps children make healthy choices by working with schools to support and contribute to their existing provision for PSHE, including children's health and well-being, behaviour and safety. This report presents the findings of an online questionnaire-based evaluation for the Coram Life Education programme based in the **Life Education Wessex and Thames Valley** area. It presents findings from data collected from **16/09/2019** to **16/03/2020**, after which school visits were suspended due to Covid-19 school closures. **487 children** and **142 members of school staff** took part in the online evaluation during this period.

The key findings demonstrate that Coram Life Education sessions have increased health knowledge and life skills for children and positively altered attitudes about health-related practices among their peers. In particular:

- 98% of children surveyed on the "Decisions" programme (10- to 11-year-olds) agreed or strongly agreed that they understand the risks of drinking alcohol
- 95% of children surveyed on the "Decisions" programme (10- to 11-year-olds) know that all drugs (legal, illegal and medical) can be harmful if not used correctly
- 93% of children surveyed on the "Decisions" programme (10- to 11-year-olds) agreed or strongly agreed that they understand better some of the laws about drugs
- 91% of children surveyed on the "Decisions" programme (10- to 11-year-olds) agreed or strongly agreed that they understand how others can influence the choices they make
- 90% of children surveyed on the "Decisions" programme (10- to 11-year-olds) know that someone with a criminal record may have difficulty in getting a job & travelling to other countries
  
- 97% of children surveyed on the "Friends" programme (9- to 10-year-olds) agreed or strongly agreed that they know that smoking is risky to a person's health

- 94% of children surveyed on the “Friends” programme (9- to 10-year-olds) agreed or strongly agreed that they know how their emotions and needs change in different situations
- 94% of children surveyed on the “Friends” programme (9- to 10-year-olds) know that it is against the law to sell cigarettes to people under 18 years old
- 93% of children surveyed on the “Friends” programme (9- to 10-year-olds) know that medicines can sometimes be harmful
- 92% of children surveyed on the “Friends” programme (9- to 10-year-olds) agreed or strongly agreed that they know more about how to be assertive with other people, including their friends
- 92% of children surveyed on the “Friends” programme (9- to 10-year-olds) know that it is best to be assertive by doing things like speaking clearly with a friendly and calm voice, repeating your points and explaining your reasons
- 91% of children surveyed on the “Friends” programme (9- to 10-year-olds) know that not all drugs are medicines
  
- 89% of children surveyed on the “Feelings” programme (6- to 7-year-olds) said they know what their body needs to stay healthy
- 88% of children surveyed on the “Feelings” programme (6- to 7-year-olds) said they know what is inside their body
- 74% of children surveyed on the “Feelings” programme (6- to 7-year-olds) said they know who they can talk to if someone has upset or is bullying them
- 73% of children surveyed on the “Feelings” programme (6- to 7-year-olds) said they know when they need to take medicine and when not

Perhaps most powerfully, children reported that they have used learning from previous visits. Statements included:

*“I told my dad to stop smoking and he stopped and went to vaping even though it’s not the best.”*

*“Consideration for what others think and want as well as to have friends to help you.”*  
*“I’ve used safer settings.”*

*“I listened to some of the suggestions for mental health.”*

*“I have used it to know that I can make my own decisions and to stand up for what I think.”*

*“I used some of the friendship tips and it helped.”*

*“I have learnt from decision making (last year) you shouldn’t always have to do the same things as your friends and you should do what makes you comfortable.”*

*“To not pressure people to do things even if they don’t want to even with my siblings and things like that.”*

*“Not done smoking.”*

*“Told my dad to stop drinking.”*

*“I am trying to help some people quit smoking because it is a really bad thing to do like we have learnt.”*

*“Yes I have went jogging in the park.”*

*“I have learnt to take not my inhaler if I don't need to.”*

*“I have used the pyramid of things I have the right to do: I have the right to say no; I have the right to change my mind. I used both of those and more.”*

*“I have sorted out an argument.”*

*“I have been assertive and have said no.”*

## **2 Background**

Coram Life Education contributes to the PSHE curriculum. Coram Life Education educators visit children, usually with mobile classrooms or inflatable classrooms, and facilitate sessions working towards key learning outcomes, that are individual to each age group. Educators use a life-skills approach, designed to increase children's knowledge, develop skills and confidence, explore attitudes and clarify values. These three inter-related strands work together to support children in making informed health choices. Coram Life Education provides a number of different programmes to suit the needs of different schools and children, in discussion with the school (see references for Coram Life Education's Programme Overview and Learning Outcomes). In addition to education programmes, 'SCARF' online resources provide teachers with a year-round framework of lesson plans, planning and assessment tools to embed and enhance wellbeing across the school.

Coram Life Education programmes are strongly evidence-based and the organisation was one of the first to achieve the Department of Health's Information Standard, a quality mark awarded for the production of accurate, credible and evidence-based health and social care information for the public. Coram Life Education supports schools in delivering recommended best practice in health and drug education as well as helping schools to meet key criteria of the Ofsted Inspection Framework. Coram Life Education has been delivered within Wessex and Thames Valley for over 20 years.

Coram Life Education, with the help of Coram's Policy and Research team, have designed outcomes-based questionnaires, to provide evidence of the impact of facilitators' work with children and young people. The questionnaires were completed using online survey software after each session. This report provides the findings of data collected using these tools in the 2019-2020 school year.

## **3 CLE in Wessex and Thames Valley schools**

In Wessex and Thames Valley schools 236 children completed the “Decisions” programme (10- to 11-year-olds) evaluation questionnaire; 164 children completed the “Friends” programme (9- to 10-year-olds) evaluation questionnaire; and 87 children completed the “Feelings” programme (6- to 7-year-olds) evaluation questionnaire. These simple surveys asked for their views on the visit and what they had learnt.

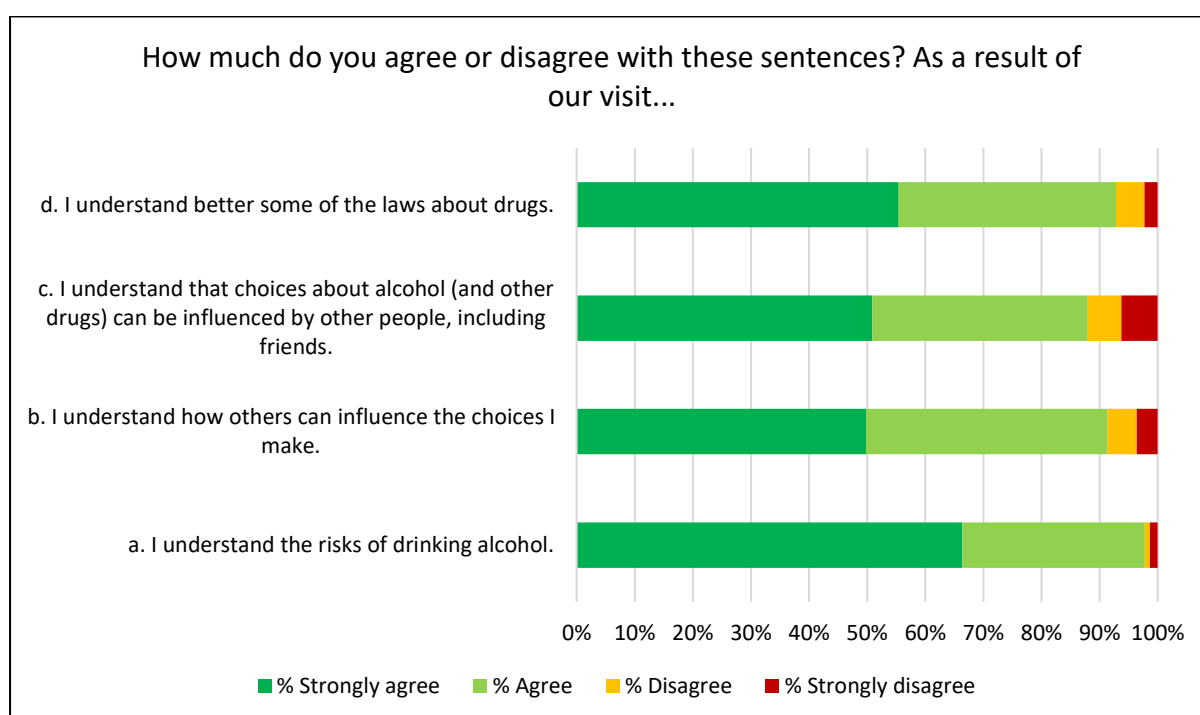
142 members of school staff, including class teachers, teaching assistants, PSHE coordinators and head teachers, also completed a questionnaire about how the sessions were delivered and the value of the programme to their schools.

## 4 Evidencing Outcomes for Children

### 4.1 Learning from the Decisions programme (10- to 11-year-old pupils)

Children reported that they had gained substantial knowledge from the Coram Life Education session (see figure 1). A majority of children agreed or strongly agreed that, as a result of the visit, they understand the risks of drinking alcohol (98%), they understand how others can influence the choices they make (91%), they understand that choices about alcohol (and other drugs) can be influenced by other people, including friends (88%), and they understand better some of the laws about drugs (93%).

**Figure 1**



Children were also asked eight true or false statements to test their knowledge gain and attitude changes (see table 1 below). Results from this section of the questionnaire show that (i) 95% of children now know that all drugs (legal, illegal and medical) can be harmful if not used correctly (ii) 90% of children now know that someone with a criminal record may have difficulty in getting a job and travelling to other countries.

**Table 1: Children's learning from the Decisions programme**

Statement ( <i>Correct answer</i> )	True	False
a. Legal drugs do not cause any harm. ( <b>FALSE</b> )	18%	82%

b. All drugs (legal, illegal and medical) can be harmful if not used correctly. ( <b>TRUE</b> )	95%	5%
c. Someone with a criminal record may have difficulty in getting a job & travelling to other countries. ( <b>TRUE</b> )	90%	10%
d. It is illegal (against the law) to be in possession of cannabis (e.g. if someone has it in their pocket /bag/ house etc.) ( <b>TRUE</b> )	80%	20%
e. It is legal to sell cigarettes to anyone of any age. ( <b>FALSE</b> )	26%	74%
f. Most 11- to 15-year-olds have never had a drink of alcohol (e.g. a whole can, bottle or glass). ( <b>TRUE</b> )	74%	26%
g. There are fewer young people who drink alcohol now than 10 years ago. ( <b>TRUE</b> )	71%	29%
h. It is best to be assertive by doing things like speaking clearly with a friendly and calm voice, repeating your points and explaining your reasons. ( <b>TRUE</b> )	88%	12%

#### 4.1.1 Social Norms and Misperceptions of Alcohol Use

Social Norms research has demonstrated that children’s knowledge about peers’ and older children’s alcohol use is commonly incorrect. Children (and adults) often overestimate the number of people engaged in risk taking behaviours; these misperceptions can influence children and young people’s future use of alcohol (in this case) and other drugs. A crucial part of a drugs education intervention therefore is to correct misperceptions of the norm by providing up to date and credible, accurate data about the actual norms around use. Research has shown that correcting misperceptions can have dramatic effects in influencing and predicting positive health behaviours.

Children were asked about the drinking behaviours of 11- to 15-year-olds and also teenage drinking patterns compared with those of ten years ago. After their Coram Life Education session 74% of children correctly answered that most 11- to 15-year-olds have never had a drink of alcohol (e.g. a whole can, bottle or glass) and 71% correctly answered that there are fewer young people who drink alcohol now than 10 years ago. Typically, pre-intervention collected data indicates that children at this age (and the population generally) misperceive greatly the number of people who drink alcohol regularly.

#### 4.1.2 Conclusion

The evaluation data demonstrates substantial learning for children in many areas. In fact, 91% of children reported that what they had learnt during the session would help them in the future. Comments made by children included:

*“I understand how the use of drugs can affect my body.”*

*“It will help me make my own decisions.”*

*“Because if I didn’t then a friend has a drink (alcohol) they might ask me and I could have said yes.”*

*“Because it will help me be aware of what I’m buying for myself when I get older.”*

*“I will never smoke or drink too much alcohol.”*

*“As I won’t be afraid to stand up for anyone including myself.”*

*“I will now never smoke or take any unnecessary drugs.”*

*“It will help me because now I know if I’m struggling to make a decision I can ask a friend.”*

*“Because when you are a teenager your mindset changes and you could do things without your parents knowing.”*

*“I think the Life Bus experience has helped me in my future life as it tells me how to use drugs and alcohol safely even though I know I’m not going to take any illegal drugs. It also helps me if I feel maybe uncomfortable or unsure in future.”*

*“It will help me make decisions independently.”*

*“I didn’t know of any other drugs until she came in. If I hadn’t known I may have bought an illegal drug in the future by accident.”*

*“It helped me realise that not all drugs are bad and how to not do something if your friends are forcing you to do it.”*

*“Yes, because it is about your opinion and that matters.”*

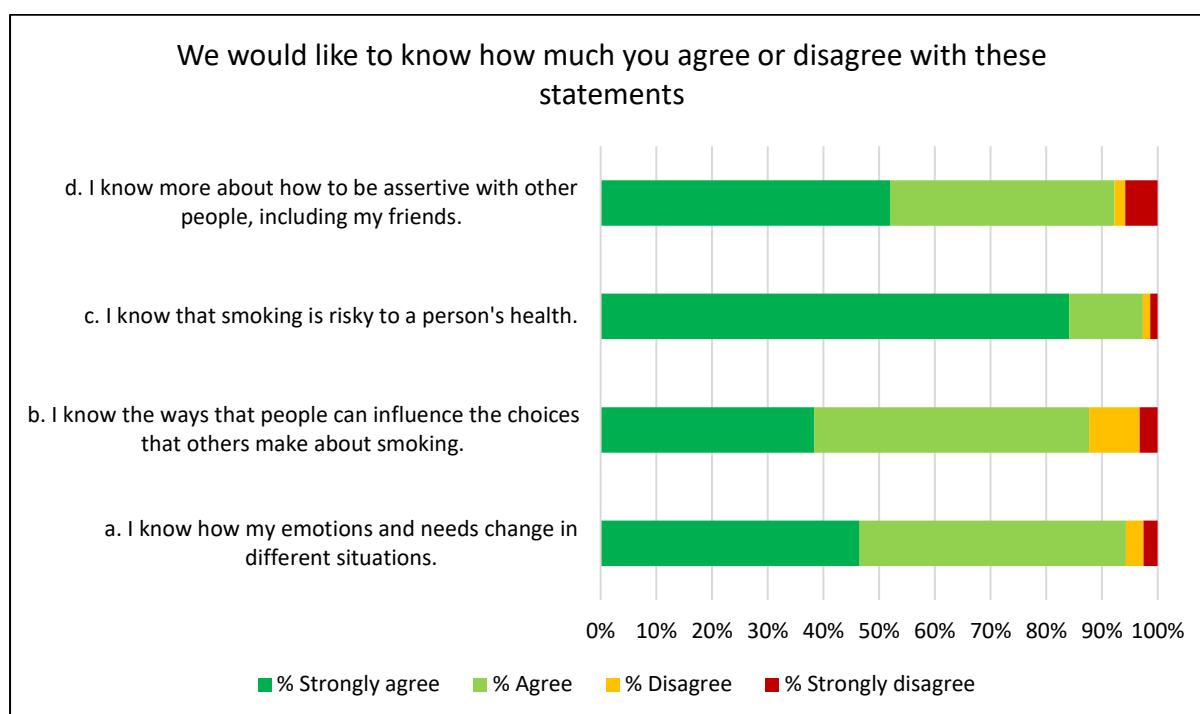
*“Because if I’m ever in a situation like being forced to smoke or use drugs I know what to do like call parents or ask them to get out.”*

*“Yes, because now I know what to do and what not to do in these difficult situations.”*

#### **4.2 Learning from the Friends programme (9- to 10-year-old pupils)**

Children reported that they had gained substantial knowledge from the Coram Life Education session (see figure 2). A majority of children agreed or strongly agreed that, as a result of the visit, they know how their emotions and needs change in different situations (94%), they know the ways that people can influence the choices that others make about smoking (88%), they know that smoking is risky to a person’s health (97%), and they know more about how to be assertive with other people, including their friends (92%).

**Figure 2**



Children were also asked nine true or false statements to test their knowledge gain and attitude changes (see table 2 below). Results from this section of the questionnaire show that (i) 94% of children now know that it is against the law to sell cigarettes to people under 18 years old (ii) 93% of children now know that medicines can sometimes be harmful.

**Table 2: Children’s learning from the Friends programme**

Statement	True	False
a. All medicines are drugs. <b>(TRUE)</b>	60%	40%
b. All drugs are medicines. <b>(FALSE)</b>	9%	91%
c. Medicines can always make people feel better. <b>(FALSE)</b>	20%	80%
d. Medicines can sometimes be harmful. <b>(TRUE)</b>	93%	7%
e. The same drug can have a medical and a non-medical use. <b>(TRUE)</b>	80%	20%
f. It is against the law to sell cigarettes to people under 18 years old. <b>(TRUE)</b>	94%	6%



g. When someone is being aggressive they are forcing their ideas onto somebody else. <b>(TRUE)</b>	77%	23%
h. When someone is being assertive they are standing firm but trying to keep things calm and friendly. <b>(TRUE)</b>	85%	15%
i. It is best to be assertive by doing things like speaking clearly with a friendly and calm voice, repeating your points and explaining your reasons. <b>(TRUE)</b>	92%	8%

#### 4.2.1 Social Norms and Misperceptions of Smoking

Social Norms research has demonstrated that children’s knowledge about peers’ and older children’s smoking is commonly incorrect. Children (and adults) often overestimate the number of people engaged in risk taking behaviours; these misperceptions can influence children and young people’s future use of tobacco (in this case) and other drugs. A crucial part of a drugs education intervention therefore is to correct misperceptions of the norm by providing up to date and credible, accurate data about the actual norms around use. Research has shown that correcting misperceptions can have dramatic effects in influencing and predicting positive health behaviours.

Children taking part in this evaluation were asked to identify how many children between 11 and 15 years old in England regularly smoke. 75% correctly answered that only 3% do regularly smoke. Typically, pre-intervention collected data indicates that children at this age (and the population generally) misperceive very greatly the number of young people that smoke regularly.

#### 4.2.2 Conclusion

The evaluation data demonstrates substantial learning for children in many areas. In fact, 88% of children reported that what they had learnt during the session would help them in the future. Comments made by children included:

*“Because I might be stuck in a tricky situation where the other person is forceful.”*

*“Because I will NEVER smoke because it is extremely bad for you.”*

*“Talk calmly, make my own decisions, be healthy.”*

*“Because if we did not learn about drugs we may smoke and we wouldn't know how to use medicine.”*

*“Because now I can keep safe when my friends tell me to have a cigarette.”*

*“I know now what to do if someone is mean to me.”*

*“That just because maybe famous people smoke does not mean you have to.”*

*“It will because what I learned will make me feel a bit more confident in standing up to friends.”*

*“Yes, because I never knew that you couldn't drink and drive.”*

*“It will help me to not rush into arguments, and it will stop me from ever smoking.”*

*“It will help me be assertive.”*

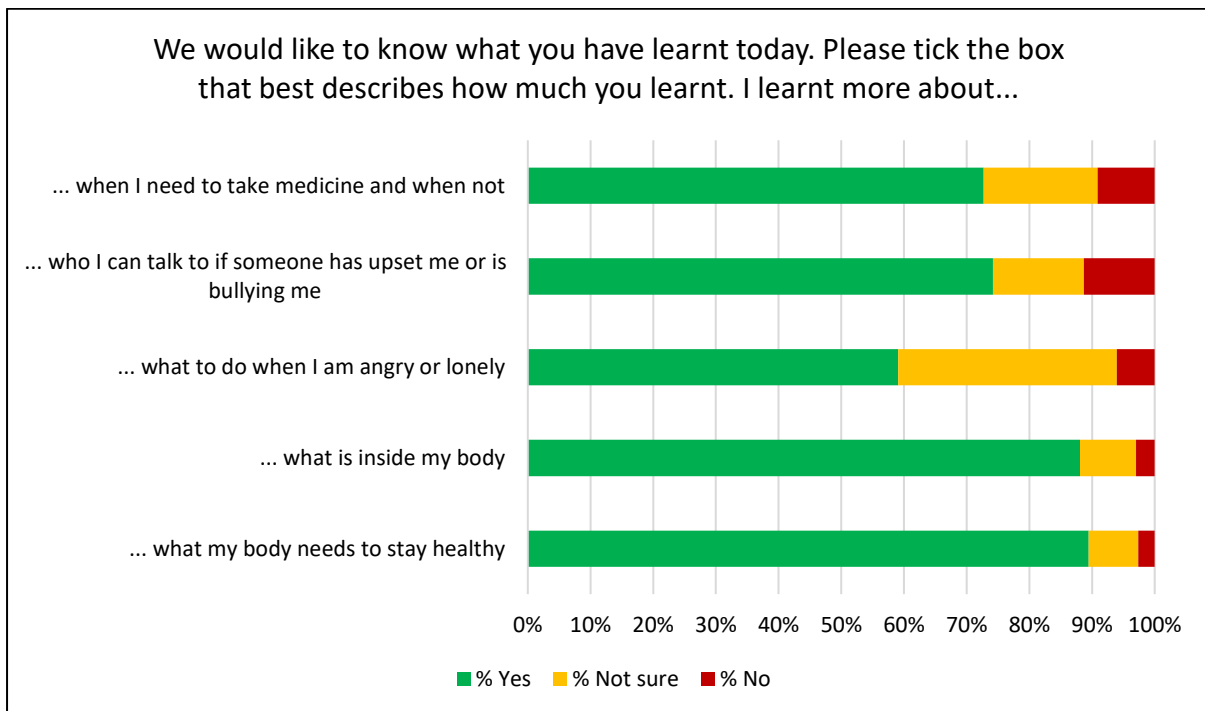
*“Yes, because it will help me to: say no; make my own decisions; be more resilient; be more assertive and have more confidence in myself.”*

*“It helps because now I won't have to worry when having a tough time with my friends.”*

### 4.3 Learning from the Feelings programme (6- to 7-year-old pupils)

Children reported that they had gained substantial knowledge from the Coram Life Education session (see figure 3). A majority of children reported that they learnt more about what their body needs to stay healthy (89%), what is inside their body (88%), what to do if they are angry or lonely (59%), who they can talk to if someone has upset or is bullying them (74%), and when they need to take medicine and when not (73%).

**Figure 3**



When asked if they had learned anything else today, children said:

*“We learnt how to look after our body.”*

*“The heart.”*

*“To stay healthy.”*

*“How to help people.”*

*“The penguin was making the kangaroo really sad as he was not letting him join in with the party.”*

## **5 Benefits of Coram Life Education to schools in the Wessex and Thames Valley area**

School staff (teachers, teaching assistants, PSHE coordinators and head teachers) were asked a series of questions in relation to the impact of CLE's PSHE education and SCARF online resources (if applicable):

79% of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I am more confident to deliver wellbeing and PSHE education."

82% of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I have a deeper knowledge of my pupils' understanding of issues and skills relating to their health and wellbeing (including behaviour, safety and mental health)."

72% of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Observing CLE's teaching and learning strategies has enabled me to integrate their approach into my teaching practice."

74% of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "CLE and/or SCARF has improved PSHE teaching in my school."

82% of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "SCARF is, or will become, an essential part of our school's PSHE, mental health and wellbeing programme."

89% of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "SCARF is easy to access and implement in the school."

85% of staff thought that CLE and SCARF are very important or important in their school in providing evidence on how it is meeting Ofsted requirements in relation to personal development, behaviour and welfare.

## **6 Satisfaction with the Coram Life Education programme**

### **6.1 Staff's satisfaction with Coram Life Education**

98% of school staff (teachers, teaching assistants, PSHE coordinators and head teachers) were either very satisfied or satisfied with Life Education's work at their school.

96% of staff agreed that the CLE sessions were well delivered.

99% of staff agreed that the quality of the content in CLE sessions and SCARF materials were appropriate to the class.

98% of staff agreed that CLE and SCARF content met children's needs.

99% of staff said that they would recommend our services to another school.

Comments from staff included:

*“It was pitched well, pacy and age appropriate. The children were engaged and excited. They had the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Lots of awe and wonder generated.”*

*“The teacher delivering was amazing and engaged all of the children.”*

*“The children were very engaged and the session provided thought-provoking material at a suitable level. They felt safe to share their thoughts and feelings and were all listened to carefully.”*

*“The session was delivered in a fun way but still managed to get across to the children the importance of looking after our body and our feelings.”*

*“The workshop leader was engaging and discussed sensitive issues skillfully.”*

*“The children very much enjoyed their visit. They loved meeting Harold again, singing, the lights and interactive resources.”*

*“Clearly presented at an appropriate level. Good content.”*

*“Good interactive activities with lots to keep the children interested and they remembered their learning well.”*

*“Excellent delivery and interaction with the class. Everyone felt safe and comfortable to join in. Lots of different topics were covered. Amazing how Laura learned everyone's names so quickly. This really added to the atmosphere of trust.”*

*“It is providing a consistent framework from which to nurture holistic child development. The school wants a Secondary (11 to 16) age programme.”*

*“Annie delivered a fantastic session for my Year 6 class about Decisions - the children were engaged and knowledgeable but nevertheless interested and some of the stats/facts appalled/fascinated them. They could access all the information very easily and loved the interactive nature of the session, with the red and green lights, the Velcro walls, the video, the venn diagram. All great!”*

*“Helen was very knowledgeable and extremely attentive to the children's questions. Her delivery of the content was outstanding and her engagement with staff was fantastic.”*

*“Caroline delivered an age appropriate, informative, fun and interactive session for our children. They were engaged and interested and it was lovely to see some of my disadvantaged children enabled to 'shine' and enjoy their time on the bus. Thank you.”*

*“Really brilliant PSHE for Nursery – thank you!”*

*“Clear and concise teaching of the theme 'Meet the brain'. Children were engaged throughout. Even I learnt some new facts!”*

*“The children were engaged and enjoyed learning in a new environment. Having the Life Education programme delivered annually enabled the children to draw upon previous experiences and link to other learning.”*

*“All children were engaged and were able to relate to their own experiences and lives.”*

*“Absolutely would recommend the life bus to other schools as the children get really excited to learn in a different environment and to meet Harold.”*

*“The children enjoyed going into the bus and taking learning out of the traditional classroom. The bus was well equipped and the children loved all the flashing lights, gadgets and puppets. It was very interactive.”*

*“Everything is there to use so could massively help in the reduction of teacher workload.”*

*“Children enjoyed the sessions and we are excited to get started with the online resources.”*

*“I like the curriculum. It is simple, easy to deliver and not time consuming to either deliver or to unpick in order to deliver in a shorter space of time. It seems to not conflict with beliefs.”*

## **6.2 Children’s satisfaction with Coram Life Education**

Children were generally very satisfied with the programme they had received.

### **6.2.1 Decisions programme**

Of the children who received the “Decisions” programme (10- to 11-year-olds) 85% reported it was ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. 63% of them would like Life Education to visit again in the future.

Children receiving the “Decisions” programme particularly liked learning about different types of drugs and the effects they have on the body; working together to consider emotional needs and the influences that young people’s peers have on an individual’s feelings and actions; and exploring ways to handle peer pressure when decision making. One child said, *“Learning which drugs were medical or non medical or legal or illegal and what harm they can do to you.”* Another said, *“When we ordered the things from most important to least important because it included teamwork and you can discuss as a team your opinion and then as a team you can all put your ideas together.”* Another said, *“The videos because it can show what can be mean and what you should do to help a friend and to not be a bystander be an active bystander.”*

31% of children found something boring. This included learning about drugs as some children felt that they already knew this information or that children should not be learning about drugs; feeling uncomfortable in the relatively small space offered by the mobile classroom for pupils in Year 6; and sections of the workshops that involved listening to explanations or participating in activities that did not suit their preferred learning styles.

### 6.2.2 Friends programme

Of the children who received the “Friends” programme (9- to 10-year-olds) 88% reported it was ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. 79% of them would like Life Education to visit again in the future.

Children receiving the “Friends” programme particularly liked learning about different types of drugs, especially the effects that smoking has on the body; and considering assertiveness skills as effective strategies for dealing with tricky situations with friends. One child said, *“Knowing what chemicals were in cigarettes I was surprised about there were 4000 chemicals in them.”* Another said, *“The most interesting thing for me was when we learnt about how sometimes it’s ok to say no. I liked it because I learnt that now I can be more confident if I ever want to say no.”* Another said, *“How to deal with arguments in different ways and what keeps your physical and mental health running smoothly.”*

31% of children found something boring. This included sitting in the mobile classroom environment; learning about drugs as some children felt they already knew this information; and participating in discussions and activities that did not suit their preferred learning styles.

### 6.2.3 Feelings programme

Of the children who received the “Feelings” programme (6- to 7-year-olds) 94% reported it was ‘good’, with 6% saying they were ‘not sure’. 92% of them would like Life Education to visit again in the future.

Children receiving the “Feelings” programme particularly liked meeting Harold the giraffe; seeing Harold help his friends to have fun together; and learning about how their body works. One child said, *“The best thing was seeing Harold.”* Another said, *“Harold helping his friend.”* Another said, *“Parts of the body lighting up.”*

Only a few children commented that they didn’t like anything about the programme. One child said, *“It was the body bit because it lighted up.”*

## 7 Conclusions

Overall CLE sessions have been highly successful. The vast majority of children report increases in knowledge and understanding of the sessions’ key learning outcome areas, especially in understanding the risks of drinking alcohol (“Decisions”); knowing that smoking is risky to a person’s health (“Friends”); and knowing what their body needs to stay healthy (“Feelings”). Teachers also highly valued the contribution to the curriculum.

## 8 References

CLE’s [Programme Overview](#) gives an overview of individual year groups’ programme learning outcomes.