

Grassing or Grooming?

Delivering a greater impact by increasing the dose and fidelity of role play activities

Summary

This report sets out to describe the most recent phase of improvement in relation to Ariel's approach to violence reduction education. This specifically relates to the improvement and evaluation of our 'Grassing or Grooming?' criminal exploitation programme.

- The starting point for this work was an evaluation of 'SafeSkills', our child sexual exploitation programme, conducted with Dartington Service Design Lab (DSDL), which identified a need to increase the amount of time young people are engaged in our programmes (dose) and to improve the quality of the engagement in the role play activities (fidelity).
- We tested an approach that involved our Forum Theatre delivering a workshop programme alongside teachers' delivery of the online programme. This explored how dose and fidelity could be increased by using forum theatre techniques to facilitate the role play activities. Quantitative evidence collected from these schools, and others using the online resource alone, seem to indicate increased impacts as a result.
- Qualitative case studies illustrate how a forum theatre approach facilitated detailed discussions and critical thinking in relation to key issues covered by the resource, particularly how keeping secrets / not grassing is used by gangs to control young recruits.
- As part of the reflection process reviewing this project of Forum Theatre Practitioners have begun to identify a series of improvements to the content of our resource and the teacher training programme that supports it. They are currently implementing a series of improvements to both.
- Further testing and evaluation of these enhanced resources is planned during the next period, working in partnership with Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership and Edge Hill University.

1 Implementing learning from the evaluation of SafeSkills

Recent evaluation of our SafeSkills programme, conducted with Dartington Service Design Lab (DSDL), identified a number of ways to improve the impact of our work; these included increasing the 'dose' and improving the 'fidelity' of the role play activities; both are critical to skill development.

In response to this we developed a project to test out whether forum theatre techniques could be used to implement the recommendations of DSDL. In order to do this Ariel Trust recruited a group of theatre practitioners, to work alongside teachers, delivering enhanced role play activities.

As part of this project 6 schools delivered the existing 'Grassing or Grooming?' (GorG) programme; while another 6 schools received an enhanced programme including a series of forum theatre workshops.

These workshops looked at the characters in the online resource and used a range of forum theatre activities to explore their feelings, motivations and responses to the scenario explored in the resource. The resource focuses on a young person who is groomed by a gang and forced to carry drugs; in the animation that is part of the programme we see him attacked in the park by a gang, who steal his bike and we strongly suspect this has all been organised by the older gang members as a way to force him to comply with their instructions. A key element of the narrative is the pressure not 'grass', a peer pressure that we know is widely used by gangs as a way of exercising control and criminally exploiting young people.

The forum theatre activities focused on a number of themes, particularly they focused directly on this question of 'grassing' exploring the motivations of the older gang members in asking the young victim to keep secrets. The groups were asked to focus on who was benefiting from this culture and how this was about the gang exercising control over the younger child. They practiced different strategies for speaking up both as the victim and also as a friend (a bystander) and explored the best ways to raise a difficult subject with an adult in a way they gets them to listen and hear what the young person is saying, rather than reacting to the issue of drugs. The case study below provides an illustration of how forum theatre supported this process.

2 Measuring Impact and continuously improving ‘Grassing or Grooming?’ in order to develop the most effective intervention possible

This report reflects work undertaken in summer term 2021 by Ariel to build on our work with DSDL, it uses similar evaluation tools and a cyclical approach innovation and testing to those developed with DSDL. These include:

- Quantitative evaluation using ‘before and after’ questionnaire, designed to measure changes in the groups’ responses to a number of statements as a result of taking part in the project.
- Qualitative reflection on the educational process used to engage children, including what worked, what didn’t and how could these be improved.

The quantitative tools capture changes in attitudes and awareness but are not able to measure the changes in young people’s skills and confidence, so the qualitative evaluation provided through case studies, observation and teacher feedback is also important.

2a Quantitative comparative analysis

Method

In order to assess the impact this new approach to the GorG role plays we have organised a preliminary study comparing the results delivered by the new approach compared to those delivered by the old approach. This study worked with 12 schools during the summer term of 2020/21.

Group 1 – 6 teachers attended a teacher training session and delivered the three lessons of ‘Grassing or Grooming?’ (GorG), using the existing online resource and supporting materials only.

Group 2 – 6 teachers delivered the programme as above, alongside this delivery Ariel’s TPs delivered a six week forum theatre programme exploring the themes of GorG.

Group 2 received both a higher dose of delivery and the fidelity of the role play activities was increased.

Complete 'Before' & 'After' data was collected from two classes (approx 52 young people) in Group 1 and a similar number in Group 2.

Results

Both groups displayed similar, positive results for all of the questions asked. However, for two statements there was clearly a stronger response from group 2, compared with group 1.

	Impact Group 1	Impact Group 2	
If someone calls you a 'grass' they are trying to control you.	+8	+15	Children more strongly agree with statement
I should always keep a secret.	+10	+25	Children more strongly disagree with statement

The stronger response from Group 2 suggest a deeper understanding of the role of the perpetrator and the role of the victim.

In GorG it is the perpetrator Ellis who calls Dean a grass and the stronger response from group 2 suggests that they recognise his controlling behaviour more clearly than group 1. Similarly it is Dean, the victim that keeps a secret from his friends and family, the stronger response from group 2 suggests that they more clearly recognise the risks associated with this pattern of behaviour.

The role play activities in GorG ask children to step into the role of Ellis and Dean, it is therefore likely that the increased time that children have spent in these roles has led to a deepening of their understanding.

Both groups exhibited large positive changes suggesting that they more clearly understand what grooming is. This increased understanding was supported by a further question which asked participants to write definitions of 'Grooming' before and after taking part in the programme. Before the programme, both groups of young people demonstrated similar patterns of understanding; a lot said they didn't know or didn't provide a definition and many of those who did focused on grooming animals. It was clear there were groups in both cohort who had explored the topic before and who gave answers similar to "*when you kiss a minor when they didn't approve*".

After the programme there were significant change in both groups with almost all participants happy to provide a definition that reflect what they had learnt in the resource and using quite sophisticated language.

Resource only

"It means to exploit, abuse or take advantage of a child"

"When you manipulate someone into doing something by being nice to them"

"Where you gain someone's trust then get them to do illegal things"

Resource + forum theatre workshops

"Grooming is when you force someone to do something without their consent and they don't consent to what you are doing with them"

"Grooming means when someone tries to make you do something you don't want to"

"An adult manipulating a child into doing things for them"

2b Qualitative feedback from observation of forum theatre activities

Young people involved in the workshop programmes engaged in a number of forum theatre facilitated discussions using scenarios from the 'GorG' online resource. The way these discussions developed is set out in three detailed Case Studies attached as Appendix 1 of this report. These show how the groups identified and explore key themes from the programme, thinking critically about the motivations and intentions of the characters and challenging the arguments that were being made by the older controlling characters.

This can be illustrated by an example from Case Study 1. This focuses on the main theme of the resource; 'grassing is not wrong' and the characters in the film are using the idea of keeping secrets as a way to scare the young victim and to control and silence them.

For example the group explored why Dean, the victim, is keeping these secrets the gang have asked him to and identified a number of possible reasons:-

"In case his mum shouts at him for meeting strangers online."

"In case Ryan stops wanting to be his friend, for delivery drugs."

“His mum would get angry as he told her he was hanging around with Ryan who she knows but he hasn’t been.”

The explored the impacts of Dean keeping the secrets and how this made him vulnerable to the gang

“I think the drug's secret has hurt Dean the most because now Ellis knows he can get him to do things for him and he won’t tell anyone.”

The group identified some words that might explain this situation.

‘Manipulation’

‘Control’

‘Coerced’ (this was one of the words worked on the week before)

They practiced using these ideas, as a bystander, to offer support to a victim

R: *“He is saying that to control you and manipulate you Dean”.*

D: *“What do you mean?”*

R: *“I don’t think he is your friend really, but I am, I can help”.*

Similar detailed discussions played out in relation to asking for help form parents and the police and these can be seen in the Case Studies at Appendix 1.

3 Qualitative reflection on the educational processes used to engage children

Throughout the delivery period and on completion of the programme the 3 theatre practitioners (TPs) completed a detailed reflection process, supported by feedback from the teachers in the schools. The reflection processes included:

- TPs keeping individual reflection diaries, Making entries after each session they delivered
- TPs holding regular reflection meeting to share experience about what worked an what didn’t
- TPs holding informal discussions with teachers to identify how activities meet the needs of children
- TPs observing children in order to monitor engagement and learning

The reflection process has led to the design of an enhanced teacher training programme and new content for teachers, in order to help them use forum theatre techniques to improve role play activities in their classrooms.

An overview of this new programme can be found in Appendix 2,

In order to increase the dose and fidelity with which teachers deliver role play activities in their classrooms, the TPs are recommending a 5 step process:

- 1.1 Begin with a simple image theatre activity in which children create still images to represent; the beginning of the story, the crisis point and a defeat.
- 1.2. Add dialogue to each images so that they become self-contained scenes
- 1.3. Reframe the scenes at a point where something can change to a more positive outcome
- 1.4. Perform these scenes with the class as spect-actors, in order to deepen an understanding of how positive outcomes might be achieved
- 1.5. Perform these scenes with parents as spect-actors, in order to widen the base of support in order to reach positive outcomes

This 5 point plan is intended to increase the time that children spend practicing the communication skills that the characters in “Grassing or Grooming?” might need to reach a positive outcome (dose). It is also designed improve the quality of role play exercises by drawing on techniques drawn from forum theatre (fidelity), while the engagement of parents should also help to generate a more significant change in children’s behaviour.

As part of the development process for this new content we have spent time, during the summer, working with Imaginarium Youth Theatre to compose a series of videos for teachers to refer to when conducting the forum theatre part of the ‘Grassing or Grooming?’ resource. The content includes clips showing theatre practitioners and young people building the forum theatre components from rehearsal to finished performance. We believe this will be an invaluable update to the resource, as it breaks down the content into bite sized activities and makes forum theatre accessible to teachers.

4 Conclusions and next steps

Ariel will never have the capacity to replicate this delivery model working face-to-face with all our partner schools. Our aim, therefore, is to build the capacity of teachers to implement similar approaches to those that use face-to-face i.e. to support teacher to use forum theatre techniques when delivering our programmes. We are therefore planning two levels of activity in order to support the development of teacher capacity.

1 Enhanced teacher training

- Introduce an element of forum theatre training into short-session teacher training
- Develop a series of video based materials as additional support for teachers
- Develop improved teaching notes based on integrating forum theatre into sessions

This enhanced training will be piloted from September 2021 with schools across Merseyside, as part of our current contract with Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership. We will collect additional feedback from schools to explore whether teachers feel able to begin to use forum theatre techniques to deliver the role play and whether they are observing increased impacts, particularly in relation to how young people communicate about issues, as a result of the changes to delivery.

2 Detailed proposal for new teacher training programme, to be piloted in Lancashire from October 2021

Based on the learning during the delivery of the project described above we have begun to develop a scheme of work and lesson plans for a more intensive programme of teacher training that will include a detail discussion of forum theatre techniques and how they can be applied, initially to our 'Grassing or Grooming?' programme. A draft scheme of work is attached at Appendix 2.

Our plan is to pilot this programme with a group of trainee teachers from Edge Hill University. These teachers will then deliver the resource as part of their placements in schools in Lancashire. Edge Hill University have agreed to put an evaluation process in place to support us to capture and reflect on the learning from this pilot in order to further develop our teacher training offer to schools.

3 An intensive programme to co-create a CPD programme for schools, subject to success of funding application

- Currently seeking funding to support a more detailed programme of development work in relation to teacher training
- Aim to develop a comprehensive CPD programme for schools
- Plan is to co-create this programme with a small number of partner schools through a detailed programme of joint working
- Will consider the value of formerly accrediting the programme

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Challenging the culture of not grassing

One of the workshop sessions focused on the victim, Dean, keeping secrets. The case study shows how the group were encouraged to analyse the drama and consider the motivations of the characters. This process builds to a forum theatre piece focused on getting a character to share a difficult secret.

First the group are asked to reflect on the animation and identify what secrets has Dean been keeping and who he is keeping them from:

Young boy: *“from his mum when he says he’s been going to Ryan’s but he’s been hanging around with Ellis”* (the older gang member)

Young girl: *“From Ryan, his mate. He hasn’t told him about the packages he’s been delivering.”*

Young girl: *“His mum at the start when he met Ryan online the first time.”*

The group are next asked to explore why Dean is keeping these secrets and identified a number of possible reasons:-

“In case his mum shouts at him for meeting strangers online.”

“In case Ryan stops wanting to be his friend for delivery drugs.”

“His mum would get angry as he told her he was hanging around with Ryan who she knows but he hasn’t been.”

Next the group were asked if it is ever OK to keep a secret, and how could they distinguish between different types of secrets.

One young boy said *“sometimes if it’s just about something good like a surprise party.”* Further questioning defined good and bad secrets:-

“Good ones are where they don’t hurt anyone and bad one’s are where somebody can get hurt.”

The group were asked the secrets they thought could hurt someone within Dean’s story?

"I think the drug's secret has hurt Dean the most because now Ellis knows he can get him to do things for him and he won't tell anyone."

The group identified some words that might explain this situation.

'Manipulation'

'Control'

'Coerced' (this was one of the words worked on the week before)

Next the group thought about how Dean's secrets were making him feel. The group were asked to think of one secret and pretend they were Dean with the group.

Young girl: *"Dean feels **alone** because he thinks he can't tell anyone about the drugs or Ellis as he will get into trouble. He is **confused** about what to do next."*

Young lad: *"I think he would feel **good at the start** when Ellis first says 'it's our secret' but then when Ellis is mean to him he would feel **very scared** about telling anyone because Ellis has threatened him."*

The group were then asked to develop a piece of forum theatre around the theme of Dean's secrets. Working in pairs they looked at a scenario where Dean has to tell someone one of his secrets and to try to get help. This was played it out in front of the rest of the class as follows with the group stop/freezing the action and developing the narrative.

One pair played out a situation in which Dean tells Ryan about the drugs.

Ryan's Character: *"Dean why haven't you been coming to footie?"*

Dean's character: *"erm, I don't know. Ellis has been knocking for me so I have been going with him".*

R: *"Well I heard bad things about him you know... You shouldn't be hanging round with him".*

D: *"I can't just stop hanging round with him - he'll go mad".*

R: *"Why?"*

D: *"Just because... I can't tell you why".*

Stop/freeze (one of the groups put up their hands to say something)

Young girl: "I think Ryan needs to tell Dean it's ok to tell him anything". (This girl swapped in for the Ryan character and we carried on from her suggestion)

R: *"It's ok to tell me anything you know Dean. I'm your best mate".*

D: *"But what if it's really bad tho?"*

R: *"Well I can try and help".*

At this point the facilitator stopped the action and asked the group to consider why Dean is reluctant to tell Ryan about Ellis?

They agreed it was because Ellis said if Dean tells on him he's a grass.

They were asked to consider whether, in this situation, grassing would be wrong? The group agreed it would be the right thing to do. So the question posed was: *'If someone is going to get hurt or in loads of trouble is it really grassing?'* Most of the group said it wouldn't be grassing if it was something really bad and someone might get hurt. So they were asked what they could do to get this into the conversation between Ryan and Dean? One young boy said Dean should say he can't tell Ryan because it would be grassing...

Back to the forum theatre;

D: *"I can't tell you otherwise I'm a grass!"*

R: *"Who said this? Was it Ellis?"*

D: *"yes..."*

At this point the action was stopped and the group asked for the words they talked about earlier when someone wants you to keep a secret for them.

Various members of the group answered; 'Manipulation', 'Control'

Cont...

R: *"He is saying that to control you and manipulate you Dean".*

D: *"What do you mean?"*

R: *"I don't think he is your friend really, but I am, I can help".*

At this point the action had to stop because it was the end of the session but as a final positive thought the group were asked to focus on what Ryan had just said and whether they would help Dean trust Ryan with his secrets?

The whole group decided yes it would and that by Ryan saying *"he's not your friend, I am"* this would give Dean some hope that he has someone to listen to him.

You can see how the step by step process of the forum theatre piece gets the group to focus closely on how the characters use language and to think about not just what one character says, but also how the other character will hear that. It allows the participants to become reflective in their communication and encourages them to develop processes for planning challenging conversations.

Case Study 2: Practicing asking parents for help

A key aim of the 'GorG' resource is to change young people's behaviour to the point where they would actually have the confidence to speak up if they or a friend needed help. Using forum theatre to build up to practicing these challenging conversations was a key element of the additional workshops.

Discussion started from reflecting on why, in the film, Dean didn't speak to his Mum:-

"I think he will be too scared to ask for help ... Because Ellis has threatened him"

When the group later suggested that Dean might consider speaking to his Mum the workshop focused on improvising this conversation. One young man acted out Dean speaking to his mum, with Rachael playing mum so that she could control the first attempt and guide him through it if needed. The rest of the class were ready to stop/freeze if they thought of an idea.

The young lad tried to tell the mum that he had been involved in drugs. Rachael asked the class what mum would say/do.

"I think she would shout"

"I think she might say - 'what have I told you about drugs!'"

They played this out and found that the young lad stopped speaking once the mum shouted. The action stopped and Rachael asked 'what could the mum do better?'

"She could listen to him without shouting" one young girl said; she then switched in and became the mum and began to play out her suggestion.

It worked - both of the young people began to talk and listen to each other. At one point in the exercise the young lad said it was hard to explain to the mum that he had been manipulated into delivering the drugs and maybe in real life it would be hard to have this conversation. Rachael stopped the action and asked the group what skills we had learnt in the previous week's session on 'talking to adults'. The group gave various answers:

"We learnt we had to tell the truth... even if it was hard"

"Be clear and direct"

"We talked about asking adults to try and listen to the whole story first before trying to help"

The pair then replayed the action with these factors in mind. The outcome was positive; the two young people were able to have a conversation and listen to each other without an argument or raised voices. The class agreed that telling the truth was always best and one young person said *"if you don't tell the truth then it could get much worse in the future"*.

Case Study 3: Speaking to the Police

By far the most challenging outcome of the 'GorG' programme is to get young people to a point where they recognise that speaking to the Police is the right thing to do and being confident enough to try to practice this conversation.

In one group speaking to the Police came up as a suggestion, so the group were asked to play out this scenario:-

One of the group volunteered to be Dean and whilst Rachael played the Police officer.

Police Officer: *"Are you ok young man? Do you need help?"*

Dean: *"Yes, I have been caught up in something bad. I don't know what to do..."*

I asked the pupils what Dean should say to the police...

Pupils: *"He should tell the officer that he has been made to sell drugs for Ellis and also try to tell the truth as much as possible"*.

This created space to discuss the legal implications of speaking to the Police and the fact that given that Dean was under 18 the police would ask for an adult to be present, so the pupils decided that Mum should come to the police station. A pupil then volunteered to be mum. The group discussed key words Dean should use when talking to his mum...

Pupils:

"forced into selling drug"

"Manipulated"

"He said I was a grass"

Mum: *"What's happened Dean? Why i'm I here?"*

Dean: *"I have been... manipulated into selling drugs for a lad I met online"*

Mum: *"What??! What have I told you about going online? And drugs!!!"*

stop/freeze! A pupil said that the police might step in to stop mum shouting at Dean.

Reframe:

PO: *"We need to listen to what Dean has to say as this is vital information".*

M: *"ok"*

PO: *"continue Dean..."*

D: *"I met a lad online who I thought was my friend and he manipulated me into delivery drugs. I was beat up when delivering the drugs and they stole them and his bike. He is now saying I owe him for the drugs and the bike".*

The young lad continued to tell the story and until Rachael stopped the action and asked if this was the right thing to do?

The class agreed, but one young lad said that he might be more scared to say everything because Ellis told him he would be a grass if he did.

Rachael asked the class if it was grassing by telling the police?

Some of the answers:

“No because it’s illegal”

“No because otherwise Ellis will make him do more stuff to pay off the drugs”

Next the group considered what made it difficult when trying to talk to an adult and ask for help?

Answers:

“Sometimes they don’t listen and try to tell you you are wrong”

“They are sometimes busy and can’t listen to you properly”

“They might want to look at everything that you do online like messages to your friends”

“You think you are going to be in trouble for telling them or asking them to help you”

From this Rachael explained that the next session we would be looking into how to express your feelings and how to talk about them in ways that can help to get others to listen to what you want to say.

Appendix 2: Scheme of work for enhanced teacher training

Draft scheme of work combining Grassing or Grooming with forum theatre				
This programme will be aimed at 6 x 3 rd year B ed students before they go on placement into 6 Lancashire schools		This programme will be delivered by PA an RM, combining the strategic processes that sit behind G or G with forum theatre		The working assumption is that this programme will be delivered over 6 x 1 hour sessions from October 2021
Overall aim of the programme: To equip trainee teachers with knowledge, skills and attitude required to deliver a high quality Grassing or Grooming programme with year 6 pupils, leading to a forum theatre performance for parents				
	Content	General objectives	Resources required	Independent learning
Week 1	Intro to Grassing or Grooming PA Image theatre RM 1- before 2-crisis point 3- Defeat	Note and discuss the learning activities contained in GorG Practice image theatre as an introduction to the role of the bystander	Grassing or Grooming web site	Review lesson plans 1 & 2 and the handouts that go with them. Provide comments and feedback, do these make sense?
Week 2	An evidence based approach PA How to add in dialogue to images so they are self-contained scenes. RM	Understand the evidence that sits behind GorG their role providing feedback Practice adding dialogue to develop the role of bystander	Presentation from literature review and Relationship Education curriculum	Review the requirements of the Relationship Education curriculum

Week 3	<p>Assessing children's learning in relation to RE curriculum PA</p> <p>Reframing: stop freezing the scenes at certain points where something can change to a more positive outcome. Learning about improvisation with a class RM</p>	<p>Devise ways to measure changes to children's vocabulary and the confidence with which they can use that vocab</p> <p>Practice reframing in order to develop a positive outcome</p>	Data from other schools and existing questionnaires	Planning your placement
Week 4	<p>Focus on skills development PA</p> <p>How to facilitate a forum theatre session with the class as spect-actors</p>	<p>Using observation to identify skills development</p> <p>Rehearse skills that bystanders can use to intervene</p>		
Week 5	<p>Parental engagement PA</p> <p>How to facilitate a forum theatre performance with parents RM</p>	<p>Discuss the feasibility of organising a parents event</p>		Consider the feasibility of a parent's event