

# Evaluation of the effects of the Bradford Speakeasy course



Research commissioned by fpa

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# Contents

<b>Report Summary</b>	page 4
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	page 6
1.1 Background	
1.2 Aims and objectives	
<b>Chapter 2: Method</b>	page 10
2.1 Research Design	
2.2 Sample	
2.3 Data analysis	
2.4 Ethical considerations	
<b>Chapter 3: Results</b>	page 14
3.1 Results in relation to findings of previous large scale Speakeasy evaluation	
3.1.1 Memories and impressions of the course	
3.1.2 Increased factual knowledge around sex and sexual health	
3.1.3 Increased confidence and communication skills	
3.1.4 A more positive and open approach to discussions of sex, sexuality and sexual health	
3.1.5 Further learning and professional development	
3.2 An exploration of any novel outcomes of the Bradford Speakeasy course	page 23
3.2.1 Broader effects on individuals attending the course	
3.2.2 Widening impact of the course	
3.2.3 Suggestions for the future	
3.2.4 Gender	
3.2.5 Changes in children and relationships	
<b>Chapter 4: Summary and Conclusion</b>	page 32
<b>References</b>	page 34

# Appendices

Appendix A	Participant Information Sheet
Appendix B	Interview Schedule
Appendix C	TSA research ethics guidelines

# Report Summary

Six parents who had attended and completed the Bradford Speakeasy course were interviewed. This report delivers the findings from the interviews.

## Background

The Bradford Speakeasy course is a community-based educational programme. The overarching aim of the Speakeasy course is to support and encourage parents to communicate with their children about sex, sexual health and relationships. The course is relaxed and informal and runs over a number of weeks. The course is delivered by facilitators who have been fully trained in the delivery of Speakeasy.

The Speakeasy course has a number of specific aims for parents. These include:

- Increase parents' confidence and communication skills with their children
- Help parents show a more positive and open approach to discussions of sex, sexuality and sexual health
- Increase parents' factual knowledge around sex and sexual health
- Provide a step towards further learning or professional development for traditionally excluded groups of parents

## Objectives

The evaluation has two aims which are as follows:

### **1. Evaluate the Bradford Speakeasy course in relation to the previous findings of a national longitudinal evaluation of the Speakeasy course**

Speakeasy has previously undergone extensive evaluation, the findings of which are available in a recent report (Coleman and Ramm 2008). This report details the findings of six in-depth interviews with regard to the key findings of the national Speakeasy evaluation and addresses how well the Bradford Speakeasy course is achieving the specified aims.

### **2. Explore any novel outcomes of the Bradford Speakeasy course**

The second aim of the Bradford Speakeasy evaluation is to explore the experiences of the people who attended the course not in relation to the aims of the Speakeasy course but from a naïve perspective.

## Results

### **1. Results of the Bradford Speakeasy course in relation to the previous findings of a national longitudinal evaluation of the Speakeasy course**

The results suggest that the Bradford Speakeasy course is successfully achieving its stated aims for parents. The course was well received by parents. Factual knowledge, specifically in the areas of STIs, contraception and child safety, were greatly increased. Parents reported that they had greater confidence and felt more able to communicate with their children about sex and sexual health. Data from the parents indicated that there was a more open and positive approach to discussions of sex, sexuality and sexual health. For some of the parents the Speakeasy course had provided a valuable stepping stone to further education or career progression.

### **2. Exploration of novel outcomes of the Bradford Speakeasy course**

The results show that parents' increase in confidence was not limited to areas covered by the course. Parents frequently talked of a feeling of empowerment due to the successful participation and completion of the course and there was evidence to suggest that for some parents this may have had a positive impact in their lives. There was good evidence to show that parents' learning was being used in a wider circle of family and friends, parents recalled times when they had been able to pass on advice to friends, neighbours and acquaintances. Some parents reported that they had been in suitable situations to pass information on directly to children who were not their own. Parents reported that it was difficult to engage males in the course or the sex education of children. There was some indication that a lack of a male perspective motivated some parents to attend the course. Parents talked of a changing relationship with their children and some observed positive changes in their children which they felt were attributable to the Speakeasy course.

## Conclusion

Based on the data provided this report suggests that the Bradford Speakeasy course is having a very positive impact upon the parents who attend and that the course is successfully meeting its aims for parents.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The Speakeasy course was first run in England in 2002. The course offers an inclusive non-threatening group based opportunity for parents to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to enable them to communicate with their children about sex and sexual health. The course is structured in seven weekly sessions which are flexible and relaxed. Parents are encouraged to gain greater confidence in talking about issues which are often considered taboo or embarrassing to talk about. The Speakeasy course is registered for accreditation with the Open College Network (OCN). For parents who wish to the course and the portfolio work arising from it can be used to gain OCN credits at level one or two.

A variety of teaching methods are employed on the course including; collage, role play, games and written work. Each session lasts approximately two hours and the course typically follows the structure shown in Table One.

Week	Topics
Taster Session	How we learned. What children need. Course outline. OCN accreditation.
Week One	Hopes, fears, expectations, group agreement, language and the words we know, pre course evaluation.
Week Two	Naming body parts. Physical and emotional changes during puberty
Week Three	Needs of children at different stages of their life. Age-appropriate information learning opportunities with children
Week Four	Collage exercises on stereotypes and media pressures and how to deal with them. Communication role play.
Week Five	Methods of contraception. Information on Sexually transmitted infections
Week Six	Sexual relationships education policy. Useful resources
Week Seven	Safe from harm. Child safety. Review and completion of portfolio. Post course evaluation.

**Table One. Speakeasy course outline.**

Speakeasy is targeted in areas of multiple deprivation and where high teenage pregnancy rates occur. Previous analysis of the demographics of people who have attended a Speakeasy course (Coleman, Cater, Ramm and Sherriff 2007) show that:

95% of the people who attend Speakeasy courses are female

71% of people on the course classify themselves as 'White British'

The largest other self classified ethnic groups attending the course are;

3% 'White other'

3% 'Black or Black British-Caribbean'

3% 'Black or Black British-African'

12% of those attending the course are in full-time work

27% are employed part-time

29% are registered unemployed

32% are unwaged and not seeking work

For 17.7% of attendees, the Speakeasy programme was their first course since leaving school.

10% of Speakeasy attendees did not consider themselves able-bodied.

The overarching aim of the Speakeasy course is to support and encourage parents to communicate with their children about sex, sexual health, and relationships. In addition, four specific aims for parents are stated:

- Increase confidence and communication skills with children
- Help parents show a more positive and open approach to discussions of sex, sexuality and sexual health
- Increase parents' factual knowledge around sex and sexual health
- Provide a step towards further learning or professional development for excluded groups of parents

## Results of previous research

Recent large scale evaluations of the Speakeasy programme (Coleman and Ramm 2008; Coleman, Cater, Ramm and Sherriff 2007) focused on how well the aims were being achieved. These reports are available from the fpa.

The 2007 report used both quantitative and qualitative methods in its analysis and included a qualitative three year longitudinal evaluation of parents attending the course. The results of the evaluation suggested that the Speakeasy course was achieving its aims for parents. Quantitative analysis of pre and post course questionnaires filled in by Speakeasy attendees showed that self-rated scores in the key aim areas had increased after attendance on the course. Parents were asked to rate themselves on a five point likert scale, (1 being a low score, 5 being high). The results are briefly summarised as follows:

1. Before the course, parents rated their **confidence** at a score of 2.99. After the course the average score was 4.40. This shows an increase of 1.41 points, or a 47.0% increase.
2. Prior to the course the overall **knowledge** score - which included the topics of puberty, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and keeping safe - was 3.07. This increased to 4.47 after the course, showing an average increase of 1.40 points or 45.6%. The most dramatic increase in knowledge score was for STIs, where parents rated their knowledge at 2.59 prior to the course and 4.33 after the course which relates to a 67.2% increase in score.
3. Before the course 60.9% of parents, 'agreed strongly' or, 'agreed' with the statement, 'I feel able to **talk to my children openly** about sex'. This increased to 95.5% of parents after the course, showing an additional 34.6% of parents who, 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement as a result of attending the course.
4. There was a slight increase in **interest in further education** amongst Speakeasy attendees. Prior to the course 67.7% of people, 'strongly agreed' or, 'agreed' that they were interested in returning to education. After the course this figure rose to 73%, an increase of 5.4%

The 2008 report furthered the longitudinal research confirming the positive results of the previous evaluation and adding to the evidence suggesting that four years on from the course people were still confident and able to use their knowledge with their children. The innovative findings from the 2008 evaluation suggested that parents were increasingly able to use their learning as their children grew older; parents were proactive in the provision of information, continued to use the materials from the course, were increasingly aware of how to link information they provided with sex education provided at schools and engaged their children in discussions about their sexual behaviour in the present and their possible behaviour in the future.

An additional evaluation conducted by TSA outlined the effects upon professionals trained as Speakeasy facilitators (Sherriff and Coleman 2006) and is concerned with a fifth aim of the Speakeasy course which is to:

- Enable health and educational professionals to give higher priority to work with parents and carers, with the backing of accredited Speakeasy training so that large numbers of parents throughout England will have access to a Speakeasy course.

This evaluation showed that the training was successful in increasing confidence, knowledge and facilitation skills and that people's learning was extending into their work places, providing staff with the skills and knowledge to refer parents to other service providers where needed.

The longitudinal evaluation of the fpa's Speakeasy course used the fpa's key aims as guidance. However, the evaluation also uncovered some novel findings which were not the main focus of the report. Some of the most significant findings were that; there was a significant change in children observed by parents, parents reported a growing confidence in children and reported that there were more frequent and open discussions about sex, many parents felt that their relationship had changed as a result of the Speakeasy course. In addition to this many parents also reported that the Speakeasy course had not only affected them but also had farther reaching consequences. Parents often reported that their spouses and friends looked to them for advice, their children were passing information to their friends and that they were increasingly aware of SRE policy.

A separate piece of evaluation work made these novel findings its focus (Ramm and Coleman 2008) concentrating on the widening effects of the Speakeasy course and the changing relationship between parent and child. This evaluation focused on the effects of Speakeasy on the parent-child dyad and the widening effects of Speakeasy both within the family and in the wider community. This was the first evaluation to elicit the views of the young people of those who attended the course. The findings confirmed the positive evaluation results of previous work and the views of the young people added weight to the positive claims made by parents who attended the course.

## **1.2 Aims and objectives of the current research**

There is a good body of evidence to suggest the positive impacts of the Speakeasy course. As such the current evaluation can build upon previous work, however to ensure an ecologically valid evaluation it is also important to explore the experiences of those attending the Bradford Speakeasy course from a naïve view point. As such, this evaluation has two aims which are as follows:

### **1. Evaluate the Bradford Speakeasy course in relation to the previous findings of a national longitudinal evaluation of the Speakeasy course**

Speakeasy has previously undergone extensive evaluation, the findings of which are available in a recent report (Coleman and Ramm 2008). This evaluation aims to present the findings from interviews with parents who attended the Bradford Speakeasy course in regard to the key findings of the national Speakeasy evaluation. Through this a representation of how well the Bradford Speakeasy course is achieving its specified aims for parents can be developed.

### **2. Explore any novel outcomes of the Bradford Speakeasy course**

If this report only presented the results in relation to the specified aims of the Speakeasy course it would be limited. One of the strengths of qualitative research methods is the ability to explore the experience of people and discover data which is not predicated by aims. This ensures that a valid representation of the experience of attending the Speakeasy course can be achieved.

Therefore the second aim of the Bradford Speakeasy evaluation is to explore the experiences of the people who attended the course not in relation to the aims of the Speakeasy course but from a naïve perspective.

## Chapter 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Design

The research design was informed by Kvale's (1996) suggested stages of designing and implementing interview studies. These guidelines provide detail on thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting of interview based research.

An 'Interview guide approach' (Patton 1990) was adopted. In this design the interviewer has a schedule of questions (See Appendix B) or areas which will be covered during the interview but is not restricted by wording or orders of questions. The interviewer is also free to probe with further questions where any interesting data are suggested. The structure of the 'Interview guide approach' allows for a systematic and comprehensive evaluation to be made whilst also embracing areas which may not be covered by predetermined questions thus allowing a more thorough and ecologically valid exploration.

All interviews were conducted in person. The interviewer had a thorough knowledge of the Speakeasy programme and had previously been involved in its evaluation and was therefore able to direct questioning to relevant areas and build a rapport with the interviewees based upon a shared knowledge of the Speakeasy course.

All interviews took place in a private room. The room was set up with flexible seating so that participants could chose to sit wherever they preferred in relation to the interviewer.

Participants were recruited by a practitioner external to TSA who contacted potential participants to request their informed consent and to arrange a time for interview. When participants arrived for their interviews they were asked to read through a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A).

Immediately prior to interview the researcher read through consent information and ensured that the participant provided fully informed consent. Participants were told the reason for the research and that the interview would take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Participants were also asked for their consent for an audio recording of the interview to be made. All participants were assured that the interviewer would be the only person to listen to the recording, that no other person would have access to it and that it would be deleted when the interview had been transcribed. All participants freely gave their consent.

At the end of the interview participants were given the opportunity to provide spontaneous feedback on the course and were asked if they had any questions for the interviewer.

## 2.2 Sample

The sample was purposively selected to represent those who had attended a recent Bradford Speakeasy course. All of parents in the sample had completed the course at least three months prior to interview to ensure that there had been adequate time for any learning to have been used in daily life. All of the parents in the sample were female. As 95% of the people who have attend a Speakeasy course are female (Coleman, Cater, Ramm and Sherriff 2007) an exclusively female sample was not deemed problematic.

Six interviews were conducted. Participants were encouraged to ask one of their children if they wished to participate in the research. In two out of the six interviews both a child and parent were present.

It is important to note that the sample was formed by people who had successfully completed the Speakeasy course and were motivated to spare their time to be interviewed. It is likely then that there is bias in the sample and as such the findings of the research should be treated with caution.

## 2.3 Data analysis

Interview summaries were created for each interview. The researcher made detailed notes of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Any comments or areas where interesting data were suggested were then transcribed verbatim from the interview recording. The researcher also recorded their post-interview reflections noting any striking aspects or themes in the interview. Through this process the main data set was developed and the interpretation of the data was initiated.

The analysis then continued in two ways in relation to the two objectives of the evaluation:

### **1. Evaluation of the Bradford Speakeasy course in relation to the previous findings of a national longitudinal evaluation**

The findings in this section were based on the findings of previous evaluation. Thematic analysis was used in previous research to develop themes which emerged from data. In the current research each established theme was examined against the findings from the six interviews. Information from the interview summaries was compared to the themes to either support the existing themes or to challenge them.

### **2. Explore any novel outcomes of the Bradford Speakeasy course**

The aim of this section was to freely explore the data from the interviews, as such Thematic Analysis was used to develop key themes emerging from the interviews. Work by Braun and Clarke (2006) guided the analysis and their suggested stages of thematic analysis are shown in Table Two. When the interview summaries were fully developed they were inspected through iterative reading to facilitate familiarity with the data. The researcher then identified themes and used verbatim quotes to support the developing theme. When all the emerging themes had been identified the researcher moved to the next summary and identified emergent themes. When all the themes from each summary had been identified separately the researcher

integrated the themes from each summary, which were reviewed and refined through the process.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Process</b>
Familiarization with data	Transcribing, iterative reading, initial ideas
Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features in a systematic fashion across the entire data set
Searching for themes	Collating codes into themes
Reviewing themes	Checking themes reflect the coded extracts and the entire data set
Defining and naming themes	Refine the specifics of each theme, generate clear definitions and names
Producing the report	Selection of vivid extract examples, final analysis of extracts, production of report

**Table 2. The stages of Thematic Analysis**

Finally it is important to note that Thematic Analysis recognises that a researcher is an integral part of the research and brings their values and theoretical positions to the research. It is necessary to recognise that the interpretation of the data is viewed in these terms (see Stanley and Wise 1993). To ensure as far as possible that the findings reflected the data the researcher made constant comparisons of the interpretation with verbatim quotes drawn from the interview summaries.

Throughout the results section reference is made to numbers of people who reported a viewpoint or idea, these are used to help give an idea about the strength of comment being made (see Silverman 2001), phrases such as, 'all' (meaning all), 'many' or 'most' (meaning  $\frac{3}{4}$  or more), 'half' (meaning approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$ ) 'several' (approaching  $\frac{1}{2}$ ) and 'a few' (meaning  $\frac{1}{4}$  or less) are used as such. These are in no way intended to claim a statistical generalisability – something which such small scale interview based research cannot claim – but are used to illustrate the strength of the theoretical points being made.

## 2.4 Ethical considerations

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with TSA's ethical guidelines (See Appendix C). These guidelines cover a number of issues such as informed consent, care of participants, confidentiality, anonymity (where relevant and appropriate), disclosure and feedback. The interviewer from TSA held a current Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.

In initial contact with the participants practitioners gained fully informed consent from potential participants in regards to their taking part in a face-to-face interview conducted by an interviewer from TSA. On the day of the interview participants were given a participant information sheet to look through while they were waiting for interview and at interview were read a sheet of consent information. All participants were informed of the aims of the research, how their views were valued and confidential, and how they would be of great help. Participants received a £10 gift voucher from TSA in recognition of their assistance in the research.

## Chapter 3. Results

### 3.1 Results in relation to the previous findings of a national longitudinal evaluation

The findings of the evaluation add to the growing body of evidence (Coleman and Ramm 2008; Ramm and Coleman 2008; Coleman, Cater, Ramm and Sherriff 2007) which suggests that the Speakeasy course is consistently achieving its stated aims which are:

- Increase parents' confidence and communication skills with their children
- Help parents to show a more positive and open approach to discussions of sex, sexuality and sexual health
- Increase parents factual knowledge around sex and sexual health
- Provide a step towards further learning/professional development for excluded groups of parents

The results presented in this section are structured in relation to these aims and are presented as follows:

- 3.1.1 Memories and impressions of the course
- 3.1.2 Increased factual knowledge around sex and sexual health
- 3.1.3 Increased confidence and communication skills
- 3.1.4 A more positive and open approach to discussions of sex, sexuality and sexual health
- 3.1.5 Further learning and professional development

#### 3.1.1 Memories and impressions of the course

The parents in the sample all reported that the course had been a **highly positive experience** and one that they would recommend to other people.

*'It's wonderful, it gives me so much more than I expected'.*

*'I enjoyed it as a whole because we had fun and learnt stuff'.*

*'I found it really fascinating... I learnt a lot'.*

*'I do recommend it highly'.*

Parents often recalled the **friendly and relaxed nature of the course**.

*'What sticks out? Being relaxed and friendly...being relaxed and friendly, it were a good laugh although we were learning things'.*

*'It was a lovely happy group'.*

Some parents recalled that they had **initially been nervous** or embarrassed about what they may be asked to do while attending the course but also that these nerves were dispelled within the first session or two. Some of the parents cited the cohesive and friendly nature of the group as a reason for this.

*'It were alright, it were a bit scary at first... cause I thought, 'Oh there's going to be loads of people there and we're going to be talking about this that and the other' and it was going to be a bit embarrassing'.*

*'Some of it was, using, like I say the very first lesson, it was having to use female and male words for genitals, it was kind of embarrassing. But then it was like, 'If you can say it then I can say It' '.*

The parents reported that the **Speakeasy facilitators** had been friendly, helpful, approachable and knowledgeable.

*'They were hilarious, they were really good, really approachable, you could ask them anything'.*

*'The group, the group was small friendly I felt I could trust people, the girls who ran it were brilliant, they really steered the conversations well and we got ground rules'.*

Most of the parents suggested that they had **not expected to learn so much** by attending the Speakeasy course. Parents frequently recalled that prior to the course they believed that they would only be learning about how to hold a conversation with their children about sex – something which was referred to as 'the talk' or 'the conversation'. Some unexpected topics included STIs, contraception, the emotional side of sex and child safety issues.

*'It was much better than I imagined, it was much more comprehensive and very sort of no holds barred, um, I got a lot more out of it than I would have thought and that I ever thought I could'.*

*'I thought it was just going to cover when you talk about the birds and bees, that 'the conversation' I just thought it was going to be about that'.*

A few parents cited clear **reasons for attending** the course, such as problems with teenage children or an awareness that they did not feel comfortable discussing sex with their children.

*'Because it's they, at this age they ask you some awkward questions and you don't how to answer them you don't know what you, with me, personally it's always been, 'No, not now we'll talk about it later', I've never known how to answer some of the questions, I mean she will say to you, 'How did she get that baby in there' and you're like, 'Oh, I don't know', what do I say to that?'*

*'I didn't know how to approach, I didn't know how to talk about any of it, I were more, I was shouting, throwing in accusations, not sitting down and talking it, I were doing it all wrong... I were right nervous, she's giggling and I just stopped talking about it I just didn't know how to do it, it were very hard, this got offered at the right time for me, it's been perfect'.*

However a significant number of parents reported that they had initially been sceptical about attending the course, or had attended not out of interest but just because it was a way of meeting friends and 'getting out of the house'. These parents reported that they were surprised to find how useful the course had been.

*'Sometimes you do courses to get you out the house and meet other people and that's what I started this course on it but I actually came away knowing, learning, I thought, 'oh it'll be stuff I know', not to be big headed but at [age] [I thought] you pretty much knows what's up when it comes to sex'.*

*'She always says, 'Oh name will come' so I just sort of get roped into it all, but I did find it really good'.*

*'They're all like, 'Are you going on it, then I'll go on it, yeah, I'll go on it if you're going on it' '.*

Finally, it was quite common for parents to report that the experience of Speakeasy was qualitatively **different to their experience of other courses**. Reasons for this included the relaxed nature of the course, the variety of teaching methods employed, the use of discussion and the need for thought and decision making.

*'It were really good because they explained things instead of just being like, teachers with a board they were relaxed and they acted out a lot of things'.*

*'The refreshing thing that I found out about this course is that it lets you make your own decisions, it just sort of sparks a discussion with you'.*

### **3.1.2 Increased factual knowledge around sex and sexual health**

All of the parents in the sample reported that their **knowledge had been greatly increased** by attending the Speakeasy course.

*'It's given me the tools and the knowledge to feel more comfortable talking about it'.*

*'I've learnt words I've never even heard of'.*

*'We didn't start it from like ... 12 to 13 plus I mean it weren't really, you only learnt the sex education like on your periods and they give you some towels and that was about it'.*

Specifically the parents in this sample found that information about **STIs and contraception** was particularly helpful. Very significant gains in knowledge were shown in these areas as shown by the quotes below.

*'It's helped me as well cause like stuff like diseases you can catch sexually, I didn't know half of them, I just thought like STDs were like a full, you know, I just thought it were like one disease'.*

*'STIs, I'd be reading stuff I'd never even heard of before'.*

*'I thought I knew a lot about contraception yeah although, it's like contraception I was like, 'Yeah ok I'll come in'...and then I was like, 'What's that?' 'Erm what's that'?! The patches, oh! There's lots that you really really don't hear about'.*

*'It were about the contraception, cause I'd never seen a coil before or the implants and stuff so I learnt all about them... and how if my kids do chat to me, know what to say back to them'.*

A novel finding in this evaluation was that parents frequently mentioned that child safety issues had been a very important aspect of the course. Some parents felt that this had given them the confidence to know how to approach the topic with their children and know what behaviour was appropriate though one parent still felt slightly uncomfortable with the subject.

*'Like how do you talk to your kids about paedophiles you can't get away with oh there's naughty men out there anymore, you can't get away, you've got to learn them that certain things are unacceptable'.*

*'I wouldn't know what to say to be honest, especially today when there's all this you've got to be careful around your kids do you know what I mean cause there's all this what is it appropriate to speak with your child with I mean if you're too open is it misconstrued as something else you know what I mean, it can be a very grey area'.*

Some of the parents reported that the factual knowledge increase from the course was the most important aspect for them because whilst they previously had the confidence to attempt to answer children's questions they now **believed that they may have previously been passing on misinformation.**

*'If they'd have come to me before I went on the course I'd of probably give them the wrong information, tried to explain to them but it would have been like old fashioned information'.*

*'I would actually [answer children's questions], but I didn't know any answers, I didn't have much confidence and I only know what I've experienced, [now] I feel more confident in answering other questions, not just about, you know, sex but about pregnancies and how to talk'.*

Many of the parents mentioned that the course had required them to think about issues and discuss possible answers and that this was different from other courses where information and answers were simply provided. Parents reported that this had encouraged them to learn and that they benefited greatly from this approach.

*'Listening to young mums and I thought, 'Oh!'... I was putting things way up [ages to tell children about issues], and when they explained I thought 'Well yeah' '.*

*'It needs you to think about things in a different way, like body pressure, media and how other people view other people and where they're getting all their information from and child safety as well cause that made you think, at the moment he's with me 24 7 but as he gets older... '.*

Most of the parents reported that they had been **shocked to find out about sex education policies in schools.** The parents felt that there was not enough being taught to children and this had often prompted the parents to think about how much their children would be taught and to take responsibility for providing information they felt was lacking.

*'Well I was surprised how little they teach and when they teach and how they teach it'.*

*'I don't think they're getting enough taught at schools no, that they only go through like the difference between plants and animals like that in science but it should be telling them more, cause young girls in year six could be starting their period and they should be able to sit down and say this is what happens at this certain age but they're not'.*

*'I'm trying to ease the transition now... I think primary schools are missing a trick there'.*

*'It changed the way how I thought about it, when we plant seeds in the spring I'll talk about human reproduction as well'.*

Many of the parents reported that they found the paperwork they completed during the course and the leaflets they had received very useful. None of the parents reported any problems completing the paperwork and found the facilitators helpful if there was any confusion. Parents often reported that they felt safe knowing that though they had learnt a great deal on the course if they couldn't remember something they felt **equipped with their folder and knew how to access further information.**

*'I'm not frightened of whatever angle the questions come from, I know I can find an answer or give an answer'.*

*'I'm a lot more prepared now cause I have it all in the folder, if they come over with one and I'm not quite sure I can look it up myself'.*

*'We've got the leaflets and I've ordered a book now... I took it, I leant it from the course... I thought I could do with having that for when she got older'.*

*'I also found through this course that there are resources in case you do get stuck'.*

One lady reported that she had found it very useful to learn how to access resources on the internet and mentioned that prior to the course she was not aware of what was available and would not have felt confident enough to look up sexual health issues on the internet for fear of finding inappropriate content.

### **3.1.3 Increased confidence and communication skills**

Parents talked frequently about an **increased level of confidence** when answering children's questions.

*'It's just like, to have the confidence to sit there and answer questions. I were like, you know, 'This can happen, this can happen, this can happen, and do you realise a girl can still get pregnant when she's on her period' and they went, 'No they can't' and I was like, ' Yes they can' '.*

*'He's just gone seven and he's been asking questions and sometimes I'd get embarrassed and I would say, 'Talk to your dad' or, 'We'll talk about it when you're older', so the Speakeasy's given me a bit of confidence to sit and explain at a young age to them'.*

Specifically some parents reported that their increased confidence came directly from feeling fully equipped with factual knowledge about puberty and sexual health issues.

*'Knowing that, to know a bit more. So when they do come home saying well, 'We've learnt this at school' I'll say, 'Well that ain't enough do you want to know a bit more' and mum can sit and explain a bit more'.*

*'It's given me a bit of courage to actually sit there and explain properly in detail without having to use like little kiddy words'.*

Two parents reported that they had had previously been worried and embarrassed about their levels of knowledge. These parents had felt unable to ask questions and valued the Speakeasy course because it provided them with an experience where they had been encouraged to ask questions.

*'If I'd have asked someone about it, like what's one of them then they'd have probably laughed cause I'm like [age] I should have known and now I know'.*

All of the parents reported that through the course they had become less embarrassed about openly talking about sex and so they felt much **more able to communicate** with their children about sex.

*'Sometimes I used to sit there and get right embarrassed and say, 'Oh, go and talk to your dad about that' or, 'We'll talk about that like when there's nobody around' but now it doesn't bother me, now like his dad'll sit there and I'll tell him [provide her child with information] and his dad's like 'You can't', and I'm like, 'I can!' '.*

### **3.1.4 A more positive and open approach to discussions of sex sexuality and sexual health**

Parents strongly believed that since attending the Speakeasy course they had developed a **more positive and open approach** to discussing sex and puberty with their children.

*'I've had other people say well if you're open about sex they're more likely to go and do it and I'm like, 'If you don't tell them anything they're going to be ignorant'. So yeah, he might go and have a sexual relationship but at least he's going to go into that relationship understanding contraception, you know, [and] all the STIs that are about, everything like that rather than blindly go in get a girl pregnant and get Chlamydia'.*

*'Yeah I've changed 'cause I'd thought you'd sit and talk to a 12 year old about puberty and that but no, it's much younger'.*

*'I'd only discussed sex twice with her prior to the Speakeasy... now she listens whether she wants to or not, I'll tell anybody! Now I tend to, if there's something they've seen, like gay sex, I would never have discussed that before Speakeasy and I would have been quite uncomfortable'.*

*'Oh go ask your dad, you know kind of thing, I don't want to do that, I don't want to have to rely on other people because I know it's within my capability to understand'.*

Parents revealed that attending the Speakeasy course had changed the way they viewed conversations with their children about sex and sexual health. Many of the parents reported that the **course 'normalised' these conversations** and that they were now part of daily life where as previously they had been something to fear and avoid.

*'I didn't realise that I was, not hush hush but if he'd of asked me whatever I wouldn't have told him you know so, it did open, yeah, 'it's normal'.*

*'It's made me more, before it would be like a national issue, before it would be like, 'Oh my goodness, do you know what's just happened', kind of thing'.*

Parents were relieved to find out that it is normal for children to ask questions about sex and their bodies. They also mentioned frequently that it was a relief to find out that other **parents were in a similar situation** to them and this encouraged them to be open with their children.

*'I think it's an overall difference being on the Speakeasy course cause you just know that it's not wrong, it's not wrong with him to come out with those words if he comes out with those words... it's normal'.*

*'Cause [name] is my first and only child, it's not something you get around when you're talking with your friends it's not like, 'Oh by the way my little un's just asked' but when you're on a course that's specifically designed to make you feel more comfortable and they've all got their own little stories, like 'Oh my little girl asked why were two men kissing' '.*

*'I realised that other people's children are asking the same types of questions, do you know what I mean'?*

Parents found that their learning from the Speakeasy **course was used frequently in their daily lives.**

*'Boys fiddling with the' selves is a good issue, it's a good example, it happens a lot, I used to go pretty mad about it yeah, I've chilled out a lot and I try to explain it... I say, 'Try and keep that for private', whereas before I used to say it was naughty, it's just a change of focus, I'm not demonising it'.*

The data showed that parents were using cues from their daily lives to prompt discussions about sex with their children.

*'I want that cause when I were growing up it were like, if a kissing scene start up on TV it weren't no discussion or you know if something obviously were*

*gonna happen. '[Name] put the kettle on' you know what I mean, I'd get sent out the room'.*

*'The baby was crying and he wanted to get milk from the fridge for the baby, cause we tried to explain that the baby needs milk'.*

Parents demonstrated both **reactive and proactive behaviour**. Parents showed a willingness to respond to their children's questions.

*'I want him coming home and saying is it true that, you can't get pregnant if you do it standing up, cause you get these little myths'.*

*'I'm like, come here, we'll do a test together, this is the information, it's not the bog standard wait for six months before you're about to drop and then tell your parents'.*

There was also clear evidence to suggest that parents were being proactive in their discussions with their children.

Interviewer: *'Would you want to wait until they brought it up with you'?*  
*'No! No, I'm going to be at them because I don't want them to be getting stuff or [name] to get pregnant or the thought of them getting somebody else pregnant'.*

*'I got to the stage where I was a bit of a sex bore, sit in bed and I was like right, 'Going to talk today about puberty' 'Oh no mum not again' 'No but we're going to talk about it cause I've got these leaflets now!' '.*

*'He used to think that the doctor cracked it open out my belly so I [previously] left him thinking that, I didn't say what it were like... cause I told him that we come as an egg so he just presumed that he cracked it out of my belly, so I just left him thinking that'.*

Most parents reported that their new open attitude towards discussions had begun towards the end of the Speakeasy course when they felt they had developed a good knowledge and confidence to do so.

*'It didn't start immediately, it was only when I got to the middle and back end of the course that things fell into place and I had enough information to be able to go into the big world and impart it'.*

### **3.1.5 Further learning and professional development**

More so than in other samples which have undergone Speakeasy evaluation the Bradford sample showed significant benefits in relation to further learning and professional development as a result of attending the Speakeasy course.

Some parents viewed their experience as providing them with a **stepping stone** towards attendance on further courses or progress in their career. These parents suggested that their confidence levels had been increased by attending the course and being an active and valued member of a group.

*'I wouldn't be frightened now of going on one in perhaps drugs or alcohol another one'.*

*'No it does, definitely, if I hadn't done these courses I wouldn't have gone for these interviews and stuff, it just builds your confidence gets you back into study as well, cause you've got to take time out to do it as well'.*

*'When I started these courses I was very, very quiet, really in myself... so getting out and mixing with people it's really boost me confidence, so now I've actually applied for erm a training position... which I'm waiting to hear about, so it's really been good'.*

*'When I went for the [job] interview I did tell them that I'd done the Speakeasy course and what it involved and obviously if I get teenage mums come up to me and stuff like that I've got information'.*

A few parents reported that they had been able to **use their learning in their careers**.

*'I've just had an issue with one of the children today she said oh 'She's been sexing him' ... I hope I try and be sensitive with it, I think Speakeasy because it's quite empowering it gives me the confidence rather than I would have said 'We don't, don't say that that's naughty' or whatever, but now I'm steering round it and able to divert it or provide information if they're ready for it. So the sexing issue today, 'No that's not sexing' and I left a book out in case they wanted to have a look at the book, it's given me an awful lot of confidence'.*

*'Yes it could be useful now in the job that I'm doing... I get all people from all different backgrounds from all different, wanting all different information, yeah, family planning wise, sexually transmitted diseases'.*

Another novel finding for the Bradford Speakeasy course was that nearly all of the parents in the sample reported that they **highly valued the OCN accreditation** attached to the Speakeasy course. All of the parents had, or were aiming for, Level Two accreditation. Some parents reported that aiming for the accreditation had provided them with motivation to complete the course.

*'I think if it had just been do a bit of homework and you get a certificate anyway, you know no accreditations anyway I'd have been reluctant but the fact that it's got a, it's like I'm an expert, that motivated me even more to want to do it'.*

*'Yeah, it's really good yeah, yeah [it provided motivation] yeah, I really wanted to do it at a level two then I were more determined yeah'.*

*'The parents on my course what with it being a disadvantaged area they do see an accreditation as an award but I don't see the point of accreditation for the Speakeasy cause where else is it going to take us other than facilitating the course'?*

Parents were proud of their certificate of accreditation and there was some evidence that a few of the parents were able to **use the OCN accreditation for career progression**.

*'I'm proud of my certificate'.*

*'I think it's brilliant, I'm so proud of it'.*

*'I have yeah, put it down I already have yeah [CV], I think so, yeah, 'cause I've already mentioned it when I've been talking, like I said about this interview, I've already been talking about it and they were like 'Oh yeah' what sorts of things were you doing in... what I'm doing in the course, what I'm getting at end of this course accreditation so yeah, it really, it does look, it appears to be looking a good positive thing, they seem to be impressed'.*

*'Yeah, I do yeah, it's something to be proud of int it, I can't wait to get the certificate and say 'look' you know, I've done it!'*

One parent reported that having attended the course they were actively seeking opportunities to use their learning with other parents in a professional capacity.

*'We could do something... we would be able to use what we've learnt with other parents who are a bit uncomfortable... we'd be able to sit and talk to other parents... hopefully now I've got the confidence now to sit and talk to other parents if they want to know'.*

### 3.2 An exploration of any novel outcomes of the Bradford Speakeasy course

This section presents the findings of the exploratory analysis of the data. It is important to evaluate the course not only in terms of what the stated aims are but also in a less prescriptive fashion, only by doing this can we discover the full outcomes of the parents who attend the course and not just in relation to the predetermined aims of the course.

The results of this section are structured in themes as follows:

- 3.2.1 Broader effects on individuals attending the course
- 3.2.2 Widening impact of the course
- 3.2.3 Suggestions for the future
- 3.2.4 Gender
- 3.2.5 Changes in children and relationships

It should be noted that the themes are interconnected and not clearly defined. Quotes are used to illustrate the theme and do not provide the full data upon which the theme was developed.

### 3.2.1 Broader effects on individuals attending the course

Beyond being confident and empowered in relation to conversations about sex parents found that there was a more global **empowering effect** resulting from attendance.

*'I don't know whether it was empowering or it felt empowering but we were very supportive and small group and that, it was quite sort of nurturing, outside of the course'.*

*'It does change the way you think, and I never expected that, most courses you go on they deliver 'that' but this is very broad and it sort of encompasses life really'.*

*'Speakeasy's a funny thing, cause it never gives you answers it gives you information and it's up to you to find the answers but that in itself is empowering because you think, ok maybe I can sort this out'.*

*'It's helped my confidence to get out there and meet other people'.*

A couple of the parents reported that the effect of this empowerment had been profound for some members of the course.

*'There was one particular girl I can think of and my perception of her... at the beginning of the course she was very timid and she had the same look on her face at the same points as me, but she was very timid, very quiet, having problems at home, by the end of the course she'd had her hair done, she'd got a whole new wardrobe she literally walked taller... she was suddenly on cloud nine, she got a job... I don't know, as a consequence of this course whether this was just empowering enough to make her feel good about herself and realise that she can do all this'.*

*'This is the first that I've done for a few years, I think it's relaxed me, I mean I used to be quiet and shy believe it or not and I've got a bag more confidence since I've been on this course and a lot more I think confidence'.*

There was some suggestion that the **social network** of the individuals was increased. A few of the parents suggested that this had continued beyond the duration of the course.

*'I knew her, I'm not really a pally friend with her and but I got to know her more from being on the course'.*

One parent reported an indirect effect on her life as a result of attendance on the course. This lady had been unaware of possible side effects of long term use of contraceptive injections and through the learning on the Speakeasy course decided to change her contraception being that she now felt fully informed about the benefits and risks of the different methods.

*'Now I've gone off the contraceptive injection as well because of all the bones and stuff, cause I've been on it years... yeah [I learnt] what it can do to you... I'd been on it since I was about 14... cause I went to the clinic she told me*

*what I was entitled to, they don't tell you nowt... and then it's only like, 10 and a half years later I find out that what it does to you'.*

Some parents reported that it sexual health had become an issue which they felt strongly about they were **increasingly aware of issues** around their own sexual health and were continually updating their knowledge.

*'From doing this it made me investigate even more stuff, like they did this spot check on lads and lasses and said, 'Lets check you for Chlamydia'.*

*'They put up a like female parts, a vagina and out of a roomful of women we didn't know it, and it's like, this is our bits and we can't tell you where the labia is, do you know what I mean, how embarrassing is that, so that were really good actually'.*

### **3.2.2 Widening impact of the course**

There was a great deal of evidence that people who attended this course were **using learning with people outside of their close family** network.

*'Like, my friend her little boy four year old was so flummoxed about how the baby gets out, 'Well let him watch a programme' and he assumed that the baby came out of the bum and I was like, 'Just tell him' '.*

*'With the neighbours, her daughter's a little bit older than mine and she's having a few problems with hormones... and I gave her a leaflet and said have a read of this and have a word with your daughter, and she wants to sign up to the course now'.*

*'There's a lot of information and the leaflets are brilliant, they've come in so handy for so many people. [a beauty therapist] happened to mention that her friend was in a predicament, 'Just a minute, right, 'Give her that leaflet, tell her to go to that clinic on that day and she can get a pregnancy test'... and that was a chance conversation'.*

*'It's like my friend's little boy when she's talking about her baby, 'How did it get there?' 'Daddy put it there' I'm like, why hide?'*

Some parents reported that they were **using their own knowledge directly with children of friends and relatives**.

*'I've spoke with me nephews and I've said if there's any questions you can ask me or we can look it up on the internet'.*

*'Yeah, I learnt he lost his virginity, even his mum didn't know... I thought no, no no no judging, 'I hope you used protection and the girl was ok with it', yes, you still get the odd little shocks and surprises'.*

*'Everybody comes to me what with any problem, so that's why I thought right, go to the course and if I can help anybody with more than a cup of sugar... a lot better now... not just my immediate family, it'll pass on'.*

Some of the parents reported that as a result of the course they had gained the confidence not only to talk to their children but felt that they had enough knowledge to **challenge other people's behaviours and ideas**.

*'I've had a discussion with a friend whose younger she has a child the same age and some of her views are like wow, I'd love her to come on the course, I've even said because we were having a discussion about when your children grow up and she's of the opinion, she'd expect her son to sleep around because that's what lad's do, I said you're pregnant now, what if you have a daughter 'oh no that's different... it's not my daughter so it's different' [challenge this?] Of course I did, 'cause I know, I've got backed up facts, from what I've learnt I've got all these, you know when you're trying to debate something but you don't know nothing about the subject you feel a little bit strongly about it but this I were like, well this can happen and this can happen and that will happen and... I challenged her and I probably made her think a little bit'.*

*'A lot of people have said to me 'Oh I don't need to go on that because I'm very broad minded I talk to my children about these things and it's hard to say to them that no it's not just about what you envisage it's the things that you don't like, like the pregnancies the contraception, like the STDs'.*

*'Yeah, because family and friends thinking it's not normal for their two year olds to be touchy feely and stuff, I learnt from the course that it's very normal in children and stuff'.*

*'Just when they're flabbergasted because their child's doing it, I said no, it's very normal... just throwing in little quotes'*

Parents often reported that they were **encouraging people to attend the course and encouraging them to improve their knowledge**.

*'There's a lot of people who are quite shy and they don't know how to talk to people about sex and I've recommended they go on the Speakeasy course yeah, I've said it to loads of people'.*

One young person who was present at a participant's interview stated that she'd learnt a lot and would be happy if her friends asked her questions. She reported that she would happily answer questions, but if she didn't know the answer she wouldn't be shy about asking the participant questions. Though this is evidence provided by only one person it is similar in finding to the Birmingham Speakeasy evaluation which suggested that young people were passing on their learning to peers.

### **3.2.3 Suggestions for the future**

The parents in the sample were very enthusiastic about the course and how it could help others who were in similar situations as them. Whilst the overriding theme was one of a successful course with very few problems a some suggestions arose concerning changes that could be made or future directions the course could take.

A few of the parents discussed how they **had not really understood what the course entailed before** they attended and that the Speakeasy name might undervalue the experience. These parents thought it might be useful to know a bit more about the course content and felt that this would encourage reluctant parents to attend, however it was noted by one parent that this might be too daunting for some.

*'If I'd have known what it's about I'd have realised that it's very transferable and very useable in other settings, I just imagined the birds and bees conversation with your ten year old or something'.*

*'My neighbour, I said you need to go on this course and she said 'I'm broad minded I speak to my children about sex' and because it's not apparent from the title as what's in it, she thinks it's just about sex and it's not and that's a tricky one'.*

*'I think the name is a bit of a misnomer, maybe it's deliberately ambiguous'.*

*'Covering contraception, and STDs I didn't expect those two at all, never heard of some of the things we discussed... no it really covered a lot more than I expected, it was quite empowering, you know 'Speak easy' you think it's just going to be about the 'talk'.*

A few parents suggested that the Speakeasy model would be a **good model to adapt** into other areas, for example a few parents thought it would be good to design a Speakeasy course for use in schools and one parent also felt that the model would be applicable to other topics such as drugs and alcohol.

*'If they run a Speakeasy course in schools do you know what I mean but don't hit them when they're 15 and 16 by that they've got their own minds made up they've probably lost their virginity they've probably got relationships.. . I think if they did a kiddy version'.*

*'I just think it was so broad I would like something very similar, but to do with drugs and I've asked if there's any training available for that along Speakeasy lines'.*

At the start of the course ground rules are put in place, one lady reported that she joined in the second week and was not made aware of these and would have felt more comfortable if she had been. **Ensuring group cohesiveness**, especially at the start of the course could help with the likely embarrassment of discussing previously taboo subjects.

*'It was absolute purgatory for me, because it was describing names of bodily parts and I didn't know the people in the group and I didn't know the group... it's painful but you know it's good for you'.*

*'But there are no negatives to this, just a few embarrassments and a few buttock clenching moments'!*

As mentioned in previous evaluations the parents felt that the **delay between sending work away for accreditation and finding out the result** was too great. Whilst some thought this was just a minor inconvenience a couple of people

mentioned that it was unfortunate because they wanted to be able to use their result or certificate for job applications.

*'Yeah, I did, I got that, I'm just waiting for the certificate to come through, when it comes through!'*

*'The only thing that I would say is a downer about the course is it takes ages to get the whether you've passed or not'.*

Parents found that **learning about emotions** involved in puberty and sex was very interesting and useful but a few people thought that the course should place more emphasis on this aspect.

*'Also as well with Speakeasy a lot of it's emotional as well which you know what I mean as emotional as in it's not just concentrating on sex as an act... that's very important'.*

*'I think a little more emotion in it, I mean it did cover it, don't get me wrong but I think it could be a bit more about emotions'.*

*'There's a heck of a lot of peer pressure now... it'd help, especially for me cause I'm quite far removed from teenagers... the way their emotions are working now, It's a long time since I were a teenager and I think the pressure is a lot more added now... what's happening nowadays cause that's something I'm a bit removed from'.*

A couple of parents thought it would be good to **extend the length** of the Speakeasy course. These parents felt that discussions were a very valuable aspect of the course but due to them the sessions could sometimes run behind schedule.

*'You get very big debates, you get right big discussions so we were getting behind on things on weeks... everyone was bringing in all different things, everybody's were different... everybody opened up'.*

*'I think it would be good to drag it over a couple more weeks, because with the big discussions that came over with it'.*

As found by previous evaluations, parents engage with the **paperwork** on different levels. This can cause issues to arise when for example, one parent has put a great deal of effort into their work and then observes another person copying out paper work from another person. Parents feel that this undervalues their efforts and this may be particularly evident on the Bradford Speakeasy course where parents were observed to highly value the accreditation they can achieve.

*'... 'cause we did have one girl come in then and she was just copying everything what the other girl put, which I could have done that and done my work a lot quicker'.*

*'Yeah cause the young lass... she we're going home and she had a little baby and it's all new and she's only young and she were coming back and she'd been on computer and she'd have everything out and then she'd looking across and see, 'She's copying I can't believe I've done all this hard work for it' '.*

A couple of parents reported that they had felt held back by the abilities of some of the group members on their course. Whilst they recognised that Speakeasy was an inclusive course they felt that they could have achieved more if they had been split into different groups with **differing abilities**.

*‘Some of them couldn’t read what was put in front of them so it wasn’t helping when we were saying ‘What have you got, what have we got’.*

*‘Only thing I found on the course was, I don’t know if it’s discrimination or anything like that but there were a few people on the course that just didn’t have a clue what they were doing... couldn’t connect with them... didn’t know how to put a condom on... I think it weren’t a good idea to work us together unless we’re all adapted to the same thing’.*

### 3.2.4 Gender

Gender arose as a theme for two specific reasons. The first concerned the lack of engagement by male partners. The second concerned the participants’ lack of experience and knowledge from a male perspective.

Consistent with previous findings of Speakeasy evaluation there were very few men taking part in the courses which the sample attended. Along with this a significant **resistance to engage** with sex education of their children was observed in many of the attendees descriptions of their husbands’ or partners’ behaviour.

*‘I know his dad’s not going to talk to him about that, I tried to get him involved, I knew he wouldn’t come to the group sessions, not a chance’.*

*‘He’d just be like, ‘Oh go and ask your mum’ you know that tactic even with the boys, ‘Go see your mum’.*

*‘What for example if I became pregnant what do we tell him? ‘Tell him Allah put it there’.*

*‘Yeah yeah, and he still won’t he still won’t, he’ll say that’s up for you to deal with, I say what if they don’t come to me and they come to you he says I’ll tell them to go speak to your mum’.*

It was often the case that in the face of this resistance to engage with the topic that the parents took responsibility for sex education of their children.

*‘I’m ok with that cause he’d probably word it all wrong’.*

*‘He’s not going to, so someone has to do it’.*

*‘It made me realise that it’s important for me to give that knowledge’.*

There was some suggestion that for some participants it was the resistance of their male partners to engage and their **male children which prompted them to attend the course**. This was often expressed because they felt that having experienced

female puberty they would be able to discuss this with their daughters but with no experience of male puberty they felt unable to approach discussions with their sons.

*'...also I've son as well and how on earth, you see cause I'm single mum with them, how do you talk with your son?'*

*'I tried to get him involved but it ain't going to happen so it [Speakeasy] just makes me more confident to teach a boy about his body more'.*

*'Do you know what I mean, like, I don't know a lot about boys puberty, I mean I knew nothing... If I had a daughter I'd have been like, 'Oh I know the answers to that' '.*

*'I do leave little leaflets about for him but that's how I'm finding it at the moment easy, before that I wouldn't have even known what to do what to say or any leaflets to use, I wouldn't have known'.*

### 3.2.5 Changing relationships

Whilst somewhat covered by the results for the specific aims of the Speakeasy course (Section 3.1) the evidence for changing relationships in families of those who attended the Speakeasy course was thought important enough to focus on in a separate theme.

Many of the parents reported that they had noticed **changes in their children** which they attributed to their attendance on the Speakeasy course. The parents recalled more instances where their children would ask questions and that their children seemed more comfortable discussing problems or issues.

*'He's really open now, I'm hoping I can continue that not force it just, if he asks me questions just to be comfortable'.*

*'I think the eldest, particularly feels more able to mention it, I hope she does, she seems to mention it more'.*

*'She's not a particularly open child but I'm hoping that this will break down barriers'.*

*'My little boy looks at it already cause it's in a folder and he spreads them all over, especially those little cartoon books and he's looking at them and he's going oh William, do you know what I mean, so he is seeing other's but he's also seeing the girl figure'.*

*'I found it hard, she's at that stage where she's started her periods boyfriends though she denies it, there's a boyfriend and I'm like, I didn't know how to approach her didn't know how to talk about it I were coming out about it all wrong and she's all 'mum and don't want to talk about it and all embarrassed but now really, we can talk about it certain things that she needs to be using when it's that time of the month and I feel very confident in doing it, I leave certain leaflets that I've got from these courses, I leave them lying about I've borrowed books from them, I've left them lying about for her to read, she's more aware she knew a lot but she's more aware now'.*

A particularly good example of the changing nature of a relationship was provided by one of the participants who showed how **barriers were being broken** down and boundaries of discussion changed.

*'I said something and my eldest daughter went [daughter acted like her mother had done something bad] as if you're not allowed to say that, I said 'oh you can' it was a word and it was taboo, I said 'no you can talk about that', it was sex, 'you can talk about sex, it's not a swear word', 'oh'. She was a bit uncomfortable, it was quite strange to hear me say it, she thought I was going to get in trouble or something'.*

One parent reported the very positive effect that she felt their changed relationship had had on her daughter.

*'She went, 'Brilliant, puberty', and she was so impressed that she'd got a bit of BO and um, she was really pleased, and that could have been really negative and she could have been really down...but because we'd already discussed about these beginnings and what might happen she was really pleased'.*

Some parents reported that they felt that they were more understanding and this was due to a new ability to put their children's **behaviour into context**. For example one parent felt that she was now able to see signs of puberty in her child where previously she had thought it was just bad behaviour and had treated it as such.

*'I can rationalise that now because of the timeline and because of the discussions about it'.*

## Chapter 4. Summary and Conclusions

This report outlines the Trust for the Study of Adolescence's findings of a qualitative evaluation of the Bradford Speakeasy course. The evaluation's aims were to explore how successfully the course was achieving its aims for parents and also to more fully explore the outcomes of parents who attended the course. These aims were achieved through the analysis of six in-depth interviews held with parents who had attended the course.

It must be noted that the purpose of a qualitative investigation is not to provide generalisable data. The findings represent the experience of six parents who attended the course. The strength of this approach to evaluation is that it provides an in-depth understanding of individual's experiences and outcomes which may not be achieved through a quantitative evaluation (quantitative evaluation data on the Speakeasy course can be found in a recent publication produced by TSA (Coleman, Cater, Ramm & Sherriff, 2007). It must also be kept in mind that the parents who formed the sample had successfully completed a Speakeasy course and were motivated to attend interview, this may introduce a significant bias into the sample as those who failed to complete the course or declined to be interviewed may have a very different experience of the course.

The results of the evaluation show that the Bradford Speakeasy course is achieving its aims for parents. The findings are in keeping with previous national evaluation of the Speakeasy programme. Parents enjoyed the course and thought it was a very positive and relaxed experience. Parents believed that their knowledge was greatly increased through attendance, particularly their knowledge of STIs and contraception. Child safety issues were also mentioned frequently as a very useful aspect of the course, this was a novel finding for the Bradford Speakeasy course. Parents reported an increase in confidence when talking about sex, sexuality and sexual health issues with their children. This was often due to increased factual knowledge but parents also felt that the speakeasy course had made them less embarrassed and allowed discussions of sex to become more natural and 'normalised'. The data suggested that parents were now more open with their children. Parents were both reactive and proactive with their provision of information. Parents encouraged and were happy to answer questions their children had but would also prompt discussions often using cues from their daily lives. The Bradford sample highly valued the OCN accreditation associated with the Speakeasy course. Some parents hoped that this would benefit them in their careers. Many of the parents reported that attending the Speakeasy course had been a valuable step towards further learning or career progression.

The Bradford sample showed significant increases in confidence which were not restricted to the scope of the course. These included a general feeling of empowerment resulting from engaging in the group to a profound increase in confidence observed in one member of a group. The cohesive nature of the groups had provided members with an increase in their social support network and there was suggestion that this had been sustained after the course by some parents. Parents reported that they were now more aware of sexual health messages in the media and their relevance to themselves and those around them.

There was evidence in the Bradford sample that increased factual knowledge and confidence was having an effect upon a wide circle of family and friends. Parents reported that their increased openness had led to situations where they were able to direct neighbours, friends, and acquaintances to advice or service provision. There was also some evidence to show that parents were using their learning with children other than their own. In addition to this most of the parents reported that they were actively encouraging people they knew to attend the course. A novel finding for the Bradford sample was the discovery that some parents were now confident enough to challenge ideas and behaviours of people in regards to sex education.

There were a variety of suggestions for the future of the Speakeasy course. Some of the most significant of these were that; there should be a consideration of how the course is described to potential participants, that more time could be spent on discussions of the emotional side of sex and puberty, and that attention needs to be paid to parents' engagement with paperwork to ensure that people feel their hard work is not undermined by those making less effort.

The participants raised the subject of gender as an issue for two reasons. Many of the participants reported that their male partners did not engage with the sex education of their children and that the responsibility lay firmly with the female parent. Gender of children was also a significant theme as parents indicated that they felt they would be unable to discuss issues such as puberty and sex with their male children as they did not have a male's perspective or experience. This was one of the reasons given that people felt the need for the Speakeasy. Whilst it is encouraging that parents would consider their perceived difficulty and choose to attend a course for this reason it raises the possibility that parents with only female children may not be so inclined to attend the course and lose out on the learning from the course.

There was evidence to suggest that relationships with children had been altered and that there were some real effects upon the children who had attended the course. Parents often noted an increased openness in their children and that their children were more relaxed when sexual relationships or puberty was discussed. A few parents noticed that they were able to observe behaviours in their children that may be attributable to puberty and as such they felt they were better able to understand and react to these behaviours.

It is important to remember that the data here represents only a small sample of those who attended the Bradford Speakeasy course and that other parents may have a very different experience of the course nevertheless this evaluation adds to the increasing body of evidence which suggests that the Speakeasy course greatly benefits those who attend it. More specifically the report suggests that the Bradford Speakeasy course is successfully meeting its aims for parents and that the benefits for parents are not limited to the specified aims of the Speakeasy course.

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# Appendices

Appendix A	Participant Information Sheet
Appendix B	Interview Schedule
Appendix C	TSA research ethics guidelines



# Speakeasy parents...

**If you are nervous about your interview...  
Don't be!**

**Here's all the information you need to know about  
it...**

**My name is Jo and I'm a researcher from a charity called TSA. We're doing this research for the fpa (who designed the Speakeasy course) to find out how good the course that you went on is. I'd like to ask you some questions about your experience.**

- **There are no right or wrong answers** – It's not a test! I'm just interested in your experience, we want to find out how good Speakeasy is and how useful it has been to you.
- **Don't worry if you can't remember bits** of the course, anything you tell us is great! The interview should take around 25 minutes.
- If you **didn't like bits of the course, it would be great if you told me**, that way it can be changed for people who go on it in the future.
- You **don't have to answer any questions** which you don't want to and we can stop the interview any time you like.
- I'm nothing to do with the people who ran the course. **Everything is confidential.** Anything that you tell me and that I use in my report won't have your name or any identifying material (like ages or jobs) attached to it. If you decide you don't want anything you've said used, just tell me and I won't!



## Appendix B. Interview Schedule

### 'Speakeasy'

Interview Schedule – August 2008

#### Parent (and child) interviews - Bradford

- To increase parents **confidence and communication skills with their children**
- For parents to show a **more positive and open approach to discussions of sex**, sexuality and sexual health
- To **increase parents factual knowledge** around sex and sexual health
- A step towards **further learning/professional development** for excluded groups of parents.
- **Effects upon the parent and child relationship**
- **Wider effects of the Speakeasy course**

#### Introduction:

I'm nothing to do with the people who ran the course so they won't know your name or that it's you who said what you did. **Everything is confidential.**

- **There are no right or wrong answers** – I'm just interested in your views and experiences, we want to find out how good Speakeasy is and the effect on the family.
- **Don't worry** if you can't remember bits of the course, anything you tell us is great. The interview should take around 25 minutes.
- The reason we are doing this research is to evaluate how good the course is and to try and make it better in the future, so if you **didn't like bits of it, it would be great if you told me.**
- You **don't have to answer any questions** which you don't want to and we can stop and you can withdraw from the interview any time you like
- **I will be making written notes of our conversation** – no one outside of the research team will see/hear them – it's just so I can remember what we have talked about. Is this ok?
- **May I record the interview** – again, no one else will hear it.

**GENERAL - Parent**

Do you remember what made you want to attend the course?

What memories stick out about the course?

Would you say that overall it was a positive or negative experience?

**GENERAL – Child**

Did you know that your mum had been on the course?

Did she tell you about it while she was on the course?

What did she tell you about?

**MEMORIES and OPENNESS - Parent**

How long ago did you do the course, do you think you remember much of it?

What do you think the most useful topics were for you?

Do you think that you've used any of the things you remember in your daily life.  
**IMPORTANT QUESTION.**

**MEMORIES and OPENNESS - Child**

Do you remember talking to your mum about anything from the course? What do you remember the most? Was she really embarrassing?

Do you think she knows more stuff now, can she answer your questions better?

**MATERIALS - Parent**

Have you used any of the course materials, have you shown any leaflets?

**MATERIALS - Child**

What did you think of the leaflets?

**CONFIDENCE/RELATIONSHIP - Parent**

22. Do you think it has affected your confidence in raising topics?

Do you think it's affected your child's?

Do you think going on the course has changed your relationship?

**CONFIDENCE/RELATIONSHIP - Child**

What do you reckon? Is it easier to talk to your mum now? Are there things you'd ask which you wouldn't before?

**WIDER EFFECTS - Parent**

Has the fact you've done the Speakeasy course affected any other people (e.g. friends) or members of your family? For example, do they ask you questions, do they want to do the course etc.? Do they communicate better about these issues?

Have you or are you aware of any fellow-Speakeasy parents who have tried to influence schools in relation to their sex and relationships education? If so, please give some details...

**WIDER EFFECTS – Child**

Some of the young people I've spoken to say that their friends have asked them about the course, or that they've shown leaflets to their friends, has anything like this happened to you?

**CLOSE**

Finally, is there anything else you would like to add or mention about the Speakeasy course?

That's all the questions about the course I have for you.

Vouchers

Is there anything else you'd like to mention about the course, any suggestions, anything you'd like to ask me?

Thanks for your help

## Appendix C - TSA ethical guidelines

TSA aims to maintain the highest ethical standards in its research work, and regularly reviews its policies and procedures in this respect. These guidelines were developed by the research team following a review of the ethical statements of a variety of bodies involved in social research. The aim of these guidelines is to inform TSA's ethical judgements and decisions. The guidelines are presented in the following sections:

- Protecting participants in TSA's research
- Informed consent
- Confidentiality and the use of information
- Feedback
- Disclosure
- Expenses and payment
- Organisational matters.

Each of these issues should be reviewed when research work is being planned.

### PROTECTING PARTICIPANTS IN TSA'S RESEARCH

A range of people are involved in TSA's research work, including practitioners, young people, and parents. Whoever is to be involved in a TSA research project, it is the responsibility of those involved in that project to think through the ethical issues involved. All researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of participants is not adversely effected by participating in research.

All researchers should ask themselves a number of key questions when embarking on a new research project at TSA. These include:

- What are the possible risks and costs to participants, in terms of time, inconvenience, distress, or intrusions on privacy?
- How will the project deal with participants who become distressed, who wish to withdraw from the project, or who disclose certain facts?
- How will issues of power and status be addressed in the research? How can a relationship of trust and relative equality be established?
- What issues are raised by the items below, such as informed consent and payment? What additional information or advice is needed?

The main issues to be considered are discussed in the following sections.

### INFORMED CONSENT

Participants must be informed of the purpose and nature of research in as much detail as possible, in order for them to make an informed decision as to whether they wish to participate or not. Researchers need to recognise and uphold the rights of those who may not fully comprehend the aims or methods of a piece of research, and who might feel over-awed by a professional adult. Researchers must make clear to all participants that it is their choice as to whether or not to participate in research, and work to ensure that individuals do not feel pressured to participate. Ensuring informed consent must also include ensuring that participants realise that they can withdraw from the research at any stage, without needing to give a reason.

Where the participant is aged under 16, a decision must be made about whether the parent/carer of the young person should be informed about the research, and if so whether their consent for a young person to participate is needed. TSA has no fixed view about

gaining parental consent, and believes the decision should be based on the competence of the young person to make an informed choice about participation. In some cases, for example in schools, the school itself will make a decision about whether their pupils can participate in research, and will act in loco parentis in this respect. However, this does not replace the need to secure the individual consent of each young person involved.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE USE OF INFORMATION

Those who agree to participate in TSA research projects should be told that all the information they provide will be treated in confidence, and that their anonymity will be protected. A full explanation of what this means in practice should be given. This could include, for example, saying that in school-based research teachers will not be told what pupils have said; also in family research young people will not be told what their parents have said, and vice versa.

Participants must be told as early on as possible that there is one exception to this rule. This is where a participant discloses that they or someone else is at risk of 'significant harm'. Where this happens the researcher has a duty to inform another professional (see also the section on Disclosure below). TSA also has specific Child Protection guidelines which further address this issue.

Participants must also be told at the beginning of the research how the information will be used, for example as statistical information, individual quotes, or case studies. They should also be told in what format the information will be reported, for example as books, articles, and in conference presentations. In all such work, it is important to stress that this will be done in a way that ensures that the individuals concerned are not identifiable. Participants should also know that, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, they have a right to see any information that TSA holds in relation to them.

## FEEDBACK

People who participate in TSA research should, wherever possible, be given feedback about the results of the research. The participants should be told about the nature of the feedback they will receive at the beginning of the project. At times it may be more appropriate to feedback to organisations rather than individuals, but it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that all those who participated receive feedback if they want it.

## DISCLOSURE

During the course of a research project, if someone discloses that they (or someone else) is at risk of 'serious harm', then the researcher has an obligation to inform another professional who can act to protect the individual. Where this happens the researcher must inform their line manager immediately, in order to agree the most appropriate person/ organisation to contact. The researcher should inform the young person what they are going to do, and what the next steps may be. As stated earlier, all participants must be told from the start that this will happen if they make a disclosure of this kind, so that they are aware of the consequences of disclosing during the research.

There may be times when a research participant is not considered at risk of immediate harm, but the researcher is concerned about their well-being. In this circumstance, the researcher should ensure that the participant receives information on helping organisations and sources of support. Note: TSA's *Child Protection guidelines* address these issues in greater detail, and all researchers are required to follow these procedures.

## EXPENSES AND PAYMENT

All participants should receive reimbursement for any expenses incurred during the course of a research project, such as travel expenses. TSA has no fixed views on whether participants should be given a 'thank you' when participating in research. Where this is offered, it should ideally be in the form of a voucher. However, it is acknowledged that this

decision cannot be made in isolation to the funding available for a particular project. There may also be practicalities involved, such as the large numbers of young people involved in school-based research – in these circumstances it may be appropriate to provide an organisational thank-you, such as by providing materials for the library. Ideally, payment should only be offered to participants after they have agreed to take part.

#### ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

As a research organisation, TSA as a whole is responsible for maintaining the highest ethical standards in research. A number of organisational structures and policies aim to ensure that this is achieved. These include:

- All TSA's research applications/projects are considered by the Trustees' Sub-Committee on Ethical Standards.
- TSA is committed to employing qualified and competent researchers. All its researchers receive regular line management, to ensure that all ethical issues raised are discussed and addressed.
- All TSA's researchers are subject to checks by the Criminal Records Bureau.
- TSA is committed to ensuring the personal safety of researchers. It will ensure that researchers are protected in terms of personal safety, by such things as the use of mobile phones and identity cards, and the use of a monitoring system for checking researcher whereabouts and activities. (*See separate document 'Safety of Researchers During Fieldwork' for further details*).
- TSA is committed to following the ethical procedures of other bodies where appropriate, for example NHS Research Ethics Committee where appropriate.
- TSA is committed to protecting the security of all data collected, following the guidelines provided within the Data Protection Act (*see separate document*).
- Finally, TSA is committed to the regular review and updating of these guidelines, which will take place at least once a year.

**TSA Research Team**

**Last updated November 4<sup>th</sup> 2005**