



Executive Summary

fpa Speakeasy Evaluation 2002 to 2007

Josephine Ramm (jramm@tsa.uk.com), Dr. Lester Coleman, Suzanne Cater and
Dr. Nigel Sherriff

Trust for the Study of Adolescence
23 New Road
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 1WZ
www.tsa.uk.com

Aims

- To quantitatively and qualitatively explore progress towards achieving the five main stated aims of the Speakeasy course which are to: Provide a step towards **further learning** for traditionally excluded groups
- Increase parental **confidence and communication skills** with their children
- **Increase factual knowledge** around sex and sexual health
- Help parents show a more **positive and open approach** to discussions of sex
- Enable health **professionals** to give priority to work with parents with the backing of **accredited speakeasy training** so that large numbers of parents throughout England have access to a speakeasy course.

To do this the Trust for the Study of Adolescence has conducted:

- Impact Evaluation: Analysis of pre and post-course monitoring forms.
- Impact and Outcome Evaluation: Themes from repeat interviews with five parents.
- Impact and Outcome Evaluation: Longitudinal research with 40 parents over three years.
- Impact and Outcome Evaluation: Focus group with parents attending a Speakeasy Graduation day.
- Evaluation: Focus group and interviews with professionals being trained to deliver the Speakeasy course.

Impact Evaluation – Quantitative findings – Monitoring Forms

Demographics

Approximately 6500 people have taken part in the **fpa's** Speakeasy course. Of these, 2367 people's details have been entered into a database by **fpa**. This sample is representative of all the people who have attended the Speakeasy course and allows us to draw firm conclusions from any statistical analysis carried out on the database.

Exploration of this data shows that:

- 95% of the people who attend the Speakeasy course were female.
- 71% classified themselves as "White British", the largest other groups were "white other" (3%), "Black or Black British-Caribbean" (3%) and "Black or Black British-African" (3%).
- 12% of the attendees were in full time work, 27% worked part time, 29% were registered unemployed and 32% were unwaged and not seeking work.
- For 17.7% of people it was the first course they had attended since school.
- 10% of the sample did not consider themselves able-bodied.

Course Impact

People who attended Speakeasy were asked to fill in monitoring forms before, and again after the course. As well as collecting demographic information these asked parents to rate themselves on subjects such as confidence and knowledge in relation to sexual development and relationships education. Major findings from analysis of the forms show that:

1. Before the course **confidence** in talking with children was self-rated by parents at a score of 2.99 (out of five). After the Speakeasy course confidence levels had been raised to a score of 4.40. This relates to an average increase of 1.41 points (or a 47.0% increase).
2. Overall **knowledge** of the topics, including puberty, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and keeping safe, increased from a score of 3.07 before course, to 4.47 after course, an increase of scores by 1.4 (or 45.6%). Individual knowledge scores and their changes can be seen in Table One.

Knowledge	Pre-course score	Post-course score	Score change (%)
Changes during puberty	3.02	4.44	+ 1.42 (+47.0)
STIs	2.59	4.33	+ 1.74 (+67.2)
Contraception	3.30	4.56	+ 1.26 (+38.2)
Staying safe	3.37	4.56	+ 1.19 (+35.3)

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 rose to 95.5% after the course. As such an additional 34.6% of parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement as a result of the Speakeasy course.
4. There was only a slight increase in interest in **further education**. Prior to the course 67.6% of people strongly agreed or agreed that they were considering returning to further education, after the course this figure rose to 73%, an increase of 5.4%.
5. The course successfully alerted parents to opportunities to raise issues with their children. 69.1% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of these opportunities prior to the course, this figure rose to 96.7% of parents after completion, an increase of 27.6%.
6. The monitoring forms included a section where parents could give their comments and feedback on the course. The overwhelming finding from this section was that the course was enjoyable, informative and worthwhile.

Analysis of effects on sub-groups according to ethnicity, disability and gender found few differences to the total sample suggesting that Speakeasy had an equally positive effect within these groups.

Impact and Outcome Evaluation - Qualitative findings – Interviews

TSA have been following a cohort of parents for three years (2005-2007), conducting telephone interviews with each parent every year. These interviews investigate experiences on the Speakeasy course and how - now there has been a considerable time gap - the Speakeasy course has had use in people’s daily lives. In 2005 40 parents were interviewed, in 2006, 28 of the sample was successfully interviewed again and in 2007 20 of the sample were successfully re-interviewed, this is a positive follow up rate for such long-term research. TSA have also conducted interviews with five participants who attended the course prior to 2005 and used a focus group with parents who were attending a Speakeasy graduation to gain further insight into the course. For the first time in 2007 TSA conducted 13 interviews with fathers and other male carers who had attended the course to gain a valuable male perspective of the course.

Major findings of the longitudinal research include:

- **The course is very highly regarded:** 100% of the sample felt that attending the Speakeasy course had been a positive experience for them. Parents felt the course was relaxed, well-planned with good facilitators, was informative, interesting, and fun.

'It was definitely a positive experience, a truly brilliant course, informative, Excellent! I would definitely recommend it to other parents'.

- **Knowledge:** Parents reported that, even when they had been confident that they knew all about the subject prior to the course, they learnt a lot of information from attending Speakeasy. Information about STIs and contraceptives was valued particularly highly and remembered clearly. Parents said that though they felt they had forgotten some of the information, whenever they needed it in their lives it came 'flooding back'. However, nearly all parents felt that a refresher course would be enjoyable and beneficial.

'She'll say, 'why', 'what', you know? And it's gave me a better knowledge to be able to answer her questions and not be uncomfortable about it as well'.

'You do think you know everything and obviously you don't, and it opens your eyes'.

- **Confidence:** Parents reported increased confidence when it came to talking to their children about sex. Parents attributed this to increased knowledge, feeling less embarrassed, knowing where to get more information, knowing there is support available and being able to discuss issues with other parents.

'I now feel very confident in talking to my children, and this is all due to doing the Speakeasy course, all of it, the whole lot was useful in increasing my confidence'.

'It's helped me cause it made you think about things, it sort of made it clearer how much information to give to them at certain times, yeah it's dead easy to talk about'.

- **Openness:** Of greatest importance is the suggestion that what was learnt on the course is continually useful in everyday lives. With the increasing time gap the longitudinal research is beginning to show the sustained impact of the course. Parents shared many examples of increased openness with their children, often very recently, and readily suggested that this was a result of having attended the course.

'Even when she was saying to me about babies growing in my tummy my first thought was 'what do I' 'how do I' age appropriate sort of, you have a flash sort of, in your it's a silly thing, but you have a flash in your head of doing that time line thing and thinking oh right am I expecting that question around now'?

'I used some of the techniques to be quite frank and open with my daughter regarding puberty and sex in a way that my parents never were with me... There's nothing now that she feels she can't ask, I've let her know that the subject of sex isn't a taboo thing you know, it's not something that you have to feel like you can't bring up with parents'.

'...He comes back from school a couple of days ago and he says, 'I like this girl' you know, and I thought, 'here we go!' ... He wants to take her out and I was on about being safe you know and everything'.

- **Further learning:** Qualitative findings suggest that the positive learning experience had encouraged parents to go on to further learning and get back into work. People who attended the course reported increased confidence as learners. Parents of young children found it especially useful in helping them reconnect with an adult world, challenging them to learn and as such was a highly valued experience.

'Speakeasy increased my desire to get into further education and do a degree at the Open University...Speakeasy has also really helped me because it's given me knowledge and confidence to get involved in other things. I've been involved in a lot of community projects and I also take part in local environmental meetings, things I wouldn't have done before'.

'I'd gone in with the idea thinking not only is it going to be quite boring and sort of really hard going but it's, you don't want to appear thick and what happens if you can't do it. Whereas the fact that there was no sort of right or wrong, it was very open and easygoing, you were made to feel at ease that you just thought, 'yeah you know, I can do this'.

Further insights from fathers and other male carers.

fpa is interested in understanding why so few men attend the Speakeasy course in an effort to discover ways of encouraging more to participate. Research so far suggests that males draw the same benefits from the course as women do, finding it worthwhile, informative and enjoyable. The content and style of delivery was deemed suitable for a male audience and men experienced very few difficulties with the course. Only very occasionally these were attributable to being a male on the course, and this presented a problem only when they were the only male in a group of women. Men particularly valued the acquisition of new knowledge through the course, felt they had retained a good amount of what they had learnt and were able to use it in their daily lives.

FUTURE DIRECTION

The evaluation so far has shown positive effects, in real-life, reported by parents. But does the course impact on other people, and how? The TSA are currently examining the perspectives of children and partners of those people who attended the course in an effort to understand the full impact of fpa's Speakeasy course. These findings will be made available in the full evaluation report which will be available from fpa's website in Spring 2008.