



News Release

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For immediate release

Sexual health promotion and drug education with homeless young people

Tacade has recently completed a project supporting hostels in East London to promote sexual health and drug education with their young residents. A high proportion of hostel and housing workers that took part in the project felt that cannabis use was the cultural norm amongst their young residents and that binge drinking was common place. Workers felt that their residents were particularly vulnerable to poor sexual health, drug and alcohol misuse. Health promotion provision varied considerably between hostels and housing projects. Many staff were keen to expand the health promotion on offer with the support of senior managers. It was recognised that staff need adequate training and appropriate policies and procedures to be in place. Training was one of the key components of the Tacade project, along with advice and support about policy development and resource provision.

Several hostels and housing associations wanted to provide their young residents with free condoms. However, the hostels found it difficult to access a sustained supply of free condoms. It is essential that hostels and housing projects supporting vulnerable young people are included in condom distribution schemes.

The Tacade project was funded by Barclays Community Programme and supported by Newham, Tower Hamlets and Hackney Primary Care Trusts. DASL

(Drug & Alcohol Services London) supported some of the training events as did Tower Hamlets Young People's Sexual Health Service (The Options Team).

There is limited research about the drug behaviours or sexual health of young people in hostels. However homeless young people, including those in hostels and housing associations, are likely to be particularly vulnerable to both drug misuse and poor sexual health. The Tacade project provided impetus to many hostels and housing associations in East London to improve the health promotion provision on offer to young people. Many workers were unaware of the sexual health, drug and alcohol services available for young people locally before attending the training. The majority of workers felt more confident to engage in health promotion following the training. There are a variety of opportunities for sexual health promotion and drug education in hostel settings through key worker meetings, information in welcome packs, signposting to specialist services, group work sessions and the provision of free condoms and lubricant. However some housing associations were reluctant to prioritise health promotion, possibly because of their workload in other areas.

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For further information please contact Helen Lee, Development and Training Manager at Tacade via email at helen@tacade.co.uk.

Notes to editors

- Tacade is a leading voluntary sector organisation in the field of personal, social, health and citizenship education, with over thirty years of experience supporting alcohol and drug education with young people. Tacade provides support for professionals, professional groups, parents and carers by delivering effective training, consultancy, project management and publications. www.tacade.com

- A pdf of the briefing paper 'Tacade promoting sexual health and drug education with young people in hostels and housing projects in East London' can be downloaded from Tacade's web site www.tacade.com/projectmanagement.php