

Development and evaluation of an intervention providing insight into the tobacco industry to prevent smoking uptake: a mixed-methods study

Lisa Szatkowski,^{1*} John Taylor,¹ Amy Taylor,¹
Sarah Lewis,¹ John Britton,¹ Ann McNeill,²
Linda Bauld,³ Qi Wu,⁴ Steve Parrott,⁴ Laura Jones⁵
and Manpreet Bains¹

¹Division of Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

²Addictions Department, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK

³Institute for Social Marketing, University of Stirling, Stirling, UK

⁴Department of Health Sciences, University of York, York, UK

⁵Institute of Applied Health Research, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

*Corresponding author

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Many smokers become addicted to smoking as children. It has been suggested that teaching children about tobacco industry practices is an effective way to prevent them from starting to smoke. We tested an interactive classroom-based intervention based on this premise (called 'Operation Smoke Storm') to see if it was effective at preventing children from starting to smoke.

Operation Smoke Storm was delivered to Year 7 students (aged 11–12 years) in two schools in the UK. Feedback from students and teachers was used to improve the intervention and to create a 'booster' lesson for delivery in Year 8 (when students were aged 12–13 years) and a take-home family booklet to accompany the Year 7 lessons. The improved Operation Smoke Storm, plus the booster session and family booklet, was then tested with students. Students completed questionnaires asking about their smoking behaviour before the Year 7 and after the Year 8 lessons. Their answers were compared with those from students in other schools who did not receive Operation Smoke Storm but who were asked identical questions.

Students enjoyed Operation Smoke Storm and reported learning new information about the harms of smoking and the tobacco industry. However, we found no clear difference in the proportion of students who had ever smoked or were susceptible to smoking between those who did and those who did not receive the intervention.

In conclusion, we found that Operation Smoke Storm is an acceptable intervention for Year 7 and 8 students but does not appear to have prevented smoking uptake in this group of participants.

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