Adapting the ASSIST model of informal peer-led intervention delivery to the Talk to FRANK drug prevention programme in UK secondary schools (ASSIST + FRANK): intervention development, refinement and a pilot cluster randomised controlled trial

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Approximately 24% of 15-year-olds in England have used an illicit drug. Illicit drug use increases the risk of poor physical and mental health. This study adapted an effective peer-led smoking prevention intervention (ASSIST) to prevent illicit drug use using information from the UK national drug education website, Talk to FRANK [www.talktofrank.com (accessed 29 August 2017)]. With stakeholders (young people, teachers (SMT and other roles), parents, ASSIST trainers, drug agency staff and a public health commissioner) we developed, tested and refined two peer-led drug prevention interventions, ASSIST + FRANK and FRANK friends to be delivered in schools to UK Year 9 students (aged 13–14 years). After the interventions had been refined, we conducted a study in 12 high schools in South Wales. Schools were randomly allocated to receive ASSIST + FRANK, FRANK friends, ASSIST or usual practice. A survey was given to all young people whose parents had agreed for them to take part to measure illicit drug use. A total of 1567 young people were recruited to the study. In-depth interviews with school staff, parents and young people explored their views on the interventions. The results showed that it is feasible and acceptable to deliver the interventions. The study was not designed to show conclusively whether ASSIST + FRANK or FRANK friends prevented drug use, but both were viewed positively. In general, FRANK friends was viewed more positively than ASSIST + FRANK. The research shows that there should now be a much bigger study to examine whether or not FRANK friends can prevent illicit drug use in young people.
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