A Lesson in School Safety: The Asthma Friendly Schools Project

Ms K Rodesano, Dr J. Moreiras, Ms C Datt, Whittington Health, Ms C Lad, Dr T Holliday, Islington CCG

Background & Aims:

Asthma is the most common chronic disease of childhood, associated with high rates of school absenteeism. Children spend 190 days a year in school with approximately 3 children with asthma per class of 30. Schools are a key stakeholder in any successful asthma network.

A cross-sector initiative, the Asthma Friendly Schools Project aims to make children with asthma safer; reducing asthma-related school absence and improving local morbidity rates.

Methods:

From September 2015, an Asthma Friendly Schools Nurse worked collaboratively with schools to implement 5 asthma friendly standards, designed by the project team.

In addition, asthma training was provided on a whole-school basis, encompassing teachers, administration staff, parents and students. 42 schools, representing 66% of schools in the region, implemented all 5 standards by the spring of 2016.

Results:

Standard - Compliance (% of schools): Pre/Post intervention

1. Register of students with asthma 50% 100%
2. School asthma policy 5% 100%
3. Asthma plans for all students with asthma 26% 64%
4. Emergency inhalers / spacers available 11% 100%
5. Named asthma lead 31% 100%

Compared to the previous year, schools completing the project in spring 2016 recorded a drop of 0.07% in absence due to all-cause illness, whereas schools who had not engaged recorded a 0.02% rise over the same period. If the same fall occurred across all local primaries, over 1600 fewer school days would be missed.

Conclusions:

Building partnerships between education and health has allowed The Asthma Friendly Schools Project to deliver comprehensive change to in-school asthma care. The authors propose that this has had a direct effect on school absence rates, indicative of better asthma control.

The project represents a successful, innovative approach to making schools safer for children and young people with asthma, enabling them to lead fuller and more active lives.