

**Theatre in
education for
road safety**

09072

May 2010

Confidentiality

Please note that the copyright in the attached report is owned by TfL and the provision of information under Freedom of Information Act does not give the recipient a right to re-use the information in a way that would infringe copyright (for example, by publishing and issuing copies to the public).

Brief extracts of the material may be reproduced under the fair dealing provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 for the purposes of research for non-commercial purposes, private study, criticism, review and news reporting.

Details of the arrangements for reusing the material owned by TfL for any other purpose can be obtained by contacting us at enquire@tfl.gov.uk.

Research conducted by 2CV

Contents



Introduction and background

Overview of research findings

Why the Theatre in Education productions work

Response to each productions: Strengths and improvements

Supporting the production: Pre and post performance

Summary

Research objectives

Evaluating the effectiveness of the Theatre In Education Program and the role it plays in the communications mix, including:

- *Engagement and stand out*
- *Effectiveness at penetrating the teen 'fortress' of trusted sources*
- *Impact on attitudes and behaviours when it comes to road safety*
- *Immediate resonance and impact vs. long term resonance and impact*

Understanding how the productions fit within the context of young peoples' lives

Providing recommendations for the program going forward

Methodology and sample

- 9 x one hour groups with young people, and 9 x one hour depth interviews with teachers, heads of year / PSHE at each school
- We visited a range of schools across Greater London, with a good spread of locations, and demographic make up

School	Play / year	Gender	Attitude to risk	Time since seeing play	Area
1	Now you see me (yr 6, age 10-11)	Female	Risk takers	Immediately after	Brent
2	Now you see me (yr 6, age 10-11)	Male	Risk takers	1-2 weeks after	Bromley
3	Now you see me (yr 6, age 10-11)	Male	Risk avoiders	2-3 months after	Havering
4	The Price (yr 7, age 11-12)	Male	Risk avoiders	Immediately after	Bexley
5	The Price (yr 7, age 11-12)	Female	Risk takers	1-2 weeks	Southwark
6	The Price (yr 7, age 11-12)	Female	Risk takers	2-3 months after	Lambeth
7	Wasted (yr 9, age 13-14)	Male	Risk avoiders	Immediately after	Kingston
8	Wasted (yr 10, age 13-14)	Female	Risk takers	1-2 weeks	Harrow
9	Wasted (yr 10, age 13-14)	Female	Risk avoiders	2-3 months	Lambeth



Overview of research findings



Summary

- The plays were exceptionally well received amongst children and teachers and have led to sustained behaviour change when it comes to road safety
- The productions' impact stemmed largely from the fact that they provided a proxy for actual experience; the viewer was led through the tragedy in a very realistic way
 - A complex journey that other media do not facilitate
- A sense 'that it could be me' was therefore encouraged, supported by relevant content such as friendships and relationships
- The inclusion of topics that were pitched just beyond each age group added further credibility to the plays and helped them break through the teen 'fortress' of trusted sources
- Rather than simply telling children what not to do, the plays were felt to empower them to make their own choices, which was considered to be very motivational
- There is an opportunity to help the messages live on through additional support materials and activities that learn from the successes of the play
- There is also an opportunity to encourage more schools to take part by re-working the communications sent to schools



Why the Theatre in Education productions work



Overall all three plays received an exceptionally positive response

'It has been brilliant, so professional and well organised, it really has an impact on the children and is very compelling', Head of Year 9, Now you see me (NYSM)

'I didn't hear a peep out of them for the entire time...it's amazing that they were engaged for so long', teacher, The Price

- Productions played a significant role in helping children to understand about road safety
- Plays resonated with the audience, and core messages were highly memorable (for those who had just seen the play, to those who had seen it 3 months before)
- Teachers' experience of organising the production visit was very positive
- All teachers have or would have the plays back to the school

'I've never seen anything like it, I was bowled over', Head of PSHE, Wasted

'It's great that the message is coming from people their age, and they really engaged with these characters and actors, they were great', Head of upper school, NYSM

'This is the best Theatre in Education program we've had at the school', deputy head, Wasted

All three plays greatly exceeded expectations amongst children and teachers alike

Behaviour change facilitated through some key successes of the three productions

Life lessons are taught

- Story played out in detail
- Context for story provided
- Message therefore remembered far beyond the performance

Credible voice / leverages touchpoints

- Voice: from 'peers'
- Highly relevant content for age and where they live
- Focus to friendship and familiar youth issues/scenarios
- Subject matter pitched beyond their age group and beyond 'school' realm
- New, engaging information and true story
- Teenage format and touchpoints

Social norms established

- Plays show audience part they have to play in being responsible for themselves and others
- Messages that give them credit as young adults help make this credible
- Plays normalise new behaviours

Trigger to behaviour change

- Emotional impact of ending felt
- Audience can place story in context of our lives

The plays are a vehicle through which these principles can be executed, however they are lessons that can be applied to other behaviour change communications

Plays provide a forum through which life lessons can be taught

- The play format allows detailed storylines to be played out
 - Enough time and resources to build an intricate story
 - Facilitates a higher level of narrative complexity than other comms
- The audience is taken on a complex journey and allowed to experience the story in a very realistic way
 - Characters involved, scenes / places they went, conversations they had
 - Exposure to the characters decision making process throughout
- The audience is exposed to all contributory factors that build up to the death of a character, as well as the aftermath
 - The closest thing to actually experiencing it for themselves
 - Audience shown how situations can unfold, and the consequences
 - Fast-paced action of the plays mirrors how quickly accidents can happen (Think video mobile advert does a similar thing)

'It felt like I was actually there and it was happening to me, which was scary but it really made me think', male, NYSM

'It allowed the boys to think about their emotions, and boys find this hard at their age, so I think it was very valuable', Head of PSHE, Wasted

A unique medium that can take the audience on a journey that is a proxy for actual experience

Familiar issues add relevance and credibility to the story

Friendship / relationships

- Friendship group central to lives, desire to fit in and have status (key to success of 'Don't let friendship die on road' comms)
 - Friends have huge influence over behaviour, and peer pressure is a relevant issue
 - Relationships with the opposite sex starting to form
- 3 plays successfully focus stories on friend groups

'The way the friendship group gets broken up is really sad...I cant imagine not having the friends I have', female, Wasted

The near future

- Going to a new school in NYSM
- References to careers and future success in The Price and Wasted
- Reference to marriage in Wasted

*"Why do you drink?" -Andy
'I don't feel confident' -Jay.
'This is a very accurate portrayal of modern children's lives', Head of PSHE, secondary school*

Relevant risk behaviours

- Playing on the road in NYSM
- Fighting in The Price
- References to drugs and alcohol in Wasted
- Sexual references in Wasted
- Alluding to theft in Wasted

"It (Wasted) included lots of underlying issues that they were fixated with', Head of Year 9

'This is a time when children are starting to think about the rest of their lives, these plays tap into that', Head of Upper school, NYSM

The familiar elements of the story get the audience engaged, meaning they can reflect on the issues in the context of their own lives

Endings have emotional impact because audience feel 'it could be me'

- Previous research has identified that a key challenge when talking to children about risk behaviours is the attitude that 'it won't happen to me'
- These plays allow children to project themselves onto the characters, making the death of a character more emotional
 - They feel as if 'it could be me' and that they have had a near miss, which is a powerful way to learn
 - Plays take children out of 'school' context into a more familiar, credible sphere
- The engaging, fast-paced storyline and structure of the plays enhances this high level of buy-in
 - *'It was gripping....you can actual feel it building up', male, Wasted*
 - *'The switch from laughter to something very serious is very effective' teacher, NYSM*
 - Finding out it is a true story at the end is highly impactful



'It's not Hollywood at the end, it's real life, he dies', Head of upper school, NYSM

Making the message applicable to children's lives is a key achievement of these TIE plays

Productions overcome challenges commonly faced by road safety communications with this audience

Road safety messages can lack cut though

- Taught from a young age, so message runs risk of being seen as old news and lacking relevance*
- In danger of being seen as a lesser risk when compared to other modern dangers such as knife crime and gang culture, especially amongst risk takers

*Teen Road safety research – July 2008

Children are used to two primary types of behaviour change messaging

Being told what to do in an authoritarian way, e.g. by teacher or parent

Scare tactics to shock them into behaving in a certain way, e.g. TV advertising

'They're at an age where they are old enough to understand that its their choice, they create situations that they need to deal with', teacher, NYSM

- However productions allow a forum to teach message in a **balanced, contextualised and engaging way, treating them as adults**
 - *i.e. It's your choice, think for yourself and take responsibility*
 - Telling a **true story**, providing information - it's up to the children what they do with it

The plays empower the children to make decisions for themselves, which is novel and highly motivating

More mature and adult references add impact

- A key challenge is to break through the fortress of trusted sources and be credible in their sphere
 - This is achieved by pitching some of the references just beyond the audience's age group
 - This may mirror some of the TV / internet content that they view, perhaps without their parents knowing, adding credibility

Now you see me



- E.g. snogging reference
- *Children giggle and feel naughty for laughing at some of the jokes*

The Price



- E.g. swearing and mocking others
- *Audience highly amused and engaged*

Wasted



- E.g. swearing, sexual and drug references
- *Teenagers gripped by lifestyles of those a bit older*

Children are often keen to grow up quickly at these ages, so this is highly effective in adding credibility

Plays also include some 'new news'

'I didn't realise that you couldn't drive when taking drugs', male, Wasted

'I didn't realise a motorbike could do this much damage', male, The Price

'Its not necessarily one in a million cars that have an unsafe driver', female, Wasted

Often children are surprised that the tragedy could happen as a result of the situation

'It's made me think that road accidents can happen to anyone', male, The Price

- NYSM teaches children that certain road obstacles can increase chance of not being seen
- The Price teaches children that motorbikes can cause fatalities
- Wasted teaches children about the effects of drugs on driving

'I never thought about getting eye contact before when crossing the road', female, NYSM

'It can be other people on the road that cause accidents, not you, so we need to look out for other people's mistakes too', female, Wasted

'I see why crossing between cars can be dangerous now', male, NYSM

'I didn't really know anything about the effects of drugs when you drive', female, Wasted

The play has gained the respect of the children, and becomes a talking point in peer to peer conversation: letting the audience spread the message

Relevant touchpoints support the core messages throughout



Provides hooks to keep the audience listening, and importantly removes play from context of 'school', entering more credible territory

The dynamic and fast-paced live theatre action

Lively characters



Interactive workshop



Multimedia / video



In 2007, 545 young pedestrians were injured or killed in road traffic collisions in London

Facts on screen

Character changes



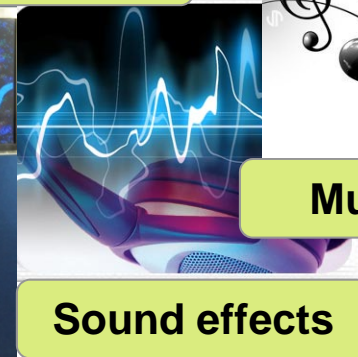
Scene changes



Props



Sound effects



Music



High audio and visual stimulation mirrors the media experience that children are accustomed to, encouraging excitement and engagement

The plays achieve stand out from other road safety messages as a result

'It feels like my parents are hassling me to do something...the play is better 'cos it is people our age', male, Wasted

Formal presentations
Not peer to peer



Other plays
Not multimedia, not true stories



'Most plays don't achieve anything close to the multimedia and modern approach of this play', teacher, The Price

'The storylines are really good but its not as easy to get involved when the actors aren't right in front of you', female, NYSM

Video / DVD
Not live



TV adverts
Less context to tragedy



'Some of those TV ads about dangers on the road are gross and I look away', female, Year 7

The core messages are highly memorable, even for those who had seen the plays 2-3 months previously

The plays were exceptionally effective in communicating the road safety message to children

- Children who have seen **NYSM and The Price** now take more care when crossing the road
 - e.g. they cross between cars, get eye-contact with the driver, look and listen, don't just follow friends
- Teenagers who had seen **Wasted** have started paying more attention to who's driving when getting into cars, and when crossing the road, in case drivers has taken drugs or drunk alcohol

Not only have their own behaviours changed, but some have become advocates for road safety, warning other friends and siblings of the dangers

The plays have had a lasting impact on behaviour

'I'm more careful when crossing the road now', female, Wasted, 1-2 weeks ago

'I look and listen if there's no crossing', female, The Price, 1-2 weeks ago

'I assess the situation more thoroughly when I get into a car now...has the driver been drinking?', female, Wasted, 2-3 months ago

'I wait until the car has completely stopped before I cross, and I look behind cars', male, NYSM, 2-3 months ago

'I always get eye contact with the driver now', male, NYSM, 1-2 weeks ago

'I try and protect other people around me now', Female, Wasted, 1-2 weeks ago

'I never cross between cars any more, and I don't just copy what my friends are doing', female, NYSM, 1-2 weeks ago

'I used to run across the road, now I stop look and listen, and use the pedestrian crossing a lot more', female, The Price, 2-3 months ago

'I use crossings all the time now', female, The Price, 1-2 weeks ago

1-2 weeks

Time since seeing play

2-3 months

Even those who had seen the play three months previously had remembered what they play had taught them



Response to each production
Strengths and improvements



Now You See Me (NYSM): structure of the play creates energy and emphasises core message



- Rapid pace of story and juxtaposition of scenes creates impact
 - Energy and tone constantly changing, creating a gripping atmosphere
 - Mirrors how quickly accidents can happen
- Slow paced final scene contrasts dramatically with this
 - Medical language adds sudden seriousness to tone
 - Kali's emotional epilogue hits home
 - Facts / stats on screen are highly relevant to age and area
- Rewind device means audience are aware of Aaron's death throughout
 - Tragedy put in context, enables audience to understand exactly how the situation unfolds
 - Enhances core message of 'prevention', audience explore how this would have been possible

The play works hard to act as a proxy for actual experience and to teach the audience a life lesson

NYSM: interactive format is highly engaging

- Audience divided into smaller groups from the outset* → Encourages team spirit, and facilitates more individual attention
- Groups given a leader (actor) who explains to them what is going to happen and how to behave* → Makes children feel comfortable and sets expectations accurately
- Children are involved in the story: asked questions, asked to interview witnesses and to make decisions* → Experiencing story rather than just watching it, and treated as adults
- Physically have to move around, vote with bodies* → Gets the blood flowing and maintains children's attention, multi-sensory
- Present group thoughts back to audience* → Encourages involvement, forces audience to think
- Narrator reflects back on scenes as they happen and evaluate learnings at the end* → Message sticks in children's' heads

Making these 10 and 11 yr olds part of the story is an effective way of maintaining their attention, following kinesthetic learning principles of learning by 'doing'

NYSM: believable characters create high level of buy-in

- Message coming from peers and therefore resonates
 - Actors play children very well, easy to relate to them
 - Youthful language resonates – ‘man’, ‘butters’, ‘innit’, ‘blud’
- Tone of humour well targeted and highly engaging
 - E.g. the scene where Aaron and Kali feign death, or when Aaron does impressions of his Mum
 - Jokey, antagonistic tone causes giggles: a bit naughty and therefore gripping
- Aaron’s character / actor is full of energy and very appealing
 - Mirrors life of children well: mocking his nagging Mum, late for school
 - Engages audience with eye contact, going up to specific children and directing comments at them



‘It was funny and really emotional’, female



‘Aaron’s just like me, he talks like me and he loves his Xbox’, male

The children warm to Aaron and feel sadness when he dies, encouraging them to think about how this could have been prevented

The Price: core message interwoven into engaging storylines

- **Multi-faceted play draws viewers in**
 - TV show engaging: showbiz characters, production terminology, and American accent are intriguing to this age group
 - Fast-paced action, multiple scenes, and relevant subject matter: fashion, Eastenders, celebrities
 - Humour pitched correctly, and audience involvement engaging
- **Core message then interwoven and pulled out slowly to increase buy-in**
 - Within familiar subject matter e.g. asking Posh and Becks about road safety on the 'Weakest Link'
 - Through accident stats that are compared to familiar reference points e.g. 33 football teams
 - Through flashbacks of Slick's experience in past
- **Slick's experiences provide a proxy for the influence and consequences of peer pressure**
 - Pressure on Slick in studio and during flashback to conform
 - Hindsight view is powerful – Slick reflects on the tragedy and puts himself in the audience's shoes

The true story contrasts in a sobering way with the 'Hollywood' TV show, encouraging children to come to their own conclusions about how to behave on the road

Wasted: builds a full picture of the friendship group, which adds context to the story

- Friendship group is one they teenagers can relate to
 - All have different roles in group - people that are loud, people that are picked on
 - Playful banter between characters is engaging: mick-taking, dancing, in-jokes, girls trying on outfits, laughing and drinking
- The teenage lifestyles and peer pressures are targeted just beyond age group, giving the play credibility
 - Relationships and stresses of dating / chatting up girls
 - Pressure to go out clubbing and take drugs
 - Desire for success and a career – Stacey's ambitions
- Screen device adds deeper context to the characters and story
 - Girls talk about their long term history, their relationships with one another etc.



'We felt as if the jokes were aimed at us', females

'There's a mix of maturity levels in Year 9, some boys I don't think understood some of the sexual references, but this didn't detract from their fascination with the play', Head of PSHE, boys school

The audience can relate to the characters, yet at the same time can learn about experiences they haven't yet had, and how they might deal with these

Wasted: tragedy at end is shocking and impactful



“It makes me appreciate life and my friends’, female

“We all knew’ is a very impactful line, we need to all look out for each other’, female

- Story is played out in detail, and ending comes as a shock
 - Contrast in pace and atmosphere at end: from speeding car, quickly intercut scenes, to blackout, heart beat and real photos of crash
- Aftermath demonstrates the consequences of tragedy to close friendship group
 - Stark contrast to humour and flippancy throughout
 - Characters have completely different relationship with one another
 - Jay’s established role as one to poke fun at has suddenly flipped – shift is impactful
- Lasting message is about taking responsibility for everyone’s actions, which treats them as adults
 - Not about blame or preaching about drugs, but that all responsible for situation
 - Not overtly gruesome: about empowerment

The story demonstrates the life-changing impact of such an accident

The Price and Wasted: potential minor improvements

Fine tune relevance to age group

The Price

- Make the characters in the flashback scenes seem a bit younger e.g. through clothes worn
- Target end messages / stats at age group and area

Wasted

- Focus more on dangers to *passengers* of drug driver (and less about driver doing up his car etc.), as some felt core message was about not drug driving rather than not being a passenger to a drug driver
- Target end messages solely at passenger, not driver

Include more interactivity

- This is a key selling point of NYSM
- Some inclusion of audience in The Price very well received
- Therefore get audience involved to a greater extent to heighten engagement and buy-in even more:
 - Ask them to act out roles
 - Get them to make decisions – what would they do in that situation?



Supporting the productions Pre and post performance



All schools felt the organisation of the play was seamless

Borough contacts Head / Heads of year or teacher by email, with objectives for play laid out

Passed on to relevant teacher (usually PSHE coordinator)

Followed up with phone call or email

Sent booking form and asked to select date

Sent information about size and layout of room needed

Production company arrive on time, set up stage efficiently, do play, clear everything up and out on time

Most schools that had experienced TIE once then went on to book it in again (based upon the success of the play as well as the ease of logistics)

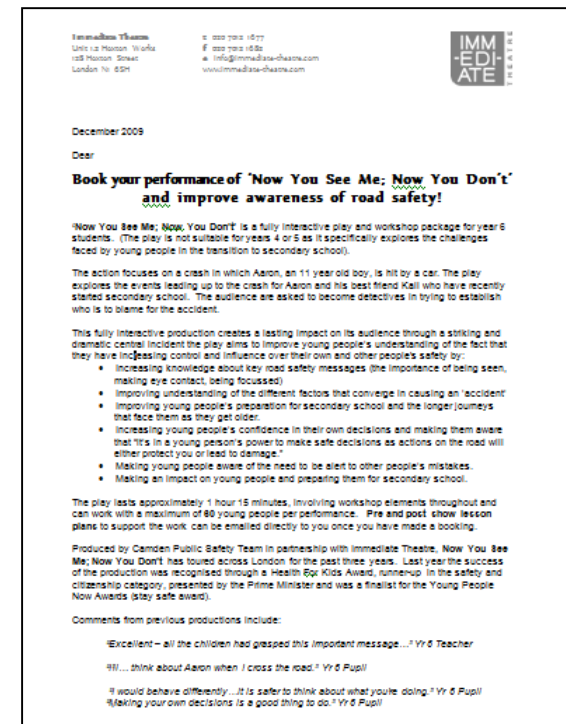
'Theatre in education emails stand out immediately as I know I want to do this', Head of PSHE, secondary school.

The logistics of getting the play into the schools was problem free for the staff, who felt the whole experience was managed professionally, requiring a minimal amount of their time

The opportunity therefore is to get *new schools* to listen

Teachers catch up on emails at the end of the day; emails therefore need to work hard to cut through a packed inbox

- **Lead information**, in bite-sized pieces, to grab their attention:
 - Very short description of what play is about
 - How well received the play has been
 - Quotes from the children about how it has affected their behaviour
 - Some quotes from the teachers / brief reviews of the play
 - How straight-forward the logistics are
 - Fact it is free
 - In email, not attachment
- **Secondary information** includes venue requirements, more detailed storyline - further details can come in follow up communication
- **Colour photos** of the production, or video / link to site with footage of play
- **Digestible layout**, less black and white copy – boxed information, sub-headers etc.
- **More dynamic / interactive means of first contact** e.g. flash email



Current NYSM introductory email

Initial email contact could work harder to mirror the modern and dynamic style of the plays and stand out in the teacher's inbox

Opportunity to align TIE with PSHE curriculum

- Currently teachers finding TIE program fits most naturally within PSHE schedule
 - From September 2011 PSHE will become a compulsory subject for Primary and Secondary school pupils, of which Safety is a component
 - Teachers will be required to deliver against a number of objectives and targets
- This presents an opportunity for TIE to be targeted more effectively by positioning itself within this curriculum as it becomes established:

Safety is a compulsory area of the curriculum, so aligning road safety plays within this gives it more significance

More established PSHE departments will develop, giving TIE a specific department and contact to target

Teachers will be under more pressure than previously to develop a more structured PSHE program, and aids to this likely to be received well

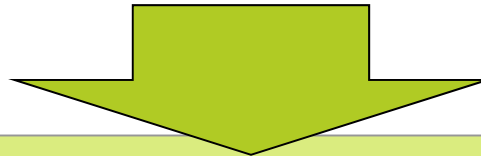
Smaller schools without a dedicated dept. may still assign PSHE responsibilities to other members of staff, who can find this a burden, or find topics hard to discuss – they are likely to welcome support

Important to target schools when syllabus being planned

Teachers are beginning to think about how to deliver upon these PSHE new objectives; TIE could fit in well

Currently little support exists for the plays post-performance, and what does exist received low take-up

- **Low engagement with few materials sent:** some teachers received a lesson plan, only one teacher read it and used it
 - **Lacked the time to read it through:** a lot of information, most claimed it is just as quick to design a lesson themselves
 - **Too late to schedule it in:** some said that the lesson plan was received too late to fit into the scheduling of classes
 - **Misunderstood nature of lesson plan:** some also presumed it was a lesson plan for a sit down class as opposed to a drama plan, and this interested them less



- Support materials and activities need to be communicated to teachers in an easy to understand way
 - Nature and benefits of support materials / activity need to be communicated clearly in email
 - Plan needs to be easy to read and implement
- Support materials need to be sent in time for scheduling of timetable (beginning of autumn term)

There are some simple ways to encourage the message of such high impact plays to live on even further

Follow up support can build on the most successful elements of the productions

Love of drama / interactivity

- Well structured and easy to implement drama lesson plan, with visual resources
- Drama lesson plan where children decide what the next steps in story are (builds on core message of choice and consequence)
- Take on parts themselves and perform to other children
- Follow up workshop with actors, e.g. about aftermath, perhaps just single actor

Multimedia approach

- Video of play or additional short clip on school intranet

Engagement with characters

- Deep dive into the life of one character? Explore aftermath and long term consequences of tragedy in class / groups
- Posters, PE bags with messages from main actors: e.g. Aaron advocating road safety

Treating them as adults

- Older pupils carry out sessions with younger pupils
- Tools for Junior road safety officers

These extra activities sit within the sphere of credibility; i.e. differentiated from other more normal school activities and lessons



Summary



Summary

- Without exception, the plays were considered to be highly engaging and have led to children taking more care when crossing the road or getting into cars
- The productions' impact stemmed largely from the fact that they provided a proxy for actual experience; the viewer was led through the tragedy in a very realistic way
 - A complex journey that other media do not facilitate
- A sense 'that it could be me' was therefore encouraged, supported by relevant content such as friendships and relationships
- The inclusion of topics that were pitched just beyond each age group added further credibility to the plays and helped them break through the teen 'fortress' of trusted sources
- Rather than simply telling children what not to do, the plays were felt to empower them to make their own choices, which was considered to be very motivational
- There is an opportunity to help the messages live on through additional support materials and activities that learn from the successes of the play
- There is also an opportunity to encourage more schools to take part by re-working the communications sent to schools