CUT FILMS: A SOCIAL MARKETING APPROACH TO REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE

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Cut Films was launched last year with a competition for schools and as part of Kodak’s National young directors’ film competition.

The campaign has its roots in a personal event – it was set up by a leading UK Film Director, Charlie Stebbings following the death of his wife, Deborah Hutton from lung cancer.

In this session we are going to describe the rationale underpinning the campaign, summarise findings and recommendations from the qualitative evaluation, say how we have responded to the research and give pointers for local action.

Rationale: Historically there has been a huge investment in youth smoking campaigns – the super-villain Nick O’Teen of the 80’s pitted against Superman and the Health Education Authority national teenage smoking campaign in early 90’s. In the last 15 years policy measures and interventions have largely focused on adult cessation with evidence suggesting it’s the best way to reduce teenage smoking rates. An increasing number of experts in the tobacco control community believe that there a strong argument to develop youth targeted campaigns with new media technologies as part of a comprehensive national strategy (Amos & Hastings). Our approach draws a social marketing framework which adapts marketing philosophy to desired behaviour change for public good (Hastings) as the diagram shows it is characterised by understanding audiences and interventions through ongoing research.

Charlie’s vision is to exploit the power of marketing and media to deliver the message to young people - a message created by and tailored to young people themselves. It is successful approach in mainstream marketing - as Charlie’s food porn ads attest - “It’s not just food...”

Pilot evaluation: 9 schools and one youth club in England participated in the pilot. A website provided information and guidance about the competition and technology for uploading the film. Each site developed their own approach to delivery. We conducted focus groups and depth interviews at each site to test the feasibility of the intervention, identify delivery strengths and any operational issues and capture the quality of interaction and dialogue amongst young people about smoking.

Key Findings – What were the success factors?

We achieved what we set out to do and met the programme’s aim of providing an opportunity for young people to engage with, create and produce their thoughts and ideas about smoking on film.

*“It’s important to have our own voice... We don’t know what adults want to see but we do know what we want.”* (Female, yr 9)

The research found that it would be feasible to promote the competition more widely and the messages of the campaign were culturally relevant to young people – as they said..

*“It’s good to make our own choices and not just have views forced on us.” (Young person, Youth Club)*

The project created an environment that provided legitimacy for discussions between young people on their own terms.

*“Usually it’s adults telling you about smoking, but this is your own ideas.” (Female, year 12)*

We found a high level of engagement and participation in team work. The process of planning was found to be appealing with a real sense of achievement. They could see the value of planning although it was evident on one site that the process had been somewhat erratic:

*“At the beginning we had no idea what to do. But then Ben came along with the camera and bang, that was it. We did look at Google and YouTube and all. But we looked at them after we’d filmed it”. (Male, yr 9.)* However, the result was a very appealing film.

The competitive aspect of the project provided a focus for the intervention and a real incentive to participate. Prizes appeared to be a successful inducement and they were incentivised by certificates and the motivational communications from DHC.

Engendering discussion on smoking issues: The planning and researching element of creating a film did encourage students to explore their ideas and there was evidence that it gave participants a chance to consider their attitudes to smoking and provoke wider debate with the new facts that they had learnt:

“*It made me think beyond the fact that cigarettes are bad for you. I went home and told my parents the things in a cigarette.”* (Female, yr 9)

Impact. Young people were keen to get the message right to target their peers

*“We thought image was the best way to tackle teenagers.” (Female, yr 10)*

Key concerns identified by the students were appearance, social acceptance and money:

*“We learnt a great number of new facts when researching; obviously the cost shocked us the most.” (Female, yr 10)*

*“I had the idea of doing something about peer pressure. You look around at your friends doing it (smoking) – and you think ‘I want to be like them’ – and that’s it!” (Male, yr 9)*

The students felt that their films were relevant to the target and were generally pleased with the impact:

“*We showed it to them on the whiteboard and they was speechless*”. (Female yr 10)

In addition, teachers reported wider benefits – building confidence and engaging disaffected young people.

We found attitudes to smoking appeared to vary with age and levels of sophistication

*“We all know it kills but the decision is about the here and now not about what might happen.”* (Female yr 11)

For some young people it helped reinforce the harm to health caused by smoking, particularly in the short term:

*“We didn’t realise how much of a disadvantage it could give you (in sport), hearing about different football players that have had to adapt their game because they smoke.” (Young person)*

For some young people (who were reportedly non smokers) it did suggest that the process of film making would help persuade them not to take up smoking:

“*Making the video put us off the idea of smoking, discovering others’ views on it (image, health, financial) took the appeal away.” (Male, yr 10)*

one of the 21 films submitted to the pilot competition: (Smoking Gun)

Key recommendations – research to action

A number of key recommendations emerged from the research which we have put into action. Schools and teachers wanted to know how the initiative would fulfil a curriculum need and deliver wider school benefits. They wanted practical ideas on delivery. In response, we are developing guidelines for teachers and case studies to illustrate the benefits to schools trying to achieve “Healthy School Status” project fits in well with the ethos of the programme and also helps fulfil the requirements to provide PSHE. It can be carried out successfully as part of mainstream classes such as key stage 3 English with links and partnerships across subject areas - music, drama, health sciences and sport.

Delivery can be as part of an extra curricula school club or an out of school project by the students in their own time. GCSE and BTEC media studies provide an ideal niche:

*“It linked perfectly with our media course for BTEC as part of this is about making a public awareness film. As well as the curriculum benefits there are a number of social benefits attached to the project such as the opportunity to work across schools and age groups.” (Teacher of BTEC).*

Dissemination activities include: showing the films on the Visual Learning Environment

presentations to the whole school, Film uploading to the campaign, You Tube and Facebook and messaging, wider broadcasting to the local community using established links to cascade to primary schools. Engaging in local action - a school was involved in a local event with the MP, the Mayor and press.

*“The Mayor said that it had taken only thirty seconds to start smoking but thirty years to give up. She wished that she had seen such films 30 years ago and avoided the damage to her health.”* (Teacher)

Further development: Website content, tone and language has been developed based on feedback from young people and teachers. We are working on downloadable podcasts with more technical information. More themes and ideas with links to other sites. Research reinforced the benefit of setting up a youth panel – we are working with a number of young people recruited from the pilot schools and engaging their expertise for the next phase. It was suggested that we encourage students to carry out their own research and with young people we have developed a pre and post testing questionnaire. Research suggested the feasibility of extending to youth clubs - a competition was launched to 1000 clubs in England in May

How can you become involved? Building on the learning from the pilot, we plan to make Cut Films a more sustainable project by running an annual national competition for schools from Autumn 2010. Schools in England can enter individually or we have developed a series of support options with ICE, our delivery partner for PCTs and local tobacco control services.

Please contact us for more details and visit our website. A copy of the full evaluation report is available. www.cutfilms.org