
Project Report

RISKING IT ALL

A verbatim theatre in education project addressing risk taking behaviour in schools across West Cheshire

Child Sexual Exploitation | Inappropriate Relationships | e-Safety | Alcohol & Substance Misuse



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“An engaging performance that brought real risks to life using very believable characters”

Ms Blanchard - Bishop Heber

About this Report

The theatre in education performance 'Risking It All' was commissioned to tour 18 secondary schools across West Cheshire in 2013. Approximately 4500 young people watched the performance of which 557 pupils filled in post show questionnaires; 291 males and 255 females all aged between 13 and 16. This report will explain:

- Explain how initial research and consultation with young people led to the creation of a hard hitting piece of verbatim theatre in education called 'Risking It All'.
- Summarise feedback from 557 young people and 31 teachers who have seen the show
- Explain how 'Risking It All' has become an effective tool in addressing CSE (Child Sexual exploitation) and safeguarding issues in schools as part of a multi-agency approach.

Acknowledgements

Zengage would like to thank, CWAC (LSCB), Catch 22, the University of Chester and Cheshire Constabulary for the valuable information, support and occupation provided by them in their respective fields. Gratitude also goes out to the teachers who organised to have the performance at their schools and returned feedback for the means of this report.



**“I firmly believe it’s
what young people need
to see”**

**Sian Hatton Jones - Bishop
Heber High School**

We are 2engage

2engage Performing Arts Company is a not-for-profit organisation specialising in the delivery of interactive workshops, theatre performances and presentations in schools, colleges, universities and businesses. With over ten years' experience in the field of applied drama and theatre, 2engage are proud to be an organisation known and trusted for their professional approach, high standard of delivery and selection of thought-provoking and relevant projects e.g. Supporting the school curricula, engaging young people, working with at risk groups, introducing workshop techniques to undergraduates and developing programmes for multi-agency delivery.

Established as a graduate start-up project in 2004, 2engage became incorporated as a community interest company in 2012. They have worked extensively across the Northwest of England producing performances and delivering workshops in their own unique, accessible and interactive style. The company promote a participatory way of working that enables people to explore, for example, complex set texts for GCSE and A 'level, to question behaviours which may place young people at risk, to look at the creative and cultural industries and their role within it and to explore the delicate balancing act when creating projects with several stakeholders.

The diverse nature of their work is always participant led, thereby encouraging individuals and groups to experience, explore, understand, discover and articulate their ideas whilst gaining confidence and self-esteem.

Our Mission

Our mission is to offer unique inclusive learning experiences that seek to inspire and transform the lives of young people for the better.



Background to the Project

In 2012 2engage received funding from the lottery to explore risk taking behaviour with a group of young people living in sheltered accommodation. The focus of the project was to explore risk taking behaviour and the impact on young people's lives. Over a 14 week period, skilled workshop leaders, performers and practitioners from 2engage held various participative consultations and drama workshops across the Northwest.

Engaging young people in practical workshop sessions allowed the 2engage to built rapport, listen to stories shared, explore the issue of risk taking behaviour and document the sessions. The findings highlighted a need to address the following safeguarding issues:

- **Alcohol and substance misuse**
- **Social networking (Facebook, instagram)**
- **Sexting (picture messaging)**
- **Child sexual exploitation**
- **Rape and inappropriate relationships**
- **Risky Situations**

News of our research spread to Cheshire West LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) Policy and Development team and various scoping meetings led to the pilot production of a theatre in education show called 'Risking It All'. 2engage and a small team of associate writers used real case studies and young people's stories to write a hard-hitting piece of educational theatre aimed to warn young people about the risk taking behaviour.

The pilot performance took place early in 2013 at Neston High School and feedback was extremely positive; 91.4% of the whole year group believed that the 'Risking It All' was the most effective way to address the issues of e-safety, inappropriate relationships, sex exploitation and substance/drug misuse.



About 'Risking It All'

The Theatre in Education show

'Risking It All' is a gripping piece of verbatim theatre aimed at years 9 - 11 that considers three story lines, (based on local case studies) of local young people impacted by the following issues: e-safety, substance and alcohol misuse, sexual exploitation and inappropriate relationships. The show highlights both the risks taken and harsh reality of the consequences each young person faces.

After 35 minutes, the performance is stopped and pupils are engaged in mid-show discussion using tool called forum theatre. This intervention will allow the audience to decide the fate of the characters and explore what consequences and outcomes each character may face. This approach demands more involvement from the audience and has proven to engage the young people more than a conventional performance scenario whereby the audience sit passively from beginning to end. The show signposts young people to various avenues of support.



The show is 50 minutes long and can be performed to whole year groups or smaller groups in main halls, theatres, drama studios and even classrooms. 2engage come fully prepared with sufficient AV equipment to suit the venue. The cast is made up of 2 male and 2 female trained actors.

LOGISTICS



Feedback Questionnaires

Pupil Feedback

The aim of the questionnaire was to gather feedback on:

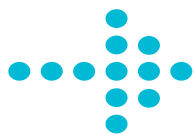
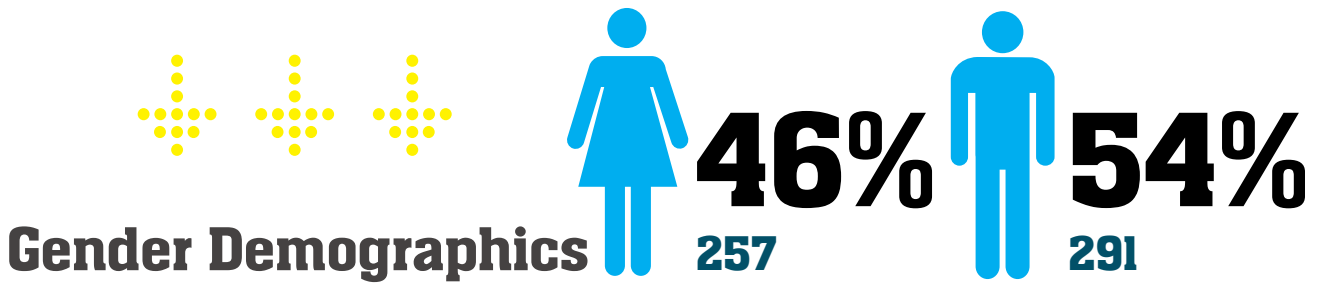
- **The quality of the production**
- **Whether or not the young people thought the use of a theatre production was appropriate to cover the issues in the show**
- **From the issues covered, which ones stood out and what other issues did young people identify.**



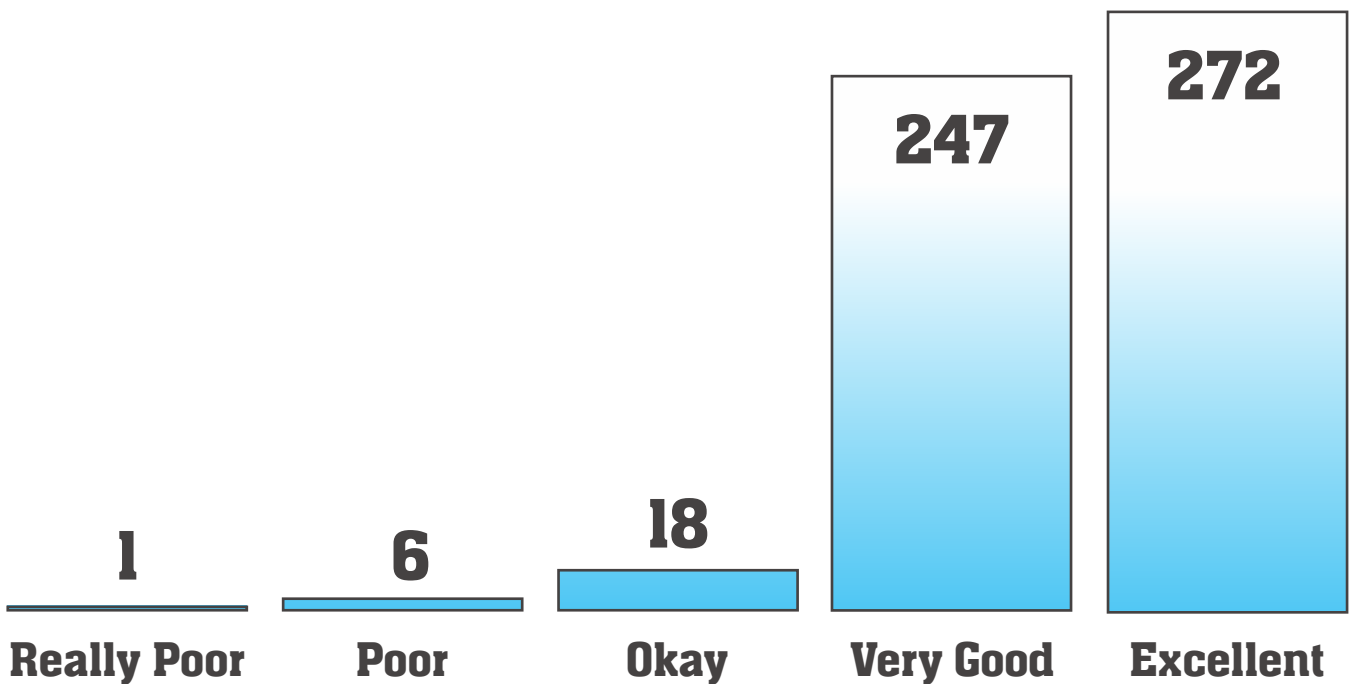
“I have watched the drama and would like to say how well it was delivered and received...”

**Elizabeth Stanton, Safer Schools Partnership,
Cheshire Constabulary.**

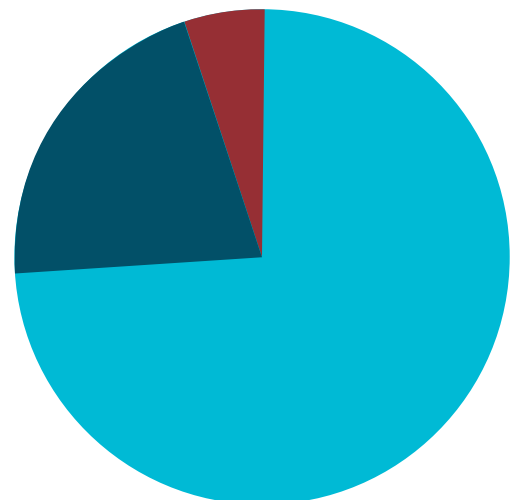
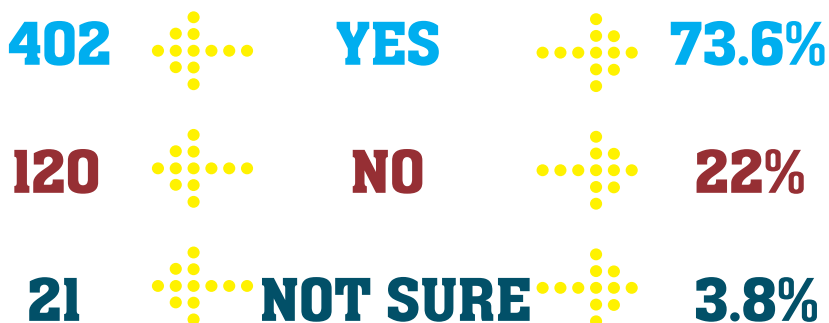
Results



How would you rate the 'Risking It All' performance?



Do you think the theatre piece you watched is the best way to warn young people about risky behaviour?



Disclosures

Feedback questionnaire were handed to schools to distribute to every pupil watching the performance. These served a dual purpose; 1 - To collect data, 2 - Offer another way to make a disclosure or reach out to someone. The project team wanted to make sure the young people had as much support in place as possible.

In total, 9 young people utilised this method of reaching out for support via the feedback questionnaire, opting for someone to contact them privately outside of school. These individuals were identified and were contacted by a dedicated Catch 22 support worker who was able to talk through some of the issues/past issues young people had encountered.



9
Pupils used the feedback questionnaire to reach out

“A well structured, relevant and engaging activity, pupils were really engaged - the performance itself kept their interest the whole time”



Teacher Feedback

Points to Consider

Reaching Younger Audiences

The need to educate younger children about healthy relationships is a conversation we are having more and more often. 'Risking It All' or a similar show could be produced age appropriately to explore topics such as healthy relationships, staying safe, appropriate touch, recognising and assessing risk and knowing how and where to get help when needed.

Staying on top of E-safety

E-safety is a one of the key issues covered in 'Risking It All' and now having performed the show over 35 times across schools, conferences and events there is clearly a growing fear amongst teachers, parents, carers and police for the safety of young people who are all at risk. misuse of the internet, social networks, apps and smart phones. Pupils, parents, teachers and professionals need adequate training where they have the skills to identify risks, have an awareness of the consequences and be able to report anything that concerns them to the correct people.

Hard-to-Reach Cohorts

In partnership with multiple organisations and charities we hope to be able to offer the 'Risking It All' production along with other workshops and activities to hard-to-reach cohorts who maybe in care, being home schooled, privately educated or currently in pupil referral units.

**If you would like to discuss any elements of this report please
contact info@2engage.co.uk**



Pastoral Care & Post-Show Support

Feedback from the pilot performance of 'Risking It All' demonstrated the potential impact of young people watching the show. From the pilot performance, data showed 6 pupils and 1 teacher had mentioned that certain scenes in the performance had brought them to tears. It was at this point, members of the commissioning team met with Catch22 caseworkers to discuss the support and welfare of young people after the performance had taken place in a school.

It was decided that going forward, all schools were briefed about the performance and the potential issues of young people being adversely impacted by the story lines and content. Each school was urged to read the script in advance and take ownership for their pupils' welfare. Form tutors and pastoral support assistants along with medical room staff and school health advisers were all asked to be aware extra aware of the impact the show may have on the pupils. Schools were also urged to provoke follow up discussions in tutor groups.

Safeguarding leads in schools were made aware that Catch 22 case workers would be on site working in partnership with 2engage to provide support during and after the performance should the need arise. It is imperative that the necessary support is in place and future tours will continue to offer this kind of support.

Multi-Agency Approach & Partnerships

The 'Risking It All' performance in schools has proven to be a powerful tool for youth engagement that has can effectively be incorporated into CSE awareness campaigns across the Northwest. Innovative approaches and multi agency partnerships have demonstrated how 'Risking It All' can be combined with a host of other services and initiatives to raise awareness. Partnership organisation who linked with 2engage since the 2103 pilot performance are:

- **Pan Cheshire Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Communications group**
- **West Cheshire LSCB**
- **Halton LSCB**
- **Cheshire Constabulary/Crimebeat**
- **Halton Borough Council**

“Really engaging, Students could relate to what was going on. It was suggestive rather than obvious”

Teacher Feedback



Appendix I –Teacher Comments

A Collection of teachers comments

"Really like the style adopted and approach taken. Well acted, good choice of music and staging"

"Hard hitting enough without being too upsetting."

"Relevant stories and language, excellent acting and stage presence"

"Down to earth approach, clear understanding of youth today with great acting, very realistic. Hit home hard. Students saw the whole story through to possible conclusions, it's what young people need to see"

"It was pitched very well for this class, very believable characters, making black and white text books come to life"

"Interaction with audience, representation on teenage behaviour, simple and effective set with student involvement helping illustrate the dangers of bad life choices - really successful theatre piece"

"Real life stories, good choice of ending, Incidents believable, characters portrayed well"

"Good performance, relevant issues raised, few students visibly effected by the content"

"The acting was the by far the best I've seen from a theatre group in this school, it was engaging and well delivered and had appropriate use of humour"

"Engaging, students could relate, was suggestive rather than obvious"

"Engaging, fast paced and at their level, the performers looked, spoke and dressed in a way that was familiar to the students"

"A well structured, relevant and engaging activity, pupils were really engaged - the performance itself kept their interest the whole time"

"Students were all listening and engaged with true performers, everything worked well, it was a excellent show"

"Pace was good, show was fantastic well presented, kept pupils interested"

"I liked the discussion elements especially the topics covered for females, The Stories were relevant"

"The performers were very professional, stories were good and very realistic and it was relevant to the pupils"

"Issues were presented well and dealt with a sensitive way although this may not be suitable for younger age groups"



Appendix 2 – Testimonials

"I have watched the drama and would like to say how well it was delivered and received by the students. It fits very well within the PHSE ethos and covers many topical subjects that our young people are experiencing in their day to day lives."

Elizabeth Stanton, Safer Schools, Cheshire Constabulary.

"The 'Risking It All' production was well received by our Year 10 pupils and addressed issues which were relevant to them in a direct, yet sensitive way. The students were able to relate to the characters and to the possible risks faced by them in their scenarios. The set was minimal, yet appropriate and worked well on our stage. The soundscapes were effective and supportive of the action, characterisation and context. The storyline was well-crafted and engaging and relevant to the audience. The students felt comfortable participating in the question and answer session to establish the risks that were faced by the characters. This professional, exciting and informative production would also be of benefit to a KS3 audience."

Julie Salisbury, Head of Performing Arts, Blacon High

"The young people actually take better advice from their peers, rather than a load of adults coming in and just giving them a really dry speech. I think that's why the interactive element is a really good part of the performance."

Georgina Browne, Inclusion Manager

"It's a really good drama that brings to life the issues that are really hard to communicate, in reality, to young people."

Gareth Cheeseman, Cheshire West LSCB

"Great acting, very realistic and it hit home hard. Students saw the whole story through to possible conclusions, I firmly believe it's what young people need to see. 1 hour with 2engage is a lot more powerful than any paper resource/video/powerpoint"

Sian Hatton Jones, Safeguarding Lead, Bishop Heber High

"The students could relate to the performers and felt confident to ask questions at the end of the performance. I would definitely recommend this play to other Secondary schools and feel it's appropriate for Key Stage 4 students and above only. The '2engage' team shared the script prior which gave me and the leadership team the chance to see if the content was appropriate for our students."

Dylan Green, Head of Year 10, The Catholic HS Chester

"I thought the performance was great and got the messages across very well. The opportunity to have outside people come into school and deliver messages to students is brilliant. They like getting it from 'real people' not the same old teacher and the content and delivery hit the right notes for the students having a huge impact. The verbal feedback from the students has been very complimentary and it has provoked a continuation of the topic in PSHCE where they had real issues and stories to discuss."

Stephan Fisher, Senior Teacher KS4, Christleton High

If you would like to know more about the 'Risking It All' project please contact Zengage Performing Arts Company.

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