



CHOICES: Safer Partying Theatre- in Education Initiative

Evaluation report
September 2011

Barbara Graves

“I was very impressed with CHOICES and felt they raised exactly the right issues. In my work I have to read many stories about how young people make bad choices and die. Every issue that they raised has featured in stories I have read, so yes, the work remains very relevant.”

**Dr Nick Baker BSc. MBChB DCH FRACP
Chair, New Zealand Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee**

Young People: *“Think of plans before you go out”
“Bad decisions can have lasting effects”
“You can have fun without alcohol or drugs”
“Be responsible around alcohol”*

Teachers: *“Real life, identifiable situations, students connect well”
“Motivates students by getting them in control of action”
“Gives them the idea that there are options and that there are consequences”
“Thank you. Would love to see you again next year”
“Well performed, original concept”
“Excellent acting. Choice topic!”*

Parents: *“Young people face a lot of situations and have pressures on them that can change quickly”
“How much young people want to fit in and be the same as others- or how they think others are”
“My son had been to see this today and talked about it and said he was going to ‘think before he acted’ well done!”*

CHOICES:

An initiative of:



In Partnership with:



Supported by:



Funded by:



ALCOHOL ADVISORY COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND
Kaunihera Whakatupato Waipiro o Aotearoa



**Vodafone
New Zealand
Foundation**

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Executive Summary

'CHOICES' is a Theatre in Education performance, which explores themes relating to safe partying. First piloted in the Nelson region in 2008, the CHOICES script is based on real stories provided by young people in the region and condensed in to a 20-minute play performed by professional actors.

The play tells the story of four main characters on an evening out and ends up with each of them suffering bad consequences due to poor choices being made.

Immediately following on from the production, a facilitator sets up a Forum Theatre session during which the audience are invited to identify key decision points in the play and offer alternative scenarios to the actors which are then acted out, demonstrating better outcomes.

CHOICES toured the Top of the South island over three weeks in late May / early June 2011, performing to audiences at 14 schools and colleges, 4 alternative education providers and 6 parent meetings.

Originally developed by Help for Young People at Events and in their Gathering Spaces (HYPE-GS), Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company and Health Action Trust, the 2011 performances were supported by HYPE-GS, Health Action Trust, NMDHB Public Health Service and primarily funded by ALAC and Vodafone.

The objective of the project is to use an innovative approach (Theatre in Education and post production Forum Theatre workshops) to address unsafe partying practices of year 10 and 11 students across the Top of the South. Relevant information was gathered to determine the project's ability to instigate attitudinal and behavioural change in young people.

The evaluation used a mixed method, qualitative and quantitative design, including questionnaire, observation, discussion and interviews.

Key findings of the evaluation

CHOICES was seen as an innovative approach to address unsafe partying practices of year 10 and 11 students across the Top of the South, by young people, teachers, parents and stakeholders. The innovative approach, particularly in the Forum Theatre sessions, was seen as contributing to attitudinal and potentially behavioural change in young people. This is supported in relevant literature and by the findings of this evaluation.

The key recommendation is that funding is secured to allow CHOICES to be offered to all schools and alternative education providers on a regular basis (every year /two years).

The following recommendations from the outcome and process components of the evaluation are summarised below, with detailed recommendations made in the discussion sections:

School liaison:

Ensure early engagement (up to one year in advance) with schools is required to determine

- the needs of the school
- audience size and composition
- fit with curriculum
- expectations of teachers and young people
- opportunities for involving parents/caregivers

Where possible, schools should be provided with a preview of CHOICES (could be a video) and introduction and training for using resource material.

Performance:

- Develop a script that is relevant, local and uses appropriate language and believable characters
- Use professional actors and director and allow sufficient time for rehearsals
- Ensure Forum Theatre is delivered as part of CHOICES package
- Employ skilled and competent facilitator for Forum Theatre session
- Deliver performance as 'theatre in the round' i.e. not on a stage
- Follow up parent sessions with opportunities for small group work and/or panel discussions

Evaluation:

- Build in evaluation component for each tour of CHOICES to enhance future delivery and to ensure relevance and levels of success for funders

Background

Pilot Project

The original CHOICES project was developed in 2008 by a collaborative group (HYPE-GS, Health Action Trust and Mess up the Mess Theatre Company). It was developed in response to a number of local reports and wider research which indicated that there was a high level of young people in Nelson and Tasman undertaking unsafe 'partying' practices, including alcohol and other drug use, sexual practices and safety. These behaviours were shown to impact on mental and emotional health and wellbeing, sexual and physical health and injury and contribute to youth offending and anti-social behaviour¹.

The script for the play was created from the real life experiences of local teenagers when partying had gone wrong.

The pilot project was delivered to selected groups of young people aged 14-17 years as well as to parents and youth workers. The groups of young people were identified as at 'high risk' of having poor outcomes as a result of not partying safely.

The evaluation of the pilot made the following key recommendations:

¹ CHOICES 'Safer Party Project Evaluation Report March 2009

- Tour CHOICES wider and show to all young people to meet local needs and national trends. In addition work with school to have a maximum impact and reach young people in a cost effective way.
- Partners to review ideas and seek appropriate funding
- Develop CHOICES further including ensuring relevance of script, time for training of youth actors, providing clearer expectations for teachers and supervisors, providing more marketing and promotion of material, providing follow up resources, using longitudinal evaluation to measure behaviour change and engaging parents.

2011 CHOICES tour: Project Description

Funding from the Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC) to extend the reach of CHOICES was secured by HYPE-GS, with funding for evaluation from Vodafone NZ.

The coordinator of HYPE-GS contacted one of the actors previously involved in CHOICES who suggested a director who had experience of Theatre in Education. The director was interviewed and appointed and advertisements were put out for the four acting roles. Auditions were held and the four actors selected. The original script was used, with slight modifications made to update references to current music and language.

The script follows the stories of four main characters and what happens to them on a night out. All the actors play multiple roles to support the development of the story, with simple costumes depicting which role they are playing. The performance begins with a party 'overture' of a series of behaviours being demonstrated, before the introduction of each character in turn. At the end of the play, each character talks about the longer term consequences of their actions.

The Forum Theatre element of the project encourages the audience to offer alternative choices that the characters could make, which would lead to better outcomes. The facilitator works with the young people to identify key points in the play where the characters stop and then act out the suggested alternative scenario.

The actors and directors had one week to rehearse the play before touring round 14 schools and colleges, 4 alternative education providers and 6 parent meetings over a three-week period. In total, almost 2000 students and over 200 parents and teachers saw the production at schools and alternative education providers in Nelson, Tasman, Buller, West Coast, Kaikoura and Marlborough.

Letters were sent to all schools and alternative education providers offering a CHOICES performance and Forum Theatre session, with the target audience of years 10 and 11 (14-16 years). Information was sent regarding expectations of schools and the requirements of teaching staff. The parent sessions were organised in partnership with Health Action Trust, NMDHB Public Health Service and in one case, with Nelson City Council.

A hand-out was produced and provided to all young people at the performances. This introduced the characters, provided details of local support agencies, and listed some safer partying tips. Different versions of this were printed which were relevant to the location of the schools.

A resource pack of curriculum support materials was developed to support the delivery of CHOICES and this was provided to 5 educational establishments after the performances.

Parent sessions were advertised through school newsletters and in the local media (local radio and free local newspapers). The format of the parent sessions varied, but all used CHOICES as a tool to generate discussions in smaller groups as well as allowing parents to see the performance that their children had seen. In some cases, young people were also invited to attend with their parents.

Audiences:

Audiences of young people ranged in size from 11 to 500 and from year 9 to year 13, with some alternative education students over 18 years old. Parent sessions attracted between 7 and 51 people.

Most venues were the school hall or gymnasium, with several performances taking place on the stage and others being more of a 'theatre in the round' format, with the actors performing at the same level as the audience.

Evaluation methodology:

The evaluation was based on a programme logic model, with predetermined evaluation criteria and standards.

Evaluation was carried out at every performance, with observational notes made on levels of participation, engagement, and contribution as well as commenting on the role of the facilitator. Feedback forms were given to a randomly selected group of young people and teachers at every performance, which measured levels of enjoyment, awareness of key messages, relevance for young people, behaviour change and learning.

Observational evaluation was also made at the parents meetings with questionnaires being completed by those in attendance.

Interviews were carried out with the director, actors and facilitator/co-ordinator and with some of the stakeholders involved.

Follow up questionnaires were sent to a sample of the young people who took saw CHOICES a term after the production and also to the teachers who received the lesson plan packs.

As well as the outcome evaluation, a process evaluation has also been carried out which describes what actually happened, issues and problems that arose and solutions that were employed. It is intended that this process evaluation will provide useful information for replicating or expanding the initiative in the future.

Results:

The evaluation results are divided into two sections, outcome evaluation (based on observations, questionnaires and interviews) and process evaluation (involving observations and interviews).

Outcome evaluation

Observational reports performance: Young People

Observations were made at the beginning, mid-point and end of the performances.

Results:

Initial: It was noted that at 14 of the 18 performances **all** young people were engaged at the start of the performance. Some of them were flicking through the hand out to check on the characters, but were highly engaged with the process. At 4 of the performances, **most** of the young people were engaged, with small groups or individuals texting or talking with those near them.

Mid performance, **all** of the young people were engaged at 15 of the 18 performances. Young people were enjoying the humour in the play and responding well, particularly to parts of the play that they could identify with. At the other 3 performances, **most** of the young people were engaged.

At the end of the performance **all** of the young people were engaged at 14 of the venues. The other 4, which were observed to have **most** young people engaged noted that some young people became less engaged as the actors summed up the longer term effects of their actions.

Observational reports Forum Theatre: Young People

Out of the 18 performances, it was noted that at 10 of them **all** students were engaged in the forum theatre session. This tended to be (although not exclusively) the smaller groups, with some of the larger groups noting that **most** or **some** of the young people were engaged.

The range of alternative choices put forward by the young people was between 4 and 11, with 6 alternative choices the most common. In one case, the young people took on the role of re-enacting the scene themselves.

The most common of these for each character were

- Jamie negotiating with her parents
- Jamie not sneaking out
- Harley going home when told to by the police
- Harley deciding Jamie is too young and too drunk
- Caleb not fighting with Harley
- Caleb taking Jamie home
- Rachel going to the hospital after being hit by the bottle
- Rachel not taking the tablets

Observational reports performance: Parents

At **all** of the Parent meetings, parents were observed to be fully engaged during the CHOICES performance. Parents particularly identified with the parenting scene, and appreciated the humour throughout. A number of parents were observed as being fully engaged, but not joining in laughter, taking the play very seriously.

Observational reports Forum Theatre: Parents

All parents were observed to be actively participating or fully engaged with the forum theatre. Alternative scenarios were put forward with the most common being Jamie's interaction with her parents. Parents took on the role in one situation.

Facilitator role

The role of the facilitator was really important. The facilitator explained what was going to happen and how the audience could shout stop and ask the actors to make a different choice to lead to a better outcome.

The facilitator developed this role over the performance period, refining this process.

Key elements were

- Reminding the audience of the four main characters
- Demonstrating shouting 'stop' at the point in the play when a different choice could be made
- Repeating the suggestions from the audience so that everyone could hear them
- Giving all instructions clearly before getting young people to talk to the people next to them
- Encouraging participation for the whole group (where practical)
- Inviting young people to take over from the actors and demonstrating better choices.

The relationship and level of understanding between the facilitator and the actors was also very important, working with them to demonstrate a good outcome. Retaining a sense of humour, dealing with inappropriate suggestions while remaining in control, also helped to encourage the young people to offer alternative scenarios.

Post performance questionnaires: Young people

A random selection of young people was asked to complete questionnaires at the end of each CHOICES session (play and forum theatre). If numbers were small (under 60), all young people completed questionnaires. With larger groups, one or two classes or the front two rows were asked to complete the questionnaires. This was decided at the discretion of the school concerned.

In total, 661 questionnaires were completed. 15 were not used in the analysis, due to inappropriate content.

Therefore, a total of 546 questionnaires were analysed

The ages of the young people were as follows

- 13 yrs - 5.4%
- 14 yrs - 45.5%
- 15 yrs - 38.6%

16 yrs- 5.2%
17 yrs- 3.3%
18+yrs- 2.0%

The ratio of M: F was 278: 268

1. How much did you enjoy CHOICES?

Really enjoyed it – 40%
Quite enjoyed it - 40.1%
It was OK – 16.7%
Didn't really like it – 1.5%
Didn't enjoy it at all – 1.7%

2. Was the performance about things you have seen at parties?

Yes – 53.7%
No – 39.7%
Blank- 6.6%

In what way?

67.5% of young people answered this question.
Of those, 66% gave reasons that included
(Most commonly given answers first)
Drinking
Drugs and alcohol
Fights
Getting wasted or stoned
People being stupid
Sex and hooking up
In all ways/ all of it
That's what teenagers do
Drinking and driving
Ditching friends
Bad/wrong choices
Peer pressure
Creepy guys
That's just how it is
Spewing and coma-ing
People doing all those things

34% reported never having been to a party or to a party where alcohol was present.

3. By watching CHOICES, how much have you learned about the harms of alcohol and unsafe partying?

A lot (didn't know much about it before CHOICES) – 16.2%
A bit (knew some of it before CHOICES) – 45.8%
Not much (knew most of it before watching CHOICES) – 26.4%
Nothing (was aware of it before watching CHOICES) – 11.6%

4. What were the main things that CHOICES was trying to tell you?

97.3% answered this question
43% explicitly mentioned making good choices or not making bad choices.

Other answers included:

The consequences of your actions
Party safe
Small decisions can have big outcomes
Do what you think is right
Be responsible
Be safe
Be careful
Be smart
Look after your mates
Think before you act
Don't get drunk
Don't drink too much
Let your parents know where you are
Don't sneak out
Look out for mates
Think of plans before you go out
Think of choices
Bad decisions can have lasting effects
Don't get wasted
Don't mix drink with drugs
Drink is bad
Don't do drugs
Drugs are bad
Don't be stupid/dumb
Don't drink and drive
You can have fun without alcohol or drugs
Parties are bad

5. Are there any things you would do differently when you're partying now that you have seen CHOICES?

Yes – 50.6%
No – 43.6%
Maybe – 0.7%
Blank – 5.1%

If yes, what?

Look out for your mates
Be careful
Be responsible around alcohol
Be responsible with guys
Be more aware
Be safer
Don't get involved in fights
Make better choices
Don't drink as much/get wasted
Don't drink or do drugs
Go out with people I trust
Think about my choices
Don't drink and drive

Look out for others
Be more aware
Make sure my parents know where I am
Think smarter
Think before I act
Choose better people to hang out with
Have a safe plan for getting home
Plan before you go out
Make safer choices
I am pretty safe but will think about my mates

Post performance questionnaires: Teachers

A total of 51 teacher questionnaires were completed.

1. Do you think CHOICES is an effective way of teaching young people about the risks of partying safely?

Yes 96%

No 4%

Why?

Those who responded **yes** made the following comments:

Got the students to decide outcomes
Not preaching, but encouraging problem solving
Empowering
Entertaining and educational
Good use of their language
Makes them think about their own behaviour
Visual and engaging kept their interest
Relevant to this age group and their activities
Interactive
Real life, identifiable situations, students connect well
At the right level for impressionable teens
Great messages
Really well put together
Helps more sensitive students explore issues in safe forum
Empowers students to come up with alternatives
Motivates students by getting them in control of action
Very like what we hear about
At the right level, great themes, realistic scenarios, great acting
Relevant and captured the audience
Characters of same age as young people
They can relate to scenarios, true to life
Gives them the idea that there are options and that there are consequences
Easier to watch others than talk about themselves
Can try out ideas with characters
Fun, different style of presentation than they normally get
Entertaining, draws kids in to identify with the characters

Those who responded **no** made the following comments:

Glamorises real issues, makes it seem cool to do those things

*Students already know a lot of the risks and still indulge in risky behaviour
Could already be too late for some
More likely to promote behaviour than discourage it, too much fun
Transitions between characters too complex, no learning outcome*

2. Do you think that young people felt safe to discuss their own partying experiences?

Yes – 41.7%
No- 28.9%
Yes/no- 5.9%
N/A- 3.9%
Blank - 19.6%

In what way?

Yes respondents:

*A safe environment was created
Informal atmosphere, not discussing with school staff
Relaxed environment, actors were young and students could relate to them.
Lots of kids wanting to do the right thing and not be pressurised
Some a little shy and not at the same stage as others
A safe environment was created
Yes, although not much discussion of own experiences
Seemed a non-judgemental situation*

No respondents:

*Big groups are always that way
No time for personal disclosure
Didn't really happen, not the right forum/ too many people
Better to follow up in class afterwards with smaller groups
Hard to open up in a big group, split into smaller discussion groups
Insufficient opportunities to personalise the situations
Group too large
They felt a bit shameful to do so
Wasn't the situation for their own experiences
No opportunity for discussions
Didn't hear any of the students share their experiences*

Yes/no

*Not much time during CHOICES but there will be lots of discussion afterwards
Not all students would speak out publicly, better to follow up*

3. Was CHOICES relevant to the young people you are working with?

Yes-98%
No-2%

In what way?

Yes:

*It is a reality in a lot of their lives
Right age group
These are the stories we hear
Age specific, they are about to be in those situations
Reflects what is happening for them*

*Some students out experiencing these things
 Because some of them have already made bad decisions and need reminding
 that there are options
 Drugs, drink etc. is the normal weekend activity
 Most just starting out into facing these issues
 At an age when they are still open to new ideas
 Issues they are dealing with. Good to get choices highlighted
 Good topics
 Many of them can relate
 Especially girls seemed to identify with the situations
 Direct reference to things that happen in this town and replicated the
 behaviours these kids show
 Very relevant to this age, particularly the girls
 Many face similar risks
 These kids don't have a lot else to do rather than party in this town
 Empowering to be offered chance to make changes - relevant
 Serious party culture here. 'Only' thing to do. Casual sex an issue.
 Repeated issue until they got it
 They already mirror adult behaviour at home
 They have been exposed to these lifestyle choices at home and have been
 experimenting with alcohol/drugs themselves
 A lot of them talk about this stuff*

No:

The outcomes did not have enough consequences

4. What age group do you think CHOICES would work best with?

13 rs -

*The earlier the better, before the culture gets normalised and becomes part
 of the psyche
 Perhaps younger
 Some year 9's will already be experimenting
 Depends on the maturity of the group rather than the age*

Yr 9 - (~14 yrs -) –

*All ages, even younger than yr 10
 The experimenting stage of the lifecycle here*

Yr 10 (~15yrs)- 7

*They know it all after 16
 Some already there, some approaching issues
 Just encountering these things in their own lives
 Highest likelihood of influencing students
 End of year 10, start of yr 11 – good for all of them
 Any younger than this cannot use empathy well
 Yr 10 seems a little young, but Yr 11 may not take it seriously*

Yr 11 (~16 yrs)- 5

*Yr 11 and 12 more likely to have established pattern behaviour
 Before year 10 too young and after year 12 got it sorted. Years 10 -11 is best*

Yrs 10 -12 –

*This is the age when they start experimenting
The characters are in this age group for the students to identify with
They are at the point of wanting more choices
Still open to ideas and not stuck in formed habits
Before habits are formed, but old enough to understand issues*

Yr 12 (~17yrs)-

Yr 13 (~ 18 yrs)

Would be much more effective

Other

13-18/20

*To let them see how they look by watching others
Most of the issues relate to this age group
Age not important, more experience. Talk with schools beforehand to decide who would benefit most.
Maturity rather than age. Would be hard to group
All ages with appropriate scenes for appropriate ages*

5. Any other comments

*Provide more of an overview before programme comes to school
Great performance
Very engaging
Excellent presentation – gets students talking
Well done – appropriate scenarios and length of performance
Great. Thank you
Well performed, original concept
Excellent acting. Choice topic!
Thanks for coming our way. It is great to have this type of message come from people in an interactive context. Great humour.
Group too large. Max 40-50
Thank you. Would love to see you again next year!
Great idea not to use stage. Theatre in the round is much more accessible
It was awesome, thanks
Worthwhile - some kind of worksheet at end reflecting good decisions – re performance and students fill in (circle) options at each scene
Thank you
Thought provoking
Ending was unclear – timing issues
The actors performed very well. I liked the multiple roles- Brecht style
Keep up the great work!
Awesome way of unpacking issues- giving the students the control to adapt story.
Good, I think the kids were engaged
This was a really positive experience
Nicely pitched 'cause I guess you have to generalise
Love kids doing problem solving, not given a set of choices to choose from.
Independent thought*

I think this is worthwhile and valuable way of connecting with youth and helping them learn in a safe way

Post performance questionnaires: Parents

At all of the parent sessions, parents were invited to complete an evaluation form following on from the performance, the forum theatre and in all but one case, the discussion that followed.

Schools chose to use CHOICES in different ways. One school used it as the first of a series of ongoing parent sessions. Three were stand-alone meetings and the other school, which was running the parents evening with Nelson City Council, had the additional aim of reducing the supply of alcohol to minors and trying to get a parent support group established. This led to one question being changed on the parent information evening for that session. In total 81 parent questionnaires were completed.

1. How useful did you find choices?

Answers on a scale of 1-5 with 1= not at all and 5 = very

1-nil

2- 3.7%

3 -18.8%

4- 30.8%

5- 46.7%

2. What did you learn from the performance?

We are doing the right thing

Need to build rapport with other parents

Parents are concerned and need to put strategies in place for young people to use

New strategies for controlling alcohol

Communicating with other parents

Consistency, boundaries, negotiation and communication

Reinforcement of my parenting choices

Implement choices at a young age

Stats were interesting

All in the same boat

Interesting strategies from other parents

Lots of people have the same concerns

Parents should communicate with each other

Some ideas for keeping YP safe

We are not unreasonable checking on parental supervision

How one bad choice can lead to an evening of bad choices

That the parents who really need this aren't here

You can do things differently and change things

Communication is the key

The issues are real and do happen

There is a lot to be worried about that our kids have to cope with

Insights into the consequences of poor decisions

My approach is as important as the questions being asked

Useful involving parents and students – provides good starting point for conversations

Reinforces how kids think
Focus on what is really important – safety of our kids
Confirmed importance of talking to and working with other parents
Funny on stage but not so funny in real life
What others are doing to help their teenagers
Parent/teen contact is the common denominator
Strong, shared view about adolescents and alcohol
A lot about average teenage parties and teen thinking
That young people face a lot of situations and have pressures on them that can change quickly
To put in place what is expected of teen
Take more interest in their friends
Open communication from an early age
What is actually going on for them in their lives
How much young people want to fit in and be the same as others- or how they think others are

3. Did you feel the forum was a safe and non-judgemental place to discuss issues?

Yes- 91.3%

No- 1.2%

Blank – 6.2%

Other- yes/no – 1.2%

If no, what could have been done to make this different?

I felt my parenting choices would not have been received very well

Smaller groups maybe

4. Has coming to the forum raised your awareness about available services and resources? (Question asked at 4/5 of the parent meetings, 52 questionnaires)

Yes- 46.2%

No- 38.4%

Blank – 15.4%

4. Has coming to the Parent Meeting changed your views on supplying alcohol to young people? Why? (question asked at 1/5 on the parent meetings, 29 questionnaires)

Yes – 6.9%

No – 72.4%

Blank – 20.7%

Why Yes?

The problem is more widespread than I thought and my eyes have been opened to the issue

I hope to put it off until my daughter is 18

Why No?

I have very strong feelings about doing so

I don't think it's a good idea -full stop

I already have a healthy respect for alcohol and wouldn't ever supply it to unsupervised kids.

I came in wanting alcohol to not be such a big part of socialising but I feel encouraged by people who feel the same as me

*Already have a sensible approach
Because my views are in line with knowledge and thoughts conveyed at the meeting
Not really an issue for us.
Reasonably conservative views already
Because I am happy with the rules we have in place in our family
Not supplying
It shouldn't happen unless controlled in the home if the families wish
Not really- reinforced in the main
Haven't really thought about it yet as eldest is 9*

5. Do you think that having watched CHOICES, it will be easier for you to discuss partying issues with young people in your care?

Yes – 74.1%

No – 18.5%

Blank – 7.4%

Why Yes?

*Yes and determined and motivated to do so
I can now consider more aspects than before
Yes, can give more information to my teens
Will encourage me to be more open
Yes, we can have a good talk
Lots of new ideas to talk about
It's a starting point for discussion that is 'hypothetical' and has been seen by both parent and child
Gives me ideas for ways of discussing issues
Maybe a little closer to their wavelength
My daughter came and I can share the scenarios with her
Now armed with some good questions to ascertain safety
A bit more aware of what they might come across and the choices they need to make
In touch more with how they think and act
Reinforced what I know
I can go home now and use this as a discussion point – they saw it today
Different approaches
Seeing things as they do
Use open questions and negotiation
Good ideas from other parents
The issues are real and do happen
There is a lot to be worried about that our kids have to cope with
More open and free to discuss
I can talk about the alcohol and drug issues in a more neutral way i.e. not focussing on my son's choices but we can discuss this together. If alcohol wasn't so ingrained in NZ society*

Why no?

*Have always found it easy to discuss
Have already got an open relationship
Was aware of all the issues before
Nothing new*

*Have always talked about everything with my teens
Just doing what we always do*

6. What else would help you support your young people?

*More info to them through school
Info on alcohol legislation and content of drinks and drivers licence rules and limits
More meetings where different ideas are put forward
Supportive parent network
Continued meetings like this - a professional talk or presentation followed by a facilitated talk in small groups
Keeping in touch with their friends and friends parents
To make the driver license age eighteen
Keeping the lines of communication open
Better contact with other parents
More push on alcohol price and ease to buy. It is too cheap and available - crazy
More information that is out in the community the better
More sessions like this!
It would be great to see more safe entertainment options for young people
More entertainment choices and better transport
More of these events and opportunities to talk with other parents
Booklets on alcohol and drugs
More communication – sharing between adults and young people
Community support – a ‘hang out’ place for our children
Showing them what a 20yr old drug habit looks like
Be more understanding
More whole of community education*

7. Other comments

*Good evening- shame poor turnout
Very interesting discussion
Thank you, thank you, thank you!
Great idea, the more information I have as a parent the more powerful I feel
Society today feels that they need alcohol to have fun i.e. rugby games, opera in the park etc. Shouldn't we have alcohol free events!!
Schools play an important role in communication options to parent
Other parents, friends and friends' parents - forming a support group being able to talk with others
More evenings like this please!
My son had been to see this today and talked about it and said he was going to 'think before he acted' well done!*

Follow up questionnaires: young people

A follow up questionnaire was sent 12 weeks after the performance to 50 randomly selected year 10 and 11 students who had watched the CHOICES performance. The questionnaire was designed to find out young people's recall of the key messages of the performance and whether or not any attitudinal or behavioural change had occurred. 50 questionnaires were analysed.

The ages of the young people were as follows

14 yrs - 26%

15 yrs- 52%

16 yrs- 22%

The ratio of M: F was 19: 31

1. Do you remember watching the production CHOICES?

Yes – 90%

No – 10%

2. What were the main things that CHOICES were trying to tell you?

If you make the wrong choices there are likely to be consequences
Making good choices at parties and make good choices in general
Not to make bad decisions about drinking and driving
Make the right choices in life
Making safe choices with alcohol
Partying and making choices
Make good choices and be careful
Don't fall to peer pressure
To drink responsibly and make good choices
Don't ditch friends when they are drunk don't drink, stupid choices
Thinking when you drink beer and making good decisions
Don't drink too much. Only have sex when you are ready
Don't drink, smoke or do drugs. Don't fight
About what happens when you don't make the right choices
Be sensible don't take drugs
I don't know
To make good choices about making the right decision at a party
Drink driving, make good choices about alcohol
To be safe when drinking and look after you mates if they get too drunk
To make good choices in life
To drink and go to parties responsibly
Making good and safe decisions when out at night
To look after your friends in dodgy situations
Not to drink and to be responsible
Be honest and don't get yourself ridiculously drunk. Look after your friends
Don't drink or do drugs
Make good choices
Don't drink or take drugs
To make the right choices
Make good choices at parties
Parties can be bad
Can't remember
Don't sneak out and go to parties without your parents' permission
Not to make bad choices and think it through
Not get too drunk
To not drink too much and don't drive drunk
Make good choices

*Make good choices
Not going to get too drunk and not do drugs
Don't drink and take drugs*

3. Have you been to any parties since watching CHOICES?

Yes – 46%

No – 44%

Blank - 10%

4. Are there any things you have done differently when you're partying having seen CHOICES?

Yes-22%

No - 64%

Blank - 14%

If yes, what?

Don't drink, be careful and get a sober driver

Can't remember

Don't drink as much

Get a sober driver

Kept my alcohol limit to a minimum and don't get really drunk

Made sure I know where I was going after and had a safe way home or where I am going to not drinking too much

Look after my friends more and be more safe

Not drink and drive

Watched out for friends

Discussion:

The objective of the CHOICES: Safer Partying Theatre in Education initiative was to use an innovative approach, Theatre in Education and Forum Theatre, to address unsafe partying practise of year 10 and 11 students across the Top of the South.

The discussion below is based on the series of evaluation criteria and standards which were defined before the initiative started, based on the outcomes identified. Five areas were identified for evaluation: Programme reach, Performance, Forum Theatre, Parent sessions and Curriculum Support Materials, each having a series of outcomes being evaluated. Each outcome is discussed in turn, with recommendations for future development, followed by an overview of the initiative as a whole.

Delivery of CHOICES: Programme Reach

Outcome 1: Percentage of schools that attend

Not all schools who were offered CHOICES arranged for performances, and so the rating is **very good** (85%). All but two schools took up the offer and not all alternative education providers attended. The timing of the tour was cited as a reason for a school not taking up the opportunity.

The more rural schools were extremely appreciative of the opportunity to take part as they felt they were often over looked for the more urban centres.

Outcome 2: Percentage of year 10/11s that attend

Not all schools arranged for CHOICES to be seen by only students from years 10 and 11. Eleven schools included year 10 students or only had year 10 students attending. Some schools only included a proportion of the year 10 students. Seven schools included year 11 students or only had year 11 students attending. The alternative education centres had a range of students attending and two schools included year 9s and year 13s. It is therefore difficult to rate this against the standard set (the percentage of yr 10 and 11 students who saw the production). However, with almost 2000 students seeing the CHOICES performance and participating in the Forum Theatre a very good level of attendance could be recorded.

The optimum size of the audience is based on whether the intention is to reach as many people as possible, to reach those at risk of poor outcomes, or to build a relationship with the audience. An audience of 500 was reported as being too big, with 40-50 being the optimum size. This would need to be discussed with the school beforehand with the purpose of delivering the programme agreed with each school.

There was no clear consensus over which age group CHOICES would work well with, with some teachers stating that pre-year 9 was appropriate while one alternative education provider noted that age 20-25 was most suitable *because they have had time for the frontal lobes of the brain to grow and mature*. The scenarios were targeted at years 10 and 11 and no teacher reported that this was inappropriate.

It was suggested, than during the initial contact phase with the schools, a more detailed explanation of the process and the content would allow schools to decide what was most appropriate for their students. Several comments were made about the maturity of students, rather than age, but it was noted that this would be *hard to group*.

Many students noted that they had not yet been to parties like this or where alcohol was present, but both teachers and parents noted that it was good to make them aware before they encountered these situations and to *catch them before the culture becomes part of the psyche - normalised. Earlier the better*.

Recommendations

- Make initial contact with schools as early as possible (up to 1 year in advance) to ensure 'best fit' with curriculum delivery and school calendars.
- Offer all schools and alternative education providers the opportunity to experience CHOICES
- Liaise with schools to determine most appropriate audience (age and size) to see CHOICES
- Link with schools to provide opportunities for parents to see CHOICES

Delivery of CHOICES: Performance

Outcome 1: Clarity of key messages

Over 97% of the young people surveyed provided at least one key message from the CHOICES performance, with many providing more than one. 43% of them mentioned making good choices or good decisions and the consequences of not doing so. Several reported *think before you act*. This was an **excellent** or **very good** outcome against the standard (all/most key messages clear).

Outcome 2: Young people's level of enjoyment of the performance

Over 80% of the young people surveyed either 'really enjoyed' or 'quite enjoyed' the performance, rating **excellent** or **very good**. Young people who rated the performance as 'It was OK' were mostly 15 year old boys.

This level of enjoyment was supported by the observational reports (see below)

Outcome 3: Level of relevance of performance to young people

This outcome was evaluated in two ways. Firstly by the young people themselves, when asked if the performance was about things they had seen at parties and secondly, by asking the teachers if it was relevant to the young people they were working with.

Over half of the young people surveyed reported that they had seen similar things at parties, with others stating that they had *heard about it* or *watched it on TV*. The things most commonly cited as being like the CHOICES production were drinking, fighting and doing drugs.

The teachers all stated that the production was relevant to their students stating comments such as they are *all at an age when they are starting to experiment with risk taking behaviour* and *because some of them have already made bad decisions and need reminding that there are options*. Only one teacher noted that it wasn't relevant stating that *the outcome did not have enough consequences*.

A couple of teachers thought that the performance was relevant but expressed concern that *I do worry that it glorifies drinking, drugs and sex (phrases, sayings etc)* while another stated that the performance *Seems more likely to promote behaviour than to discourage it*.

The results rate as **excellent** against the standard for teachers and **very good** for students.

The question of relevance also relates to the age, maturity levels and experience of the students (see Outcome 2 programme reach, above). While many young people may not have experienced these things first hand, as one of the teachers said *it is what we hear about around school on a Monday morning*. At some stage, young people will be exposed to some or all of these types of situations and they are now aware of some of the options available to them.

Nick Baker, Chair of the NZ Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee, presented some statistics at one of the parent meetings and stayed on to watch the CHOICES performance. He noted *'In my work I have to read many stories about how young people make bad choices and die. Every issue that they [CHOICES performance] raised has featured in stories I have read so yes, the work remains very relevant*.

Outcome 4: Audience engagement during performance

As noted in the observational evaluation results above, almost all young people and all parents were engaged for the whole performance. This rates as **excellent**. Where there were slight lapses in engagement, these were often due to very large numbers of young people or limited teacher intervention to deal with inappropriate behaviour. The performance is very engaging as illustrated by one young person from an alternative education centre, who was texting and then was drawn into the performance and sat with his thumb poised over the phone for the rest of the performance.

Recommendations

- Ensure key messages are worked into the script and that these are reiterated by the facilitator during the Forum Theatre.
- Ensure content and language is appropriate and relevant and includes humour where appropriate.
- Ensure script is 'localised' and content is provided by young people to ensure that it is relevant to them.
- Ensure high quality actors with sufficient time for rehearsal and professional directing.
- Performing at the same level as the audience (not on a stage) should be considered where possible.

Forum Theatre workshops with young people

Outcome 1: Young people have raised awareness about the 'harms of alcohol' and unsafe partying behaviours

This was evaluated by establishing the number of behavioural options explored by forum theatre. The results show that in most cases, the outcome was **excellent** with two recorded as **very good** against the expected criteria, with a maximum of 11 and an average of 6 different options being explored.

These sessions were very well facilitated; with the young people being encouraged not only to offer alternative choices, but to discuss why the outcome might be better.

The Forum Theatre was also viewed as 'safe' and 'empowering' for the young people as they could direct the actors to make different choices. One teacher noted that it was '*Not preaching, but encouraging problem solving*' while another noted that that it is '*Easier to watch others than talk about themselves*'.

Young people were also asked 'By watching CHOICES, how much have you learned about the harms of alcohol and unsafe partying?' The results were **very good** with most young people noting that they had learned a lot or a bit (didn't know much about it/knew some of it).

Outcome 2: Percentage of young people participating on the Forum Theatre activity

In 10 out of the 18 performances it was noted that all young people were engaged in the Forum Theatre. This achieves an **excellent** rating with the other 8 performance achieving **very good** levels of participation.

Participation rates related almost exactly to the size of the audience, with larger audiences demonstrating lower levels of participation. Again, the role of the facilitator was critical to encouraging participation and ensuring that an individual or a small group did not dominate the session.

The culture of the school was also a factor in this, with some audiences being constrained and quiet, compared to others where the young people were more vocal and less inhibited. This contributed a lot to the levels of interaction and responses of the audience. Some schools were very settled, attentive and quiet, and were obviously unsure whether laughter was acceptable. Others were more open, outwardly laughing, commenting and engaging with each other.

Levels of engagement were particularly high when the actors were not performing on the stage, but were on the floor, at the same level as the young people.

Outcome 3: Facilitator enables and encourages all young people to participate in forum theatre

As above, the role of the facilitator contributed to the responses being **excellent** or **very good** as measured against the standards described before the initiative was started.

The facilitator needs to demonstrate a range of skills; issuing clear instructions, synthesising the information provided, repeating and rephrasing so that everyone can hear, encouraging participation, dealing with rowdy behaviour and inappropriate comments and retaining a sense of humour.

As stated above, the size of audience, culture and intimacy of the venue can make this easier or more difficult for the facilitator.

Recommendations

- Forum Theatre should be retained as an integral part of the Safer Partying Initiative.
- Consideration should be given to audience size to maximise participation, with 40-50 being the optimum.
- Employing a skilled and confident facilitator is vital to the success of the Forum Theatre sessions.
- Relationships should be built with schools well before the performance to align expectations.

Parent Sessions

Outcome 1: Attendance at parent sessions

Attendance by parents was quite low and rated **poor** on the standard (less than 20% of parents of young people). Parent attendance was higher where the CHOICES session was part of an on-going project or accompanied by other speakers.

Reasons for low numbers were given as *the weather* and *too close to another launch of a student resiliency project*. Others noted that *it is very difficult to get parents to go to anything other than parent teacher evenings and even then...*

Advertising of the events may also have contributed to the levels of attendance, with some schools advertising in newsletters and direct mail outs to parents, and others not even mentioning it in the school calendar.

Some attendees did not even have young people at the school but were attending as parents of primary age children or interested members of the community.

Some parents also commented that they were not aware that they could have brought their young people with them.

Outcome 2: Opportunities are provided for parents to form networks with other parents

All parents who attended the meetings were offered the chance to sign up to the Health Action Trust Parent's mailing list, which provides information relevant to the parents of teenagers. Over 50% of those attending did this, rating **excellent**.

One parent meeting (in conjunction with Nelson City Council) had the specific intention of establishing a parent network. A follow up meeting was held to do this, but was only attended by 5 people, three of whom had not been at the first meeting. However, those who were there had already established a parent group at their primary school that could

potentially grow with the children. The goal of the meeting to establish a parent network and parent phone tree was not realised during this process. One school had the CHOICES session as the first of a series of parent meetings on a range of topics. These meetings were due to take place over the following two terms and were supported by the Parent Teacher Association and the school principal.

Outcome 3: Support services are present or represented and provide resources with contacts

A range of resources was available at the parent meetings and uptake was high. At all of the meetings, representatives of some support agencies were also present and took part in discussions. One parent evening organised a panel of support agencies who answered questions from parents generated during the evening. Another had a guest speaker (Chair of the Child Mortality Review Committee). Further information was offered to parents via the Health Action Trust Parent's mailing list, which parents had the opportunity to sign up to. One parent reported that they were *already aware of services but resources and people from services was great* while another reported that it was *nice to know that help was available*.

Outcome 4: Parents feel their forum is a safe and non-judgemental environment to discuss issues

This outcome rated **very good** with over 75% of parents reporting that the forum was safe and non-judgemental. Only one parent reported that it was not safe stating that *I felt my parenting choices would not have been received very well*.

The parent sessions were well run with small, facilitated groups working together to identify issues and solutions related to helping their young people party safer. A huge range of ideas were generated which have been picked up by other stakeholders to develop further. Having smaller groups allowed parents to share experiences without feeling that they would be judged for doing so. This was seen as very beneficial, with the opportunity to link with other parents and hear their points of view and strategies being highlighted as very important. *Lots of people have the same concerns. Parents should communicate with each other. It was Very interesting just hearing what other parents had to say.* Following the CHOICES performance with opportunities for discussion and for parents to exchange experiences, strategies, and ideas for future sharing of information is a very positive outcome of these meetings. CHOICES stimulated the discussions and provided parents with a vehicle for discussion, which took the focus away from themselves and their teens.

Recommendations

- Ensure schools advertise CHOICES programme for target parent group and ask parents what would encourage them to attend.
- Use local media to promote events
- Include CHOICES as part of on-going parent information sessions
- Link with the PTAs to explore opportunities for advancing some of the ideas.
- Do an environmental scan of other activities being held in the community at the same time as planned meetings to avoid confusion or overload, thus restricting opportunities for participation.
- Make use of keynote speakers to encourage wider attendance.

Curriculum Support Materials

A set of curriculum support materials was developed to support the CHOICES performance and Forum Theatre sessions. This was offered to schools and alternative education providers to pilot. 5 schools were sent the packs after the CHOICES tour had ended.

A follow up questionnaire was sent to the key contacts at the schools. Two teachers completed the questionnaire, with others sending comments included below. None of the teachers had used the curriculum support material by the middle of term three (12 weeks after the performance). Reasons for this were mainly due to the timing of the performance and the fact that the curriculum material was given to the schools after the CHOICES tour had taken place.

We had completed our alcohol unit at Year 10 when the presentation came to school. Would try and use the lessons at a later stage. Presentation was good. Lessons to coincide with presentation as a follow up would have been good. Possibly need more warning or earlier notification of the Drama presentation so that we can link with class room lessons and build into our schools planning.

The resource looks really good and I can see opportunities for it to support what we do in year 10 and 11. We have not used it to date as it did not coincide with our unit progression this year for the junior school. Will look at using some lesson ideas in our upcoming drug unit in year 11.

We had hoped to use the curriculum based pack but unfortunately the most appropriate group to see the production was our Yr11, and sadly they have no health programme - shocking but true. So no follow up, which would have doubled the impact I'm sure. We would ideally have arranged for either the Yr9 or 10 to see Choices but they had already been fully 'calendared' by the time the Choices stuff got to us. It might be useful to your evaluation to mention that schools these days are such huge machines that we are already drafting the 2012 programmes. Earlier notification for us would have given us more scope.

We have not yet used the lesson plans as we have huge disruptions to our teaching program. We will use them in the future as it is all good stuff and yes we will be using them.

[We]Have planned to use them this term however have unexpectedly become short staffed and unable to deliver without enough support. Plan to use them in the last term. Lesson plans to be ready straight after performance, while still fresh in the students mind. Impressed with the lesson plans though – great tool to reinforce the learning from the performance.

Mid-term outcome:

Young People make better (safer and healthier) choices while partying

Of the young people who filled in post performance questionnaires, just over half (50.6%) reported that they would do things differently when partying as a consequence of having seen CHOICES. This rates **good** (some young people). In the follow up questionnaire, 12 weeks later, of those that had been to parties since the CHOICES performance, 52% reported that they had made different decisions, including making plans for getting home, not drinking too much, having sober drivers and looking out for friends - all of which could be classed as making safer choices with the intention of better consequences.

CHOICES clearly had an impact on the young people who watched it in terms of how they *think* they will act in party situations. Several young people also noted that they were already responsible and in those cases CHOICES had not impacted on their already 'safe' choices. In this respect the aim of attitudinal change has been achieved in approximately half of the young people who watched the performance.

Translating this into behavioural change is much more difficult to attribute directly to the performance, as a wide range of factors can contribute to decisions being made. This evaluation relies on self-reported behaviours and intended behaviours of young people. However, several young people noted that they had done things differently as a consequence and others said that they would. Detailed longitudinal research would be necessary to track young people and gain information about their behaviour particularly those who reported that they had been to parties that had similar elements to the CHOICES productions. This would require significant investment above that provided for this evaluation.

Overall discussion of CHOICES

The objective of the project is to use an innovative approach (Theatre in Education and post production Forum Theatre workshops) to address unsafe partying practices of year 10 and 11 students across the Top of the South. This objective was met, with young people, teachers, parents and stakeholder organisations all noting how useful, relevant and engaging the CHOICES performance was. In particular, the Forum Theatre element was highlighted as being enjoyable, a good way of engaging young people and a successful way of getting them to explore alternative choices and seeing the impact of these.

Teachers expressed a desire to have CHOICES as an annual event and to build the performances into their curriculum plans to maximise the impact it could have for young people's learning. Schools were not in agreement over the best ages for young people to participate in CHOICES programme. Some felt it was better with younger students and others with older students. The ideal audience size was also discussed with many schools choosing to have CHOICES seen by whole year groups, and other smaller classes. What was evident was the need for schools to be informed about CHOICES as early as possible (up to a year in advance) so that teachers could make informed decisions about which young people to involve and how to ensure that any curriculum components were designed to be enhanced by the opportunities that CHOICES provided.

The supporting lesson plans devised to accompany the CHOICES programmes were seen as containing useful ideas and approaches, but all the schools who took these noted that the timing led to them not being used in this year's curriculum. Providing a teacher preview (could be a video) of CHOICES and an opportunity to review the resource material well before the CHOICES tour, would enable teachers to make better use of the lesson plans and to build CHOICES into the work they are delivering.

Having professional actors and a relevant and localised script were also seen as contributing to addressing unsafe partying behaviours and instigating attitudinal change in young people. It was evident during the performances when young people identified with parts of the script and the choices that the characters faced. The language was appropriate to the young people and the characters were believable. The improvising skills of the actors were apparent when being asked to act out new scenarios and demonstrating better outcomes.

The actors and director and several of the teachers felt that around 40 students was the best size to maximise the impact of CHOICES. Also, performing at the same level as the young people, rather than on a stage was seen to increase levels of engagement and participation. Having larger groups changed the experience, and although it was felt that there could be

some benefits in larger groups seeing the production, the best results were achieved with smaller groups.

The role of the facilitator during the Forum Theatre sessions was critical to the success of this element of CHOICES. Keeping the audience engaged, encouraging them to participate, questioning them to explain the options they were suggesting all led to the smooth running of the Forum Theatre sessions. The facilitator role developed through the tour but required a high skill level from the outset.

Involving parents was also seen as important. Allowing them the opportunity to view CHOICES provided them with opportunities to talk about the content with the young people in their care in an objective way. Parents also hugely valued the opportunity to talk with one another and exchange strategies for dealing with issues related to teenage partying. By providing parents with an understanding of the kinds of things their teens may be exposed to, along with a variety of strategies to help them deal with them, is another component in addressing unsafe partying behaviours in young people.

Measuring behavioural change is very difficult, as CHOICES may be a contributing factor, but many other issues may influence a decision. The key messages delivered through CHOICES were identified by most young people and could be recalled three months later. Many young people noted that they would change what they did at parties as a result of watching CHOICES, but it would require a very detailed, longitudinal study to discover the extent to which this took place.

CHOICES is a very powerful learning tool, which engages the young people watching it in a way that is relevant, safe and interactive, causing them to reflect on the decisions made by the characters and reflect that into their own experience. Using professional actors, not their classroom teachers and taking a humorous and yet purposeful script, young people get involved with the story and are keen to offer alternative scenarios with better outcomes. Although many young people stated that the play was saying 'don't drink' or 'don't do drugs' many understood that the key point of CHOICES was to highlight the consequences of decisions and that they could make alternative choices with better and safer outcomes. This contributes to CHOICES' success in achieving its intended outcomes of addressing unsafe partying and effecting attitudinal change in the young people who were involved.

Process evaluation:

As part of the evaluation brief was to consider issues important to extending the CHOICES programme further, the following process information has been included with recommendations made for future planning and delivery. This information was gained from interviews with the actors, director, and facilitator/coordinator and from discussions with stakeholders.

Actors and director:

Recruitment

The HYPE-GS coordinator resigned from her position during the preparatory phase of setting up CHOICES. One of the actors from the pilot project was appointed as coordinator of CHOICES, who would be responsible for logistics and facilitating the sessions.

This led to the actors, director and coordinator all reporting that there was insufficient time at the recruitment stage and that detailed information (tour dates), contracts and the scripts were not provided early enough.

Having a detailed brief of the roles and tour beforehand would have been useful for the actors.

However, the fact that the coordinator had been directly involved in the pilot, led to her being able to share a lot of information and have a good understanding of what needed to be done.

The actors were auditioned and recruited in time, partly due to existing connections with some of the actors. The actors all felt that it would have been useful to have someone based in Nelson that they could talk to from the outset.

The director worked with the group during rehearsals and over the first week of performances. This was seen as important and about the right length of time to support the development of the production. The actors did note that it would have been good for the director to attend the last performance to see how the play had developed over time.

Actors

Actors needed to be young enough to relate to the audience and to be credible in the roles that they were playing.

Actors needed to be skilled at improvising, to deliver the alternatives suggested by the audience and to ensure that the resulting actions were plausible and led to better outcomes. The actors also needed to remain focussed to deal with the very quick change of costume and character to ensure the continuity of the script.

Recommendations:

- Ensure sufficient time for recruitment of director and actors
- Have all material; script, contracts prepared beforehand
- Prepare a detailed brief for the actors including dates and times of tour

Script:

The script was first devised for the pilot project and was adapted very slightly to bring it up to date in terms of language used and references to current music. It was described by the director as "*punchy and doesn't sanitise behaviour*" and reflects the world that the young people live in. It was noted that the young people enjoyed seeing themselves in the characters and scenarios, which made exploring alternatives more realistic.

All agreed that the script was good, particularly in that it was written from real local stories, but felt one or two things could be changed, including changing the part where the boys dress as girls, as this took away from the intent of that part of the drama. It was also felt that the dad role could be reworked to be mum instead of dad. The characters of Jamie and Stacey were not always clear.

It was noted that the fight scene had a lot of impact and that the actors had to deal with a high level of physicality and teamwork to make sure the play was delivered well.

The actors felt they had the scope to make the characters real and evolve them as the project went on. The script allowed them to maintain a high level of energy throughout the tour.

Recommendations:

- Ensure scripts are based on local young people's stories
- Send scripts to actors well ahead of rehearsal period
- Allow director, actors and facilitator to develop the script as necessary, while retaining the key messages and local context

Rehearsal schedule and venue:

The actors, director and coordinator all felt that they had sufficient time (one week) to rehearse the play and work on the Forum Theatre component. The actors and director were all confident and professional. The rehearsal venue chosen was good, providing a quiet, warm and sufficiently large space for the actors to work. The opportunity to link with the facilitator during rehearsals was seen as very important and there was not time for this to occur.

Recommendations:

- Ensure a good venue for rehearsals.
- Provide sufficient time (1 week) to learn the script and rehearse.
- Include facilitator in second half of rehearsal week to rehearse role, familiarise with script and explore different choices with actors

Liaison with schools

The coordinator noted that more time was needed to do this and that responses from schools were variable, that staff contacts changed and that often the school was not sufficiently briefed and therefore appropriately prepared for the performance. The letters sent to the schools advising them of CHOICES, the expectations of staff and young people, were not always reflected in the behaviour seen at schools. Not all schools replied and a number of follow up calls had to be made.

Some schools noted that they are planning up to a year ahead, so earlier engagement is vital to ensure the timing can be maximised. This was also true of the support material, which was not delivered until after the performances.

Some schools advertised the parent performances in their newsletters and by direct email to parents while others did not.

Issues that need clarifying were the appropriate age range attending and the timing of the sessions – about an hour. Also behavioural expectations and involvement of teaching staff, as the levels of discipline and teacher attendance varied.

It was also noted that several of the schools had recently been visited by similar outside presentations, looking at risk taking behaviours. A better scan of what else is touring would help to avoid duplication or confusion for teachers and young people alike.

Several staff commented that it would have been better if this could have been tied more closely with the curriculum, particularly health. It was decided to show CHOICES during term 2 as many schools cover alcohol and other drugs and sexual health during this term, but involving the health teachers more closely could have led to better follow up, with the CHOICES performance integrating better into ongoing work.

Recommendations:

- Early contact with schools to identify dates, timing and key contact person
- Ensure schools are sufficiently briefed about the process, with a clear indication of the timing
- Phone/visit school staff to reinforce expectations, venue and numbers/ages of audience
- Link with health teachers well in advance to look at integrating CHOICES with their curriculum plans
- Carry out environmental scan of other visiting groups/performances and adjust timing as necessary

Roles

Coordinator

For this production, the coordinator and facilitator was one role. Suggest that the logistics and facilitator role be split, to allow focus on specific tasks.

Overlap between the roles was noted, especially with contact and interactions with school staff, but a clearer definition of roles was sought.

Clarity of roles, assignment of tasks and the relationship with other partners involved in the project was identified as important. The coordinator expressed some difficulties with knowing what was required and who was responsible for key tasks, such as media releases. Having the full support of the project sponsor organisation was also seen as very important, again with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and support structures.

Recommendations:

- Have separate coordinator and facilitator. If this is not possible, ensure sufficient organisational support for both roles.
- Clarify roles of all involved at start of project with clear responsibilities defined.

Facilitator role

The role of the facilitator was vital to the success of the Forum Theatre and the actors described how critical it was that the facilitator was very familiar with the script. The actors, director and facilitator all noted that it would have been useful to have built up the role of the facilitator during the Forum Theatre during the second half of the rehearsal week.

The facilitator also needs to be confident in dealing with disruptive comments and ensuring that as many of the audience as possible could contribute to the forum theatre.

Key skills required

Detailed knowledge of the play

Ability to project voice

Ability to explain process clearly

Ability to respond flexibly to responses from group

Ability to clarify suggestions from the audience

Confident in using humour

Recommendations:

- Ensure facilitator has all qualities outlined above
- Facilitator to spend second half of rehearsal week with actors
- Facilitator to make contact with schools prior to performance to ensure awareness of content and expectations of audience and staff

Logistics

The group travelled together to all the venues. The order of presentation had been designed to minimise travel. The actors noted that having three performances on one day and also having to travel that evening was very tiring. Better to limit to two performances if having to travel as well.

The actors were used to having a per diem payment when they were on the road, which had not been included in the initial budget. Need to consider all on the road costs for next production. Make clear with actors from the outset.

Having local contacts and people on the ground to pick up tasks was important. The staffs from Health Action Trust and Public Health Service was singled out for the work that they picked up and did, such as media advertising, supporting the coordinator, providing support materials and organising parent sessions.

The unity of understanding between all of those working on the project and their high levels of support, flexibility and solution-focussed approach was also identified as a key strength of the project.

Recommendations:

- Limit performances to two per day if travel is involved
- Budget for per diem payment for actors
- Ensure role and task clarity of all involved
- Encourage regular planning meetings of all involved in initiative prior to start, during and after the tour.

Performances:

Group size:

All involved agreed that the maximum group size should be 150 with smaller numbers being ideal – around 40. The very big audiences restricted participation and provided a different experience. It was also suggested that if there was going to be a very large audience, that this should not be on the first day of the tour, giving the actors more time to polish their performance.

The timing of performances needed to be clarified as on one or two occasions the session finished before the end of the school period and staff were left with students and nothing to do.

Venue:

All agreed that the performances and Forum Theatre were better when performed at the same level as the audience i.e. not on a stage. It was felt that the audience engaged best this way as they were drawn in more to the action. This worked well with the small groups and with one group up to 150.

Smaller numbers also allowed for more time to discuss issues and for the facilitator to spend more time eliciting the reasons behind some of the choices offered.

All also agreed that the venue needed to be warm!

Recommendations:

- Maximum group size of 150 young people, suggested size 40
- Perform on the floor wherever possible
- Ensure the venues are warm with distractions minimised
- Check timing for sessions with school and ensure that time is filled

Forum Theatre

All felt that this was the most important part of the process. It was important to spend the time exploring the choices and not just re-enacting the suggestions but asking why the young people thought they were a good idea.

The improvisation skills of the actors were highlighted, as they had to think on their feet and act out different scenarios often with little or no preparation. Some of the key decision points and likely alternatives had been discussed and rehearsed previously, but new suggestions came up at most venues.

The Actors also devised their own ending part way through the tour, introducing the 'Pie Rap' as an alternative to the partying. (Going back to Caleb's house to eat pies rather than going partying).

Recommendations:

- Forum Theatre is integral to the success of TIE and sufficient time needs to be allowed for this
- Strong actors and a good facilitator were vital to make this successful
- Opportunities should be provided for the audience to take on the acting roles

Parent sessions

The parent sessions were advertised in the local media (free newspaper), the local paper and on local radio. Several of the schools also advertised in their newsletters and/or by directly emailing the advertisement to parents. Newspaper articles and a letter to the editor were also included in the main local paper.

Schools that did not proactively advertise had lower attendance numbers of parents than others.

Where CHOICES was part of an on-going process of two or more meetings, attendance was higher.

Parents were invited to bring the young people in their care to the parent sessions. Some people were aware of this and others were not.

There was a good uptake of related resource material provided to take away from the sessions.

The follow up sessions generated many suggestions for ongoing parent support and future meetings. This was taken up by support agencies and organisations.

Recommendations:

- Parent sessions need to be advertised well
- Schools should consider appropriate ways of encouraging attendance
- Provide relevant resource material for parents to take away
- Provide links to local services as appropriate
- Ensure suggestions generated by parents during follow up sessions are taken up by schools/support agencies involved.

Appendix 1: Observational records

CHOICES: Performance Observation

School:

Numbers attending	Year group (s)	Age	M/F
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(check numbers with schools)

Audience engagement

Initial

All	Most	Some	Few
-----	------	------	-----

Comments

Mid performance

All	Most	Some	Few
-----	------	------	-----

Comments

End of performance

All	Most	Some	Few
-----	------	------	-----

Comments

Other observations:

CHOICES: Forum Theatre Observation

School:

Numbers attending	Year group (s)	Age	M/F
-------------------	----------------	-----	-----

Range and nature of options put forward by group

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

More

Participation rates

All	Most	Some	Few
-----	------	------	-----

Comments

Role of facilitator to enable and encourage

Comments

Other observations:

CHOICES Parents Forum Observation

School:

Numbers attending

M/F

Audience engagement

Initial

All

Most

Some

Few

Comments

Mid performance

All

Most

Some

Few

Comments

End of performance

All

Most

Some

Few

Comments

Other observations:

CHOICES: What did you think?



About you:

Age Male Female

[Please circle your answers]

1. How much did you enjoy CHOICES?

Really enjoyed it Quite enjoyed it It was OK Didn't really like it
Didn't enjoy it at all

2. Was the performance about things you have seen at parties?

Yes No

In what way?

3. By watching CHOICES, how much have you learned about the harms of alcohol and unsafe partying?

- A lot (didn't know much about it before CHOICES)
- A bit (knew some of it before CHOICES)
- Not much (knew most of it before watching CHOICES)
- Nothing (was aware of it before watching CHOICES)

4. What were the main things that CHOICES was trying to tell you?

5. Are there any things you would do differently when you're partying, now that you've seen CHOICES?

Yes No

If Yes, what?

Thank you!



CHOICES: Teacher Questionnaire

School:

- 1. Do you think CHOICES is an effective way of teaching young people about the risks of not partying safely?**

Yes

No

- a. Why?**

- 2. Do you think that the young people felt safe to discuss their own partying experiences?**

Yes

No

- a. In what way?**

- 3. Was CHOICES relevant to the young people that you are working with?**

Yes

No

- a. Why?/Why not?**

- 4. What age group do you think CHOICES would work best with?**

- a. Why?**

- 5. Any other comments?**

If you are not able to complete this at the performance time, please feel free to complete an online version of the questionnaire at

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BYWPZPQ>

Thank you for your time and valuable contribution.

CHOICES: Parent's Forum - Your views

School:



1. How useful did you find CHOICES?

(Please circle on a scale of 1-5 where 1= not at all and 5= very)

1 2 3 4 5

2. What did you learn from the performance?

3. Did you feel that the forum was a safe and non-judgemental place to discuss issues?

Yes No

If no, what could have been done to make this different?

4. Has coming to the forum raised your awareness about available services and resources?

5. Do you think that having watched CHOICES, it will be easier for you to discuss partying issues with young people in your care?

Yes No

Why?

6. What else would help you support your young people?

7. Any further comments?

✂-----

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

I would like to sign up to the Health Action Parents information mailing list

Yes No

Please provide postal address (on reverse) if you don't have access to email.

CHOICES: What has happened?

About you:

Age

Male Female



[Please circle your answers]

1. Do you remember watching the production CHOICES?

Yes No

2. What were the main things that CHOICES was trying to tell you?

3. Have you been at any parties since watching CHOICES?

4. Are there any things you have done differently when you're partying, having seen CHOICES?

Yes No

If Yes, what?

Thank you



Appendix 4: Post lesson plan questionnaire

CHOICES: Safer Partying Lesson Plans

Name:

School/ Alternative Education Provider:

1. Have you used the CHOICES lesson plans?

Yes (go to Q2) No (go to Q3) No

2. If yes, which ones have you used?

2(a) How useful were they?

2 (b) Any other comments?

(Go to Q 4)

3. Why have you not yet used the lesson plans?

3 a Would you consider using them in the future?

3 b Any other comments?

(Go to Q 4)

4. If going through this process again, how could the lesson plans and theatre performance be used to maximise the benefits for you and for your students?

Thank you for your time.