

**CIPR PRIDE AWARDS**  
**COMMUNITY RELATIONS**  
**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**WHAT'S STOPPING YOU? RAISING TEENAGERS' ASPIRATIONS**

**The problem**

Low aspirations are the heart of many of the problems affecting teenagers.

Research shows that young people who lack ambition are far more likely to do badly at school, get involved in crime, binge drink, use drugs, and become teenage parents.

Raising aspirations is the key to unlocking teenagers' potential and also to reducing the costly effects of their negative behaviour on the wider community.

**Creativity**

Communicating with teenagers with very low aspirations is challenging.

They are less likely than their peers to engage with many forms of mass media or to take part in positive activities outside school. They often have low standards of literacy and short attention spans.

Derbyshire County Council's public relations team knew they would have to think creatively and design every aspect of the campaign around the communications needs of the target audience. We also knew we would have to 'think big' to grab their attention.

Our research showed that passive forms of communication would not engage our audience – they needed to actively experience campaign messages. But on a practical level we also need to reach large numbers.

At the core of the campaign is a face-to-face approach using exciting, large scale live motivational events.

With headteachers' support, we secured a captive audience by delivering much of the campaign in school time.

The live events were supported by a broader background campaign using social media, magazines, video clips, teaser posters, local media and materials for parents and teachers.

**Strategy and implementation**

**Objectives**

- To reach 50% of the target audience
- To change behaviour in 12 to 16-year-olds by raising aspirations.
- To contribute to council performance indicators:
  - increasing number of young people getting 5 A-C grades at GCSE

- reducing number of young people aged 16+ who are not in education, employment or training
- reducing anti-social behaviour
- preventing teenage pregnancies.
- To enhance the county council's community leadership role by:
  - highlighting the problem of low aspirations to a wide audience
  - challenging the notion that lack of ambition is inevitable in poor areas.

### **Target audience**

'What's Stopping You?' was targeted at the district of Bolsover, which is the most deprived community in Derbyshire and has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in England.

Our target audiences were:

Primary audience: young people in Bolsover district aged 12 to 16 with a particular focus on girls and the most disaffected/at risk young people.

Secondary audiences: parents, grandparents, schools, youth workers, partner and voluntary organisations, teenage pregnancy/health workers, local media.

### **Research**

A group of young people from Bolsover, including girls considered at risk of teenage pregnancy, worked with public relations staff throughout campaign.

Our research showed that young people with low aspirations respond negatively to messages warning them about the consequences of their behaviour. As one girl said: "If someone tells me not to do something like smoking, I do it... just to show them I can if I want – it give me a bit of power."

Our focus group responded well to credible, exciting face-to-face activities and to messages delivered by their peers and celebrities. As a result of the research, the campaign strategy centred on large-scale events and the live messages were reinforced through printed campaign materials and social media.

### **Implementation**

Campaign materials and activities included:

- 7-minute DVDs targeted at school assemblies and drama or PSHE lessons
- Materials for parents, Connexions advisers and youth workers,
- A special What's Stopping You? magazine for Bolsover secondary schools.
- Local media coverage
- Campaign posters in schools.
- A website with videoclip competitions and a YouTube channel:  
[www.derbyshire.gov.uk/wsu](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/wsu) and [www.youtube.com/user/Whatsstoppingyou](http://www.youtube.com/user/Whatsstoppingyou)

At the heart of the campaign were live motivational events which were trailed in schools through teaser posters. School staff worked with us to build up excitement and an air of mystery around the events. These events included:

#### What's Stopping You? – red carpet film gala

Shot in Bolsover, the film 'Summer' tells how the aspirations of three teenage friends affect the rest of their lives. With a hard-hitting plot – including teenage pregnancy and violent crime – and using strong local dialect, the film has clear resonance with our target audience.

A Hollywood-style premiere in Bolsover was attended by 800 teenagers, the film's director, producer and most of the actors – even Robert Carlyle sent a personal motivational message which was played on the big screen.

#### Gareth Jones – What's Stopping You? motivational roadshows

To target younger students, we worked with TV presenter Gareth Jones (ITV's Big Bang and How2) to develop live multi-media motivational presentations aimed at groups of up to 200 12 to 14-year-olds.

As part of Gareth's presentation we produced six YouTube-style videoclips featuring local teenagers talking about how they overcame barriers that were stopping them from getting on.

#### **Evaluation and cost-effectiveness**

Of 3,480 young people in years 8 to 11 six secondary schools, more than 80% were reached once by the campaign and the majority twice or more (our target was 50%).

The six videoclips on YouTube and the What's Stopping You? website have been viewed 4,100 times (our target was 2,000 views).

Around 1,500 young people who attended campaign events rated the experience anonymously: 91% rated it on the scale 'enjoyed it/really good/great'. An extremely high positive response from a group who may be more inclined to start from a negative standpoint – we expected 60% positive reaction.

Feedback from headteachers is 100% positive. Sample comments:

"What's Stopping You was excellent! [The campaign] demonstrates how ordinary people can make a success of their lives through having a go. Our Y9 students sat enthralled..." and "Comments from staff and students alike were 'brilliant', 'fantastic'. Gareth held their attention and interest for a very long time and they were talking about it for days."

The success of the campaign means it will be rolled out across the county very cost effectively as all materials were designed from the outset to be re-used in other areas.