

Conclusions and recommendations

The results of the pilot and the observations made lead to the following recommendations.

1.1

Target group participation

The pilot shows that participation of the target group is a good way to engage young people. The youngsters find it important to be taken seriously and to be able to contribute to the education of all Dutch adolescents on risk behaviour. It should be pointed out that the government and communication agencies can learn a lot from this target group. By talking to young people knowledge can be gathered on themes important to the target group and on the way adolescents want to be educated on these themes.

1.2

Content of the message

The adolescents in the pilot have said several times that they want the education on risk behaviour to be harsh (IB: this means real, showing the consequences of risk behaviour). They want us to make clear that drinking alcohol will lead to Korsakov syndrome, causing permanent brain damage and memory failure. Sexual transferable diseases caused by unsafe sex should be shown as well. And the possible consequences of doing a striptease in front of a webcam or giving your name, address, phone number to someone in a chat room. Some youngster suggested showing 'before' and 'after' pictures to make the consequences clear.

The most important aim of the Consumer Safety Institute is to prevent injuries. A subject the target group is seemingly not very interested in. They find education on risks during sports not necessary and in the pilot they hardly spook of risk behaviour in traffic. Talking about all kinds of risk behaviour young people come up with themselves, gives us, however, the opportunity to also talk about harm and injuries. This way we can reach adolescents with our message on injury prevention. In view of this it is important that the moderator brings up these subjects and is able to keep the youngster's attention.

1.3

Presentation of the message

The questionnaire that pupils filled in afterwards show that they enjoyed the lesson and found it interesting. They say they learned more about risk behaviour. They replied for instance that they need to think about the consequences of their behaviour more. They also replied that they now know more about the different kinds of risk behaviour that exist. Concerning the way in which they like best to be educated on the subject, they have a preference for internet and television. A huge advantage of the school setting, however, is that youngsters will not be able to zap to another channel or surf to another website. They are invited to take part in talking about the subject. They can not just watch, listen or read as would be the case with education through internet or television. We wanted them to participate and contribute. The 2 to 2.5 hour lesson used in the pilot forced them to learn more about risk behaviour. Because there are no long term effects known of this pilot, we are unable to draw conclusions on the level of incorporation of all the information exchanged during the lessons.

It should also be kept in mind that this type of intervention is relatively expensive and labour-intensive (IB: expensive, because we hired a communication agency to moderate the lessons, film them and produce a documentary).

It is of great importance to select the right moderator. Three groups in the pilot indicated that the presence of their teacher had a disturbing influence on the conversations. These pupils did not speak freely on their own risk behaviour in the presence of this person. It is therefore important to find a moderator that is not linked to the school. The moderator used in this pilot was a street wise guy being able to relate to the pupils and making them feel comfortable by sharing examples of his own risk behaviour as a youngster.

Apart from talking to adolescents on risk behaviour in schools, there is also the possibility of using the internet as a means of education. The You Tube clips that were shown during the lessons could be used as content for a website on risk behaviour. Adolescents visiting this website can be provided with information on risk behaviour. They can also exchange their own experiences. The website can also be of use to teachers or health professionals wanting to prepare a lesson on risk behaviour. For instance by providing all kinds of materials they can use.

1.4

Conclusion

The method used in this pilot is labour-intensive and expensive. But it is a good method to involve the target group. Target group participation empowers the youngsters; they feel they are being taken seriously. The short term effects of the pilot method are interest and involvement. The long term effects are unknown.

The school setting made it possible for us to assure our message reached the youngsters. During a period of 2 to 2.5 hours they had to listen to each other and they had to participate in talks on risk behaviour. In order to make this succeed we found that it is of great importance to find the right moderator that will make the youngsters at ease. Risk behaviour can be an emotive subject to talk about. A website could support talking about it by supplying video clips for both teachers and pupils. Adolescents could furthermore leave their stories on risk behaviour anonymous on the website. And in addition they could be given tailor made advice. The moderators can also profit from such a website. By reading the adolescent's stories they could prepare better for their task.

The difference between this pilot and the actual campaign we will be starting this year is that in this pilot we were able to ask the adolescents their opinion on risk behaviour and the education given on it. This we can not do in the national campaign. The youngsters in the pilot felt they contributed to a national campaign or action plan. If we choose to educate youngsters in a school setting we should make sure the lesson will provide youngsters with information they need. The pupils indicated they learned a lot on risk behaviour from the interrogative/investigative/explorative way in which we approached them during the lessons. The adolescents approve of the use of the You Tube video clips.

They argue that education on the subject should be harsh. The choice of You Tube video clips can easily be adjusted to the wishes and/or experiences of the adolescents.

The lessons should mix popular subjects regarding risk behaviour with less popular ones. So the moderator should make sure the youngsters talk about drugs, alcohol and loveboys for instance, but also about subjects like sports, traffic safety, violence, etc. causing injuries and how to prevent them.