

**Younger drivers' road  
safety strategic  
development Debrief**

Project No: 13025

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## Background

- TfL are committed to improving the safety of younger drivers, who are disproportionately more likely than other road users to be involved in accidents
- M&C Saatchi are going to develop a campaign to target this audience and strategic research is required to understand younger drivers in London and identify a range of strategic levers that have potential to be used in an advertising campaign



Research exploring strategic levers for communications

# Objectives

## Overall business objective:

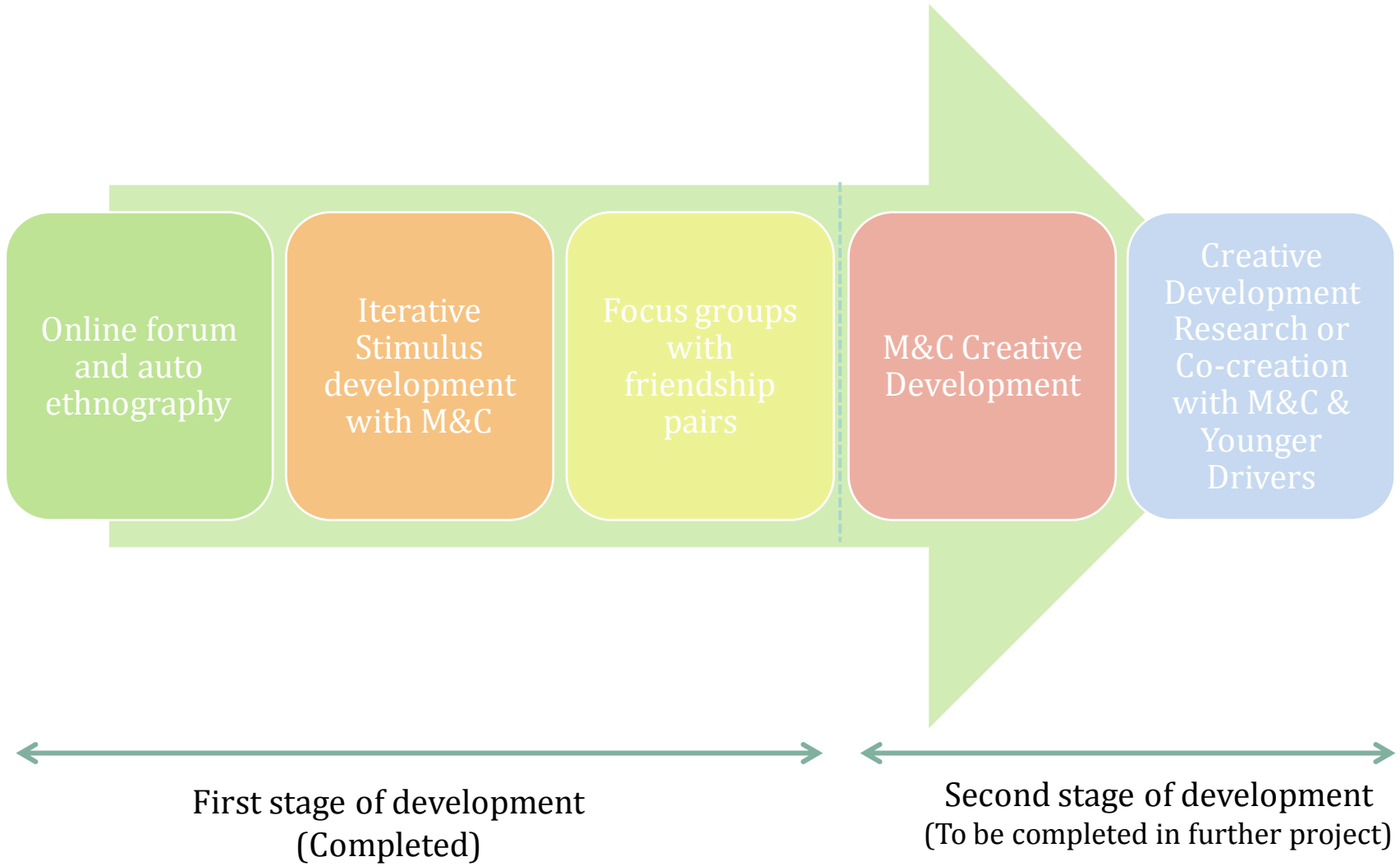
- To improve road safety of younger drivers and reduce KSIs

## Research objectives:

- **To understand the younger driver mindset:**
  - their attitudes to and relationship with driving
  - risk factors on the road and dynamics that affect safety
  - explore attitudes and dynamics around risk taking versus speeding
- **To explore motivating factors for staying safe**
  - using strategic territories from M&C Saatchi and Kid Again as springboards for development
  - to use stimulus to explore attitudes to speeding vs general risk taking
- **To identify a range of potential communication levers and opportunities to help inform creative development**

**Business question:** How can TfL improve the safety of younger drivers?

# Methodology



# Sample

Group	Age	Area	SEG	Risk taking
1	17-18	Zones 4-8	C2D	Med/high
2	19-21	Zones 2-3	BC1	Med/high
3	22-25	Zones 4-8	C2D	Low/med
4	17-18	Zones 4-8	BC1	Low/med
5	19-21	Zones 4-8	C2D	Med/high
6	22-25	Zones 2-3	BC1	Med/high

- Additional criteria:**
- Mix of time since getting licence
  - Mix of own car versus parents car
  - Mix of journey experience (short versus longer trips)
  - Mix of points/penalties
  - Mix of number of times taken to pass test Mix of confidence level

# What we explored

- Eight propositions were tested (with associated mood board imagery)

<p><b>A LIFETIME OF GUILT IS NO LIFE</b></p>	<p><b>GETTING A CRIMINAL RECORD WILL STAY WITH YOU FOR LIFE</b></p>	<p><b>SHOW OFF - LOOK STUPID</b></p>	<p><b>RISKY DRIVING IS LIKE GAMBLING WITH YOUR LIFE</b></p>
<p><b>SPEEDING UP COULD MAKE YOU MISS OUT</b></p>	<p><b>DON'T LOSE THE KEYS TO YOUR INDEPENDENCE</b></p>		

Propositions updated based on group feedback when testing:

<p><b>BEGINNER DRIVERS MAKE BASIC MISTAKES</b></p>	<p><b>DRIVING LIKE AN AMATEUR</b></p>	<p><b>YOUR MATES ARE MORE VULNERABLE THAN YOU WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING</b></p>	<p><b>YOUR MATES ARE VULNERABLE WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING</b></p>
<p>Grps 1-2</p>	<p>Grps 3-6</p>	<p>Grps 1-4</p>	<p>Grps 5-6</p>



# **Headlines from the research**

## Headlines from the research

- Young drivers are **prone to over-confidence** in their abilities, a **misplaced sense of control and invulnerability** and a desire to push themselves and their car to the limits; this is most evident in their approach to speed
  
- Two propositions have potential for development, due to the territories they occupy, though both have watch-outs to be considered, a third has some potential but would require a re-articulation to be considered:
  - ***“Speeding up could make you miss out”*** - **Night driving** resonates because it focuses on a familiar, desirable and highly emotive situation; to maximise impact it needs to present clear, credible consequences which cause an emotional stir up in young drivers
  
  - ***“Your mates are vulnerable when you’re driving”*** - **Friendship**, specifically the impact of killing or injuring friends, causes an emotional stir up of the long-term consequences of drivers’ actions; however the statistics to back it up can be questioned and need clarification
  
  - ***“Drive like an amateur”*** occupies an important territory, that of **Driver Identity**, but does not resonate enough to interfere with current behaviours; however some responses to this idea suggested that there is potential to do so by challenging drivers to question what they can and cannot control on the road, and the potential consequences of placing too much faith in their own abilities

**Context: road  
users in London**

# Driving represents a rite of passage for young men

*"I always had to rely on my mates or my mum to get me places; now I'm in control..."* (group)

*"I love driving my car around, it is a part of me that I wouldn't want to lose."* (online forum)

*"Driving means everything to me; I'd cry if you took my keys away"* (group)

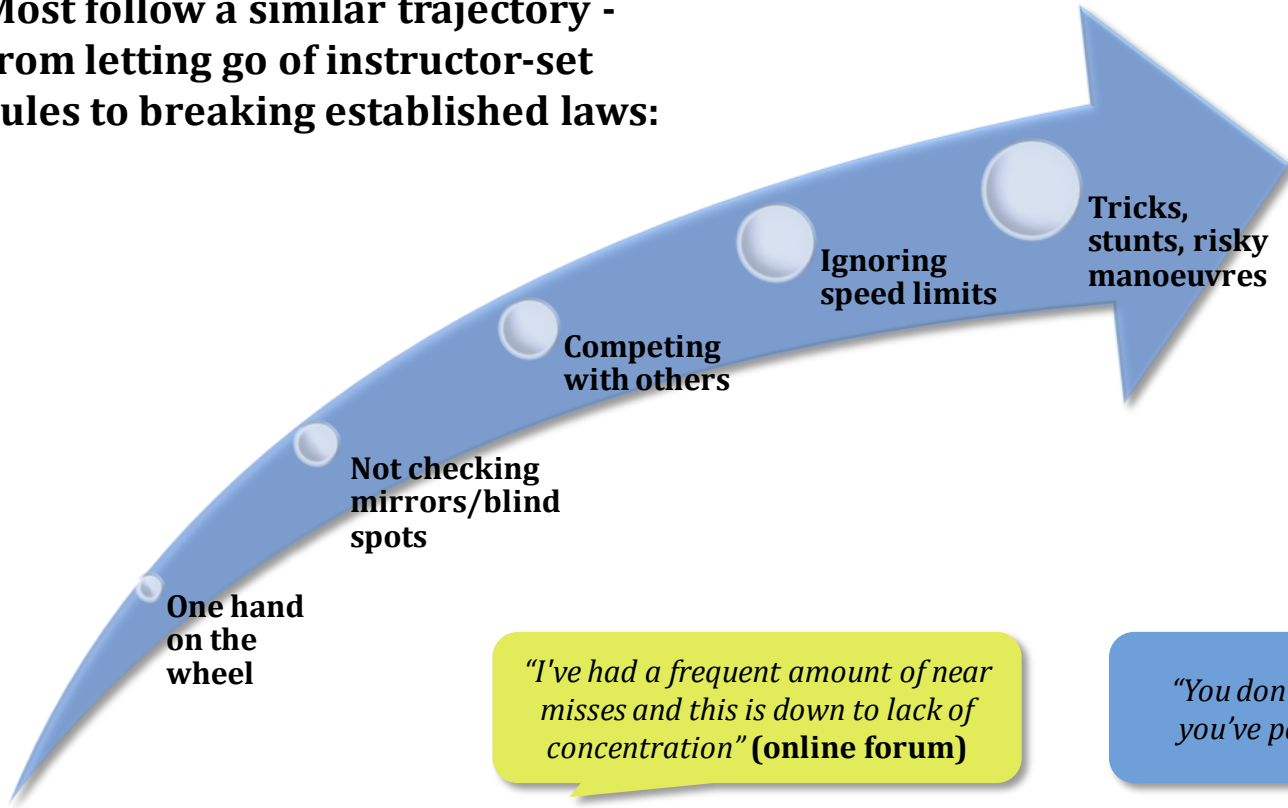
*"I genuinely love driving"* (online forum)



**A strong sense that they are finally able to do something they have been waiting for; they are 'unleashed'**

# Relaxing the rules is an essential element of this freedom

Most follow a similar trajectory - from letting go of instructor-set rules to breaking established laws:



Those at the upper end of spectrum often considered to be an indication of competence and confidence

*"I've had a frequent amount of near misses and this is down to lack of concentration" (online forum)*

*"You don't really start learning till you've passed your test" (group)*

*"Yeah, of course I've tried drifting, but the road was empty" (group)*

*"First thing I stopped after passing my test was putting both hands on the wheel - one is better" (online forum)*

# Authority figures helping to undermine rules

All these were observed commonly in all groups

## Parents/Family



**Bad habits observed and adopted**

*"Watching my dad and my brothers driver has definitely made me drive faster" (group)*

## Police



**Letting them off when pleading ignorance**

*"I got pulled over at night when I was speeding – the police saw the roads were empty so they just let me off" (group)*

## Instructors



**Teaching handbrake turns & allowing to speed**

*"My instructor on my last lesson took me on the motorway and told me to just go for it" (group)*

# Unrealistic perceptions of driving fuel risky behaviours

## Inflated sense of control

Unrealistic faith in their ability to read the road and respond accordingly

## Overconfidence

A sense that they are better than many drivers on the road

## Other drivers viewed as obstacles

Belief they are better than many drivers on the road (particularly 50+ drivers)

## Invulnerability

Belief that accidents only happen to other people: the idiots

## Rules seen as arbitrary

Particularly speed limits; rarely viewed as driven by safety

## “Everyone does it”

Belief that everyone breaks the rules

*The speed limits are only there because old drivers can't handle going any faster (group)*

*I can go as fast as I like at night; if there's a problem I'll see it and slow down. (online forum)*

*I don't check mirrors any more; you do it for the test but there's no point when you're really driving (group)*

# Other drivers are widely criticised

- Ego and bravado pervades much of the discussion among young drivers (and seems likely to influence driving style)
- Often displayed via their criticisms of other road users (including that of their friends)
  - Cyclists, pedestrians and taxis routinely criticised for perceived risky behaviour
  - Friends are typically castigated on a technical level (inability to park; poor clutch control)
- Other drivers are often stereotyped as
  - *less confident*
  - *less able*
  - *overly cautious*
  - *technically poor*

## 2 driver groups repeatedly singled out for specific criticism and caricature:



*Older drivers (not necessarily elderly)*

- *Too slow and cautious to stay safe*
- *In the way*
- *Driving skills often rusty*

*Female drivers (particularly younger)*



- *Less confident; liable to dither*
- *Easily distracted*
- *More prone to collisions*

*I would say that the younger generation are a lot more carefree on the roads compared with elderly drivers. Some might say we're less safe but I'd say we're more confident.*  
**(online forum)**



# The risk moment exercise - examples

## THE RISK MOMENT

Think back to a time when you took a risk while driving:

**Describe what you did:**

Didn't let the kid overtake

**What went through your mind:**

Guy was driving right behind me so  
didn't want him to get his way,

**How did it feel at the time?**

Pretty funny

**Why did you do it?**

He was right behind me I was going  
fast anyway and he was annoying me so  
didn't want to give him the chance,

**How do you feel about it now?**

Probably shouldn't do it

# The risk moment exercise - examples

## THE RISK MOMENT

Think back to a time when you took a risk while driving:

**Describe what you did:**

~~fixed up my friend's car~~  
Looked at a girl and didn't realise that the traffic had slowed down for the lights

**Why did you do it?**

because i'm a curious teenager

**What went through your mind:**

I was a bit shocked as it was my first near miss and realised I needed to focus more.

**How did it feel at the time?**

very scary

**How do you feel about it now?**

It's a lesson learnt

# The risk moment exercise - examples

## THE RISK MOMENT

Think back to a time when you took a risk while driving:

**Describe what you did:**

Coming around a blind corner too fast. nearly had a head on.

**What went through your mind:**

Just deciding to not take caution for once for sake of losing a few seconds.

**How did it feel at the time?**

eye opening.

**Why did you do it?**

NOT CONCENTRATING.

**How do you feel about it now?**

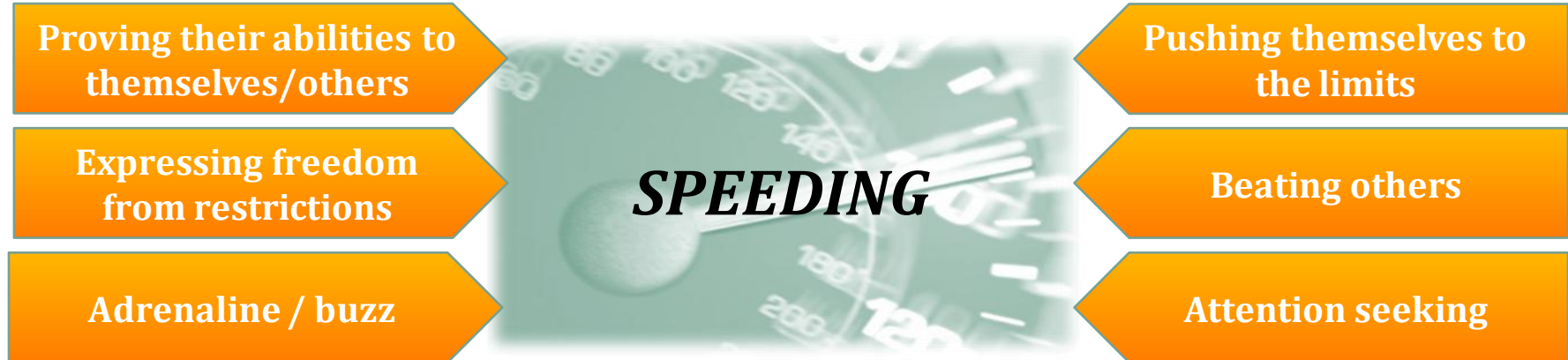
wiser.

# The need for speed is an inherent aspect of driving

- Consequently, many actively seek situations in which speeding is possible:
  - Motorways
  - Empty roads
  
- Late night driving often seen as the ideal time:
  - Little traffic; few obstacles
  - Low police presence
  - No reason not to speed

*I notice my friend seems to like the idea of going fast, for example racing people at the lights etc.*  
**(online forum)**

*Once you get on to the motorway, one of the first things you want to do is see how fast you can make it go* **(group)**



# **Exploring the 'Young Drivers' propositions**

# What works: Two proposition territories have the strongest potential

## Friendship, loss and guilt

**YOUR MATES ARE VULNERABLE WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING**



- A powerful, highly emotive subject area which encourages empathy and leaves a lasting imprint

**But...**

- The statistic that backs it up does not stand up to interrogation
- It does not encourage drivers to consider their behaviour or their approach to driving

**Consequences hit home, but they need to believe this could happen to them**

## Night driving/Empty roads

**SPEEDING UP COULD MAKE YOU MISS OUT**



- Captures a moment that exemplifies many young drivers' influences and attitudes; potentially a fertile behavioural lever

**But...**

- Doesn't challenge the behaviour or attitudes that fuel speeding on these roads
- Doesn't provide a tangible, credible reason for changing behaviour

**Behaviour/situation resonates strongly, but driver identity needs addressing**

# One further proposition contains a promising idea that needs development

Driver identity

**DRIVING LIKE AN  
AMATEUR**



- The proposition does not encourage people to consider their own behaviour, because they do not identify themselves as amateurs

## But...

- There is potential for a proposition that addresses and undermines the false assumptions and over-confidence that underlie their driving behaviour

## Attitudes to address:

- Belief that they are can control the situation on the road
- Confidence in their ability to respond in time to any obstacle
- Speed = competence

**General territory is right but it needs to address the audience's overconfidence**

## General watch-outs

### Young drivers are well defended and find it easy to opt out

- Blame is often allocated to others
- They do not admit to certain behaviours (showing off, submitting to peer pressure)

### Sensitivity to being singled out or demonised

- Frustration around what they see as finger-wagging and stereotyping
- Some resistance to statistics focusing on under 25s

### Impact of comms often highly specific or short-term

- Road safety ad literate, yet still prone to unsafe behaviours
- Effects often short-lived (e.g. the following journey) or limited to certain situations (e.g. slowing outside schools)





# 'Your mates are vulnerable when you're driving'



## Comprehension



## Relevance



## Motivation

### What works

- Message is clearly understood
- Loss and guilt cut through regardless of interpretation of statistics

- **Resonates strongly** – can easily imagine the pain of living with guilt
- Driving is closely linked to friendship & social life

- Loss of friendship & guilt of responsibility **potentially highly motivating**
- Impact on wider friendship/family network also considered

### Watch-outs

- Interpreted by some as mates being more vulnerable (can make proposition more powerful but not accurate)

- Statistic is open to question and can be hard to understand
- Would be most motivating if friends were *more* vulnerable

- Situation specific – may lose relevance when driving solo
- Doesn't address causes of speed-related collisions

*"I don't think I could face my friends family if he was killed in a crash and it was my fault"*

*"I don't really get the stat – is it because drivers our age carry more passengers?"*

# 'Speeding up could make you miss out'



## Comprehension



## Relevance



## Motivation

### What works

- Message is clear and unequivocal
- Audience agree this is a moment when they are likely to speed

- **Strong appeal** as this is the ideal situation for many
  - Resonates as a speeding moment
- Message can also imply empty roads in general – so can have wider relevance

- Appreciate that speeding is dangerous up to a point
- An emotive situation, so plenty of potential for motivation

### Watch-outs

- Not seen as a dangerous moment – for this audience **clear roads = lack of danger**

- Strong self belief in their own reflexes and abilities
  - Needs to challenge assumption that they are in control
- Message confined to Fri/Sat night can result in opt out

- Consequences are not concrete enough
- Concern about their own safety at night is low
- Impact may depend on the cause of the mistake

*“Driving on an empty road like that is amazing – you can test your driving skills.”*

*“Police understand that driving faster on empty roads is fine – I’ve been pulled over and just cautioned doing 60 in a 30 mph zone”*



# 'Driving like an amateur'



## Comprehension



## Relevance



## Motivation

### What works

- Understand how they could be the target audience for this message
- Message clear, even if they disagree

- Addressing driving identity has potential, given close ties to identity
- Some can see their own behaviour- recognise basic mistakes they make

- No-one wants to be an amateur
- Learning from personal and peer mistakes seen as an important part of the learning process

### Watch-outs

- No perceived correlation between age/experience and quality of driving
- Message felt to be relevant to all bad drivers regardless of age

- Don't easily self-identify as an amateur: can opt out as for 'other people'
- No clear consequences for driving like an amateur
- Mistakes may be unintentional

- Can be ignored as demonising new drivers
- Don't/won't recognise their driving style in this message

*"Some of the mums you see on the road with huge cars are such rubbish drivers"*

*"I'm not an amateur - I've been driving for over a year now, I'm confident and relaxed when I drive & I don't make stupid mistakes"*

# 'A lifetime of guilt is no life'



## Comprehension



## Relevance



## Motivation

### What works

- Easily understood by all
- A strong and direct message

- Resonates strongly – can easily imagine the pain of living with guilt
- Easy to empathise with someone in this situation

- Powerful and emotional message
- 'Someone' can refer to both friends, family and strangers - allows people to create their own worst case scenario expectation

### Watch-outs

- Although clear and direct, very similar to the message of other road safety campaigns
  - Risk of opting out due to over-exposure to similar message

- Worst case scenario message not addressing all risky behaviours - seen to be purely about speeding
- Passing driving test can be distant memory for some – can self exclude

- Doesn't challenge any specific behaviour
- Some deny they would feel guilty if it wasn't their 'fault'

*"It's definitely something that would stick with you – I'd be cut up whether it was a stranger or a mate, either would be terrible"*

*"It doesn't really tell you what you shouldn't be doing, it just says you might kill someone if you drive badly"*

# 'Getting a criminal record will stay with you for life'



## Comprehension



## Relevance



## Motivation

### What works

- Appreciated as one of the serious consequences of a crash/being caught breaking the rules

- Particularly relevant to younger and BC1 audience (implications of a criminal record more credible)

- Long-term impact a strong deterrent for some
- Hits home regardless of perception of blame/guilt

### Watch-outs

- Not necessarily perceived to be the most pressing consequence of a fatal crash

- Not as relevant /credible for older/C2D audiences
- Associated images and potential consequences not always a deterrent
  - Not being able to travel to the US
  - Jobcentre association

- Perceived to be unlikely they will get a criminal record (worst case scenario)
- Not seen as primary deterrent by some
  - Guilt for the death or injury of a person seen as more motivating

*"My dad was in jail and he's gone to the US..."*

*"What's wrong with the job centre? Are you saying all of them are criminals?"*

# 'Don't lose the keys to your independence'



## Comprehension



## Relevance



## Motivation

### What works

- Getting your driving license is seen to be a moment of gaining independence

- Most relevant to those heavily invested in driving
  - Car/driving enthusiasts
  - Those who rely on own vehicle for work

- Driving grants independence
- No-one wants to lose their license

### Watch-outs

- Getting driving license less of a landmark moment:
  - Less need to drive
  - Smartphone access improving bus/tube experience
  - Less social cred

- Can lack relevance for London audience
  - Necessity of car usage diminished due to quality of public transport

- Loss of license does not necessarily mean loss of independence

*"I'm 17, all my mates are going to bars and clubs and I'm stuck at home – so I still feel like a kid"*

*"I gave up driving for a year because I decided I'd rather spend the insurance money on a holiday with the lads"*

# 'Risky driving is like gambling with your life'



## Comprehension



## Relevance



## Motivation

### What works

- Acknowledgement that risky driving can result in losing your life
- These behaviours are recognised as errors they make/have made
  - Reference to recognisable errors means stronger resonance
- Losing own life is motivating for some
- Seen to be a particular risk of speeding

### Watch-outs

- Some of the identified risks are seen as minor infringements – not likely to result in death
- Taking the risk provides the 'buzz'
  - They aren't learning anything new
- Audience often opts out
  - "it won't happen to me"
- Loss of own life not felt to be as motivating as the loss of a friends/strangers lives

*"Yeah it could happen, but it's not going to happen to me – I'm a careful driver"*

*"When it's just me in the car I care less – if I die then I'm dead, but if my mates die in my car then I have to live with the consequences"*

# 'Show off – look stupid'



## Comprehension



## Relevance



## Motivation

### What works

- Showing off to friends recognised as having potential to result in risky behaviour

- Bravado and grandstanding in groups demonstrates that 'showing off' is part of driving experience
- Some admit that their driving style can be affected by carrying friends as passengers

- Agree that there's nothing impressive about crashing

### Watch-outs

- Few actively admit to showing off
- Drivers often in minority in friendship group & are valued as such – can deny social influence

- Is emphasis on driver unfair? Risky behaviours can be borne of peer pressure/internal distractions
- Proposition more likely to be relevant in retrospect

- Lack of significant consequence means potential impact is lost
- 'Looking stupid' not seen to be the most demotivating outcome of a car accident


*"I don't show off to my mates in the car – it's my car, my rules"*

*"My mates don't understand that I need to concentrate when I drive, I'm not showing off I'm just dealing with them being idiots"*



# Evaluating territories against the success criteria

**YOUR MATES ARE VULNERABLE WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING**



Comprehension ▽

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Relevance ▽

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Motivation ▽ →

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**SPEEDING UP COULD MAKE YOU MISS OUT**



Comprehension ▽

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Relevance ▽

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Motivation ▽ →

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**DRIVING LIKE AN AMATEUR**



Comprehension ▽

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Relevance ▽ →

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Motivation ▽ →

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**A LIFETIME OF GUILT IS NO LIFE**



Comprehension ▽

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Relevance ▽


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Motivation ▽

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# Evaluating territories against the success criteria

**GETTING A CRIMINAL RECORD WILL STAY WITH YOU FOR LIFE**



Comprehension ▽

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Relevance ▽

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Motivation ▽

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**DON'T LOSE THE KEYS TO YOUR INDEPENDENCE**



Comprehension ▽

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Relevance ▽

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Motivation ▽

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**RISKY DRIVING IS LIKE GAMBLING WITH YOUR LIFE**



Comprehension ▽

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Relevance ▽

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Motivation ▽

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**SHOW OFF – LOOK STUPID**



Comprehension ▽

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Relevance ▽

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Motivation ▽

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# Visual stimulus response

## What works



- ✓ Presenting a moment where drivers likely to take risks – empty night-time road prompts excitement
- ✓ Emotional stir up images – showing impact of accidents on family and friends
- ✓ Showing common mistakes made by drivers – highlighting the issue in a realistic way
- ✓ Bringing to life the process of getting a criminal record - making it seem more concrete

## Watch-outs



- Negative consequence of relying on public transport did not resonate strongly
- Images of drivers showing total lack of control did not appeal– audience does not self-identify as amateur drivers
- Images showing disapproval or peer judgement seen as patronising
- Images of groups of mates enjoying themselves felt to be overly positive
- Images can turn them on / over-excite them

# 'Kid Again' - contemporary relevance

- The 'Kid Again' campaign video (2008) was also shown to respondents
- Although well received, the ad was seen to lack impact across our sample – gaining or losing a driving license was not considered to be the landmark moment it once was:
  - **Less necessity to drive in London**  
- public transport experience perceived to have improved
  - **Less social cred associated with driving**  
– trend towards less young people driving
  - **Smartphone access for young audience**  
- has resulted in public transport usage becoming an entertainment moment



## Campaign fit with TfL

- Overall, campaign is felt to fit with TfL
  - TfL perceived as a respected authority on London transport
  - Seen as a credible source of safety information
  - Potential of campaign to benefit from positive TfL reputation
  
- However, audience not aware of TfL as a source of this sort of messaging
  - Don't associate TfL with roads – specifically travelling by car
  - No recall of previous road safety campaigns run by TfL
  
- The source of message being from TfL was not perceived as having a potential to effect the impact of the campaign



**Transport  
for London**



# **Conclusions and recommendations**

# Overall learnings from 'Younger Drivers' propositions

Learning across the propositions can be applied to a set of principles for development

## What to do

- ✓ Addressing consequences, behaviour and driving identity in single execution
- ✓ Showing emotional and practical consequences of risky behaviours
- ✓ Challenging assumption that young drivers (or any drivers) are in control
- ✓ Providing behaviours/situations relevant to audience - enabling them to empathise



## Watch-outs

- Concrete consequences across executions
- Avoiding finger pointing – demonising audience
- Statistics can risk drawing attention away from core message
- Risk of being situation/behaviour specific - avoiding opt out due to lack of perceived relevance