

COI COMMUNICATIONS

On behalf of The Department of Health

Adult Sexual Health Creative Development

Qualitative Research Report

February 2004

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1. BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.1 Background

The original Adult Sexual Health campaign was launched in December 2002 through press and radio. 'Don't play the Sex Lottery' was the campaign tagline and '*use a condom*' was the message. (All the adverts had NHS branding). The campaign also aimed to highlight a place to go for help and advice i.e. a helpline (Sexwise) and website (playingsafely.co.uk).

There were STI specific adverts in women's *and* men's press covering Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Herpes etc. The campaign was aimed at 18-30 year old heterosexuals with a core target audience of 18-24 year old C2DEs (who were perceived to have more partners and unprotected sex).

The press campaign was run in weekly and monthly titles. However, tracking figures showed that not enough of the 'core target' was seeing the campaign. Valentine's Day was considered an opportunistic time to place a short campaign in 'red top' tabloids: News of the World, The Sun, Daily Mirror, Daily Express and The Star. The adverts will run for 5 days running up to Valentine's Day, using a different execution every day.

1.2 Research Objectives

The overall objective of the research was to pre-test the creative materials (five press executions and one radio advert) designed for the campaign. Specific research objectives focussed on evaluating and exploring the creative materials in terms of:

- Impact, appeal and interest generated
- Comprehension of message
- Accessibility and relevance for target group
- Credibility and involvement/persuasiveness
- Language and tone of voice
- Detailed views on style, design format and content

→ **Overall to provide direction for the creative development of the Valentine's Day Adult Sexual Health campaign.**

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was based on 80 interviews conducted across three hall days in three different locations. Interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes and were conducted with members of the public recruited from the street and brought into a central venue to be interviewed.

The sample was weighted towards the core target audience for the campaign: 17-24 year old, C2DE tabloid readers. However, a number of interviews were conducted with older people, people from socio economic groups B and C1 and broadsheet readers to gauge an understanding of how they viewed the executions when compared to the core target audience.

A majority of respondents were single:

TABLOID READER QUOTA

	SEG BC1		SEG C2DE	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
17-24 years	2 interviews	3 interviews	11 interviews	12 interviews
25-34 years	2 interviews	2 interviews	7 interviews	7 interviews
35-44 years	2 interviews	2 interviews	2 interviews	2 interviews
45+ years	2 interviews	2 interviews	2 interviews	4 interviews

BROADSHEET READER QUOTA

	SEG BC1 (C2DE)	
	Male	Female
17-24 years	2 interviews	2 interviews
25-34 years	2 interviews	2 interviews
35-44 years	2 interviews	2 interviews
45+ years	2 interviews	2 interviews

Research was conducted in Birmingham, Manchester and Lewisham (South East London) between 19th and 22nd January 2004.

3. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The core audience (C2DE, 17-34 year old tabloid readers) gave a positive response to the campaign. The executions are seen to fit well within a tabloid format because of the style of humour and the images used. Tabloid readers are aware that their newspapers are often bold and more flamboyant in tone and style than broadsheet newspapers. Therefore they understand that bold statements have to be made to increase standout amongst news articles and gossip pages.

The core target audience for the Valentine's Day campaign were not offended by any of the executions. From the look and style of the press adverts, respondents spontaneously suggested a target age range for the campaign of teens to late twenties. They liked the idea of a five day Valentine campaign – to build awareness at a time of year when the promotion of romance is at its peak.

In comparison, broadsheet readers (Times, Independent, Telegraph) find the campaign 'crude' but accept that the approach will work well with the intended audience. Guardian readers are the only broadsheet buyers who consider that the executions might work well within their newspaper.

'Teddy Bear'

Because some DEs have low literacy levels and are not always engaging with the text, this audience need to be able to understand the message without having to read the bottom copy. Because of this, 'Teddy Bear' emerged as the strongest of the five executions and could be viewed as the template for the other ads because:

- the basic message is understood through linking together the image, headline, punch-line and strapline
- it clearly looked like a Valentine's Day card
- the headline was recognised as a typically romantic statement
- by contrast, there is clearly something wrong with the bear - with the endline clarifying the bear's expression

‘Angel’

For reasons of clarity, the weakest execution is probably ‘Angel’. The image used is not suited to either a tabloid newspaper format or to tabloid readers themselves. It is too ‘classical’ and upmarket and not an image this audience naturally associates with romance. However, even before making these judgements, some DEs are failing to notice the advert because of its weak pastel colours.

After reading the bottom copy on ‘Angel’, respondents (including broadsheet readers) assume that epididymitis is an STI like gonorrhoea and chlamydia. Therefore, this may be too much ‘medical’ information for the audience at this stage, given that some are not aware of the acronym ‘STI’. Keeping statements simple and using the term ‘sexually transmitted infection’ would make executions clearer.

‘Bleeding Girl’

‘Bleeding girl’ uses a modern and current card style that younger respondents recognise. Some respondents feel it does not look like a Valentine’s card and suggest the inclusion of more literal Valentine’s Day images or symbols. However, the headline clearly follows a Valentine’s theme. Whilst the image and endline are clear the use of ‘rectal bleeding’ adds to the clarity by being both shocking *and* arresting.

The execution benefits from the use of an image of a girl with rectal bleeding. A boy with the same symptoms would signify anal sex and therefore promote homosexual connotations. A heterosexual audience would therefore associate genital herpes with homosexuality

‘Boy with Syphilis’

‘Boy with syphilis’ relies on the reader understanding that the boy has sores around his mouth. However, because the visual is not graphic enough readers tend to dismiss the sores as acne or crumbs. This often means the message behind the execution is missed. The headline ‘Be my Valentine’ neither intrigues readers nor suggests the

subject matter is STIs. Because of the lack of any endline linking the image to the text, respondents have little incentive to read the bottom copy.

‘Sunset’

‘Sunset’ provides perfect tabloid humour through its use of risqué silhouettes and poetry. However, many are not reading the poem because of the recessive font style. A bold/ clear headline and endline may be needed.

Across the five press adverts the strapline ‘Use a Condom’ works very well with this audience. Even DEs, who fail to read the copy, tend to read the strapline. The bottom copy is considered informative and most of the intended audience learnt new facts. However, the font size is too small and the contact details are often missed.

The NHS branding makes the information about STIs irrefutable. It reassures readers and adds a sense of accessibility and ‘ordinariness’ to the campaign. Respondents claim the logo ties in well with the NHS’ provision of sexual health services.

Radio Advert

The radio advert fits well with the press campaign. It makes clever use of the ‘sex lottery’ concept and respondents listen and can recall several (new) facts from the advert. The only concern centres on the length of the advert and some consider the end of the skit to be the end of the execution. This is possibly suggested by the musical ‘full stop’ of the jingle. The inclusion of ‘human papilloma virus’ may also be too detailed or complex to include in a radio ad – especially as respondents are already being told several new facts throughout the campaign.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 Respondent Profile

In general, the core target audience for the executions (17-24 years, SEG C2DE and single) were often in low paid work. Working males were commonly working as manual labourers e.g. painter and decorator, farmhand, machinist etc whilst women were typically cleaners or factory workers. Many were unemployed, often on a long term basis.

Of the core audience, many were reading a newspaper daily, commonly The Sun, Daily Mirror or Daily Express. Weekend readership included the Sunday Mirror and News of the World. In addition, many were also reading local titles and Metro.

A good ethnic mix was also achieved including respondents from South Asian, South East Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds. Typically, Birmingham had the larger proportion of South Asian respondents and Lewisham provided many of the African Caribbean respondents.

4.2 'Angel'

Impact and appeal

Overall, the colour selection within 'Angel' lacked impact. The use of pastel shades gave the execution a recessive feel and readers felt that stronger colours were needed to enable the advert to stand out within a brash tabloid setting. Tabloid readers claimed the image of the angel/ cherub was too 'classical' and 'upmarket'. They were not associating either the image of the angel or the layout of the card with their own perceptions of Valentine's Day and romance. ABC1 respondents liked the image but felt it was not aimed at a tabloid reading audience:

“I like it, but it’s quite traditional and I’m not sure it goes – it’s too subtle.” (Female, broadsheet reader, Birmingham)

Design

Comprehension of the link between the headline and the visual was inconsistent. Some respondents missed the connection between the headline ‘*Valentine, you’ve inflamed my passions*’ and the image of the angel with swollen testicles. Others were confused by the image itself: “*...is it a heart up his backside?*”

However, some considered the term ‘inflamed’ intriguing because it was not a word often used in tabloid newspapers. This made them want to read on. When the joke was understood, the ‘black humour’ was liked – it appealed to a tabloid reading audience.

Communication

The written information beneath the image was new to many respondents and the majority had not known that there were 25 Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Interestingly, although most respondents were reading the written information, the majority (including broadsheet readers) claimed that it stated that epididymitis was an STI, rather than a symptom of an STI as written.

Some older respondents had never heard of Chlamydia or the acronym ‘STI’. For the majority of respondents who felt unsure about their level of knowledge about STIs, the inclusion of another unknown term had the potential to further confuse. Therefore clear and simple references were called for.

Overall effectiveness

The clear references to more than one STI, their side effects and how to avoid them through condom use gave the bottom copy a succinct but strong impact. Some considered the reference to ‘testicles’ to mean that epididymitis was only a male

concern. However, as a symptom, ‘swelling of the testicles’ was worrying and some wondered about the effects of Chlamydia for women.

Issues to consider

Recommendations focussed on using bolder colours in the execution and a clearer typeface for the headline for greater clarity and standout. Respondents suggested that anything too subtle would be easily missed in red top newspapers.

4.3 ‘Teddy bear’

Impact and appeal

Overall this was the strongest press execution. The bold colours and overt references to Valentine’s Day attracted young people and the classic romantic headline was felt to be aimed at both men and women.

Respondents questioned why the bear was wincing / holding itself and recognised immediately that something was wrong within the scene. This execution drew the attention of the reader and held their interest. Because of this, many were inclined to read the message and the bottom copy.

Communication

Some recognised ‘pain when peeing’ as a symptom of infection and this endline, combined with the main strapline - ‘Use a condom’ - suggested that the execution was about safe sex. However, it was essential that respondents read the bottom copy in order to understand that the execution was highlighting chlamydia as an STI.

When read, the copy conveyed a clear message – chlamydia can cause pain when peeing. Some respondents were shocked by the seriousness of the side effects and were largely unaware that Chlamydia could cause infertility. They were concerned

that the STI often had no symptoms. This fact was worth highlighting particularly given the very visual reference to a symptom portrayed via the Teddy bear wincing.

Once again, the level of detail within the accompanying copy was liked and all the points included were considered worth keeping. Respondents praised both the level of detail and the succinctness of the new information:

“In three lines they’ve said loads of new things and stuff I didn’t already know.”
(Woman, Birmingham)

Overall effectiveness

This advert was viewed as engaging and impactful. It was considered to have a strong headline and image which encouraged respondents to read the copy.

‘Teddy bear’ is one of the strongest executions overall. The use of a teddy bear within an overtly ‘cute’ setting both maintained the Valentine’s Day theme *and* depicted romance in a way that the core target audience understood.

When compared to the four other executions, some readers suggested that ‘pain when peeing’ was not a particularly severe symptom. However, respondents supported the idea of different adverts depicting a range of severity. Respondents felt that different levels of severity would make each execution individual and impactful in itself. Therefore, respondents felt the advert was hard hitting enough, especially as the tone of the advert suggested it was aimed at younger readers.

Issues to consider

When respondents considered the message and tone of ‘Teddy bear’, the advert was perceived to be aimed at both men and women. However, the colour scheme and image, although attractive, was initially perceived to be aimed at women. Therefore there was the potential for men to overlook the advert. Because men were the least aware of chlamydia as an STI, this advert may need to convince men they are the target audience. There may be the potential for a bright image, in a similar style to ‘Teddy bear’, but aimed at men.

4.4 Girl bleeding

Impact and appeal

Across the campaign, this execution created the strongest impact. The combination of a Valentine's Day headline, shocking endline and bold image meant it was impossible to ignore.

A majority found it 'vile', 'nasty' and 'shocking' but wanted it to be included in the campaign. Although respondents were taken aback, they gave no impression of being 'disgusted' or upset and many said that 'shock tactics' were necessary for a sexual health campaign.

Several respondents mentioned recent news reports about the rise of STIs in Britain and felt that 'Girl bleeding' was taking the appropriate action to stall this increase:

"There's been loads of stuff in the news about the rise of sexual infections and they say it's really serious. It must be if they're being this blatant about it... but if it works then they should do it." (Male, Birmingham)

There was no evidence that respondents found the symptoms of genital herpes (or the other STIs mentioned in previous executions) to be unrealistic or exaggerated.

However, respondents (especially broadsheet readers) did suggest that the advert was suited more to tabloid than broadsheet newspapers and especially appropriate for 'The Sun':

"I'm not morally offended but feel we've dropped our standards if we go down to this level. It is definitely an idea more suited to a tabloid because it lacks taste." (Female, Broadsheet reader, Lewisham)

The strength of impact of 'Girl bleeding' was seen to be more in tune with newspapers which were less afraid to be forthright about sex and issues surrounding sex:

“This doesn’t go too far because it has a good meaning and it comes out at you. I mean look at the other stuff in this paper it’s all about sex and scandal anyway.”
(Male, Manchester)

Design

The headline and endline were seen to be in keeping with a Valentine’s Day style. This execution was felt to provide less literal references to Valentine’s Day (e.g. hearts) within the illustration. However, the inclusion of blood dripping and the unexpected endline hooked readers regardless of whether they felt the Valentine’s theme was bold enough:

“It looks less like a Valentine’s card than the others but that doesn’t matter because the picture is vile and you have to look at it.”(Female, Lewisham)

However, younger respondents (and girls in particular) felt that it resembled a very modern Valentine’s card. They claimed that the style of illustration was similar to that used in a current range of greetings cards.

Communication

The image, which controversially focussed on a girl with blood dripping from her, initially suggested references to miscarriage and menstruation, and was therefore perceived to be aimed at women. However after reading the header, endline and bottom copy, the majority of respondents saw the relevance of the execution to both men and women.

Several respondents initially questioned whether ‘*and make my rectum bleed*’ was referring to gay or anal sex. However, the use of a girl (rather than a boy) within the execution, alongside the information within the bottom copy, clarified this issue. Younger, C2DE tabloid readers pointed out that the execution stated that men and women, including themselves, could get genital herpes:

“That girl makes you think it’s about women but what is written at the bottom says men as well. It gets over a point – stop having unprotected sex.” (Male, Manchester)

Most respondents were unaware that rectal bleeding was a symptom of genital herpes, or that it could cause blisters on the mouth. A small number of respondents had heard that genital herpes was incurable, but for the majority this was a new fact.

The image alone encouraged the reader to want to know what else the advert had to say. Most questioned why a bleeding rectum was mentioned after such an innocent headline:

“It lulls you into a false sense of security.” (Female, Manchester)

Overall effectiveness

‘Girl bleeding’ was the most shocking execution. However, the impact of ‘Girl bleeding’ is heightened by the fact that the other four executions in the campaign are less graphic. Had they all used similar methods to gain attention, the ‘shock’ effect would have been reduced.

Younger readers felt their parents might disagree with the execution’s delivery but condone the sentiment behind ‘Girl bleeding’. Only South Asian respondents felt that their parents would be appalled or offended by both the approach and the message. However, they claimed their parents were unlikely to read tabloid newspapers and maintained that the execution was tackling an issue their parents chose to ignore.

Overall, respondents felt that the strength of the approach was necessary, claiming that the message hit home and provided vital, new information about STIs.

Issues to consider

This execution may offend some older tabloid readers. However, very few were distressed or appalled by ‘Girl bleeding’. Several admitted they were taken aback by the approach of the advert, but agreed that the information contained within it was

both essential and educating. They did not see themselves as the target audience for the campaign and felt younger people might respond well to this hard-hitting and original approach.

There was some suggestion that bleeding was a reference to menstruation and ‘rectum bleed’ to gay or anal sex. However, in reality these responses were immediate rather than considered. They were also the reactions of DE respondents with low literacy levels, who were unlikely to read the accompanying text.

Finally, some respondents suggested including clearer Valentines sentiments e.g. hearts. Although these would not increase the impact of ‘Girl bleeding’ it would be in keeping with the theme of the campaign.

4.5 ‘Boy with syphilis’

Impact and appeal

Initially, the headline and image used in ‘Boy with syphilis’ did not gain respondents’ attention and several missed it completely when flicking through the mocked up copy of ‘The Sun’. The sores appeared to be spots or crumbs around the boy’s mouth and were associated with acne rather than a symptom of an STI. The headline gave readers no suggestion of the execution’s message beyond its association with Valentine’s Day.

However, on second glance the blisters on his face were considered a disturbing symptom for an STI, both because of their very visual and disfiguring nature *and* because respondents had previously assumed that the symptoms of an STI were confined to the genitals. ‘Boy with syphilis’ brought the full effects of STIs out into the open and made people aware that they could affect other areas of the body.

Design

For many, this execution twisted Valentine’s Day innocence and romance the most of all the executions. For example one broadsheet reader claimed ‘Boy with syphilis’

was adding to “..*the destruction of innocence*” by the media. However, a number of respondents felt that the boy should look more in pain (like ‘Teddy bear’) or that his symptoms should be visually ‘gory’ (like ‘Girl bleeding’) to create more of an effect.

Importantly, several respondents claimed the boy appeared very young and innocent which they felt may offend some parents who would question why he was being associated with syphilis.

Communication

Some less literate respondents felt the execution was suggesting that syphilis could be passed onto children through kissing. The use of a young boy in the image made these respondents think that children were prone to contracting STIs (and specifically syphilis). They also questioned if the execution was suggesting syphilis was not just sexually transmitted:

“Can kids get it then? Is his saying they could get it from you if you’ve got it?” (Male, Lewisham)

Respondents suggested that an endline similar to ‘...*and my rectum bleed*’ would build intrigue and pull people towards the copy. They claimed that without an endline ‘Boy with syphilis’ lacked a clear link to a sexually transmitted infection and readers would be less likely to read the bottom copy:

“It’s the symptoms which scare you and make you think.” (Male, Birmingham)

When respondents read the copy, most of the information was news to them and several claimed they were shocked:

- By the severity of the symptoms and side effects to the heart and nervous system
- That cases were the highest in 20 years
- and, to some extent, that syphilis was a modern day issue

Overall, tabloid readers felt this execution was aimed at younger, ‘everyday’ people and included themselves in this target audience:

“It’s talking to the younger generation because we’re more reckless when it comes to sex. It’s definitely suitable for The Sun because it’s for normal, run-of-the-mill people.” (Male, Lewisham)

Overall effectiveness

‘Boy with syphilis’ was considered an effective execution. The use of an old fashioned Valentine’s image attracted attention when placed amongst tabloid stories. When the spots on the boy’s face were noticed this also alerted respondents to new STI symptoms.

This advert also benefited from not being associated with any particular age group or gender.

Issues to consider

Initially this was considered to be one of the visually weaker executions. However, the copy contained new facts which most found useful and informative.

The lack of an endline to link Valentine’s Day to a symptom of an STI was raised. Respondents referred to ‘Teddy bear’ as a format which effectively used this approach. Importantly, the use of a young boy in the image was raised. Some respondents felt uncomfortable with the use of a young child and others (with low literacy levels) wondered if syphilis could be passed on without sexual contact.

4.6 'Sunset'

Impact and appeal

The use of the silhouettes on a beach and the design of the card were compared to a kitsch, porn image. Respondents typically laughed aloud when they saw this image.

Although nudity and sexual perversion were not seen to be incongruous with The Sun's format, the style was perceived to be of the seventies making the advert look original and impactful within a 2004 tabloid setting. The beach, sunset and couple all added to the 'tongue in cheek' feel of the advert which was also considered eye-catching. The sexual position was found amusing and in keeping with the humour and brashness of tabloid newspapers.

The sexual position of the silhouettes was viewed as risqué because, unlike the other adverts, it shows a couple actually having sex. However, some of the target audience initially missed the image, which suggests that the silhouettes are possibly too small.

Communication

Like 'Girl bleeding' the poem's endline in 'Sunset' is unexpected but key to understanding the advert. It fits in well with the image and style of the Valentine's Day card. However, unlike 'Girl bleeding' the line "...and you gave me genital warts." was humorous and gained attention through its use of black comedy.

The bottom copy provided new information:

- that genital warts were incurable
- that they appeared on one's anus
- that it doesn't always have symptoms:

"I thought I knew a lot more about STIs and I don't." (Male, Manchester)

Although most respondents were able to imagine the symptoms of the STI, the ‘cauliflower’ description in the text gave readers an even clearer picture of the effects of genital herpes.

Overall effectiveness

‘Sunset’ was praised as an original looking advert. The amusing poem and image were considered fitting for a tabloid format, given the amount of nudity they covered daily. However, some (particularly men) said they had relied on the images in previous executions to ‘say the nasty bit’.

This execution relies solely on text to communicate the message, which makes it less effective given that a number of the target audience tended to avoid reading the text.

Issues to consider

The silhouettes and poem provided the link to sex and genital warts. Therefore they should be bolder and clearer and perhaps separated into headline and endline as in ‘Bleeding Girl’ and ‘Teddy Bear’. At present, if the audience fail to read the poem or see the image of the couple they may fail to read the bottom copy.

Some men suggested adding more ‘facts or figures’ to the copy to add impact e.g. in ‘Boy with syphilis’ it mentions ‘...*highest incidence in 20 years.*’

4.7 Radio execution

Most respondents were radio listeners and the target audience for this campaign were often listening to commercial radio stations regularly.

Impact and appeal

The radio advert was seen to fit in well with the press campaign and to make clever use of the ‘sex lottery’ concept. The advert was considered witty, punchy and told the

audience new, retainable information. Respondents commended the game show format and felt that effort had gone into making the execution memorable:

“It’s catchy that game show thing and it’s giving you information but not in a bland way like some do.” (Male, Lewisham)

Communication

There was a clear link to Valentine’s Day in the opening line which set the scene and grabbed respondents’ attention. Many respondents noted that the ‘sex lottery’ phrase from the press executions had been carried over to the radio advert and appreciated the continuity.

The list of symptoms was considered worrying, but the use of sarcasm appealed to this audience and as a result, several were able to quote points from the execution. Although several respondents commented that the symptoms were ‘disgusting’ they felt this attracted and focussed the listener’s attention.

Respondents were unsure why ‘human papilloma virus’ was mentioned and when questioned (after hearing the radio advert) could not recall what it stood for. Like the inclusion of ‘epididymitis’ in ‘Angel’ ‘human papilloma virus’ may provide too much information at this stage. Given that much of the information included in the advert was new to respondents, anything that may be viewed as ‘technical’ might be off-putting.

Overall effectiveness

Sarcasm was an approach to which tabloid readers warmed and it aided the retention of facts and information within the advert. However, some believed the advert had ended before the serious voice over was heard. This was due to the musical sign off or full stop after the game show sketch that listeners assumed signified the end of the advert.

Respondents noted the final ‘*use a condom*’ message which they considered key to the campaign:

“I can remember the bit about ‘give your loved one genital warts’ and ‘together forever’ and the safe sex ‘use a condom’ bit at the end.” (Female, Manchester)

Issues to consider

Respondents had to be pressed to criticise the radio execution. Their only recommendation focussed on the length of the advert. The information is interesting to listeners but the overall length may mean their attention is not held through to the end. This could mean that some may miss the serious voiceover at the end of the advert.

4.8 Views of broadsheet readers

Compared with tabloid readers – who were the core audience for the Valentine’s Day campaign – those buying broadsheet newspapers found both the press and radio adverts ‘crude’ rather than humorous. However, apart from a few older respondents (65 years and older), broadsheet readers were not offended by the design approaches used. These older respondents felt there was too much sex in newspapers anyway. Most were, however, unlikely to see the adverts themselves.

Unsurprisingly, a small number were offended by the ‘Girl bleeding’ execution. Overall, however, respondents felt that the design style fitted well with a tabloid setting whilst standing out from mainstream adverts. Some felt the ‘Boy with syphilis’ image did not clearly suggest an STI: *“It looks like crumbs around the mouth”* and dismissed it as having ‘no hook’.

The ‘Sunset’ image was considered the most sophisticated execution but equally, the most likely to be overlooked because of the font style and amount of wording.

Broadsheet readers were also more willing to actively analyse the text within each execution. Therefore they often noted the website and telephone details along with all the symptoms mentioned. Although some tabloid readers noticed these contact details,

there were few spontaneous mentions. There was therefore a call for the contact details for Sexwise and ruthinking.co.uk to be made larger.

Across all the executions the copy received praise. Most broadsheet readers took time to read the information and considered it explicit, direct and clear. Some questioned whether the copy needed to be larger – a common complaint across the sample.

Some respondents commented that the mention of ‘incurable’ in ‘Girl bleeding’ and ‘Sunset’ could possibly lead to inactivity by those affected. They felt those infected should be encouraged to make contact with the relevant help:

“If it is incurable then they might think they can’t do anything about it. Should it say treatable?” (Male, Broadsheet reader, Birmingham)

Overall, only Guardian readers could see the press executions fitting well with their paper’s format and ethos. Readers of The Times, The Telegraph and The Independent all felt tabloid newspapers provided a more appropriate platform. They found the executions crude rather than funny but supported a campaign that took a hard-hitting approach to a current public health issue:

“All give over a good message” (Female broadsheet reader, Manchester)

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Adult Sexual Health press executions were liked and the campaign was perceived to provide vital public health information.
2. The use of different styles of Valentine's card was effective and the play on romantic sentiments was felt likely to retain interest across a five day campaign.
3. The use of Valentine's Day as a theme was considered original and timely:
 - Already in people's thoughts, via the media and shops
 - A time of year when the focus on romance / sex is increased
 - Possibly a time when safe sex could be less of a consideration
4. The designs were impactful and the core respondent sample (young and single) felt the adverts were aimed at them
5. The designs were seen to effectively copy a tabloid-style approach (particularly *'The Sun'*).
6. The inclusion of bright colours and clear Valentine's Day references made the executions interesting and arresting.
7. 17-24 year old women in particular had seen earlier 'Sex Lottery' executions and heard the radio adverts. They felt that the slogan fitted with these new executions.
8. The headlines were arresting – particularly 'Teddy Bear' and 'Girl Bleeding'
9. *'Use a condom'* was a strong and clear ending to the adverts.

10. Overall, the terms and language used in the bottom copy of the press executions was clear and understood. However some words/ terms were new to some respondents e.g. Epididymitis, 'STIs'.
11. The copy offered the optimum level of detail - most learnt new facts about STIs: symptoms, long term effects and prevalence. The font size was criticised.
12. Poor reading skills amongst some DEs means that it is important that the message is delivered without the support of the copy text (which they are unlikely to read).
13. 'Boy with syphilis' and 'Sunset' would benefit from a clear reference to both Valentine's day *and* an STI in their headlines.
14. Overall, the executions were seen to be aimed at anyone having sex – male or female. (However, some felt that 'Angel' might be more aimed at men and 'Girl Bleeding' and 'Teddy Bear' more aimed at women).
15. It was assumed that the website/ helpline would:
 - offer advice on safe sex, symptoms and treatments
 - and details of sexual health services in their area
16. The NHS logo gave credibility to the facts /symptoms of STIs and linked in well to service provision for sexual health.

6. APPENDIX

J.1226 ADVERTISING PRE-TESTING – TOPIC GUIDE (FINAL)

- **Introduction:**

- Introduce self, Research Works Limited, purpose of the interview (to gather views about some new advertising ideas)
- MRS Code of Conduct on respondent confidentially and inform respondent that you will be taking notes
- Explain that we'll be looking at some draft press adverts and we want their honest reaction and opinions

Respondents will be asked to flick through the mocked up newspaper and point out anything that attracts their attention. After the first advert has been discussed, the order of introducing adverts will be rotated.

- **Impact and appeal**

- Initial reactions: would you **stop to look** at this advert? Why/why not?
- Does it **remind you** of any other adverts? If so, what and where?
- Does the **style fit your newspaper**? Why/why not?
- *Explain that a different advert will be in the paper each day for the five days leading up to Valentine's Day: **how effective is this approach?***
- Please **describe** the advert. (*Probe – is this a positive or negative view?*)
- Did the visual **surprise** you? (*Probe – sores on syphilis execution*)
- How **interested** are you to look further? (*i.e. at the text*)
- How **visually impactful** was this execution? (*Probe individually*)
- *Colours - Design style*
- *Layout - Images*
- *Headline - Text style and size*
- Could this advert be **improved** visually? If so, how?

- **Communication**

- What was the advert was all about?
- *Probe (if necessary): what was the advert saying about sex?*
- **Which part** of the advert told you what it was about? (*Probe: headline, visuals, copy text?*)
- **Focus on headline:** what did you understand from the **headline**?
- How **clearly** was this message communicated?

- Do you think the clarity of the message could be **improved**? If so, how?
- **Copy text**
 - Which parts of the text were: **Interesting? New? Memorable?** Why?
 - *Probe: to what extent were the statistics impactful?*
 - Is there **too much or too little information**? (*Probe: more symptoms?*)
 - Was there anything **unclear or confusing**? If so, which parts and why?
 - *Probe: how did you feel about the text size?*
 - *Probe: how do you feel about the language used? (Probe: difficult words?)*
- **Tone**
 - What kind of **tone of voice** did this execution have?
 - *Probe: How is it talking about sex and contraception?*
 - Is this an **appropriate approach** to advertising sexual health? Why/not?
 - *Probe: was this advert worrying?*
 - Is the advert **credible**?
 - Do you **support** the approach? Why/not?
 - *Probe if concerned: what changes would you suggest?*
- **Target Audience**
 - **Who** do you think this advert is aimed at? Why do you say that?
 - Does it seem **relevant** to you? Why/not?
 - Does it seem **relevant to both men and women**? Why/not?
 - Which of these creatives was **most relevant to your age group**? Why?
- **Effectiveness**
 - Having seen this advert, what **effect** does it have on you? (*Probe thoughts, feelings, behaviour*)
 - **Ask 17-24 year olds:** What effect would this advert have on older people (i.e. your parents' age)? (*Probe thoughts, feelings, behaviour*)
 - **Ask those over 24 years old:** What effect would this advert have on younger people (i.e. 18-24 year olds)? (*Probe thoughts, feelings, behaviour*)
 - Did you notice the **web address and telephone number**?
 - If you were worried, would you consider visiting the site or phoning the helpline? Why/why not?
 - What would you expect to find at the website? (*Probe: places to go?*)
 - What would you expect to find out from the helpline? (*Probe: places to go?*)

Explain that there will also be a radio advert running at the same time as the press campaign. Ask respondent to listen to the advert on audio tape.

- **Radio**

- Does this **remind you** of any other adverts? If so, what and where?
- Would you listen to this? Why/why not?
- What encourages you to listen? What discourages you from listening?
- What is the **message** of the advert?
- **How** is it talking about sex? (*Probe tone of voice*)
- **Who** is the ad aimed at?
- What **effect** does it have on you?
- Does this radio advert fit with the press adverts? Why/why not?

- **Overall impressions of the campaign**

- What do you think about the campaign **as a whole**?
- How **useful** is the campaign? (*Probe: whether practical, empowering,*)
- What is **memorable** about this campaign? (*e.g. symptoms, using a condom?*)

- Which of these **executions** would/wouldn't you use in the campaign? Why?
- What **changes/improvements** would you suggest?

- Did you notice the **NHS branding**? (*If not, point out*)
- Is this appropriate? Why/not?
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