

MEDIA RELEASE
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Scientists and Actors Join Forces to Explore Vaccination in Schools

New play for young people discusses controversial issue of vaccination

Acclaimed theatre company **iceandfire** are touring their new play for young people, *Bind* by Sara Masters. Coming hot on the heels of the MMR debate and the controversial Swine Flu vaccinations, this brand new play asks 'What duties do we have to our community?'

A collaboration with Dr Thomas Churcher from **Imperial College London**, funded by **The Wellcome Trust**, the show begins touring London schools from next week until 16 December. Schools that have booked a performance include Hendon School, Trinity Catholic High School (Essex), Riverston School in Greenwich, Harris Academy Bermondsey and Eltham Hill Technology College.

With less than half of London's children currently immunised against measles, and fears of an epidemic due to the low uptake of the MMR vaccination, *Bind* explores what happens when an individual's rights come into conflict with their responsibilities to the community.

Sara Masters, co-Artistic Director of iceandfire theatre, says the show will make students think about the issues they are faced with every day in a different way:

"I really want to challenge young people with this play. Make them connect what they hear in the news about vaccinations, and from their teachers, parents and friends, with ideas of our duties as citizens. How can we gauge how our behaviour and choices impacts on other people? Not just family members and close friends, but the wider community, even strangers?"

Making links to key components of the Citizenship curriculum the play will be accompanied by a 50-minute actor-led workshop using drama exercises to explore the themes of the play in more depth and to make links between the participants' lives and those of the characters. This will be further supported by a resource pack detailing both introductory and follow up work to support the performance and workshop.

Professor Richard Ashcroft, Professor of Bioethics at Queen Mary University of London, saw an early version of the play and was impressed by how it challenges young people to think about vaccination in relation to human rights and the community:

"This is excellent - it does a great job of suggesting the issues around risk, cooperation, responsibility for others and protecting the vulnerable."

Interviews are available with Sara Masters and Dr Thomas Churcher, as well as actors Sabrina Grant and Ann Akin.