



Government  
Communication  
Service

# **The Government Communication Service guide to communications and behaviour change**

**2014 Edition**





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# Foreword



The Government Communications Plan for 2014/15 identifies the primary functions of government communications that span the breadth of our work.

One of these is to encourage changes in behaviour which benefit individuals and the public at large. This guide provides a practical explanation of the main behavioural theory principles from social psychology and behavioural economics, so you can apply them to your work to create more effective communications.

Much of government communications is about improving, and saving lives. When our work is exceptional we make a real difference to issues as diverse as improving road safety, healthy eating, cyber-security, reducing fire deaths, encouraging saving for retirement, payment of taxes, job seeking and strengthening recruitment to our armed forces.

Behavioural theory is a powerful tool for the government communicator, but you don't need to be an experienced social scientist to apply it successfully to your work.

Behavioural theory is relevant to all communications disciplines and I expect all government communicators to have a good grounding in its application. This guide is your starting point to thinking critically about how to use these approaches to improve your work.

**Alex Aiken**  
Executive Director of  
Government Communications

# 1. Introduction

Nearly all of our campaign and communication activities will have an aspect of behaviour change as their outcome. By applying behavioural theory, we can design more effective communications to influence how people act for the public good.

There are many socially beneficial behaviours that we seek to promote, including changes that help individuals from day-to-day (e.g. healthy eating), saving lives (e.g. road safety) or helping the effective running of government (e.g. tax self-assessment).

Using communications to encourage changes in behaviour can also help save money, such as the savings to HMRC through better compliance with the tax system. The Government's approach is to use a mix of awareness raising, persuasion, practical help and behavioural theory, to demonstrate why changes in behaviour are important and to make these changes easy for the public to adopt.

Whilst human behaviour is a very complex, this guide sets out how you can apply key ideas from social psychology and economics in your communications strategies.

## Case study 1: Change4Life

### Aim

To help families improve their long-term health by making positive changes to their lifestyles.

### Behavioural principles

The obesity prevention campaign focused on supporting families most at risk by **breaking down the goal** into manageable steps. Starting with helping families to understand the health consequences of their actions, it then encouraged them to adopt new behaviours through advertising and leveraging the support of partnerships. Real life stories of positive change were used to inspire and encourage others to do the same, shared through media, peer-to-peer and local networks. On-going support was provided to make it easy for people to maintain new behaviours and take up support services.

### What was the impact?

Results showed evidence of the campaign influencing behaviour, and improved health outcomes amongst the target audience. Over 650,000 adults have joined the programme and over one million children are registered. Change4Life Sports Clubs in schools have attracted around 220,000 young people.

## 2. What is behavioural theory

Within government, 'behaviour change' tends to be dominated by two strands of academic thought: social psychology and behavioural economics.

Government communicators have long been at the forefront of encouraging positive behaviour change to benefit individuals and the wider public. We have a proud history of some of the most successful and memorable behavioural change campaigns, such as road safety, dating back to the 1960s.

There are many theories of behaviour change, but they are all designed to help us better understand behaviour by highlighting what influences the individual or group.

Within some government departments and agencies, many teams (usually policy or analysis) have already undertaken significant research into behavioural models relevant to their policies. It is well worth investigating whether any work has already been carried out in your department or agency before starting your own exploration.



## 3. Purpose of this guide

The guide draws on previous guidance, good practice across GCS and the work of the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT). We have also included sources for further reading.

Historically, much government communication has focused on appealing to a rational viewpoint, informing and explaining choices to citizens. It assumes that logical persuasion alone will result in the right outcomes. But our work is about more than just information; we also have a role to influence behaviour for the public good, using proven methods that go with the grain of human nature. Broadly speaking, most government communications seek to encourage or enable people to act in one of the following ways:

- to start or adopt a new behaviour;
- to stop doing something damaging;
- to prevent the adoption of a negative or harmful behaviour; and/or
- to change or modify an existing behaviour.

In each case, the aim is to encourage people to behave in a certain way. Insights from **social psychological theory** (how other people's presence, especially within a group, can influence our intentions, attitudes, motivations and activity) and **behavioural economics** (which demonstrates how we don't always act in rational ways and are often governed by unconscious automatic responses) provide us with a deeper understanding of human behaviour.

### Case study 2:

#### Pensions auto-enrolment

##### Aim

To encourage employees to remain in their workplace pension when enrolled.

##### Behavioural principles

The 'We're all in' campaign focuses on building messages around **social norming** and saving, with real people in workplaces where our audiences can see themselves – factories, bakeries, retail environments and warehouses, for example. Behind the scenes footage then captures people talking about their experiences, proving that 'people like me' are the stars of the adverts, increasing the credibility of the message. Placement and frequency of the messaging are proving key in building social norming. The campaign has encouraged people to talk about pensions in the workplace and influence each other.

##### What was the impact?

Research shows people recognising the advertisements are 13 percentage points more likely to say they intend to stay enrolled, and 9 percentage points more likely to say the policy makes sense for them. Whilst analysis had suggested a potential 28% opt out rate, actual opt out figures stand at just 9% after the first year.



## 4. A common framework - EAST

A common framework is needed for Government communicators on behaviour change so we can share lessons on what works and establish common standards on evaluation.

The framework devised by the Behavioural Insights Team is the right starting point for people thinking about behaviour change. This provides an easy to use checklist based around four key principles known as **EAST** – making it **Easy, Attractive, Social** and **Timely**. Each element of the framework is designed around well established behavioural theory principles – a glossary of key terms is included in this guide.

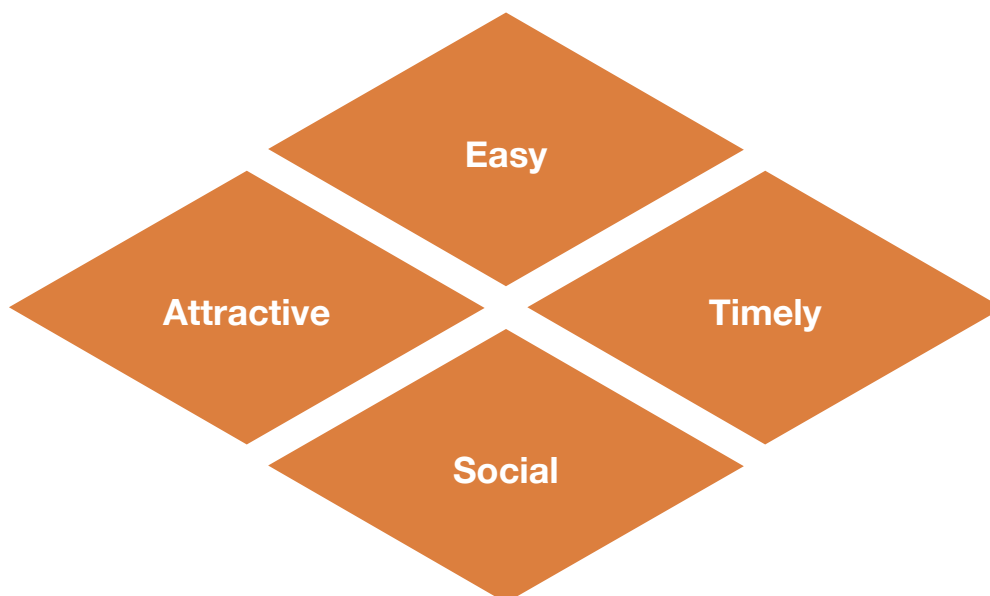
Our case studies on current behaviour change campaigns demonstrate how **EAST** can be applied for strategic and tactical approaches.

For communicators working on longer term strategies, this guide sets out how to develop successful behaviour change campaigns, applying the methodology of the GCS campaign framework.

### 4.1. Using EAST

If you want to change how people act, you should consider how the following behaviour change principles apply to your communications work. You should start by having a clear behavioural objective and understanding of the situation and context in which the behaviour is taking place. By applying the key steps within the GCS campaign framework, you can create an effective and measurable behaviour change campaign.

You can download the full EAST framework from: [www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/east-four-simple-ways-apply-behavioural-insights](http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/east-four-simple-ways-apply-behavioural-insights)



**Making it Easy** – if you want someone to do something make it easy

- Simplify messages – making the message simpler can result in 5 to 10 % increase in response rates. Identify how a complex goal can be broken down to simple actions or “chunked up”.
- Harness the power of defaults – we have a strong tendency to go for the default/easiest option when making decisions.
- Limit the hassle required to take up a service.

**Making it Attractive** – it is important to attract an individual's attention in the first place, and ensure that desired behaviours are rewarded

- Attract attention – make use of images, colour or personalised/tailored messages.
- Make the desired behaviour valuable. Scarcity gives something a greater perceived value.

**Making it social** – we're all social animals and heavily influenced by what those around us do.

- Show that most people perform the desired action, often described as the “social norm”.
- Encourage people to make a commitment to others – which increases the likelihood they will follow through with an action.
- Use the power of social networks to encourage behaviours and advocacy that spread peer to peer.

**Making it timely** – timing impacts on how we act in any given situation

- Prompt people when they are most likely to be receptive, when habits are already disrupted.
- Consider the impact of costs and benefits. We are more motivated by costs and benefits that affect us immediately.
- Help people plan their response to events. Prompt them to identify the barriers to action and develop a plan to address them.

### Case study 3:

#### HMRC tax debt letters

##### Aim

To increase the proportion of people paying tax debts when sent a first reminder letter, and to reduce late payment of income tax.

##### Behavioural principles

Messages in the letters were adapted using the power of **social norms** – in this case, debtors were told the great majority of people had already paid. One additional line was added into debt reminder letters saying: ‘Nine out of ten people in the UK pay their tax on time. You are currently in the very small minority of people who have not paid us yet’.

##### What was the impact?

Tests found that the best performing messages raised payment rates at 23 days after the letter was sent by five percentage points.

##### Top tip

Significant revenue was at stake and the results could be measured easily. HMRC knew whether people had paid or not, and by when. If you can find a reliable, easily-collected measure of what people actually do (not what they say they do), then you’re halfway there.

### Case study 4:

#### Stoptober

##### Aim

To increase attempts to quit smoking in the second half of the year – creating another milestone for people to quit, as well as the natural opportunity around the New Year.

##### Behavioural principles

Smokers are five times more likely to stop successfully if they make it to 28 days. The campaign used the ideas of ‘**chunking** and **social norming**’, developing a 28 day behavioural journey with smoking cessation experts and academics, to boost smokers’ chances of success. It was designed to show them the health and financial benefits of quitting but also **reinforced** gains such as food tasting better and improved sleep and energy levels. Rather than emphasising the harm cigarettes do, it focused on making the experience of quitting **feel easier**.

The “28 day” insight shaped the entire campaign, with experts helping to map out the whole experience of a quitter. This guided the support tools (physical kit, SMS support programme and an app) and a social media strategy using the power of peer-group support and advice in helping smokers quit.

##### What was the impact?

Evaluation showed that the campaign generated 234,132 quitters. Assuming normal relapse rates, Stoptober will save the NHS £18,830,580 in the first year alone and £41,568,024 over three years.

##### Top tip

The simple statement on ‘28 days’ reframes a huge, permanent commitment into a manageable challenge. In research, smokers didn’t even question it: far from trying to persuade them of something unpalatable, the campaign gave them the hope they craved.

## 5. Applying behaviour change with the OASIS planning model

Behaviour theory is an integral part of the GCS communications framework. Here's how to apply **EAST** to your **OASIS** communications planning:

### Objectives

- Identify the behavioural challenges in your objectives – build in evaluation from the start.
- Distinguish between different behavioural outcomes – changing attitudes or behaviour are different objectives and should be measured as such. While changing attitudes does not necessarily lead to behaviour change it can, for some campaigns, be seen as an important goal in its own right. Equally it is perfectly possible to affect behaviour without changing attitudes.

### Audience/Insight

- Consider all the factors that might influence the behaviours/attitudes of the audiences you're trying to change – what is the context and what are the behavioural barriers?
- Choose the most appropriate behavioural theory – if you're not sure, use **EAST**. Remember that behavioural theory principles are not a replacement for core research/insight about your audiences.
- Establish the role of communications in changing behaviour vs other, policy-led interventions.

### Strategy/Ideas

- Work through the theory and apply the principles – how can you design your communications to influence behaviour using the principles in your model? What does this mean for your strategy?
- Map out the customer journey to consider the interventions where communications are most relevant to amplifying desired behaviour changes.

### Implementation

- Develop a plan for behavioural interventions with clear timescales and resources. Consider how your communications can be supported by other levers – influencers, partners, social networks, and peer-to-peer communications.

### Scoring/Evaluation

- Identify what works – test, learn and adapt. You are unlikely to find the perfect mix of behaviour principles and communications first time.
- Consider a randomised controlled trial to test your intervention to decide whether to scale up or reject. See Section 7 in the guide.

## Case study 5:

### Blood donation

#### Aim

To reverse the decline in the number of 17-18 year olds registering to donate blood by recruiting 100,000 new donors in 100 days.

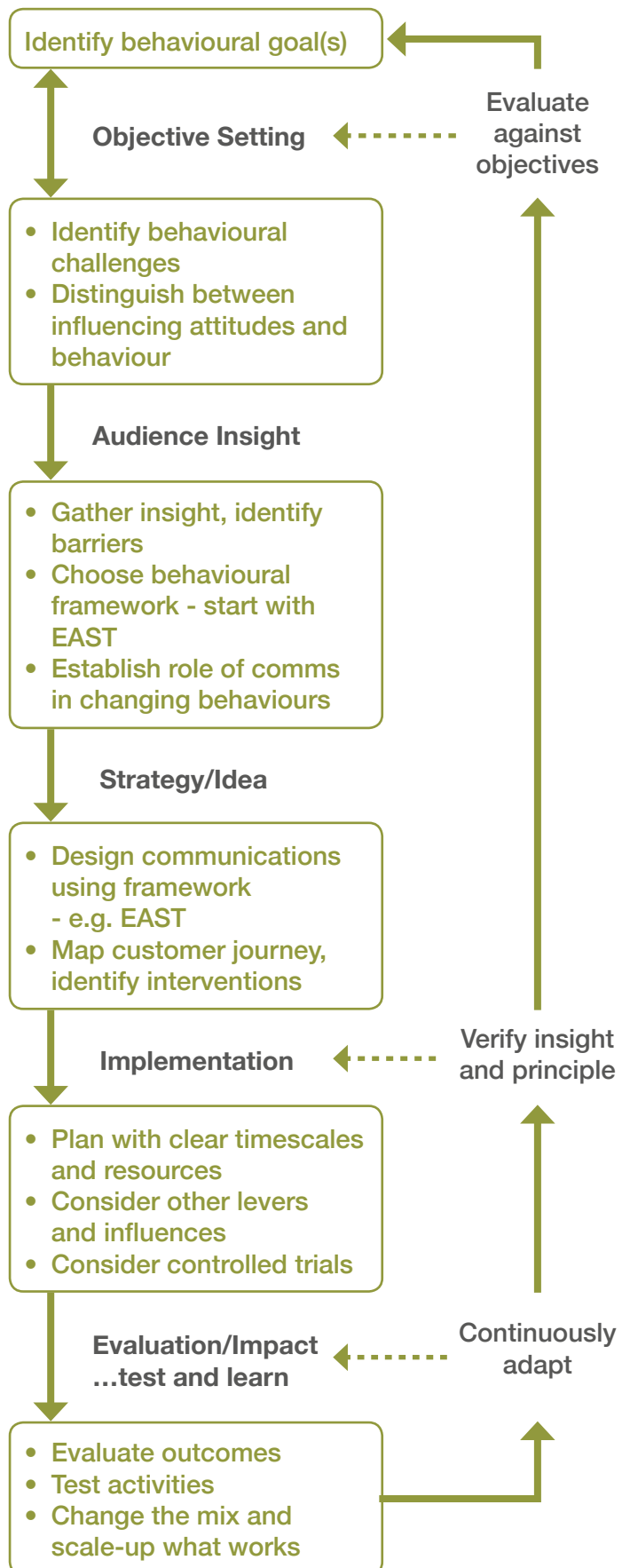
#### Behavioural principles

To reverse that decline in registrations, the campaign aimed to attract attention by combining young people's interest in celebrities, fashion and television, as well as **capitalising on their desire to be seen to be making a difference**. As well as having a 100 day target, a competition through social media channels to win a limited edition 'blood sister/ blood brother' t-shirt designed by Wayne Hemingway created a **'scarcity' factor**. Peer-to-peer social networks had followers explaining how they encourage others to become blood donors, and uploading pictures of themselves. During the final week, celebrities and influencers tweeted personal messages, videos and images thanking people for signing up.

#### What was the impact?

A total of 119,907 new donors registered during the 100 day campaign.

## Delivering Behaviour Change



## Case study 6: Fire kills

### Aim

To persuade householders to test their smoke alarms when they change their clocks twice a year.

### Behavioural principles

Testing smoke alarms is a small extra task at a time when people are already moving around the house changing their clocks and more receptive to adding other behaviours.

A very simple message: “tick, tock, test” backed up by statistics was also used to make a **memorable automatic connection** between the two actions, reinforced through radio, press and digital advertising and social media. Stark images were also used to increase the emotional power and salience of adverts such as burnt timepieces – a child’s alarm and ‘granny’ mantelpiece clock – targeting groups most vulnerable to fire death.

### What was the impact?

Accidental fire deaths and injuries in the home have fallen over the last two years (deaths by 12% in 2011/12 and 7.5% in 2012/13), with the increase in smoke alarm testing contributing significantly. Evaluation has shown progress in establishing the link between testing a smoke alarm and changing clocks, with a peak of 18% of respondents having claimed to have tested their alarms over a clock change weekend.



## Building capability: Claimant Communications Unit

DWP’s Claimant Communications Unit combines expertise in behavioural theory, customer relationship management and professional copy writing and design in order to create clearer, more relevant and more motivating communications. The Unit is developing and testing interventions to encourage positive action among job-seekers, and to drive wider behaviours required by fundamental reforms to welfare and pensions - with some highly positive early results. The team is also committed to raising capability and quality across DWP through the department’s first ever communications standards for clear communications. Crucial to the Unit’s effectiveness is its innovative approach - applying eye-tracking technology to operational communications products, for example - and the networks it is building with leading academics in communications, social psychology and behavioural economics.

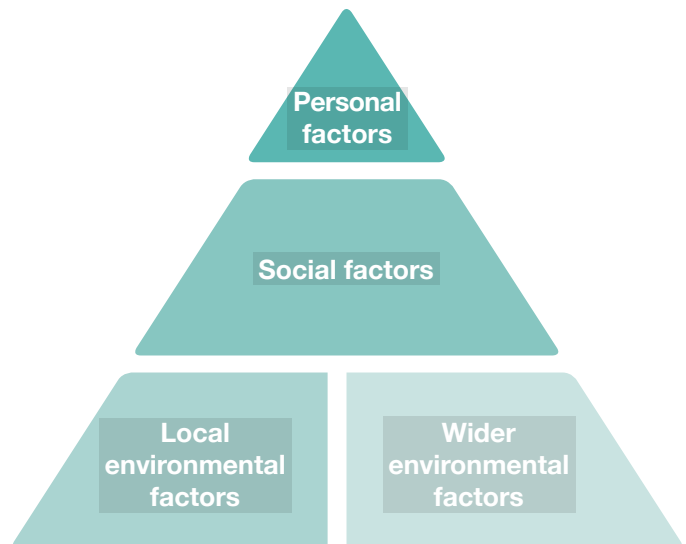
## 6. Beyond EAST

**EAST** provides a great starting point and should be in everyone's basic toolkit. For those running big campaigns it is worth examining further factors influencing behaviour.

### Social psychological models of behaviour

There are many different social psychological models that seek to explain human behaviours. Broadly speaking, the factors can be split into:

1. Personal factors which are intrinsic to the individual, such as their level of knowledge or their belief in their ability to change their behaviour and habits.
2. Social factors which are concerned with how individuals relate to each other and the influence of other people on their behaviour.
3. Environmental factors over which individuals have little control. These include both:
  - a. local environmental factors, for example, the area in which an individual lives, including local shops and facilities, and
  - b. wider environmental factors such as the economy or technology.



It is helpful to identify factors influencing behaviour at the personal, social and environmental levels. An 'ecological' approach – one that takes account of and addresses factors at all three levels – is likely to be most effective.

Understanding all the factors that influence the behaviour you want to change is an essential starting point. It will enable you to identify the most effective interventions and to establish where communications sits within the mix.



## Case study 7:

### Jobcentre 'nudge' posters

#### Aim

To encourage claimants to expand the area of job search to increase their chances of finding work.

#### Behavioural principles

New posters for jobcentres were designed to challenge claimant attitudes that had been identified as barriers to work. Aimed at Universal Credit and Jobseeker's Allowance claimants, the posters used the idea of **'loss aversion'** by highlighting the potential job opportunities claimants might miss out on by not widening their job search area. They also used local job market data to make the messages more relevant and credible.

#### What was the impact?

Evaluation shows the posters provided a valuable prompt for discussions with claimants and the local job data helped Work Coaches to credibly challenge behaviours and attitudinal barriers.



## 6.2. Knowledge and awareness

Standard economic theory assumes that if people are provided with information, they will act on it to maximise personal benefit and minimise costs, a concept often referred to as 'rational choice theory'. Sometimes – for example, when telling people how to deal with swine flu or about a new piece of legislation – it is enough to give them the relevant information. But knowledge and awareness alone are rarely sufficient to effect behaviour change. Other factors can override our 'rational' selves, and we may make systematic errors in our rational calculations.

Communications can address this by combining information with practical tools to encourage

positive changes – as the Change4Life campaign does through showing people how to incorporate more activity into their daily lives.

## 6.3. Attitudes

While attitudes can influence behaviour, evidence now suggests that the link is not as strong as we might previously have thought. Situations where a person holds values that are inconsistent with their behaviour are known as the 'Value Action Gap'. This can be particularly evident with attitudes to the environment. While people may believe that it is important to protect the environment, other factors may take precedence when it comes to actually changing their behaviour.



## 6.4. Habit and routine

Habit or routine can be a key factor in influencing frequent behaviours. The more we repeat a particular behaviour, the more automatic it becomes. Many of the behaviours we try to influence in government will be habitual (for example, checking a smoke alarm).

Behaviour change theories often stress the importance of examining habits as a first step towards changing them, by raising them out of the unconscious mind. Communications strategies should consider how to turn habit into conscious behaviour.

## 6.5. Self-efficacy

It is important for an individual to believe they can achieve a goal successfully. This will determine the effort a person is prepared to put into changing their behaviour and even whether they will attempt it at all. People's sense of self-efficacy can be driven by many things, including past experiences and personal beliefs (for example, some people are naturally more pessimistic than others).

Communications can help to increase self-efficacy by providing clear instructions that make a particular behaviour seem more achievable, using testimonials to show how other people have made the change or by helping to teach relevant skills.

## 6.6. Shortcuts (heuristics)

We take 'mental shortcuts' or use 'rules of thumb' hundreds of times each day, and the more pressure we are under, the more shortcuts we take. When we don't have time to make a fully calculated decision, we often make an 'educated guess' based on how easily we can recall or imagine something happening, or on what has happened before.

'Five-a-day' is one of the best known examples of how communications uses heuristics to influence behaviour.

## 6.7. Biases

Internal biases mean that our natural responses are not always fully 'rational'. Recognising this can help us understand why people make the choices they do and identify whether there is a role for communications in overcoming these biases.

People tend to **prioritise short-term reward over long-term gain**. For example, some people prefer to have more money now than to pay into a pension plan. This is an important principle as government is often seeking to persuade people to make choices that involve a long-term pay-off but little immediate gain.

The extent to which we disregard future gain (the 'discount rate') will increase the more remote the issue appears to be. A younger person, for example, is less likely to prioritise investing in a pension plan. Disadvantaged groups also tend to be more likely to discount future gain, focusing instead on getting by in the short term.

We're **loss-averse**. We tend to put more effort into avoiding loss than ensuring gain. Evidence suggests that communications focusing on potential losses rather than gains are more motivating: in other words, disincentives are more effective than incentives.

## 6.8. Social norms

These are the group rules that determine socially 'acceptable' behaviour. Social norms can have a huge influence. These norms vary by group, so what the norm is for one group of young people may well be different from that adopted by another group living in different circumstances. Failure to act in accordance with these 'rules' can lead to exclusion from the group.

We tend to underestimate the extent to which we are influenced by others. Most people will deny any influence at all. Direct questioning

alone is unlikely to be the best way of establishing the influence of social norms on an individual.

Communications can be effective in making use of the power of social norms through:

- peer-to-peer approaches such as online forums or communities where people can connect with others in similar circumstances
- positive testimonials from others who have used a service or adopted a particular behaviour
- targeting campaigns at respected, authoritative opinion leaders or recruiting them as ambassadors for a brand or behaviour.
- driving word of mouth, for example by using PR techniques to generate news stories that describe other people behaving in a particular way.

## 6.9. Environmental factors

Environmental factors can be hugely significant in determining how an individual will behave.

However motivated we are to behave in a certain manner, if our local environment puts barriers in the way of that behaviour it is unlikely that we will succeed. Factors that operate at a national or even international level can also have a huge influence on individual behaviour. Wider environmental factors can include technology, the economy, taxation and legislation.

### Case study 8:

#### HMRC outbound emails

##### Aim

To increase the effectiveness of outbound emails to small and medium size businesses to encourage take up of support products.

##### Behavioural principles

Activity on HMRC emails compares well to industry norms and OGDs.

However, there is scope to increase levels of engagement: 50% of emails are not viewed, and less than 10% of recipients click on a 'productive' link.

The impact of concise text, accessible language and **clear calls to action** were tested to improve response rates. An existing series of emails were used as the control. The remaining customers received a variant of the control email.

##### What was the impact?

Simplification of text and layout can significantly increase activity on the email and take up of help and support. For VAT customers, the trial increased click through rates to help and support links by almost 100%.

##### Top tip

This work demonstrates the general principle that a 'test and learn' approach can deliver operational improvements. The variant email has now been rolled out and reaches over 15,000 new VAT customers per month.

## 6.10. How to tackle these issues

Where the specific behaviour or behaviours have already been identified and agreed, you can start identifying the influencing factors. If, however, this thinking has not yet been done, it is important to identify the relevant behaviours and other factors contributing to the issue you are seeking to address. An exercise to identify the factors and behaviours contributing to the issue will provide a useful starting point in developing a comprehensive picture of influences.

Don't worry about trying to identify every last variable. A clear prioritisation of those factors most likely to be affecting behaviour, across the three levels of personal, social and environmental, will suffice for all but the most complex campaigns.

### Case study 9:

#### Job-seeking

##### Aim

To increase the number of young people attending jobcentre interviews and training courses.

##### Behavioural principles

A Jobcentre work coach letter was re-designed to include a range of behavioural insights. The letter appealed to social norms by including the message that 7 out of 10 people found the training course had helped them with their job search. A verbal and written commitment that they will attend (I will attend this course on x day/time) was required to "lock" respondents into the event. The letter also emphasised that places were limited, highlighting the value of the event.

##### What was the impact?

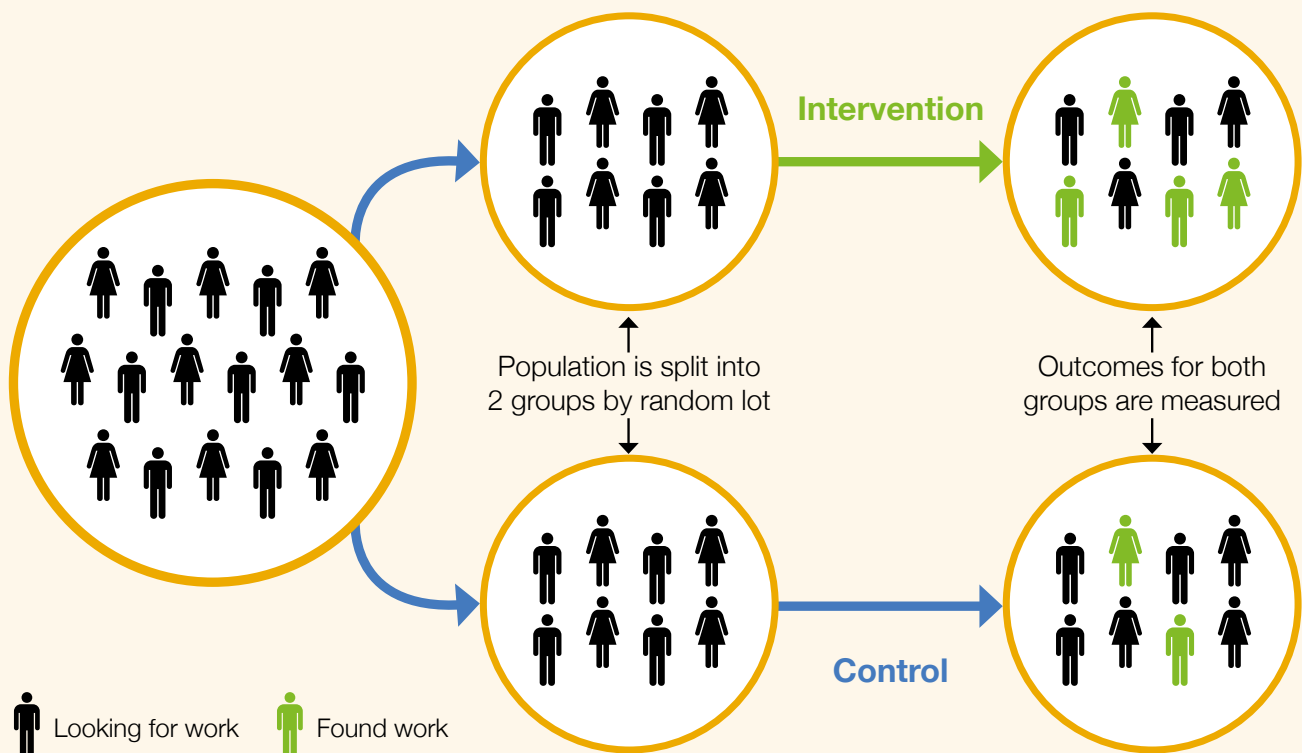
Applying behavioural principles to the letter increased the attendance of young people at jobcentre interviews by 30% over a six week period, compared to the control group. The extrapolated return is estimated at £25,000 over a 12 month period.

# 7. How to set up a controlled trial

You might wish to set up a randomised controlled trial (RCT) as part of your evaluation strategy. An RCT is often seen as the best way of assessing whether a communication intervention has directly caused behaviour change. This is because it removes biases or other factors which could affect the outcome.

An RCT involves randomly selecting people who match your target audience profile into two or more groups. One group receives your communication being tested, another will receive an alternative communication or no communication at all. This is known as the control group and enables you to compare and contrast your intervention.

**Figure 1.** The basic design of a randomised controlled trial (RCT), illustrated with a test of a new 'back to work' programme.



You will then assess behaviours of the different groups to understand how effective your communication has been. The key steps to any successful RCT are to ensure you have well defined and measurable outcomes, a control group to compare and contrast, and to avoid introducing any biases into the trial. See the Cabinet Office and Behavioural Insights Team paper 'Test, learn, and adapt' for more guidance.

### **Case study – DWP email trial**

As part of a recent small scale trial, DWP wanted to understand how effective email communication would be at getting claimants to access online content and increase understanding of Universal Credit. They developed two email communications, randomly selected target claimants into two groups, and delivered different emails to these groups and assessed results. The performance of the two emails was very different, with one email nearly twice as likely as the other to result in claimants clicking through. As a result, DWP have been able to understand more about what motivates claimants to engage with online content and are in the process of introducing the more successful email into its operational communications.

# Resources

**Behavioural Insights Team:**

[www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk](http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk)

**Mindspace Behavioural Economics:**

[www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/our-work/better-policy-making/mindspace-behavioural-economics](http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/our-work/better-policy-making/mindspace-behavioural-economics)

**Simply psychology:**

[www.simplypsychology.org/social-psychology.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/social-psychology.html)

**GCS campaign framework:**

<https://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/blog/2013/07/23/the-birth-of-the-campaign-framework/>

**Government Communications Plan:**

<https://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/blog/2014/05/13/launch-govt-comms-plan-1415/>

**Test, Learn, Adapt:**

Developing Public Policy with Randomised Controlled Trials

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-learn-adapt-developing-public-policy-with-randomised-controlled-trials](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-learn-adapt-developing-public-policy-with-randomised-controlled-trials)

**Organ donor registrations:**

trials of different approaches:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/organ-donor-registrations-trialling-different-approaches](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/organ-donor-registrations-trialling-different-approaches)

**The Behavioralist as Tax Collector:**

Using Natural Field Experiments to Enhance Tax Compliance

[www.nber.org/papers/w20007](http://www.nber.org/papers/w20007)

# Glossary

**Anchoring** - we have a tendency to rely heavily on the first piece of information offered (the “anchor”) when making decisions.

**Biases/cognitive biases** - we often think in certain ways that can deviate from accepted ideas of rationality.

**Cognitive dissonance** - occurs when there is conflict between our attitudes and behaviors, this produces a feeling of internal conflict prompting us to make a change to eliminate the dissonance.

**Chunking** - breaking down a task into smaller components to make it easier to reach a goal.

**Discount rate** - the extent we disregard future gain increases the more remote the issue appears to be (see also loss aversion).

**Framing** - the context in which choices are presented; can have a significant affect on the acceptance of information even when the situation is the same.

**Friction costs** - term coined by Behavioural Insights Team; refers to irrelevant details that make a task more challenging or effortful - often make the difference between doing something and putting it off.

**Heuristics** - mental short cuts or ‘rules of thumbs’ we use in everyday situations, for example when we don’t have the time to weigh up the pros and cons of options.

**Herd mentality** - we have a strong natural inclination to follow the majority view. See also social norms.

**Loss aversion** - people’s tendency to put more effort into avoiding loss than ensuring gain.

**Reciprocity** - we have a strong natural instinct for to give back to others in return for their support.

**Salience** - our attention is most drawn to information that is relevant to us.

**Self efficacy** - an individual’s sense they can carry out an action successfully, and that action will bring about the expected outcome.

**Social norms** - group rules which determine what is deemed acceptable behaviours. Social norms have huge influence on our actions. See also herd mentality.

**System 1 and System 2** - the idea our minds are composed of two types of thinking. System 1 is fast, reflexive, intuitive and automatic decision making (often associated with heuristics). System 2 is slow, rational and deliberative decision making.

**Theory of change** - a methodology which sets out steps or pre-conditions required in order to achieve a behavioural outcome or goal, including:

**a) The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)** is a well-known model widely used in the past, in part due to its relative simplicity and ease of use. According to the model, the key factors influencing behavioural intention are:

- attitudes towards the behaviour;
- subjective norms, and;
- perceived behavioural control or agency.

**b) The Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour** also defines intention as one of the key factors influencing behaviour. However, unlike the TPB, it also recognises the role of habit and acknowledges the importance of environmental

factors. It also recognises that behavioural intention is influenced by emotions and social factors, elements not included in the TPB. Of the three directly influencing factors (habit, intention and facilitating conditions), it sees habit as the most influential.

While the TIB is less widely used than the TPB, it can be particularly helpful in relation to regular/habitual behaviours such as car use.

**c) The Needs, Opportunity, Ability (NOA)** model of consumer behaviour is a good example of a model that explicitly incorporates factors at the environmental level. NOA consists of an intention-based model of individual behaviour ‘nested’ within a model that shows the influence of macro-level environmental factors.

At the individual level, intentions are formed through both ‘motivation’ and ‘behavioural control’. At the macro level, needs, opportunities and abilities are influenced by the five environmental factors at the top of the model: technology, economy, demography, institutions and culture.

**d) The Stages of Change** is the best-known theory of behaviour change, developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente and based on smokers’ approaches to giving up cigarettes. The central idea is that behaviour change comprises six stages, with people progressing from one to the next at their own pace. The six stages of change are:

**1. Pre-contemplation:** The individual has no intention of changing their behaviour in the foreseeable future (usually defined as the next six months), possibly because they have not yet acknowledged that there is a problem behaviour that needs to be changed.

**2. Contemplation:** The individual acknowledges that their behaviour needs to change. While they are not yet ready to change, they intend to do so within the next six months.

**3. Preparation:** The individual is preparing to change their behaviour within the next month and may already have devised a plan of action.

**4. Action:** The individual has changed their behaviour within the past six months.

**5. Maintenance:** The individual is actively maintaining the changed behaviour (although they can still relapse at this stage).

**6. Termination:** The new behaviour is embedded and the individual is confident that they will not relapse.



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