

expecting people to make the most rational, ‘best’ choice based on this information. However, people are not always rational.

In contrast, approaches based on ‘changing contexts’ – the environment within which we make decisions and respond to cues – have the potential to bring about significant changes in behaviour at relatively low cost. Shaping policy more closely around our inbuilt responses to the world offers a potentially powerful way to improve individual wellbeing and social welfare.

For this reason, behavioural insights – looking closely at why a person behaves in certain way and what can alter that behaviour – can be particularly helpful to councils when addressing issues that need demand management or early intervention. It can also be useful to address and encourage culture change within an organisation. Examples of each of these are included within this briefing.

Some councils are already embracing behaviour change and have specialist behavioural insights teams working within the local authority. In October 2016, the LB Barking and Dagenham set up their “Insight Hub” with the aim of making better use of the council’s data to understand customer needs, forecast future demand and design behavioural interventions. Liverpool City Council also have a dedicated Insight Team and, of course, the Cabinet Office have the Behavioural Insights Team.

But, more often than not, councils approach behavioural insights in an ad hoc manner. Behavioural insights do not seem to have a ‘home’ within most councils, and projects are driven by ‘one off’ problems, rather than

an overall strategy towards data insights. For example, when gathering evidence for this briefing, interviews were carried out with officers working in public health, communications and digital teams, as well as external consultants.

LB BARKING & DAGENHAM INSIGHT HUB

LBBDD’s Insight Hub was established during the beginning of a major transformation journey in which the council must make £63m savings by 2020. Instead of setting up an Intelligence Unit already seen in many other councils (which mainly carry out performance reporting), LBBDD built the case for an entirely outward looking service, focused on being more ‘proactive’ rather than ‘reactive’ to issues. The Insight Hub was set up in October 2016 and is comprised of skills in data strategy, data science and behavioural science. The team conduct detailed analyses whilst engaging closely with the council’s departments, as well as the third sector and local businesses. The team report to the Chief Executive whilst also embedding themselves with front-line staff. The team emphasise the importance of being on the front line in order to develop a full understanding of how data can be translated into actionable and applicable tools. The Insight Hub combine data with behavioural insight and are currently focussing efforts on building predictive models in order to create a culture in which users are drawing on data to inform service design.

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HOW TO ENCOURAGE BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

There are many ways to encourage behavior change. Below are four simple principles to

think about when starting a project that will use behavioural insights and behavior change techniques. Put simply, if you want to encourage a behaviour, make it Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely (EAST).³

EAST: FOUR SIMPLE WAYS TO APPLY BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

THE BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS TEAM (2014) ³

MAKE IT EASY

- **Harness the power of defaults:** We have a strong tendency to go with the default or pre-set option, since it is easy to do so. Making an option the default makes it more likely to be adopted.
- **Reduce the 'hassle factor' of taking up a service:** The effort required to perform an action often puts people off. Reducing the effort required can increase uptake or response rates.
- **Simplify messages:** Making the message clear often results in significant increase in response rates to communications. It's useful to identify how a complex goal can be broken down into simpler, easier actions.

MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE

- **Attract attention – Salience:** We are more likely to do something that our attention is drawn towards. Ways of doing this include the use of images, colour or personalisation.
- **Design rewards and sanctions for maximum effect:** Financial incentives are often highly effective, but alternative incentive designs — such as lotteries — also work well and often cost less.

MAKE IT SOCIAL

- **Show that most people perform the desired behaviour:** Describing what most people do in a particular situation encourages others to do

the same. Similarly, policy makers should be wary of inadvertently reinforcing a problematic behaviour by emphasising its high prevalence.

- **Use the power of networks:** We are embedded in a network of social relationships, and those we come into contact with shape our actions. Governments can foster networks to enable collective action, provide mutual support, and encourage behaviours to spread peer-to-peer.
- **Encourage people to make a commitment to others:** We often use commitment devices to voluntarily 'lock ourselves' into doing something in advance. The social nature of these commitments is often crucial.

MAKE IT TIMELY

- **Prompt people when they are likely to be most receptive:** The same offer made at different times can have drastically different levels of success. Behaviour is generally easier to change when habits are already disrupted, such as around major life events.
- **Consider the immediate costs and benefits:** We are more influenced by costs and benefits that take effect immediately than those delivered later. Policy makers should consider whether the immediate costs or benefits can be adjusted (even slightly), given that they are so influential.
- **Help people plan their response to events:** There is a substantial gap between intentions and actual behaviour. A proven solution is to prompt people to identify the barriers to action, and develop a specific plan to address them.

CASE STUDY 1

EARLY INTERVENTION

Applying behavioural insights to increase uptake of childcare places – *London Borough of Hounslow*

Residents who receive certain benefits or have an annual household income of less than £16,190 can access up to 15 hours of free childcare and early learning for their two-year-old child each week. Early Year and Childcare teams send each eligible parent a unique voucher, which they can redeem at a participating childcare provider of their choice.

Traditionally take up of the offer has been slow. So, the Early Years team, working in partnership with the Public Health team, used a randomised control trial (RCT) to test two new approaches to see if they could improve take up.

The standard invitation letter includes a unique voucher and a list of participating childcare venues. It was sent in a standard A5 white window envelope. Drawing on insights from the behavioural sciences, the council rewrote the standard letter and tested an alternative envelope design to work out which style increased registration rates the most. Three versions of the invitation letter were designed:

1. Control

Standard letter and voucher in a standard white window envelope.

2. Salience Treatment

This was a standard letter and voucher in a white full view window envelope which had a large window on the front to expose the voucher inside. This is an example increasing the salience of an offer. Evidence suggests we are more likely to do something that our attention is drawn to.

3. Social Norm Treatment

This added additional sentences to the standard letter. These highlighted that “many local parents” were taking up the offer. This is an example of using social norms – indicating what other people do in the same situation. Social norms have proven to be persuasive in lots of different areas, from energy efficiency to tax compliance. The letter also urged the reader to, “use your voucher as soon as possible so that you don’t miss out”. We know that people are sometimes loss-averse – they feel the loss of something more than they might value an equivalent gain – so there were grounds to believe that alerting them to the fact that they could miss out, might be effective.

Each of the 1,200 eligible households were randomly assigned to receive one of the above versions. The number of people from each group who subsequently redeemed the voucher was then measured.



- 20 per cent of people who received the Control letter went on to redeem their voucher.
- 26 per cent of those who received Salience Treatment went on to redeem their voucher.
- 27 per cent of those who received Social Norm Treatment went on to redeem their voucher.

The differences are statistically significant and indicate that both treatments are more effective than the standard letter.

CONCLUSION

By changing the letter, the team found that they could increase take up of a programme to support disadvantaged two year olds by 37

percentage points, by rewriting the invitation letter that is sent to residents. Over the course of a year, this difference would lead to approximately 270 more families taking up the offer compared to the standard letter.

This programme of work was focused on a very specific area: encouraging eligible residents to take up 15 hours of free childcare. But the findings show that small changes (which often have no extra cost) can have big impacts.

CONTACT: For more information or to discuss this case study, contact Chris Norfield, Public Health Strategist: Behaviour Change, LB Hounslow, chris.norfield@hounslow.gov.uk

CASE STUDY 2

DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Channel shift blue badge scheme – *Essex County Council*

Blue Badge parking permits let disabled drivers and passengers park nearer to where they're going. Essex County Council have, on average, 26,000 blue-badge applications a year. Of those, 70 per cent are renewals.

In 2012, 98 per cent of renewal applications were offline applications. Processing the applications was very costly for the council, so they wanted to look at moving towards online applications. They developed an online application form that resulted in a 30 per cent move to online applications with no promotion, but they felt they could increase this.

The team needed to find a sensible way of managing demand for renewals and shifting applications online, while maintaining sensitivity. Blue-badges can be an emotive issue and, in addition, the group of people applying tend to be older and less inclined to want to change to digital applications.

In order to look at the issue further they brought in a behaviour change expert, Toby Blume from Social Engine, to examine the problem. First, they set up a Randomised Control Trial (RCT).

The council normally reminds blue badge holders 10 weeks in advance of their badge

needing renewal. To organise the RCT, the council sorted the renewals into four groups (including a control group who received the standard renewal letter). The three additional groups were as follows:

1. Intrinsic/Incentive Group

The letter clearly stated that applying online could save public money.

2. Messenger Group

There was minimal change to the text of the letter, but it did include quotes from other residents.

3. Salience and Simplification Group

This letter put the message more simply in bullet points.

RESULTS

The trial was carried out for 4-5 months. It was found that there was little difference between the Incentive and the Simplification group, but there was a 7-8 per cent channel shift by those in these groups compared to around 3 per cent channel shift in the Messenger group. Based on this, the council adapted future letters and now 60 per cent of applications are online.

In part, due to this, the council have been able to streamline the workforce. Where previously it had taken 20 temporary staff to process all the applications, now only six are needed. In total the scheme has saved the council in the region of £50k per annum.

Perhaps a greater benefit however, is that it is better for the customer. The application process has changed from one that could take 90 days, to one that is possible in 24 hours.

EXAMPLES: Each letter used a different method

1. INTRINSIC/INCENTIVE GROUP

There are two main advantages to you applying online:

- Renewing online will speed up the processing of your application; and
- If all Blue Badge applicants renewed online, it could save as much as £45,000 in public money which can be used helping us to protect frontline public services.

2. MESSENGER GROUP

Why not join the thousands who are now using our simple new online renewal process and visit www.essex.gov.uk/bluebadge

Mrs W from Wickford applied online and says:

"The online application form was easy to complete and took about five minutes. I would recommend renewing this way to family and friends".

Mr B from Rochford says:

"No problem, would most certainly recommend applying online, it was a good service".

3. SALIENCE AND SIMPLIFICATION GROUP

Your blue badge is due to expire in December 2014



- To avoid any delay to your Blue Badge being issued, renew immediately
- Renewing online is quicker and easier go to www.essex.gov.uk/bluebadge
- Act now to ensure you receive your Blue Badge before your current one expires

CONTACT: For more information or to discuss this case study, contact Georgi Young, Delivery Manager, Essex County Council, georgianna.young@essex.gov.uk or Cheryl Arthur, Head of Telephone and Digital Access cheryl.arthur@essex.gov.uk

CASE STUDY 3

DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Addressing fly tipping with behaviour change – *London Borough of Redbridge*

In 2016 Redbridge experience a 53 per cent increase in fly tipping. This was costing the council nearly £300,000 a year to clear up. Because of this, at the end of 2016 a dashboard was created which allowed the council to get an insight into hotspot areas for fly tipping. Data showed that while fly tipping was an issue across the Borough, one ward - South Ilford, had by far the highest concentration of fly tipping incidents.

The council then began to develop a hypothesis as to why this would be the case. Creating a map overlay of the area, it could be seen that many residents were in short term accommodation and that English was either their second or third language. The council considered whether the fly tipping was in fact a communication issue, rather than anti-social behaviour.

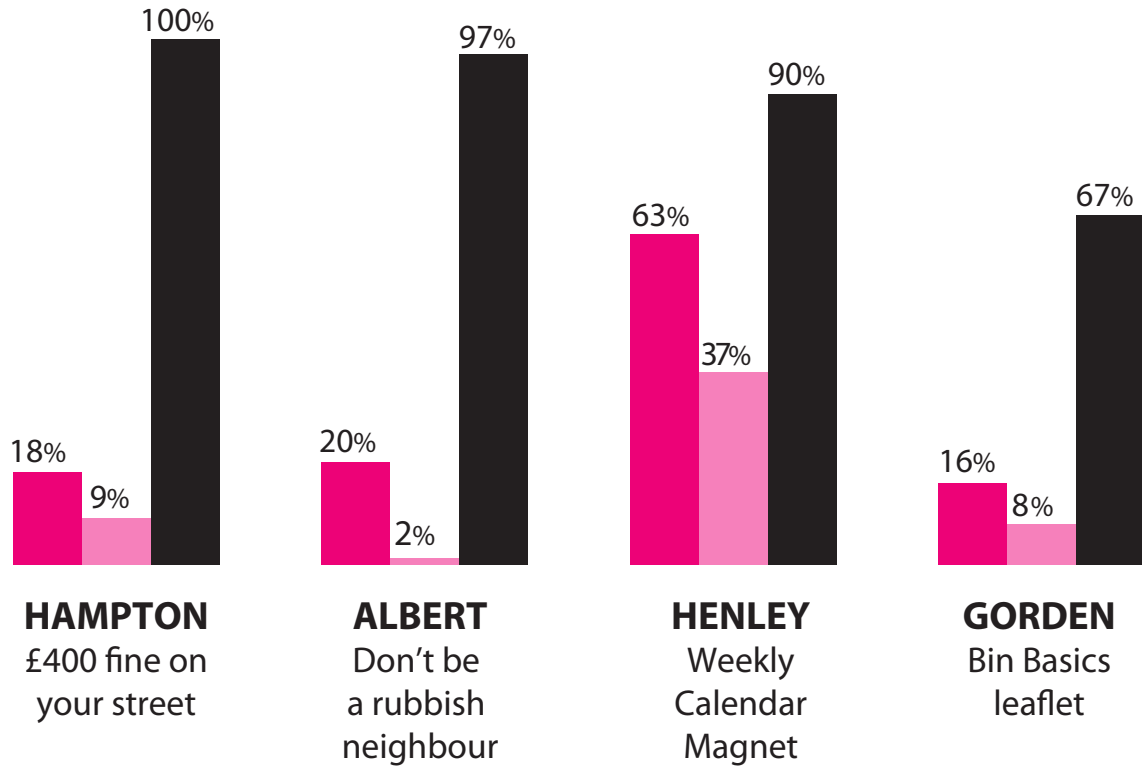
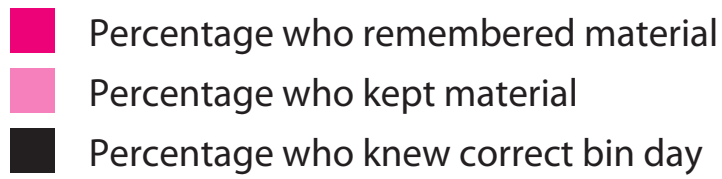
Based on this hypothesis, a series of behaviour change solutions and messages were designed. Additional to two control groups these included:

- a fridge magnet with the correct day ticked – messenger influence – a ‘nudge’ technique
- a ‘bin basics’ leaflet with imagery - messenger influence – a ‘nudge’ technique
- a ‘don’t be a rubbish neighbour’ leaflet – social norm influence – a ‘nudge’ technique
- a ‘£400 fine on your street’ leaflet – a financial disincentive – a ‘shove’ technique.

The pilot was evaluated in four separate ways. These included: fly tipping data from the new civic pride dashboard, a focus group of engaged residents, a before and after survey of enforcement team staff in the tested areas, and finally, a survey of residents in each of the tested streets which allowed them to see if residents had kept the material, understood it and whether it had led to any change in behaviour – i.e. did they know what day their black bag waste was collected and how it should be left out for collection?

The top three most effective pilot materials overall were the £400 fine message, fridge magnet and ‘bin basics’ leaflet.

The chart demonstrates that the £400 fine message had an impact on knowing the day of collection but was not memorable. In contrast, the fridge magnet scored highest as being most memorable with the resident keeping the material rather than throwing it away. The clear visual prompt of the magnet appeared to have the strongest impact, suggesting that people did not know which day their rubbish was collected. Resident focus groups backed up the data results, with the group preferring a strong enforcement message as an overall campaign, but saying that some communities need more targeted messages.



CONTACT: For more information or to discuss this case study, contact Mary Patricia Flynn, Campaigns and Communications Manager, London Borough of Redbridge, mary.patriciaflynn@redbridge.gov.uk

CASE STUDY 4

Culture change within a council

A large unitary council in the South of England was looking at ways to help further their Digital Transformation Programme and make things easier for both residents and council workers.

They worked with Capita to use behaviour change methods to encourage people to embrace digital technologies. Before the council could successfully change the services, however, they needed to transform the internal organisational culture of the council. A fundamental part of this was to use customer journey mapping to build customer insight and behaviour change into services from the beginning of their design.

A key focus of behaviour change was in Children's and Adult social care. They wanted social workers to embrace more effective ways of working, including using tablets. Rather than simply hand out devices and crudely mandate the use of tablets, staff were provided with as much support and encouragement as possible to make the change sustainable. The process started by taking the time to really understand how people felt about the change, by exploring their hopes and fears in depth.

The council and Capita used behavioural insights to guide people to use their new tablets. Knowing that there would be

resistance and engrained ways of working, they looked at how change was perceived and understood i.e. what was the current culture of teams?

As well as boosting people's personal motivation, they worked to build up people's 'psychological capital' – the positive and developmental state of an individual as characterised by high self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency. Levels of psychological capital predict whether people will stick with change.

To create a greater sense of psychological capital, they worked with managers, who play a key role in determining an employee's optimism and resilience at work. They kept focusing on:

- What outcomes are we trying to achieve?
- What behaviours are needed to achieve these?
- What could block these behaviours?

A wide range of complementary initiatives drew on behaviour insights regarding what works in helping people change their behaviour. This included:

- It was important that social workers felt a sense of autonomy about the culture change. Instead of emailing and making tablets mandatory, highly participative workshops were held to inform people about the tablets and how they would work. They made it clear that they wanted to hear all ideas, and reiterated that there was 'no such thing as a wrong idea'. The workshop dynamic meant

that the teams worked together to learn and share new tools and knowledge. The team were of mixed ability so this was particularly important to build up capacity in the team

- Many people were nervous as first. Great effort was taken to build up a greater sense of mastery as they applied what was learned in workshops
- Constantly linking the technology change to their role and identity as social workers – seeing the tablets as enabling and helping vulnerable children get help more quickly.

RESULT

As part of the wider digital transformation programme, over 200 social workers are now using the tablets. Social workers report being “productive and helpful” like never before, which is backed up by a 34 per cent increase in social care assessments and a 10 per cent reduction in wasted travel time.

CONTACT: For more information or to discuss this case study, contact Jonti Dalal-Small, Senior Consultant, Capita jonti.dalal-small@capita.co.uk

ENDNOTES

- 1 Cabinet Office and the IfG, (2010), ‘[Mindspace – Influencing Behavior Through Public Policy](#)’
- 2 Cabinet Office and the IfG, (2010), ‘[Mindspace – Influencing Behavior Through Public Policy](#)’
- 3 The Behavioral Insights Team, (2014), [EAST – Four Simple Ways to Apply Behavioural Insights](#)

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