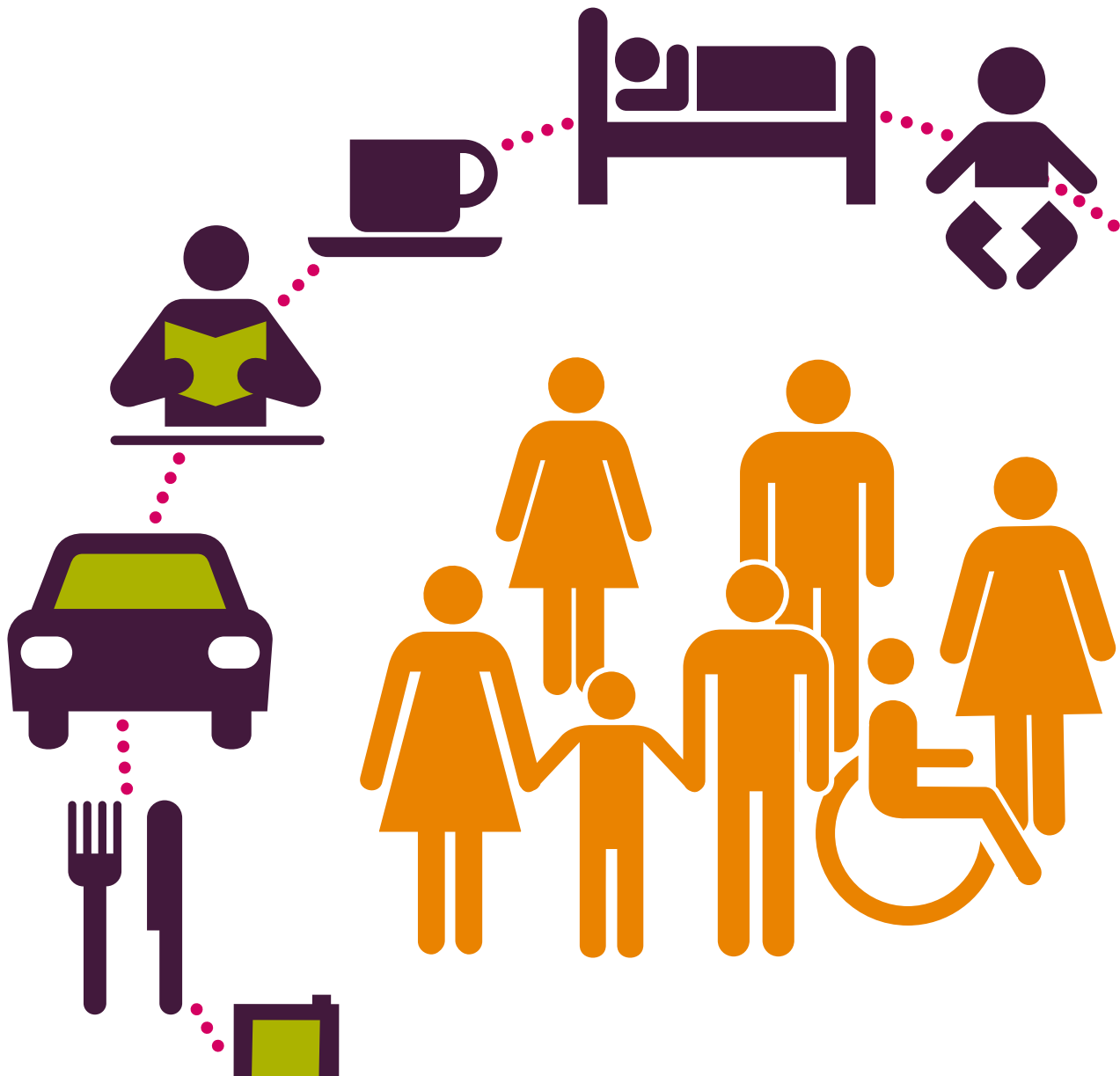


Communications and behaviour change





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Foreword



We need to encourage positive behaviour change



Tackling some of society's most intractable and costly problems most often requires us to change behaviours in some way. Some steps may be small, like turning off lights, and others may be large, like changing our diets. Some behaviours can have tragic short-term consequences, like driving too fast, and others longer-term damage to ourselves and other people, like smoking.

What they have in common are the personal, social and economic costs to us as citizens and taxpayers. Money and resources spent, for example, on treating obesity is not just a cost but also a lost opportunity to invest in other areas of civil society.

So, increasingly, the success of many government policies and priorities depends on our achieving behaviour change with the greatest effectiveness and efficiency.

But, as this document makes clear and our experience has shown, behaviour change is a complex area. If we are to succeed, we need to understand the theories underpinning behaviour change and how marketing and communication can aid policy formulation and ensure effective delivery.

Government has a number of tools at its disposal to stimulate behaviour change, from legislation, regulation and taxation to providing information, persuasion, engagement and working in partnership. In most cases, putting these tools into action will require communications in some form.

Within government, we are continually seeking new and better ways to communicate with citizens to encourage positive behaviour change. With this document, we hope to provide those working in government communications with an update on some of the latest thinking about what drives human behaviour and to launch the debate as to what this means for our approach to communications, from strategy development through to evaluation. We see this as the first stage in an ongoing dialogue.

There are already many examples across government where the theories and principles outlined below have been used to develop effective communication and marketing strategies. We have drawn on these examples and included some of them as case studies, from which we can all learn.

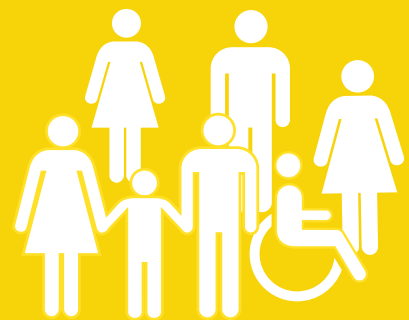
I hope you find this a useful resource. We look forward to working with you to continue developing and delivering communications that are informed by both a deep understanding of the behaviour we seek to influence and the rapidly changing communications landscape.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lund'.

Mark Lund, Chief Executive, COI

Introduction

Human behaviour is a very complex area. This document draws on key sources from the disciplines of social psychology, economics and behavioural economics (where the first two disciplines overlap). We have sought to distil this information into some key factors that are important to consider for anyone developing communications that seek to influence behaviour, and to develop a framework for applying these factors to the development of a communications strategy.



About this document

The document is designed primarily for those working in government communications and draws on the Government Social Research (GSR) *Behaviour Change Knowledge Review*.¹ The GSR Review was developed primarily for those in analysis, research and policy roles. It is therefore important that this document covers the same key theories and principles, so that those working across all types of behaviour change interventions can develop a common understanding.

Broadly speaking, most government communications seek to encourage or enable people to act in one or more 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 get people to behave in a certain way. Insights from social psychological theory and behavioural economics, both of which provide us with a deeper understanding of human behaviour, are therefore relevant to all government communications.

A brief introduction to some key behavioural theory disciplines

Many disciplines have something to say about human behaviour, including economics, psychology, sociology and anthropology. Within government, ‘behaviour change’ (which is often applied through social marketing campaigns) tends to be dominated by social psychological and (behavioural) economics thinking.

Behavioural models are designed to help us better understand behaviour. Those used within government tend to be social psychological models that explain behaviour by highlighting the underlying factors influencing the individual or group. Behavioural economics combines insights from economics and psychology to generate principles that show how people’s decision-making can be less ‘rational’.

Over recent years, behavioural economics has attracted much interest, with authors such as Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein² exploring some of the principles and looking at how these can be used to ‘nudge’ us towards making ‘better’ decisions.

1 Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

2 Thaler R and Sunstein C (2008), *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

While behavioural models and economics both seek to explain why people behave the way they do, theories of change seek to explain how behaviour changes. There are many theories of behaviour change, drawn from a wide range of disciplines. This document discusses a few of the most commonly cited theories.

We have provided an overview of some of the main factors from social psychological models, the key principles of behavioural economics and the best-known theories of change. For a more in-depth discussion, see the GSR Review,³ which covers over 60 social psychological behavioural models and theories and includes an appendix that matches behaviour types or domains (for example environment, health or transport) to models. You may find this a helpful starting point in identifying those models that are relevant to you and warrant further exploration.

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

In this document

What influences people's behaviour?

This section outlines some of the key factors that influence behaviour. It draws on a range of social psychological theories and includes three examples of behavioural models. The section also gives an overview of the key principles of behavioural economics and of the best-known theories of change. Case studies provide a practical illustration of how models and theories have been used to inform government communications.

Embedding behavioural theory

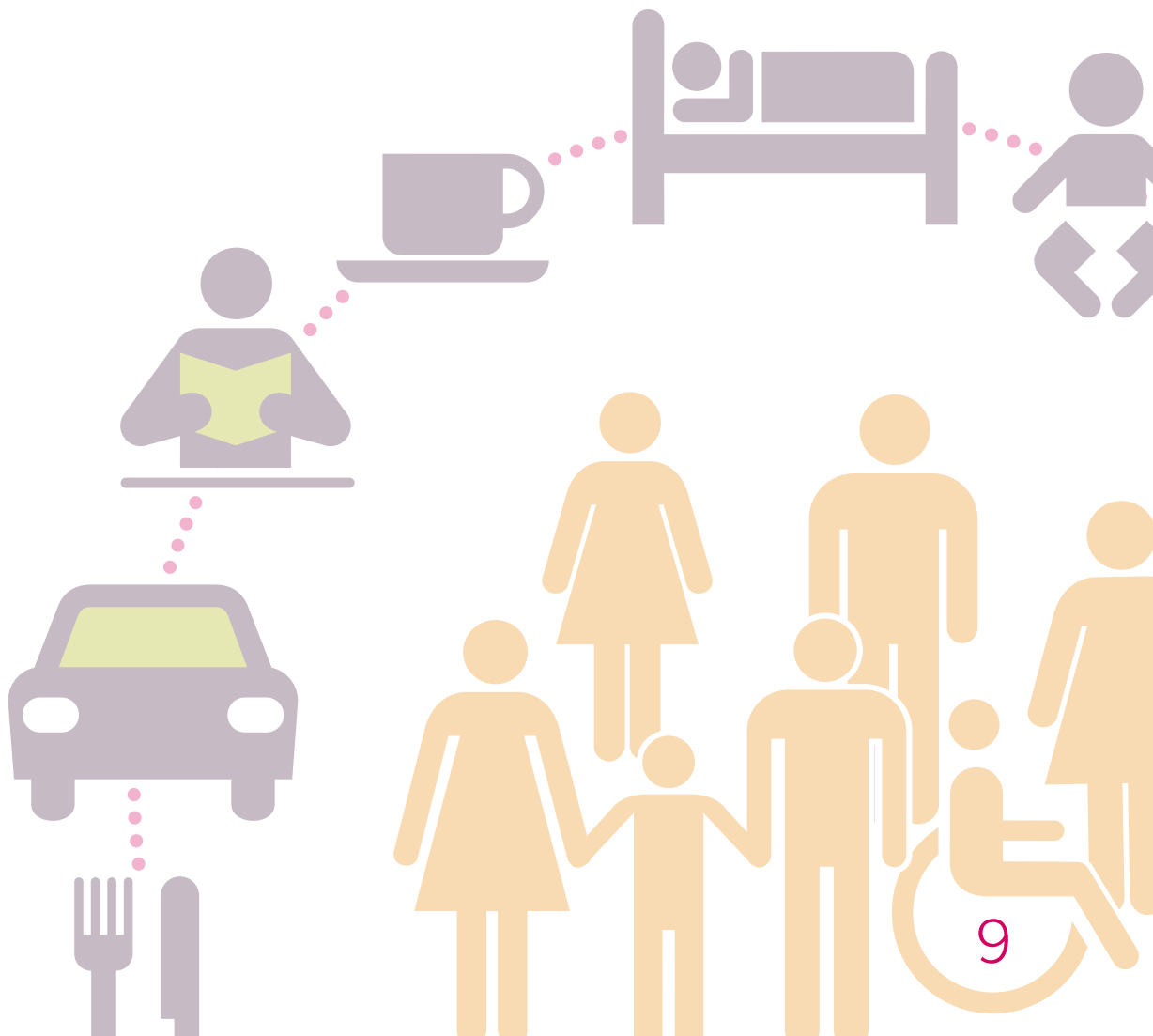
A five-step framework shows how, by increasing our understanding of behaviour, behavioural theory can help to define the role for communications and build a communications model. The Department of Health's Tobacco Control campaign is used to show how each step of the process might work in practice. The section concludes with a summary of the steps and a series of questions designed to stimulate thinking at each stage.

Conclusions and future implications

This section lists the main conclusions emerging from the report, then goes on to consider some of the key implications for communicators.

Next steps

Finally, this section suggests some areas for future discussion aimed at embedding behaviour change theory in communications development.



What influences people's behaviour?

Human behaviour is influenced by a huge range of factors. In this section, we seek to distil the ever-increasing body of evidence about why we do what we do into some key factors and principles that are important to consider when designing communications aimed at influencing behaviour change.



‘Individual behaviours are deeply embedded in social and institutional contexts. We are guided as much by what others around us say and do, and by the “rules of the game” as we are by personal choice.’⁴

Social psychological models of behaviour

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

1. Personal (‘micro’) factors which are intrinsic to the individual, such as their level of knowledge or their belief in their ability to change their behaviour and their habits.
2. Social (‘meso’) 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 (‘exo’) environmental factors, for example the area in which an individual lives and local shops and facilities, and
 - b. wider (‘macro’) environmental factors such as the economy or technology.

Most models tend to focus on factors at the personal and social levels, with few explicitly referencing those at the environmental level. It is, however, essential to consider factors from all three levels. For this reason, we suggest that social psychological models are used primarily to identify personal and social factors and that additional work (see the discussion of systems mapping, page 13) is undertaken to identify the relevant external factors.

There are a number of reasons why it is so important to identify factors at all three levels. Seeking to understand and influence behaviour by addressing personal factors alone, for example, is unlikely to work, because it fails to take into account the complex and interrelated nature of the factors that influence what we do: we do not act in isolation, and most people are influenced to a very great extent by the people around them and the environment in which they live. Equally, it would be overly simplistic to focus on environmental factors, such as access to services or levels of taxation, while ignoring the social and personal factors at play.

In seeking to influence behaviour in the context of health, for example, it is generally accepted that an **ecological** approach – that is, one that identifies and addresses the factors influencing behaviour at all three levels – is likely to be most effective at bringing about behaviour change.

⁴ Jackson T (2005), *Motivating Sustainable Consumption: A Review of Evidence on Consumer Behaviour and Behavioural Change*, report to the Sustainable Development Research Network, London.

Key learnings

- It is essential 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 in bringing about behaviour change.

A note about behavioural models

While models can help us understand more about human behaviour, they do have some limitations:

- Models are deliberately simplified to aid understanding, and 'do not account for all the complexities of behaviour'.⁵
- Most models do not segment the target population. In reality, different factors are likely to carry different weight for different people.
- Models are usually based on data from a specific audience and/or designed with a specific behaviour in mind and may not 'travel' well. Any model used must be explored for relevance to the behaviour that is being addressed.

It is also important to note that behavioural models and theoretical insights are not a substitute for primary research. Our aim is to help you incorporate theory into your planning alongside primary research and other evidence.

⁵ Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

Behavioural models and communications

Understanding all the factors that influence the behaviour you want to change is an essential starting point. It will enable you to start identifying the most effective interventions and to establish where communications (in the broadest sense) sit within the mix.

The approach outlined in this section is aligned with the early steps in the nine principles for developing interventions using behavioural models outlined in the practical guide section of the GSR Review.⁶ This is to ensure that policy and communications teams share a consistent framework.

Identifying behaviours

Some government communications focus on influencing a single behaviour, such as getting people to drive more slowly. For many issues, though – for example, climate change and obesity – government will need to bring about changes in multiple behaviours in order to meet policy goals.

Where the specific behaviour or behaviours in question have already been identified and agreed, you can move straight on to identifying the influencing factors (see page 15). If, however, this thinking has not yet been done, it is

important to identify all the relevant behaviours and other factors contributing to the issue you are seeking to address. Otherwise, it will not be possible to select the appropriate behavioural model(s).

The most complex behaviours may require a systems thinking approach. **Systems thinking** is a way of mapping out all the factors influencing a particular issue and the relationships between them, so that issues can be seen as part of an overall system rather than in isolation. **Systems diagrams** provide a visual representation. At the core of systems thinking is the concept of **feedback**, the idea that changing one factor will often affect one or more of the other factors within the system. It is therefore particularly useful in helping to anticipate the possible consequences of interventions aimed at a specific factor or factors. While it may not be communications teams who undertake systems mapping, such exercises can nevertheless yield valuable insights into the range of interventions needed to address the various factors and the part that communications can play in the mix.

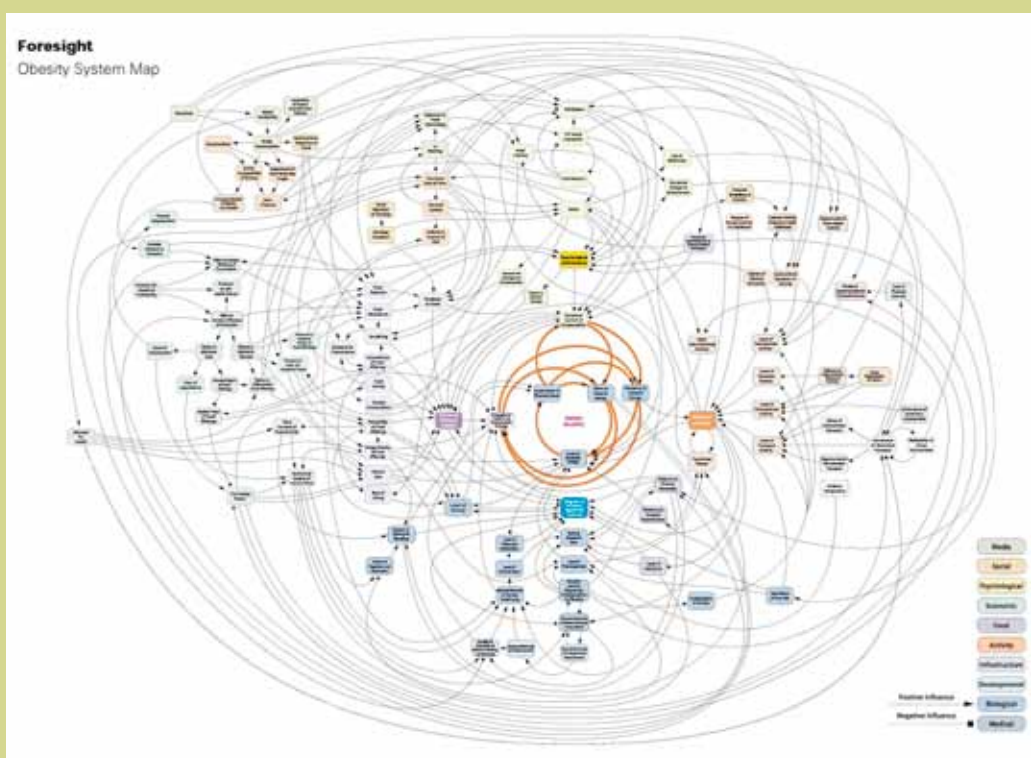
Where the issues involved are less complex, a full systems mapping exercise may not be needed. However, an exercise to identify the factors and behaviours contributing to the issue you are seeking to address will provide a useful starting point in developing a comprehensive picture of influences.

⁶ Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Practical Guide: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

Mapping the causes of obesity

Obesity is a complex issue with extremely wide-ranging causes operating at the personal, social and environmental levels.

In the absence of a model incorporating all the relevant factors, a team of experts from a range of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, food sciences, genetics and epidemiology, produced an Obesity System Map highlighting the full range of contributory causes.⁷



The Obesity System Map shows a vast number of factors operating at the personal, social and environmental levels with multiple linkages and no one factor dominating. This clearly points to the need for a sustained and wide-ranging programme of interventions in order to facilitate change.

Understanding the factors that influence behaviour

The factors that influence behaviour fall into the following broad levels: personal; social; local environment; and wider environment.

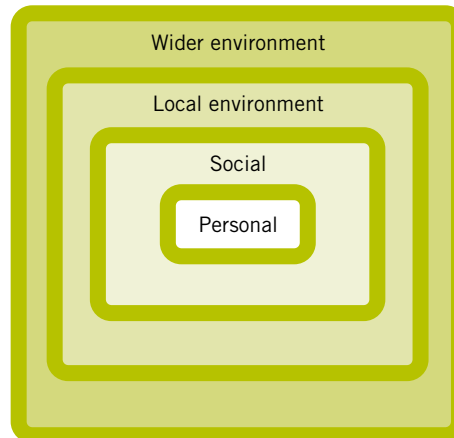
This section provides an overview of factors at all levels that can play a major role in influencing behaviour. It does not and cannot cover all the factors that influence behaviour. Instead, we have chosen to focus on those that appear across a number of different behavioural models and/or that we believe are particularly important to consider when designing communications aimed at influencing behaviour change.

The section also includes three examples of behavioural models to show how the factors selected work in context.

Personal factors

Knowledge and awareness

When we ask people to change their behaviour, we need to clearly set out our expectations. This might be, for example, the speed limit we want them to observe when driving in a built-up area. Standard economic theory assumes that if people are provided with information, they will act on it in such a way as to maximise personal benefit and minimise their costs, a concept often referred to as 'rational choice theory'.



The AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) marketing model is an example of an 'information deficit' model. It is based on the idea that providing information will spark interest, which in turn leads to desire and subsequently to action.

Sometimes – for example, when telling people how to deal with swine flu or about a new piece of legislation – it is appropriate simply to give them the relevant information. But **knowledge and awareness** are rarely enough by themselves to bring about behaviour change. Other factors can override our 'rational' selves, and we may make systematic errors in our rational calculations (see the section on behavioural economics, page 20).

Providing information is therefore a first step towards influencing behaviour change rather than an end point. For example, as well as explaining how eating too much and doing too little can lead to obesity, the Change4Life campaign (see case study on pages 28–29) also aims to increase self-efficacy (see page 18) by showing people that they can incorporate more activity into their daily lives. Information can also be used to direct people to other communication channels or services – such as a website – that aim more directly at changing behaviour.

Attitudes

Attitudes are specific to particular behaviours. Early psychological models show attitudes leading to intention in a predominantly linear fashion. In later models, attitude still plays a role but appears alongside a range of other factors.

While attitudes can influence behaviour, evidence now suggests that the link is not as strong as we might previously have thought. The so-called 'Value Action Gap' describes those situations where a person holds values that are inconsistent with their behaviour.

The Value Action Gap can be particularly evident with regard to 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. Darnton cites research into pro-environmental behaviours which found that at least 80 per cent of the factors influencing behaviour did **not** stem from knowledge or awareness.⁹ It is also important to bear in mind that although attitudes can precede behaviour, the opposite can also be true.



According to Festinger's theory of **cognitive dissonance**,⁸ a person holding two inconsistent views will feel a sense of internal conflict ('cognitive dissonance'), which will prompt them to change their views and so bring their perceptions into line. This has also been found to apply to inconsistencies between perceptions and behaviours.

A good example of cognitive dissonance is evident among smokers. Most smokers know that smoking causes lung cancer and other health problems, but they also want to live a long and healthy life. Smokers can seek to reduce this 'dissonance' either by giving up smoking or by finding ways to justify their habit, for example by claiming that cigarettes keep them slim or that they know someone who smoked 30 cigarettes a day and lived to be 100.

8 Festinger L (1957), *A theory of cognitive dissonance*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, California.

9 Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

Communications can help to shift attitudes. For example, government campaigns have succeeded in changing attitudes to drink driving and this, combined with legislative change and other interventions, has succeeded in bringing about behaviour change (see the case study on page 19). However, as with **knowledge and awareness**, shifting attitudes alone may not be enough to bring about behaviour change. It is therefore rarely advisable to view attitude shift as a precursor to behaviour change, or to use it as a proxy for behaviour change for the purposes of evaluation.

Habit and routine

Habit or **routine** can be a key factor in influencing frequent behaviours. In recent years, it has become an emerging area of study in social psychology and in fields such as neuroscience. Here, experiments on animals have given insights into the dual process cognitive system¹⁰ whereby the automatic mind handles most of our day-to-day functioning while the executive mind both monitors the automatic mind and takes on focused mental tasks.

The more we repeat a particular behaviour, the more automatic it becomes. As time passes and the behaviour is undertaken more and more frequently, habit can therefore become the key factor driving behaviour. As government communicators, many of the behaviours we try to influence will be habitual (for example, leaving appliances on standby or having the tap running while we brush our teeth). Such behaviours are often unconscious, and difficult to explain or justify.



Kurt Lewin's theories of change maintained that breaking habits required an 'emotional stir-up'¹¹ to raise the habit to conscious scrutiny. Smoking is both an addictive and a habitual behaviour. The British Heart Foundation's Fatty Cigarette campaign set out to tackle the habitual element by associating the cigarette with the damage it was doing. The aim was to ensure that each time the smoker thought about having a cigarette, they would also think about the damage it caused. This constituted the 'emotional stir-up' needed to turn smoking from an unconscious habit into a conscious action.

10 Graybiel (2008), 'Habits, rituals, and the evaluative brain' in *Annual Review of Neuroscience* vol 31, 359–87.

11 Lewin K (1951), *Field Theory in Social Science*, Social Science Paperbacks, London.

A number of behaviour change theories stress the importance of subjecting habits to scrutiny as a first step towards changing them, by raising them out of the unconscious mind. Communications designed to influence habitual behaviours must therefore look at which strategies will be most effective in turning a habit into a conscious behaviour. Ambient media used at the point where the behaviour actually takes place is an example of communications seeking to do this and can be very effective – for example, posters and stickers near washbasins reminding people to wash their hands, as used in the swine flu campaign.

Self-efficacy

Agency, self-efficacy and **perceived behavioural control** (different terms are used in different models) all describe ‘an individual’s sense that they can carry out a particular action successfully and that action will bring about the expected outcome’.¹² What is important is the belief, not whether or not the individual is actually capable of achieving a particular goal. 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 agency can be driven by many things,

including past experiences and personal beliefs (for example, some people are naturally more pessimistic than others).

This factor appears in many social psychological models. Lack of agency can be a strong barrier to behavioural change. Again, environmental issues are a useful example. ‘Public responses to climate change are commonly characterised by a lack of agency, for instance, the sense that the problem is too large for individuals to make a difference.’¹³

Communications can help to increase individuals’ sense of agency, for instance by providing clear instructions that make a particular behaviour seem more achievable, by using testimonials to show how other people have made the change or by helping to teach relevant skills. For example, one element of a recent sexual health campaign set out to teach young people negotiation skills which they could then use to initiate discussions about, for example, contraception. A further example of a campaign seeking to increase ‘agency’ is the Home Office vehicle crime campaign (see page 20). However, it is essential that any such communications are seen as trusted and credible and that the behaviour is depicted as achievable.

¹² Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

¹³ Ibid.

Moment of Doubt campaign

The Department for Transport's Moment of Doubt campaign aims to convince young men aged between 17 and 29 that the consequences of drink driving are relevant to them.

In the past, drink-driving campaign messages have been based on a risk and reward model, contrasting the pleasure of drinking with the risk of causing injury or death by driving under the influence. While the number of people killed has fallen from 1,600 in 1979, it has stayed relatively stable at above 500 a year since 2000.

The advertising agency, Leo Burnett, set out to re-evaluate the assumptions behind the campaign. Attitudinal research found that a small but growing number of people, particularly men aged 17–29, refused to acknowledge the risk of having a crash when driving after drinking, while qualitative

research suggested that trying to shock viewers with the most extreme consequences was becoming less effective for this group, who did not see drink drive-related crashes as relevant to them.

From general attitude to personal response

These findings, along with input from behavioural psychologists, pointed to a move away from campaigns that build public outrage towards persuading the target audience that drink driving could have immediate, negative consequences for them personally.

Consumer research, a semiotics analysis and behaviour theory identified the key intervention point as occurring when the drinker was deciding whether to have a second pint, ie when they were still in control. The campaign therefore focused on creating **cognitive dissonance** (see page 16) between the desire for another drink and a set of credible, relevant consequences such as getting a criminal record, being banned from driving and damaging relationships with a partner or family members.

Impact

Six months after the launch of the campaign, young men's perception that they would be caught by the police had risen from 58 to 75 per cent.¹⁴ The number of people breathalysed during December 2007 rose by 6.4 per cent, while the number testing positive fell by 19.5 per cent.¹⁵ The number of deaths and serious injuries caused by drink driving fell for the first time in six years, from 560 in 2006 to 410 in 2007.



14 BMRB Tracking, January 2008.

15 Association of Chief Police Officers.

Home Office vehicle crime campaign

The Home Office vehicle crime campaign sought to increase people's sense of agency by persuading them that they could outsmart the criminals.¹⁶

Where previous campaigns had used images of circling hyenas to play on people's fear of crime, the strapline 'Don't give them an easy ride' aimed to empower people and convince them that through their own actions they could lessen their chances of becoming a victim. The campaign also sought to change habits by placing ads reminding people to lock their cars and not leave valuables on show in strategic places such as parking meters and petrol pumps where opportunistic theft was most likely to happen.



Emotion

Emotions may be triggered without our knowing and can have a strong influence on our behaviour, both conscious and unconscious. While most models see emotion as influencing behaviour change indirectly (by altering attitude, habit or agency), there are occasionally situations where behaviour is driven by emotion alone. For example, a phobia or fear can determine how an individual behaves in certain situations.¹⁷

Where communications do aim to stimulate emotion, it is important to understand which factors are likely to be affected by the emotional response, given that often, emotion will not have a direct influence on behaviour. Emotion can be a useful 'hook' but it should not be the end point. Otherwise, there is a risk that the communication will not lead to any change in behaviour, as in the Home Office's original vehicle crime campaign (see box), where images of hyenas circling a car inspired fear in some sectors of the audience and left them feeling powerless.

Behavioural economics

In the previous section, we looked at some of the most common factors that drive behaviour at the personal level. These all appear in social psychological models. Behavioural economics can also be used to understand individual behaviour.

¹⁶ COI/IPA (2008), *How Public Service Advertising Works*, World Advertising Research Centre, London.

¹⁷ Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

Behavioural economics involves applying psychological insights to economic models to account for the systematic 'errors' in our decision-making. It suggests that the decisions we make are dependent on context and that natural **biases** and **mental shortcuts (heuristics)** can lead to 'imperfect' decision-making. Behavioural economics does not generate 'drivers', but it does offer principles that can help us understand why people deviate from the assumed 'rational' standard. Communicators seeking to influence behaviour in a way that involves making a decision or choice should therefore have an understanding of those principles.

Mental 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. Where, for instance, we don't have time to make a decision by calculating the pros and cons of various options, we often make an 'educated guess' based on, for example:

- **How easily we can recall (availability) or imagine (simulation) something happening:** We tend to believe that events we can easily think of or imagine happen more often and are consequently more likely to happen to us. '... people tend to be more nervous about flying than driving because airplane crashes are easy to recall. Similarly, it is found that the larger the jackpot in a lottery, the more tickets that are bought, because the consequences of a large prize attract more attention and are easy to imagine.'¹⁸

Communications can harness this bias by making it easier for people to imagine the consequences of a particular behaviour or reminding them of the (negative) consequences of a past action.

- **What has happened before (representativeness):** We generally make decisions based on how similar an outcome is to something that has happened before, not by weighing up all the possibilities.

'The heart of the gambler's fallacy is the misconception of the fairness of the laws of chance. The gambler feels that the fairness of the coin entitles him to expect that any deviation in one direction will be cancelled out by a corresponding deviation in the other ... This fallacy is not unique to gamblers'.¹⁹

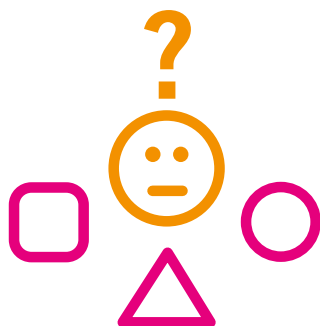
Biases

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 in the 'real world' and identify whether there is a role for communications in overcoming these biases, some of which are discussed here.

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

¹⁸ Halpern D, Bates C, Geales B and Heathfield A (2004), *Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy*, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, London.

¹⁹ Kahneman D, Slovic P and Tversky A (1974), 'Judgement Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases' in *Science* vol 185 No. 4157, 1124-31.



Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler in *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*²⁰ use the term **'choice architecture'** to describe how decisions can be influenced by the way in which they are framed. They argue that the 'choice architect' can 'nudge' people towards 'better' choices without compromising individual freedom.

This concept is particularly relevant to communications and central to the aims of many communications strategies, suggesting as it does that the way choices are framed can make them more effective.

The extent to which we disregard future gain (the 'discount rate') will increase the more remote the issue appears to be. So, generally speaking, the younger the person, the less likely they are 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.

'... policies that are based on individuals' investment in their future (eg personal pensions, adult education) have a tendency to widen inequalities as those with high discount rates will be less likely to take on these opportunities.'²¹

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. According to this principle, a message that states 'You will lose £X each year if you don't insulate your loft' will have more impact than one that states 'You will save £X each year if you do insulate your loft'.

We have a natural preference for the status quo (inertia). When faced with a difficult or complex choice, our tendency is to carry on doing what we've always done and avoid making a decision.

In recent years, there has been much discussion about how government can harness the power of inertia by adjusting society's 'default' settings, for example by requiring people to opt out

20 Thaler R and Sunstein C (2008), *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

21 Halpern D, Bates C, Geales B and Heathfield A (2004), *Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy*, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, London.

of becoming organ donors or making pension contributions something to opt out of rather than opt in to. Indeed, in the case of pensions this is already happening: from 2012, all employers will have to automatically enrol their eligible employees into a good quality workplace pension scheme and provide a minimum contribution unless the employee chooses to opt out.

Such decisions tend to be taken by policy teams (although communications may have a part to play both in helping to develop the policy and in getting messages out to the relevant audiences). But where this approach is not possible, communicators should give some thought to strategies for overcoming inertia, for example by making the behaviour seem easier to undertake than people perceive it to be.

Choices are influenced by the way they are presented (framing). As the discussion of biases demonstrates, many of the choices we make are hugely influenced by how they are presented to us or how they are framed.

Key learnings

- Understanding the natural biases and mental shortcuts that shape people's thinking should inform the nature and content of communications.

Social factors

'... an extremely important task during the formative stages of the strategic planning process is to gain an understanding of the extent to which interpersonal influences are likely to be important for one or more target groups.²²

Other people's values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour can have a strong **social influence** on our own behaviour, a phenomenon that has been widely discussed in recent years.

Social norms are the group 'rules' that determine what is deemed 'acceptable' behaviour. Social norms can have a huge influence on our thoughts and behaviours and therefore appear in many different social psychological models. Social 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.

When we are unsure of how to act in social situations we often assume that others around us know more and look to them for pointers on how to behave, a phenomenon known as **social proof**. An example of this would be a party where food is laid out but guests are unsure whether it's acceptable to help themselves. As soon as the first person helps themselves, others will quickly follow: the behaviour has been shown to be acceptable to the group.

²² Andreasen A (1995), *Marketing social change: Changing behaviour to promote health, social development and the environment*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

We tend to underestimate the extent to which we are influenced by others. Most people will deny any influence at all, an important factor to consider, particularly for researchers. Direct questioning alone is unlikely to be the best way of establishing the influence of social norms on an individual.

Communications and social norms

Communications can be effective in highlighting social norms and prompting people to act in accordance with them. An experiment involving hotel guests provides an illustration.²³ Half the guests had signs in their bathrooms with a message about how reusing towels could benefit the environment. The other half had the same sign but with an extra message stating that most hotel guests reused their towels at least once during their stay. Guests exposed to the additional message were 26 per cent more likely to reuse their towels: a clear demonstration of the power of social proof.

Further examples of how communications can utilise the power of social norms include:

- peer-to-peer approaches such as online forums or communities where people can connect to others in similar circumstances. This can be particularly helpful with regard to less common or more sensitive issues, as social proof and reassurance can be provided in a 'safe' and anonymous way;

- positive testimonials from others who have used a service or adopted a particular behaviour (thus showing that such behaviours are acceptable). Note that testimonials can also help to boost self-efficacy (see page 18);
- targeting campaigns at respected, authoritative opinion leaders or recruiting them as 'ambassadors' for a brand or behaviour. These people can help both to spread the message and to provide social proof of the acceptability of a particular behaviour; and
- driving word of mouth, for example by using PR techniques to generate news stories that describe other people behaving in a particular way.

Social norms can be particularly strong in relation to some of the most intractable behaviours that government is seeking to change. For example, if the norm within a peer group is to go out and drink to excess, it is unlikely that lasting behaviour change will be achieved unless that norm is addressed. For the young people in that group, the views and behaviour of their peers will be a more powerful influence than information provided by other sources.

Descriptive and injunctive norms

The social psychologist Robert Cialdini distinguishes between two types of social norm: 'descriptive norms' and 'injunctive norms'.²⁴ Descriptive norms fit the description of social norms set out above: that is, we base our own behaviour on how other people act. Injunctive

²³ Goldstein N, Martin S and Cialdini R (2007), *Yes! 50 Secrets from the Science of Persuasion*, Profile, London.

²⁴ Cialdini R, Kallgren C and Reno R (1991), 'A Focus Theory of Normative Conduct: a theoretical refinement and re-evaluation of the role of norms in human behaviour' in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* vol 24, 201–34.

norms are the rules and regulations that tell us what we should do. Often, the two types of norm align but sometimes, as in Tim Jackson's motorway driving example (see right), this is not the case.

The risk of unintended consequences

Communicators must be aware of the risk of making the behaviour they are seeking to change seem as if it is widespread and therefore acceptable. For example, in seeking to highlight the problem of missed appointments, hospitals and GP surgeries will often cite the number of people that fail to turn up. It has been argued that this approach runs the risk of inadvertently legitimising the behaviour – other people are doing it, so why shouldn't I? An alternative would therefore be to focus instead on the fact that the vast majority of people do turn up on time.

Similarly, it has been argued that raising awareness, particularly of risky health behaviours such as heavy drinking or drug taking, may serve to exacerbate the problem. Research in the US into the different approaches taken by colleges to try to reduce alcohol consumption found that most campaigns highlighted the 'descriptive norm', that is the high consumption of alcohol. Through the use of trial communications, the team found that such messages could actually encourage those students who drank less than the amount described to increase their consumption to the level presented as the norm.²⁵



'Tim Jackson gives the example of motorway driving (Jackson 2005): if other drivers around him are driving over the speed limit, he may be likely to do the same (following the **descriptive** not the **injunctive** norm). If he sees a police car up ahead, he is likely to reduce his speed; the police car performs a focusing function, making the **injunctive** norm salient. The police car also provides an element of 'surveillance', the sense of foreboding that sanctions may be imposed which is a requirement for adherence to injunctive norms. The focusing function is also required in activating **descriptive** norms.'²⁶

25 Schultz PW, Nolan JM, Cialdini RB, Goldstein NJ and Griskevicius V (2007) 'The Constructive, Destructive, and Reconstructive Power of Social Norms', in *Psychological Science*, vol 18 No. 5, 429–34.

26 Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

While there are instances of social norms changing rapidly, this has often been as a result of legislative change, for example the ban on smoking in public (smoking had already become less acceptable, but the ban made it even more so). More commonly, social norms change slowly, and therefore, in the absence of legislative change, a long-term approach will be required as it will take time for any changes to filter through and become commonplace in society. In other words, a short burst of communications activity alone is unlikely to be effective in shifting a social norm.

Environmental factors

In order to understand why people behave in the way they do, it is essential to take into account the physical conditions and environment in which they live.

Environmental factors can be hugely significant in determining how an individual will behave. Before behaviour change can occur, the right ‘facilitating conditions’²⁷ must be in place in both the individual’s local (exo) environment and the wider (macro) environment.

The local (exo) environment

However motivated we are to behave in a certain way, if our local environment puts barriers in the way of that behaviour it is unlikely that we will succeed. For example, an individual may be strongly motivated to use public transport instead of a car, but if there is little access to public transport in their area, it will be difficult if not impossible for them to change their behaviour.

Another example is recycling. Before kerbside collections became commonplace, anyone wanting to recycle needed not only the motivation to recycle but also the commitment to find a recycling facility and access to transport. To be effective, communications aimed at persuading people to recycle needed to go hand in hand with improving access to recycling facilities.

The wider (macro) environment

Factors that operate at a national or even international level can also have a huge influence on individual behaviour. Wider or **macro environmental** factors can include technology, the economy, taxation and legislation.

Most social psychological behavioural models do not make explicit reference to external factors. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (see page 31) looks at environmental factors within the context of ‘perceived behavioural control’, while the Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour (see page 32) considers external factors as part of ‘facilitating conditions’.

Although few models reference specific environmental factors, it is essential that communicators take them fully into account. Systems mapping or similar exercises at the start of any interventions planning should identify the factors influencing behaviour at this level. Social psychological models can then be used to identify factors and plan interventions at the personal and social levels.

The implications for communicators

Broadly speaking, factors influencing behaviour at the environmental level will often be tackled through policy or delivery interventions, for example by making changes to regulations or the provision of services. Communications nevertheless have an important role to play.

Communications can provide vital support for policy interventions, for example by providing information about new legislation (such as the reclassification of cannabis) or promoting local services. In such cases, more traditional forms of advertising may be appropriate.

Communications can also influence environmental factors by helping to frame the discourse on particular issues. While this may challenge 'traditional' definitions of the role of communications, it is an important point to consider, particularly where government is seeking to influence behaviours that are deep-seated and difficult to change.

Participative approaches such as citizens' summits, workshops or online dialogue draw on theories of learning and change which argue that sustainable change cannot be imposed. Rather, people need to play an active role in the change process. Communications could be used, for example, to recruit people into programmes that empower them to change the environment themselves or to highlight local problems, thus creating the momentum for change.

Even where hard policy levers are applied, individuals may fail to respond in a 'rational' way (see page 15). Litter penalties are one example of this. Since 2006, councils have had the power to issue fixed penalty notices to anyone dropping litter in public. However, littering remains a major problem, even in areas where those penalties are enforced. In such cases, communications can play a crucial role alongside policy interventions by seeking to persuade people to adopt or advocate a particular behaviour.

Key learnings

- We cannot rely on people to make rational decisions based on the information provided, and we cannot assume that changing attitudes will lead to a change in behaviour.
- Social factors are powerful, and social norms are deeply entrenched. Change in social norms is often slow to happen, and communications are likely to be most effective when working with other interventions in shifting social norms.
- Communications will often provide valuable support for policy interventions in influencing environmental factors.

Change4Life

The cross-government Obesity Team's Change4Life campaign aims to help families improve their long-term health by making positive changes to their lifestyle.

The Foresight report *Tackling Obesities: Future Choices*²⁸ concluded that obesity is caused by a wide range of factors, including environmental, economic, media, educational and technological factors, and that tackling it calls for a multi-faceted, cross-societal approach. Change4Life, which was launched in 2009, therefore forms part of a wider cross-government strategy, Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives, which includes initiatives such as building safe places to play, promoting healthy food in schools and the development of an active transport policy.

There is no behaviour change model for obesity prevention, so the Change4Life team based its marketing campaign on a hypothetical behaviour change journey derived from a review of behaviour change theories and research with the target market. The plan is to adapt the hypothesis as the campaign progresses.²⁹

The right conditions for change

The most relevant models included Robert West's 'PRIME' Theory, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Social Cognitive Theory and Social Capital Theory. The team agreed that the programme should be split into two steps: first, creating the right conditions for behaviour change; and second, supporting people on their behaviour change journey. Findings from the Tobacco Control campaign (see case study on page 43) suggested that the conditions for behaviour change included being dissatisfied with the present, having a positive image of the future and having specific triggers for action.

The marketing plan was therefore split into six phases, which map on to the behaviour change journey shown opposite:

- Pre-stage: engaging with workforces and partners, including local service providers and NGOs, both face to face and through direct marketing.
- Phase 1: reframing obesity as relevant to the target audience groups with the aim of encouraging a social movement, using TV, print and outdoor advertising, PR, a helpline, a campaign website and fulfilment materials, and by building partnerships.
- Phase 2: personalising the issue by making people realise that their behaviours could be putting themselves and their families at risk. The main mechanism for this was a questionnaire, asking families about a typical day in their lives. Responding to this questionnaire triggered individualised advice and guidance. Activity was targeted at postcodes with the highest risk of obesity.



28 Vandenbroeck P, Goossens J and Clemens M (2007), *Tackling Obesities: Future Choices* – *Building the Obesity System Map*, Government Office for Science, London..

29 Department of Health, Change4Life marketing strategy, 2009.

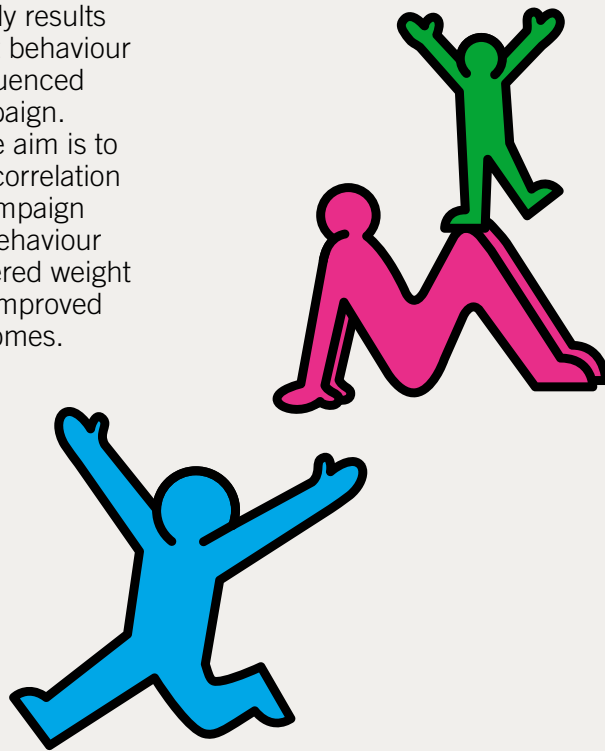
change 4 life

Eat well Move more Live longer

- Phase 3: defining the eight behaviours families should adopt and promoting them through advertising and a range of partners, using direct and relationship marketing and focusing activity on areas where target audience groups were most likely to live.
- Phase 4: inspiring people to change through real-life stories in the local and national press, and locally targeted activities.
- Phase 5: ongoing support and encouragement for at-risk families going through the change process, delivered by post and online.

Impact

Although it is too early in the campaign to validate all the assumptions made about behaviour change, early results suggest that behaviour is being influenced by the campaign. The ultimate aim is to establish a correlation between campaign response, behaviour change, altered weight status and improved health outcomes.



Measuring Change4Life's impact through the behaviour change journey



Behaviour models: some examples

Models help us to understand the underlying **factors** that influence behaviour. There are many different social psychological models, some specific to particular behaviours and others more general, and it is worth spending time identifying which are most appropriate to the behaviour you are seeking to influence.

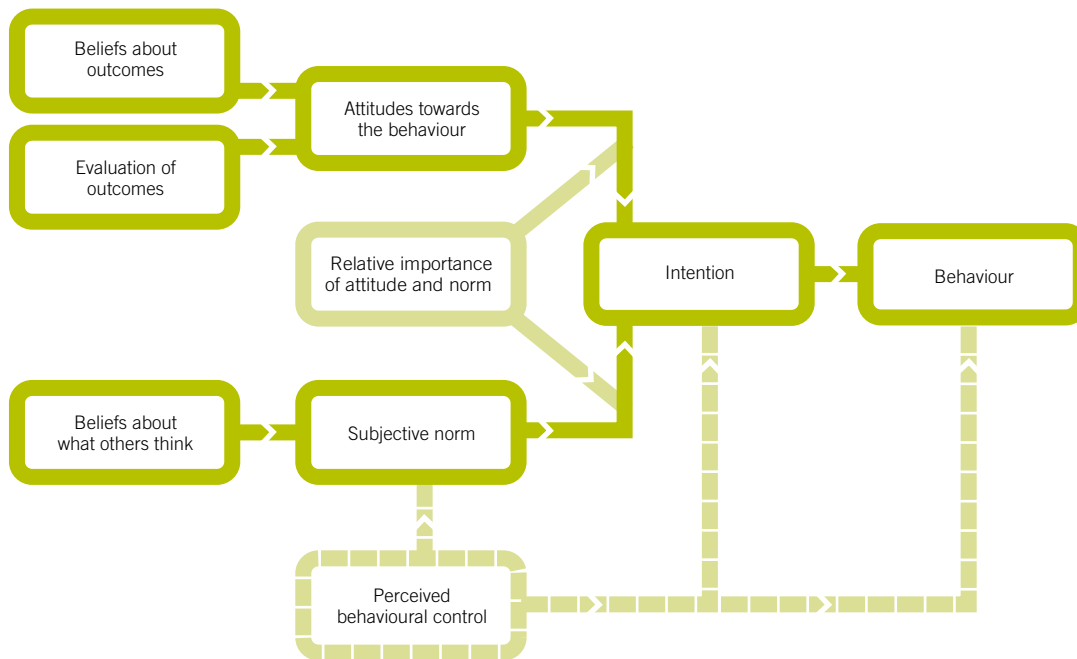
It is likely that you will identify a number of models that are relevant to the behaviour you are seeking to influence. From these, you will be able to identify those factors where communications are likely to have an impact. As discussed previously, models should be used in conjunction with other evidence to build up as comprehensive a picture as possible of the behaviour in question.

The three examples of models included here have been selected because they represent the differing levels of complexity and scale that can be found in models:

- **The Theory of Planned Behaviour:** provides an example of an intention-based model. It is also one of the best-known and widely used behavioural models.
- **The Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour:** builds on intention-based models by including other factors, notably habit. As discussed above (see page 17) this factor is a major influence on many of the behaviours that government is seeking to change.
- **The Needs, Opportunity, Ability model** refers explicitly to environmental-level factors, something that is relatively rare in social psychological models.

For a more comprehensive list of models, see the appendices to the GSR Review³⁰ which cover over 60 social psychological and behavioural models and theories and includes an appendix matching behaviour types or domains (for example environment, health or transport) to models.

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1986)³¹



The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)³² is a well-known model that has been fairly 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.

Intention is seen as leading directly to behaviour.

The TPB is an 'adjusted expectancy value model'. Whereas an 'expectancy value' model is based solely on attitude,

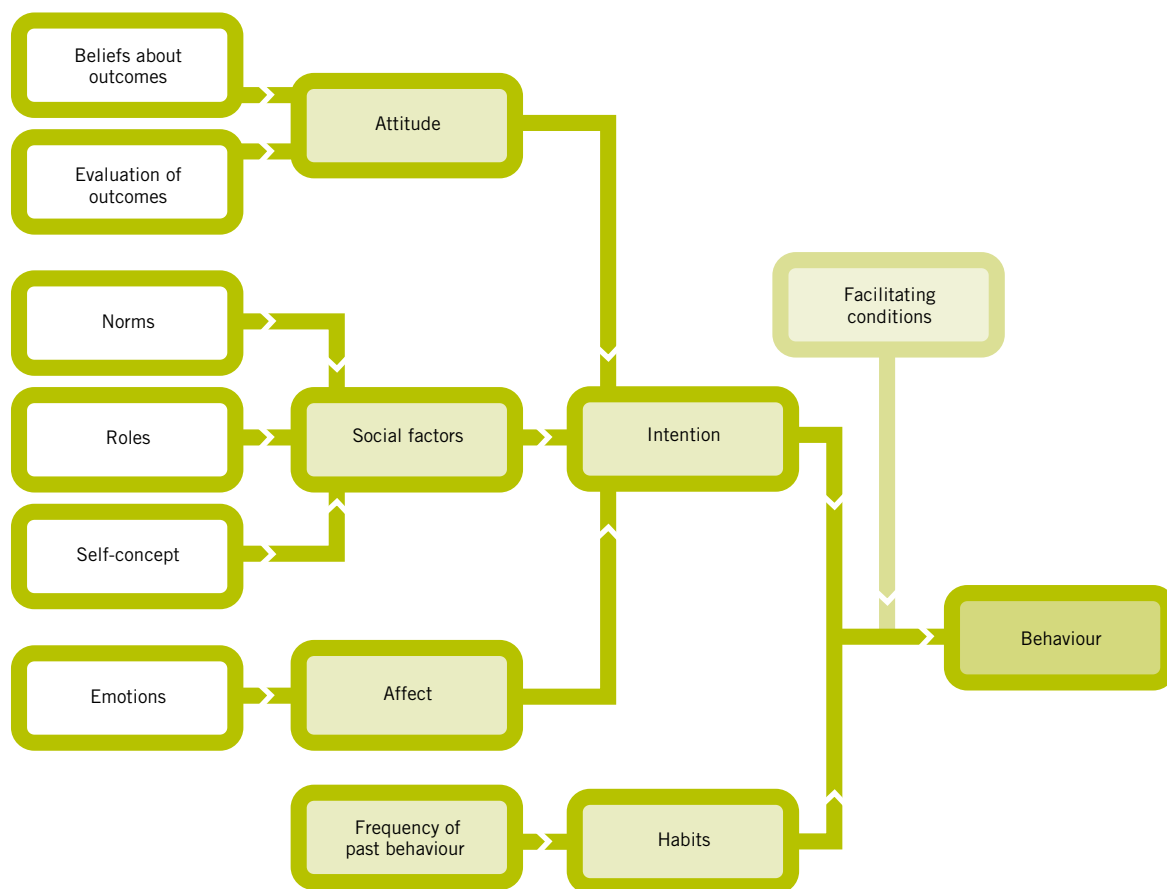
the TPB also recognises the influence of the 'subjective norm' (that is, how socially acceptable an individual believes their behaviour to be). It also includes 'perceived behavioural control', defined in this case as the ease (or otherwise) of performing the behaviour in question (see page 18, on self-efficacy).

For these reasons, the model is seen as providing a more accurate prediction of behaviours than models based solely on attitude. Nevertheless, the TPB remains an intention-based model. Given that behaviour is driven by many factors other than intention, the model may be more effective at predicting intention than actual behaviour.

31 Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

32 Ibid.

Triandis' Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour (1977)³³



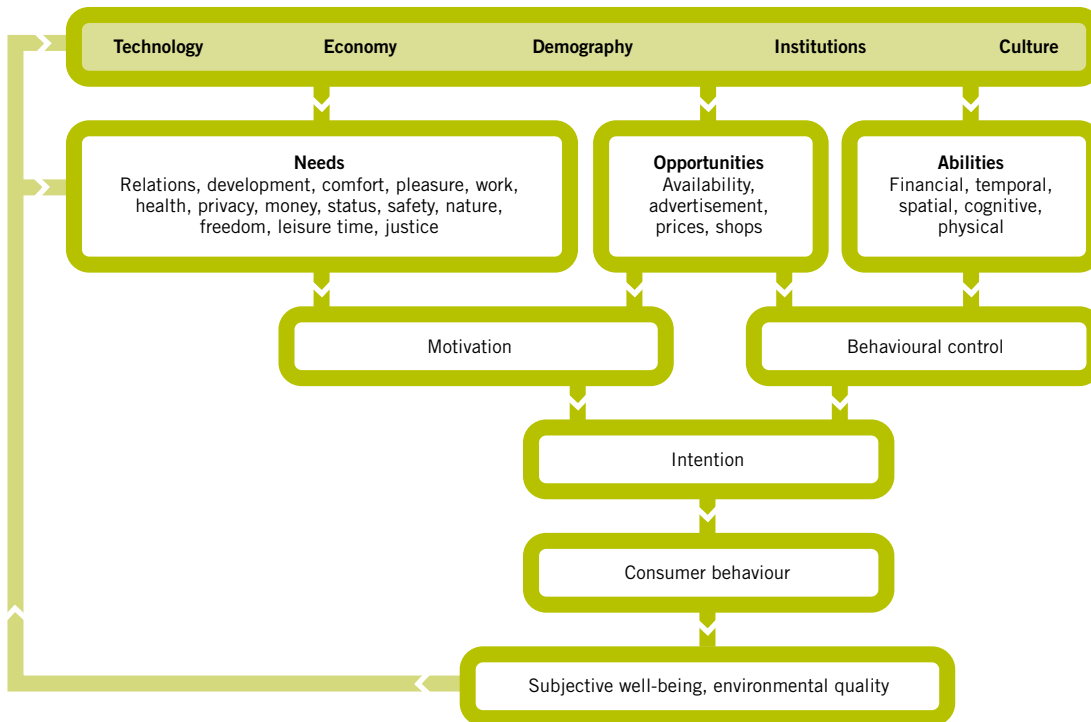
The Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour

Harry Triandis' Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour (TIB) 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 (called 'facilitating conditions' in the model). Triandis also recognised 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), Triandis saw habit as the most influential. He also believed that its influence increased over time and, therefore, that the influence of intention decreased. The more times a behaviour is repeated, the more **automatic** and less **deliberative** it becomes.

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

Velk et al's Needs Opportunities, Abilities model (1997)³⁴



Needs, Opportunity, Ability

The Needs, Opportunity, Ability (NOA) model of consumer behaviour is a good example of a model that explicitly incorporates factors at the environmental level.³⁵

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' (which is driven by needs and opportunities) and 'behavioural control' (agency) (which is driven by opportunities and abilities).

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. The model shows a two-way relationship between

environmental factors and consumer behaviour, with a large 'feedback loop' linking the top and bottom levels.

Perhaps because of its greater complexity, the NOA is used less frequently than either the TPB or the TIB. However, it provides a valuable demonstration of how environmental factors can influence behaviour and shows clearly that focusing only on personal factors will not be enough to bring about change.

'The NOA emphatically shows the interaction between individual and society, and demonstrates the need for interventions to work on multiple levels of scale.'³⁶

The FRANK case study (overleaf) provides a practical example of how a behavioural model has been used to inform a communications strategy.

34, 36 Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

35 Gatersleben B and Vlek C (1998), *Household Consumption, Quality of Life and Environmental Impacts: A Psychological Perspective and Empirical Study*, in Noorman KJ and Schoot-Viterkamp, AJM (eds), *Green Households? Domestic Consumers, Environment and Sustainability*, Earthscan Publications, London.

FRANK

In 2005, the FRANK campaign team set out to adopt a more targeted approach to communicating with young people about drugs

Desk research into the best ways of communicating with young people about drugs³⁷ identified Gibbons and Gerrard's Dual Path Theory³⁸ as an effective way of addressing risk issues where there was no direct correlation between attitude and behaviour.

Dual Path Theory behavioural model

Gibbons and Gerrard's model reflects the fact that drug taking involves rational, irrational and social factors and informs four potential roles for intervention communications:

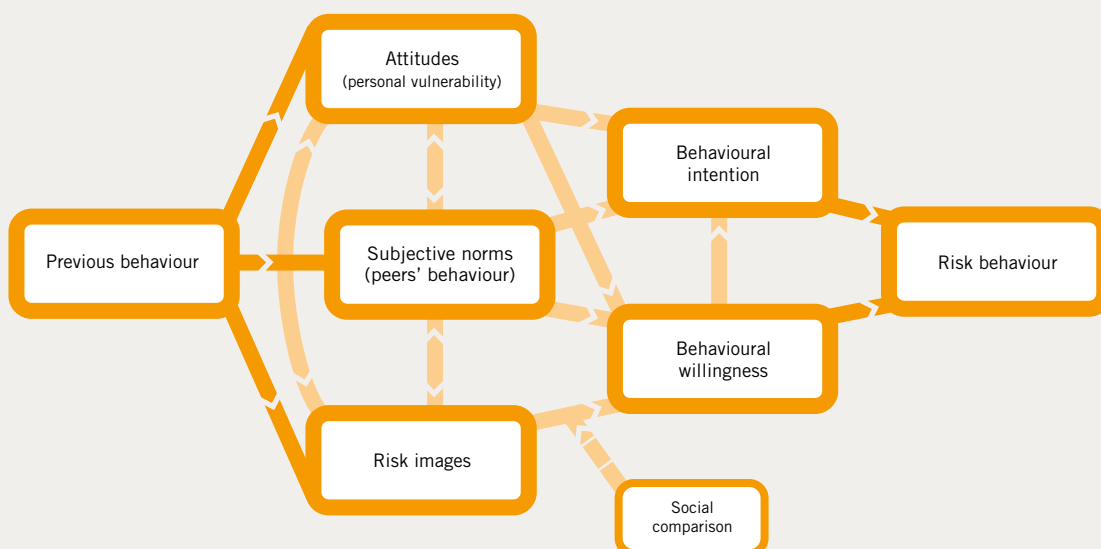
- boosting young people's resistance (**behavioural willingness**);
- encouraging young people to see drug use as marginal rather than mainstream (**subjective norms** – peers' behaviour);
- emphasising the risks involved in taking drugs (**personal vulnerability**); and

- undermining the image of drug users (**risk images**).

Insights and implications

The model research yielded a number of valuable insights. The first was that if a young person has previously used a drug, this will inform their future drug-taking behaviour. Communications therefore work best when they are targeted at young people before they become regular drug users. The FRANK campaign is not interested in outright rejecters, so resources have been focused on young people who are thinking about taking a drug for the first time and occasional users.

Secondly, younger adolescents (11–14 years old) are heavily influenced by their peers. Even where there is a strong intention not to use drugs, their high level of **behavioural willingness** means that they will look to their peer/



37 Darnton A (2005), *Understanding Young People's Drug Use, Desk Research Report One: Commentary*, for FRANK and COI, London.

38 Gibbons F, Gerrard M and Lane D (2003), 'A Social Reaction Model of Adolescent Health Risk' in Suls J and Wallstone K (eds), *Social Psychological Foundations of Health and Illness*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, Massachusetts.

FRANK

social group when making a decision. Messages therefore encouraged this group to contact FRANK for expert advice rather than listening to their friends.

They also indirectly promoted negative perceptions of drug users and emphasised the risks of drug taking. The campaign focused on cannabis, the most prevalent drug for this age group.

Thirdly, young people aged 15+ tend to think more rationally about the risks of drugs and be more drug experienced. Their decisions are more likely to be informed by their own sense of personal vulnerability as well as by their peer/social group. Messaging for this group therefore focused on the risks involved in using drugs (mainly cocaine) and on building up trust and confidence in FRANK.

Impact

This model-driven approach to the campaign is reflected in its evaluation. Key performance indicators (KPIs) include the number of young people contacting FRANK, increasing awareness of the risks, strengthening resistance and promoting negative perceptions of drug users. The campaign has achieved considerable, measurable success in these areas since the model was adopted.

Knowing and trusting FRANK as the expert on drugs:³⁹

- Total awareness of the FRANK campaign among the target group is 90 per cent.
- FRANK is the **most trusted** source of drug information and advice for young people
 - 81 per cent trust FRANK to provide them with reliable information;
 - 59 per cent would turn to FRANK for information about drugs, compared

with 44 per cent who would turn to their mother, 22 per cent who would turn to their friends and 20 per cent who would turn to their doctor.

Perceived risk of drugs (of cannabis among the 11–14s and cocaine in the 15+ group):

- The percentage of 11–14-year-olds agreeing that cannabis is very likely to damage the mind rose from 45 per cent in April 2006 to 63 per cent in April 2009.
- After the last burst of cannabis advertising (February 2009), 74 per cent said the advertising made them realise that cannabis is more risky than they thought.
- After the last burst of cocaine advertising (January 2009), 67 per cent said the ads made them realise that cocaine is more risky than they thought.

Negative perceptions of drug users (negative average out of 10):

Drug user	March 2006	April 2007	March 2008	5 April 2009
Cannabis ⁴⁰	7.2	7.5	7.5	7.7
Cocaine ⁴¹	7.4	7.6	7.8	8.0

Note: The higher the score the more negative the perception is of users of that drug.

Building young people's resistance skills

- After the last burst of cannabis advertising, 73 per cent said that the advertising made them less likely to take cannabis in the future.
- After the last burst of cocaine advertising, 62 per cent said that the campaign made them less likely to take cocaine in the future.

³⁹ Tracking survey (Synovate).

⁴⁰ Base: young people who have never used cannabis.

⁴¹ Base: young people who have never used cocaine.

Key learnings

- Models should be used as tools to identify factors that influence the behaviour you are seeking to change.
- You may find that there are a number of models that are relevant to the behaviour.
- Not all models include factors at the environmental level, but it is nevertheless critically important to identify these and build them into your planning.
- Models should be used in conjunction with primary research and other evidence to build up a full picture of the behaviour. This can then be used to develop an intervention/communications strategy.

Understanding how behaviour changes

In the section headed ‘Understanding the factors that influence behaviour’ (see page 15) we looked at the various factors that can influence behaviour. In this section, we will look at some theories on how behaviour actually changes. Anyone working on communications aimed at influencing behaviour will need an understanding of the main theories of behaviour change and their implications for communications.

The Stages of Change

The best-known theory of behaviour change is the ‘Stages of Change’ model,⁴² developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente and based on smokers’ approaches to giving up cigarettes.

Since then, this model has been used for a wide range of primarily health-related behaviours, including weight loss and alcohol and drug problems. 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. Their self-efficacy (see page 18) is high.

Individuals are segmented by stage. 'Staged-matched interventions' have been devised and provide suggestions as to how people at each stage can best be moved forward. Over recent years, however, the model has been subject to criticism, with some arguing that there is no evidence that stage-matched interventions are any more effective than other interventions, and that interventions can work at any stage of the change process.

Nevertheless, the model can provide a useful way of identifying where an individual is in their 'change journey' and understanding what this means for targeting and messaging. For instance, individuals who are interested in changing their behaviour (ie who are in the 'contemplation' stage) may be a useful primary target for any communications activity.

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations

This well-known theory seeks to explain how new ideas and technology spread through society by 'diffusion', defined as 'the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system'.⁴³ Its basic premise is that people fall into the following five categories, according to how likely they are to adopt particular 'innovations':

1. **Innovators:** The first to adopt. As a group they are more willing to take risks. They also tend to be young and to belong to the higher social classes.
2. **Early adopters:** Tend to be seen as opinion leaders among the later adopter groups and, like innovators, tend to be younger and from higher social classes.
3. **Early majority:** Later to adopt than innovators and early adopters. Innovation 'spreads' through contact with early adopters. They are also seen as opinion leaders by some.
4. **Late majority:** Adopt innovations later than average and tend to be more sceptical than the above groups. They are less likely to show opinion leadership than groups 1, 2 and 3, and have less contact with earlier adopter groups.
5. **Laggards:** Adopt innovations later than all the other groups. Laggards tend to be older and are not usually opinion leaders. Their networks tend to be limited to family and close friends.

43 Rogers E (1995), *Diffusion of Innovation*, Free Press, New York.

It is notable that the groups most likely to adopt an innovation early on tend to demonstrate higher levels of opinion leadership (that is, to be held in high regard and have their opinion respected by others). Opinion leadership is often subject-specific; it is possible to be an opinion leader in relation to one innovation but a follower with regard to another. Rogers argues that adoption depends on access to 'information' about the innovation, and that this information should be tailored to the group.

According to the theory, innovation spreads gradually through the first groups. When the level of adoption reaches between 10 and 20 per cent (Gladwell's 'tipping point'⁴⁴) the rate of adoption suddenly increases steeply before levelling off at around 80 to 90 per cent. Diffusion itself also follows a five-stage process:

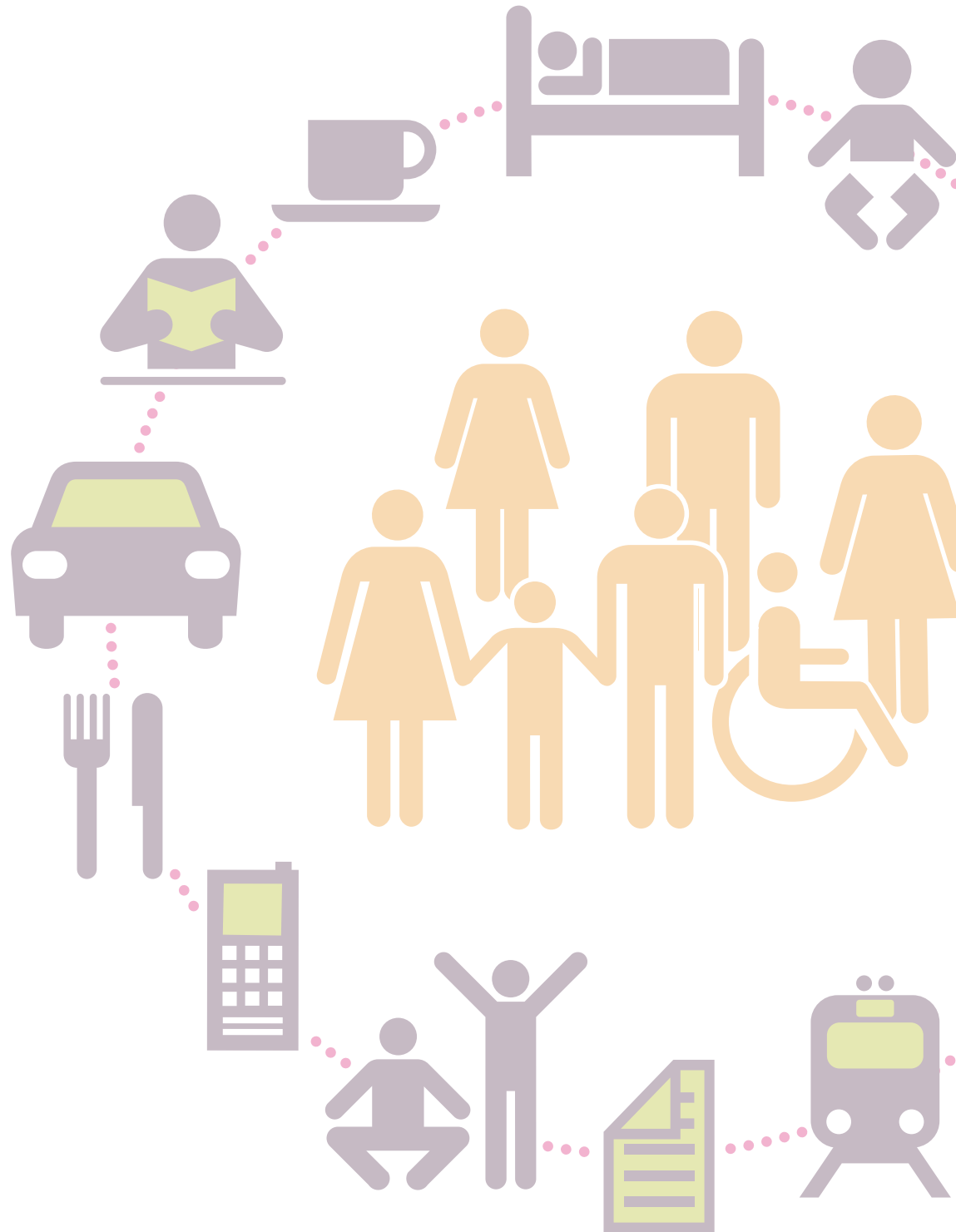
1. **Knowledge:** The individual is aware of the innovation but lacks information about it.
2. **Persuasion:** The individual becomes interested in the innovation and seeks information about it.
3. **Decision:** The individual weighs the pros and cons and decides whether or not to adopt the innovation.
4. **Implementation:** The individual adopts the innovation.
5. **Confirmation:** The individual decides to continue using the innovation.

The theory is based on a deliberative linear process similar to that shown in the AIDA marketing model (see page 15). The individual decision as to whether or not to adopt the innovation is very 'rational'.

This theory of change has been widely used in commercial marketing, principally in relation to the adoption of new technologies and products rather than behaviours. Nevertheless, the concept of opinion leaders as important agents of change is a useful one, as is an understanding of how change spreads through society. Both these factors support the case for using communications to target opinion leaders (in the hope that they will then spread the message and encourage take-up among others) and for peer-to-peer marketing that exploits the power of social networks.

Key learnings

- As well as understanding the factors that influence behaviour, it is important to understand how behaviour changes.



EMBEDDING BEHAVIOURAL THEORY

This section focuses on how behavioural theory can be used to support the practical planning, delivery and evaluation of communications. This will help to ensure that communications are designed with a realistic understanding of what they can be expected to achieve, within what timescale and at what cost.



‘What influences people’s behaviour?’ demonstrated some of the ways in which behavioural theory can help us understand human behaviour. However, it also highlighted some of the complexities of the field, and showed that there is no one simple way of addressing communications challenges.

The process set out here recognises and reflects that complexity, but is nevertheless designed to be practical. It is not prescriptive; rather, its aim is to show how behavioural theory can be used to support the development of a robust communications model. We appreciate that communications teams are often working to tight time constraints. This process is designed to be usable and achievable within tight deadlines, and can be adapted to work within both shorter and longer timescales.

For clarity and simplicity, we have split the process into five steps, as shown in the figure overleaf:

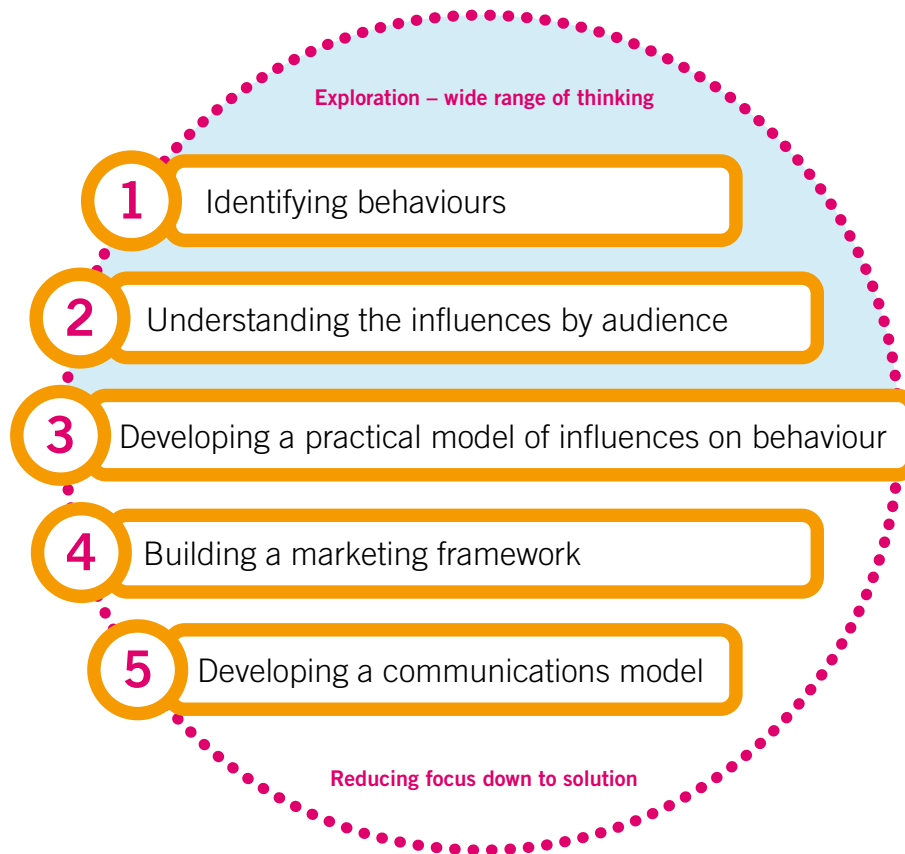
The five-step process

Many communications and policy formation projects are already broadly following all or some of these steps. However, what is often missing is any systematic attempt to utilise the value of behavioural theory throughout the process and to share knowledge between all of those involved in developing interventions, including communications teams and their agencies.

At each stage of the process, an example drawn from the Department of Health’s Tobacco Control project brings the theory to life by showing how that step could operate in practice.

‘We need an even better understanding of human behaviour, not just to arrive at the optimum solution in terms of motivation but also to understand how to get as close as possible to the behaviour under investigation to stand the greatest chance of influencing it.’ Judie Lannon⁴⁵

The five-step process



Why use the five-step process?

Identifying, translating and applying relevant behavioural theory from the outset will help you to:

- make sure that the right questions are asked and the right people are involved;
- build close working relationships between communications and policy teams and external agencies;
- set clear expectations as to what communications can achieve;
- identify new roles for communications;
- identify the types of agencies that should be involved in the process and ensure that their energies are focused on addressing the challenge, rather than defining it; and
- support robust evaluation based on a clear, shared understanding of objectives and the role of communications in achieving them.

In practice: background to the strategic review of the Tobacco Control campaign

The behavioural goal of the Department of Health's Tobacco Control marketing and communications strategy 2008–10 is to help reduce smoking prevalence to 21 per cent among the general adult population and to reduce the prevalence among routine and manual workers to 26 per cent.

Before a recent strategy review, Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages of Change model (see page 36) played a major role in shaping communications activity. The model was used both to focus the creative targeting of campaigns (for example, campaigns about NHS Stop Smoking services targeted those in the preparation phase) and to evaluate them (for example, analysis of campaign tracking data was based on the stages within the model).

For one part of the campaign, the 'Together' programme, the Prochaska model has formed the basis of the entire contact strategy. Together, which is still in use, offers remote support to move potential quitters from preparation to maintenance (that is, from stage 3 to stage 5 of the model). The blueprint for content creation and the timing of messages are entirely dictated by the model.

However, while the Stages of Change model has been invaluable in structuring thinking, it is a model about how behaviour changes, not what influences behaviour. Many important influences in smoking cessation – such as the impact of legislation and pricing – are 'off the model' and not explicitly described.

Moreover, there was growing clinical evidence that interventions tailored around the model were no more effective than untailored approaches. The strategic review of Tobacco Control communications presented an ideal opportunity to survey the behaviour change landscape and identify a more appropriate model.

Step	Key questions	Outcome	
Step 1 Identifying behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we addressing single or multiple behaviours? • How do we break down the issue into its component behaviours? • How do multiple behaviours relate or group? • Who do we want to undertake the behaviour? • What is the desired and current behaviour? • Does the behaviour involve people starting, stopping, maintaining or preventing? 	Agreed target behaviours	Exploration

1

Identifying behaviours

Step 1 involves identifying the behaviour or behaviours that your policy and/or communications activities are seeking to influence.

As previously mentioned, sometimes government communications will seek to influence a single behaviour – for example, getting drivers to reduce their speed. But many of the more complex issues government is seeking to address, such as climate change and obesity, will require changes in multiple behaviours.

If you are aiming to influence a single behaviour, or the component behaviours have already been identified, go straight to step 2. If not, your starting point should be to identify all the relevant behaviours relating to your policy and communication goals (which may not necessarily be the same) (see pages 13–15 for more detail). Otherwise, it will be impossible to develop an understanding of the factors that influence those behaviours.

Step 1 in practice: the Tobacco Control campaign

The Department of Health identified two key behaviours that it would need to influence in order to reduce smoking prevalence:

- whether or not an individual chooses to make a quit attempt; and
- the method by which they choose to quit.

By getting more people to make quit attempts the aim is to increase the ‘market’ for quitting. In influencing ‘how’ people quit, the aim is to increase the overall success of quit attempts. Evidence shows that some methods of quitting are more successful than others: for example, smokers who quit with NHS Stop Smoking services are four times more likely to succeed than those who go ‘cold turkey’.

Step	Key questions	Outcome	
Step 2 Understanding the influences by audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors are at play at the following levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – personal (for example habit, emotions, confidence, knowledge, biases or mental shortcuts)? – social (for example is the behaviour with or against social norms, peer pressure, who will influence and how strongly)? – local and wider environmental (for example access, price, opportunity, services, proximity)? • How do factors differ across audiences? How does their importance vary across different audience groups? 	Detailed understanding of all influencing factors	Exploration

2

Understanding the influences by audience

The next step is to identify all the factors influencing the behaviour(s) that relate to your policy and communication goals. These factors will vary among different audience groups. Behavioural theory should play an important role in this task.

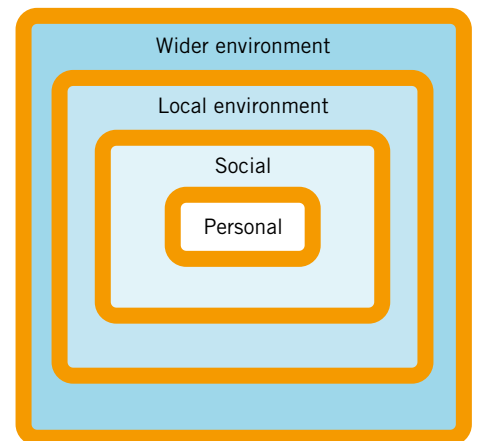
The factors influencing behaviour can be divided into broad levels: personal, social and environmental (both local and wider). (See pages 15–27 for more detail.) You will need to consider factors at all these levels. Note that this may mean considering more than one behavioural model and looking at other relevant theories.

The GSR Review⁴⁶ describes over 60 models and theories and includes an appendix that matches behaviour types or domains (eg environment, health, transport) to models. This can be a useful starting point for identifying relevant models and factors that influence the behaviour(s) in question.

Generating behavioural insight

As noted above, behavioural models and theories are often based on a theoretical ‘everyman’. Models do not always indicate the relative importance of factors, and some are developed with a specific behaviour in mind. To develop meaningful insights into the reasons why people behave as they do, you will need to draw on other information (including primary research) as well as on behavioural theory.

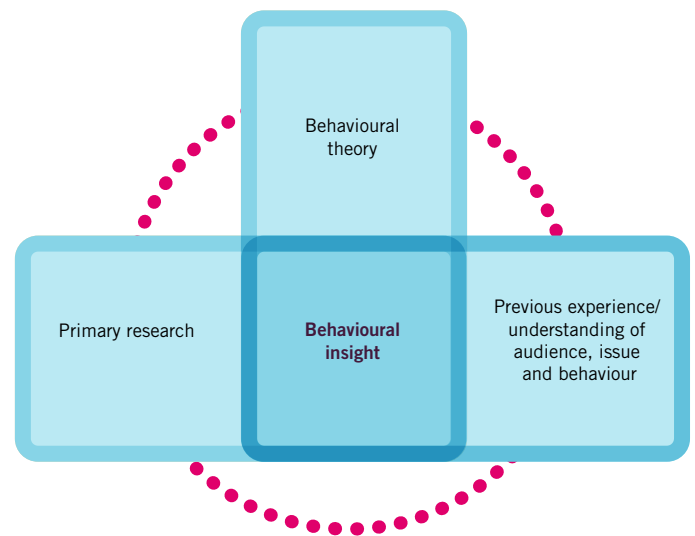
In practice, steps 1 and 2 are likely to be iterative. Exploring the factors that influence one behaviour might highlight another behaviour that could be easier to influence, or where communications have a more obvious role to play. In this case, you will need to go back to step 1 and add the ‘new’ behaviour to your list before proceeding again to step 2.



46 Darnton A (2008), *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

Creating an accurate segmentation will mean exploring people's claimed behaviours; intentions; attitudes; physical, practical and psychological barriers; motivations; goals; and levels of self-efficacy. You may also wish to find ways of linking the segmentation with data describing the actual behaviour of different groups.

Consider links to planning tools such as TouchPoints,⁴⁷ TGI⁴⁸ and MOSAIC,⁴⁹ which leave detailed information on demographics, geodemographics, life stage, media consumption and attitudes, supporting the segmentation process. The tools will help to ensure that your segmentation is actionable, and are best used to supplement your own primary research. The Cabinet Office has produced guidance on segmentation.⁵⁰



Combining sources to generate 'behavioural insights'

The figure above shows the range of sources that will often need to be used to help generate behavioural insights. Techniques may include:

- drawing on the knowledge and experiences of relevant stakeholders, for example frontline service staff;
- reviewing and analysing existing information (including relevant behavioural theory) and data through desk research;
- qualitative and ethnographic research or customer immersion; and
- using semiotics to look at how specific audiences construct and understand meaning.

Behavioural insights can then help to identify the most important influencing factors – that is, those that have the strongest influence on the behaviour or behaviours in question.

Carrying out a bespoke segmentation can help you identify how the factors that influence behaviour affect different audience sub-groups.

47 IPA TouchPoints is a consumer-focused multi-media database designed to provide insights into how people use media.

48 The TGI Survey enables an understanding of consumer attitudes, motivations and behaviour.

49 MOSAIC classifies residential postcodes into 12 lifestyle groups.

50 www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/public_service_reform/contact_council/resources/segmentation.aspx

Segmentation in action: HMRC

When HM Revenue & Customs set out to segment its target audience by looking at the factors that influence their behaviour in relation to tax, the first step was to scope the issue through a large-scale data review and over 100 interviews. These were used to develop a framework that identified the factors driving the way that people behave. Qualitative research followed, and was used to design a major piece of quantitative research. The findings pointed to five distinct segments, based on four dimensions: awareness (of obligations); motivation (to comply); ability (to comply); and opportunity (to comply).

Step 2 in practice: the Tobacco Control campaign

The Department of Health used a number of different models and theories to gain further insight into the factors that influence smoking behaviour, as well as primary research with the target audience and interviews with academics and practitioners. A number of new insights emerged from these sources.

Many theories identify the role of attitudes and beliefs in driving motivation. For smoking cessation these operate in two ways: by shaping the desire to stop smoking (through beliefs such as 'smoking harms me and my family'); and by shaping positive images or a 'vision' of the future. This latter form of 'positive motivation' was particularly important, as primary research among the target audiences identified that while many smokers had a strong desire to stop smoking, there were far fewer positive associations with the concept of being a 'non-smoker'.

Robert West's 'PRIME' Theory of motivation identified the need for a trigger as well as motivation to drive a quit attempt. Previous marketing had sought only to drive motivation.

The concept of self-efficacy or agency (the extent to which an individual believes that they can carry out a particular action successfully and that that action will bring about the expected outcome) has been identified in many theories, including the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Theory of Reasoned Action. The role of self-efficacy was also highlighted by NHS Stop Smoking service practitioners and is summarised in the model subsequently developed (see below) as 'confidence in ability to quit'.

The impact of social norms on behaviour is also explicit in many models, and research among the target audience highlighted the role of peer pressure in driving both quit attempts and relapse. This was captured in the model as an influence that drove 'positive environmental pressure to quit'.

Many other influences that operate at a cultural or environmental level – such as legislation and price – play a very important role in driving cessation and influence the 'environment' for quitting.

Finally, in order to successfully change their behaviour smokers have to know **how** to change successfully. In culture change models this is sometimes referred to as 'practical steps for action'.

Step	Key questions	Outcomes	
Step 3 Developing a practical model of influences on behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we prioritise the factors identified at step 2? • How do these factors influence current and desired behaviours? • What is the relative importance of the factors? • Do we have data to measure the factors? • Can we build a data-driven model? • If we can't, what are the pragmatic hypotheses we can work with and test? • What are our early hypotheses about how behaviour might change? • What are our early hypotheses about the role that communications might play? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model of key influencing factors • Understanding and/or measurement of how the factors work together and their importance • Initial hypothesis about role of communications 	Towards a solution

3

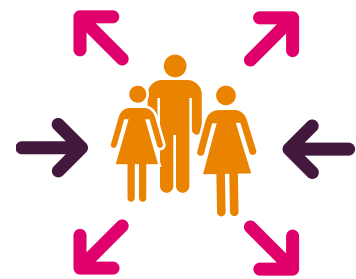
Developing a practical model of influences on behaviour

The insights into behaviour developed at step 2 can now be used to develop a practical model that brings together all the relevant behaviours and influencing factors, and which is based on a deep understanding of the relationship between current and desired behaviours and the key influencing factors involved. Sometimes, it will be appropriate to adapt an existing model; at other times, you will need to create a model specifically for the task in hand.

Developing a practical model will require input from people with a range of different skills, including experts in behaviour (who may well be academics) and experts in policy and communication. This will help ensure that the model works across all interventions, not just communications, ensuring consistency and coherence.

The model should be dynamic and have a temporal element too it so that it can adapt in line with changing circumstances. For example, a model developed two years ago might not take into account the economic downturn, and would need to be updated to reflect the impact of this factor on customers' attitudes, behaviours and intentions. The simplest solution is to schedule regular reviews into your planning process.

Whether it is data-driven or not, a practical model is essential. It will help to focus thinking about the behaviour(s) in question and the influencing factors, and can be used to develop a marketing framework (see step 4 below).



Often, practical models are developed both from a behavioural theory (explains behaviour) and change theory (explains how to change behaviour) perspective.

Using the behaviour model to create hypotheses of change

Interrogating the model can help you to develop hypotheses about how change might take place and (in the case of data-driven models) to predict the role that communications might play within the wider intervention mix. This information can then be fed into the marketing framework (see step 4). You can use the model to answer the following questions:

- Which influencing factors have the biggest impact on the behaviour(s) we are seeking to change?
- Where can communications legitimately play a role?
- How much of our budget should we allocate to communications and how much to other interventions?

Testing the model

You can test your model by populating it with data that measure factors and behaviour (note that you may need to use proxy data measures against some inputs). It can then be used to predict the outcomes of different interventions. The data will need to be measured over time to allow understanding of how the behaviour changes.

Once you have data or proxy data for each factor, you can use a statistical technique for modelling the relationships between variables (such as linear regression or agent dynamics) to produce a predictive tool. This can be used to predict the response to future interventions and also look at future trends.



Data-driven models should always be created in partnership with policy colleagues. Such models require considerable resources, and may not always be achievable at the outset. In practice, ongoing evaluation should aim to create a data-driven model that can then be used to adapt and refine the communications strategy.

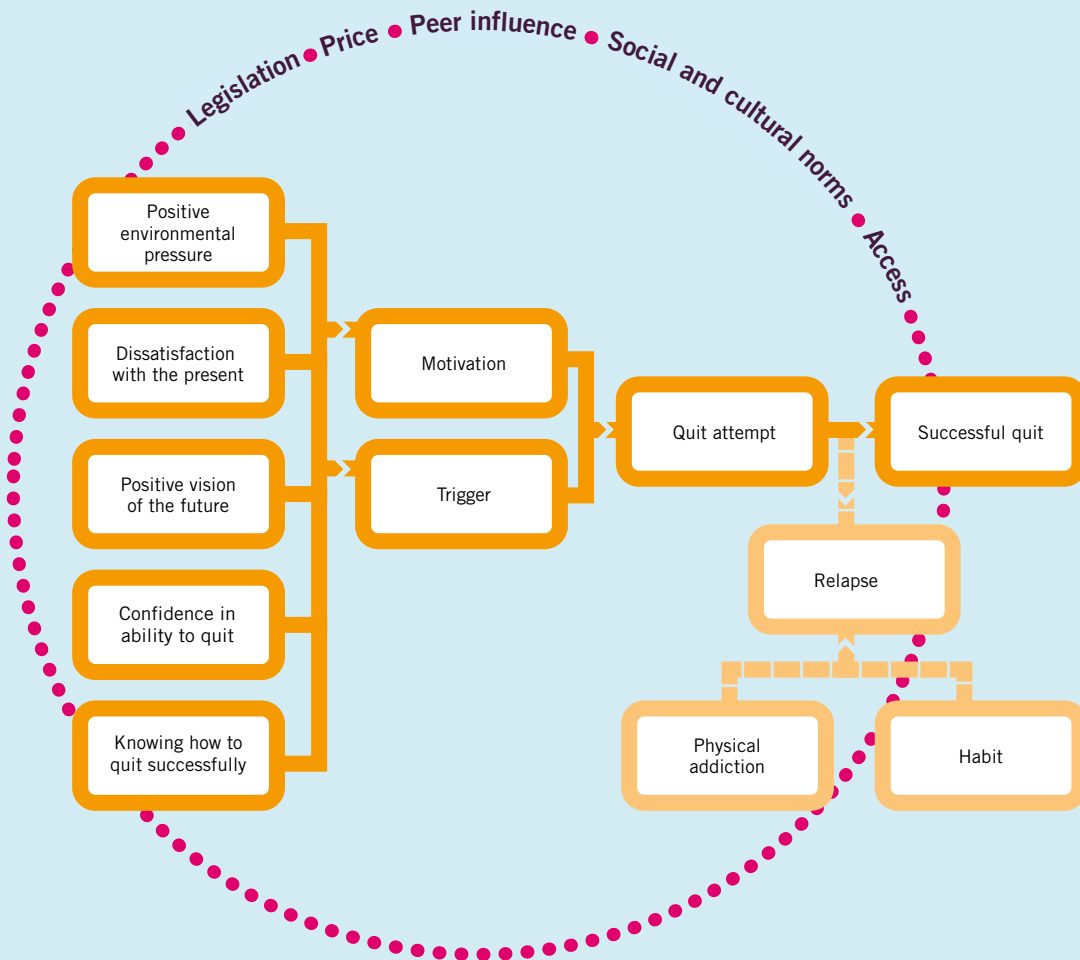
Step 3 in practice: the Tobacco Control campaign

The influences that were identified in step 2, along with the conditions for successful behaviour change, are captured in this generalised model of smoking cessation (see figure).

Identifying the influences on behaviour change has shaped the Department of Health’s marketing and communications strategy in many ways. Most profoundly, it has helped to define marketing objectives and to develop the workstreams that contribute to meeting those objectives.

The department also developed a data-driven model that would quantify the impact of levers such as price and legislation and help everyone involved gain a better understanding of the scale of the task for communications. For example, when first developed in 2007, the model identified that the all-adult prevalence target would be met but that the target for prevalence among routine and manual workers was much more challenging. Among this audience, 530,000 smokers needed to quit in order to hit the target. The model showed that communications should deliver 298,000 of these. The model is updated on a regular basis as new information emerges, and it continues to be used to help set quantifiable targets for communication and to aid budget setting.

Generalised and simplified smoking cessation behavioural model



Step	Key questions	Outcomes	
Step 4 Building a marketing framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors will marketing/interventions need to target? • Where will communications play a role? What factors will they affect, and how? Will they play a leading or supporting role? • What are the communications objectives? • What are our top-line evaluation metrics for these communications objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the role of communications and the factors they are designed to influence • An agreed set of communications objectives • How communications fit into the wider picture • Top-line metrics for setting and evaluating key performance indicators 	Towards a solution

Building a marketing framework

Techniques such as systems thinking (see page 13) and approaches such as social marketing show the benefits of looking at communications in the context of all interventions rather than in isolation. Communications should be designed to complement and reinforce other interventions. In the private sector, this holistic approach is generally seen as the key to effective marketing and the most ‘joined-up’ companies are usually the most successful.

The basic idea underpinning systems thinking is that the whole is more than the sum of the parts, and that putting pressure on a single point will impact on the rest of the system. For example, if a police drug seizure reduces supply but demand remains constant, the price of drugs will increase and other supply streams will open up. The main purpose of the marketing framework is therefore to show how all interventions – including, for example, legislation, enforcement and stakeholder engagement as well as communications – can work together to deliver change.

The framework will help to identify the role – or roles – that communications can play. Often, this will be to influence factors and/or intermediate behaviours rather than to have a direct effect on the end behaviour. As the case study earlier shows (pages 34–35), one of the key aims of the current FRANK campaign is to make drug use less appealing by focusing on non-aspirational and unattractive images of drug users.

In other cases, communications may be used to support and maintain the behaviour change once it has taken place (for example, by supporting people who have given up smoking so that they don’t relapse).

It is important to recognise that, in some instances, taxation and legislation (for example) may be more effective than communications in changing behaviour. However, even in these instances communications are likely to play a supporting role. It is therefore important to take care when identifying the role we expect communications to perform.

Setting objectives and writing a brief

The marketing framework should be used to identify and set communications objectives. In practice, these objectives are often to change one or more of the factors that influence behaviour, rather than the end behaviour itself.

The communications objectives – combined with an audience segmentation, as described above (page 46) – can be used to generate a high-level evaluation matrix and plan. It is important to remember that communications may need to be assessed in terms of their impact on influencing factors rather than on the actual behaviour itself. Any evaluation of communications must therefore form part of a broader evaluation framework or at least attempt to separate out the effect of other influences and/or interventions.

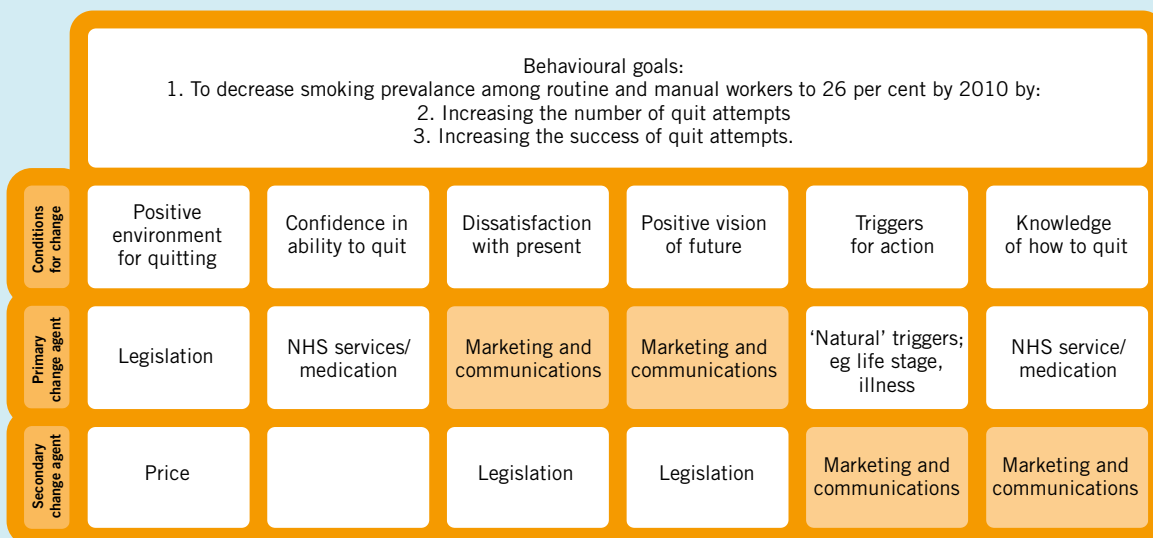
You should now have all the information you need to create a communications brief. The brief should reflect the five-step process, and take into account all other relevant interventions. It should also include the behaviours

you have identified as relevant to your policy and communication goals, the influences that affect those behaviours, your communication objectives and your top-line KPIs.

Step 4 in practice: the Tobacco Control campaign

The marketing/interventions framework identifies the role for marketing in the context of other interventions such as legislation and price. It should include the behavioural goals, the conditions for change and the primary and secondary change agents for helping to bring these about. So, for example, we see that one of the necessary conditions for tobacco control is to create dissatisfaction with the present. The interventions aimed at bringing this about are marketing and communications and legislation.

The marketing/interventions framework



Step	Key questions	Outcomes	
Step 5 Developing a communications model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does everyone involved understand the role communications can play and the factors they are aiming to influence? • How do we expect communications to influence people's behaviour over time? • What are the key triggers and barriers at each stage of our change journey? • How will communications influence these? • Where do communications fit within the marketing framework? • How do we evaluate each stage of the change journey? • How can we use our learnings to adapt our practical model? • How can we use our learnings to adapt our hypothesis? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communications strategy • An understanding of whom communications are targeting and where communications fit into the overall picture • An evaluation plan and matrix 	Towards a solution

5 Developing a communications model

The marketing framework developed in step 4 should define:

- the role of communications (which factors it is aiming to influence and how);
- where communications fit into the wider picture;
- top-line metrics for setting and evaluating KPIs; and
- the target audience and its behaviour(s).

Once your communications brief is in place, you can move on from looking at behavioural theory to consider how change theory can help you develop a strategy for bringing about change. Academic theories of change can be useful here, although they will need to be adapted to reflect the specific behaviours you are seeking to influence; this may require you to formulate and test hypotheses about how they apply to the behaviour you are seeking to change over a period of time. The GSR Review⁵¹ has a detailed section on theories of change, some insights from which appear in section 1 of this document.

It is also important to remember that when we talk about 'behaviour change' we are really looking at two distinct areas: behavioural theory and change theory. A practical behavioural model should reflect the importance of changing, as well as explaining, behaviour. But while a model should incorporate some change theory, its main purpose should be to understand the behaviour and its influences. However,

as we move on to look at creating a communications strategy (that is, how we can use communications to help change the behaviour), change theory becomes more important.

Change theory and change modelling tend to be generic and rarely seek to explain how behaviours differ from each other in terms of the way they change. So when using change theory in creating communications models, it is vital to keep the specific behaviour that you are trying to change in mind. If we lose sight of the behaviour or behaviours we are seeking to change, we will lose most of the benefit of applying the theory.

Unlike many behavioural models (which seek to explain the influences on people's behaviour), change models work over time and in stages. The aim is to provide a strategy for moving people from one stage to the next. In practice, people rarely move in a neat linear pattern. Rather, they move forward, sometimes in jumps, and relapse, often several times.

There are a number of examples of campaigns where a behaviour change model has been developed from change theory only. For example, the original Tobacco Control communications strategy was based on Prochaska's Stages of Change model (see page 36). However, in testing the model, the Department of Health found that a deeper understanding of the factors influencing behaviour needed to be made more integral to the process.

51 Darnton A (2008) *GSR Behaviour Change Knowledge Review. Reference Report: An overview of behaviour change models and their uses*, HMT Publishing Unit, London.

There are also plenty of communications strategies (in the widest sense of the term) that use change theory but that are based on practical marketing experience rather than academic theory. Often, in practice, the theory is the same and only the language is different; however, there are a number of terms that are used interchangeably but which actually have quite different meanings.

For example, the terms ‘behavioural change journey’ and ‘customer journey’ are sometimes used interchangeably. However, these are two very different things. The behavioural change journey outlines the stages involved in a change of behaviour (for example, in Prochaska’s model, from pre-contemplation to contemplation and so on). A customer journey is the experience or series of experiences that a citizen has with a service or brand on the way to a specific output – for instance, the number and type of contacts they have with a government department or agency before receiving the benefit they have applied for.

Segmenting the audience on the basis of change

While some change models (such as the Stages of Change model, see page 36) are based on audience segmentation, generally they allow for the fact that, even within specific behaviours, the extent to which people want to change varies greatly. This means that they can be classified into different groups or stages. Segmentation not only helps to define groups; it can also help to determine the most effective action for each group.

We have already suggested that target audiences may need to be segmented in order to understand their behaviour. Now, we are suggesting that each behavioural segment should be further sub-divided according to how willing (and able) its members are to change their behaviour and what help they need to bring that change about.

Prioritising barriers and triggers for change

Even where the behaviour we are seeking to influence is homogeneous across the target audience (for example, paying the congestion charge) we will need to look at how communications can help to support the desired change. That will mean identifying and prioritising the barriers and triggers associated with the behaviours as well as assessing their relative weight. Because most behaviours are influenced by multiple factors, and people will be at different stages of behaviour change, you will almost certainly need to develop a range of communications targeted at multiple triggers and barriers in order to bring about change.

Setting goals and evaluating success

KPIs and plans for evaluating communications should be developed alongside and be based on the communications model. Change to the factors that the communications are seeking to influence should be evaluated at each stage, and the results used to adapt both the communications

themselves and the applied behavioural and change models that you have developed. This is integral to the process and will enable you to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of your communications much more accurately.

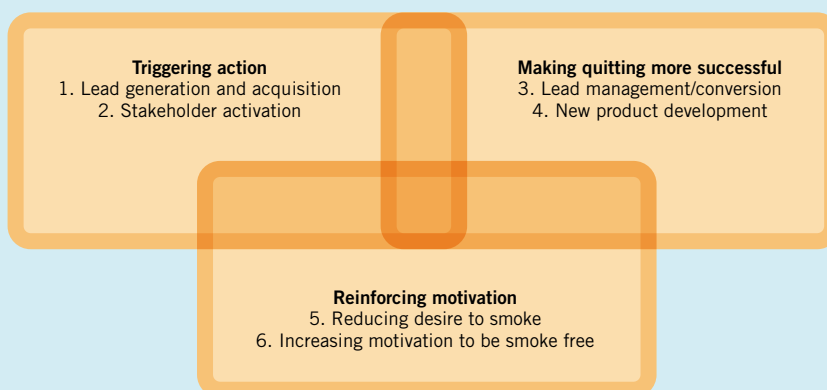
The evaluation plan should be approached with as much care as the other steps in this process. Influencing behaviour is a complex task, so it is important to learn

as much as possible both about what works and what doesn't work so well. A typical evaluation plan will be based on a consideration of behavioural insights, the change process, communications objectives and activity, and how best they can all be measured and understood.

Step 5 in practice: the Tobacco Control campaign

A simple model was used to drive the shape of the overall strategy. This identifies three marketing objectives and, within these, a number of different workstreams for communication. (Continued over)

Marketing objectives and workstreams

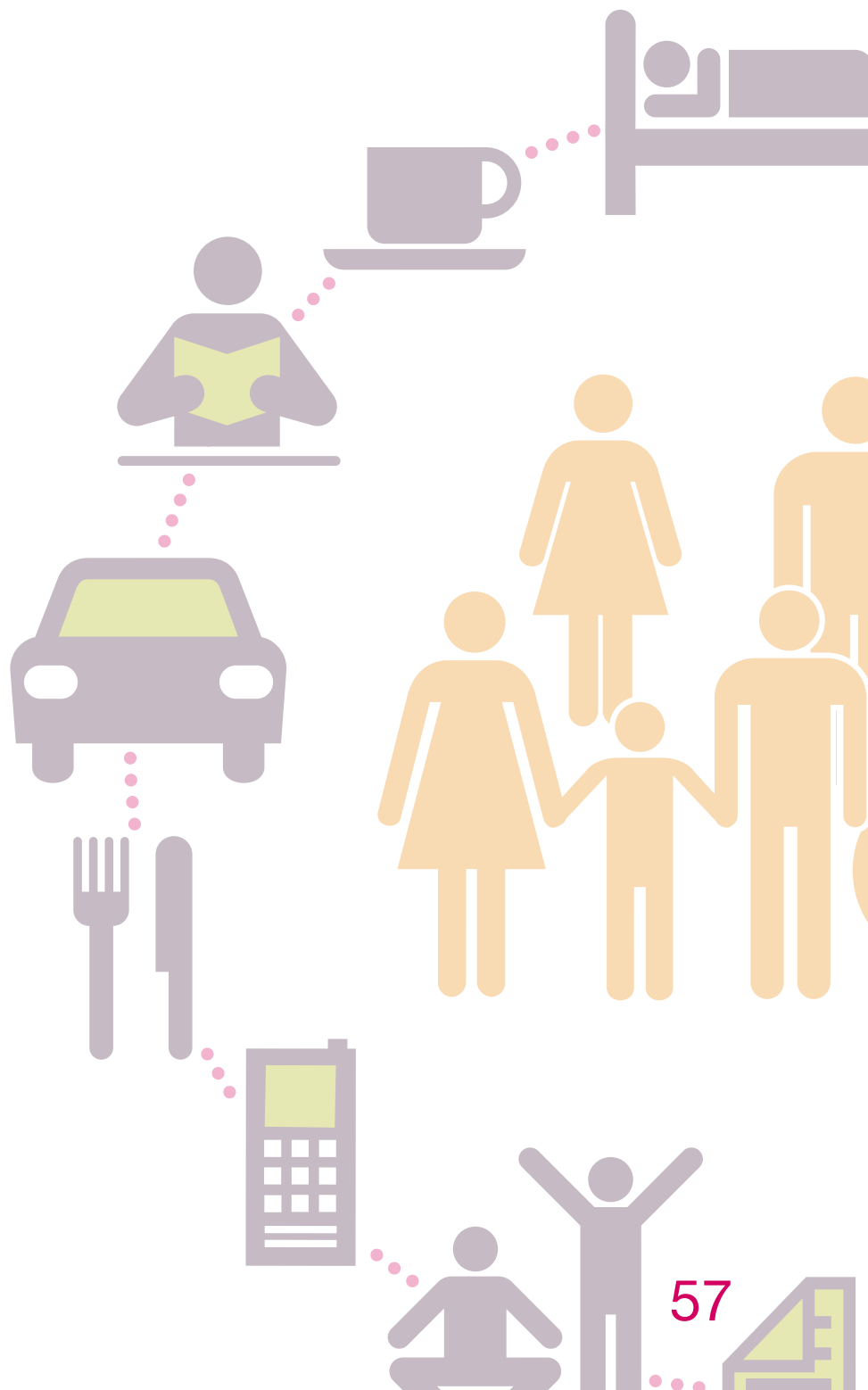


Step 5 in practice: the Tobacco Control campaign

A wide range of KPIs have been defined in order to enable the Department of Health to monitor all aspects of the strategy (see next page). The KPIs reflect the defined marketing objectives and the way in which communications are expected to influence behaviour.

Triggering action	
Business KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage of smokers making a quit attempt in any given year <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage of smokers making a quitting-related action in any given year <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage conversion of quitting-related actions to quit attempts
Marketing KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage of smokers making a quit attempt in any given year triggered by Department of Health marketing activities <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage of smokers making a quitting-related action in any given year triggered by Department of Health marketing activities <input type="checkbox"/> Volume of centrally generated valid responses for NHS support <input type="checkbox"/> Volume of centrally generated active responses for NHS support <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of centrally generated responses (percentage intermediate conversion) <input type="checkbox"/> Cost per valid/active response
Making quitting more successful	
Business KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Volume of quitters using NHS support <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage of smokers using NHS support to quit (market share)
Marketing KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Salience (spontaneous awareness) of NHS support <input type="checkbox"/> Percentage of smokers believing that NHS support is the most effective way to quit <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of the different types of NHS support available <input type="checkbox"/> User imagery associated with NHS support <input type="checkbox"/> Quit rate among customer relationship marketing (CRM) participants vs control <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate conversion among CRM participants vs control <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy/net promoter score for NHS support
Reinforcing motivation	
Business KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Claimed motivation to quit <input type="checkbox"/> Smokers' perceptions of smoking prevalence among general population <input type="checkbox"/> Increase in the proportion of smoke-free homes
Marketing KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness and understanding of negative consequences of smoking <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional engagement with communication <input type="checkbox"/> Fame/talkability/word of mouth impact of communication <input type="checkbox"/> Perceived relevance of negative consequences to themselves or their family <input type="checkbox"/> Image of non-smokers and ex-smokers <input type="checkbox"/> Perceived impact of communication on desire to quit

The first year of the new strategy has seen improved overall quit results, with a particularly large increase in online response and engagement. The statistical model predicts that marketing activity has resulted in 1.3 million quit attempts and 95,000 successful quits in 2008/09, while econometric modelling for 2009/10 predicts over 2 million quit attempts and 160,000 one-year quits as a result of social marketing activity.



CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

This document is intended to stimulate debate about how communications can most effectively influence behaviour, and to contribute to our overall goal of helping to develop ever more effective and efficient government communications. Here we summarise our conclusions and look at some of the implications for government communicators.



Applications for communications development

The starting point for effective communications should be a deep understanding of human behaviour and how to change it. Behavioural theory has a key role to play in helping us to understand why people act in the way they do. We have focused on social psychology and behavioural economics, two disciplines that have become more accessible in recent years, but we recognise the need to cast the net wide to capture valuable learnings from other relevant theories. In future, our aim will be to develop our thinking and practice in this area so that we draw from the full range of insight into human behaviour and apply it to the development, delivery and evaluation of communications.

Understanding behaviour and its influences should be based on a combination of theory, primary research and existing understanding and experience. To provide the best behavioural insights we need to employ the most appropriate tools and techniques and synthesise across the range of sources. What we have learnt in practice is that we don't always have the time or budget to work through the steps outlined in our process in as much depth as we might like. However, this should not preclude the use of the process in a pragmatic way, building up a deeper understanding of the behaviour and its influences as our communications develop.

Creating a single practical behavioural model for each behaviour change programme will enable a consistent approach. We believe that using a team of relevant experts to create one model

that is used by all of those involved in developing and delivering activities to support behaviour change has a number of advantages. It allows us to develop and share a common understanding and language throughout the whole process. It also provides a framework on which the communication strategy can be built and implemented, alongside the range of other interventions. In the longer term, it can be a unifying platform across policy and communications.

Communications should not be viewed in isolation. By taking a holistic view of all interventions it becomes easier to identify the role for communications and help inform budgeting decisions, by pointing to where communications can have the biggest impact.

Developing a practical behavioural model can help make communications more effective at influencing behaviour. Such models allow us to drill down into the ecology of influences on people's behaviour and provide us with the tools to work more efficiently and effectively at changing it. Models should also help us to better identify realistic communications objectives targeted at specific factors that contribute to the behaviour, and to identify a role for communications that complements and supports other interventions.

Communications can work on many levels. The case studies we have chosen illustrate campaigns that have explicitly drawn on behavioural theory. They show that communications can perform a range of different functions, from reframing an issue, to promoting normalisation, to building up people's belief and confidence in their own ability to change.

Future implications for communications development, delivery and evaluation

Understanding behaviour will support more robust and meaningful evaluation.

A deep understanding of the behaviour(s) you are seeking to change should lead to a clear understanding of the role that communications can play and to the establishment of specific and realistic objectives. This should in turn enable you to develop a focused evaluation plan which sets relevant key performance indicators and measures that explicitly relate to the factors that communications are seeking to address. The plan should set out the methodologies and techniques required to test, refine and validate your initial hypothesis.

Evaluation should be ongoing. Given that the process of developing communications designed to bring about behaviour change will necessarily be an iterative one, evaluation should also be ongoing. By evaluating behavioural and change models and activities at each stage, we can test our original hypotheses and either validate or adapt them as necessary. This should in turn yield valuable insights as

to what is and isn't working and why. Communications should be evaluated with consideration of all interventions and influences on behaviour, so that the contribution of communications can be clearly understood.

Understanding behaviour and its influences will enable us to harness the most efficient and effective communications channels.

The spread of new technologies and the proliferation of content and communications channels mean that we have more tools at our disposal than ever before. It also means that we need to look at communications in new ways and, as emphasised throughout this document, alongside the factors that influence the behaviour we are seeking to change.

- **Earned opportunities in the form of trusted experts, such as family, friends and social media contacts, are an important resource.** People look to those around them to guide their behaviour and support them through change. For communications, this area has traditionally been the preserve of PR. However, the internet creates powerful new opportunities, including blogs and user-generated content, which can be effective channels for facilitating social proof and peer group support.

- **Owned communications opportunities delivered via your own assets, such as call centres, websites or outreach programmes, will have a significant impact on the way people experience your brand or service.**

Such opportunities can also provide a useful way of offering the face-to-face or personal encouragement that is such an important part of the behaviour change process. They can also be useful in cases where people need to experience the behaviour before their attitudes can change.

- **Paid-for media opportunities (which traditionally account for the biggest part of the government communications budget) are not always the most trusted sources.** Such opportunities provide effective channels for information and persuasion but are not always the most trusted or listened-to sources. Consideration should be given to how these work together with the earned and owned opportunities, within the ecology of influence on people's behaviour.

How we conceive and develop campaigns and propositions will also need to be reframed by a deeper understanding of how to deliver the role of communications within the practical behaviour change model.

It is apparent that we increasingly need to understand holistically how all the triggers of change can be harnessed together and, within that, how we re-purpose communications to seed, start or simply nudge a wider narrative among our audiences while planning for its effects alongside those of the other interventions. In this context the implication is for a shift away from discrete campaigns and towards multiple messaging and propositions that stimulate ongoing relationships with the distinctive groups we need to engage for sustained and successful behaviour change.

There is scope for further exploration of the role that brands can play within behaviour change campaigns. This will help us to make more informed decisions as to when a brand can be used to support behaviour change, and to incorporate an understanding of the behaviour and its influences into the development of the brand architecture and positioning.

NEXT STEPS

There is still considerable scope to further explore the implications of embedding behaviour change theory in the development of communications.

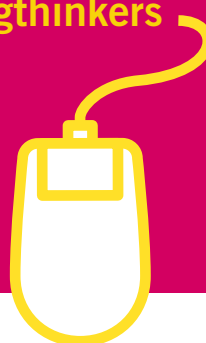


The following questions provide a flavour of the kinds of areas we are currently considering:

- **How do we best encourage this emerging thinking and practice to become a widespread and common language that is understood and applied by all of those involved in supporting behaviour change?**
- **How do we ensure that we keep abreast of theoretical developments?**
- **How do we ensure that all of those involved in the development of communications are trained in understanding theory and applying it to their work?**
- **How do we get better at applying theory through the communications process? What are the best tools and techniques to use at each step?**
- **How do we best learn from and share our experiences, so that we can gain a better understanding of the factors that influence behaviour across government initiatives and of the most effective way of addressing them?**
- **How do we ensure that we make effective use of research, combined with theory, to help us better understand behaviour?**

We hope that this document will launch the debate and mark the start of an ongoing dialogue that will lead to better practice and more effective government communications. We are in the process of developing a programme of work to take this thinking further.

Please go to <http://coi.gov.uk/blogs/bigthinkers> if you would like to join the debate.



APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1: The five-step process

Step	Key questions	Outcomes	
Step 1 Identifying behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we addressing single or multiple behaviours? • How do we break down the issue into its component behaviours? • How do multiple behaviours relate or group? • Who do we want to undertake the behaviour? • What is the desired and current behaviour? • Does the behaviour involve people starting, stopping, maintaining or preventing? 	Agreed target behaviours	Exploration
Step 2 Understanding the influences by audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are the attitudes, values and beliefs of the target audience? – Is there a gap between attitudes and behaviour? – Are people aware of the need to undertake the behaviour? Is the requirement known to them? – Do they have the knowledge to undertake the behaviour? – Is the behaviour habitual or one-off? – Are people confident about undertaking the behaviour? – If people do undertake the behaviour, will the outcome be beneficial to them? – What emotions are involved in the current and desired behaviours? – What biases/heuristics might be at play? • Social: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is the behaviour in line with or against social norms? – Is peer pressure likely to be an influence? – Who will influence them, and how strong will their influence be? • Environmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What factors influence them at the local and wider environmental level (access, price, opportunity, services and proximity)? • How do factors differ across audiences? How does their importance vary across different audience groups? 	Detailed understanding of all influencing factors	
Step 3 Developing a practical model of influences on behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we prioritise the factors identified at step 2? • How do these factors influence current and desired behaviours? • What is the relative importance of the factors? • Do we have data to measure the factors? • Can we build a data-driven model? • If we can't, what are the pragmatic hypotheses we can work with and test? • What are our early hypotheses about how behaviour might change? • What are our early hypotheses about the role that communications might play? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model of key influencing factors • Understanding and/or measurement of how the factors work together and their importance • Initial hypothesis about role of communications 	Towards a solution
Step 4 Building a marketing framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors will marketing/interventions need to target? • Where will communications play a role? What factors will they affect, and how? Will they play a leading or supporting role? • What are the communications objectives? • What are our top-line evaluation metrics for these communications objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the role of communications and the factors they are designed to influence • An agreed set of communications objectives • How communications fit into the wider picture • Top-line metrics for setting and evaluating key performance indicators 	
Step 5 Developing a communications model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does everyone involved understand the role communications can play and the factors they are aiming to influence? • How do we expect communications to influence people's behaviour over time? • What are the key triggers and barriers at each stage of our change journey? • How will communications influence these? • Where do communications fit in with the marketing framework? • How do we evaluate each stage of the change journey? • How can we use our learnings to adapt our applied model? • How can we use our learnings to adapt our hypothesis? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communications model • An understanding of whom communications are targeting and where communications fit into the overall picture • An evaluation plan and matrix 	

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