



Public Health
England

The Social Norms Approach

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Can beliefs about what others think and do change our behaviour?

The Asch Experiment (Asch, 1952)

During the 1950s Solomon Asch conducted and published a series of experiments that demonstrated the degree to which an individual's own opinions are influenced by those of a majority group

[here](#)

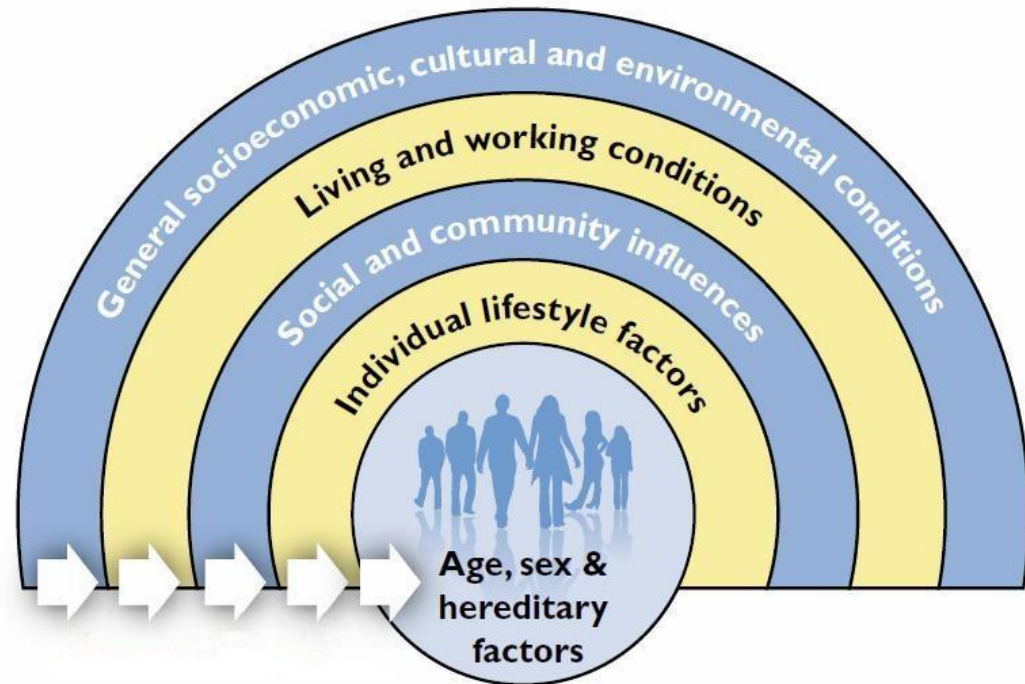
[1950 TV commercial from Camel cigarettes](#)

What is the overall aim of the social norms approach?



- The overall aim is to correct misperceptions that people may have about a health behaviour.
- Studies have found that by correcting misperceptions, it can lead to more healthy behaviour, i.e. shifting the focus from targeting the individual (people at risk of smoking) to the environment (people living in risky environment in which smoking is the norm) is key to strengthening norms.

What Influences people's health



Health Determinants Model

Seeking to understand and influence behaviour by addressing personal factors alone, 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

Social Norms

Essentially, the social norms approach uses a variety of methods to correct negative misperceptions (**usually overestimations of use**), and to identify, model, and promote the healthy, protective behaviours that are the actual norm in a given population. When properly conducted, it is an evidence-based, data-driven process, and a very cost-effective method of achieving large-scale positive results.

How Do Misperceptions Occur?

- We notice the “difference” not the pattern. “Out of the Ordinary” gets the attention.
- Focusing on the unusual makes it appear usual.
- Not-normal behaviour looks like the Norm.

What Stands Out?





The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS



NO SMOKING POLICY



PLEASE EXTINGUISH
YOUR CIGARETTE IN THE
STUB BINS PROVIDED.



Smokeless Tobacco



Slow death by poison

**Not everyone who gets hit
by a drunk driver dies.**



Jacqueline Saburido was 20 years old when the car she was riding in was hit by a drunk driver. Today, at 23, she is still working to put her life back together.
Learn more at www.TexasDWI.org

DON'T DRINK & DRIVE

Save a Life
from Department of Transportation

What message is this sending?



Now what?

- We care so much we want to “*scare the health into them*”.
- Unfortunately, we inadvertently NORMALISE the very behaviour we are trying to decrease.
- Fear in ads keeps us in the past (fearful experience) or worried about the future (potential fearful experience).
- It does not allow us to be in the present moment.

How does the social norm approach differ from traditional approaches?

The social norms approach

- does not use 'hard hitting scare tactics'
- uses credible science based statistics
- focuses on healthy behaviours and attitudes; doesn't show smoking or cigarettes
- does not use negative images; uses only positive visuals
- involves the local community from the very beginning
- not draconian or directive, but instead uses a simple format to present information about healthy social norms back to the community



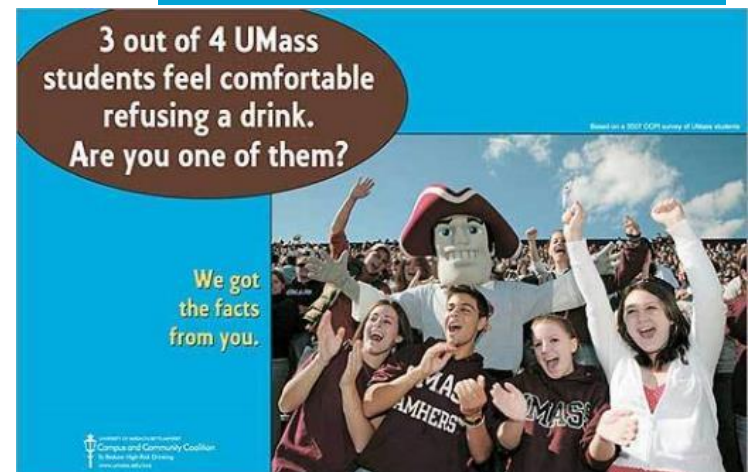
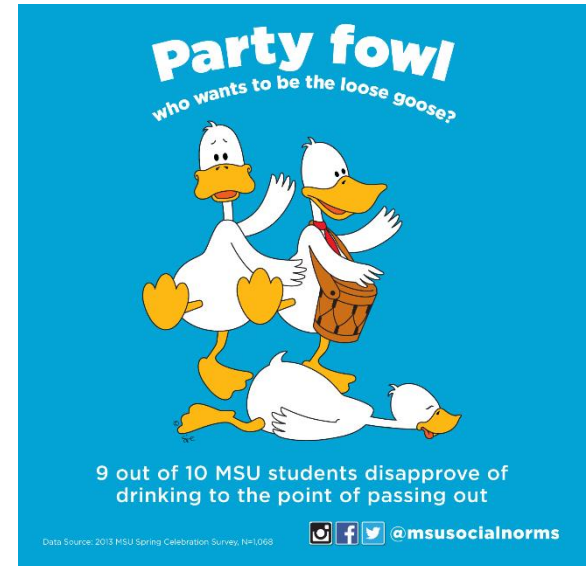
Social Norms Approach

To address misperceptions of the norm

Social Marketing



Social Norms



Normative message

75% of MU Students
Have Never Smoked Pot*

Engaging photo of student
in a familiar location

Image shows 'positive' behaviour

Recognisable logo

Data source



STAND
Un-Branded.

Don't be bound by the misperceptions of college life.

Millersville University
SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

Millersville University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution. It is proud to be a member of the American Association of Colleges and Universities. © 2009

WE GOT THE FACTS FROM YOU

*National Collegiate Health Assessment, Fall 2009
www.millersville.edu/wandw/socialnorms

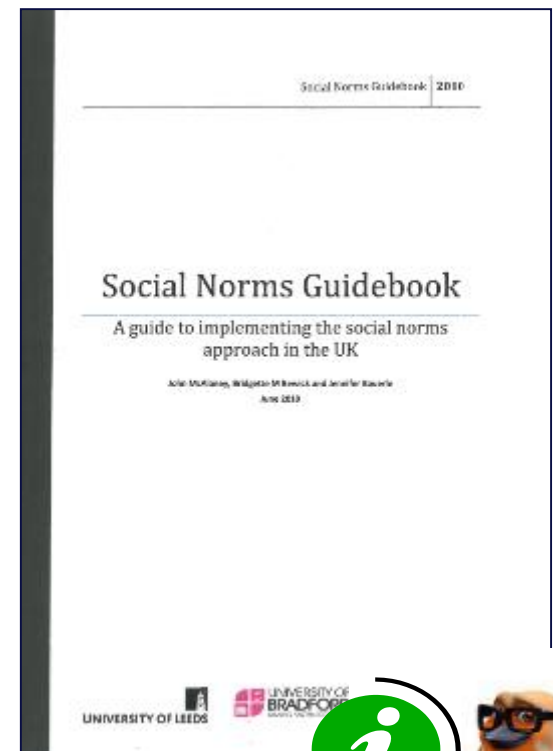
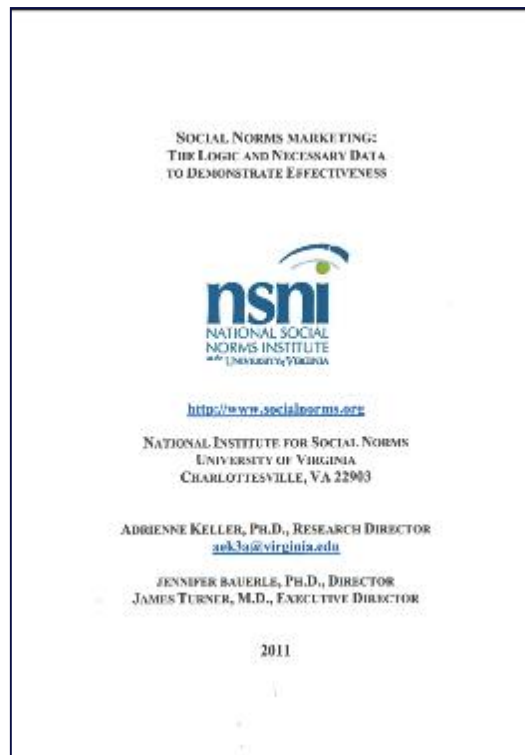
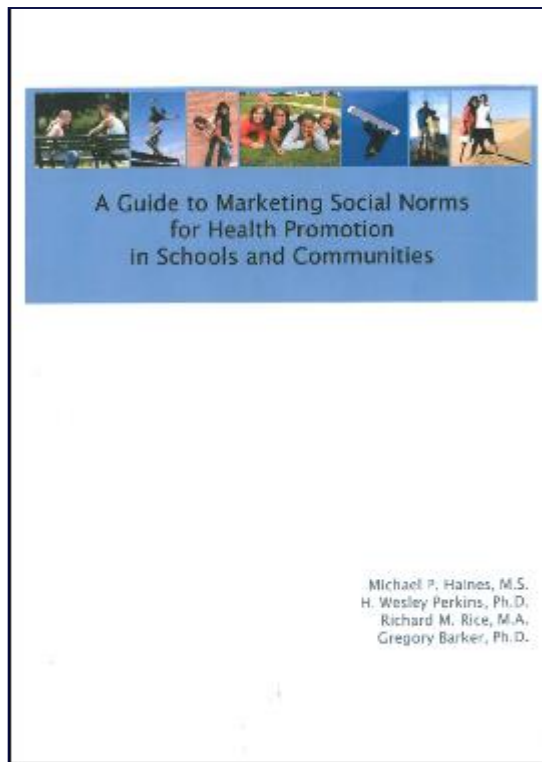


- ▶ Preparation
- ▶ Data collection
- ▶ Data analysis at baseline
- ▶ **Intervention**
- ▶ Follow-up
- ▶ Evaluation



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Social Norms Approach



A new video was released featuring Dr. Wesley Perki (1 minute) overview of the social norms approach to health promotion. You can watch it in [WMV VIDEO](#) format or [MOV VIDEO](#) format. (Note: The MOV version may take a few minutes to download on some computers.)



Visit the NSNC website for a short overview of the social norms approach.

Evidence for Best Practices

Explore publications about the social norms approach and its application in multiple environments.

Start a Campaign

Learn how to design a social norms campaign, and connect to other organizations doing this work.

The Social Norms Approach

What is it? How does it work? How can you use it to influence and promote positive behaviors on our respective populations?



Behaviour question and corresponding perception question

9 In general, how often do you drink alcohol? *Please tick ✓ one box*

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Every day | <input type="checkbox"/> | Once or twice a month | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 or 6 days a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | Once every couple of months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 or 4 days a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | Once or twice a year | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Once or twice a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not at all in the last year | <input type="checkbox"/> |

15 In general, how often do you think other adults in your community drink alcohol?
Please tick ✓ one box

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Every day | <input type="checkbox"/> | Once or twice a month | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 or 6 days a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | Once every couple of months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 or 4 days a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | Once or twice a year | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Once or twice a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not at all in the last year | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Behaviour question and corresponding perception question

3. Which of the following best describes the reason for your being at Pinderfields Hospital?

Please tick a suitable box.

- I am a hospital in-patient
- I am a hospital out-patient
- I am visiting (or here with) a patient
- I am Pinderfields Hospital staff
 - Clinical
 - Domestic
 - Technical
 - Administration/Management
 - Other (please specify)
- I am visiting (or here with) Pinderfields Hospital
- Other (please specify)

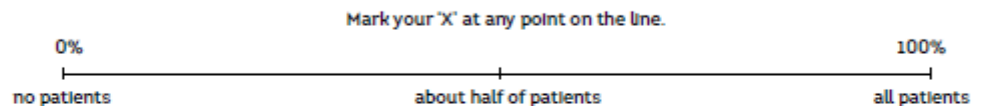
The following question asks about you smoking tobacco (including cigarettes and roll-ups) on Pinderfields Hospital grounds.

7. Which of the following BEST applies to you? Please tick one box only.

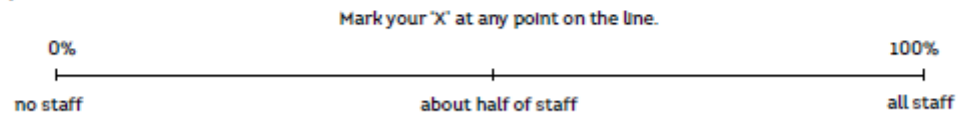
- I am a non-smoker.
- I only smoke in the entrances to the hospital building, but would not smoke elsewhere on the grounds.
- I am a smoker but do not smoke anywhere on hospital grounds.
- I do not smoke in the entrances to the hospital building, but I do smoke elsewhere on the grounds.

STATEMENT 3 How many of these people do you think smoke in the entrances to Pinderfields Hospital?

10 a) HOSPITAL PATIENTS



b) HOSPITAL STAFF



c) HOSPITAL VISITORS

what the flock?™

<http://social-norms.org.uk/project/what-the-flock/>



The billboard displays a screenshot of the 'what the flock?' website. At the top left of the screenshot is the logo 'what the flock?™'. To the right is a 'share this site' button with social media icons and the text '1,102 people like this'. Below the logo are two t-shirt images, each with a sheep silhouette and a badge that says 'win a limited edition t-shirt'. In the center is a dark grey quiz box with the text 'play our quick quiz to find out what the flock?™'. Below this is a paragraph: 'We've been talking to the students of Leeds and asking them a few questions. Take our quick quiz to find out what your fellow students have been saying.' To the right of the paragraph are several questions with radio buttons: 'Are you a University student in Leeds?' (yes/no), 'email address' (input field), 'male' (radio) / 'female' (radio), 'age' (input field) / 'year of study' (input field), 'do you want to enter a prize draw to win a limited edition what the flock? t-shirt?' (yes/no), and a 'question one >' button.



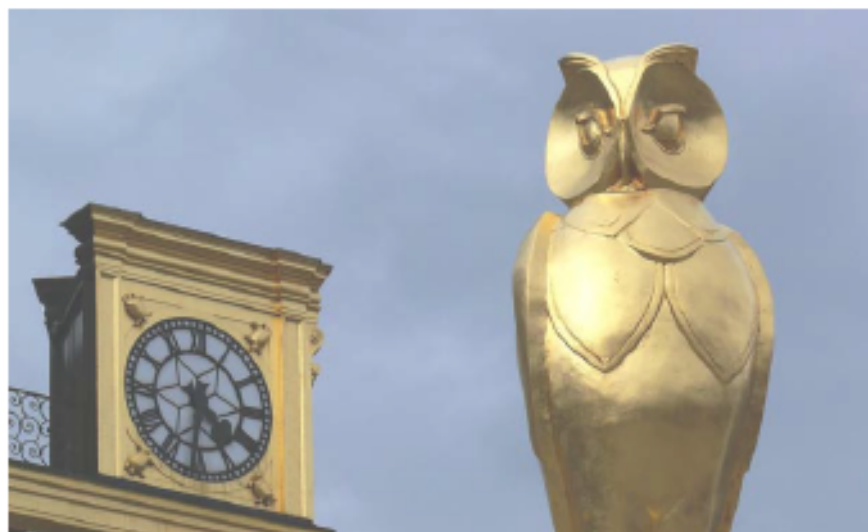
What the flock?!... Leeds replaces iconic golden owls with sheep.

Leeds City Council has announced today of its plan to replace the six golden owls that stand on pedestals in front of the Leeds Civic Hall on Millennium Square with the more humble sheep.

The news comes as a shock to some, as the golden owls have been a feature of the city for over 100 years. Speaking to the Yorkshire Lamb, Geoff Gilmartin, Head of Local Heritage, states "The statues of the owls have come under scrutiny for some years now. The original golden owl artwork was not actually commissioned for Leeds so some locals feel a resentment towards them" "After sheer determination the Council has been able to react to the dislike towards the owls".

The owls were originally commissioned in 1904 for Bristol City Council's city gates. However, when plans for the gates were halted in 1907, the owls were sold on to Leeds City Council. Gilmartin goes on, "in true Yorkshireman style we accepted the reduced price pieces".

The sheep, with its new fleece of life, is close to the heart and heritage of Leeds. The city was at the forefront of the cloth-making industrial revolution and is said to have been 'a city built on wool.'



The owl's golden years are up.

All this is to coincide with the launch of a new commission targeted at three Leeds based Universities. Sheep have already been seen appearing on Woodhouse Moor and at bars and club events around Leeds. The new commission is to launch on 10.10.10 at 10pm and can be seen online at whattheflock.org.uk

So it seems... all's wool that ends wool for Leeds.

send your comments to:
editor@yorkshirelamb.com

www.whattheflock.org.uk
launches 10th October 2010





play our quick
quiz to find out

what
the flock?TM

We've been talking to the students of Leeds and asking them a few questions. Take our quick quiz to find out what your fellow students have been saying.

login ▼

Username

Password

Remember Me

Log In

[register ▶](#)

Could the social norms approach be used in other UK organisations?





<http://social-norms.org.uk/project/pinderfields-hospital/>


(0.00 to 0.55 mins)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access



The impact of a social norms approach on reducing levels of misperceptions around smokefree hospital entrances amongst patients, staff, and visitors of a NHS hospital: a repeated cross-sectional survey study

Scott Crosby¹, Diane Bell², Gerard Savva³, Becky Edlin³ and Bridgette M. Bewick^{4*} 

Abstract

Background: Smoking is a cause of avoidable morbidity and mortality. In the United Kingdom (UK) the national smoking ban inside hospital buildings is widely adhered to. There is a perception it has led to smokers congregating around hospital entrances (Selbie D. 2016, It's time for a truly smokefree NHS. Public Health Matters Blog. Public Health England). Efforts to shift social norms and create positive smokefree environments might be strengthened by delivering social norms messages. This study explored the impact of a social norms approach campaign to reduce levels of misperceptions surrounding support for smokefree hospital entrances.

Method: Repeated cross sectional study design. Staff, patients, and hospital visitors at Pinderfields National Health Service (NHS) Hospital (Wakefield, United Kingdom (UK)) completed a survey before and after implementation of a public health social norms campaign ($n = 481$ surveyed before; $n = 459$ surveyed after). The main outcome measure was difference between perceived and reported levels of support for smokefree hospital entrances.

Results: There were high levels of support for smokefree hospital entrances. The majority of participants agreed that patients ($n = 849$, 90% agreed), staff ($n = 863$, 92% agreed), and visitors ($n = 850$, 90% agreed) should not smoke in the hospital entrance.

Participants underestimated the proportion of others who self-reported keeping the entrance smokefree. Over 90% of respondents reported not smoking in the hospital entrance, but the perception was that between 50 to 75% of hospital staff, patients, and visitors did not smoke in the hospital entrance.

The mean percentage of hospital staff, patients, and visitors who respondents thought did not smoke in entrances was higher for respondents responding after, compared to those responding before, the campaign. There was an overall significant effect of time on attitudes towards smoking in the entrances; in all instances the mean percentage of hospital staff, patients, and visitors the participants believed agreed that hospital entrances should be smokefree was higher for those responding after, compared with before, the campaign.

(Continued on next page)

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Full list of author information is available at the end of the article



Is it possible to implement a social norms approach
in a UK community setting?



Bewick et al. (2013)

Leeds Institute of Health Sciences

Division of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences

SOCIAL NORMS IN THE COMMUNITY (SONIC): STRENGTHENING SMOKEFREE SOCIAL NORMS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Crosby S¹, Bell D², Savva G³, Marshall K⁴, Furber A⁵ and Bewick BM⁶

⁶ Leeds Institute of Health Sciences, School of Medicine, University of Leeds

¹ Smokefree Yorkshire and the Humber

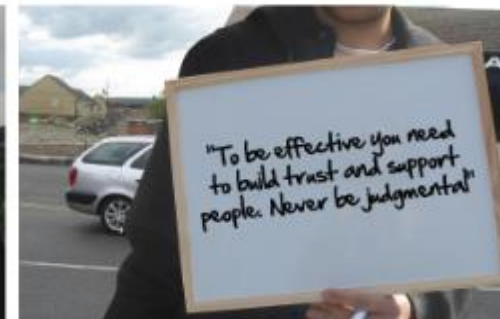
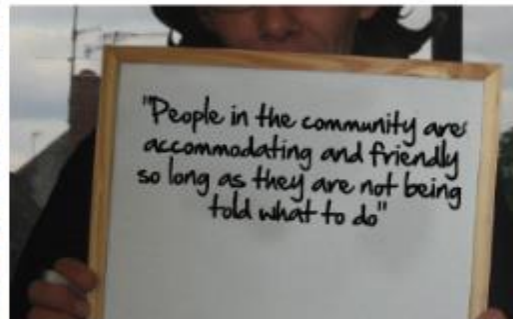
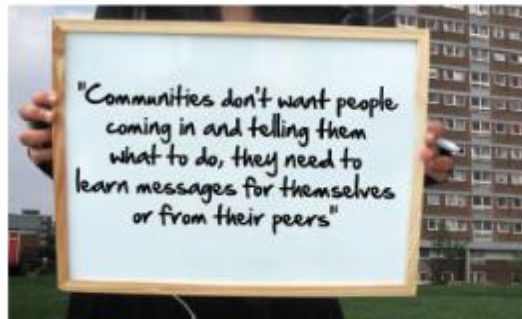
² Department of Health, Public Health and Social Care Group – Yorkshire and the Humber

³ Magpie Creative Communications Ltd trading as 'Magpie'

⁴ Information by Design

⁵ Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and NHS Wakefield

*corresponding author b.m.bewick@leeds.ac.



How do you take forward a social norms approach?

The most cost effective way of demoralising a behaviour is to focus locally at the grassroots level utilising assets within the community. Taking a bottom-up approach ensures that the norm is embedded for sustainability. Major steps include:

1. Collecting baseline data on attitudes and behaviour.
2. Analysing the data, identifying patterns of actual behaviour, attitudes and perceived norms.
3. Developing a campaign promoting the positive social norms messages that were identified. Identify communication channels to disseminate campaign.
4. Evaluating impact on attitudes and behaviour, plan ongoing actions

<http://social-norms.org.uk/>

Summary

The social norms approach to behaviour change combines lessons learned from a variety of fields including social marketing, sociology, behavioural psychology and evaluation research. Our perceptions of our peers' attitudes and behaviours have a great influence on our own attitudes and behaviours.

- Unfortunately, our perceptions are often inaccurate: We tend to over-estimate the number of our peers who value and make unhealthy choices and under-estimate the number who value and make healthy choices.
- If, in a given group or population of people, most people are making healthy choices but most people believe that their peers are making unhealthy choices, then a social norms approach may reduce the misperception and further encourage healthy choices.

Important Lessons

The social norms approach focuses on positive messages about healthy behaviours and attitudes that are common to most people in a group:

- It does not use scare tactics or stigmatise an unhealthy behaviour.
- It avoids moralistic messages from authorities about how the target group “should” behave. Instead, it simply presents the healthy norms already existing in the group.
- It builds on the assets already in the community, through participation by community members, and by highlighting those who make healthy choices.

Important lessons

Some important lessons learned in the course of several decades of research include:

- The effectiveness of social norms marketing interventions can be undermined if the overall environment supports and promotes unhealthy choices.
- The effectiveness of Social Norms Approach interventions can be enhanced if the norms that are promoted reflect a group that the individuals closely identify with.
- Social norms approach's are perhaps best conceptualized as culture change interventions, taking more than one year to realise the behavioural change effects.

References and further reading

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