

Planning health behaviour change from our audience's perspective

To encourage healthy choices and change health related behaviours, **our audience's needs, motivations and concerns need to be at the centre of our planning**. This checklist helps us to devise and deliver projects from our audience's perspective – leading to increased impact, improved cost-effectiveness and less wasted effort.

The audience perspective

What it means for our project

Make it relevant to me

We know that one size does not fit all so, to maximise our project's impact, we need to focus on a defined group, or segment, of people that have things in common – perhaps they are at a certain life stage (e.g. starting a family) or they might have done something before (e.g. tried to give up smoking).

Deciding which group to target depends on our objectives and resources – we might decide to focus on the group most in need, or the one that is easiest to reach. **The key thing is to be clear about the group we are targeting so we can develop a project that is relevant to them.**

TOP TIP: Define your target group by common behaviours, or their attitudes to health. This is more effective than defining a target group by location alone.

Know me

Having identified our target group, we need **to identify the benefits they are looking for and the barriers that prevent them from acting**. This may involve some research. We can also actively involve the audience in the development of our project, and test our ideas with them before implementation.

TOP TIP: Checking the findings from research others have already done will help focus your research questions and avoid duplication.

TOP TIP: Use "mystery shopping" to explore the audience's actual experience of interacting with your organisation or services.

Work with others who know me

We can improve the effectiveness of our project by **involving individuals and organisations from other sectors** who are concerned with the health of our target group. Partners can provide new insight, additional resources, or a means of reaching our target group; perhaps our audiences consider them to be more trustworthy messengers than us?

TOP TIP: Don't forget to involve internal stakeholders such as front line staff in the project's planning from the outset; they may have valuable experience about what works with the target group.

Give me a clear action to take

There are many actions that people could take to improve their health. We need to focus on one because, for our audience, no two actions have the same set of benefits and barriers – e.g. what might stop someone eating more healthily will be different to what might stop them doing more exercise. **We need to select an action that our target group is likely to take and that has an impact on our health objective.**

TOP TIP: The chosen action must, in itself, deliver the benefits that are valued by our audience (see below). E.g. being aware of symptoms is important - but it doesn't result in any benefits without additional actions taking place (such as a consultation with a health professional).

Tell me what's
'in it' for me

We need to **maximise the benefit that really matters to our target group and will motivate them to act**. This might be convenience, happy kids or more confidence. Incentives can trigger one-off actions such as quitting smoking, but they are not as useful for on-going actions as when the reward stops, so can the behaviour.

TOP TIP: Emphasise the benefits the audience will experience immediately (e.g. 'have peace of mind now') rather than those that will come in the future ('reduce the chance of getting cancer').

TOP TIP: Stress what is being wasted as well as what can be gained. The benefit of avoiding loss can be a strong reason to take action.

Make the action
normal for me

Most of us look to those we trust, or consider similar to us, for guidance before taking action. We need to consider how we can make the desired behaviour visible to provide this **"social proof"**.

TOP TIP: Encourage those who have already acted to promote the benefits of taking action to others.

TOP TIP: Consider using the social norm (e.g. '9 out of 10 students choose not to smoke') to challenge the misperceptions that may encourage people to act.

Make the action
easy for me

Our project needs to **lower the most important barriers that are stopping our target group from acting** so it is easier for them act. These barriers might be practical (such as financial cost, inconvenience or access) or psychological (such as lack of confidence, lack of interest or fear of peer disapproval).

TOP TIP: It may not only be the audience that needs to take action. Check your organisation's accessibility, processes, products and services to see if you are making it as easy as possible for your audiences to act.

Help me to keep
doing it

For an action that needs to be sustained (e.g. regular exercise) we need to promote the benefits of, and lower the barriers to, that action over a longer period to **ensure it becomes part of everyday life after our project has finished**.

TOP TIP: If our audience is encouraged to set goals, opportunities are created to provide feedback so people can validate their actions, see progress and be motivated to continue. Visual prompts, such as alcohol unit measures or wall-charts, can also remind the audience of the benefits of taking action.

A note on evaluation

We want to **measure the actions that have taken place as a result of our project and the impact of those actions**. We will need to determine a "baseline" before our project in order to draw a comparison and, for sustained actions; we will need to measure at different points in time after the project.

TOP TIP: Avoid relying on claimed, or self-reported, behaviour. Use hard data where possible such as service use or observation.

TOP TIP: Consider the timing of your evaluation. Certain actions (such as sun safety) may be more common in summer so evaluating them in winter may not provide accurate results.

CauseAction

We work with clients in public health improvement to design, implement and evaluate projects that cost-effectively encourage and support people to take positive action that improves their lives. We also provide tailored training for organisations looking to build their capacity to deliver behaviour change.

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