

Behavioural science in policy: shaping systems for better health

Enabling Constraints: Research-Informed Policy and Practice

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behavioral sciences

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Gold Standard? Research-Informed Policy



Article

COVID-19 Personal Protective Behaviors during Large Social Events: The Value of Behavioral Observations

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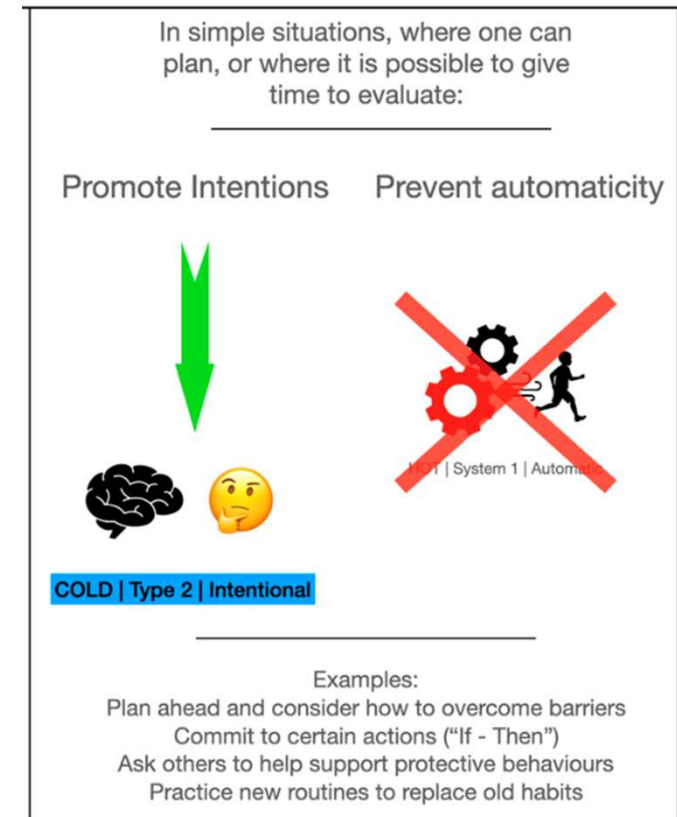
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Abstract: Within the context of reopening society in the summer of 2021, as the UK moved away from ‘lockdowns’, the Government of Wales piloted the return of organized ‘mass gatherings’ of people at a number of test events. The current study reports behavioral observations that were made at two of the test events to inform this process. The researchers were particularly interested in four key factors: how (1) context within a venue, (2) environmental design, (3) staffing and social norms, and (4) time across an event, affected the personal protective behaviors of social distancing and face-covering use. Data collection was undertaken by trained observers. Adherence to protective behaviors was generally high, but there is clear evidence that these behaviors were shaped in a systematic way by the environment, situational cues, and the passage of time during the events. Some instances of large-scale non-adherence to personal protective behaviors were documented. An analysis within a dual-process



Situational Behavioural Support



“An individual’s intentions are not always matched by their actions... [recommending] a balanced liberal paternalistic approach where system-level changes support appropriate individual-level decisions to engender collective responsibility and action.”

<https://www.mdpi.com/2641970>



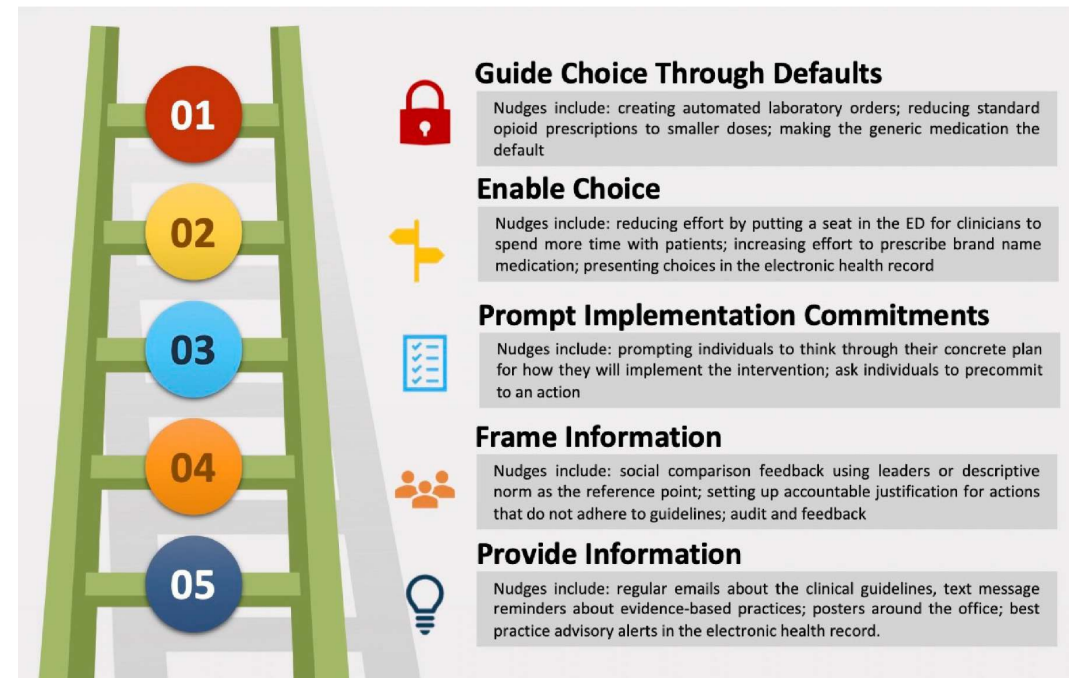
Figure 1 Nuffield intervention ladder with examples



Source: Adapted from Nuffield Council on Bioethics (2007)

<https://www.nuffieldbioethics.org/publication/public-health-ethical-issues/>

The Intervention Ladder



Last BS, Bittenheim AM, Timon CE, et al Systematic review of clinician-directed nudges in healthcare contexts BMJ Open 2021;11:e048801. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-048801





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Target Article

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addiction; behavior change; behavioral economics; behavioral public policy; climate change; framing; nudge; obesity

What is Open Peer Commentary? What follows on these pages is known as a Treatment, in which a significant and controversial Target Article is published along with Commentaries (p. 25) and an Authors' Response (p. 75). See bbsonline.org for more information.

The i-frame and the s-frame: How focusing on individual-level solutions has led behavioral public policy astray

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Abstract

An influential line of thinking in behavioral science, to which the two authors have long subscribed, is that many of society's most pressing problems can be addressed cheaply and effectively at the level of the individual, without modifying the system in which the individual operates. We now believe this was a mistake, along with, we suspect, many colleagues in both the academic and policy communities. Results from such interventions have been disappointingly modest. But more importantly, they have guided many (though by no means all) behavioral scientists to frame policy problems in individual, not systemic, terms: To adopt what we call the “i-frame,” rather than the “s-frame.” The difference may be more consequential than i-frame advocates have realized, by deflecting attention and support away from s-frame policies. Indeed, highlighting the i-frame is a long-established objective of corporate opponents of concerted systemic action such as regulation and taxation. We illustrate our argument briefly for six policy problems, and in depth with the examples of climate change, obesity, retirement savings, and pollution from plastic waste. We argue that the most important way in which behavioral scientists can contribute to public policy is by employing their skills to develop and implement value-creating system-level change.



Operating context, prevailing conditions... enabling constraints



Michie S, *et al.* The behaviour change wheel: a new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation Sci* 2011;6:42.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42>



Special Issue: Promoting Behavioural Change to Improve Health Outcomes—2nd Edition



This Special Issue will focus on several interrelated themes, which include a continued focus on contemporary behavioral frameworks such as COM-B and how they can provide insights into the drivers of complex challenges. Likewise, an exploration of how concepts like the intention–action gap and dual-process theory can shed light on health promotion and also the sustainability behaviors that protect the planet and support our wellbeing. Further, health economics is increasingly being recognized as critical for quantifying the impact and value of health promotion and sustainability research. Indeed, health economics can help understand and design better policies.

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Questions and Comments?