



From Insight to Impact

APPLIED BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE IN ACTION -
PRIMARY CARE

Kate Abendstern – Caja Associate Director



Agenda

- The Primary Care Challenge & The 'Immediacy Bias'
- The Access Model
- Framework Spotlight: COM-B & MINDSPACE
- The Behavioural Interventions
- Results
- Questions & Takeaways

The Primary Care Challenge & The 'Immediacy Bias'

Result = POOR SATISFACTION

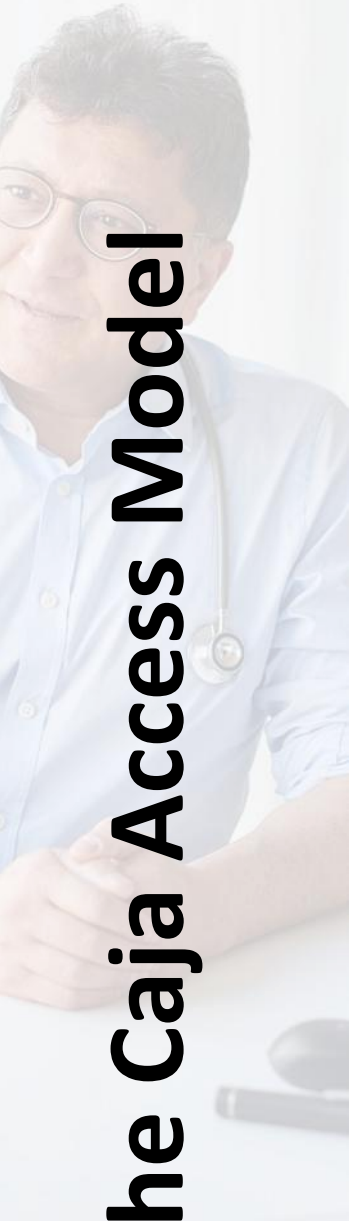
Immediacy Bias and Temporal Discounting have skewed the public's perception of Primary Care as we increasingly seek immediate rewards over sometimes higher-value delayed results.

3 Key Challenges

- 01 Access to Services & Patient Demand
- 02 Changing Workforce & Skill-mix
- 03 Lack of Integration & Signposting for General Public

Challenge	Immediacy Bias Impact	Temporal Discounting Impact
Access to Services & Demand	Frustration when healthcare isn't as fast as other services	Preference for fast but suboptimal care (e.g. walk-in clinics, A&E)
Changing Workforce & Skill-mix	Devalues non-GP staff when GP is expected for quick answers	Underappreciation of system sustainability and future benefits
Lack of Integration & Signposting	Patients feel lost without quick, clear directions	Preventive/community care undervalued due to delayed impact

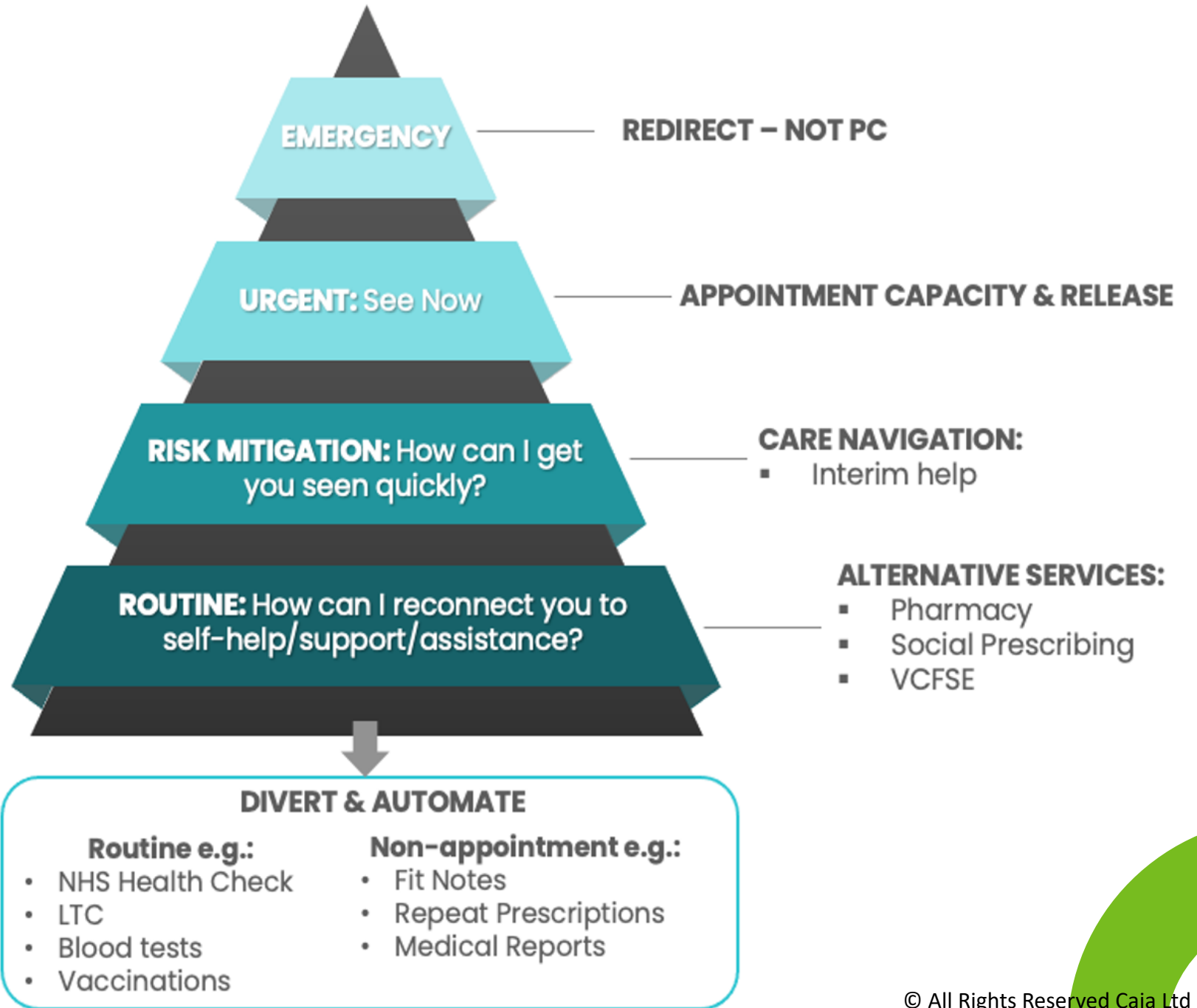
The Caja Access Model



Access Channels:



Download Caja
White Paper



Framework Spotlight– COM-B

Capability (Psychological, Physical)

- Patients lack awareness of care options beyond the GP.
- Low health literacy or understanding of roles like ANP, pharmacist.
- Reception staff lack structured training in how to confidently and consistently navigate patients.
- Many patients have limited ability to self-navigate digital systems.
- Language barriers and cognitive impairments limit understanding of complex information.

Awareness

Opportunity (Physical, Social)

- Practice websites are often text-heavy, poorly structured, and not accessible.
- Digital exclusion due to lack of internet access, smartphone, or data.
- Phone systems have long waits, are difficult to navigate for those with hearing, speech or cognitive impairments.
- Reliance on 8am booking reinforces inequalities for those with chaotic lives or multiple responsibilities.

Access & Time

Motivation (Reflective, Automatic)

- Distrust or scepticism toward non-GP clinicians, especially among older adults or certain cultural groups.
- Past negative experiences lead to low perceived value of alternatives.
- “If I’m not seeing a GP, I’m being fobbed off.”
- People in more deprived communities deprioritise preventive or routine care due to other life pressures.

Trust & Beliefs

Framework Spotlight– MINDSPACE

Messenger

We are heavily influenced by who communicates information

Authority / trust / similarity

Incentives

Our responses to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts such as strongly avoiding issues

Losses loom larger than gains / we overweight small probabilities / we have a higher discount rate for today compared to tomorrow / reference points matter

Norms

We are strongly influenced by what others do

Many others / similar others / reinforcement

Defaults

We 'go with the flow' of pre-set options

Active choice / enhanced active choice

Salience

Our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us

Simplicity / accessibility / novelty / anchors

Priming

Our acts are often influenced by our subconscious cues

Word / environment

Affect

Our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions

Attractiveness / fear / disgust / fun

Commitment

We seek to be consistent with our public promises and reciprocate acts

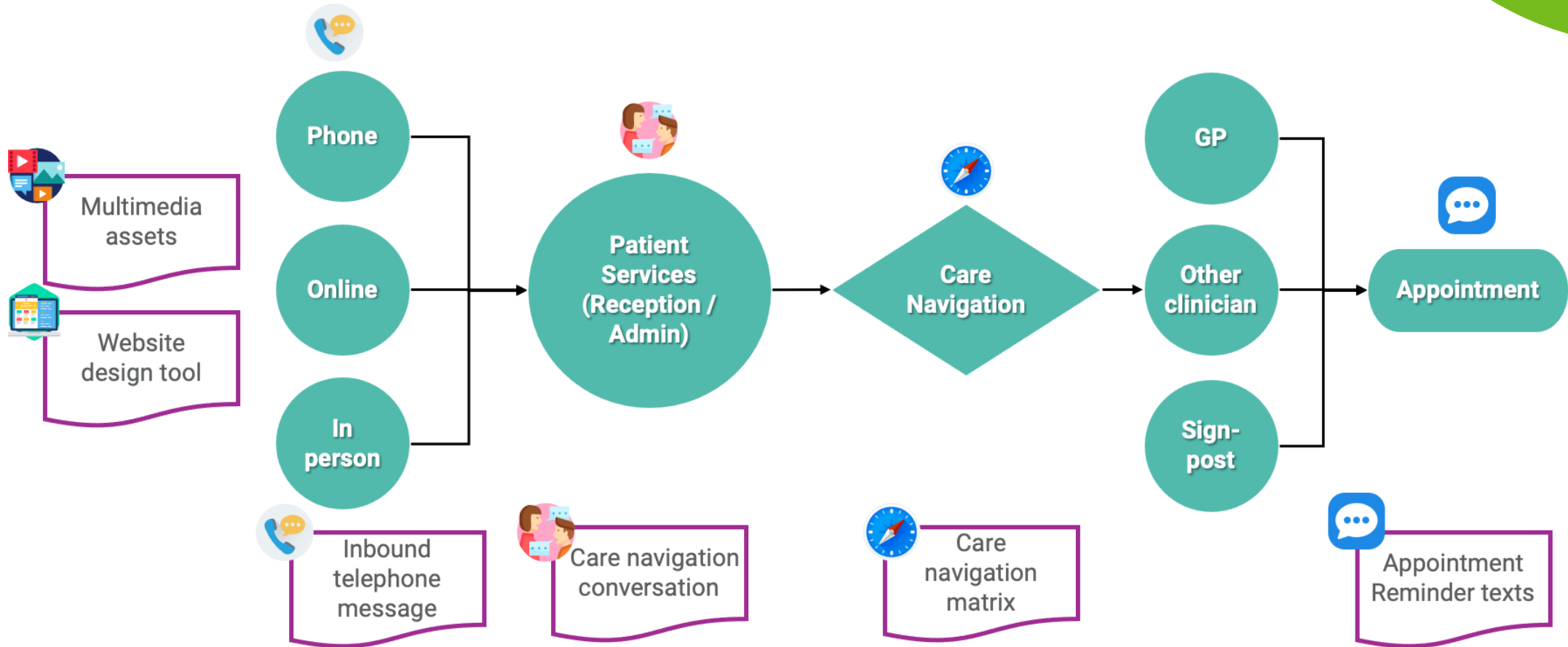
Specific commitment / active commitment / public commitment / reciprocity

Ego

We act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

Above average / self-consistency / labelling / we seek positive associations

The Interventions



Applied Nudges

THE TEST

In-Bound Phone Message



Welcome [Practice name]. Please note all calls are recorded for training purposes.

If you need immediate medical attention, please hang-up and call 999.

If you'd prefer not to wait, the quickest way to contact the practice is through our website, where you can submit non-urgent medical queries or admin requests in just a few easy steps.

You can also book some appointments including screenings, order repeat prescriptions and see test results via the NHS App- over 44 million people are doing this already.

Our doctors are committed to providing you with the best support. A member of staff may ask you some basic questions about your needs so we can help you as quickly as possible.

If you need to speak to someone, please select one of the following options:

- For appointments or general queries for reception, press 1.
- For prescriptions, press 2.
- For referrals or to speak to the secretaries/admin team, press 3.

Multi-Media Assets

This is Michael.

He was feeling *app*-rehensive.

Look at him now.

USE YOUR NHS APP TO

- ✓ Order repeat prescriptions
- ✓ Book and manage appointments
- ✓ View your GP Health Record

Scan the QR code to join hundreds of SSOT patients already benefitting from this *free* service.

NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board

Advertisement for the NHS app featuring a man named Michael dressed as a superhero. He is smiling and looking at his green smartphone. The text highlights that he was previously 'app-rehensive' but is now confident using the app. A list of app features is provided, and a QR code is shown on a smartphone screen with the instruction to scan it to join hundreds of patients already using the app for free. The NHS logo and the name of the Integrated Care Board are in the top right corner.

DON'T WAIT
TO GET THE CARE YOU NEED

YOU CAN USE **YOUR NHS APP** TO :

- Order your repeat prescriptions
- Choose where your prescriptions are sent
- Order at a time that suits you

OVER 22 MILLION REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS ARE ORDERED VIA THE NHS APP EVERY YEAR

DON'T WAIT

NHS App

NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board

Advertisement for the NHS app featuring a woman sitting on a sofa, talking on a mobile phone and holding a pill. The text emphasizes not waiting for care and lists the benefits of using the app: ordering repeat prescriptions, choosing where prescriptions are sent, and ordering at a convenient time. A statistic states that over 22 million repeat prescriptions are ordered via the app every year. The NHS logo and the name of the Integrated Care Board are in the top right corner. At the bottom, there are QR codes for Patient Access and the NHS App, along with the 'DON'T WAIT' slogan.

Results

- ✔ 34 Primary Care staff completed Caja Behavioural Science Academy / Foundation Academy
- ✔ Unused available appointments decreased from 18.4% to 12.4%
- ✔ Decrease in DNA rates by up to 21%
- ✔ Significant drop in calls during the 8:00 to 9:00 am rush
- ✔ Reduction in maximum call wait times by 10 minutes
- ✔ Decrease in call abandonment rates by 3%
- ✔ Increase in repeat prescriptions processed through the NHS App by 10.4%

Questions & Takeaways

- Behaviour change alone isn't enough — fix the system first
- Nudging is powerful, but it's not a silver bullet
- Ethics first — preserve autonomy
- People compare — context shapes perceptions
- Start small, think big — scale with intention
- Technology enables, but doesn't guarantee improvement

Get Your Copy

