



Category: Public Sector Campaign

Company: North East and North Cumbria urgent and emergency care network and North of England Commissioning Support

Entry title: Plasticine people

Brief and objectives:

The NHS faces immense pressure every winter, due to factors including demographic change and increasing numbers of patients with complex needs. This pressure is exacerbated by a significant number of patients who use the system inappropriately, attending A&E with minor problems or visiting GPs with things that could be treated at home with help from a pharmacist.

This project conducted comprehensive behavioural analysis into what drives these decisions, providing evidence to design a social marketing approach, influence patient behaviour, and help reduce pressure on services. It was led by NECS on behalf of the North East and North Cumbria Urgent and Emergency Care Network, with backing from Kenyons.

Objectives included:

- Gain a shared understanding of healthcare-seeking behaviour
- Inform all service and initiative design to support behaviour change in key identified segments of the population
- Inform a sustained regionwide urgent and emergency care communications strategy, challenging social norms with consistent messages at all NHS touch points.

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Research developed a depth of evidence about views of patients and staff from A&E, primary care, 999 and 111 teams, paramedics and pharmacists. This included 40 in-depth staff interviews, staff web groups, public focus groups (61 participants), rolling focus groups/video booths (32 staff/162 patients), rapid ethnography, vox pops and wiki engagement.

This created Mosaic segmentation around use of services, and an opportunity to improve understanding of the purpose of urgent and emergency care services in the North East from support for minor ailments (pharmacy, GP, walk-in, 111) to serious or life-threatening emergencies (999, A&E). Key themes included:

- Data sharing and tracking
- Fairness and justice
- Too much choice, too many names
- Education through communication

- Quick advice
- Missing specialist skills
- More community focus
- Acceptance of risk

Significantly, it showed that patients do not respond to being lectured, in spite of showing strong support for protecting the NHS by choosing services carefully.

Seven Mosaic segments ranged from preventers (better safe than sorry) to novices (I need someone to tell me what to do) and key messages were developed for these key audiences.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation, and stakeholder engagement:

This analysis provided the basis for a major regional campaign using a family of 'plasticine people' to share hard-hitting messages in an engaging, friendly way.

Designed to be flexible and responsive, the plasticine people share factual and timely information influencing patient choices, using a surge modelling algorithm to monitor peaks in demand and select key messages accordingly.

Creative testing showed that the characters have instant, striking appeal, and can cover challenging topics in a direct style because their warmth softens the harder messages.

Campaign development was as follows:

- Develop flexible, responsive behaviour change campaign
- Develop system to trigger messages and channels according to need, reviewing past peaks, weather and current demand
- Digital pilot to test behaviour change campaign (in South Tees and Sunderland)
- Analyse pilot results and enhance plan
- Roll out campaign to region
- Develop campaign to promote pharmacy and implement surge modelling algorithm

Implementation of tactics:

The campaign ran throughout autumn/winter 2016-17, focusing on actions people can take to stay out of A&E.

- Primarily targeted digital advertising, so messages could be amended to the situation
- Social media – utilising local NHS, stakeholder and partner accounts to push messaging
- Microsite to support marketing (urgentoremergency.co.uk) linking the campaign to sources of help e.g. NHS Choices website, NHS Child Health app. Also communicated the peaks/dips for the public
- Other channels e.g. radio, advertising near major roads, bus and rail advertising

Surge algorithm was also developed to mitigate busy periods in the NHS. This includes:

- Understand past peaks and inform future peaks (e.g. bank holidays etc.)
- Demand, relative to usage and capacity – understand past key surge conditions e.g. broken bones in icy conditions

Measurement and evaluation:

Between 14 November 2016 and 31 March 2017, the campaign had a total reach of 2.4 million, including 31 pieces of media coverage with positive or neutral sentiment, 14,600 unique website users including 44% direct visits to website (the key call to action), 25% to the page promoting the NHS child health app, 20% visits to GP and pharmacy opening times.

Messages through social media had 1.7m reach, 3,500 click-through (Twitter) and 126,000 reach, 1,900 engagements.

Evaluation was conducted through an extensive, targeted online regional survey of 1,105 people, measuring unprompted and prompted recall of the campaign and key messages as well as cognitive impact and understanding.

50% said they had seen or heard campaign adverts, with females more likely to have seen something related to the campaign. Young people (58%) and over-65s (54%) were most likely to have seen or heard advertising, showing that the campaign reached priority groups. The most effective media were leaflets, newspapers, internet, radio and posters.

35% were very likely (9 or 10 on a ten-point scale) to use NHS services other than A&E as a result of seeing or hearing the campaign. The highest recall was for the radio component (35%), coughs and colds (26%) and antibiotics (21%).

Budget and cost effectiveness:

Research - £85,000

Campaign development - £40,000

Campaign testing - £36,000

Promotion - £97,000

Evaluation - £9,800

TOTAL - £267,800

Cost effectiveness

- £8 per person reach
- All North East NHS organisations signed up to using insights and working together to avoid campaign duplication. NHS provider organisations are starting to see the effects of behavioural change on the front line
- If 26% of North East population changed behaviour then up to £82million saved (average A&E attendances is £127 per visit)