

Basic Information

Region (Check Region): Yorkshire and Lincolnshire

Category: 22. Best COVID response

Entry Information

Entrant company name: Social

Entry title:

The Big Community Sew: Delivering 1million face coverings

Entry

Brief, objectives and budget:

The Big Community Sew aimed to help accelerate behavioural change by encouraging the public to adopt non-medical face coverings as a new cultural norm. It would achieve this by mobilising the nation's home sewers to provide free face-coverings for their local communities, protecting medical-grade face masks for frontline NHS and social care staff.

A secondary objective was to harness a growing volunteering spirit and ensure that thousands of home sewers across the UK felt they were part of a national effort.

The budget was £15,000 to develop a website, social media and PR campaign.

The idea, research and planning:

The Government made it compulsory to wear face coverings in public places (where social distancing could not be maintained) in April 2020. This included shops, public transport and visitor attractions.

There were global shortages of personal protective equipment and an urgent need to preserve medical grade masks for front line NHS and social care staff.

Patrick Grant, the fashion designer best known for his role as a judge on The Great British Sewing Bee, conceived the concept of the Big Community Sew campaign in order to encourage the nation's six million sewing machine owners to produce face coverings for their friends, family and neighbours.

The campaign was aligned to public health guidance across the four home nations and

linked to the website of the relevant national public health agency. It went from conception to launch in a matter of days, and Social provided communications support across digital channels and the wider media, with the initial announcement made to four million viewers on BBC1's The One Show.

As a leading figure in the UK fashion industry and a brand ambassador for a major sewing machine brand, Patrick produced a how-to video and drew on his networks of sewing influencers, fashion designers and Great British Sewing Bee contestants to do the same. This resulted in a suite of engaging how-to videos for sewers of different skill levels featuring a range of styles and even face coverings to fit children.

Strategy, creativity and innovation:

Our strategy was to use a broad range of coordinated communications tactics to raise awareness of the campaign whilst also directly engaging with sewing groups and influencers, to help ensure the campaign had the required impact.

We encouraged the sewing community to connect with and promote the campaign and empowered them to produce and distribute the face coverings themselves. Our website included a page for sewing groups to sign up, linking to their Facebook pages. This enabled them to promote their involvement in The Big Community Sew and directly respond to local requests.

We promoted campaign and user-generated videos on social media, primarily twitter and Instagram, and were able to get into the heart of the sewing and crafting communities through influencers such as Tilly and the Buttons, Elisalex and Molly Makes Cakes.

A wider media campaign was also established, which saw us earn print and online coverage in national newspapers such as The Sun and Daily Express along with strong television coverage on BBC Breakfast, the BBC News Channel and ITV's This Morning, along with radio coverage on BBC 5Live amongst others.

A key message was to encourage people to share the face coverings they had made on social media and the #BigCommunitySew hashtag was used >1,000 times.

Delivery/implementation of tactics:

Over 100 sewing groups signed up to our website pledging their support to the campaign. They were subsequently encouraged to own the campaign locally and deploy creative methods to distribute face coverings in their communities.

Some of the innovative approaches included mask trees being set up in Amesbury, partnerships established with Volunteer Riders UK (a team of motorcyclists who deliver face coverings to care homes and hospices across the UK) and a deal with EUROSPAR in Northern Ireland to distribute face covering pre-packs in 60 outlets. Further partnerships were also established with Aldi, Blackburn Rovers football club and John Lewis to promote the Big Community Sew.

Many other organisations established partnerships with sewing groups through the Big Community Sew, including The Felix Project in London, which distributed 10,000 free face

coverings with food packs to vulnerable Londoners and the University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to provide nurses with face coverings to wear while travelling to and from work.

Building on the early success of the Big Community Sew, a competition was launched in to encourage sewers of all ages (under 12 years, 13 -17 years, 18+ years) to design a stylish and functional face mask. The aim of the competition was, now people were accustomed to face coverings, to wear them with style and confidence.

The competition ran during July and August 2020 with winners announced live on the BBC News channel on September 4th 2020.

Measurement, evaluation and impact:

Government was very happy with the campaign and Michael Gove, The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, said:

"The Big Community Sew is a wonderful example of communities across the United Kingdom coming together to do their bit for the national effort."

The impact included:

- 1,000,000+ free face coverings delivered - based on sewing group feedback & reports on social media
- Speedy supply of face coverings to vulnerable groups across the UK including the elderly, disabled groups and frontline workers
- 348,000 views of how-to-videos posted on the Big Community Sew website
- 35 pieces of print coverage in launch week alone, in hyper-local, regional, trade and consumer, and national press, achieving an estimate 2.5m coverage views.
- 5 standout pieces of national broadcast coverage, including interviews on the two major breakfast shows, reaching an audience of millions.
- Helped to normalise the wearing of face coverings in public places
- Mobilised over 120 sewing groups from Shetland to Torbay and Llanelli to Newry

The campaign has also achieved a sustainable legacy. The Big Community Sew is now an established charity with a mission to connect charities, hospitals and community groups who have an urgent need for sewing with volunteers who will sew for them.

Some of its current projects include supplying the NHS with incubator covers, children's pyjamas and cloth bags for bereaved relatives.

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information (images, artwork, clippings and other media):

Provided
