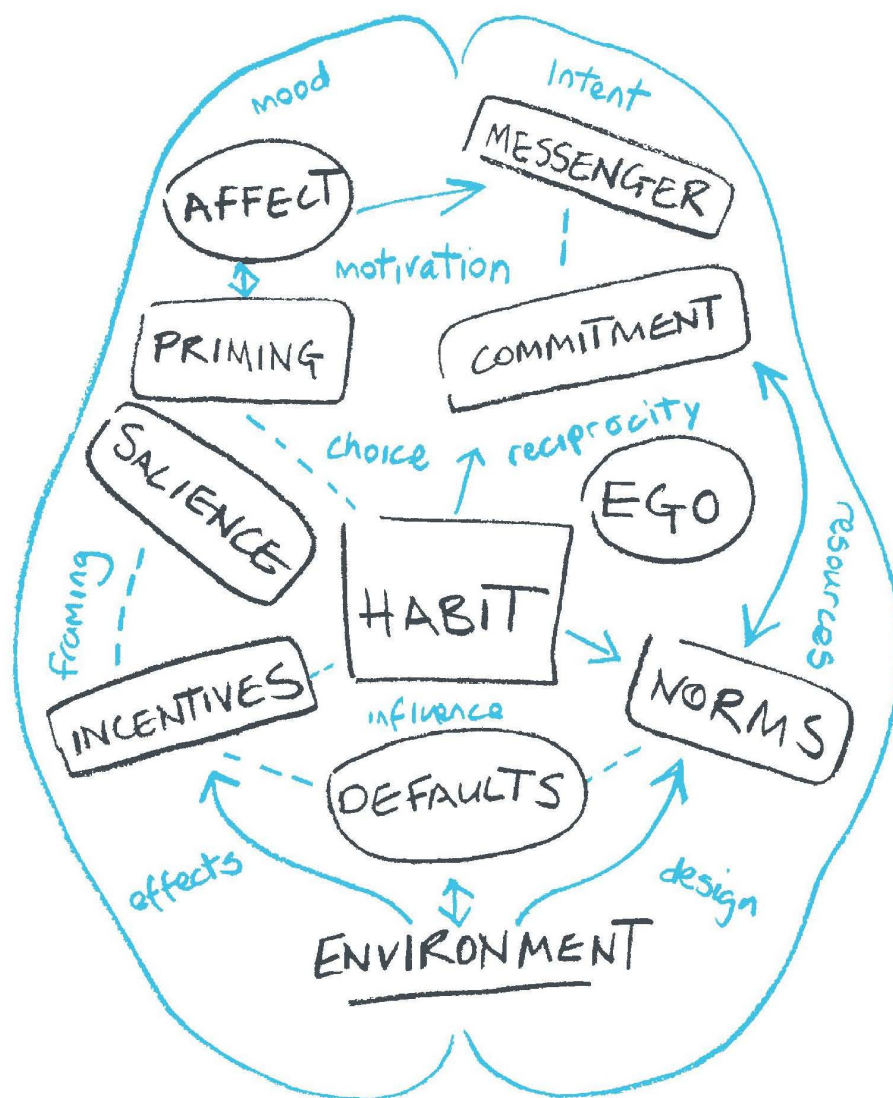


MINDSPACE

Influencing behaviour through public policy



Foreword

Influencing people's behaviour is nothing new to Government, which has often used tools such as legislation, regulation or taxation to achieve desired policy outcomes. But many of the biggest policy challenges we are now facing – such as the increase in people with chronic health conditions – will only be resolved if we are successful in persuading people to change their behaviour, their lifestyles or their existing habits. Fortunately, over the last decade, our understanding of influences on behaviour has increased significantly and this points the way to new approaches and new solutions.

So whilst behavioural theory has already been deployed to good effect in some areas, it has much greater potential to help us. To realise that potential, we have to build our capacity and ensure that we have a sophisticated understanding of what does influence behaviour. This report is an important step in that direction because it shows how behavioural theory could help achieve better outcomes for citizens, either by complementing more established policy tools, or by suggesting more innovative interventions. In doing so, it draws on the most recent academic evidence, as well as exploring the wide range of existing good work in applying behavioural theory across the public sector. Finally, it shows how these insights could be put to practical use.

This report tackles complex issues on which there are wide-ranging public views. We hope it will help stimulate debate amongst policy-makers and stakeholders and help us build our capability to use behaviour theory in an appropriate and effective way.



Sir Gus O'Donnell

Cabinet Secretary and
Head of the Home Civil Service



Sir Michael Richard

Executive Director,
Institute for Government