



TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS
tpas

The Engagement Maximiser

How could tenant engagement learn from behavioural insights?
A pilot project.

Authored by Anna O'Halloran
and Steven Johnson



Voicescape

www.tpas.org.uk



Contents

Page

1.	Executive Summary	3
2.	Introduction	4
3.	Meet our Landlords	5
4.	The Behavioural Approach	9
5.	The Path to Engagement	11
6.	Core Project trial, design and evaluation	13
7.	Key Takeaways	32

1. Executive Summary

Taking a theory – behavioural insight – and applying it practically to our passion – tenant engagement – is at the heart of this report.

The possibilities of applying behavioural insight methodology in tenant engagement and involvement are endless. And I hope that in this report you can read useful, effective and applicable examples from a range of landlords to inspire you in your own organisations.

I am confident that once you have read this report you will see how behavioural insights can inform decision making, improve engagement, and deliver positive results for people and communities.

The sector is on the cusp of an exciting journey to reap the benefits of behavioural insights and it is vital that residents are with us on this journey.

From rent collection to gas and repairs services to encouraging climate-friendly decisions within households, we are all capable of equipping our teams and service design to take on behavioural insight principles. It's an accessible science that, even done in only a little depth, can have a big impact.

And to now be able to apply this to engagement, given the new regulations and expectations upon the sector to hear the voice of tenants, feels a great step forward.

The themes and recommendations within this report act as a starting point on how the principles could work successfully for housing providers and most importantly, residents.



Jenny Osbourne MBE
Tpas Chief Executive



2. Introduction

A behavioural approach to Tenant Engagement: Why now?

The Charter for Social Housing Tenants makes it clear that effective and authentic tenant engagement is expected and widely recognised as an essential way to ensure tenant experiences are embedded across policies, plans and services.

Tpas launched the 'Engagement Maximiser' last year as a collaborative project to explore how a behavioural approach to tenant engagement could trigger innovation and improvement. The use of behavioural science has had a huge impact on our trailblazing organisations. Take a look at the report and our key takeaways to see how accessible behavioural science is and how you can apply the method to not only maximise engagement but other projects too.

The broad aims laid down at the outset were as follows:

- Increase the number of engaged tenants for our participating landlords
- Build capacity within the landlord teams in relation to the behavioural approach and evidence-based approaches.
- Create a positive legacy for the landlords through the development frameworks, tools and strategies for ongoing application.
- Build evidence and insights that the wider sector can benefit from.

Never has the need for new approaches to securing that engagement been so important

The five landlords collaborating on the Engagement Maximiser were motivated by a variety of reasons, but united by their passion for tenant engagement.

“We’re really interested to learn from best practice in the sector.”

“We’re looking to increase the quantity of engaged tenants, but also the diversity.

“We want to be seen to be leading from the front as far as regulation is concerned.”

“We’re always looking for new ways of improving how we engage with our tenants. The behavioural approach seems to have a lot of potential.”

“We’re keen to get more tenants involved, but it’s also about understanding those tenants better – finding out what motivates them.”

“We’re hoping to highlight the key gaps in our current engaged tenant pool so we can be more targeted in filling them.”

“It’s certainly not over, my interest in behavioural insight and housing has increased as I now look for the opportunity to apply my knowledge of BI in any project I am involved in.”

Tenant, Greatwell Homes

Over a 12-month period, 5 trailblazing landlords worked with our National Consultancy Manager and our partners (the Voicescape team) to understand the barriers to engagement and develop strategies to overcome them using the latest behavioural science research...

3. Meet our Landlords



Wandle was founded in 1967 as the Merton Family Housing Trust, we have since grown into an organisation with over 7,000 homes across nine south London boroughs.

We are a provider of homes for rent (social and affordable), shared ownership, outright sale, and supported housing. We also have a small portfolio of commercial properties and garages.

As a developing housing association, we are helping to tackle the shortage of good quality affordable housing. Our recent development programmes have provided hundreds of new homes both for the people most in need of housing and those who would otherwise not be able to afford to own their own home.

Our existing properties are as diverse as the areas in which we operate. We want to be a good landlord and contribute to building strong communities in the area we work through our community investment strategy.

“ The project was a success for Wandle as it enabled us to achieve our outcomes within our timeframe and budget, using a method that is innovative, unique and collaborative.

We have a better understanding of residents' needs, their motivations, communication preferences and the services they wish to improve.

We only had a sub-set of residents that were willing and able to engage with us due to proximity and other commitments. Despite many incentives being offered, residents were still not committing to engagement. This new insight has enabled us to have more considerations on how we promote activities, ensuring it appeals to the target profile and how we communicate with residents in general. Subsequently resulting in increasing and widening the profile of subscribed residents overall. ”

Staff member,
Wandle Housing



Previously Wellingborough Homes, Greatwell Homes was created in 2007.

As a locally based Housing Association with properties based around Northamptonshire we are keenly committed to:

- Developing a range of diverse new homes that meet local needs
- Working with customers to provide great homes and value for money services
- Investing in communities that will support our customers.

In addition to the new name in 2019, we have launched three new sub-brands:

1. **Greatwell Works** – our repairs branch
2. **Greatwell Places** – our estates team
3. **Greatwell Living** – our sales team

Going forward we aim to build upon our current stock of properties, whilst diversifying our tenure offer in order to meet a variety of local housing needs.

“ The background information and slides were great from all the sessions. The desktop research was really comprehensive and made us focus on recruitment.

It has been a great learning process and I am very much hoping that we will be able to use the report to tailor our approaches to recruitment in the future. We used the learning to develop and incentives and rewards scheme / points-based system. It ran alongside this project and been heavily consulted with our customers to provide appropriate reward, incentive, and choice. ”

Staff member,
Greatwell Homes



Nottingham City Homes is an arms' length management organisation (ALMO) of Nottingham City Council.

This means that the council owns the homes and we manage them on its behalf. At present we manage around 27,000 homes around the city of Nottingham.

Our overarching vision is to create homes and environments where people want to live; however, we have several sub-goals too:

- Involve our residents and listen to them to deliver excellent services
- Make sure our estate are great places to live
- Build high quality but affordable new homes
- Re-invest in our communities
- Make sure we continue to be a great place to work.

We are also involved in Housing to Health, a service aimed to improve the relationship between housing and health in Nottingham. We provide appropriate homes to help increase the discharge rate from hospital or direct those at risk of hospitalisation due to their poor living conditions to better quality homes.

“ [The project was] really good – even just going through it – ‘positive learning experience’. ‘Great to work with others’.

The results were brilliant, the frequency of SMS has increased and the principles are now embedded. This approach tripled tenant academy take up and had extra attendance of 1k extra people. ”

Staff member, NCH



We are an arms' length management organisation (ALMO) created in 2005. We currently manage and look after around 22,000 homes on behalf of the City of Wolverhampton Council.

Our mission is to provide good quality homes and first-rate customer service for our tenants and leaseholders. We are passion about this mission and care about the future of Wolverhampton.

In 2015 we completed our Decent Homes project which saw us fit new kitchens and bathrooms across thousands of homes – making each of them more energy efficient. While we finished this project our aim is to continue improvements like these for years to come.

We are also proud of the fact we were one of the first ALMOs in the county to be given a three-start 'excellent' company rating!

The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust is a registered housing association, established over 100 years ago by Joseph Rowntree to provide housing in communities.

We currently managed 2,500 homes in York and the north-east of England.

Along with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation we are an independent social change organisation working to inspire social change and solve UK poverty.

Together JRHT and JRF have two overarching aims:

- Everyone has a decent home in a good place
- Everyone has good living standards and prospects

We own the freehold of essentially all the properties in New Earswick, York – these include homes for rent, shared ownership, shops, communal facilities and schools.

When it comes to the rented properties we act as the landlord whilst also supporting the community and education activities to enhance the lives of those living and learning across these communities.

4. The Behavioural Approach

The last decade has seen the rapid rise of behavioural approaches to innovation. From its beginnings as a niche discipline within government policy circles, its methods and principles have since become mainstream practice and entered popular consciousness.

The approach was popularised in the UK by the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) - initially a discrete unit with the Cabinet Office and latterly a joint venture co-owned by the government, innovation charity Nesta and the Team's employees. Early work from what became known as the 'Nudge Unit' reported demonstrable impacts in policy areas as diverse as tax collection, fraud, retirement and savings, health and wellbeing and unemployment. These early proof points served as a catalyst for wider application of these behavioural approaches to UK government policy and the launch of similar government units across the world.

The commercial sector has followed suit with a similar behavioural 'turn' in marketing and innovation - the 'Chief Behavioural Officer' being the latest addition to many companies. A wide range of accessible management literature popularising the principles of behavioural economics, prospect theory and social psychology has further accelerated this trend.

Why the Behavioural Approach?

Taking a behavioural approach to change involves viewing organisational challenges through the lens of human behaviour. At heart, most organisational challenges can be distilled down to challenges of human behaviour.

Taking a behavioural approach involves actively translating those organisational challenges into specific behavioural challenges, thereby unlocking a wealth of evidence and research from behavioural science disciplines and a fertile new seam of innovation potential.

A behavioural approach tends to have some relatively consistent features that can serve as a basic process model. For our purposes on the Engagement Maximiser, these were adapted as follows:

What?

Be clear on exactly what you want tenants to do

Who?

Identifying tenants you most want to engage

Why?

Understand what is preventing those tenants from engaging

How?

Make changes that make engaging easier or more attractive, using insights from behavioural science.

So what?

Measure how successful those changes are at increasing tenant engagement.



The weird and wonderful world of priming

There is a long-standing debate in the sector regarding the labels given to people living in social housing: are/should they be tenants, customers, residents... or something else? As far as behavioural science goes, rather than mere semantic quibbling, these labels could have a significant influence on human behaviour via the concept of 'Priming'

'Priming' is a psychological effect that relates to how human thought and behaviour can be influenced by sub-conscious cues. Whilst in theory all sub-conscious stimuli could be priming behaviour at all times – the layout of a room, the colour of a wall, the sound of music in the background – most empirical research has focussed on the influence of specific words or labels.

For instance, classic studies have shown that when individuals are exposed to words and concepts related to the elderly, they subsequently move more slowly when leaving the room compared to those exposed to neutral words and concepts. Similarly, individuals exposed to words related to

physical fitness were subsequently more likely to take the stairs rather than the lift.

Applications within social housing include the impact of job titles and how we refer to key concepts. For instance, is communication from an 'Debt Recovery Officer' more/less likely to result in a payment than those that come from a 'Financial Support Officer'? Similarly, does referring to 'debt' rather than 'arrears' and 'Gas Safety Check' rather than 'boiler service' have any impact on tenant behaviour?

Whilst in recent times some doubt has been cast on the reliability of this research, Priming nevertheless remains an interesting area of investigation with the potential for wide-ranging application. With this in mind, we engaged both 'tenants' and engagement professionals in a words association exercise in an attempt unearth connotations of the terms 'customer', 'tenant' and 'resident' that could potentially have an impact on subsequent behaviour.

“ As part of our community development strategy we had identified a need to increase the number and diversity of residents engaged with WH. This was also a key driver from the green paper and to remain in line with the regulatory standards.



This remains a high priority for us. We were interested in the project as it was a 'trailblazer' so an innovative approach to solve an ongoing challenge.

The team liked that there was an opportunity at the start to engage with other organisations and discuss some of the challenges they had around this area of work/reassuring to understand that most organisations reported similar challenges. The team felt it was useful to understand the behavioural science techniques and the principles behind the trial, and that it would impact some of the wording used on other communications to tenants. ”

Staff member, Wolverhampton Homes

5. The Path to Engagement



A strategic framework

Whilst it's possible to enable some behaviours with one-off changes, longer-term sustainable change happens over time. Given this, it's important to consider behaviour change as a journey rather than event.

When it comes to a behavioural approach in our context, we try to balance triggering a one-off engagement with the development of an ongoing productive relationship based on engagement and participation.

To foster this more strategic mindset a framework was created to facilitate a coordinated behavioural approach to tenant engagement over time. This framework – 'The Path to Engagement' – draws upon other well-established citizen participant frameworks - such as Arnstein's Ladder of

Participation (1969) and Rosenblatt's Engagement Pyramid (2014) – and aligns more directly with the behavioural approach.

Each stage represents a different level/type of engagement with the 'intensity' of engagement increasing as the number of tenants required decreases. Crucially, each stage of the path brings its own behavioural dynamic and – whilst there will be some overlap - can be approached as a specific behavioural challenge.

With each stage of the path defined, it becomes possible to identify the specific target behaviour for that stage along with the associated barriers and the interventions required to overcome them, facilitating the behavioural approach at a strategic and operational level.

Stage	Behaviour	Example	Barriers	Intervention
Lead	Commit to a formal role with specific responsibilities	Board membership, committees and panels	?	?
Collaborate	Help deliver services or assist with tenant engagement	Volunteer to assist with community events. Become an ambassador / recruiter for tenant engagements	?	?
Co-create	Work with the organisation to help improve design of services & guide future planning	Take part in deeper in-person engagements such as focus groups and workshops.	?	?
Chip-in	Respond to basic engagement requests	Complete postal / online questionnaires. Take part in telephone surveys.	?	?
Opt-in	Commit to future engagement	Officially opt-in. Submit preferences for issues to be engaged on and channels or forums to be engaged through.	?	?
Be Aware	Engage with information about the organisation's current services and future plans	Engage with information about our organisation. Read newsletters, visit websites etc.	?	?



The 'path' concept also more faithfully represents the varied and dynamic nature of real human behaviour. Tenants aren't simply engaged or not; they are engaged to varying degrees, in different ways and at different times.



6. The Core Project

The Engagement Maximiser project was delivered through a series of facilitated workshops, involving tenants, engagement professionals and behavioural insights experts.

These were designed to encourage tenants and engagement teams to use their experience to adapt principles from the behavioural sciences to the needs of their own organisations. In doing so, they created tailored projects that they could 'own', but also continue to develop beyond the Engagement Maximiser project.

The project teams incorporated colleagues from a range of functions in addition to Tenant Engagement, including Communications, IT, Insight and Business Improvement. This interdisciplinary approach enabled us to achieve a balance of rigour and practicality, given that the teams were operating in a live service context. In doing so we were able to maintain sufficient experimental standards whilst capturing invaluable insights from a range of people. Ultimately, this helped build the

foundations for a sustainable legacy through the ongoing application of the project's principles.

These workshops took the landlord teams and their tenants through each of the stages referred to in the 'Behavioural Approach Side Bar'. The following section covers each of these off in turn.

a) Define the target behaviour

A clear, well-defined target behaviour represents the foundation of the behavioural approach. Whilst an apparently simple task, translating an organisational objective into a specific behavioural objective can be a complex exercise and is often overlooked as a result.

When undertaking this first step, it is important to consider the following guidelines and make sure the target behaviour is:

1. **Actually a behaviour:** a common mistake is to frame the objective in terms of awareness, attitudinal shift or organisational strategy rather than a specific behaviour. For instance, 'Increase the number of customers on the scrutiny panel' is an organisational objective, whereas 'Request information about being a scrutiny panel member' is behavioural.

2. **Specific:** make the behaviour as specific and concrete as possible. 'Get more tenants involved' is an abstract and weak behavioural objective, whereas 'Get X more tenants to attend Y meeting on Z day' is strong, concrete and actionable.
3. **Singular:** home in on single action rather than a sequence or bundle of behaviours. For instance, 'Co-create our repairs service' could involve the following bundle of behaviours: engaging with information about workshops, securing commitment to participate, attending workshops, meaningfully participating in workshops. In line with our Path to Engagement, break behaviour bundles down into their individual constituents and treat each as its own challenge.
4. **Measureable:** ensure that data can be collected in line with the requirements of a randomised controlled trial (see Evaluation section below). This will be central to developing a sound evidence base for the effectiveness of your intervention.

With the above guidance in mind our teams homed in on the Opt-in stage of the Path to Engagement and built interventions designed to secure an active commitment to future engagement. This commitment was demonstrated through the completion of an 'Engagement Profile': additional information that could be used to tailor future engagement opportunities towards the specific tenant preferences:

- Services / issues they would like to influence
- Level of involvement they could commit to
- Preferred communication channels
- Preferred engagement channels (surveys, meetings etc.)

b) Think about identifying priority groups

Where possible, a behavioural approach would include highlighting priority groups within the wider population to focus in on. This allows teams to better **target resource** to optimise budgets and **tailor intervention** to increase effectiveness.

Identifying this groups involves striking balance between:

- **Need:** groups who are more in need of intervention
- **Number:** groups who are large enough to generate business impact
- **Nudgability:** groups who would be more likely to undertake the desired behaviour.

For instance, for many landlords **Under 25s** would be identified as a group that is more in need of intervention as they are under-represented within the pool of engaged tenants. However, it's likely that this group is both small and difficult to engage.

At the other extreme, many landlords default to targeting already engaged tenants as they are much more likely to respond. However, these groups are not in need of intervention - they are already engaged.

The aim is to identify a sweet-spot between these extremes that identifies groups that are under-represented, reasonably numerous and who would be more likely to engage.

In some cases, the identification of priority groups would depend on the objective of the engagement. For example, if the objective was to design a new youth support service, then the age of the target group would be fixed. However, within that there would still be consideration of which sub-categories



of ‘young people’ would we need to engage to get a representative view of the service: genders, ethnicities, geographies etc.

This type of prioritisation is normally arrived at through data analysis to segment customers according to behaviours, demographic characteristics etc. However, when this is not practical it is possible to take a less targeted approach for purposes of a trial and then use the trial data itself to identify future priority groups.

In practice, this involves identifying a larger, randomly selected group from the entire tenant base as the ‘sample’. These tenants then receive the intervention and the data is analysed to find out not only which interventions worked better, but also which groups are more likely to respond. These findings can then be used to define target groups for future interventions, as well as providing some steer on the nature of the intervention itself.

For example, in taking this wider population approach, we may find that on average young people are much less likely to engage. However, it’s possible that we also find that of those young people who do engage, they are much more likely to do so if they are receipt of intervention A, rather than intervention B. We then have an evidence-base for targeting future interventions for young people using intervention B.

Within the Engagement Maximiser project, resources were limited. Therefore, given the above considerations, it was decided that the latter more pragmatic approach to identifying priority groups would be adopted.

“ Something that the team can use to involve as many customers as they can. ”

Tenant, Greatwell Homes

c) Understand behavioural barriers

If we are to design services and interventions that enable certain behaviours, it’s essential that we first have a solid understanding of any obstacles that currently make those behaviours unappealing, difficult or unrewarding for our priority groups: the barriers.

To structure this element of the project a framework was developed to categorise behavioural barriers into three broad types:

1. Landlord Factors
2. Tenant Factors
3. External Factors

A combination of literature reviews and workshops with tenants and staff was used to deepen our team’s understanding of the behavioural dynamic surrounding tenant engagement.

At a general level, we recommend that the initial learnings from this process are built upon through a review of all existing research, engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders and wider research directly with social housing tenants using more qualitative techniques such as focus groups or co-production sessions.

1. Landlord Factors

The nature of the landlord-tenant relationship has a significant impact on the likelihood that a customer will engage, and the mindset that they will bring to that engagement. This dynamic can be influenced by a wide-range of factors such as the rent collection process, communications with customers, customer experience, reputation, service quality etc. Beyond these general considerations, there are

a range of landlord factors more specific to the tenant engagement process that influence engagement behaviour.

Process & Resource: Make it slick

Pressures of the 'day job' and limited resource can limit the speed and effectiveness with which teams respond.

Given engagement experiences with retail and other sectors, tenant service expectations are high. Speed of response and quality of communication are central to creating a positive experience. In turn, this first experience will influence how meaningful the subsequent engagement is; how likely the tenant will be to subsequently engage and the nature of opinions they share with other tenants.

Furthermore, at the opt-in stage, tenant motivation is 'hot', but this heat will quickly dissipate if a quality response isn't received quickly.

Menu of Involvement: Make it simple

Limited, prescriptive or uninspiring engagement channels can no longer align with the diversity social housing populations and their modern lifestyles.

Again, service expectations are informed by the seamless, tailored and rewarding customer experiences that tenants have with commercial and retail brands.

It's important to move away from one-size-fits all approaches and traditional channels such as meetings and paper surveys to more targeted and tailored approaches to engagement that reflect the diverse communication preferences of tenants. In particular, the development of more effective digital channels holds potential to make engagement easier and more rewarding for tenants whilst simultaneously reducing costs for landlords.

Lack of Clarity: Make it specific

The generic notion of 'engagement', 'involvement' or 'scrutiny' is too vague and lacks a 'hook' to capture attention and establish relevance.

Engagement opportunities that are general in nature - asking tenants to 'get involved' or join a generic panel or scrutiny process for instance - are less likely to be taken up.

The more specific we are about the nature of the engagement, the easier it is for tenants to understand what's required, conceptualise what the process entails and – crucially – how the outcomes will benefit them.

This clarity will also help shape everyone's expectations about what engagement entails. The ability to provide a service that meets the tenant's expectations is much easier when we are able to mould these expectations beforehand. Not only can the failure to meet expectations result in a spoiled relationship but simply meeting someone's expectations can help foster a positive long-term relationship.

Rather than promoting tenant engagement generally, focus in on specific engagement opportunities:

- What is this issue / service want tenant views on?
- When will they be required to participate?
- Specifically, what will they need to do to submit their views?
- How long will it take?
- What will happen as a result of their involvement?



2. Tenant Factors

Raise Awareness

Some social landlords lack resources and strategy in how they promote the concept of tenant engagement and specific engagement opportunities.

At a very basic level, many tenants simply aren't aware of the engagement opportunities that the landlord has to offer. Whilst this may be due to a range of factors, the teams in this project felt that there are a significant proportion of tenants who simply don't consume any landlord information at all.

Beyond basic awareness, there are also issues with misconceptions of who 'engagement' is for and why it exists. The teams felt there was an assumption that engagement opportunities are merely for tenants to raise or make a complaint.

Build Trust

For a range of reasons tenant trust is low, in both the landlord and the engagement process.

Tenant trust is a pre-requisite for meaningful engagement. Not only does it increase the likelihood that the engagement opportunity will be taken, but it also influences the mindset that the tenant brings to the engagement.

The general sense of trust that a tenant has in their landlord can be influenced by a wide range of factors based on their wider service experience, the opinions of fellow tenants and wider reputational signals derived from the media. Tenant engagement teams have little or no influence over these wider issues.

However, in the context of tenant engagement, trust in the process is likely to be the key factor – something that tenant engagement teams can

exert control over. The key components to this trust are confidence that the team will:

- **Listen:** pay attention with an open mind
- **Understand:** see things from the tenant's perspective, not the landlord's
- **Act:** ensure that the tenant's input is acted up
- **Feedback:** let the tenant know what their engagement results in and what impact it has had.

Increase Motivation

The ways in which tenants will benefit from engaging are unclear and/or unconvincing.

Any behaviour relies on the individual being motivated enough to undertake it. Our landlords felt that engagement opportunities are often framed in terms of how the tenant can help the organisation improve services, without having a clear enough emphasis on how this – and other elements of the engagement – will directly benefit them.

Over-and-above the abstract notion of 'improving services' there are a wide-range of benefits associated with engagement that should be communicated as part of promotion efforts. These can range from simple social engagement opportunities, and skills and confidence building, to more formal benefits that lead to an improved CV or more formal training. See the Key Messages side bar for more inspiration.

engagement opportunities, and this can create a number of knock on effects.

“ NCH now have almost 300 new members to involvement. ”

Tenant, NCH

Consultation Fatigue

Tenants can tire of engagement requests through over-reliance on small groups of engaged tenants and over-use of general approaches.

Consultation fatigue becomes a barrier when tenants are continually asked to participate in

engagement opportunities, and this can create a number of knock on effects.

Firstly, they are highly likely to 'tire' of participation and stop engaging. More importantly, the views of this small pool of tenants are almost certainly not representative of the wider population, introducing the risk of designing services for the general population based on the needs of a few.

Even at the wider population level, consultation fatigue could become a factor when there is too many large scale, generic calls for participation – for example, the constant request for views and opinions on social media or the overuse of surveys.

Fear and Stigma

Choice of venues and timing, along with fear of judgement from other tenants reduce likelihood of engagement.

Issues related to fear and stigma operate at several levels. At a practical level, distance to venues and timing of engagements may reduce the number of those who are willing to engage. For example, night-time engagements requiring public transport may be unsettling or generate an element of fear.

Furthermore, if the tenant happens to be behind with their rent, is the focus of an ASB case or hasn't granted access for their gas safety check, the likelihood that they will engage reduces dramatically. Understandably, the tenant will be apprehensive that they will be asked to discuss these sensitive issues, or even fearful that they will receive sanction.

However, there is a more nuanced social level to 'fear and stigma' related to the perceptions of fellow tenants. Tenants involved in the project told us they fear they will be judged as 'do-gooders' by their neighbours or even be suspected of 'snitching' on other tenants in relation to income and lifestyle, property condition and anti-social behaviour.

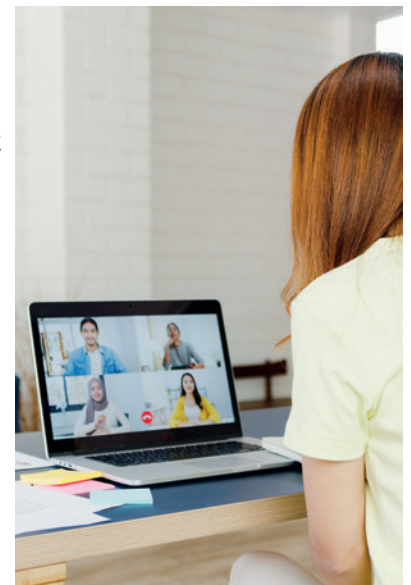
A third level that is more nuanced still relates to a tenant's self-identity. For some, ongoing issues with the stigmatisation in the media results in a sense that social housing tenants are 'second class' citizens. In cooperating with the landlord through engagement opportunities it reinforces the individual's identity as a social housing tenant, along with the negative stereotypes that go with it.

Skills

Some tenants feel that they don't have the skills or capabilities to participate in an engagement opportunity.

Depending on the nature of opportunity, the skills required could vary considerably. Any sort of online engagement requires digital skills and confidence that some people may lack.

Any forms of written or verbal engagement requires language and literacy skills that may be a barrier for some. More fundamentally, engagement that requires attending meetings, groups or workshops requires a level of confidence that many tenants may feel they don't possess.





3. External Factors

The likelihood that a tenant will engage is also influenced by a range of ‘External’ factors such as politics and the economy, media coverage and the general pressures of modern life. Unlike our first two categories, these factors largely lie outside the control of both tenants and landlord, and so we just include a brief summary here:

Modern Life

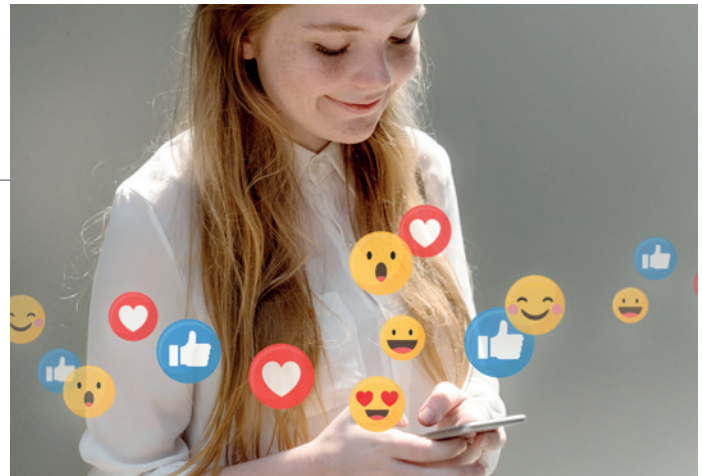
- Worsening public transport
- Lack of time
- Complex lifestyles with multiple competing priorities
- Low incomes (no money for travel / time of work)

Media

- Media coverage of ‘property ladder’ makes tenants feel like they must be ‘at the bottom’. This results in them feeling judged and impacts on self-respect
- Stigma of being a social housing tenant: engaging with landlord reinforces identity as ‘social housing tenant’ – tenants are getting less willing to embrace this.
- Uncomplimentary coverage of landlords negatively impacts trust.

Politics and the economy

- General low trust in the ‘system’
- Negative perception of local government gets over-generalised to landlords
- People feel mistreated and are therefore less likely to ‘give back’.



d) Design the change

With the target behaviour well-defined and the barriers understood, the foundations for designing behavioural interventions are now in place. In addition to the evidence gathered through the previous phases, research from the behavioural sciences would also be incorporated at this stage.

Each landlord attended an intervention design workshop facilitated by the Voicescape behavioural insights team. These workshops were designed to empower engagement teams to use their wealth of frontline experience to adapt research drawn from the behavioural sciences and coalesce this with each team’s specific organisation and tenants.

For the purposes of this project we focussed on using a specific, well-evidenced behavioural principle to help the teams’ position their trial within the Path to Engagement. In addition, we used a behavioural design framework to guide the development of the trial interventions and utilised specific ‘nudges’ to trigger an opt-in response.

Following the workshops, the teams worked within their own teams – with support from Voicescape – to develop and refine the initial intervention ideas and work towards testing them through a randomised controlled trial.

Behavioural lever: Foot-in-the-door technique

Our approach to the trial and subsequent continuation through the Path of Engagement was based on a phenomenon known as the ‘Foot-in-the-door’ effect. In basic terms, this principle states that when we commit to a doing a small thing, it becomes much more likely that we will then commit to bigger things. The mechanism behind this relates to a deep-seated human need to maintain consistency in our identity. Responding to a small request, but then refusing to respond to a subsequent **related** request makes us feel like we are being inconsistent.

When our behaviours contradict our self-identity in this way, we experience an uncomfortable psychological tension known as ‘cognitive dissonance’. A simple way to resolve this tension is to adapt our behaviour to maintain consistency i.e. respond to the subsequent request.

Behavioural Design Framework

Dependent on the behaviour, target group(s) and barriers there are a wide range of behaviour change theories, models and frameworks that can be invoked to guide the design of interventions.

Adapted from a range of similar frameworks we structured the intervention design around four key principles.

How do we make the target behaviour...

Foot in the Door Case Study

Foot in the Door techniques inform some of the most common sales and marketing tactics: free trials of a service, feel samples of a product, committing to a small charity donation and then being asked to increase later.

The most famous research example of foot-in-the-door technique revolves around asking citizens to support a community cause. Two groups of citizens were asked to place a large, unsightly sign in their front garden reading "Drive Carefully". Prior to being asked to place the large unsightly sign, one of the groups had already been asked to place a small, discreet sign in their front window.

76% of people in the group that had been asked to place the small sign, subsequently agreed to place the large sign, compared to only 17% in the group that hadn't. The small sign was the foot-in-the-door that made a response to the bigger ask more likely.

Transposing the same logic to tenant engagement and our Path to Engagement framework, we hypothesised that securing a very simple, easy ‘opt-in’ from the tenant, would make the subsequent (and future) engagement easier to secure, driven by the need for the tenant to preserve consistency and avoid cognitive dissonance.

1. Obvious	2. Easy	3. Attractive	4. Satisfying
How do we get our communication noticed?	How do we make it as easy as possible for our customers to respond?	How do we communicate the value of responding? What's in it for them?	How do we make them feel good about their response so they are more likely to respond further in the future?



The Campaign Message Bank

Behavioural approaches are strongly associated with the application of 'Nudge Theory'. Nudges are small changes made to the context in which a behaviour occurs that make the desired behaviour more likely to happen.

The design of these Nudges draws on evidence from the behavioural sciences, most notable research into the common, predictable quirks in our decision-making processes known as cognitive heuristics and biases.

Our landlords felt that organisations often fall into the trap of framing engagement in terms of benefits to the organisation. This perspective needs reversing, with a clear focus on how engagement will directly benefit the tenant. The most effective way to do this is to make the positive advantages of participation relevant and resonant to tenant values and identity.

In this context, our teams developed a bank of Nudges as the basis for the specific messaging used within their interventions. The teams themselves decided which Nudges they wanted to experiment with and went on to test their effectiveness through a series of randomised controlled trials (RCTs).

1. Power, control or influence

We have a deep-seated need to feel that we have some control over things that are important to us.

Influencing decisions that the landlord makes gives you control over what happens to your home and your area.

- Get advanced / inside information on upcoming plans
- Exert control over what happens in your area / to your community
- Assume a position within the community.

2. Social norm

We tend to act in similar ways to people who are in the same communities we are in.

Other people like you are already doing it.

- It's the normal thing for tenants to do
- Don't be left out
- Sense of belonging – be part of something.

3. Intrinsic reward

We can be strongly motivated when our tasks serve a higher purpose or are inherently ethical or satisfying.

Make a difference! Impact positively on your community!

- Make a positive impact on other tenants' lives
- Destigmatise social housing – make a stand and help show that SH tenants aren't the stereotype.
- Less divided community – repair 'fractured' communities.

4. Extrinsic reward

We are motivated by financial rewards and perks.

Become an engaged tenant and benefit financially.

- Get paid for your time / receive shopping vouchers
- Build up points to spend at retail outlets
- Qualify for a prize draw to win X
- Build up skills that could lead to a better job.

5. Identity

We are motivated to maintain a consistent and positive self-identity.

You're the type of person who does this sort of thing.

- You have the intelligence and creativity required: you'd do a great job
- We need people like you to help
- You're not like most other tenants.

6. Reciprocity

When we do something for someone they are more likely to return the favour.

We [tenant engagement team] are trying hard to get your voice heard but we need your help.

- We are working hard to support you
- Help us help you
- As a token of our appreciation we would like to give you X.

6. Loss aversion

Psychologically, the pain of losing is twice as powerful as the pleasure of gaining.

If you don't act now you will miss out on this opportunity.

- Don't lose your right to a say
- Sign up now or risk losing out
- Don't miss out on the chance to win.

e) Evaluate impact: the trials

One of the defining features of the behavioural approach is an emphasis on scientific method and rigorous standards of evidence. This normally includes the use of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) to evaluate the impact of interventions.

Each of our landlords attended workshops facilitated by the Voicescape team to create interventions that were conducive to this sort of testing.

Whilst apparently simple in structure, the rigour of an RCT is dependent on a range of technical factors, including methods for randomisation, calculations of sample size and power, construction of metrics and data collection.

Running a trial that complied with these stringent requirements within a live service context – as opposed to an academic context - represented one of the biggest challenges for our teams.

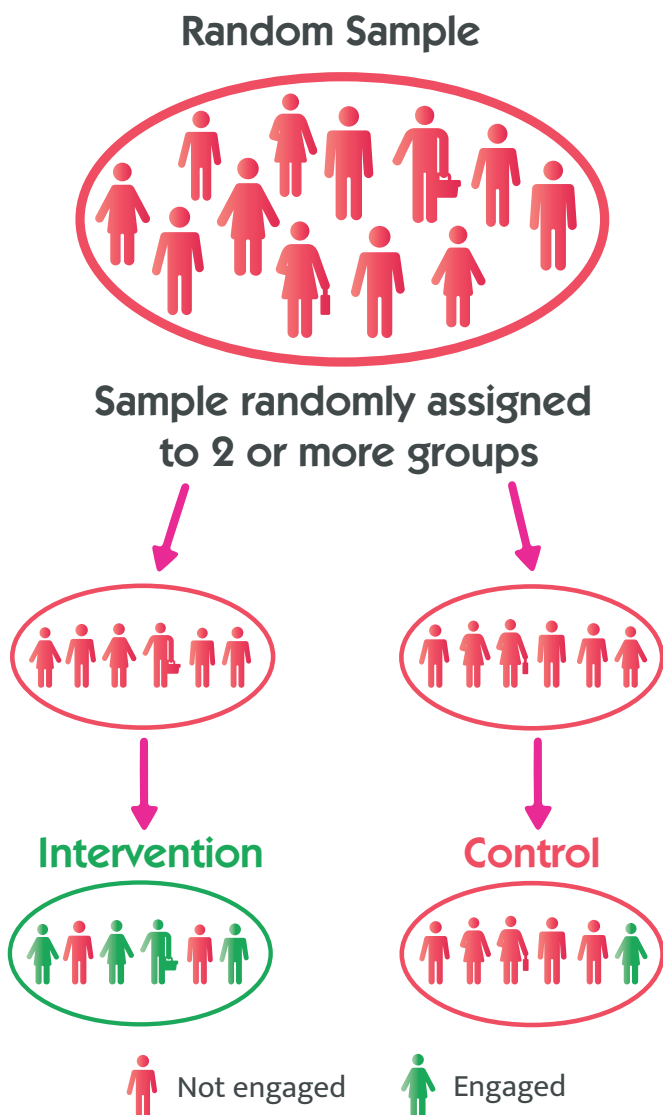
“ Nudge generally - it's a good technique. Anything that can be done to increase the numbers of younger people getting involved is worth it. ”

Tenant, Greatwell Homes



Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs)

Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) are widely regarded as the gold standard for establishing a rigorous evidence base. Whilst there are a range of technical considerations to factor into the design of an RCT, the structure underpinning them is relatively intuitive:



A sample group of individuals (tenants in our case) will be drawn from the population and randomly allocated to 2 or more groups. One of these groups will be the 'Control' group whilst the others we refer to as Change groups.

Tenants allocated to the Control group receive the 'business as usual' intervention - the communication or service the organisation would normally use. Individuals allocated to the Change groups will each receive one of the newly designed interventions.

By **randomly** allocating a large enough sample to the different groups and running a **control** group alongside the new interventions, we significantly increase our confidence that any differences in response are caused by the interventions themselves, rather than by other factors.

Further analysis is then applied to the results to test for the 'statistical significance' of any differences. This increases confidence further still that any differences are not the result of random chance and are a direct result of the intervention(s).

In the absence of a business-as-usual intervention – and therefore no natural Control group – a 'Randomised Trial' is used to test the new interventions against each other.

“ The fact that customers were invited to get involved with the project helped put my mind at rest about the ethics. ”

Tenant, Greatwell Homes

Wandle Homes



Trial Design

Four letters were posted out to a sample of 3,000 residents. An existing letter already being used with tenants prior to the trial served as a Control intervention.

The four different interventions were as follows (see Appendix X for the full letters):

- **Control** 'An invitation to join Wandle's Service Improvement Forum'
- **Intrinsic reward** 'Have your say and make a difference in your community'
- **Extrinsic reward** 'Have your say and you could Win £100 in shopping vouchers'.
- **Social norm** 'I'm a Wandle resident and I want to improve how they do things' (sent from an existing engaged tenant).

Summary Results

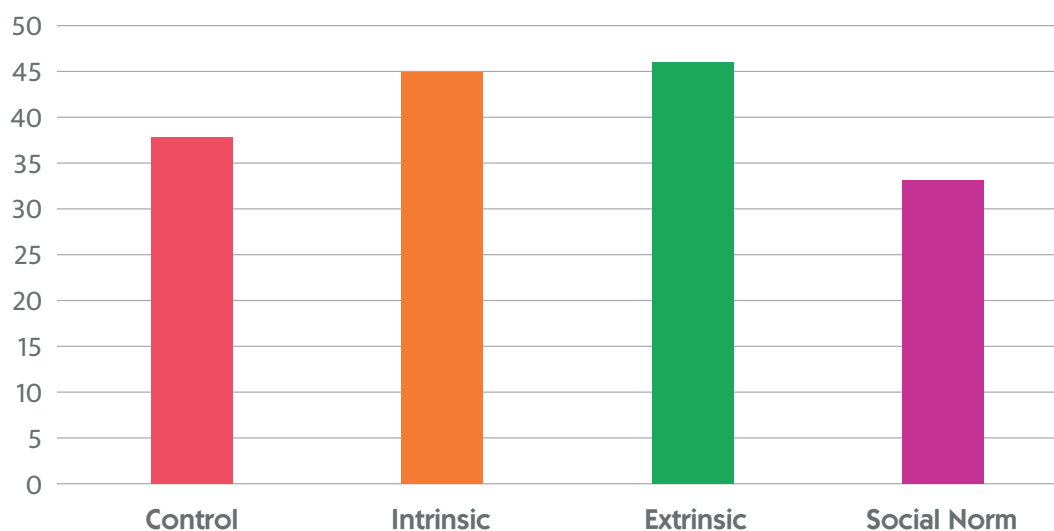
Over the course of the trial, 162 Wandle residents opted-in – an overall response of 5.6% that effectively doubled the size of the existing engaged tenant pool. The volume of opt-in responses varied across the change groups, with the **Extrinsic Reward** intervention producing the highest number of opt-in responses and the **Social Norm** the lowest.

Although there are some variations in these response rates, none of these were found to be statistically significant.

Further analysis showed some interesting differences in response rates in relation to Borough and tenure type. For instance, Intrinsic reward seemed to work best for General Needs tenants from Southwark but didn't work well for General Needs tenants from Croydon, Merton and Lambeth.

The inclusion of a letter written by a tenant was of particular interest across the project.

Wandle Opt-in Response Rates





Generally, there is an assumption that using existing tenants as champions would be a positive and effective method of increasing engagement.

This has some support in the behavioural sciences in relation to ‘Messenger’ effects - the impact of a piece of communication can be heavily influenced by the who sends it – and also in relation to Social Norms – we are more likely to do something if people ‘like us’ are also seen to be doing it.

Interestingly, not only did the tenant letter not perform as well as the two ‘Reward’ messages, it also performed less well than the Control. Whilst we cannot conclude that use of tenant champions is therefore an ineffective method of widening engagement from this one trial, it’s clear that it should be used with caution.

Further thought needs to be put into whether we should be using certain types of tenant to attract certain groups and whether the use of tenant champions is more appropriate for some communications methods than others – face-to-face contact rather than letters perhaps.

“ It was definitely worth getting involved, I'm glad I was involved it hadn't occurred to me that HA would involve customers in things like this, I'm glad I was involved.”

Tenant, Greatwell Homes

Greatwell Homes Greatwell Homes

Trial Design

Four SMS messages were sent out to 2,000 Greatwell Homes residents. An SMS campaign offered the advantage of being simple to implement, cost effective and conducive to clear data. Greatwell Homes also had a high proportion of tenant mobile phone numbers, along with experience of using this method to engage residents in other business areas.

The trial was run over 2 waves, with a second message being sent to the sample X days after the first. The opt-in process for this trial had two distinct stages:

1. Respond to the text message (click through or text back)
2. Complete a profile (online form or call back)

Whilst we look at both metrics in the analysis, only (1.) can be considered directly related to the intervention and is therefore the primary indication of trial performance. The likelihood of a tenant completing their profile will be influenced by a host of factors unrelated to the text message: the design of the online form or the call-back script used by the member of staff, for instance.

In the absence of an existing message already being used, the Greatwell team designed a generic message using the organisation’s standard tone of voice to serve as a quasi-control. The four different messages were as follows:

1. Control

“Would you like to help us improve our services by getting involved? Text back ‘YES’ or click on the link to fill out a simple form and find out more.

Thanks, [Officer Name] from Greatwell Homes,
your landlord [phone number] [web hyperlink]”

2. Intrinsic reward

“Would you like to help your neighbours and make a difference in your community? Text back ‘YES’ or click on the link to fill out a simple form and find out more.

Thanks, [Officer Name] from Greatwell Homes,
your landlord [phone number] [web hyperlink]”

3. Extrinsic reward

“Would you like to get exclusive rewards, shopping vouchers and boost your CV through mystery shopping with us? Text back ‘YES’ or click on the link to fill out a simple form and find out more.

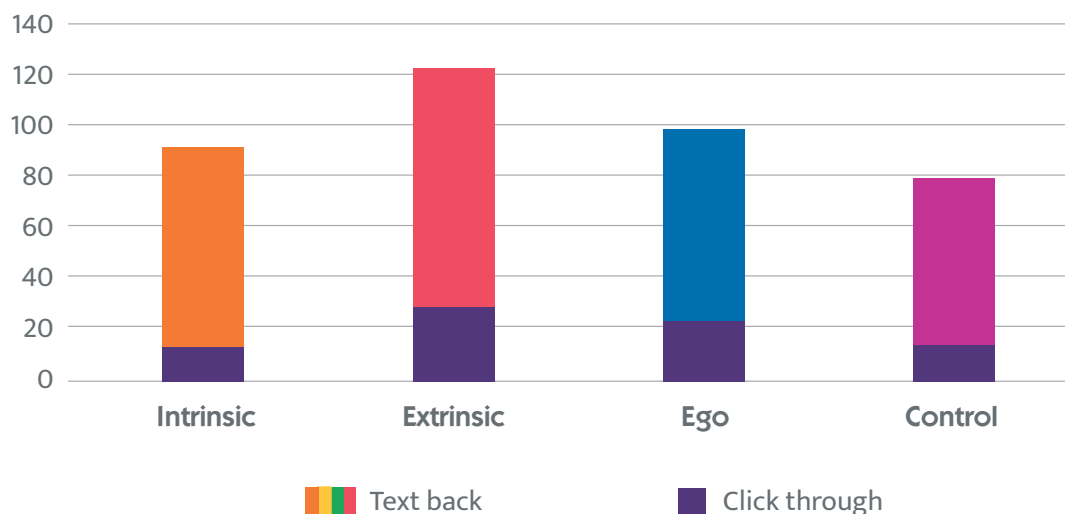
Thanks, [Officer Name] from Greatwell Homes,
your landlord [phone number] [web hyperlink]”

4. Identity

“We think you’d be great at helping us improve our services through getting involved! Text back ‘YES’ or click on the link to fill out a simple form and find out more.

Thanks, [Officer Name] from Greatwell Homes,
your landlord [phone number] [web hyperlink]”

Greatwell Response Rates





Given that the trial took place over two waves and that tenants were allocated to different groups for Wave 2, it's possible that the above results are distorted by the influence of Wave 1 on the impact of Wave 2. To get a clearer view of the true impact of the interventions, further statistical modelling was undertaken to factor out this interplay between Waves. This analysis resulted in the estimated impacts shown in the graph below.

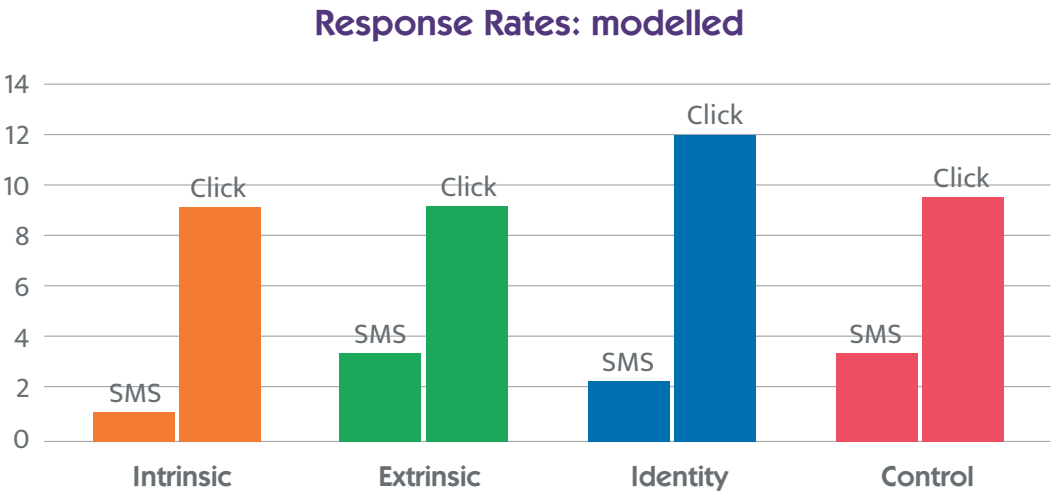
Again, there are clear differences in the effectiveness of the interventions, this time with the **Identity** condition having most impact and the **Intrinsic** motivation having least. Whilst the best performing messages differ across the two analysis, the appeal to the tenants' self-interest is common to both. This gives greater weight to the possibility that tenants are more motivated by factors that benefit them personally rather than their neighbours and community. Indeed, there is some evidence that an appeal to helping others could be a disincentive, given that the Intrinsic message performed less well than the Control in the modelled analysis.

Some of the differences between interventions within the modelled results were statistically significant:

- In relation to the **Text Back** metric: the extent to which the **Intrinsic** intervention was less likely to trigger a response was statistically significant. Meaning this intervention was significantly less likely to motivate tenants to text back.
- In relation to the **Click Through** metric: the extent to which the **Identity** intervention was more likely to trigger a response was statistically significant. Meaning this intervention was significantly more likely to motivate tenants to click through to the online sign-up form.

Overall, the difference between the **Intrinsic** intervention and the others was statistically significant, creating strong evidence that the **Intrinsic** message is less effective and getting tenants to Text Back and Click Through.

This further reinforces the fact that, **in this case**, appeals to self-interest seem to be far more motivating to tenants than the opportunity to make a positive difference in the community.



Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust



Trial Design

Four letters were sent out to 1,981 JRHT residents. Like Wandle, JRHT also had an existing letter they used to trigger engagement from tenants which served as Control. The interventions were designed to secure opt-in by the submission of an engagement profile by either post or through an online form.

The four different interventions were as follows (See Appendix X for full letters):

- **Control** Existing engagement letter: “Can you help us improve our services?”
- **Simple** Existing letter, simplified using information design principles
- **Power** Simple letter, with additional messaging empowering the tenant with control over decisions. “Would you like more control over the services you receive?”

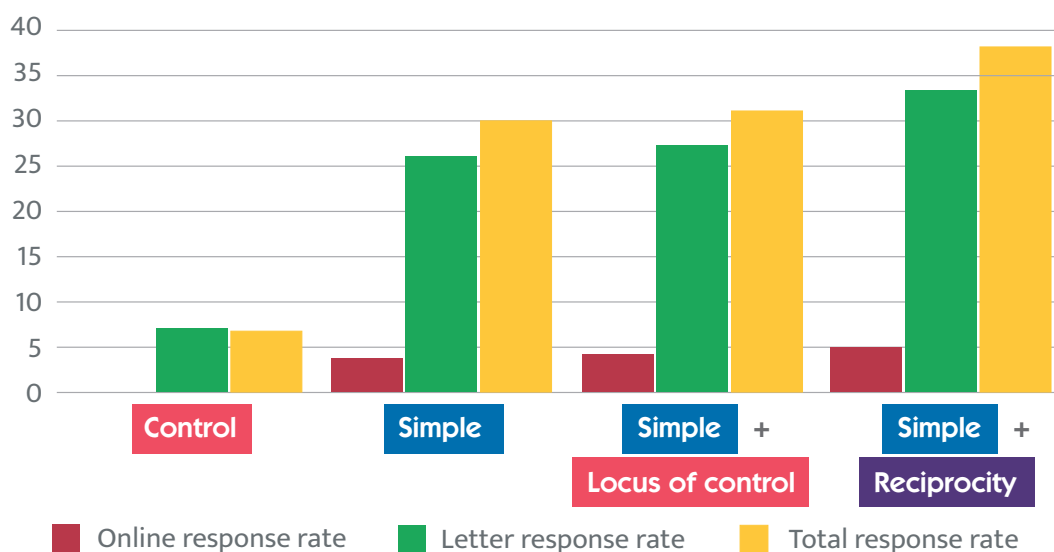
- **Reciprocity** Simple letter with additional messaging underlining the efforts JRHT are making to give their tenants a voice. “We’re working hard to get your voice heard.”

Summary Results

Over the course of the trial **106 residents** opted in to JRHT’s engaged tenant pool – an overall response rate of 5.35%. The volume of opt-in responses varied across the intervention arms with **Reciprocity** producing the greatest volume of opt-in responses and the **Control** group producing the least.

While all the interventions were significantly better than the control, inclusion of the other behavioural messaging didn’t create any further significant difference over and above the Simple design. This suggests that biggest impact on engagement was achieved through the use of clear design and plain language, rather than any specific behavioural messaging.

JRHT Results





The effect of merely simplifying the design is a very strong and is something that can be taken forward by tenant engagement teams. This finding is supported by other work that the Voicescape team have done in relation to income collection and gas safety access. The tendency to try and use one piece of communication to achieve a range of objects leads to it achieving none. It was felt that this is part of a more general tendency to design communication from the organisation's perspective rather than creating more 'user-friendly' version by seeing it from the tenant's perspective.

There was an assumption that the ability to supply profiles online would increase the number of opt-ins. Again, there is some support for this in the evidence as tasks which are easier to execute – have less 'friction' – are more likely to be executed. Compared with the numerous steps associated with returning a handwritten form, you would expect completion of an online form to be the more 'friction-free' of the two options. However, in this trial the number of profiles returned by post massively outnumbered those filled in online. Again, whilst we can't conclude that use of postal-return forms is categorically more effective than the online counterpart, we clearly need to be more **cautious** in our assumptions regarding digital services.

“Tripled tenant academy take up and had extra attendance of 1k people.”

Staff member, NCH

Nottingham City Homes (NCH) Trial Design



Three SMS messages sent out to 3,000 NCH residents. In the absence of an existing text message being used by NCH, generic message with no overt behavioural content was designed to serve as a quasi-control.

Interventions aimed to elicit a simple text message response from the tenant to opt-in to the engaged pool. Tenants received a 'Welcome' message, following by a second message prompting an opt-in response and then a third asking for preferred contact details.

The 'Welcome' message varied according to trial arm, whilst the prompt question remained consistent.

The three messages were as shown on the next page.

Summary Results

Over the course of the trial **239 residents** opted-in to NCH's resident engagement pool – a response rate of 8%. The volume of opt-in responses varied across the intervention arms, with **Extrinsic** producing the greatest volume and **Simple** (quasi-control) the least.

Again, we see that the appeal a tenant's self-interest seems to increase opt-in rates compared to more altruistic motivations related to neighbourhood and community.

Further analysis showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the **Extrinsic** intervention and both the **Control** and **Intrinsic** interventions.

1. Control

“Hi, this is Nottingham City Homes. We’d like to ask you a few questions about getting involved with us. You’ll soon receive a question from number [number]. To take part, just reply to the first question. Or just ignore this if you’re not interested.”

2. Extrinsic reward

“Hi, this is Nottingham City Homes. We’d like to ask you a few questions about getting involved with us. Everybody who takes part will go into a draw to win £100 of Intu vouchers. You’ll soon receive a question from number [number]. To take part, just reply to the first question. Or just ignore this if you’re not interested.”

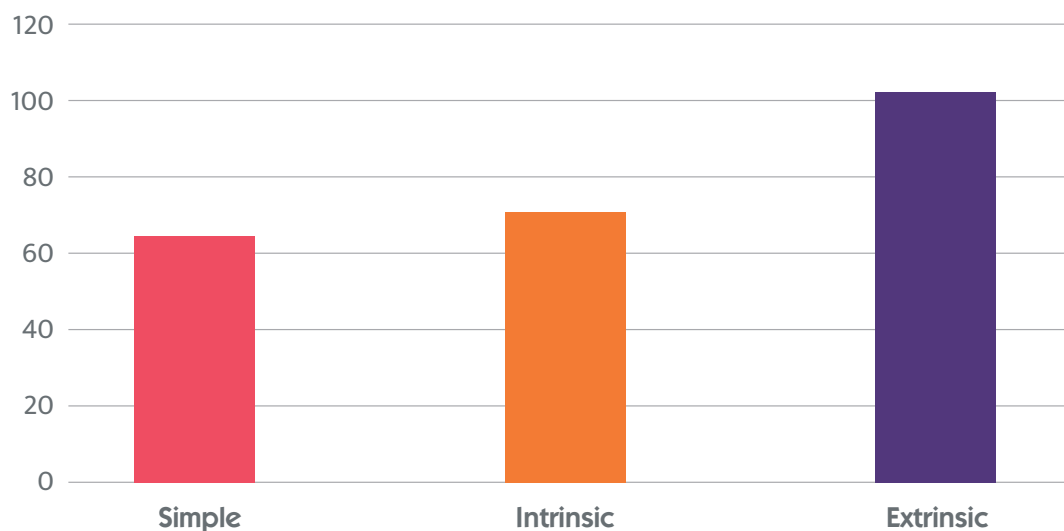
3. Intrinsic reward

“Hi, this is Nottingham City Homes. We aim to support you and your local community, but we need people like you to get involved to help us make a difference. You’ll soon receive a question from number [number]. To take part, just reply to the first question. Or just ignore this if you’re not interested.”

“Using social media is what young people use and this technique can easily be incorporated into that.”

Staff member, NCH

NCT Opt-in Response Rates





Wolverhampton Homes

Trial Design



Wolverhampton Homes' initial trial was implemented by the internal team without any input from the behavioural insights consultants on the project. When this initial trial returned an opt-in rate of just 0.5%, it was decided that a second trial should be run, this time in collaboration with Voicescape team.

In the first trial, text messages were used to nudge recipients to an online form. The questionnaire was lengthy and hadn't been designed from a behavioural perspective or with the user experience in mind and was the most likely driver of poor performance.

By far the most complex of the trials, the second version involved 8 different interventions being issued to 4000 residents. The team at Wolverhampton Homes were interested in testing the impact of a range of factors: communication channel (postcard vs email), tone of voice (official versus personal), as well as nudges (loss aversion versus identity). This resulted in the trial structure shown in the table.

In the Official tone, the Identity message attempted to trigger this effect as follows:

"We know how much you value your home and care about your community. Let's work together to shape both. Click this link to find out more. Thank you, Wolverhampton Homes"

A similar approach was taken for the Official tone in the Loss aversion intervention:

"Don't lose your chance to have your say on how on we can improve your home and community, by working together. Click or don't click, it's up to you. Thanks, Wolverhampton Homes."

Group	Channel	Nudge	Tone
1	Text	Identity	Personal
2	Text	Identity	Official
3	Text	Loss Aversion	Personal
4	Text	Loss Aversion	Official
5	Postcard	Identity	Personal
6	Postcard	Identity	Official
7	Postcard	Loss Aversion	Personal
8	Postcard	Loss Aversion	Official

The only difference in the Personal tone – for both Identity and Loss aversion - was that the message opened with an introduction from the officer:

"Hi, It's [officer name] here from Wolverhampton Homes."

Crucially, in this second trial, the wider customer journey was considered in more detail. Rather than the tenant being faced with a lengthy questionnaire on clicking through, they watched a video with further information about the benefits and process of engaging. The tenant was subsequently contacted to securing the opt-in and complete the engagement profile.

Summary Results

The opt-in process in this trial had multiple stages:

1. Click-through
2. Agree to be contacted
3. Opt-in with profile

As with Greatwell Homes, the primary metric should be Click Through, as beyond that the tenant is subject a wide range of influences not related to the actual intervention.

Over the course of the trial, 865 tenants clicked through to the website – a response rate of 21%. Of those 865 tenants 128 (14%) agreed to be contacted and of those 123 (96%) completed a profile and fully opted-in.

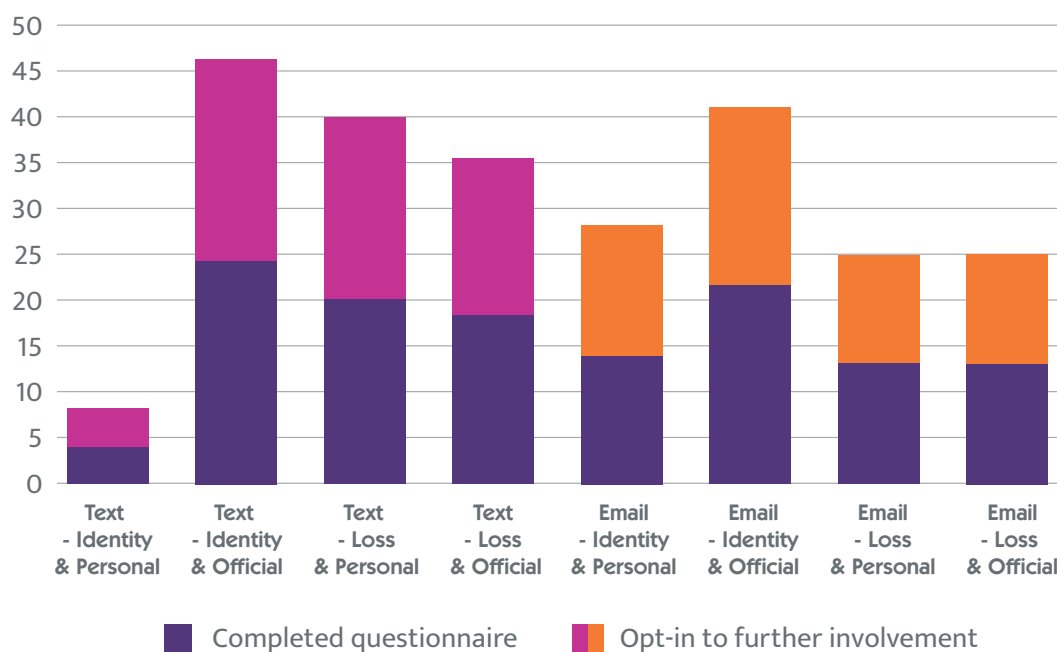
Unfortunately, due to data collection limitations within the text message system used, it wasn't possible to breakdown the total response by trial arm therefore we can't report on the relative impact of the different interventions on click-through rates.

However, it was possible to breakdown the data in relation to **Agreeing to be contacted** and **Opt-in with profile**.

Responses varied across the 8 groups, with the **Identity** nudge, delivered by text in an official tone securing most opt-ins and the **Identity** nudge delivered by text in a Personal tone securing least.

Furthermore, the increase in opt-ins associated with the Text–Identity–Official intervention was significantly greater than each of email interventions apart from its counterpart Email-Identity-Official.

Opt-in rates: all arms





7. Key Takeaways

1. The effort is worth it!

The application of a behavioural approach brings unique challenges, especially for small teams working in a busy delivery context. For all our teams, the complexity associated with adhering to stringent standards of evidence was the key challenges in executing the project.

Given this, it's important to manage expectations amongst stakeholders from the outside and gain buy-in for what can be an in-depth and lengthy process. It's essential that project leads have a clear understanding of the need for – and benefits of – the behavioural approach to keep their teams and stakeholders energized along the journey.

Although the behavioural approach does demand more rigor and resource than standard approaches, it was generally accepted that the investment was worth it – not only in terms of the results that were gained, but also in relation to the evidence-based journey that it puts teams on.

2. It's simple!

Despite some of the technical complexity inherent in the behavioural approach, there is a surprisingly simple guiding principle at its heart: find out what works – and do more of that!

Several of the teams reported that the most valuable and enduring insight to come from the pilot was the need for – and benefit of – evidence-based approaches. This related directly to the trials – finding out what works and what doesn't – but also the wider need to take a tenant-focused approach to engagement and an emphasis on the benefits for them.

All teams felt that this mindset shift is something that will continue to inform and improve their work and a principle they would seek to share within their organisations.

3. Assemble a multi-disciplinary team

The application of the behavioural approach draws in a range of skill sets that are unlikely to co-exist within a tenant engagement team:

- Qualitative research
- Data analysis
- Nudge' theory
- Communications design
- Project management

One of the key learnings from the pilot was the need to assemble this multi-disciplinary team in advance of the project and undertake upfront activity to manage expectations and secure buy-in.

Not only does this multi-disciplinary approach set a behavioural project up for success, it helps establish a culture of engagement across the organisation, by communicating that tenant engagement is a business-wide priority and 'everyone's job', rather than just a niche concern for the engagement team.



4. Statistical significance: the pros and cons



We've seen how and why RCTs provide the most rigorous evidence-base for intervention. However, we've also seen how the technical nature of some of their components creates challenges for operational teams.

If RCTs are not designed and implemented with rigor, the results they yield are unlikely to constitute reliable evidence. This means that we cannot be confident in our results irrespective of any statistical significance. This has important knock-on effects; when we are initially building up an evidence-base it is important to make sure our foundations are secure, especially given we will likely build on these in the future.

Therefore, wherever possible we need to strive to evaluate interventions as rigorously as possible, viewing the resource required as a sound investment in solid evidence.

Less rigorous methods, whilst easier to execute, run this risk of being a complete waste of resource should the evidence they yield not be strong enough to be applied.



5. There's a gap in the evidence base

The brief literature review undertaken as part of this pilot struggled to locate relevant qualitative research studies into the behavioural dynamic around tenant engagement. Most studies available focused on the practices and shortcomings of organisations looking to engage citizens, rather than the specific factors influencing the engagement behaviours of those citizens.

6. Plan, Plan, Plan

Given that taking a behavioural approach to tenant engagement can be a complex, resource-intensive, multi-disciplinary effort, a key learning for all our teams was the need to plan ahead.

From drawing the team together and managing stakeholders to ensuring that the pace of the project

is maintained to avoid losing buy-in, upfront effort to plan and prepare will pay dividends when it comes to execution and evidence.

7. The war of attrition!

The foot-in-the-door technique relies on an appropriate and timely follow-up to leverage the consistency effect. Several trials experienced severe attrition rates following the initial response. This highlights the need to design engagement efforts within the context of a wider customer journey, of which initial response is only the first stage.

Processes for dealing with responses promptly and effectively should be designed prior to the intervention being launched. The behavioural approach can be applied to this wider design effort with consideration of how initial responses can be converted into firm opt-ins and subsequently into actual engagements.



8. The need for efficiency

Several teams had to invest significant resource to convert the initial responses secured by the nudges into fully opted-in tenants.

Greatwell, Wandle and NCH followed up with outbound calls and produced some of the most impressive results. Wolverhampton Homes' first trial on the other hand relied on tenants completing an online form independently. As we saw, this resulted in the lowest opt-in rate of all the trials at 0.5%. When replacing the online form for a video and then follow up call in their second trial opt-in rates rose considerably.

There is clearly an opportunity to design methods for dealing with higher-volume responses that falls somewhere between these two extremes. Further work should focus on applying behavioural principles to the design of online experiences that avoid such dramatic attrition rates.

9. It's the start of a journey, not the end

For our teams, the end of the project merely represented the start of the journey as they embraced the evidence-based approach as an ongoing process:

test > learn > adapt > test > learn > adapt.

The project provided the frameworks and tools to support this ongoing journey and all the teams left the project with plans to develop this work further, securing the legacy that was a core objective of the project.

This also represents the start of journey for Tpas as we explore how we can now build on this pilot, further develop the behavioural approach to engagement and support our members in the application of it.





With special thanks to Emma-Jane Flynn, Voicescape, Wandle, Greatwell Homes, Nottingham City Homes, Wolverhampton Homes and Joseph Rountree Housing Trust.



T: 0161 868 3500
E. info@tpas.org.uk
W. www.tpas.org.uk

 @tpasengland  tpasengland

