



# Using Behavioural Science to Support Communication Campaigns in North Yorkshire During the Coronavirus Crisis

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Summary Report



# Contents

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# 1. Executive summary

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## 1.1 Background

In April 2020, North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to develop communications content to assist NYCC's coronavirus strategy as part of the Local Government Association (LGA) behavioural insights programme.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the communications aim to:

1. Support the wellbeing of NYCC staff as they adjust to working from home.
2. Mobilise North Yorkshire residents to support their local community.

This report is written for the project team at NYCC. It sets out our methodology for developing a final set of messages, and goes on to explain the behavioural science techniques used.

## 1.2 Methodology

We used the following methodology to create the final message bank:

1. **Identify target behaviours and outcomes:** we worked with NYCC to identify the immediate and long-term impact that the messages should achieve. In section 3.1, we include logic models which set out the mechanisms by which the messages are intended to affect change.
2. **Apply behavioural insights:** we applied a range of techniques and principles from the behavioural science literature to develop a core set of 20 messages (10 for each aim). We also drew on insights from the wellbeing and psychosocial literatures.
3. **Feedback and iteration:** we gathered feedback from the NYCC project team and other policy experts at BIT. We applied this feedback, along with further evidence from the behavioural science literature, to expand and iterate the message set.

## 1.3 Proposed solutions

We have developed a set of suggestions that incorporate techniques from the behavioural science and wellbeing literature to support NYCC's communications campaigns during the coronavirus crisis. We have also drafted a set of 57 messages, which apply the techniques set out in this report for NYCC to use in their communications campaigns (please see Appendices A and B).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/behavioural-insights>

### 1.3.1 Supporting the wellbeing of NYCC staff

Adjusting to remote working is likely to be challenging for staff, particularly those with children. We set out proposed strategies and techniques to support staff wellbeing in table 1 below.

**Table 1: summary of proposed solutions to support the wellbeing of NYCC staff**

	Strategy	Techniques used
	<b>Supporting healthy thinking patterns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach staff simple <b>mindfulness techniques</b> to support mental wellbeing;<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Support <b>growth mindsets</b> to improve resilience;<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Evoke <b>gratitude</b> to boost motivation<sup>4</sup> and resilience;<sup>5</sup> and</li> <li>• Foster <b>intrinsic motivation</b> amongst staff.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
	<b>Building community through storytelling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <b>storytelling</b> (shared experiences and insights) to build a sense of belonging amongst staff.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
	<b>Encouraging behaviours which support wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce <b>implementation intentions (planning prompts)</b> to help staff carry out positive behaviours;<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Use a <b>trusted messenger</b> to increase engagement with messages;<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Break down desired behaviours into <b>manageable steps</b>;<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Use <b>substitution</b> to help staff maintain</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Roeser, R. W., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Jha, A., Cullen, M., Wallace, L., Wilensky, R., ... & Harrison, J. (2013). Mindfulness training and reductions in teacher stress and burnout: results from two randomized, waitlist-control field trials. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105:787–804.

<sup>3</sup> Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Random House.

<sup>4</sup> Grant, A. M., & Gino, F. (2010). A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate prosocial behavior. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 98(6), 946

<sup>5</sup> Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American psychologist*, 56(3), 218.

<sup>6</sup> Vallerand, R. J., & Bissonnette, R. (1992). Intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivational styles as predictors of behavior: A prospective study. *Journal of personality*, 60(3), 599-620.

<sup>7</sup> Linos, E., Ruffini, K., & Wilcoxon, S. (2019). Belonging Affirmation Reduces Employee Burnout and Resignations in Front Line Workers.

<sup>8</sup> Gollwitzer, P. M. (1999). Implementation intentions: Strong effects of simple plans. *American psychologist* (54)7, 493.

<sup>9</sup> Dolan, P., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., King, D., & Vlaev, I. (2010). MINDSPACE: influencing behaviour for public policy.

<sup>10</sup> Gobet, F., Lane, P., Croker, S., Cheng, P., Jones, G., Oliver, I. & Pine, J. (2001). Chunking mechanisms in human learning. *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences*, 5(6), 236-243.

		<p>positive behaviours;<sup>11</sup> and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage <b>public commitments</b> so that staff follow through with desired behaviours.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Supporting parents who work at NYCC</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest <b>simple, accessible activities</b> parents can do with their children in the home;</li> <li>• Make it easier for parents to access support at work by <b>breaking processes down</b> into manageable steps; and</li> <li>• Use <b>storytelling</b> to foster a sense of community among parents.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Easing the transition back into the office</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage <b>reciprocity</b> to encourage behaviours which limit the spread of coronavirus in the workplace;<sup>13</sup></li> <li>• Use <b>implementation intentions (planning prompts)</b> to help staff plan how they will safely return to work;</li> <li>• <b>Break behaviours down</b> into easy steps to help staff support those who are still working from home;</li> <li>• Use a <b>trusted messenger</b> to reassure staff that their safety is important to NYCC;</li> <li>• Highlight <b>social norms</b> to encourage staff to return to the office;<sup>14</sup> and</li> <li>• Use <b>defaults</b> to either encourage staff to return to the office, or to alleviate perceived pressure.</li> </ul>

### 1.3.2 Mobilising the community in North Yorkshire

Table 2 below sets out strategies and techniques to build community engagement in North Yorkshire.

<sup>11</sup> Beard, E., West, R., Michie, S., & Brown J. (2016). Association between electronic cigarette use and changes in quit attempts, success of quit attempts, use of smoking cessation pharmacotherapy, and use of stop smoking services in England: Time series analysis of population trends. *BMJ*.

<sup>12</sup> Kast F, Pomeranz D. (2009). Peers as a saving commitment device: evidence from a field experiment among low-income micro-entrepreneurs. *Work. Pap.*, Harvard Univ., Kennedy School

<sup>13</sup> Cabinet Office & Behavioural Insights Team (2013). *Applying behavioral insights to organ donation*.

<sup>14</sup> Deutsch, M., & Gerard, H.B. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 51, 629-636.

**Table 2: summary of proposed solutions to mobilise the community in North Yorkshire**

	Strategy	Techniques used
	<b>Appealing to people's sense of altruism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight positive <b>social norms</b> (e.g. high rates of volunteering in North Yorkshire);<sup>15</sup></li> <li>• Support <b>self-efficacy</b> (people's belief that they are capable of making a difference);<sup>16</sup></li> <li>• Use <b>network nudges</b> to spread positive actions;<sup>17</sup></li> <li>• Leverage <b>reciprocity</b> to encourage altruistic behaviours;<sup>18</sup> and</li> <li>• Increase the <b>salience</b> of people in need.<sup>19</sup></li> </ul>
	<b>Making it easy to make a difference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combat <b>choice overload</b> by providing a small set of volunteering options with clear next steps;<sup>20</sup> and</li> <li>• Support residents to <b>build habits</b> that help the community.</li> </ul>
	<b>Maintaining volunteer engagement over time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster volunteers' <b>intrinsic motivation</b> to help others;<sup>21</sup></li> <li>• Apply <b>commitment devices</b> sustain engagement;<sup>22</sup></li> <li>• Use <b>storytelling</b> to foster a sense of community and solidarity amongst volunteers;<sup>23</sup> and</li> <li>• Use a <b>trusted messenger</b> to increase the power of messages of thanks to volunteers.<sup>24</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>15</sup> Deutsch, M., & Gerard, H.B. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 51, 629-636.

<sup>16</sup> Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In V. S. Ramachaudran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior* (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81). New York: Academic Press. (Reprinted in H. Friedman [Ed.], *Encyclopedia of mental health*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Behavioural Insights Team. (2014). EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights.

<sup>18</sup> Cialdini (2007). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion*. New York: HarperBusiness, Revised Edition.

<sup>19</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2014). EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights.

<sup>20</sup> Iyengar, S., & Lepper, M. (2000). When choice is demotivating: Can one desire too much of a good thing? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 995-1006.

<sup>21</sup> Vallerand, R. J., & Blissonette, R. (1992). Intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivational styles as predictors of behavior: A prospective study. *Journal of personality*, 60(3), 599-620.

<sup>22</sup> Kast F, Pomeranz D. (2009). Peers as a saving commitment device: evidence from a field experiment among low-income micro-entrepreneurs. *Work. Pap.*, Harvard Univ., Kennedy School

<sup>23</sup> Linos, E., Ruffini, K., & Wilcoxon, S. (2019), *Belonging Affirmation Reduces Employee Burnout and Resignations in Front Line Workers*.

<sup>24</sup> Dolan, P., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., King, D., & Vlaev, I. (2010). *MINDSPACE: influencing behaviour for public policy*.

## **1.4 Next steps**

NYCC has already started to use the messages and techniques set out in this report. A number of the proposed techniques were embedded in a Facebook campaign during Volunteers Week in early June 2020, and 'storytelling' messages have been sent via NYCC's staff intranet. BIT will continue to work with the communications team at NYCC to help them integrate the messages into their campaigns.

## 2. Introduction

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North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) was successful in their application to the Local Government Association (LGA) to fund a project with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to embed behavioural science into their work. The project was commissioned as part of the LGA behavioural insights programme.<sup>25</sup> During a kick-off meeting between BIT and NYCC on 31st March 2020, we discussed how behavioural science could best be used to support both staff at the council and the wider public in North Yorkshire during the coronavirus pandemic.

In line with government guidance to curb the transmission of Covid-19, staff at NYCC began working from home in March 2020. Although some flexible working arrangements for staff were in place before lockdown, the move to remote working represents a major shift in how council staff operate and interact with one another. NYCC is keen to support the wellbeing of staff as they adjust to this change, with a particular focus on parents who may be balancing work with increased caring duties.

Over the coming months, the general public also has a vital role to play in limiting the spread of coronavirus and helping those in need. Therefore, NYCC is also seeking to encourage and sustain the community response to the coronavirus crisis in North Yorkshire.

In light of this, NYCC asked BIT to develop two core sets of messages grounded in behavioural science. The messages aim to:

1. Support the wellbeing of NYCC staff as they adjust to working from home.
2. Mobilise residents of North Yorkshire to support their local community.

BIT drafted a core set of 20 messages (10 for each of the above themes). NYCC provided feedback on these messages, which BIT used to refine and expand the message set. BIT then added further messages to produce a set of 57 (32 in line with the first theme, and 25 in line with the second) for NYCC to use in their communications (see Appendices A and B). In this report, we explain the methodology for developing the messages and the evidence which underpins them.

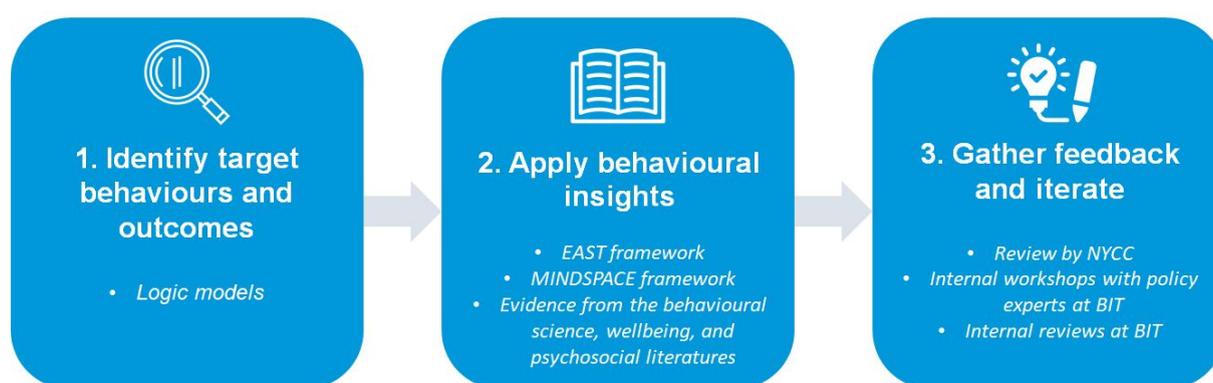
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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/behavioural-insights>

## 3. Methodology

In this section, we detail our methodology for developing the messages. First, we worked with the project team at NYCC to identify the specific behaviours that we wanted to change, then we explored which behavioural insights might be most appropriate to achieve the desired behaviour change before developing a draft set of 20 messages. We iterated and expanded this initial set of messages based on feedback from NYCC and other BIT staff members. Figure 1 below summarises our approach:

**Figure 1: summary of methodology for developing messages**



### 3.1 Identifying target behaviours and outcomes

We began by working with NYCC to narrow the scope of the messages. We identified:

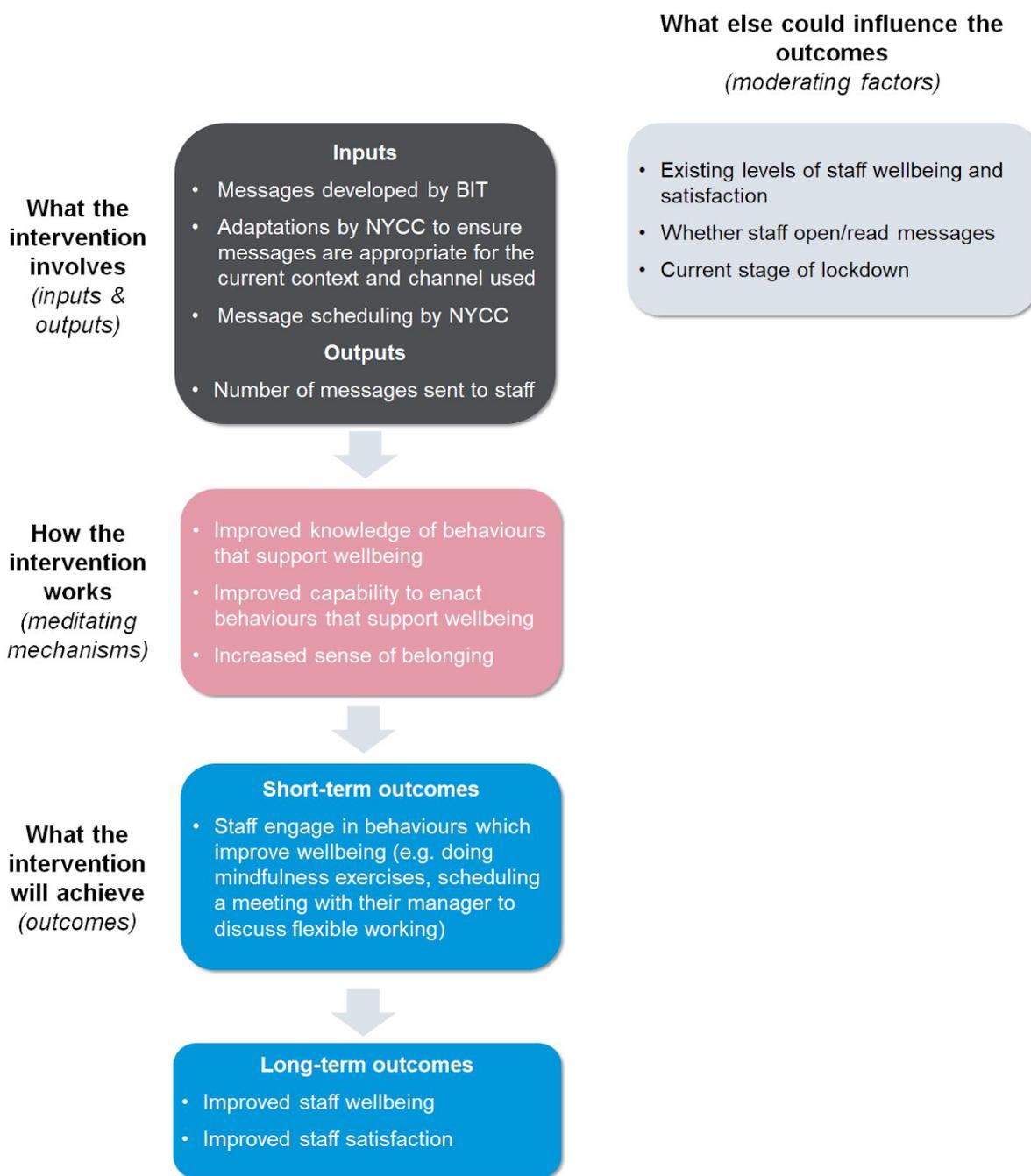
1. Specific behaviour changes in the short term
2. The long-term impact of the messages

The models below set out how we expect behaviour to change as a result of the messages. They include mediating and moderating factors that may make the messages more or less effective, and outline some potential short-term and longer-term outcomes arising from the messages. A logic model is a diagrammatic representation of how an intervention, programme or policy is intended to work.<sup>26</sup> These models help us to consider the assumptions and caveats related to the intervention (in this case, the messages), and can inform how the intervention might be evaluated. Due to the short time available to do background research for this project, the logic models are non-exhaustive, and may not contain all of the elements relevant to the intervention.

<sup>26</sup> HM Treasury (2020). [Magenta Book: Central Government guidance on evaluation](#). Logic models are sometimes referred to as theories of change. The two terms are almost synonymous but theories of change are more usually used to refer to the organisational level, while logic models refer to a specific programme or intervention.

### 3.1.1 Logic model: Improving staff wellbeing

**Figure 2: logic model for improving staff wellbeing**



#### What the intervention involves (inputs and outputs)

Inputs describe the resources that go into an intervention to make it work.<sup>27</sup> In this case of this intervention, the inputs are:

<sup>27</sup> Harries, E., Hodgson, L. & Noble, J. (2014). [Creating your Theory of Change: NPC's Practical Guide.](#)

- Core **messages developed by BIT** based on insights from behavioural science (see Appendix A).
- **Adaptations** made to the messages by NYCC to ensure they are appropriate for the communication channels used by the council and for the specific context in North Yorkshire. For example, NYCC may need to shorten certain messages if they are being sent out via SMS, and some message content will need to be updated if lockdown measures are changed by the government.
- **Message scheduling by NYCC**; each message should be sent at a timely moment where staff are most likely to be receptive to its content. For example, messages which relay information about a return to the office should be sent ahead of the date when staff are actually required to return.

Outputs are the quantities of product or service produced by the intervention.<sup>28</sup> In this case, the output is the number of messages sent to NYCC staff.

### How the intervention will work (mediating mechanisms)

Mediating mechanisms are the processes that enable the intervention to affect the outcomes. The messages are intended to work through the following mechanisms:

- **Increased knowledge of behaviours that support wellbeing:** the messages contain suggested actions staff can take to improve their wellbeing. These aim to build knowledge of how to support mental health through easy-to-do activities.
- **Improved capability to enact behaviours that support wellbeing:** even when staff are aware of steps they could take to improve their wellbeing, they may face obstacles in actually carrying them out. For example, they may not have enough time or headspace to follow through with desired actions. The messages aim to equip staff with strategies to help them follow through with positive behaviours.
- **Increased sense of belonging:** working from home brings many challenges, one of which is that staff may feel less connected to their colleagues. Some of our proposed messages aim to promote a sense of belonging by highlighting shared experiences between NYCC staff.

### What the intervention will achieve (outcomes)

The outcomes are the intended benefits to the participants or setting.

- The intended **short-term outcomes** of the messages relate to behaviour changes among staff. More specifically, we hypothesise that staff will engage more in behaviours that support their wellbeing, for example doing mindfulness exercises, reaching out to colleagues, and availing of workplace provisions such as flexible working.
- As a result of immediate changes in behaviour, we anticipate that in the **long-term** staff satisfaction and wellbeing will improve.

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<sup>28</sup> Harries, E., Hodgson, L. & Noble, J. (2014). [Creating your Theory of Change: NPC's Practical Guide](#).

### What else could influence the outcomes (moderating factors)

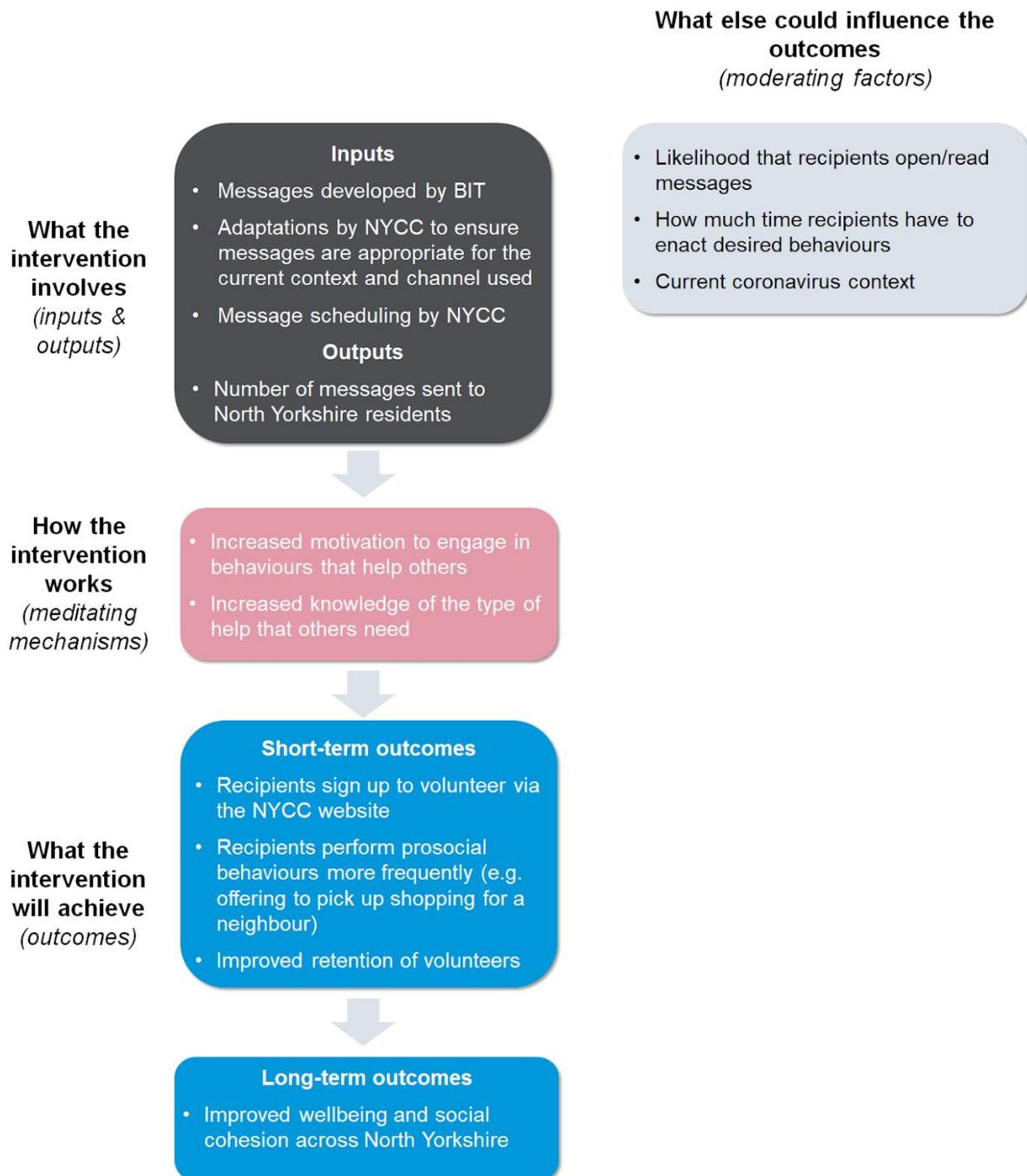
Moderating factors are existing conditions which might influence the success of the intervention. It is impossible to account for all potential moderating factors, but in our logic model we identify several which could play a significant role:

- **Existing levels of staff wellbeing and satisfaction:** If staff wellbeing is already very high, it may be difficult to improve this metric; this is known as a 'ceiling effect'. Similarly, if staff wellbeing is extremely low, it may be unrealistic to expect a relatively light-touch intervention such as these messages to result in a meaningful shift in wellbeing and/or staff satisfaction.
- **Whether staff open/read messages:** If staff don't actually read the messages, it will be impossible for the communications to impact behaviour.
- **Current stage of lockdown:** While many of the messages developed have a wide application, the relevance of some may change as the coronavirus context evolves. For example, if staff are no longer required to work from home, messages relating to developing good routines while working remotely won't be as applicable.

In the next subsection, we detail the logic model for messages which aim to enhance community spirit.

### 3.1.2 Logic model: mobilising the community

Figure 3: logic model for mobilising the community



#### What the intervention involves (inputs and outputs)

The inputs for the messages to be sent out to residents of North Yorkshire are as follows:

- The **core messages based on behavioural science** developed by BIT (see Appendix B).
- **Adaptations** made to the messages by NYCC to ensure that they are suitable for the communication channel used by the council and context in North Yorkshire. For

instance, messages may be adapted to include specific case studies collected by NYCC.

- **Message scheduling by NYCC;** each message should be sent at a point in time when it best aligns with the needs of the community. For instance, messages asking volunteers to offer to help with grocery shopping were most needed at the beginning of lockdown, when more people were self-isolating with coronavirus.

The output is the number of messages sent out to North Yorkshire residents.

### How the intervention works (mediating mechanisms)

The messages are intended to build and sustain community spirit through the following mechanisms:

- **Increased motivation to engage in behaviours that help others:** the messages leverage behavioural science techniques to spur people to act in a community-oriented way by doing kind acts for those around them.
- **Increased knowledge of the type of help that others need:** not knowing how to help is a significant barrier to volunteering during the coronavirus crisis.<sup>29</sup> The messages aim to inform recipients of the type of help that is needed, and how they can build supportive behaviours into their daily lives.

### What the intervention will achieve (outcomes)

- The intended **short-term** outcomes are that recipients are more likely to do actions that support their community, either by formally signing up as a volunteer via the NYCC website, or informally by performing ‘invisible acts of kindness’. The messages also aim to improve retention rates within NYCC’s volunteer workforce.
- it is difficult to say what the **longer-term outcomes** of these messages may be; greater prevalence of prosocial behaviours could lead to increases in wellbeing<sup>30</sup> and perhaps better social cohesion.

### What else could influence the outcomes (moderating factors)

We have identified the following factors which could influence the success of the messages:

- **Whether recipients open/read messages:** it won’t be possible for the communications to impact behaviour if the intended recipients don’t read them.
- **Time available for recipients to enact desired behaviours:** some recipients may simply not have sufficient time to help others in their community. In these cases, the messages are unlikely to have a significant impact.
- **Current coronavirus context:** the pertinence of some messages may change as some lockdown measures are lifted. As the context changes, there may be less demand for some of the behaviours encouraged by the messages. For example, if

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<sup>29</sup> In a volunteering survey conducted recently by BIT, 42% of respondents said that not knowing how to get involved would be a barrier to volunteering during the coronavirus crisis.

<sup>30</sup> Weinstein, N. & Ryan, R.M., (2010), ‘When Helping Helps: Autonomous Motivation for Prosocial Behavior and Its Influence on Well-Being for the Helper and Recipient’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 98, No. 2, 222–244

people who were previously shielding are told they can start going to the shops, they are less likely to need someone else to pick up their groceries and medicine.

## 3.2 Frameworks used to develop messages

Throughout this report, we combine core principles from the EAST framework for behaviour change (to foster a behaviour, make it easy, attractive, social, and timely)<sup>31</sup> with BIT’s policy expertise and institutional knowledge of the behavioural science literature. We have used these core principles to create multiple messages that aim to influence different behaviours. For example, we have applied ‘reciprocity’ (people’s tendency to return one kind gesture with another) both to encourage NYCC staff stay at home if they feel unwell, and to spur North Yorkshire residents to do ‘invisible acts of kindness’ or to sign up to volunteer.

In table 3 below, we set out how the behavioural techniques that we’ve used map onto the EAST framework.

**Table 3: summary of EAST principles and their applications in this report**

EAST principle	Explanation	Behavioural insights used
<b>Easy</b>	Minimising the effort it takes to perform a behaviour will vastly improve the likelihood that people do it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation intentions (planning prompts)</li> <li>• Embedding behaviours</li> <li>• Defaults</li> <li>• Breaking goals down</li> </ul>
<b>Attractive</b>	People are more likely to pay attention to stimuli that are appealing to them and that attract their attention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the salience of information</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	Humans are social creatures who are influenced by the behaviour of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social norms</li> <li>• Network nudges</li> <li>• Public commitments</li> <li>• Reciprocity</li> <li>• Messenger effect</li> </ul>
<b>Timely</b>	It’s important to deliver information at the right moment when people are able to act on it effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messages will be sent at timely moments (e.g. volunteering messages sent out during volunteers week)</li> </ul>

While we have primarily applied techniques from the behavioural science literature, we have also drawn on evidence from the psychosocial and motivational literatures. In particular, we have applied the work of academics such as Carol Dweck, Gregory Walton, and Judith

<sup>31</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2014). EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights.

Harackiewicz. Insights from their research provide guidance on how best to influence the way people perceive themselves and their abilities, ultimately boosting their motivation, resilience, and self-confidence.

## 3.3 Message development

### 3.3.1 Phase 1: drafting an initial message set

The aim of this phase was to draft a core set of ~20 messages (10 for each theme). These would undergo a review by NYCC before BIT proceeded to the next phase: developing a final message bank of ~55 messages. We set out our methodology for phase 1 in table 4 below:

**Table 4: methodology for phase 1**

Activity	Description
<b>Research and scoping</b>	<p>We consulted colleagues across BIT who have previously worked on similar wellbeing and community-building projects.</p> <p>We also sought advice from colleagues who are currently developing strategies to promote various behaviours during the coronavirus lockdown, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing text messages to be sent by the NHS to 2 million people at high risk of contracting Covid-19.<sup>32</sup></li> <li>• Working with Chartered College of Teaching to create a text message programme for teachers to support them as they transition to remote working.<sup>33</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Initial solution generation</b>	<p>We used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings from the ‘research and scoping’ phase;</li> <li>• Our standard frameworks - EAST<sup>34</sup> and MINDSPACE<sup>35</sup>; and</li> <li>• Insights from the psychosocial and motivational literatures to generate an initial set of ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal workshop</b>	<p>We held a workshop with other staff members at BIT to gather feedback on our proposed solutions and generate additional ideas.</p>

<sup>32</sup> Burd, H., Coleman, C., ‘Using behavioural insights to create a Covid-19 text service for the NHS’ The Behavioural Insights Team, 8th April 2020,

<https://www.bi.team/blogs/using-behavioural-insights-to-create-a-covid-19-text-service-for-the-nhs/>

<sup>33</sup> ‘FREE TEXT MESSAGING SERVICE LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT TEACHERS DURING COVID-19’, Chartered College of Teaching, 26th March 2020,

<https://chartered.college/2020/03/26/teachtogether-2/>

<sup>34</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2014). EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights.

<sup>35</sup> Dolan, P., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., King, D., & Vlaev, I. (2010). MINDSPACE: influencing behaviour for public policy.

<b>Final review</b>	The ideas went through a final review by a senior staff member at BIT.
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### 3.3.2 Phase 2: developing a final message bank

During this phase, we iterated and expanded our initial message set in line with feedback from NYCC. We produced a set of 57 finalised messages for NYCC to use in their communications campaigns.

**Table 5: methodology for phase 2**

Activity	Description
<b>Feedback from NYCC</b>	<p>Members of the NYCC project team provided feedback on our draft message set. Key points of feedback for each message set are detailed below.</p> <p>Feedback on messages to support NYCC staff wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messages should include quotes from frontline staff (e.g. carers, NHS workers, supermarket workers).</li> <li>• There should be some messages which help to alleviate anxiety among staff about eventually returning to the office.</li> <li>• There should be an increased focus on encouraging staff to prioritise their own wellbeing (i.e. be kind to themselves).</li> </ul> <p>Feedback on messages to mobilise North Yorkshire residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be additional messages which encourage 'invisible acts of kindness' (i.e. non-formal volunteering).</li> </ul>
<b>Generating additional messages</b>	<p>We revised and expanded the initial message set by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporating feedback from NYCC; and</li> <li>• Drawing further on the EAST<sup>36</sup> and MINDSPACE<sup>37</sup> frameworks.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal workshops</b>	<p>We held two further workshops with colleagues at BIT where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We presented and solicited feedback on our existing messages; and</li> <li>• attendees generated additional messages.</li> </ul>

<sup>36</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2014). EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights.

<sup>37</sup> Dolan, P., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., King, D., & Vlaev, I. (2010). MINDSPACE: influencing behaviour for public policy.

**Final review**

The ideas went through a final review by a senior staff member at BIT.

In the next section, we set out our proposed solutions and example messages.

## 4. Proposed solutions

In this section, we explain the insights and techniques from the behavioural science, wellbeing, and psychosocial literatures which we used to develop the final message bank. We include example messages to demonstrate how the different techniques have been applied.

Please note that all quotes, statistics, policies, and links highlighted in yellow are illustrative only. We have included them to demonstrate how similar content might be implemented by NYCC within a given message.

### 4.1 Supporting the wellbeing of NYCC staff

Remote working can be challenging for staff. Evidence suggests that it can lead to struggles with 'turning off', longer working hours, and isolation.<sup>38</sup> The adjustment to remote working may be particularly challenging now as we face a global pandemic which carries its own anxieties. Indeed, rates of stress and sadness have increased across the UK population over the course of the lockdown.<sup>39</sup> On top of this, staff with children are likely to have to juggle work commitments with keeping their children occupied at home due to school closures. As some lockdown measures begin to ease, NYCC is also keen to support staff as they return to the office.

In this section, we describe how behavioural science might be used to improve mental wellbeing among staff during these uncertain times. We structure our solutions as summarised in table 6 below.

**Table 6: summary of strategies to support the wellbeing of NYCC staff**

	Strategy	Summary
	<b>Supporting healthy thinking patterns</b>	Using techniques from the wellbeing and psychosocial literatures to improve motivation and resilience.
	<b>Building community through storytelling</b>	Sharing advice and experiences from NYCC staff to foster a sense of belonging.

<sup>38</sup> Beauregard, T. Alexandra and Basile, K.A. and Canónico, E. (2019) Telework: outcomes and facilitators for employees. In: Landers, R.N. (ed.) The Cambridge Handbook of Technology and Employee Behavior. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 511-543.

<sup>39</sup><https://yougov.co.uk/topics/health/articles-reports/2020/04/04/how-coronavirus-has-taken-its-toll-nations-mood>.

	<b>Encouraging behaviours which support wellbeing</b>	Using behavioural science techniques to foster behaviours which support wellbeing while staff work from home.
	<b>Supporting parents who work at NYCC</b>	Helping parents to balance working from home with childcare.
	<b>Easing the transition back into the office</b>	Alleviating any anxiety about returning to the office, and encouraging behaviours which will limit the spread of coronavirus within the workplace.

### 4.1.1 Supporting healthy thinking patterns



Staff at NYCC may not feel like they are performing to the best of their ability at present - many will have to adjust to a new routine while working from home, others may be trying to balance work with childcare responsibilities, and all will be dealing with the stress and worry associated with the pandemic. This may leave staff feeling discouraged and unmotivated. Techniques to encourage healthy thinking patterns could be used to help them to overcome these challenges.

#### Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of focusing one's attention on experiences and sensations occurring in the present moment (for example, through simple breathing exercises). It is recommended by the NHS as a technique for improving mental wellbeing<sup>40</sup> and has been shown to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for a range of public sector staff including teachers,<sup>41</sup> police officers,<sup>42</sup> and doctors.<sup>43</sup>

Text messages from NYCC could teach staff simple mindfulness techniques, with guidance for how to build them into their day.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>.

<sup>41</sup> Roeser, R. W., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Jha, A., Cullen, M., Wallace, L., Wilensky, R., ... & Harrison, J. (2013). Mindfulness training and reductions in teacher stress and burnout: results from two randomized, waitlist-control field trials. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105: 787–804.

<sup>42</sup> Christopher, M., et al. (2015). A Pilot Study Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention on Cortisol Awakening Response and Health Outcomes among Law Enforcement Officers. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*.

<sup>43</sup> Kumar, S. (2016). Burnout and doctors: prevalence, prevention and intervention. *InHealthcare* 4(3), 37.

### Example Message

We are living through extraordinary times. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, take a moment to breathe in deeply through your nose for 3 seconds, hold for 2 seconds, then out through your mouth for 4 seconds.

Mindfulness isn't the answer for everyone, but it can help some people. Here's another breathing exercise we like! <http://bit.ly/2q0YVyP><sup>44</sup>

### Positive mindsets

Mindset theory was developed by Carol Dweck, a psychologist at Stanford University.<sup>45</sup> Within mindset theory, someone with a 'fixed mindset' believes that we are born with a set of skills which are more or less unchangeable. On the other hand, someone with a 'growth mindset' believes that our abilities improve through hard work and perseverance, and are not limited by predetermined capabilities. Having a growth mindset has been shown to correlate with educational outcomes,<sup>46</sup> health outcomes,<sup>47</sup> and relationship success.<sup>48 49</sup>

Text messages which encourage growth mindsets could be used to help NYCC staff overcome difficulties they face in doing their jobs during the coronavirus crisis. Messages should acknowledge the challenges that staff are facing while highlighting that they also provide opportunities for personal growth.

### Example Message

You've been working from home under lockdown for [number] weeks now. We know it hasn't been easy, and we want to say thank you for the resilience you've shown during these extraordinary times.

If you could give one piece of advice to your past self from [number] weeks ago, what would you say?

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<sup>44</sup> The linked activity has been included as an example and can be changed according to NYCC's preference.

<sup>45</sup> Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.

<sup>46</sup> Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. S. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4), 302–314.

<sup>47</sup> Yeager, D. S., Johnson, R., Spitzer, B. J., Trzesniewski, K. H., Powers, J., & Dweck, C. S. (2014). The far-reaching effects of believing people can change: Implicit theories of personality shape stress, health, and achievement during adolescence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106(6), 867.

<sup>48</sup> Dweck, C. S. (2012). Mindsets and human nature: Promoting change in the Middle East, the schoolyard, the racial divide, and willpower. *American Psychologist*, 67(8), 614.

<sup>49</sup> A significant number of recent replications of growth mindset trials have failed. Use of growth mindset interventions should be applied with this caveat in mind. Li, Y., & Bates, T. C. (2017). Does mindset affect children's ability, school achievement, or response to challenge? Three failures to replicate. *SocArXiv Preprint*. Retrieved from: <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/tsdwy/>

## Gratitude

Evidence shows that receiving thanks for work can boost workers' motivation.<sup>50</sup> It can also positively impact the person giving thanks by encouraging them to focus on positive emotions (i.e. gratitude), which can act as a buffer during stressful situations.<sup>51 52</sup> With this in mind, messages to staff could:

1. Directly thank staff for their hard work in challenging circumstances; and
2. Encourage staff to express gratitude to their colleagues.

### Example Message

"I wouldn't be able to do my job without the support of my colleagues. I'm so grateful for them every day." - [staff member at NYCC]

Think about how your colleagues have supported you this week. Why not send them a quick message to say thank you?

## Intrinsic motivation

'Intrinsic motivation' is where behaviour is driven by internal rewards such as curiosity or a sense of accomplishment. Evidence shows that those who have high levels of intrinsic motivation tend to try harder,<sup>53</sup> perform better,<sup>54</sup> and are less likely to drop out of programmes and courses.<sup>55</sup> NYCC could foster staff's 'intrinsic motivation' by helping them to focus on their internal drivers for working at the council (e.g. supporting others in their community).

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<sup>50</sup> Grant, A. M., & Gino, F. (2010). A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate prosocial behavior. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 98(6), 946.

<sup>51</sup> Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American psychologist*, 56(3), 218.

<sup>52</sup> Emmons, R., & McCullough, M. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377-389.

<sup>53</sup> Skinner, E. A., Wellborn, J. G., & Connell, J. P. (1990). What it takes to do well in school and whether I've got it: A process model of perceived control and children's engagement and achievement in school. *Journal of educational psychology*, 82(1), 22.

<sup>54</sup> Miserandino, M. (1996). Children who do well in school: Individual differences in perceived competence and autonomy in above-average children. *Journal of educational psychology*, 88(2), 203.

<sup>55</sup> Vallerand, R. J., & Blissonette, R. (1992). Intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivational styles as predictors of behavior: A prospective study. *Journal of personality*, 60(3), 599-620.

### Example Message

As a staff member at NYCC, you are serving your local community each day. Although it's sometimes easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day, remember that you are making a difference.

Take a moment now to reflect on how the work you're doing is helping people in North Yorkshire.



## 4.1.2 Building community through storytelling

Working from home may make NYCC staff feel less connected to their colleagues. Previous work by BIT has used storytelling to foster a sense of social belonging and professional identity.

In a project to support 911 responders in the USA, we sent staff weekly emails with uplifting stories from other responders, and encouraged recipients to submit experiences of their own. The emails resulted in a 9.6 percentage point reduction in burnout among staff.<sup>56</sup>

NYCC could share stories from a range of NYCC staff via regular emails. Recipients could be invited to share further insights and experiences (for example by replying to the email or using an online form).

### Example Message

"It's the small things I miss about being in the office - hearing about my colleagues' weekends or having a laugh together. My team has started having weekly catch up calls where we're not allowed to talk about work - they're really helping me to feel connected!" -  
[staff member at NYCC]

How are you staying connected with your colleagues? Share your stories here! [link to online form]



## 4.1.3 Encouraging behaviours which support wellbeing

Adjusting to working from home and spending more time indoors involves building new routines and strategies to maintain a good work-life balance. Messages which support NYCC staff to adopt positive working behaviours could have a positive impact on their mental wellbeing, as well as helping them to feel more in control of the situation.

<sup>56</sup> Linos, E., Ruffini, K., & Wilcoxon, S., (2019), Belonging Affirmation Reduces Employee Burnout and Resignations in Front Line Workers. 10.13140/RG.2.2.21546.36801.

## Implementation intentions (planning prompts)

Planning exactly how we will perform a behaviour can make us more likely to follow through with it when the time comes around.<sup>57</sup> Implementation intentions, or planning prompts, have been shown to help people attend their vaccination appointments,<sup>58</sup> vote,<sup>59</sup> and exercise.<sup>60</sup>

Messages from NYCC could encourage staff members to plan the specifics of how they will carry out behaviours that support mental wellbeing while working from home.

### Example Message

Separating work time and personal time is important for your mental health. Make a plan, for example:

**I will finish work at \_\_[time]\_\_. When I sign off, I will:**

- Tell my colleagues I'm finished for the day**
- Close my laptop and put it away (along with my keyboard, mouse etc.)**
- Put on some relaxing music!**

## Choosing an appropriate messenger

How likely we are to act on a message can depend on who it comes from. This is known as the 'messenger effect'.<sup>61</sup> Previous projects by BIT have leveraged the messenger effect to increase the number of pupils from underrepresented regions applying to and attending university,<sup>62</sup> and to encourage civil servants to donate a proportion of their salary to charity.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Gollwitzer, Peter M. (1999) Implementation intentions: Strong effects of simple plans. *American psychologist* (54)7, 493.

<sup>58</sup> Milkman, K. L., Beshears, J., Choi, J. J., Laibson, D. & Madrian, B. C. (2011). Using implementation intentions prompts to enhance influenza vaccination rates. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(26), 10415–10420.

<sup>59</sup> Nickerson, D. W., & Rogers, T. (2010). Do You Have a Voting Plan? Implementation Intentions, Voter Turnout, and Organic Plan Making. *Psychological Science*, 21 (2), 194-199.

<sup>60</sup> Belanger-Gravel, A., Godin, G., & Amireault, S. (2011). A meta-analytic review of the effect of implementation intentions on physical activity. *Health Psychology Review*, 7(1), 23-54

<sup>61</sup> Dolan, P., Hallsworth, M., Halpern, D., King, D., & Vlaev, I. (2010). MINDSPACE: influencing behaviour for public policy.

<sup>62</sup> Sanders, M., Chande, R. & Selley, E. (2017). Encouraging People Into University. Department for Education.

<sup>63</sup> BIT (2015a). Update report 2013-2015. Available at:

[www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT\\_Update-Report-Final-2013-2015.pdf](http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT_Update-Report-Final-2013-2015.pdf)

Research shows that respected leaders can heavily influence culture and behaviours within the workplace.<sup>64</sup> NYCC could include quotes from senior staff at the council to encourage positive behaviours.

#### Example Message

"Checking emails in the evening can be unproductive and stressful, and stops me from recharging. I prefer to tackle them the next day when I'm feeling refreshed" - [trusted senior messenger]

We all recognise the importance of a healthy work-life balance, but some of us feel guilty switching off in the evenings. Try to set boundaries around your work hours this week.

#### Breaking goals down

Breaking behaviours down into manageable steps can make them easier to achieve; this is known as 'chunking'.<sup>65</sup> For example, previous work by BIT found that people were more likely to access free pension advice when guidance for how to access it was condensed into three simple steps.<sup>66</sup> NYCC could use chunking to help staff to carry out behaviours that support their wellbeing.

#### Example Message

While we're working from home, it's easy to spend the whole day looking at a screen. Try the following steps to take care of your eyes:

- **Use the 20-20-20 rule:** every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- **Blink regularly** to give your eyes a rest.
- **Use a larger font size** where possible.

You can see more tips [here!](#)

#### Substitution

It can be much easier to maintain positive behaviours if they are embedded into daily routines. An effective technique for sustaining new behaviours is to substitute one behaviour for another. For example, people are more likely to successfully quit smoking if they begin by

<sup>64</sup> Kassin, S. M. (1983). Deposition testimony and the surrogate witness: Evidence for a "messenger effect" in persuasion. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 9(2), 281-288.

<sup>65</sup> Gobet, F., Lane, P., Croker, S., Cheng, P., Jones, G., Oliver, I. & Pine, J. (2001). Chunking mechanisms in human learning. *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences*, 5(6), 236-243.

<sup>66</sup> Glazebrook, K., Costa, E., Larkin, C., (2017), Improving engagement with pension decisions: The results from three randomised controlled trials, The Behavioural Insights Team. Available at: <https://www.bi.team/publications/improving-engagement-with-pension-decisions-the-results-from-three-randomised-controlled-trials/>

switching to electronic cigarettes rather than stopping all at once.<sup>67</sup> NYCC could prompt staff to substitute behaviours from before lockdown with new ones which support wellbeing.

### Example Message

Three months ago, many NYCC staff spent at least an hour commuting every day.

Today, take the time you would have spent traveling home from work to **do something kind for yourself**. You could:

- Phone a loved one
- Do a 10-minute [self care yoga video](#)
- Take a solo walk - try leaving your phone at home to really disconnect

### Public commitments

Evidence shows that we are more likely to follow through with a behaviour if we make a public commitment to do so. For example, a trial in Chile found that low-income entrepreneurs saved more money when they publicly announced their savings goals.<sup>68</sup> NYCC could help staff to follow through with positive behaviours by encouraging them to share their plans with others.

### Example Message

During times of uncertainty, finding a routine can help us feel more in control. While your daily schedule has likely changed, try to create new rituals. For example:

- Have a quiet cup of tea each day before you open your laptop for work.
- Try out a new recipe for dinner every Wednesday.
- Call a loved one on Sunday mornings.

We are more likely to follow through with our goals when we share them publicly. Share how you're going to practice self-care this week with a friend or colleague!

## 4.1.4 Supporting parents



NYCC are particularly keen to support staff with children as they adjust to spending substantially more time at home and balancing caring responsibilities with work commitments. In this section, we describe how NYCC can use behavioural science to support parents.

<sup>67</sup> Beard, E., West, R., Michie, S., & Brown J. (2016). Association between electronic cigarette use and changes in quit attempts, success of quit attempts, use of smoking cessation pharmacotherapy, and use of stop smoking services in England: Time series analysis of population trends. *BMJ*.

<sup>68</sup> Kast F, Pomeranz D. (2009). Peers as a saving commitment device: evidence from a field experiment among low-income micro-entrepreneurs. *Work. Pap.*, Harvard Univ., Kennedy School

## Providing simple activities to do with children

While there is a wide range of content available online with ideas for games and activities to do with children, parents may not have the time or headspace to search for appropriate materials. Some activities may also not be suitable to do within the home and/or with limited access to resources.

Messages from NYCC should contain simple, accessible ideas for activities that parents can do with their children. BIT has extensive experience developing messages like these which are suitable to do at home and with a range of age groups.<sup>69</sup>

### Example Messages

This weekend, try planning a dinner party with your children! Together, you could plan a menu, make place cards, and decorate the table. They'll love the opportunity to get creative.

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This Sunday afternoon, why not sit down with your children and make a schedule for the week.

Think about when you'll go out for walks, when you'll do chores, when you'll call loved ones. It's important to schedule fun activities that you can look forward to together.

## Breaking goals down

NYCC parents may not be aware of workplace provisions that could help them to balance work and childcare. Even if they are aware that workplace provisions exist, they may be unsure of how best to apply for them. In 4.1.3, we set out how breaking behaviours down into manageable steps can help people to carry through with them. Messages from NYCC should break down exactly which steps parents should follow to take up beneficial workplace provisions (e.g. set up a meeting with their line manager), and how they might apply them (e.g. condensed hours).

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<sup>69</sup> For example, BIT worked with Ipswich Opportunity Area to develop ~400 home learning tips for parents.

### Example Message

Working with young children at home can be difficult. We want to do all we can to support you. Have you spoken to your manager about how you could benefit from our flexible working policy? You could:

- Start and end your working day earlier or later
- Consider 'condensed hours' (e.g. a 40-hour working week over 4 days)
- Split your working day into two chunks (e.g. 7am-11am, then 2pm-6pm)
- Request unpaid leave to make childcare more manageable (e.g. one day of unpaid leave per week for the next two months)

Why not schedule a meeting with your line manager to discuss options?

### Storytelling

In 4.1.2, we explained how storytelling could help to foster a sense of belonging amongst NYCC staff. It could also be used to build a sense of community specifically among staff who are parents. Parents could be asked to submit their experiences of balancing childcare with work (for example via an online form or by responding to an email). NYCC could then share any submissions with staff who are parents.

### Example Message

This week, we're thinking of all the parents at NYCC who are balancing working from home with childcare. **Thank you for doing your job in really challenging circumstances.**

If there was one piece of advice you could give to another parent in a similar situation, what would it be? Submit your ideas [here](#) and we'll share them with other NYCC parents on the intranet next week.

### 4.1.5 Easing the transition back to the office



NYCC staff may be able to return to the office in the coming weeks and months as lockdown measures ease. This is likely to bring its own anxieties; staff may be concerned that commuting to work and being in the office will increase their risk of catching coronavirus.

We have developed messages to alleviate anxieties and support behaviours that reduce the spread of coronavirus within the workspace by:

- Evoking reciprocity
- Using implementation intentions

- Breaking goals down
- Using a trusted messenger
- Applying social norms
- Using defaults

## Reciprocity

Reciprocity relates to a simple yet powerful idea: if someone does something kind for us, we feel obliged to return the favour. Across a variety of contexts, evidence from the academic literature suggests that people feel obliged to repay gestures, gifts, and favours from others. For example, previous work by BIT has shown that people are more likely to sign up to be organ donors if they are first asked to consider the statement: “If you needed an organ transplant, would you have one? If so, please help others.”<sup>70</sup>

This principle could be applied to encourage NYCC staff to follow through with behaviours that limit the spread of coronavirus. Messages should prompt staff to consider what precautions they would want their colleagues to take to keep the workplace safe.

### Example Message

If someone on your team thought they might have coronavirus, what would you want them to do? Stay at home, or take a risk and come into the office?

**If you or someone in your household has symptoms of coronavirus, please stay at home.**

## Implementation intentions

In 4.1.3, we explained how implementation intentions (planning prompts) can help us to follow through with behaviours. NYCC could also use implementation intentions to help staff to enact behaviours that will limit the spread of coronavirus within the workplace.

### Example Messages

From [date], you will be able to work in the office again if you wish. The government has advised that workers avoid taking public transport where possible. Take some time this week to think about how you might travel to and from work.

For example, you could:

- **Cycle** - do you need to get your bike serviced?
- **Walk** - which route will you take?

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<sup>70</sup> Cabinet Office & Behavioural Insights Team (2013). Applying behavioral insights to organ donation.

**We want to support behaviours that will keep you and your colleagues safe. Please don't come into the office if there is even a small chance that you or someone in your household has coronavirus.**

If you or someone in your household develops symptoms, you should:

1. Email your line manager to let them know that you can't come into the office.
2. Request sick leave if necessary.
3. Follow [NHS guidelines](#) on how to take care of yourself and those in your household.

### Breaking goals down

As discussed in section 4.1.3, we can make behaviours easier to carry out by breaking them down into manageable steps. NYCC can ease the transition back into the office by setting out specific, simple behaviours that they would like staff to carry out in order to achieve a wider behavioural goal (e.g. supporting staff who are still working from home).

#### Example Message

As some staff return to the office, let's try to maintain some of the good practices we learned while working from home.

Many of our colleagues will continue working from home (e.g. if they are shielding or living with someone who is shielding). Support them by:

- Setting up a Skype calendar event for **all meetings**.
- Waiting until **all attendees have dialled in** before starting a meeting.
- Keeping up the **virtual coffee breaks!**

### Use a trusted messenger

In section 4.1.3, we explained that the likelihood that we act on a message can depend on who it comes from. Within workplaces, messages from trusted leaders can have a powerful influence on behaviour.

NYCC should use messages from senior leaders within the council to reassure staff that their safety is being taken seriously.

#### Example Message

**"As the number of coronavirus infections decreases and government guidance changes, my top priority is to keep you safe.**

I've been working with HR and office managers to develop procedures so that you can return to work with as little anxiety as possible:

[list of NYCC return-to-work policies]"

- [Senior staff member/team leader at NYCC]

### Highlighting behavioural norms

People are more likely to engage in a behaviour when they believe it is in line with the behaviour of the majority, i.e. the social norm.<sup>71</sup> For example, in work with HMRC, BIT found that when you tell people: “Most people with a debt like yours have paid it by now”,<sup>72</sup> the number of people paying their taxes on time improves by 3 percentage points.

To encourage staff to return to the workplace, NYCC could highlight that other staff are keen to return. This data could be collected via a simple online form.

### Example Message

In a recent survey, **63%** of NYCC staff said that they would like to come back into the office for at least one day per week once restrictions are eased.

### Defaults

People are more likely to choose a given option if it is the default.<sup>73</sup> For example, a study in Germany showed that the probability of purchasing green electricity is 19 percentage points higher in regions where a green energy tariff is the default option.<sup>74</sup>

Defaults could be applied differently depending on the behaviours NYCC would like to prioritise. NYCC could make working at home the default option by asking staff to tell their line manager if they would like to return to the office. This would be a powerful signal to staff that they are not expected to go back into the office, thereby alleviating anxiety around the decision. Alternatively, NYCC could ask staff to alert their manager if they *don't* want to return to the office. This would likely encourage more staff to return from working from home, but could potentially make them feel pressured to do so.

Below, we set out two versions of how defaults could be applied, depending on which behaviour NYCC would like to encourage.

<sup>71</sup> Deutsch, M., & Gerard, H.B. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 51, 629-636.

<sup>72</sup> Hallsworth, M., List, J. A., Metcalfe, R. D., & Vlaev, I. (2017). The behavioralist as tax collector: Using natural field experiments to enhance tax compliance. *Journal of Public Economics*, 148, 14-31.

<sup>73</sup> Jachimowicz, J. M., Duncan, S., & Weber, E. U. (2016). Default-Rejection: The Hidden Cost of Defaults.

<sup>74</sup> Kaiser, M. et al, (2020), The power of green defaults: the impact of regional variation of opt-out tariffs on green energy demand in Germany, *Ecological Economics*, 174.

### Example Messages

*[To encourage staff to remain working from home if they wish to do so]*

From [date], staff will have the option of coming back into the office to work if they wish.

If you would like to return to the office for work, please email your line manager and let them know:

- What date you would like to return to the office.
- How many days per week you would like to work in the office.

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*[To encourage more staff to return to the office]*

From [date], staff will have the option of coming back into the office to work if they wish.

If you would prefer to remain working from home, please email your manager and let them know.

## 4.2 Mobilising the community in North Yorkshire

Throughout the UK, there has been an unprecedented public response to the call for volunteers for the coronavirus crisis, with over one million people signing up for voluntary schemes.<sup>75</sup> NYCC would like to drive this community spirit in North Yorkshire. The solutions in this section aim to:

1. Increase the number of people who sign up to volunteer in North Yorkshire
2. Sustain volunteering in the longer term
3. Encourage 'invisible acts of kindness', i.e. informal volunteering

In this section, we outline how NYCC can use behavioural science to achieve these aims. Our proposed strategies are summarised in table 7 below.

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<sup>75</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/13/a-million-volunteer-to-help-nhs-and-others-during-covid-19-lockdown>.

**Table 7: summary of strategies to mobilise the community in North Yorkshire**

	Strategy	Summary
	<b>Appealing to people’s sense of altruism</b>	Using behavioural science to motivate people to help others in their community.
	<b>Making it easy to make a difference</b>	Creating rules-of-thumb to help people overcome practical obstacles to supporting others.
	<b>Maintaining volunteer engagement over time</b>	Supporting and motivating existing volunteers so that they continue to help once the crisis is over.

#### 4.2.1 Appealing to people’s sense of altruism



We set out how behavioural science techniques could be used to encourage people to sign up for local volunteering initiatives below:

- Highlight positive social norms around sign-up rates;
- Foster self-efficacy;
- Use network nudges; and
- Encourage reciprocity.

#### Social norms

In section 4.1.5, we explained that people are more likely to engage in a behaviour if they believe that others around them are doing the same; i.e. if it is the ‘social norm.’

NYCC could encourage take-up of volunteering opportunities by highlighting that many others in North Yorkshire have signed up. This could be achieved by either referring to:

- **The number of people who have already signed up:** “Join 1,353 others in North Yorkshire who have signed up to volunteer”; or
- **The rate of increase of volunteer sign-ups:** “Volunteer numbers in North Yorkshire have tripled since March. Join them and sign up today.”

### Example Message

Be part of the movement in North Yorkshire to fight Covid-19.

Volunteer numbers in North Yorkshire have tripled since March. Join them and sign up today to make a difference: <https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T>

### Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy describes whether an individual believes that they can succeed in specific situations. This belief (or lack thereof) plays an important role in how people approach goals and challenges.<sup>76</sup>

As part of BIT's ongoing coronavirus research, we surveyed an online sample of 3,026 UK adults on their attitudes towards volunteering during the Covid-19 emergency. Although 92% of people were willing to help in some way, 31% of people said that feeling as though they 'don't have the skills' would act as a barrier to signing up to volunteer.<sup>77</sup> Messages from NYCC could support self-efficacy by emphasising that everyone has the skills necessary to support in some way.

### Example Messages

During these uncertain times, we can sometimes feel helpless.

But you don't need special skills to make a difference in your local community - simple actions can make a world of difference. For example, you could volunteer to ring people who are self isolating for a chat!

You can help - click here to find out how: <https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T>

### Network nudges

When we make a change to our behaviour, it can make other people within our networks of colleagues, friends, and family more likely to do the same. This phenomenon is known as a 'network nudge'.<sup>78</sup> For example, a previous project by BIT found that the proportion of bankers donating to charity increased by 32.7 percentage points when they were encouraged to do so by a colleague who had donated in the past.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In V. S. Ramachaudran (Ed.), Encyclopedia of human behavior (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81). (Reprinted in H. Friedman [Ed.], Encyclopedia of mental health, 1998).

<sup>77</sup> This survey was conducted as part of a separate piece of research into behaviours during the coronavirus crisis. The survey results haven't yet been published.

<sup>78</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2014). EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights.

<sup>79</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2015). [Update report 2013-15](#)

Network nudges could be applied to increase sign up rates for volunteering in North Yorkshire. Volunteers could be prompted to encourage others in their networks to sign up for local initiatives at timely moments, for example:

- When they first sign up to volunteer; or
- When they have completed their first volunteering action (e.g. dropping off their first food bank donation).

#### Example Message

Can you think of any friends or family who might also like to volunteer?

Share this message with friends to let them know how they too can make a difference in their community.

*“I’ve just signed up to volunteer during the coronavirus crisis. I thought you might be interested too - you can click this link to find out more and sign up! <https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T>”*

#### Reciprocity

In 4.1.5, we explained the principle of reciprocity: that if someone does something helpful for us, we tend to be kinder and more cooperative in return.

This principle could be applied to encourage community action within North Yorkshire by asking people to consider:

- Whether they would require support from their community if they were in a vulnerable group; and
- The work that is already being done for them and their community by key workers.

#### Example Messages

If you were in a vulnerable group, what kind of support would you need from your community?

You can give this support to others - sign up here: <https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T>

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Think of key workers you know (nurses, supermarket staff, teachers, doctors, police officers) - they are doing incredible work helping your community to get through this crisis.

You can do your bit too - sign up here: <https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T>

## Increasing the salience of people in need

While the vast majority of people are aware of the challenges the UK faces during the coronavirus crisis, they may be less cognisant of the day-to-day needs of people in their community who have been affected. The behavioural science literature tells us that we are more likely to act on messages that attract our attention and evoke our emotions.<sup>80</sup> Stories from people who have benefited from community support could increase readers' awareness of people in need, motivating them to act.

### Example Message

"When I tested positive for coronavirus, I had no idea how I would get food as I self-isolated. Then my neighbour, Anna, called to say she could pick up whatever I needed. I honestly don't know what I would have done without her." - Hamzah, North Stanley

During these difficult times, it's stories like Hamzah's that keep our spirits up. All across North Yorkshire, communities are coming together like never before. Can you think of someone like Hamzah who could use a helping hand? Reach out to them today.



## 4.2.2 Making it easy to make a difference

While many people in North Yorkshire are keen to support their community, they may also be overwhelmed by the scale of the problem. In the aforementioned volunteering survey conducted recently by BIT, 42% of respondents said that not knowing how to get involved would be a barrier to volunteering during the coronavirus crisis.

A key principle of behavioural science is that making it even slightly easier to perform a task can make us disproportionately more likely to do it.<sup>81</sup> For example, one study found that pre-filling university application forms increased the likelihood of applicants attending university by up to 8 percentage points.<sup>82 83</sup>

In this section, we set out two behavioural science techniques which could make it easier for people living in North Yorkshire to engage in socially impactful behaviour:

- Combatting choice overload; and
- Habit formation.

<sup>80</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2014). EAST: Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights.

<sup>81</sup> Thaler, R. H. (2015). *Misbehaving: The making of behavioral economics*. W W Norton & Co.

<sup>82</sup> Bettinger, E. P., Long, B. T., Oreopoulos, P. & Sanbonmatsu, L. (2013). The role of application assistance and information in college decisions: Results from the H&R block FAFSA experiment, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(3), 1205-1242.

<sup>83</sup> This study showed no significant effect when it was subsequently repeated

## Combatting choice overload

Evidence suggests that having too many choices can make it harder for people to settle on one option; this is known as choice overload.<sup>84</sup> NYCC could combat choice overload by presenting potential volunteers with a small number of possible actions, with clear next steps.

### Example Message

It's easy to feel helpless during these difficult times. But each one of us has the power to make a difference to people around us through small acts of kindness.

This week, try to do one extra act of kindness. Here are some ideas!

- Telephone someone you know who is self-isolating to check if they're ok.
- Drop a note through your neighbour's door to say you're thinking of them/offer help.
- Donate to your local food bank (you can find your nearest one here: <https://bit.ly/2XDoViu>)

## Habit formation

People are more likely to maintain behaviours that are embedded into their daily routine. For example, one study found that participants were more likely to successfully lose weight when given advice on how to incorporate healthy behaviours into their daily life.<sup>85</sup> NYCC could promote behaviours that benefit the community by suggesting that people pair them with behaviours they already do, like going to the supermarket or for a walk.

### Example Message

The next time you go to the supermarket, why not pick up some extra items to donate to your local food bank? Every tin of beans, packet of cereal, or chocolate bar helps!

You can find where your nearest foodbank is here: <https://bit.ly/2XDoViu>



## 4.2.3 Maintaining volunteer engagement over time

As well as building their existing volunteering workforce, NYCC is also keen to retain and mobilise that workforce once the coronavirus crisis is over.

<sup>84</sup> Iyengar, S., & Lepper, M. (2000). When choice is demotivating: Can one desire too much of a good thing? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 995-1006.

<sup>85</sup> Lally, P. Chipperfield, A. and Wardle, J. (2008). Healthy habits: Efficacy of simple advice on weight control. *International Journal of Obesity* 32:700–707.

## Fostering intrinsic motivation

As detailed in section 4.1.1, 'intrinsic motivation' is where someone is driven to perform a behaviour by internal rewards such as enjoyment or altruism.

NYCC could nurture intrinsic motivation by prompting volunteers to focus on their internal drivers for helping. More specifically, messages could emphasise:

- The positive impact that volunteers are having and continue to have; and
- The positive emotions and experiences associated with volunteering.

### Example Messages

Thank you for being a part of the incredible movement to fight coronavirus in North Yorkshire. Volunteers like you have helped thousands of people get food, care and emotional support. It's hard to describe the difference you have made!

You can carry on making a difference when we're on the other side of this crisis. What kind of volunteering would you like to do in the longer term? You can see different volunteering options [here](#).

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Calling to check on a neighbour or offering to pick up some milk in the shop may not feel like much, but it can make a huge difference. Kindness towards those who are vulnerable is needed everyday, not just in a pandemic.

What will you do to help those around you once this is all over?

## Commitment devices

In section 4.1.3, we set out how making a formal commitment to do something can make us more likely to follow through with it. NYCC could sustain long-term volunteering by asking volunteers to commit to spending a certain number of hours helping each week. This could be achieved via a simple online form where volunteers input their name, email address, and the number of hours they would like to commit to. NYCC could then follow up with emails encouraging volunteers to stick to their commitment.

### Example Message

It's clear that support from volunteers like you will be vital for many months to come as we all get to grips with the 'new normal'.

Can we depend on you to keep offering your support? Commit to volunteering a certain amount of your time each week by clicking this link: [\[insert hyperlink here\]](#)

## Storytelling

In 4.1.2, we discussed how storytelling can foster a sense of belonging and reduce burnout. NYCC could ask volunteers to submit stories and advice based on their volunteering experience. These could then be shared with other volunteers to build community and solidarity.

### Example Message

Thanks for all your help so far! We have new volunteers joining regularly and they would love to hear your top tips for helping others. Please click [here](#) to share what you wish you had known when you first signed up to volunteer.

## Using a trusted messenger

As discussed in section 4.1.3, the likelihood that we act on a message often depends on who it comes from. NYCC could make messages of thanks to volunteers more powerful by using a trusted messenger, e.g. a leader at NYCC.

### Example Message

"I would like to thank each and every person who has helped out during this difficult time. I couldn't be prouder of the North Yorkshire community."

[Leader at North Yorkshire County Council]

## 5. Conclusion

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In this report, we have detailed the methodologies and behavioural science techniques used to generate a set of 57 messages for NYCC to use in their communications campaigns. The messages aim to:

1. Support the wellbeing of NYCC staff as they adjust to working from home.
2. Mobilise North Yorkshire residents to support their local community.

We started by working with NYCC to narrow down the specific behaviours the messages should encourage as well as the longer-term impact we'd like to see the messages achieve. We then used insights from the behavioural science literature to draft a core set of 20 messages (10 for each aim). NYCC provided feedback for this initial draft set, which we applied to develop a final set of 57 messages.

NYCC has already started using some of the messages, for example during Volunteers Week (June 2020). BIT will continue to support NYCC's communications team as they implement the messages over the coming months.

## 6. Appendix: Final message set

Please note that all quotes, statistics, policies, and links highlighted in **yellow** are illustrative only. We have included them to demonstrate how similar content might be implemented within a given message.

### Appendix A: Supporting the wellbeing of NYCC staff

Messages are split into four categories:

- **Supporting healthy thinking patterns** to help staff overcome the challenges that working from home during these difficult times brings.
- **Encouraging positive behaviours** to improve staff wellbeing.
- **Supporting parents** as they balance childcare with working from home.
- **Easing the transition back into the office:** providing guidance and reassurance for staff.

**Table 8: messages to support the wellbeing of NYCC staff**

Number	Behavioural science/wellbeing concept used	Message
<b>Supporting healthy thinking patterns</b>		
1	Evoking <b>gratitude</b> can boost motivation and resilience.	<p>“I wouldn’t be able to do my job without the support of my colleagues. I’m so grateful for them every day.” - [staff member at NYCC]</p> <p>Think about how your colleagues have supported you this week. Why not send them a quick message to say thank you?</p>
2	Teaching staff simple <b>mindfulness techniques</b> can support mental wellbeing.	<p>We are living through extraordinary times. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, take a moment to breathe in deeply through your nose for 3 seconds, hold for 2 seconds, then out through your mouth for 4 seconds.</p> <p>Mindfulness isn't the answer for everyone, but it can help some people. Here's another breathing exercise we like! <a href="http://bit.ly/2q0YVyP">http://bit.ly/2q0YVyP</a></p>
3		<p>Taking regular breaks from your laptop is important.</p> <p>The next time you have a break between meetings, stand outside for a few minutes and try this simple</p>

		<p>exercise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.</li> <li>2. Breath in through your nose and out through your mouth.</li> <li>3. Breathe in gently and regularly. See if you can count from 1 to 5 as you breath in, and again as you breath out</li> <li>4. Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.</li> </ol>
4	<b>Growth mindsets</b> can improve resilience.	<p>Thank you for your hard work during really challenging times. You might have found some days a struggle - that's completely normal; it takes time to adapt to new situations.</p> <p>Think of the progress you've made since lockdown began - maybe you've put a good routine in place for yourself, maybe you're exercising more now than you did before. These little wins are important, so take time to reflect on them!</p>
5		<p>You've been working from home under lockdown for [number] weeks now. We know it hasn't been easy, and we want to say thank you for the resilience you've shown during these extraordinary times.</p> <p>If you could give one piece of advice to your past self from [number] weeks ago, what would you say?</p>
6		<p>With extra time on our hands, we can feel pressure to be more productive. But the reality is that during these uncertain and stressful times, we're all going to have down days.</p> <p>Take care not to put yourself under a lot of pressure and <b>be kind to yourself</b>.</p>
7	Fostering <b>intrinsic motivation</b> (where behaviour is driven by internal rewards such as a sense of accomplishment or desire to do good) can boost motivation.	<p>As a staff member at NYCC, you are serving your local community each day. Although it's sometimes easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day, remember that you are making a difference.</p> <p>Take a moment now to reflect on how the work you're doing is helping people in North Yorkshire.</p>
<b>Encouraging positive behaviours</b>		
8	<b>Implementation</b>	Separating work time and personal time is

	<p><b>intentions (planning prompts)</b> can help staff carry out positive behaviours.</p>	<p>important for your mental health. Make a plan, for example:</p> <p>I will finish work at ___[time]___. When I sign off, I will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tell my colleagues I'm finished for the day</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Close my laptop and put it away (along with my keyboard, mouse etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Put on some relaxing music!</li> </ul>
9		<p>During your lunch break or between meetings, leave your phone by your computer and take 15 minutes for yourself. You could have a cup of tea, take a stroll outside, or read a few pages of a book.</p>
10		<p>"Each day, I try to do 10 minutes of exercise. I normally squeeze it in before work or during my lunch break. It makes all the difference to my energy levels while I'm working from home!" - [staff member at NYCC]</p> <p>It doesn't matter how long you exercise for - getting your heartrate up once a day can make a world of difference. Check out <a href="#">this list</a> of 10-minute workouts from the NHS here - they're suitable for all abilities!</p> <p>What time will you do 10 minutes of exercise tomorrow?</p>
11		<p>Phones have become a lifeline for many of us in the past few months, helping us to work remotely and stay in touch with loved ones. But try to remember that feeling constantly connected can cause anxiety.</p> <p>Set 'phone free' breaks during your day - just 15 minutes as you eat your lunch could make the world of difference. When will you have your 'phone free' break?</p>
12	<p>Using a <b>trusted messenger</b> can increase engagement with messages.</p>	<p>"Checking emails in the evening can be unproductive and stressful, and stops me from recharging. I prefer to tackle them the next day when I'm feeling refreshed" - [trusted senior messenger]</p> <p>We all recognise the importance of a healthy work-life balance, but some of us can feel guilty for switching off in the evenings. Try to set boundaries around your work hours this week.</p>

13		<p>"We know the difference we make to people's lives in North Yorkshire through our work at the council, and that can sometimes make it hard to switch off from work. Self-care is critical if we want to be able to give the best of ourselves." [trusted senior messenger]</p> <p>This period is challenging for us all. Try to think of one small thing you could do this evening to switch off from work.</p>
14	<p><b>Breaking goals down</b> into manageable 'chunks' can make them easier to achieve.</p>	<p>There is a lot to digest at the moment, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. You can take care of yourself by limiting the time you spend following the news:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid checking the news before you go to sleep.</li> <li>• Try to allocate a specific time during the day to read the news (e.g. only watch the news and PM broadcast at 5pm each day).</li> </ul>
15		<p>While we're working from home, it's easy to spend the whole day looking at a screen. Try the following steps to take care of your eyes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use the 20-20-20 rule:</b> every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.</li> <li>• <b>Blink regularly</b> to give your eyes a rest.</li> <li>• <b>Use a larger font size</b> where possible.</li> </ul> <p>You can see more tips <a href="#">here!</a></p>
16	<p><b>Storytelling</b> can build a sense of community amongst staff.</p>	<p>"It's the small things I miss about being in the office - hearing about my colleagues' weekends or having a laugh together. My team has started having weekly catch up calls where we're not allowed to talk about work - they're really helping me to feel connected!" - [staff member at NYCC]</p> <p>How are you staying connected with your colleagues? Share your stories here! [link to online form]</p>
17		<p>[Moment of happiness or funny story from staff member]</p> <p>During difficult times, moments of joy are even more important.</p> <p>Can you think of something that made you laugh or smile this week? Why not spread the joy and share</p>

		it with a colleague?
18		<p>"There have been plenty of ups and downs over the past few weeks. Getting out for a walk every day has helped me to clear my head and get some perspective" - [staff member at NYCC]</p> <p>If you've had difficult days over the past few weeks, you're not alone. Here are some other evidence-based tips on how to stay mentally healthy. <a href="https://bit.ly/2y2kkeV">https://bit.ly/2y2kkeV</a></p> <p>How have you been taking care of yourself over the past few weeks? Why not share your ideas with colleagues here! <a href="#">[link to online form]</a></p>
19	<b>Substituting</b> one behaviour for another can help staff to build healthy habits.	<p>Three months ago, many NYCC staff spent at least an hour commuting every day.</p> <p>Today, take the time you would have spent traveling home from work to <b>do something kind for yourself</b>. You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone a loved one</li> <li>• Do a 10-minute <a href="#">self care yoga video</a></li> <li>• Take a solo walk - try leaving your phone at home to really disconnect</li> </ul>
20	<b>Public commitments</b> can help us to follow through with intended behaviour changes.	<p>During times of uncertainty, finding a routine can help us feel more in control. While your daily schedule has likely changed, try to create new rituals. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a quiet cup of tea each day before you open your laptop for work.</li> <li>• Try out a new recipe for dinner every Wednesday.</li> <li>• Call a loved one on Sunday mornings.</li> </ul> <p>We are more likely to follow through with our goals when we share them publicly. Share how you're going to practice self-care this week with a friend or colleague!</p>
<b>Supporting parents</b>		
21	Focusing on <b>short, simple activities</b> .	This weekend, try planning a dinner party with your children! Together, you could plan a menu, make place cards, and decorate the table. They'll love the opportunity to get creative.
22		This Sunday afternoon, why not sit down with your

		<p>children and make a schedule for the week.</p> <p>Think about when you'll go out for walks, when you'll do chores, when you'll call loved ones. It's important to schedule in fun activities that you can look forward to together.</p>
23		<p>Next time you're on a walk with your children, why not do a wildlife hunt? You could try to identify birds and plants, and keep a list of what you've seen!</p>
24	<p>Giving a small set of options with clear next steps can help to overcome <b>choice overload</b>.</p>	<p>Working with young children at home can be difficult. We want to do all we can to support you. Have you spoken to your manager about how you could benefit from our flexible working policy? You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start and end your working day earlier or later</li> <li>• Consider 'condensed hours' (e.g. a 40-hour working week over 4 days)</li> <li>• Split your working day into two chunks (e.g. 7am-11am, then 2pm-6pm)</li> <li>• Request unpaid leave to make childcare more manageable (e.g. one day of unpaid leave per week for the next two months)</li> </ul> <p>Why not schedule a meeting with your line manager to discuss options?</p>
25	<p>Creating a sense of community through <b>storytelling</b> amongst parents can build resilience.</p>	<p>This week, we're thinking of all the parents at NYCC who are balancing working from home with childcare. <b>Thank you for doing your job in really challenging circumstances.</b></p> <p>If there was one piece of advice you could give to another parent in a similar situation, what would it be? Submit your ideas <a href="#">here</a> and we'll share them with other NYCC parents on the intranet next week.</p>
<p><b>Easing the transition back to the office</b></p>		
26	<p><b>Evoking reciprocity</b> can encourage positive behaviours.</p>	<p>If someone on your team thought they might have coronavirus, what would you want them to do? Stay at home, or take a risk and come into the office?</p> <p><b>If you or someone in your household has symptoms of coronavirus, please stay at home.</b></p>

27	<p><b>Implementation intentions</b> (planning prompts) can make people more likely to follow through with a behaviour.</p>	<p>From [date], you will be able to work in the office again if you wish. The government has advised that workers avoid taking public transport where possible. Take some time this week to think about how you might travel to and from work.</p> <p>For example, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Cycle</b> - do you need to get your bike serviced?</li> <li>● <b>Walk</b> - which route will you take?</li> </ul>
28		<p><b>We want to support behaviours that will keep you and your colleagues safe. Please don't come into the office if there is even a small chance that you or someone in your household has coronavirus.</b></p> <p>If you or someone in your household develops symptoms, you should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Email your line manager to let them know that you can't come into the office.</li> <li>2. Request sick leave if necessary.</li> <li>3. Follow <a href="#">NHS guidelines</a> on how to take care of yourself and those in your household.</li> </ol>
29	<p><b>Breaking goals down</b> into manageable 'chunks' can make them easier to achieve.</p>	<p>As some staff return to the office, let's try to maintain some of the good practices we learned while working from home.</p> <p>Many of our colleagues will continue working from home (e.g. if they are shielding or living with someone who is shielding). Support them by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Setting up a Skype calendar event for <b>all meetings</b>.</li> <li>● Waiting until <b>all attendees have dialled in</b> before starting a meeting.</li> <li>● Keeping up the <b>virtual coffee breaks!</b></li> </ul>
30	<p>Using a <b>trusted messenger</b> can increase engagement with messages.</p>	<p>"As the number of coronavirus infections decreases and government guidance changes, <b>my top priority is to keep you safe.</b></p> <p>I've been working with HR and office managers to develop procedures so that you can return to work with as little anxiety as possible:</p> <p>[list of NYCC return-to-work policies]"</p> <p>- [Senior staff member/team leader at NYCC]</p>

31	People are more likely to engage in a behaviour when they believe it is in line with the behaviour of the majority, i.e. the <b>social norm</b> .	In a recent survey, <b>63% of NYCC staff said that they would like to come back into the office</b> for at least one day per week once restrictions are eased.
32	Staff will be more likely to take the <b>default</b> option when it comes to returning to the office.	From <b>[date]</b> , staff will have the option of coming back into the office to work if they wish.  If you would like to return to the office for work, please email your line manager and let them know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What date you would like to return to the office.</b></li> <li>• <b>How many days per week you would like to work in the office.</b></li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Mobilising the community in North Yorkshire

Messages are split into three categories:

- **Promoting invisible acts of kindness** by people living in North Yorkshire.
- **Increasing volunteer sign-ups** through the NYCC portal.
- **Sustaining volunteer engagement** both during and after the crisis.

**Table 9: messages to mobilise the community in North Yorkshire**

Number	BI concept used	Message
<b>Promoting invisible acts of kindness</b>		
1	<b>Embedding behaviours</b> into our daily routine can make us more likely to maintain them.	When you go out on a walk or run, why not drop a note through your neighbours' doors offering to pick up groceries or medicine?  Not sure what to write? Check out this template - or print it out if you have a printer! <a href="https://bit.ly/2RKKERT">https://bit.ly/2RKKERT</a>
2		The next time you go to the supermarket, why not pick up some extra items to donate to your local food bank? Every tin of beans, pack of cereal, or chocolate bar helps!  You can find where your nearest foodbank is here: <a href="https://bit.ly/2XDoViu">https://bit.ly/2XDoViu</a>

3	<p><b>Breaking goals down</b> into manageable ‘chunks’ can make them easier to achieve, and helps to combat ‘<b>choice overload</b>’.</p>	<p>It’s easy to feel helpless during these difficult times. But each one of us has the power to make a difference to people around us through small acts of kindness.</p> <p>This week, try to do one extra act of kindness. Here are some ideas!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone someone you know who is self-isolating to check if they’re ok.</li> <li>• Drop a note through your neighbour’s door to say you’re thinking of them/offer help.</li> <li>• Donate to your local food bank (you can find your nearest one here: <a href="https://bit.ly/2XDoViu">https://bit.ly/2XDoViu</a>)</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Evoking reciprocity</b> can make people more likely to perform altruistic behaviours.</p>	<p>Can you think of a time when you were having a bad day and a small act of kindness made it better? Maybe someone in the street smiled at you or a friend gave you a surprise phone call.</p> <p>Seemingly small acts can make a huge difference, especially during these difficult times. What small act of kindness can you do for someone today?</p>
5		<p>Think of all the frontline workers who risk their health to keep our communities going: bin collectors, police officers, supermarket staff.</p> <p>Next time you see any frontline worker, remember to thank them for all they are doing during this crisis. You might not think it’s much but it will make the world of difference.</p>
6		<p>“Being a nurse is difficult at the best of times but especially so during this pandemic. I don’t know what I would do without the support of my neighbours. It’s the little things like when Jim next door offers to pick up shopping for me at the end of a busy week.” - Hiba, nurse at Scarborough General Hospital</p> <p>We are so grateful to our incredible frontline workers for helping to overcome the crisis we’re in. But it wouldn’t be possible for them to do their jobs without the support of their friends, family, and community. Each act of kindness you do helps to build their resilience. Thank you.</p>
7	<p>Quotes from beneficiaries of volunteering increases</p>	<p>“When I tested positive for coronavirus, I had no idea how I would get food as I self-isolated. Then</p>

	the <b>salience</b> of people in need, emphasising the need for volunteers.	<p>my neighbour, Anna, called to say she could pick up whatever I needed. I honestly don't know what I would have done without her." - Hamzah, North Stanley</p> <p>During these difficult times, it's stories like Hamzah's that keep our spirits up. All across North Yorkshire, communities are coming together like never before. Can you think of someone like Hamzah who could use a helping hand? Reach out to them today.</p>
8	<b>Network nudges</b> can help positive behaviours to spread more rapidly.	<p>This week, phone one friend or family member to check in on how they're doing.</p> <p>Nominate five other friends to do the same, either directly or on social media. Remember to hashtag #SaltOfTheEarth!</p>
9	Highlighting the intrinsic rewards of performing kind acts could help to foster <b>intrinsic motivation</b> .	<p>Research shows that small acts of kindness for others can help us to feel happy and fulfilled. By helping others, we're helping ourselves!</p> <p>What's one act of kindness could you do today for someone in your community?</p>
<b>Increasing volunteer sign-ups</b>		
10	<b>Evoking reciprocity</b> can make people more likely to perform altruistic behaviours.	<p>If you were a vulnerable elderly person, what kind of support would you need from your community right now?</p> <p>You can give this support to others - sign up here: <a href="https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T">https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T</a></p>
11		<p>Think of key workers you know (carers, nurses, supermarket staff, teachers, doctors, police officers) - they are doing incredible work helping our community to get through this crisis.</p> <p>You can do your bit too - sign up here: <a href="https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T">https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T</a></p>
12	Supporting <b>self-efficacy</b> (people's belief that they are capable of making a difference) can encourage them to engage in a behaviour.	<p>During these uncertain times, we can sometimes feel helpless.</p> <p>But you don't need special skills to make a difference in your local community - simple actions can make a world of difference. For example, you could volunteer to ring people who are self isolating for a chat!</p>

		You can help - click here to find out how: <a href="https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T">https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T</a>
13	People are more likely to engage in a behaviour when they believe it is in line with the behaviour of the majority, i.e. the <b>social norm</b> .	Be part of the movement in North Yorkshire to fight Covid-19.  Volunteer numbers in North Yorkshire have tripled since March. Sign up today to make a difference: <a href="https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T">https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T</a>
14	<b>Network nudges</b> can help positive behaviours to spread more rapidly.	Can you think of any friends or family who might like to volunteer?  Share this message with friends to let them know how they too can make a difference in their community.  <i>"I've just signed up to volunteer during the coronavirus crisis. I thought you might be interested too - click here to find out more and sign up! <a href="https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T">https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T</a>"</i>
<b>Sustaining volunteer engagement</b>		
15	Focusing on the <b>positive impact</b> volunteers are having could foster <b>intrinsic motivation</b> .	Thank you for being a part of the incredible movement to fight coronavirus in North Yorkshire. Volunteers like you have helped thousands of people get food, care and emotional support. It's hard to describe the difference you have made!  You can carry on making a difference when we're on the other side of this crisis. What kind of volunteering would you like to do in the longer term? You can see different volunteering options <a href="#">here</a> .
16		<b>"Knowing that Alex is always there for a chat when I need it has gotten me through the past couple of months." Sarah, 87, East Stanley</b>  Volunteers like you make a huge difference to thousands of people in North Yorkshire - know that they are truly thankful. People like Sarah need support all year round, not just during pandemics. Think about ways to sustain your volunteering efforts when this is all over.
17		It's been <b>[X]</b> weeks since you first signed up to volunteer. Thank you for your commitment! It's hard to put into words how much of a difference

		<p>you're making.</p> <p>Getting to the other side of this crisis is a marathon, not a sprint. We need volunteers like you to keep doing amazing work to support vulnerable people. Thank you for keeping going.</p>
18		<p>Together, we've achieved so much in North Yorkshire over the past few months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [number] people matched with volunteers</li> <li>• [survey results showing that people feel supported by volunteers]</li> <li>• etc...</li> </ul> <p>We couldn't have done it without you.</p>
19		<p>While there are many reasons we want to go back to the way things were, there are some things that have come from this crisis which we should hold on to.</p> <p>One of these things is you! We are so thankful for your incredible work over the past few months. We needed volunteers like you before coronavirus and we will continue to need you afterwards.</p> <p>Will you continue your journey with us? If so, please add your name to this mailing list: <a href="#">[link]</a></p>
20		<p>Calling to check on a neighbour or offering to pick up some milk in the shop may not feel like much, but it can make a huge difference. Kindness towards those who are vulnerable is needed everyday, not just in a pandemic.</p> <p>What will you do to help those around you once this is all over?</p>
21	<p>Highlighting the <b>positive emotions and experiences</b> associated with volunteering can foster <b>intrinsic motivation</b>.</p>	<p>We've been overwhelmed by stories about the incredible experiences volunteers have had over the past few months. You've told us about the amazing people you've met, the conversations you've had, and the sense of accomplishment you've felt.</p> <p>What has been the most important volunteering experience you've had during the crisis? Reply to this email to let us know!</p>
22		<p>It's been <a href="#">[X]</a> weeks since you first signed up to</p>

		<p>volunteer - thank you, you are making the world of difference.</p> <p>Reaching out to others can make us understand ourselves better - what have you learned about yourself as a result of volunteering?</p>
23	<p>Making a <b>commitment</b> to perform a behaviour makes us more likely to follow through with it.</p>	<p>It's clear that support from volunteers like you will be vital for many months to come as we all get to grips with the 'new normal'.</p> <p>Can we depend on you to keep offering your support? Commit to volunteering a certain amount of your time each week by clicking this link: <a href="#">X</a></p>
24	<p><b>Storytelling</b> can build a sense of community and solidarity amongst volunteers.</p>	<p>Thanks for all your help so far! We have new volunteers joining regularly and they would love to hear your top tips for helping others. Please click <a href="#">here</a> to share what you wish you had known when you first signed up to volunteer.</p>
25	<p>A message of thanks from a <b>trusted messenger</b> could encourage commitment.</p>	<p>"I would like to thank each and every person who has helped out during this difficult time. I couldn't be prouder of the North Yorkshire community."</p> <p>[Leader at North Yorkshire County Council]</p>