

Social marketing works!

A powerful and adaptable approach for
achieving and sustaining positive behaviour



A short introduction for NHS Staff

A message from Dr Fiona Adshead, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer



We know that the challenges to improve health and reduce inequalities are significant at the local and national levels. We also know that if we invest in understanding what motivates people and address their everyday lives and concerns it is possible to make a real difference.

Government policy and strategy is increasingly being reframed to focus much more closely on the basic needs and concerns of people. Alongside this, the focus at the local level is on ensuring that we can provide genuinely practical and supportive approaches to assist people in adopting and sustaining active and healthy lives.

In October 2006, we launched Health Challenge England, igniting a new national debate about why there are such wide variations in people's health. It underlined how we are already rising to the challenges we face at individual and community level, but also set out the next steps in our strategy to support the changes we all need to make to enjoy the best possible health.

The recent Small Change, Big Difference is just one example of how social marketing can be used on a national scale to understand the realities of people's lives and ensure interventions provide genuine support, motivation and encouragement. The days of simply trying to tell people what is good for them are over. The evidence is increasingly clear that if we help people make small manageable changes, over time we can have an increasingly positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

At local level, we are also seeing examples of how a social marketing approach has the potential to impact enormously on not only the health of the individual, but also the wider community. Clearly, tailoring solutions to different local needs is crucial.

This leaflet offers an introduction to social marketing for NHS staff. Your work has such an important impact on people's health, and in working with others across different sectors, you make a real difference to their lives. Health in the 21st century is everybody's business.

Contents

This leaflet is designed to provide a short introduction to social marketing, to help describe what it is, its key features and to clarify potential misunderstandings. It does not aim to be a how to guide, as other resources are currently being developed for this purpose. See www.nsmcentre.org.uk for latest materials and resources.

What is social marketing?	4
Issues to highlight from the definition	5
The roots of social marketing	6
Social marketing's key features	8
– the customer triangle	
Social marketing national benchmark criteria	9
How social marketing can be used and applied	16
Operational social marketing	
– total process planning model	18

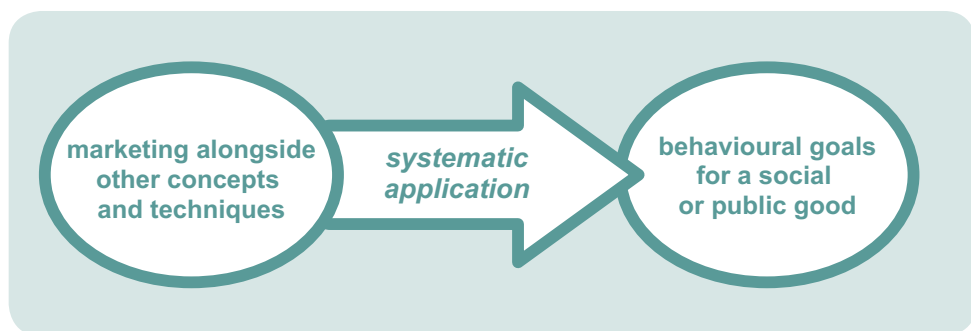


What is social marketing?

Marketing that improves people's lives

Social marketing is an approach that is increasingly being used to achieve positive impacts on the behaviour of individuals and groups, and to help sustain these over time.

Since the 1970s, when the term was first used, a range of descriptions and definitions have been developed. Based upon a review of these, we have produced the following which builds on the latest thinking and approaches to social marketing.



Social marketing is:

the systematic application of marketing alongside other concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioural goals, for a social or public good

Health-related social marketing is:

the systematic application of marketing alongside other concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioural goals, to improve health and reduce health inequalities

Issues to highlight from the definition:

Marketing alongside other concepts and techniques

Using marketing techniques can help us in our work but it is important to understand that social marketing doesn't use marketing in an isolated way. It integrates and connects it with the best approaches from existing social sciences, public health and health promotion. This unified approach helps to achieve the greatest potential benefit and impact.

Behavioural goals

It is the focus on behaviour that is at the core of social marketing. It aims to achieve a measurable impact on what people actually do. It doesn't just focus on achieving changes in behaviour, but takes a much wider approach to focus on how to promote, establish and sustain changes over time.

Social or public good

The primary purpose of social marketing is to help achieve improvement in the lives of people. This helps to distinguish it from commercial marketing where the primary purpose is financial, in terms of profits or shareholder value. This should not be taken to mean that commercial marketers can't also contribute to a social or public good, but rather in social marketing this aspect is the primary focus.

The roots of social marketing

Social marketing, like all good approaches, is dynamic and evolving. Increasingly, we talk of social marketing as having two parents. The social parent draws on the best learning and skills from the social sciences and social policy areas, including public health and health promotion. The marketing parent brings the best of both commercial and public sector marketing approaches.

Originally, in the 1960s and 1970s it was described as the use of commercial marketing in the public sector. However, in the last decade it has become a much more integrated and mature approach that harnesses the best of marketing alongside the extensive learning and experience from social sciences and social policy. This means that rather than competing with best practices in public health and health promotion it increasingly integrates with them.

A word about language

Social marketing draws on some language that is more commonly used in the commercial sector, which can at first be off-putting to those who have been grounded in public sector language and culture.

For example traditional marketing commonly uses the 4 P's of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. In relation to purchasing behaviour this has proved a robust approach in helping to think through ways to market effectively to a given audience. In social marketing however the behaviours being addressed are commonly more complex and can be influenced by a wider range of factors.

So while the 4 P's of commercial marketing can be useful as a starting point, in practice social marketing uses a broader analysis to inform development of appropriate interventions. It can nevertheless be very useful in public sector initiatives to ask some basic questions to help review what is being developed.

The use of the term customer in social marketing should not be seen as being limited to the public. It can just as well be applied to key decision-makers, planners or even politicians who it may be necessary to target in order to achieve a particular goal. Part of the effective scoping of a social marketing initiative identifies who the key audiences or customers need to be, and what behaviours are being focused on.

How can my understanding of what the customer values and wants, help me enhance the value of what I am offering to them?

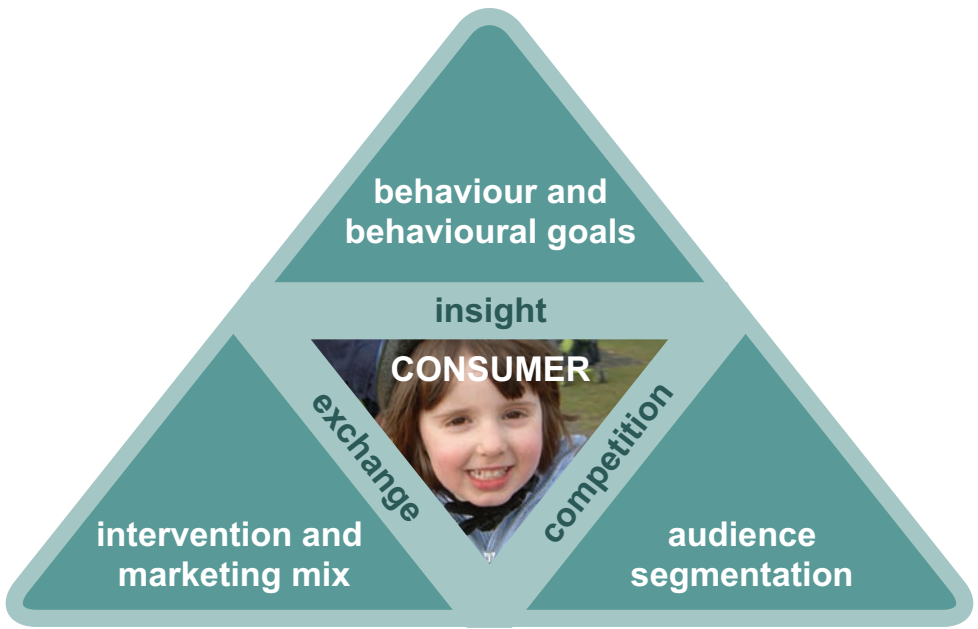
What might stop the customer taking up my offer?

What is the product I am offering to the person or the customer?



Social marketing's key features

Social marketing is based on a number of core concepts and principles. The social marketing *customer triangle* is a simple device to help highlight seven of these, with the customer or consumer placed at the centre.



customer triangle

Social marketing national benchmark criteria

Building on the customer triangle, a set of social marketing national benchmark criteria have been developed and are now being rolled out across the country.

The aim of these criteria is to help bring rigour and consistency to the way in which social marketing is approached in order to increase its chances of delivering successful outcomes.

These criteria can be used in a range of ways including:

- 1: Commissioning
- 2: Development of interventions
- 3: Review and evaluation

1: Commissioning

Commissioners can use the benchmark criteria with organisations or individuals tendering for social marketing related work, so that their proposals are considered in terms of consistency with the eight point criteria.

2: Development of interventions

The criteria provide a checklist on which to reflect and therefore assist the development process. They identify the issues that will need to be addressed and during the work they act as a guide to keeping work and processes on track with the key elements of social marketing.

3: Review and evaluation

The criteria also provide a checklist of key issues to include and consider in any review and evaluation process. For example, the extent to which work was based on deeper understanding and insight of the customer, had a clear behavioural focus and specific measurable behavioural goals.

Social marketing national benchmark criteria

Practical tools and resources are being developed and are being made available via the www.nsmcentre.org.uk website.

Below is a brief introduction to each of the eight benchmark areas. A single sheet resource is available on the website and further resources will build on this in future.

1. Clear behavioural goals

Social marketing is driven by a concern to achieve measurable impacts on what people actually do, not just their knowledge, awareness or beliefs about an issue. Establishing behavioural goals requires going beyond the traditional focus on behaviour change to recognise the dynamic nature of behaviour within a whole population. It looks at both the positive and the problematic behaviours to understand the relationship between them and identifies patterns and trends over time and the influences of them. An approach which focuses on the attainment of behavioural goals also describes the aim of an intervention in terms of specific behaviours, and considers manageable behavioural steps towards a main behavioural goal.

Example: 'Food Dudes', a healthy eating programme.
www.fooddudes.co.uk

2. Understanding the customer through consumer research

Social marketing begins and ends with a focus on the individual within their social context. Interventions respond to the needs and wants of the person rather than the person having to fit around those of the service or intervention. In order to gain this understanding it is important that customer and market research is used, together with local intelligence, to inform the development of the work. This helps to avoid top down approaches and the tendency to start crafting messages or interventions before there is a real understanding of the customer.

Example: A smoking cessation programme for pregnant women in Sunderland
r.j.lowry@ncl.ac.uk

3. Theory-based and informed

It is important that the planned social marketing intervention actively assesses and draws from theory across different disciplines and professions. It should avoid applying the same theory or set of theories to every context, but focus on identifying those that offer the greatest potential for understanding the influences on behaviour.

Example: Integrated Theory Framework, National Social Marketing Centre website
www.nsmcentre.org.uk

Social marketing national benchmark criteria

4. Insight

Social marketing is driven by actionable insights that are able to provide a practical steer for the selection and development of interventions. To develop such insight means moving beyond traditional information and intelligence (e.g. demographic or epidemiological data) to looking much more closely at why people behave in the way that they do. Consideration is given to the possible influences and influencers on behaviour, and specifically what people think, feel, and believe. Importance is placed on considering those things within and outside of an individual's control.

Example: A mouth and bowel cancer initiative encouraging early attendance at health services.

www.woscap.co.uk



5. Exchange

Social marketing puts a strong emphasis on understanding what is to be offered to the intended audience, based upon what they value and consider important (e.g. short-term versus long-term benefits). It also requires an appreciation of the full cost to the audience of accepting the offer, which may include: money, time, effort and social consequences. The aim is to maximise the potential offer and its value to the audience, while minimising all the costs of adopting, maintaining or changing a particular behaviour. This involves considering ways to increase incentives and remove barriers to the positive behaviour, while doing the opposite for the negative or problematic behaviour.

Example: 'Think!' a national road safety campaign.
www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk

6. Competition

Social marketing uses the concept of competition to examine all the factors that compete for people's attention and willingness or ability to adopt a desired behaviour. It looks at both external and internal competition.

External competition can include those directly promoting potentially negative behaviours but can also include other potentially positive influences that might be seeking to gain the attention of the same audience.

Internal competition includes the power of pleasure, enjoyment, risk taking, habit and addiction that can directly affect a person's behaviour.

Example: 'Truth', a youth-focused anti-tobacco campaign in the U.S.
www.protectthetruth.org

Social marketing national benchmark criteria

7. Segmentation and targeting

Social marketing uses a developed segmentation approach. This goes beyond traditional targeting approaches that may focus on demographic characteristics or epidemiological data, by considering alternative ways that people can be grouped and profiled. In particular it looks how different people are responding to an issue, what moves and motivates them. This is often referred to as psycho-graphic research. It ensures interventions can be tailored to people's differing needs.

Example: 'Where's your head at?', an illicit drugs programme in Australia.
www.drugs.health.gov.au

8. Marketing mix

Social marketing recognises that in any given situation there are a range of intervention options or approaches that could be used to achieve a particular goal. It focuses on ensuring that a deep understanding and insight into the customer is used directly to inform the identification and selection of appropriate intervention methods and approaches. As single interventions are generally less effective than multi-interventions the issue is also to consider the relative balance or mix between interventions or approaches selected. Where this is done at the strategic level it is commonly referred to as the intervention mix while at the level of a dedicated social marketing intervention the term marketing mix is more common.

Example: The national tobacco control campaign in England.
www.givingupsmoking.co.uk



How social marketing can be used and applied

Social marketing can be used to inform and assist policy formulation, strategy development and related implementation and delivery, including service development and design. When considering how social marketing might be able to assist work, it is useful to distinguish between using it strategically and using it operationally.



Strategic social marketing

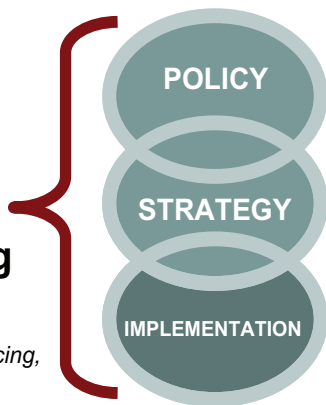
Where social marketing concepts and principles are used to inform and enhance policy formulation and strategy development. In particular where it is used to ensure a strong customer focus directly informs the identification and selection of appropriate interventions.

Operational social marketing

Where social marketing is undertaken as a planned process and worked through systematically to achieve specific behavioural goals. Critical to this process is the initial scoping stage which examines and assesses issues. Scoping also provides the focus for subsequent development and evaluation.

strategic social marketing

*informing and enhancing,
policy, strategy &
its implementation*



operational social marketing

*applied as a specific planned process
as a social marketing programme
or social marketing campaign*

Operational social marketing

When social marketing is used operationally it is undertaken as a systematic and planned process, designed to achieve tangible and measurable impacts on behaviour. It can be undertaken in a range of ways but the total process planning model (see page opposite) sets out a simple set of stages that can help ensure an effective intervention. The website www.nsmcentre.org.uk provides further material and a fuller planning guide is being developed and will be available soon.

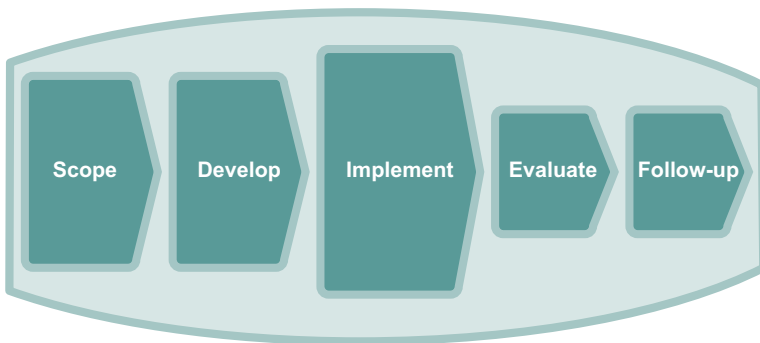


Though all stages of social marketing are important, investing time in the scoping stage is particularly critical. This helps to avoid a tendency to start generating and crafting messages or interventions before a deep understanding and insight into the customer is achieved. It also ensures that a clear behavioural focus is identified from the start, and that relevant theory and ethical issues are considered.

The understanding and insights gained during scoping are then used to directly inform the selection of appropriate methods and the development of a working proposition (i.e. what will be able to achieve and sustain the desired behaviour) that can be taken into the next development stage. Initial insights also provide a baseline by which interventions can be measured and evaluated.

Total process planning model

Undertaking and applying a social marketing approach as a dedicated intervention, systematically planned and staged to achieve specific behavioural goals



Terms: Social Marketing Programme	Social Marketing Campaign	Social Marketing Initiative
Used to refer to a longer term planned programme of work	Commonly consisting of a range or cluster of activities	Used to refer to a time specific targeted intervention
Typically staged over 3 to 10+ years	Typically staged over 1 to 3 years	Typically undertaken within 1 year

Operational social marketing can be undertaken in a short, medium or longer term time frame. Ideally a longer term approach should be adopted, since many of the behaviours being addressed are unlikely to be achieved by short term initiatives. However it can be useful to frame a social marketing programme or campaign in terms of shorter term initiatives that can contribute and build towards longer term goals over time.



For further information see:

NSM Centre website – www.nsmcentre.org.uk

Provides access to a developing range of resources, links to other useful sites and an opportunity to join the NSM e-Network and receive a regular NSM e-bulletin.

National Social Marketing Centre

c/o Consumer Focus

4th Floor, Artillery House, Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RT

Email: info@nsmcentre.org.uk

Tel: 00 44 (0)20 7799 7900

All our resources are kept under review and we welcome comments and feedback on ways we might improve future editions or to receive ideas or suggestions for other material or resources. Comments can be emailed to info@nsmcentre.org.uk.