

## ShowCase

### Love your mouth

**Topic:** Cancer

**Organisation:** Newcastle-upon-Tyne University

**Location:** Newcastle; Gateshead (North East)

**Dates:** 2006 to 2009

**Budget:** Approximately £47,600

**Website:**

[www.openuptomouthcancer.org/aboutthecampaign/local\\_activities/northeastpilot](http://www.openuptomouthcancer.org/aboutthecampaign/local_activities/northeastpilot)

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### Overview

Love Your Mouth was a pilot initiative funded by Cancer Research UK to promote early detection of oral cancer in the North East of England.

The aims of the intervention were to create a user-friendly service in Gateshead and Newcastle where people at risk from oral cancer could have their mouth examined by a competent clinician.

Love Your Mouth developed a voucher system, which enabled holders to receive a free soft tissue mouth check at a participating dental practice. Over the 2 phases of the intervention, over 3,000 Love Your Mouth vouchers were printed and distributed in booklet form to pharmacies, smoking cessation services, health trainers, NHS walk-in centres and medical practices in the Newcastle and Gateshead area.

### Results (Phases One and Two):

- 485 'assessment of risk' vouchers distributed to at-risk individuals
- 101 dental appointments attended for a soft tissue mouth check
- Five voucher holders referred to specialist oral surgeons by the dentist
- One person kept under review as a possible cancer sufferer

## 1. BEHAVIOUR

- For at-risk individuals to seek early screening and diagnosis for oral cancer
- For local service providers to establish a satisfactory final common pathway to diagnose potential oral cancer cases
- For screening sites and professionals to capture, screen and direct possible cases of oral cancer into the final common pathway

## 2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

- Focus groups with members of primary target audience
  - Determine knowledge and attitudes towards oral cancer and health services
  - Pre-test voucher design and use
  - Review project reach
- Stakeholder interviews with health promotion professionals

## 3. THEORY

- **Health Belief Model:** An individual's willingness to change their health behaviour is based on perceived susceptibility to and severity of the risk, and perceived benefits of and barriers to taking action

## 4. INSIGHT

- Target audience most valued health and family
- Most smoked and drank
- Low spontaneous awareness of oral cancer
- Lack of knowledge of oral cancer symptoms and means of prevention
- Low awareness of link between oral cancer and drinking alcohol

## 5. EXCHANGE

- **Barriers:** Existing health services seen as unfriendly, unwelcoming, frightening and not for them; Fear of dentist; Low self-esteem; Not aware of own risk status
- **Solutions:** Engagement strategy; Service improvements to make screening quick, easy, effortless and painless; Free soft tissue mouth check; Used local, trusted 'sales force' to identify at-risk individuals
- **Benefits:** Early diagnosis offers improved survival rates and reduces worry

## 6. COMPETITION

- Target audience's hostile towards health communications
- Range of other publicity campaigns

### Response

- User input to design attention-grabbing materials

## 7. SEGMENTATION

- **Primary audience (at-risk individuals):**
  - Socially deprived
  - Live in north of UK
  - Two years since last visit to a dentist
  - Aged over 40 years
  - Tobacco users
  - Drink above recommended units of alcohol per week
- **Secondary audience:** Dental staff
- **Tertiary audience ('sales force'):** Other healthcare professionals in contact with the target audience (e.g. pharmacists, smoking cessation teams, GPs)

## 8. METHODS MIX

- Awareness raising about symptoms of oral cancer and risk behaviours; press and media coverage
- Numbered voucher system – Given to identified at-risk individuals to redeem against a soft tissue check; Allowed individuals to be tracked through the referral system
- Training, information packs and resources for primary care workers to 'risk assess' individuals
- On-street recruiters