

A Social Marketing Approach to Community Cohesion

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Overview

- Background
- Social Marketing Approach
- Insight Research
- Residents' Perceptions
- Social Marketing and Myth-Busting
- Applying a Framework for Behavioural Change
- Staff Training Programme
- New Narrative



Background

- The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham's (LBBD) vision:
"To work together for a better borough that is safe, clean, fair and respectful, prosperous and healthy, and where our young people are inspired and successful"
- Community cohesion remains a priority nationally and locally
- Problems in Borough with negative perceptions and "myths"
- LBBD appointed TCC to lead the community engagement work underpinning the development of the community cohesion strategy
- Of primary importance was ensuring members of the wider community had the opportunity to contribute to the community cohesion strategy



The Social Marketing Approach

- Heart of this approach was the generation of insight to understand residents' perceptions and why traditional "myth-busting" approaches fail
- People generally change for emotional rather than rational reasons and usually require personal support (Deutschman, 2007)
- Social marketing campaigns and interventions should be based upon an understanding of the emotions connected with the behaviour in question and take into account the relationships required to support change
- Social marketing should combine commercial marketing's success in making emotional appeals and connections through branding and advertising with theories of emotional intelligence
- Framework highlights the importance of developing and maintaining appropriate relationships and trust to support behavioural change



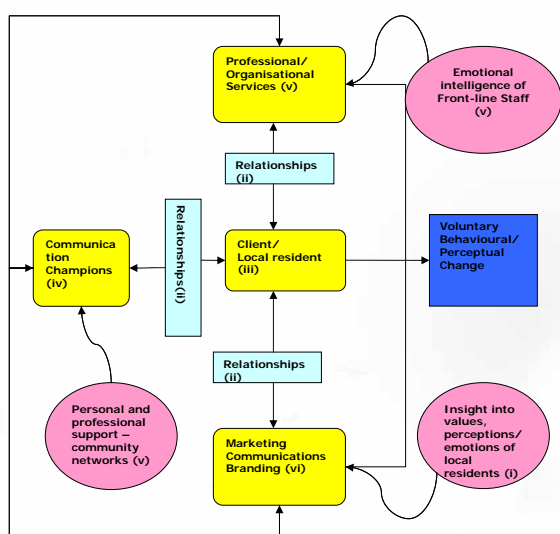


Social Marketing and Myth Busting

- Traditional approaches to "myth busting" are often flawed because they take a literal and factual approach to what is fundamentally an emotional response (McKenzie-Mohr, 2000)
- Expecting local authority staff to have the ability to act as "myth busters" is unrealistic.
- When in direct confrontation with residents, contradicting what the residents 'know' to be true (however inaccurate it is in reality), they will be seen as disingenuous
- When presented with facts that disagree with an emotionally held opinion emotions will, more often than not, win out
- Directly confronting myths may cause individuals to become more stubbornly entrenched in their opinions
- Opinions and feelings are changed through congruent communication – that is communication that agrees with a person's emotional reality

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Framework for Behavioural Change



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Applying the Framework to Myth Busting

- (i) Start of this approach was the exhaustive gathering of insight into the values, perceptions and emotions of local residents, staff and other stakeholders
- (ii) The framework highlights the critical importance of personal relationships when designing and implementing behavioural change interventions
- (iii) Clients/customers (in this case local residents) lie at the heart of a network of relationships
- (iv) Community communicators (champions) are major influencers on residents' beliefs and perceptions
- (v) Front-line staff and professionals should also attempt to build more trusted relationships with residents by adopting an emotionally intelligent approach
- (vi) Corporate communications should reflect the values of residents and help to reinforce the relationships being built between staff and residents



The Staff Training Programme

- Building on the initial work by Goleman (1995; 1998; 2001)
- Aim was to develop the skills required for "deeper conversations" and for communicating more effectively by considering the emotional reality of the individual you are dealing with (Lings et al, 2008; Kotter and Cohen, 2002; Gardner, 2004, Goleman and Ekman, 2007)
- Skills introduced: *Active Listening, Uncovering Underlying Issues, Challenging Without Confrontation*
- Central to the programme is adopting a careful, open-listening and non-defensive approach where front-line staff aim to improve the quality of their relationships with residents



Evaluation of Training

- 450 structured telephone interviews; 2 focus groups
- 80% found training useful
- Two-thirds “always” use *active listening*

“I had a 20-minute conversation with a customer about his large fines....he started off angrily and ended up calm.....he actually felt listened to.”

- 56% “always” use *challenging without confrontation*

“It made me realise that I need to think before I open my gob.. I try and do this more.”

- 95% said it helps LBBB provide a better service



New Narrative

- *We understand that people in Barking and Dagenham work hard for their families. This should be a safer, fairer and cleaner place to live and work; a place where everyone can realise their potential and where local people get first-class local services.*
- *We know that this won't be easy to achieve. Some people feel let down and are worried about how fast the area is changing. We take those worries seriously.*
- *Through our actions we will earn the right to be trusted so that local people have confidence in us. People will really see a big difference.*
- *Only by working together, on a basis that is honest, fair and transparent, can we hope to deliver the place our community deserves.*

