



**A bitesize guide to**

# **BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS.**

**SOCIAL  
CHANGE**

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Corporation

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# INTRODUCTION.

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If you are trying to change behaviour or deliver positive change, understanding behavioural insights will help you on your journey. It should form part of your efforts to understand people and society. Everything we do as positive changemakers, should start with an understanding of human behaviour.

## Defining Behaviour

So 'what's this BS all about?' I hear you ask. Well, before we delve into the science part, let's take it back to basics and focus on behaviour itself.

## What actually is behaviour?

The following definition captures the key characteristics that make up a behaviour:

"Anything a person does in **response** to **internal or external** events. Actions may be **overt** (motor or verbal) and **directly measurable** or, **covert** (activities not viewable but involving voluntary muscles) and **indirectly measurable**; behaviours are **physical events** that occur **in the body** and are **controlled by the brain**"

(Davis et al., 2014<sup>1</sup>)

## What isn't it?

There is a need to distinguish the actual behaviour from influences on the behaviour (i.e., thoughts/ attitudes towards it) and outcomes that result from the behaviour.

## Influences

What might enable/prevent a person from engaging in the behaviour?

## Outcomes

What goal will the person achieve by engaging in the behaviour?

For example, losing body weight is not a behaviour, it is an outcome of engaging in the behaviour of increased physical activity and/or modifying your diet. Intentions to eat more healthily and exercise are also not behaviours but rather influences on the target behaviour.

<sup>1</sup> Rachel Davis, Rona Campbell, Zoe Hildon, Lorna Hobbs, Susan Michie. (2014). Theories of behaviour and behaviour change across the social and behavioural sciences: a scoping review. Health Psychology Review, vol. 9 (3), 323-344.

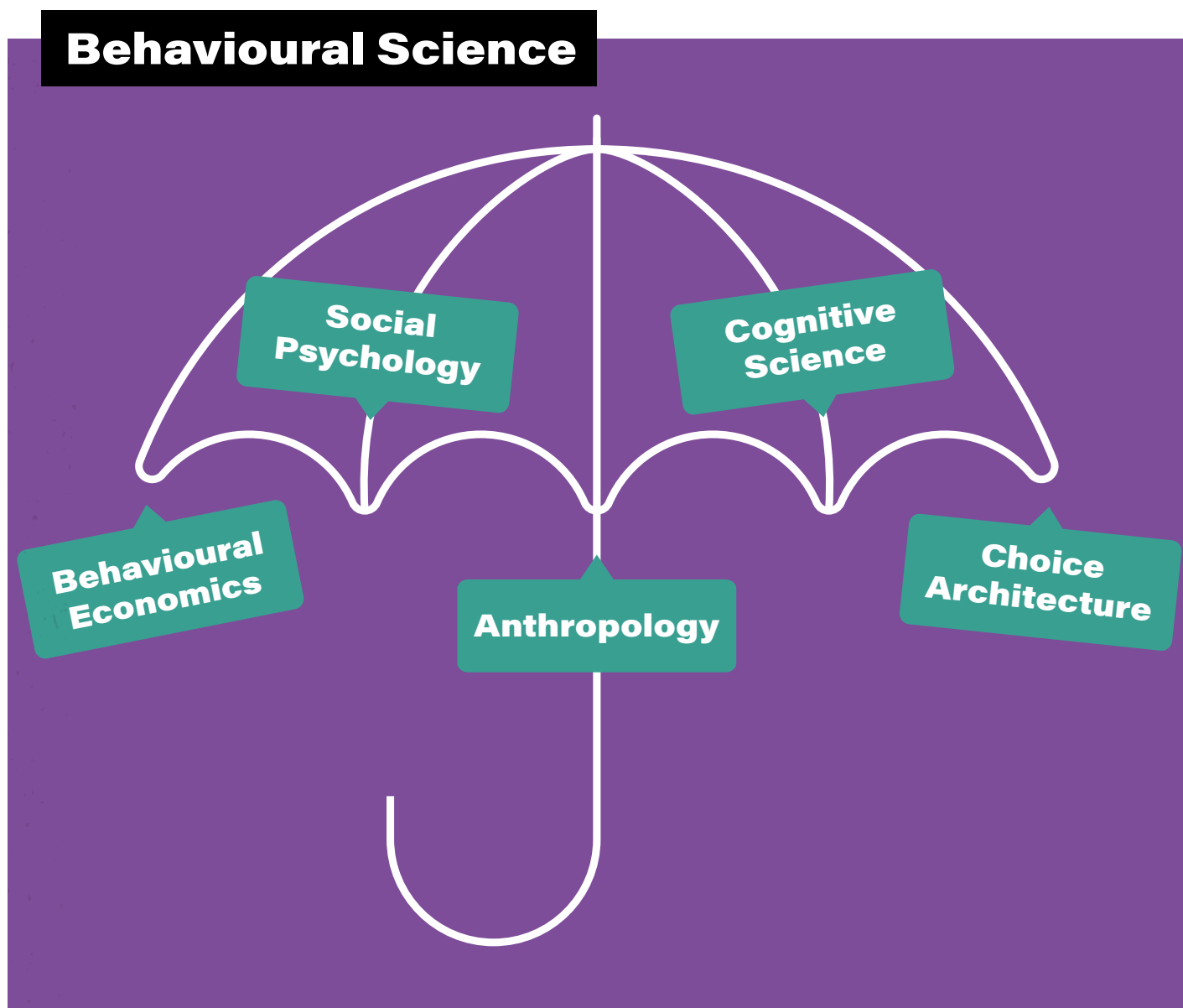
# BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE.



So, we now know what behaviour is, but what about behavioural science?

Put (very) simply, behavioural science is the study of human behaviour (makes sense, right?), but what does that really mean?

Well, behavioural science is actually an umbrella term for a number of integrated disciplines that collectively provide us with an understanding of how and why people do the things they do (behavioural insights).



# THE INTEGRATED DISCIPLINES OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE.

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## The Integrated Disciplines of Behavioural Science

Each of the following fields of study have, and continue to, contribute valuable insights that advance current understandings of human behaviour:

### Anthropology:

This is a fancy term for the study of what makes us human. It considers who are ancestors were (i.e., where we have come from) and how we have evolved. It explores not only our biological makeup, but also social factors, including language and culture.

### Behavioural Economics

Often used synonymously with the term 'behavioural science', behavioural economics explores how cognitive, cultural, emotional, and social factors impact on our decision making.

### Choice Architecture

This refers to the way in which the environment around us is designed and how the different ways in which options are presented to us can influence the choices we make, by 'nudging' us towards or away from a particular action.

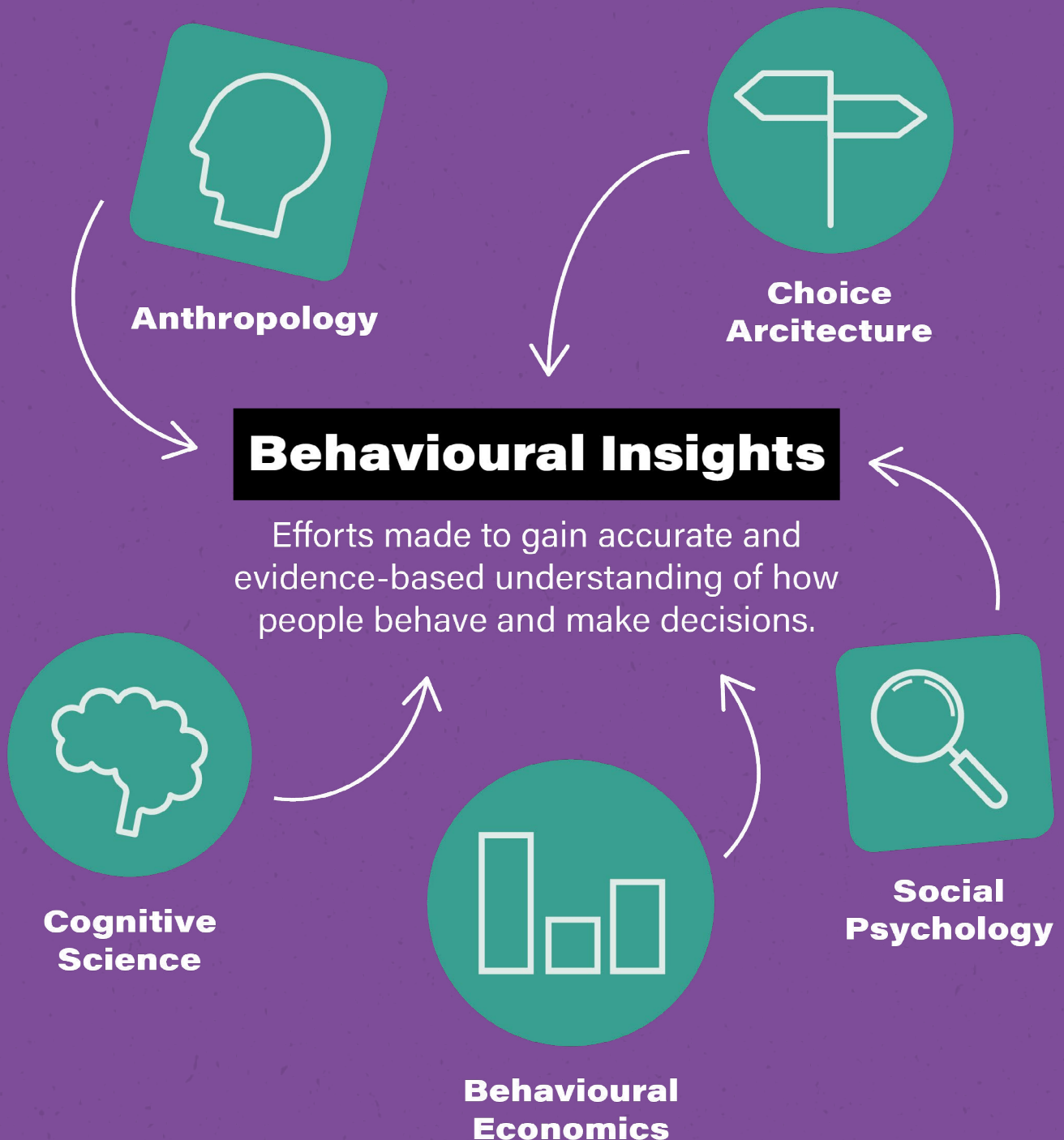
### Cognitive Science

Also known as 'cognitive psychology', this is the study of internal mental processes (e.g., attention, language, memory, perception, problem-solving, creativity, reasoning). Cognitive science tries to make sense of what goes on inside our busy minds. How humans 'see' and interpret the world. For example, how you recognise your favourite food by its aroma and the way it looks and how you recognise an orange by its round shape, citrus flavour, and its colour.

### Social Psychology

Social Psychology is the study of how and why individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by the presence of other people.

# Behavioural Science





# BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS.



## What does behavioural insights mean?

'Behavioural insights' is a term many use to describe an approach to policy making that combines insights from a range of disciplines including psychology, cognitive science, behavioural economics and social science. It is largely focused on discovering how and why humans make choices and decisions.

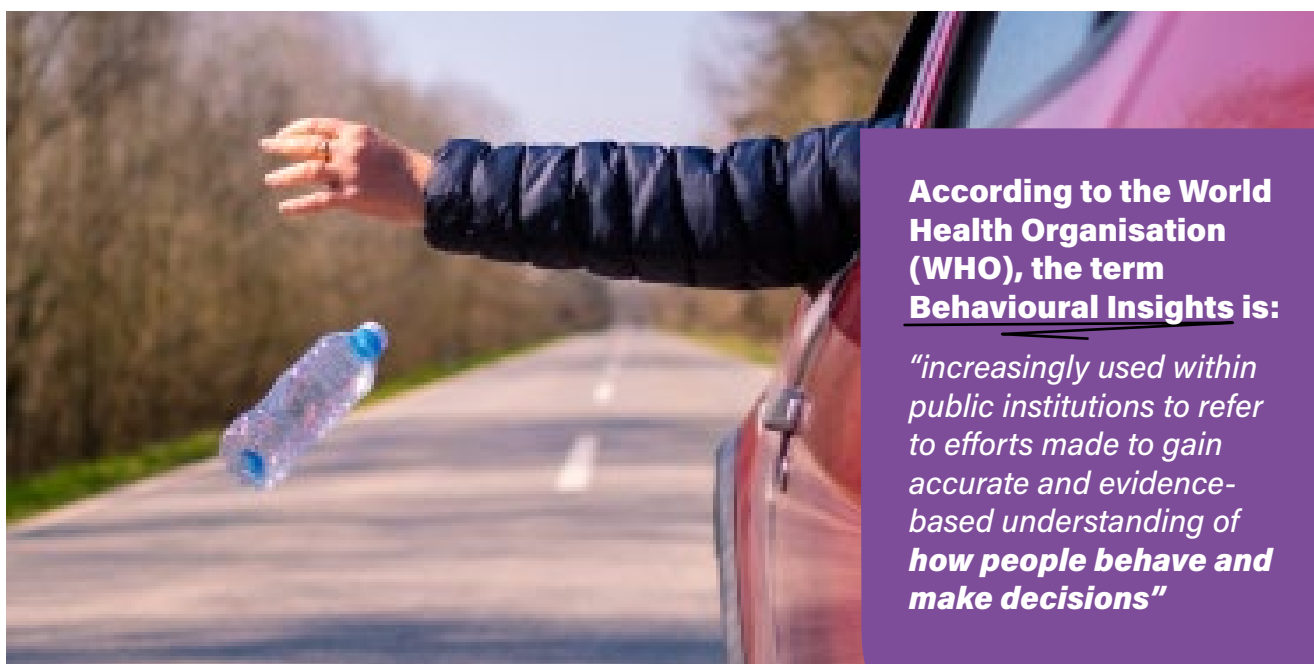
## Where do I start?

So many people across different disciplines are looking at human behaviour and attempting to answer the question: Why do we [people] do what we do? They are also asking the question: How do we get them to change? Especially when the behaviour is not seen as positive, for example fly tipping or throwing waste out of a car window. In health, a classic example is smoking. Why do some people still smoke and how do we support them to quit?

A lot of people feel that the answer to behaviour change lies within behavioural insights and academics, practitioners and experts across the disciplines have come together to agree some important insights we should all look to if we are attempting to change behaviour. These behavioural insights are increasingly being used – or tested – in our society.

## What insights should I start with?

To help us understand behavioural insights, a number of frameworks, acronyms and mnemonics have been created by the UK Government's Behavioural Insights Team (also known as the 'Nudge Unit'). We will explore these in the next few pages.



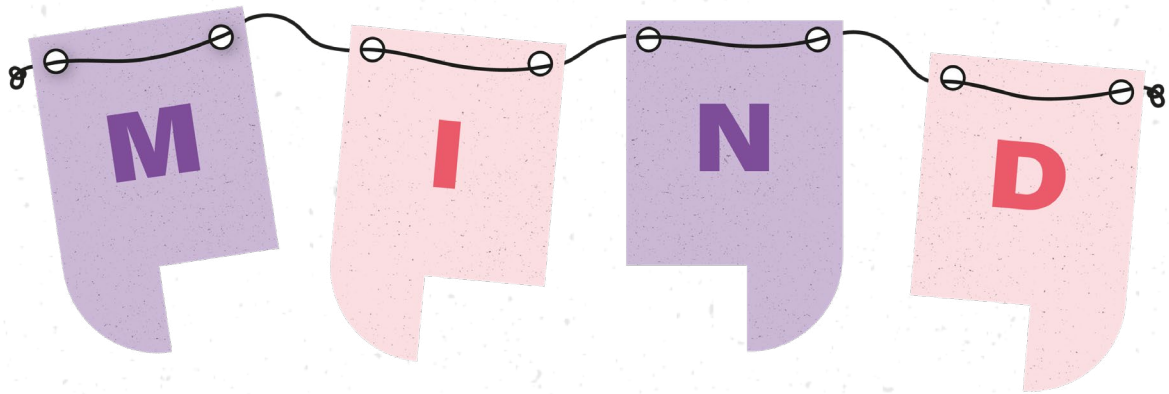
**According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the term Behavioural Insights is:**

*"increasingly used within public institutions to refer to efforts made to gain accurate and evidence-based understanding of **how people behave and make decisions**"*

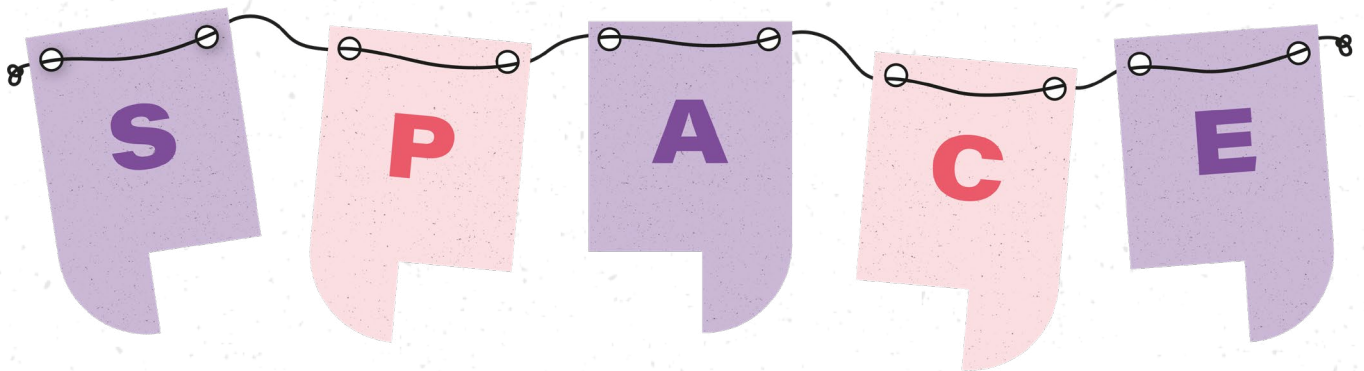
# MINDSPACE.

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The mnemonic 'MINDSPACE' was developed in 2010 by the Behavioural Insights Team (Institute for Government and Cabinet Office) to represent the nine most robust influences on human behaviour.



**Messenger . Incentive . Norms . Default**



**Salience . Priming . Affect . Commitment . Ego**

There are many articles, papers and examples of each in practice over the last decade. Many people have given consideration to one or more of these when deciding policy changes or moving people towards positive change.



Component	Description
<b>Messenger</b>	We are heavily influenced by who communicates information.
<b>Incentives</b>	Our response to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts such as strongly avoiding losses.
<b>Norms</b>	We are strongly influenced by what others do
<b>Defaults</b>	We 'go with the flow' of pre-set options
<b>Salience</b>	Our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us
<b>Priming</b>	Our acts often influenced by subconscious cues
<b>Affect</b>	Our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions
<b>Commitments</b>	We seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocate acts
<b>Ego</b>	We act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves and show us up in a good light..

[MINDSPACE, Institute for Government and Cabinet Office, 2010].

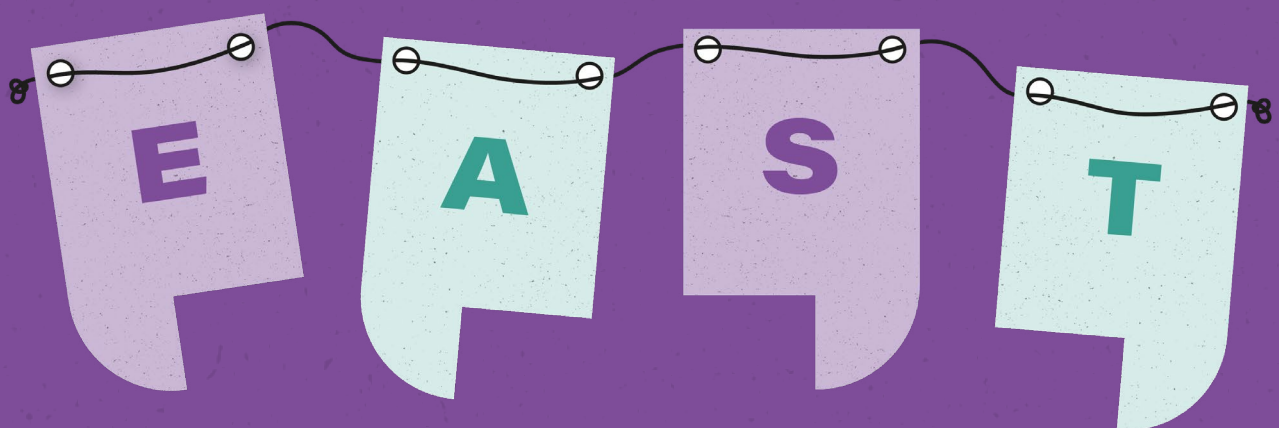
For an in-depth breakdown of MINDSPACE, check out our [mini guide to MINDSPACE](#).

# THE EAST PRINCIPLE.

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Four years after the Behavioural Insights Team was created in 2010, the EAST framework was developed to provide a shorter, simpler mnemonic that captures four key principles for encouraging a behaviour.

According to EAST, in order to incite behaviour change, the desired behaviour must be **Easy**, **Attractive**, **Social** and **Timely**.



**Easy . Attractive . Social . Timely**

# EASY

Make the behaviour easy to perform. The more complicated something is to undertake, the more resistant a person will be to engage in it. Clear concise communication about how to perform a behaviour can encourage uptake of a behaviour.

## **Related MINDSPACE component:**

### **Defaults**

Default choices reduce the time and effort required for decision-making e.g., getting a 'regular' sized drink at the coffee shop because that is the default pre-set option already decided for you.

# ATTRACTIVE

The more desirable the behaviour appears (i.e., more benefits and rewards that it is associated with) the more likely we are to perform it.

## **Related MINDSPACE component:**

### **Incentives**

Introducing incentives or sanctions for completion/avoidance of the behaviour can heavily influence action e.g., rewarding people with a shopping voucher for completing a survey.

# SOCIAL

People are more likely to engage in behaviours that are performed by others whose behaviour they seek to emulate.

## **Related MINDSPACE component:**

### **Norms**

If you can show people that the behaviour is commonly performed/the 'normal' behaviour for people like them, they are more likely to engage in the behaviour themselves. For example, someone might buy a branded item of clothing to fit in with a group who also wear a lot of branded clothes, as it is considered 'cool' and socially-acceptable in that group.

# TIMELY



People need to be prompted when they are most likely to be receptive to behaviour change, such as when their existing behaviours have already been disrupted in some way. For example, somebody who has smoked for many years may not be receptive to messaging that encourages them to stop until a major life event, such as a health scare or a pregnancy causes them to re-evaluate the costs and benefits of the behaviour.

## Related MINDSPACE component:

### Saliency

People are more likely to change their behaviour if its relevance to them (e.g., its impact on their health, lifestyle, financial situation) is made clear, and if engaging in the behaviour is presented as a favourable option. E.g., if you are trying to encourage people to use their car less and engage in active travel and you know that they are having financial difficulties and lead a very busy life, talking to them about the cost savings and potential time-savings they can make by travelling by other means.

For more on the EAST principle, check out our downloadable guide to [\*\*EAST: Applying Behavioural Insights in the Real World.\*\*](#)

# WHAT IS 'NUDGING'?



'Nudging,' or the term 'nudge' is a concept that first appeared in the 2008 book *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, coined by two American scholars at the University of Chicago: economist Richard Thaler and legal scholar Cass Sunstein.

A 'nudge' is essentially a means of encouraging or guiding behaviour but without telling or forcing people, and ideally without the need for big incentives, sanctions or changes in the law. Some governments prefer this approach as it is less 'nanny state' [a term used to describe a government or its policies as overprotective or interfering unduly with personal choice].



Nudge-type interventions are often described as approaches that steer people in certain directions while maintaining their freedom of choice.

## Approaches that steer people in certain directions while maintaining their freedom of choice.<sup>2</sup>

The nudge idea also recognises that many decisions – and ensuing behaviours – are automatic and not made consciously.

### Example nudges:

1. Confectionary and other snack items at the end of supermarket queues or tills
2. Sending people reminders about an upcoming appointment
3. Making organ donation or signing up to a workplace pension plan an opt-out default option (making people more likely to accept the default option than go to the effort of opting out).

## Automatic and not made consciously.<sup>3</sup>

When thinking about how to change behaviour, available evidence and insights tell us that there are many different ways we can try and change people's behaviour, as illustrated in the diagram on the next page: "From Stealth to Force". As you can see, 'nudging' behaviour is just one approach. It's important to note that one way is not always the best way, or the only way, and in some cases, a mix of these different approaches could work better to solve a problem.

<sup>2</sup> Sunstein, Cass R., *Do People Like Nudges?* (February 17, 2016).

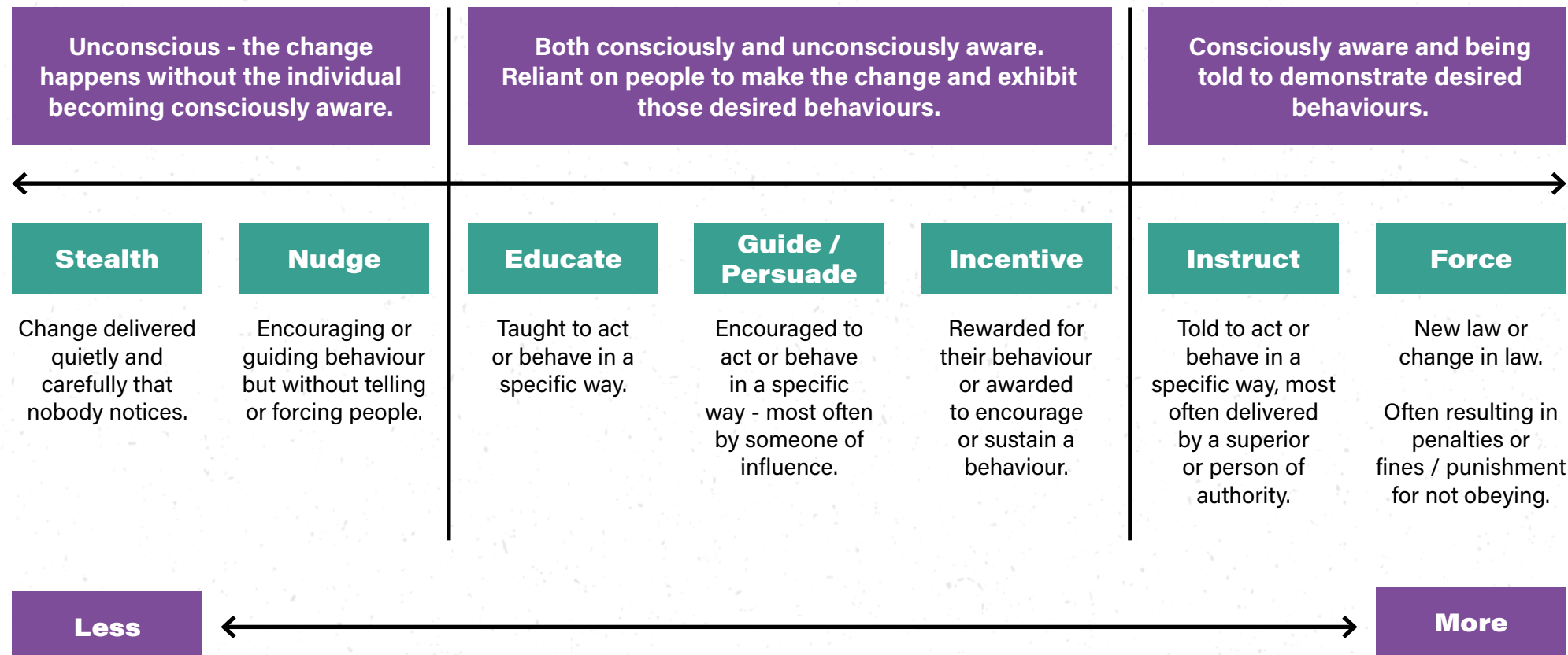
<sup>3</sup> Michie, S. *Behaviour change beyond nudge*, 2015.





## From Stealth to Force

The various ways we can try and change behaviour.



### Nanny state

A term to describe a government or its policies as overprotective or interfering unduly with personal choice.

# CONCLUSION.

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We recommend that you now look at a problem you have been trying to solve, or review a project you are working on that requires some behaviour change and try and apply a few of these insights. Start small, and by that we mean test and learn first before rolling out or 'upscaling' your potential solutions.

As practitioners, we have done a lot of testing, learning and adapting over the last decade and we continue to follow the best in the behavioural insights field. We have several 'testing' models and ways of working out 'what works' so please do get in touch with us if you need help.

## **I'm eager to learn more about behavioural insights...**

We're so pleased! This was produced as a simple guide for beginners. If you want to learn more you could explore some of the disciplines - like behavioural economics - we have introduced you to in this paper, or you could read up on each of the insights we have introduced you to briefly. Our simple guides are available on our website in our [Changemaker Academy](#).

Finally, if you haven't already, sign up to our newsletter on our [website](#). We share new behavioural insights, ideas and concepts every month. Behavioural Science is at the heart of all that we do and we are keen to share our knowledge and expertise with you.

**DON'T FORGET, IF YOU WANT  
TO CHANGE SOMETHING  
FOR THE BETTER, OR APPLY  
BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TO  
A REAL-WORLD PROBLEM,  
PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH  
OUR TEAM. WE ARE READY  
TO WORK WITH YOU. CHANGE  
STARTS HERE.**

**SOCIAL  
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