






TESTS

Using behavioural science to promote responsible recreation



Target		Choose a specific behaviour
Explore		Understand the context, barriers and enablers
Solution		Design a behaviourally-informed intervention
Trial		Test the effectiveness of your intervention
Scale		Increase adoption of effective interventions

This guide is for

“ Anyone working to promote responsible recreation behaviour.

Whether rangers collecting data in the field, or policy-makers interested in incorporating behavioural insights.

It gives you the tools you need to run your own project, drawing on behavioural science to influence the actions and decisions of recreationists. It uses the Behavioural Insights Team’s ‘TESTS’ methodology:

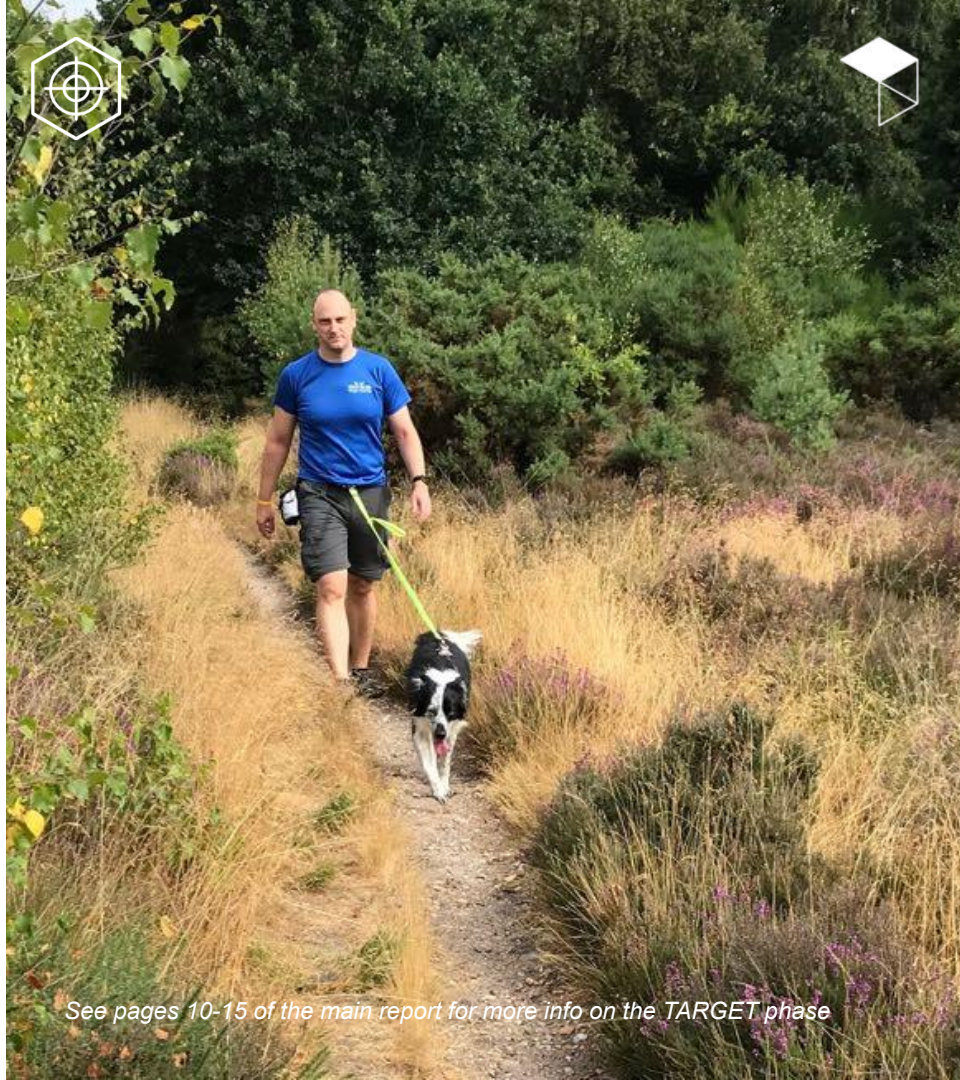
(Target, Explore, Solution, Trial, Scale) ”



Target



Aim	Choose a behaviour
By	Defining the problem and determining the measurable target outcomes
Question Checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> What is the specific behaviour you want to change?<input type="checkbox"/> Who is your specific target audience?<input type="checkbox"/> How will you measure behaviour change?



See pages 10-15 of the main report for more info on the TARGET phase



Target: In practice



1. Define the broader goal or problem.

E.g. Wildlife disturbance by recreationists

2. List the different actors involved - whose behaviour contributes to the problem, or the desired solution?

E.g. local visitors, occasional tourists, dog-walkers, rangers

3. List as many behaviours as you can for each actor. These can be behaviours you want to increase or decrease.

E.g. keep dogs 'under control'; visitors sticking to paths; bagging of dog fouling; littering; avoiding sensitive areas; signing up for wildlife initiatives; joining litter-picking walks

Tip - be specific, and try to focus on behaviours (actions) rather than attitudes, knowledge, engagement, etc. It's fine to include attitudinal and awareness outcomes if you have good, evidence-based reasons to believe that an increase in those outcomes will lead to behaviour-change. But bear in mind, they often do not, or only do so very weakly, if other barriers or conflicting motivations exist. It's therefore often better to target behaviours directly where you can.

4. Prioritise those behaviours on the **IMPACT** they have on your overall objective, and on the **FEASIBILITY** of changing and measuring that behaviour.

E.g. to what extent do our potential target behaviours contribute to or solve wildlife disturbance (IMPACT), and to what extent can we realistically change that behaviour with the tools available (FEASIBILITY).

Tip - be realistic. Many behaviours are ingrained routines or a consequence of strong habits or preferences. The Explore phase (next page) can help tell you how readily influenced a given behaviour is by highlighting the barriers that would need to be overcome.

5. Identify a source of data for measuring the behaviour. Ideally this will be an existing (reliable) source of administrative data, but you may need new data e.g. through surveys, or observation.

Tip - ideally we will measure the behaviour directly, but sometimes we will need to rely on a *proxy measure* (e.g. number of complaints about dog fouling may be a proxy for dog fouling), or an *intermediate* measure (something which is thought to be 'en-route' the the behaviour, e.g. the number of free dog waste bags being taken).

Explore



Aim

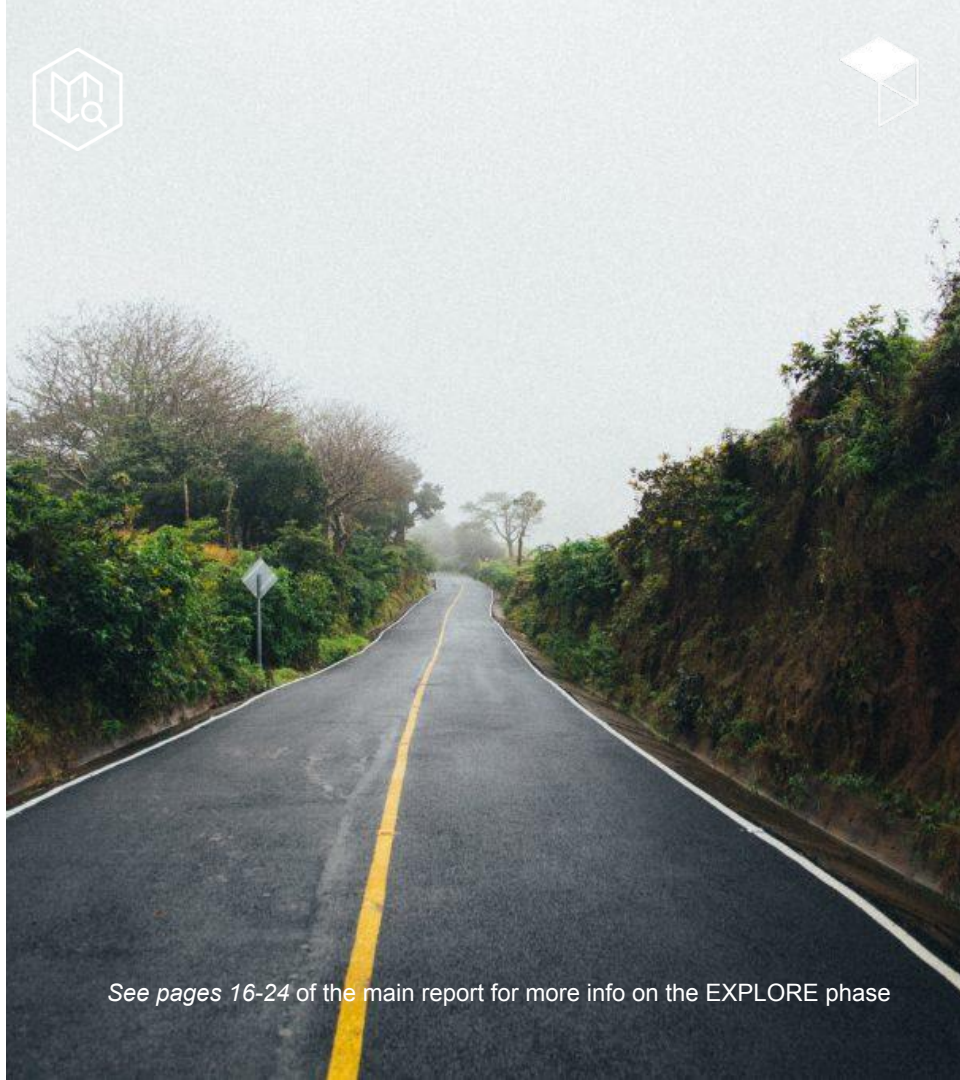
Understand the context

By

Mapping relevant behaviours and the wider context

Question Checklist

- What are the factors influencing the target behaviour? Think about the individual, social and material factors (ISM)?
- Does the target audience have the capability, opportunity and motivation required to change their behaviour (COM-B)?
- What are the touchpoints where you could intervene? (moments, locations, and influences)



See pages 16-24 of the main report for more info on the EXPLORE phase



Explore: In practice



There are many tools we can use to explore the barriers to behaviour-change, as well as identify the enablers, motivations and touchpoints we could harness.

1. Review the existing evidence - what has been tried? What worked and what did not? How strong is this evidence? What evidence is there from adjacent fields or issues?

2. Fill any important evidence gaps with primary research. Make sure to LEAD:

- **Listen** to people (interviews and focus groups)
- **Experience** the system (put yourself in their shoes; experience the process; observe the target audience in action)
- **Ask** questions (quantitative surveys and questionnaires)
- Explore the **Data** (what do trends and differences between subgroups tell us?)

Tip: Don't just explore the attitudes and conscious motivations of the target audience. It is also important to think about *nonconscious motivations* (e.g. cognitive biases, emotions, habits and routines), *social dimensions* (e.g. social norms, culture, identity, the importance of the right messenger, trust, etc.), and *material dimensions* (e.g. what does the layout/geography encourage or discourage, convenience and practicality, timeliness, costs).

It can be useful to organise these findings in a couple of ways:

3. Consider categorising the 'barriers to change' and 'enablers of change', within a 'COM-B model' to see if the problem is a lack of capability, lack of opportunity, or lack of motivation. This model emphasises the need for people to have the **C**apability, **O**pportunity, and **M**otivation to change a behaviour.

4. Consider mapping out each step the target audience must go through in order to comply with the desired behaviour, and the barriers at each stage. Any behaviour can be viewed as a 'process' or a visitor 'journey' (even a simple one, such as correctly disposing of dog waste). There are often more steps and complications than you realise!

For example:

- **What are the moments of decision or action?** (bringing dog bags; seeing that the dog has fouled; choosing to pick it up; being willing to carry it if a bin isn't nearby; finding a bin; knowing that any bin is acceptable;...)
- **What are the psychological and practical barriers** at each step? (refer back to point 3)
- **What are the points of contact or influence?** At which moments (within the above described journey and wider) can you intervene or influence the decision, or make the desired behaviour easier?

Solution

Aim	Design a behaviourally-informed intervention
By	Shortlisting ideas and considering and available resources
Question Checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> What is your intervention? (use the EAST framework for ideas)<input type="checkbox"/> What resources will you need?<input type="checkbox"/> Whose buy-in do you need in order to implement it?



See pages 25-34 of the main report for more info on the SOLUTION phase



Solution: In practice



Using the EAST framework, we consider interventions to change behaviour that make it **Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely**. **TIP: Consider feasibility** (of implementing the intervention) and **impact** (that the intervention will likely have on the target behaviour). Prioritise to choose one or a couple of interventions to test during the subsequent Trial phase.

Make it EASY: People often take the path of least resistance. You can therefore encourage desirable behaviours by:

- removing small frictions or hassles,
- defaulting people into the desirable choice, or
- redesigning the way choices are presented to make the desirable behaviours easier.

E.g. introduce paw print signs at key decision points to act as a cues indicating desirable path

Make it ATTRACTIVE: Humans are more likely to adopt a behaviour when it captures our attention or is in line with our motivation and beliefs. You can:

- draw attention with visual cues that are particularly relevant or noticeable
- leverage motivation by emphasising the positives, and
- use incentives, which can be 'behaviourally informed' (e.g. by using lottery designs which align with our cognitive biases)

E.g. make information appeal to dog-walkers with dog-friendly language and tips

Make it SOCIAL: Human behaviour is hugely influenced by what others around us are doing. You can promote desirable actions by:

- highlighting the fact that other people are adopting the desired behaviour (social norms).
- make behaviour more publicly visible, so that those complying benefit from social approval, and others feel more obliged
- and emphasise opportunities for people to help each other, or highlight what you've done for them (to evoke reciprocity)
- Harness the right messenger - someone who people identify with, trust, and perceive as a credible and legitimate authority

E.g. consider whether a different messenger would be best placed to deliver a message, for example a dog-walking club

Make it TIMELY: People are creatures of habit, so nudges are most effective at moments of change in people's lives. We also have a deep tendency to emphasise the present more than the future. You can therefore:

- time campaigns strategically during moments of changed routines or before habits are set
- highlighting the immediate benefits of sustainable actions
- help people plan ahead, or make future commitments

E.g. target information to new dog-owners or new residents to an area, to establish responsible recreation habits early

Trial

Aim	Test the effectiveness of your intervention
By	Designing and launching a trial; evaluating, learning and adapting
Question Checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> What behavioural outcome will you measure?<input type="checkbox"/> What is your comparison group ('counterfactual') to know whether your intervention had an impact?<input type="checkbox"/> What analysis method will you use?



See pages 35-45 of the main report for more info on the TRIAL phase



Trial: In practice



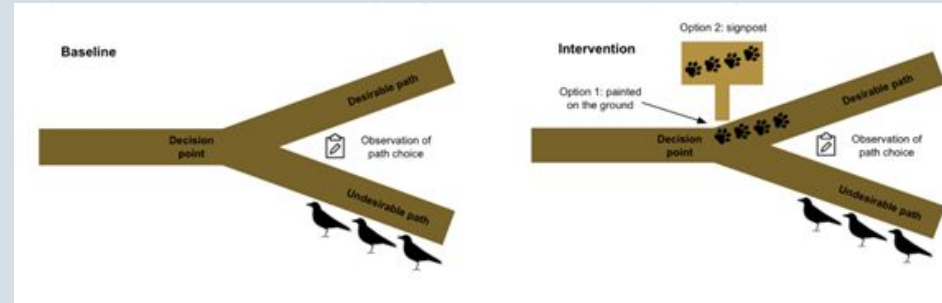
To gather evidence to find out whether an intervention is effective we aim to use randomised controlled trials (RCTs), where one group of people is randomly allocated to receive the intervention while the other does not, as this is the most rigorous method of impact evaluation.

E.g. We used materials originally designed by Bird Aware Solent and conducted an **online randomised controlled trial** (RCT) to test the effectiveness of behaviourally-informed messaging on dog-owners' comprehension of 'wildlife disturbance' and intentions to pick up a leaflet



There are several other methods we can use when an RCT is not possible, for example due to small sample sizes or an inability to allocate the intervention randomly. E.g, Quasi-experimental design, and pre-post evaluation.

E.g. new signage could be installed in one site but not another, and walkers' path choices could be compared between the two sites, quantifying pre-existing differences by first capturing baseline data. (this would be a simple 'difference in-differences' design)



TIP: You may also prioritise a 'process evaluation', which usually combines quantitative and qualitative insights to understand how your intervention was received by the target audience, and what mechanisms led to the impact.

Scale



Aim

Increase adoption of effective interventions

By

Reflecting and redesigning

Question Checklist

- What worked well?
- How could you improve your intervention?
- If your intervention was effective, what might you need to change to roll it out more widely?



See pages 46-48 of the main report for more info on the SCALE phase



Scale: In practice



Interpret your findings from the trial by asking what worked, and how strong is your evidence? Use the **‘SCALE’ checklist** to assess how your intervention might be implemented more widely and plan next steps:

Sponsorship: Do you have buy-in from both leaders and frontline practitioners who were not involved in the initial trial, and who may need persuading of the value?

Cost/benefit: Can the intervention be delivered at scale in a cost-effective way? If the intervention is a communication, the answer is probably yes. But if the cost of implementing the intervention at scale is higher than the benefit, consider whether narrowing down implementation to a sub-group where it is most effective or cheapest to implement will make the cost-benefit trade-off positive.

Accountability: Who will be responsible for implementing the intervention and do they have the necessary support? Are there clear levers and reporting structures?

Logistics: Will there have to be changes in delivery? For example, rangers may be able to hand out leaflets to a small number of people but this would not be feasible at scale. Can you make use of existing delivery channels, or create new ones? Can you codify the intervention for others to adopt, or develop best practice guides? Are you sure that the fidelity of the intervention will be retained once you’ve adapted it to be implementable at scale?

Evidence: Do you need further evidence before scaling up?

TIP: This is particularly relevant if:

- You are unsure whether the results will replicate for other locations or subgroups of the population
- You need to adjust the intervention, even slightly, to implement it at scale, and you are not sure whether it will be as effective;
- You think there may be a difference in how effective the intervention is if people receive it again and again.
- You think there is some evidence that your intervention worked but the effect size was too small to make a meaningful difference



TOP TIPS

FOR EFFECTIVE LEAFLETS

One key element of BIT's work with Natural England has been to improve the design of leaflets targeting dog-walkers with information about sensitive wildlife. Here we distil some of the key lessons learnt from this work, and from our similar past work on improving behaviour-change communications.

Further reading:

We previously created two sets of guidelines for TRAFFIC (the wildlife charity), on choosing the right messengers and crafting effective messages:

Messengers:

<http://www.changewildlifeconsumers.org/site/assets/files/1433/dr-good-practice-guidelines-messengers-vfinal.pdf>

Messages:

<https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/12124/dr-good-practice-guidelines-messages-final.pdf>



Make leaflets **EASY**

- 1. Simplify** messages and use **checklists** to increase comprehension and identify specific actions. *Tip: include key messages in headings.*
- 2. Make the desired action clear.** Break down vague and/ or complicated behaviours into straightforward, actionable steps.
- 3. Use rules of thumb** and **memorable phrasing** to increase recall and ease decision-making where there is uncertainty. *Tip: rhymes, humour, rules of three, and acronyms can boost recall.*
- 4. Suggest a viable alternative.** If the message is ‘don’t do...’, don’t expect people to work out their own solutions. Direct people to an appealing, easy, better alternative (e.g. a map showing a different spot to mountain bike or wild camp)

Keep your dog happy & safe

- Keep clear of roads
- Avoid sticky mud and sharp shells
- Check for ticks after your walk
- Play with toys and try new areas - take a look at our suggestions overleaf!

These wintering birds fly in from as far as the Arctic to feed on our shores



They can only eat when the tide is right - but a bird in flight can't eat at all

***We cannot eat when we fly,
Every time a dog runs by,
So on the path is where to stay,
or feeding birds will fly away***



Make leaflets **ATTRACTIVE**

5. Make information relevant to audience interests. The information you want to convey (e.g. about the threats to wildlife) might not be the information they want to read (e.g. where the nicest walks are). So include enough of the latter that they want to pick up and read the leaflet.

Tip: provide something useful to the audience, e.g. in this case beautiful walks for dog walkers, tips on free parking, etc.

6. Consider the positioning, and hierarchy of information. Messages at the top of a list have greatest recall, and some locations will draw greater attention than others (e.g. potentially the centre of a fold-out, or the left-hand section, if people read it from left to right). There's no one-size-fits all strategy here, so prototype it and test it – what grabs *your* attention when you pickup the leaflet? *Tip: put the most important message first.*

Are you a **nature lover** too?

Nature-loving dog walkers

- **Never let their dog close to birds or wildlife - even when they can fly away.**
- Keep their dog close to paths.
- Use a lead around livestock or when signs require it.
- Keep their dog in sight when it's off lead.
- Are considerate of other people who may not be comfortable around dogs.
- Bag and bin their dog's poo - in ANY public bin.





Make leaflets **ATTRACTIVE** (continued)

7. Use colour, contrast and images to attract attention, and bold or border key messages. We are overwhelmed by excessive information, so help people draw their attention to the important bits. *Tip: faces and eyes often attract our gaze. Don't let strict on-brand colour palettes detract from the effectiveness of the leaflet.*

8. Use narrative, and avoid overly negative messaging. Narratives and storytelling can soften messages that might cause reactance/dismissal if communicated too directly. Using an admonishing tone that invites guilt can also discourage engagement. Instead, invite engagement with positive messages, e.g. pride in a local area, and case studies of people benefiting from doing the right thing. *Tip: it can be fine to highlight the gravity of an environmental threat, but this is different to putting too much blame, guilt or helplessness onto the target readership themselves.*



Make leaflets **SOCIAL**

9. Harness positive social norms, as we tend to follow what others do - particularly those we perceive to be 'like us'. Simply telling people that 'most people... [do the right thing]', or using dynamic norms such as 'more and more people are....' can be effective. *Tip: avoid inadvertently normalising negative behaviours by advertising them.*

10. Appeal to social identities within your target audience. *Tip: consider local identities and those beyond self-perceived environmentalists.*

11. Boost engagement with competitions, and inviting actions on social media (e.g. posting a picture, sharing, or making a pledge). *Tip: consider how to harness networks and social media.*

90% of dog walkers we speak to are nature lovers.

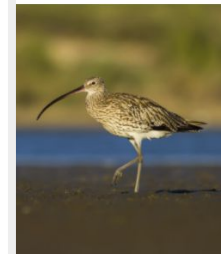
We are as well.

Please join us in protecting the wildlife we all love.

Are you a **nature lover** too?

Nature-loving dog walkers

- **Never let their dog close to birds or wildlife - even when they can fly away.**



Follow us on social media!
[@BirdAwareSolent](#)

Tell us what being a **#solentnaturelover** means to you, and how you help protect our precious wild spaces - and we'll enter you into our monthly **prize draw**





Make leaflets **TIMELY**

12. Target specific **delivery locations** and **audiences**. This means using prompts at the **moment of action or choice** (for example, the entry to the area may be a good time to remind people to keep dogs under control but be too late to discourage mountain biking in the area). **Communicate at moments when habits are momentarily disrupted or have not yet formed** (e.g. people who have just moved to the area, or are buying their first dog).

13. Use **implementation intentions** to help people plan. We are more likely to carry out a plan when we have written it down, or told someone about it, or made specific plans (how, when, what if...). *Tip: public pledges can be another way to help people stick with intentions.*

Explore new places

There are lots of great places to walk with your dog around the Solent. Here are some of our favourites - which will you try first?

1. **Royal Victoria Country Park**, SO31 5GA - dog washing facilities, toilets, café and parking
2. **Manor Farm Country Park**, SO31 1BH - toilets and paid parking
3. **Alver Valley Country Park**, PO13 8LU - toilets and parking
4. **Appley Park, Ryde**, IOW, PO33 1QX - toilets, parking and nearby cafes
5. **Fort Victoria Country Park**, IOW, PO41 0RR - toilets, free parking and café

My next walk will be on _____ (date)
and I will go to _____ (site)

Not many people will actually fill this in. But it still puts the thought in their minds. Not only does this list raise awareness of good places to visit (and makes it easy with searchable postcodes), but barely thinking about it, we may start to plan where and when we could visit one of these areas.

