



Public Health
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Department
of Health

NHS Health Check Conference – 1 March 2016

Dispelling myths and displaying costs: An RCT to determine the most effective NHS Health Check letter in Northamptonshire

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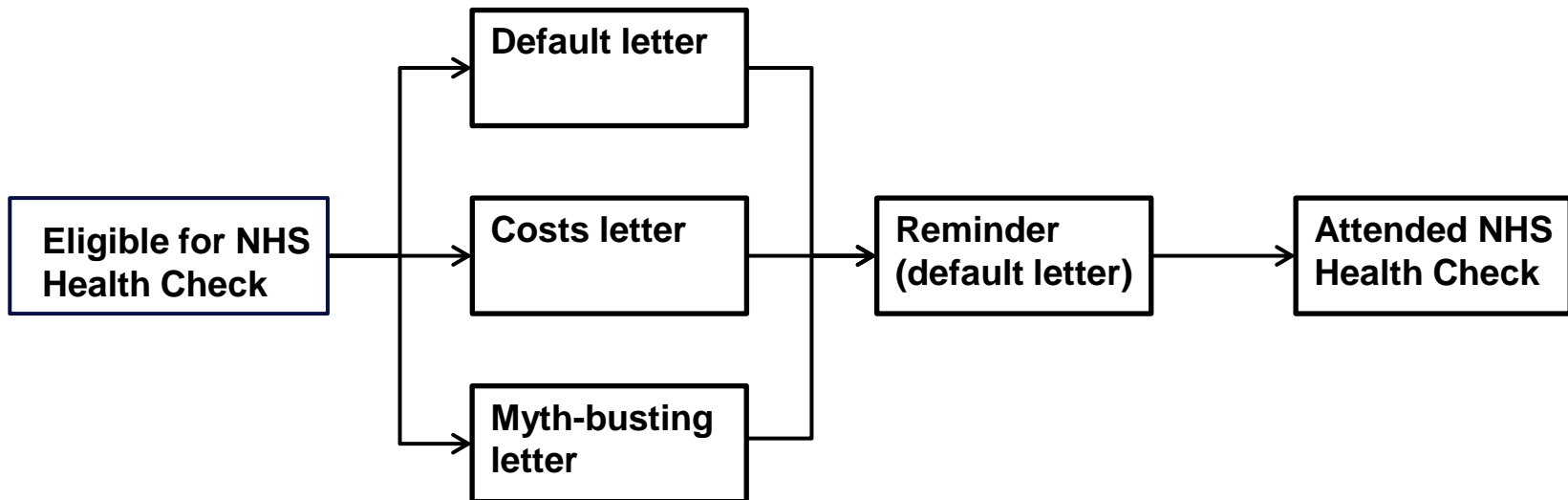
Making minor changes to the NHS Health Check invitation letter based on behavioural insights principles has the potential to increase uptake of the NHS Health Check without additional cost.





Randomised controlled trial

At the start of each month the trial participants eligible for the NHS Health Check were randomly assigned to receive one of three letters over a 12 month period.



N = 6,331



Randomised to receive one of three letters

A.

Original letter as control

Dear **Xxxx**

We are inviting you to attend your free NHS Health Check.

NHS Health Checks are being offered to people aged between 40 and 74 once every five years.

The check is to assess your risk of developing heart disease, stroke, kidney disease or diabetes. If there are any warning signs, then together we can do something about it.

By taking early action, you can improve your health and prevent the onset of these conditions. There is good evidence for this.

The check should take about 20-30 minutes and is based on straightforward questions and measurements such as age, sex, family history, height, weight and blood pressure. There will also be a simple blood test to measure your cholesterol level.

Following the check, you will receive free personalised advice about what you can do to stay healthy.

Take a look at the enclosed leaflet for more information about the NHS Health Check and how it could benefit you.

Please call the surgery to book your appointment on **XXXXXXXX**.

Yours sincerely

Dr **XXXX**

B.

Costs

Dear **X**

Your NHS Health Check is now due.

Phone us on **XXXXXXXXXX** to book your appointment.

The NHS Health Check is important. Your GP has already set aside funding to pay for your appointment. Please take the time to attend.

Take a look at the enclosed information about the NHS Health Check and how it would benefit you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr **XXXXXXXXXX**

C.

Myth busting

Dear **Xxxx**

Your NHS Health Check is now due. It is important that you attend.

Phone us on **XXXXXXXXXX** to book your appointment.

Yours sincerely,

Dr **XXXXXXXXXX**

Don't let excuses get in the way of protecting your health!

- Excuse: *I don't want to bother the NHS*
Your GP says: I want you to attend the NHS Health Check, as it can help prevent you developing more serious conditions which will take up more NHS resources.
- Excuse: *There's nothing I can do about my family history of illness.*
Your GP says: Family history plays only a small role. For example, most of the causes of heart attacks are related to how much you look after your body.



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Letter B: Costs

The NHS Health Check is important. Your GP has already set aside funding to pay for your appointment. Please take the time to attend.



**Behavioural Insight:
Loss Aversion**

Letter C: Myth Busting

Excuse: I don't want to bother the NHS

Your GP says: I want you to attend the NHS Health Check, as it can help prevent you developing more serious conditions which will take up more NHS resources

Excuse: There's nothing I can do about my family history of illness.

Your GP says: Family history plays only a small role. For example, most of the causes of heart attacks are related to how much you look after your body.

**Behavioural Insight:
Messenger Effect**



Conclusions

- Both the Costs and the Myth Busting letters increased the uptake of NHS Health Checks in Northamptonshire by 4-5%, a relative 12 – 15% for no additional cost
 - The Myth Busting Letter was marginally more effective at increasing uptake than the Costs letter in Northamptonshire
- The use of behaviourally informed messaging can increase the uptake of NHS HCs without any additional costs
- This messaging can be applied to the leaflets and inserts sent out alongside the National Template Invitation letter
 - However, always remember to evaluate changes you may make!



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Thank You

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