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.

Eligible for NHS Health Check

- Default letter
- Costs letter
- Myth-busting letter

Reminder (default letter) → Attended NHS Health Check

N = 6,331
Letter Design

Randomised to receive one of three letters

A. Original letter as control

[Image of letter]

B. Costs

[Image of letter]

C. Myth busting

[Image of letter]

Dear [Name],

Your NHS Health Check is due.

Promote on [xxxxxxx] to book your appointment.

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

Take a look at this simple information about the NHS Health Check and how it might benefit you.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

[Image of letter]

Dear [Name],

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

Please call [xxxxxxx] to book your appointment.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

[Image of letter]

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

- Book your appointment now.
- See your GP at least every two years.
- Take a look at this simple information about the NHS Health Check and how it might benefit you.

[Image of letter]
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
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.
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!
Authors & Acknowledgements

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Northamptonshire County Council
Thank You

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