

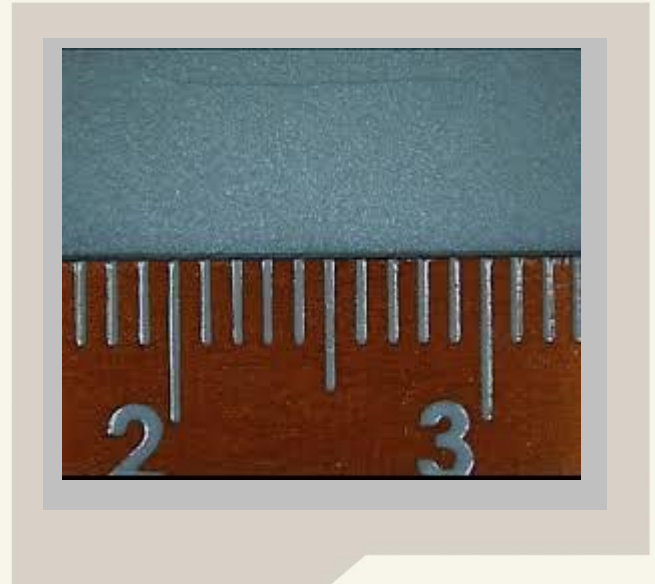
## NUDGE NUDGE, SAY NO MORE

You get to the station at 9.22. Do you go for the expensive peak train which leaves in five minutes or wait for the cheaper off peak leaving in twenty? The system of peak and off peak train fares is an obvious example of how train companies ease pressure from busier trains. They want to influence your behaviour – to nudge you towards choosing quieter trains and do so by rewarding you with cheaper fares.

Nudge theory is a concept in behavioural science and political theory which argues that positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions can influence the behaviour of individuals and groups alike.

### HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS

One element of nudge theory looks at how we make decisions and tells us that despite our desire to be seen as thoughtful and rationale beings who make considered decisions, most of the time we make decisions automatically.



This is supported by [a Max Planck 2008](#) experiment which suggested that we make decisions up to 7 seconds before we even become aware of them.

Other research suggests that we make decisions without realising it, then filter information selecting only that which supports our decision and eliminating information which conflicts with it.

## THE THEORY

Nudge theory posits there are two systems at work when making decisions: The automatic system which is fast, unconscious, able to think in parallel (meaning that it can do many things at the same time), and does it all for next to nothing in terms of energy consumption.

The reflective system is exactly the opposite. It is slow, can only take on one process at any time, analytic and requires a lot of effort. At first glance this might appear preferable but actually, it isn't. The reflective system is just too slow and requires too much effort to handle even a fraction of the decisions we are faced with every day. Fortunately the automatic system is brilliant in handling the thousands of problems, judgements and choices we are faced with every day.

Nudge theory understands that human behaviour can be influenced and manipulated relatively easily. Consider how supermarkets place more expensive brands at eye level or the use of BOGOF to get you to spend more money. Government too is using this to affect public behaviour and 'nudge' us towards more desirable behaviour.

*For more information:*

*READ: [Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness](#) written by Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein.*

*VISIT: The Government has set up a Behavioural Insights Team which considers practical application of nudge theory. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/behavioural-insights-team>*

*Are you one of the many people who pay tax to HMRC? If so you have probably received a letter telling you that those who do not pay their taxes are a minority in their local area – or that 9 out of 10 people pay their taxes on time. This is a nudge tactic used very successfully by the Government to increase the number of people paying their taxes on time.*

*It appears that social pressure has a greater impact than the threat of fines.*



## ADVOCACY & NUDGE

Advocacy services can use nudge theory to increase the social impact it has, influencing commissioners to increase budgets or services. It can encourage policy makers to include advocacy in local developments or government to increase who can access an advocate. It can even nudge professionals towards behaviours and decisions which support clients achieve their outcomes.

One way of nudging people is to use examples of people and services who are already doing what you want to do: raise awareness about good models of practice and frame them in a way which makes them the norm. Nobody wants to be seen as the last or only organisation not doing something.

## USING NUDGE IN PRACTICE

### Increased funding?:

Your service currently has a waiting list of approx. 3-4 weeks – you simply cannot keep up with demand. You have a meeting with your commissioner to discuss funding an additional 0.5 post.

*Find out how other services in your region deal with waiting lists – pick one you want to emulate and tell your commissioner about it. Use an example of another service successfully increasing the staff team.*

### New service?

You want to expand into residential home x which provides care for older people.

*Find out which of the home's competitors provide advocacy to its residents and write to home x about it. Emphasise how advocacy has helped their competitor.*

### Changes to practice?

You are a young person's advocate and are worried about the way statutory review meetings are ran.

*Find out how other IRO's involve young people in the running of the meeting and use this in training sessions.*

## QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

1. What do you think of 'nudge'?

2. Is it ethical to influence behaviour and decisions in this way?

3. What behaviours do you want to nudge the following groups towards:

- Commissioners
- Decision makers
- Other professionals
- Policy makers
- Clients

You are a manager of an advocacy service and are very confident in the standard of advocacy provided by your team. You want however to get better at how you measure outcomes and have introduced new paperwork to capture this data. Your staff team are resistant saying you can't measure advocacy or they haven't got the time.

How do you 'nudge' them towards gathering this data?

### CASE STUDY

You are an advocate working with a client who has epilepsy and mild learning disabilities. He is 38 and tells you he wants to be able to walk to the shops by himself. His carers are very reluctant and fearful of the risks in case he has a fit or gets lost.

How can you nudge them towards his outcome?

### CASE STUDY