

# Health Sector Experience

## Introduction

Explain started to work with the NHS North East Strategic Health Authority (NESHA) in 2007 and since then, has carried out a number of projects across its 12 Primary Care Trusts. Since 2009, Explain has been named an approved agency on the roster for NHS Yorkshire and has carried out a number of research projects within the Yorkshire region and in particular with NHS Hull. Explain is also working with the Kent and Medway Cancer Network and Humberside and Yorkshire Cancer Network on their Cancer Awareness Measurement surveys. Additionally, Explain is currently undertaking a research programme with Medway Council and the Public Health Team.

Many of the health sector projects are related to social marketing interventions including providing insight in the scoping and pre-test phases as well as evaluation. Explain has experience working with a range of audiences including patients, general public, practitioners, wider stakeholders and employees. Much of the research is extremely sensitive either in the nature of the subject or the audience engaged with. All research is in-line with the NHS report 'Involving Patients and Public Practice Guidance' (section 11 of the Social Care Act 2001).



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### **The 'Good Death Charter' Consultation**

Explain assisted NHS North East with the development and launch of a 'good death charter' within the North East. As a leader in this field, being the first SHA to develop such a charter, Explain's role was crucial in ensuring independent insight was given, and a fair representation of a variety of stakeholders, was presented to NHS North East in order to develop the charter in line with local wants and needs. This involved several strands of fieldwork across the region, including an 1,120 on-street survey, an online survey with 1500 responses, four focus groups, 49 in-depth face to face interviews and 23 semi-structured telephone interviews. One key question from the research being to determine 'What makes for a good death?' and as the North East is known to be the most reluctant region to consider and discuss death across the UK, the project itself encouraged openness about death and dying. As part of this project, Explain also carried out a highly sensitive qualitative exploration of the experiences of those dying and their carers. Research findings were presented in March 2010 at the National Dying Matters Conference in London and regionally at the Creating a Compassionate Community conference in Newcastle.

### **Influenza Vaccination Insight (Swine Flu)**

One of our most topical projects was carried out for North East Primary Care Organisations. Explain was commissioned to gather insight from front line staff within the NHS, with regards to seasonal influenza vaccinations prior to the licensing of the swine flu vaccination. The key objectives were to measure the awareness of the upcoming winter vaccinations; assess the current uptake of the seasonal influenza vaccine, explore also the reasons why the vaccination may have been refused; to measure intentions to be vaccinated against H1N1 swine flu; and to aid the North East PCOs in the development of key communicational messages to encourage frontline staff to be vaccinated this year. 100 semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out across the 12 PCTs in the region, and included a wide range of front line staff, e.g. GPs, dentists, midwives, nurses, paramedics, ambulance drivers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and those working in social services.

Also earlier this year, Explain was commissioned by NHS North East to evaluate its current influenza advertising materials with the public, determine vaccination rates across the region and investigate the understanding of the flu vaccines and priority groups. In order to meet the required objectives, 600 face to face on-street interviews were carried out with members of the general public across the 4 NHS management bodies; NHS North of Tyne, NHS South of Tyne, NHS County Durham and Darlington and NHS Tees.



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## Breastfeeding Stakeholder Consultation

Following the completion of the breastfeeding benchmarking project with Public Health North East, NHS North East approached Explain to assist in the next steps of its social marketing exercise. In order to provide a holistic perspective on what interventions would likely be successful in encouraging young mothers in particular to breastfeed, Explain has carried out 21 in-depth interviews with a range of professionals in this field. The overriding aim was to gain insight into what they perceive to be sustainable and worthwhile interventions, highlighting also areas for improvement in terms of information, training and resources, to support staff fully in the implementation changes to increase initiation and continuation rates.

## Northern Deanery

The Northern Deanery is the organisation which trains trainee doctors across the North East. In order to sustain and encourage recruitment into the Northern Deanery of trainee doctors, Explain carried out four strands of research with trainees themselves, and has consulted with Programme Directors and Heads of School in addition. A mixture of telephone interviews, face to face in-depths, and focus groups, provided the Deanery with a holistic understanding of decision making across the whole trainee journey. Part of our work with the Deanery has involved an evaluation of the promotional approach and recent marketing of the Northern Deanery as a preferred place to live and train. From the insight Explain provided, the Northern Deanery were able to revise its strategic approach and adapt its induction of new trainees into the Deanery, and ensure an effective relationship was established throughout the journey.

## Chlamydia Screening Programme Evaluation and Scoping Research

In December 2009, Explain completed four strands of research across six PCTs in the North East, with regards to Northumberland, Tyne and Wear's Chlamydia Screening Programme. In order to engage with young people aged 16 to 24 years, to ask highly sensitive questions about screening habits and sexual behaviour, the first strand of work consisted of an online survey. In addition to this, to reach 'non-testers' on-street fieldwork was conducted to evaluate awareness levels of NTCSPs branding (the 'Chlamydia Gremlin'), and identify young peoples preferences for communication and any barriers experienced to being screened for chlamydia. Providing then a holistic view and informing the development of service provision as well, in-depth interviews were also being carried out in two phases – with Contraceptive and Sexual Health Service Managers, Administrators and Health Advisors; and with GPs and Practice Nurses in primary care settings. As part of this project Explain presented findings to the Regional Chlamydia Steering Group, and an audience of mixed health professionals and councillors at Northumbria University as part of a Sexual Health In Partnership event. The project was concluded with a SMART stakeholder workshop whereby specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely objectives were set, following a strategic presentation of key findings from Explain.



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## Rowing machines

Explain were commissioned by NHS North East to carry out an evaluation of the 'Get Going, Get Rowing' programme that is currently being run in local schools. The programme has involved a number of rowing machines being installed in local schools, which students then use to compete against each other, as well as other schools in their area. Explain conducted 60 semi-structured interviews at the end of 2009 with children who use the machines, in order to find out what they think of the programme and how engaged they are. Explain will also carry out a further 60 interviews, allowing changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to the rowers, to be tracked. These interviews are to take place in May 2010.

## Communications for the Future

In order to inform the North East Strategic Health Authorities strategy for the next ten years, Explain was asked to carry out a research programme to understand how the general public in the region wanted to be communicated with now, and in the future. Eight focus groups, a series of BME interviews and a large scale on-street survey of 1281, were carried out across the region. Key points of interest were the ways in which the public expect and would like to be communicated with in regards to hospital appointments and reminders, and the ways in which results from such appointments should be disseminated. Findings as specific as this are invaluable to the development of any genuinely effective communications strategy, and from the insight Explain provided, NESHA has been able to not only contemplate what is currently in place and the short term changes required, but long term communication plans for patients in the future in order to meet their expectations and information needs.

## Public Polling

The purpose of this research project was to provide NESHA with information from the general public within the relevant catchment area, about their thoughts, issues, concerns and priorities regarding the NHS. A sample of 1200 telephone interviews were completed across the 12 Primary Care Trusts, looking overall to record satisfaction levels with particular aspects, such as the general state of hospital provision, ambulance response times, and the overall quality of medical treatment they had received. In addition, Explain made recommendations in terms of improvements that could be made to the service, to align provision with the public's expectations and requirements. This included, for example, the amount of choice patients have in choosing a GP, waiting time for routine appointments, and time spent waiting to be seen in A&E. Explain are currently conducting a similar project for NHS North of Tyne across three PCTs; Northumberland Care Trust, Newcastle PCT and North Tyneside PCT. A sample of 900 on-street interviews will be conducted with residents of the area to understand their perception of local health services in the area.



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## Primary Care and Community Services

NHS North East identified that in order to make a sustainable difference in primary care they must focus on effective communications, relationships and engagement with primary care providers. Explain were therefore commissioned to engage with primary care providers (i.e. GP surgeries, opticians, dentists, pharmacies) in order to assess their communication and engagement needs and preferences. A questionnaire was developed on paper and online, and was distributed widely across the North East. The results have now been fed back to NHS North East and will be used to inform communication strategies going forward.



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## NHS North of Tyne

### Emergency Care Public Consultation

Using three methodologies, Explain assisted NHS North of Tyne with its significant public consultation, providing independent assessment as a 'critical friend.' Through an online survey, telephone interviews, and attendance at public meetings, Explain invited and evaluated public response to the proposed plans for emergency care across Northumberland and North Tyneside. As part of this project Explain ensured two attendees were present at every public meeting, 24 in total, to take comprehensive notes of all questions posed by the public, and every individual response given by panel members. Explain was also responsible for ensuring a representative sample of the population was consulted, identifying gaps in response to the consultation and plugging them where necessary with focus groups for example. As the consultation has spanned as far north as Berwick, as far west as Haltwhistle, and as far south in the region as North Shields, Explain has mapped public opinion across a considerable geographic location, taking into account how this can in itself be an important factor when understanding individuals perceptions of health care and provision, i.e. an obvious distinction to make is between rural and urban views, and sensitivity to issues such as this, is crucial to contextualising findings.

### Unintended Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health

Explain completed a project with North Tyneside PCT, consulting with young men and women residing in the borough, to assess and understand their knowledge and use of sexual health services and contraception. Working closely with the local Teenage Pregnancy Steering Group, the research was carried out in three strands and consists of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. As this piece of work is considered 'sensitive' and involved the engagement of young people, the methodological approach and recruitment of respondents was carefully considered to reflect the Market Research Societies Code of Conduct. In brief, Explain carried out an online survey, 20 in-depth interviews with young people aged 16 to 17 years, and a qualitative consultation with young parents and parents-to-be as well, in the form of focus groups and in-depth interviews. From the findings Explain was able to evaluate services in North Tyneside from the perspective of service users, identify also gaps in the knowledge of young people with regards to contraception, and explore the key barriers to accessing integrated contraceptive and sexual health services in the area. Results were also being used to inform the development of an advertising campaign aiming to reduce the number of unintended teenage pregnancies, whilst balancing the messaging suggested by young people and parents, with the stigma attached to being a young mother or father.



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## Public Opinion Polling

Explain was commissioned by NHS North of Tyne to provide a baseline measure of public satisfaction and attitudes towards NHS services in the North of Tyne. 900 on-street interviews were conducted across 3 PCTs; Newcastle PCT, North Tyneside PCT and Northumberland Care Trust.

Specifically, the project provided North of Tyne NHS with a measure of public satisfaction and perception of services across NHS North of Tyne and highlights any areas for improvement. Results were presented back to the NHS North of Tyne team in April 2010.

## Strategy Review

NHS North of Tyne's strategic plan for the period 2008 to 2013 sparked this research project. Public involvement was explored through a series of focus groups across the region, and public views were gathered on the proposed plan and its 25 goals. The research determined whether the strategy meets the needs of the general public, and identified key priority areas and areas for improvement. For example, respondents were asked to evaluate the quality of medical care they had received and waiting times for GP and hospital appointments. Having fed back concise findings to the NHS North of Tyne, they were able to tailor the strategic plans for the next five years.

## Healthy Living Centres

There were four HLCs in North Tyneside, offering unlimited use of therapeutic exercise programmes through medical referrals from primary and secondary care, as well as to those on lower incomes. Unfortunately, as funding was no longer available to run HLCs, Explain was commissioned to work with NHS North of Tyne to establish how best to support visitors throughout the changes that were set to take place to the HLCs, in the acknowledgement that it was essential for patients to continue to exercise. As this process of change and closures is ongoing, so far Explain has carried out 20 in-depth telephone interviews with users of the Battle Hill HLC, and plans are in place to ensure users of the other three HLCs are engaged with at an appropriate time.



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## **NHS South of Tyne and Wear**

### **Alcohol Treatment Interventions**

Explain initially carried out six focus groups for the NHS South of Tyne and Wear, providing insight into the attitudes and behaviours of its targeted audience for an alcohol treatment interventions service. The findings from this project were then used to inform the development of a media campaign aimed to encourage heavy drinkers into intervention services. Explain has subsequently conducted a further three pre-testing focus groups to give creative guidance in selecting which version of the campaign is most likely to be effective with the target audience. There were clear findings from respondents about straplines, photography, and the overall design and messaging, and from this the campaign has been adapted and was launched in November 2009. Explain is currently undertaking the third phase of research for this project, evaluation. This involves a quantitative on-street survey with members of the general public to assess awareness of the campaign, and its impact in terms of attitudinal and behavioural changes which have followed its launch. To ensure the impact of the campaign is accurately measured, this is carried out in two stages – during the 'campaign peak', just after the launch completed in December 2009, and then several months later, expected to be later this year.

### **CVD Pathway**

Explain has worked with the NHS South of Tyne and Wear on a large scale project regarding the CVD pathway. This included public engagement through focus groups with the general public, to determine awareness of the risks and barriers to seeking guidance, as well as in-depth interviews with stakeholders such as GPs, Optometrists, and Pharmacists. From the findings of this first stage of research the 'Health Check Campaign' was developed, which Explain has recently pre-tested. This included a mixture of in-depth face to face interviews and a number of focus groups, with a range of respondents to ensure key stakeholders were consulted before finalisation. For example, Explain consulted with BME community leaders, Pharmacists, GPs, and members of the general public. The campaign is currently being revised, and is set to launch over the coming months.

### **NHS Guide Evaluation**

Explain was commissioned by NHS South of Tyne and Wear to evaluate a recent publication distributed to all residents in the South of Tyne and Wear area entitled – 'Your guide to local NHS services 2009/2010'. Distribution of the guide was staggered and in order to meet the required objectives, the research was carried out onstreet in two locations, where residents had most recently received the guide; South Tyneside and Gateshead. A sample of 400 interviews was conducted in December 2009 with residents of the area to measure awareness of the guide and highlight any improvements recommended for the future.



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### **Stroke and TIA Awareness Raising Research**

Explain assisted NHS South of Tyne and Wear with its social marketing exercise to understand the barriers for people who may suffer a TIA/stroke, to accessing appropriate care in a timely manner, and to understand how best to raise awareness of the TIA and stroke pathway. The overall aim of the research was to increase the number of people seeking help promptly, increase public knowledge of TIA and stroke services, and to encourage effective referral into the pathway. There were three strands to this social marketing research; face-to-face in-depth interviews with stroke sufferers and carers; in-depth interviews with a range of Practitioners across SOTW including GPs and emergency care staff; and seven focus groups with the general public.

### **Vascular Disease Awareness Campaign**

Working on behalf of NHS South of Tyne and Wear, Explain conducted four focus groups with a range of men from Sunderland, Gateshead and South Shields. The objective was to test the effectiveness of a health campaign, which aimed to motivate local people to move more, eat healthily and make positive lifestyle changes. This was developed in line with the national Change for Life strategy, and incorporated its branding as such. From our insight the local campaign was tweaked and tailored to ensure it would reach the target audience, and have the desired effect in terms of attitudinal and behaviour change of men in the region. Findings were also fed back to Change for Life in the form of a comprehensive written report which included full transcriptions so that respondent's literal comments could be viewed.

### **'Balance It'**

Explain has carried out a recruitment project involving respondents living in specific postcodes, within deprived areas of Gateshead, who were recruited into the SOTW NHS 'Balance It!' programme. Recruiters carried out door-to-door research, discussing sensitive issues surrounding weight and lifestyle with the public. Recruiters had to take details from respondents in order to record BMI (body mass index) and check eligibility for the programme. Issues faced during the recruitment included language barriers, un-occupied housing and sensitive health issues. Researchers were briefed and trained on their approach, ensuring they were fully equipped with the knowledge and expertise to undertake the recruitment exercise.



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## **Public Health North East**

### **Breastfeeding Benchmarking**

Working for Public Health North East (PHNE), Explain has conducted on-street quantitative research with mothers across the 12 PCTs in the region, to identify and understand the motivations underlying decisions surrounding breastfeeding. For example, Explain engaged with mothers who do and do not breastfeed, in order to determine what motivates this decision. A total of 1,319 interviews were carried out, and the findings are being fed into the Regional Breastfeeding Plan that PHNE are developing. The insight is also being used to help inform an effective communications strategy, in terms of the promotion needed to communicate the benefits of breastfeeding to a diverse array of mothers across the whole of the region.



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### **Illicit Tobacco Use Amongst Young People**

As part of a tobacco control strategy for Hull, NHS Hull commissioned Explain in February to carry out several strands of research with young people, specifically those aged 12 to 16 years old. Preparation for fieldwork is currently underway, which is set to involve four local schools and a mixture of methodological approaches. For instance, in-depth interviews are planned with professional stakeholders, as well as young people themselves, alongside a self-administered survey to be done in schools, and mini-groups with years 8 to 11. The focus of the research is smoking prevalence, tobacco use, and use of illicit tobacco, with the overriding aim of providing NHS Hull with an indication of what will make for effective interventions with this age group in the future. Fieldwork has started and results are scheduled to be given back in May.

### **Caring With Confidence**

Caring with Confidence is a programme funded by the Department of Health, aiming to provide carers across England aged 18 or over, with support in order to improve their health and wellbeing through a series of sessions. The programme is designed by carers, for carers, and aims to be as flexible as possible in order to encourage participation. Taking a proactive approach, NHS Hull commissioned Explain to carry out the scoping stage of an intervention, to explore uptake and perception of Caring with Confidence in Hull. A total of 28 in-depth interviews were carried out with carers, and Explain ensured that those of particular interest were included in the sample, e.g. parents caring for children with learning difficulties, those caring due to COPD, stroke, CVD, Alzheimer's and dementia. One of the key findings to come out of this insight was the way in which ones identification, or lack of, with the concept of 'carer', impacts heavily on what support networks are known of and accessed. As part of this project also involved an evaluation of the current marketing materials being used to promote Caring with Confidence, from Explain's feedback appropriate tweaks could be made to maximise appeal to the target audience, encouraging higher uptake.

### **Stroke/TIA and COPD: Local Evaluation and Scoping Research**

Explain has recently assisted NHS Hull with its social marketing exercise to understand awareness levels of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, stroke and TIA, and the barriers for sufferers in accessing the appropriate care in a timely manner. The overall aim of this project was to increase the number of people seeking help; increase public knowledge of COPD, TIA, stroke, risk factors and relevant services; and to encourage effective referral into the respective care pathways. In order to achieve a holistic understanding fieldwork was segmented into three strands; six focus groups with members of the general public; 27 semi-structured telephone interviews with front line staff in primary care settings; and extensive desk research which was carried out throughout, to provide NHS Hull with up to date insight on COPD, stroke and TIA regionally, nationally, and internationally.



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## **COPD Campaign Pre-Test**

Working on behalf of NHS Hull, Explain was commissioned to pre-test campaign materials developed by the British Lung Foundation, aimed at raising awareness of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, and encouraging those suffering the symptoms to seek a free lung test. The overriding objective of this project was to explore which version of the BLF campaign resonated most highly with residents in Hull, who were 'at risk' of COPD themselves. Taking a qualitative approach in the form of focus groups, Explain provided in-depth insight on what prompts and prevents behaviour change, what messaging, designs and methods of communication would work best for NHS Hull to reach its target audience. Findings were fed back, and the recommended combination of posters and leaflets were distributed and displayed around the city.



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## Other health related experience



### Tobacco Control Strategy

Working with Medway's Public Health Team, Explain were commissioned by Medway Council in February, to carry out a comprehensive and holistic programme of research, contributing to the development of its Tobacco Control Strategy and Alliance. Explain is currently preparing for fieldwork, which involves consultation with professional stakeholders, members of the general public who do and do not smoke, and young people aged 12 to 16 years old. As there are so many target audiences, and each element of research has its own objectives, a variety of methods are being used in this project. This includes an initial stakeholder workshop with key professionals in Medway to gauge from them what the priority areas are in Medway, and what key insights they require from the other strands of research; following this is the development of focus groups and a large on-street survey with members of the general public; and subsequently, researchers will be entering schools to carry out in-depth interviews and a self-administered survey with young people. Being such a large project, the findings from the fieldwork will then be tied together in a SMART stakeholder workshop, whereby specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely objectives will be set, getting the Tobacco Control Strategy and Alliance off to a flying start!



### Kent and Medway Cancer Network

Explain are currently working with Kent and Medway Cancer Network (KMCN), carrying out a cancer awareness survey within the area. The main objectives of the research are to better understand the level of public knowledge of cancer signs and symptoms and to help them plan interventions and campaigns to raise awareness of risk factors. In total, 3,300 on-street interviews are being conducted in the three PCT areas; NHS Medway, NHS West Kent and NHS East and Coastal Kent (1,100 per PCT area), using the cancer awareness measurement (CAM) tool. Quotas have been applied to ensure a representative mix of ages, socio-economic groupings (SEG's), genders and ethnic groups, in-line with PCT population statistics. The project will be presented in May 2010.



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## **Humber and Yorkshire Coast Cancer Network**

### **Humber and Yorkshire Cancer Network**

Explain has also been commissioned to conduct a cancer awareness survey across Yorkshire and Humberside, using the same cancer awareness measurement (CAM) tool. In total, 5,500 on-street interviews are being conducted in the five PCT areas; NHS Hull, NHS East Riding of Yorkshire and NHS North Lincolnshire, NHS North East Lincolnshire and NHS York and North Yorkshire (1,100 per PCT area). As with the KMCN research, quotas have been applied in-line with PCT population statistics. The project is to be completed in May 2010.



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