

# UNDERSTANDING AND CHANGING PUBLIC ATTITUDES:

A REVIEW OF EXISTING EVIDENCE  
FROM PUBLIC INFORMATION AND  
COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

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## AIMS OF THIS REPORT

**There is evidence of increasingly negative public attitudes towards asylum and immigration issues in the UK. This evidence can be found in ad hoc opinion polls, the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, European surveys - most notably Eurobarometer and the European Social Survey (ESS) - and international surveys, in particular the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) (Saggar and Drean 2001; Crawley 2005). These attitudes are reflected in, and reinforced by, negative media coverage and the successful campaigning of the anti-immigration lobby.**

Increased concern about rising levels of hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees has been met by efforts on the part of policy makers, practitioners and advocates to better understand the factors underlying attitude formation in relation to asylum and, in turn, increase public understanding of issues relating to forced migration and positively influence attitudes (Valentine and McDonald 2004; Lewis 2005; Coe et al 2005).

The aim of this report is to assist those working in the refugee sector (and beyond) to better understand the dynamics of the current situation. In turn it aims to ensure that resources are directed towards those activities which are likely to be most effective in positively affecting attitudes towards asylum issues given what is already known, while assuming that broader contextual factors (for example, the level of asylum applications and the government's policies and discourse) remain largely consistent with the current situation.

This report draws on desk-based research and analysis undertaken in October 2008 to provide an overview of the learning which already exists in relation to other groups about which the public holds negative or prejudicial views. The report also explores whether there are aspects that are particular to the issue of asylum which might influence the effectiveness or otherwise of deliberative efforts to change attitudes in this area. For example, there is a view, widely held by some socio-economic groups, that

asylum seekers are not entitled to, or deserving of, our support and/or tolerance because they are not UK citizens. This may have particular implications both for the types of 'messages' that campaigns deliver and indeed, the success or otherwise, of such campaigns.

Moreover there is some evidence that attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees may actually be a reflection of broader concerns (at the local, regional or national level) about the changing ethnic and cultural composition of societies, together with broader processes of social and community change and the ability (or otherwise) of government to deliver services (particularly social housing, healthcare and education). If, as this evidence suggests, asylum is effectively a 'touchstone' issue, then this may have significant implications for the extent to which 'single issue' messages or campaigns around asylum and/or the rights and needs of asylum seekers are able to affect attitudinal change.

## WHY DO ATTITUDES MATTER?

The research underpinning this report has been driven by an understanding that attitudes matter.

On the one hand attitudes matter because they may translate into actions and behaviours that negatively impact on the individuals and groups in society about which such attitudes are held. For individual asylum seekers and refugees and their families this can undermine feelings of safety and security and may have long-term implications for the process of integration. It is clearly more difficult to integrate into a society that does not accept the presence of, or is hostile towards, foreigners; conversely, integration becomes easier if the receiving society is more tolerant.

In addition, it seems reasonable to assume that negative attitudes towards asylum may also be directed towards those who are assumed to be asylum seekers and refugees, most typically by virtue of their race or nationality. This is exacerbated by the tendency of the media and public alike to conflate different categories of migrant. There are concerns, for example, that negative - and often legitimated - public discourses and debates around asylum and migration may 'spill over' into society more generally, and translate into hostile or prejudicial attitudes towards other groups of migrants and towards ethnic minority groups at a broader community level (Lewis 2005).

But there is a further reason why attitudes matter.

Attitude and opinion surveys make a substantial contribution to the formation of political ideas and to policy-making, and this contribution is likely to grow stronger in the future. Many studies of political behaviour include an attitudinal component and government departments increasingly commission studies of attitudes and opinion in relation to particular policy issues. Politicians and those who wish to influence policy-makers make substantial use of such surveys and are increasingly concerned to shape their policy stance in accordance with actual or perceived public preferences.

Perceptions and policy areas influence each other in both positive and negative ways (Beutin et al. 2006). Where opinion surveys report negative attitudes towards asylum seekers and other migrants, policy makers and politicians may be drawn into introducing policies which demonstrate that negative attitudes and public hostility are being taken into account. In this way negative public attitudes (as reflected in opinion polls and survey) may influence the content and direction of government policies in this area and effectively lead to a 'ratcheting up' of hostility at all levels of the political and policy spectrum.

In other words, stereotypes and negative perceptions can become 'institutionalised' in policies and practices targeted at addressing public concern. The result of these practices is a vicious circle of exclusion, marginalisation and further discrimination leading to stigma, which exacerbates negative attitudes and produces further discrimination. This vicious circle can only be reversed if steps are taken to remove discriminatory practices and to challenge negative public attitudes and perceptions.

## WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ATTITUDES TO ASYLUM?

In order to target appropriately initiatives aimed at changing attitudes, it is important to have a good understanding of the factors that influence attitude formation in this area.

It should be noted at the outset that very little is known specifically about attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees. Most of the existing evidence relates to immigration and immigrants more generally and/or to wider issues of race and ethnic minority formation. Most opinion polls do not offer definitions for the terms they use and interpretation of the word 'immigrant' is particularly liable to change (McLaren and Johnson 2004). The terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' have very different meanings and connotations yet are often used interchangeably.

Nonetheless over recent years a plethora of additional ad hoc opinion polls on attitudes to asylum and immigration have been undertaken by a range of market research companies and commissioned by organisations or newspapers with an interest in this issue. Common majority sentiments identified in surveys are that 'there are too many in Britain', that 'they get too much help' and that 'migration is out of control' (Saggar and Dreaan 2001). MORI surveys of the British public show a major increase in those who see immigration as the most important issue facing the UK (Crawley 2005).

The tendency towards negative attitudes highlighted in opinion polls is reflected in the findings of

the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey. In 1995, around two-thirds of the population thought the number of immigrants should be reduced. By 2003 this had jumped to three-quarters. Perhaps more importantly, there is evidence that "where there was previously some degree of ambivalence there now seems to be more conviction, and the conviction is overwhelmingly against immigration" (McLaren and Johnson 2004: 172). Negative attitudes towards immigration can also be seen at the European level, although public perceptions are not uniform across all countries (European Commission 2003; EUMC 2005; Beutin et al. 2006).

It is important to note that although the evidence base in relation to public attitudes towards asylum and immigration issues is often presented as if it were conclusive and clear, this is in fact not the case. There are a number of difficulties associated with the evidence base. Key issues include the definitions that are used and respondents' understanding of these, the different responses that can be elicited as a result of the questions that are asked, and the conclusions that are then extrapolated from this evidence.

An almost universal difficulty with opinion polls and surveys is that they assume a level of knowledge about the definitions and terms that are used. There is evidence from research that the British public appears to have little understanding of the differences between ethnic minorities, immigrants and asylum seekers

(Saggar and Dreaan 2001). Yet an ability to distinguish between groups is important for surveys that focus on specific types of immigration or different groups of immigrants. Failure to make this distinction means that negative or positive attitudes about one type or group may be extrapolated across other types or groups in ways that do little to enhance our understanding.

Moreover whilst many of the surveys and opinion polls provide a description of the difference in attitudes between various groups of the public and from diverse areas of the UK and EU, they provide us with a limited understanding of the factors that underlie these differences in attitude. Attitudes towards asylum and immigration are measured and described in relatively simplistic ways. This is despite what is known about the complexities of attitude formation and processes of attitudinal change.

The reality is that many factors are known to influence public attitudes towards a whole range of issues, including asylum and immigration. These factors are demographic (e.g. age, sex, race), economic (e.g. income), social and cultural (e.g. religion, media, information sources, actual and perceived social norms, ethnicity, lifestyle), psychological (e.g. personality type), political (e.g. left-wing/right-wing ideologies) and geographical (e.g. location, proximity to immigrants). The evidence in relation to the role of these factors is often contradictory. For example:

- **There is some evidence that women are likely to hold more positive attitudes towards immigration and ethnic minorities than men, but this is not consistently demonstrated by all opinion polls or in other research studies;**
- **Whilst research has generally found that the old are likely to be more anti-immigrant than the young, some surveys suggest that young people aged 15 to 18 appear to be more negative than the population as a whole;**
- **Although those with cultural and ethnic ties to immigrants might be expected to promote pro-immigrant attitudes and support more open immigration policies, the fact that ethnic minority respondents are more likely to be economically marginalised can lead to negative attitudes towards new immigrants who are perceived as a threat;**
- **Surveys and in-depth research shows a correlation between higher levels of education and more positive attitudes towards immigration, but there is evidence from the UK that even those with high levels of educational attainment and corresponding income are increasingly hostile;**
- **Whilst there is considerable evidence that economic self-interest plays an important role in attitude formation among those who believe that immigration lowers wages, takes jobs away, disproportionately hurts the poor, and/or puts public expenditures under pressure, some research has found that there is no clear correlation between attitudes and labour market position or income.**

It is also important to understand that correlation and causality are not the same thing. The fact that some characteristics are associated (correlated) with particular attitudes does not necessarily mean that these characteristics are the primary cause of these attitudes.

Indeed it is possible that attitudes towards asylum have nothing to do with its actual impact on society. The impact may be *perceived* rather than real and may not correlate in any meaningful way with an individual's situation or characteristics. Hernes and Knudsen (1992) suggest that it is the combination of these individual factors and a number of subjective factors including the perceived fairness (or otherwise) of government policies – not just in relation to asylum issues but more generally – alongside actual or perceived *relative deprivation* which influences attitudes towards immigrants.

The concept of relative deprivation is very important. The main idea

is that the attitudes of individuals represent a relationship between their expectations and their achievement relative to others in the same position as themselves.

The concept of relative deprivation may be the key to understanding attitudes towards ethnic or other 'outside' groups including asylum seekers and immigrants because it exists regardless of actual economic impacts and results primarily from a perception of discrepancy between the conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled and those they believe that others are rightfully entitled to (Fetzer 2000). Thus, when others receive something they do not deserve or are perceived not to deserve – for example, they obtain certain benefits without working for them, or are given a status which they are not considered to be worthy of – people react negatively.

## DO OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCE ATTITUDES TO ASYLUM?

As with all areas of life, the factors influencing attitudes towards asylum and immigration are complex and inter-connected. One of the difficulties in unpicking attitudes to any issue is that these often reflect an individual's broader 'world view'. This 'world view' develops over time and is based on a whole range of factors in addition to those which are immediate or obvious. It is unusual for example, for an individual to feel positive or negative about asylum but conversely about other related issues. Much more common is the existence of an overall set of beliefs and values which, whilst influenced by levels of knowledge, the policy and political context and personal experience, remains largely constant and consistent.

Although under-researched, there is a growing body of evidence that explores the role of values and ideology in shaping attitudes to asylum and immigration. Some of these studies do this by comparing attitudes towards immigration not only in different communities within a country or across different countries but also within a country over time (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Kessler and Freeman 2005; Wilkes et al. 2008).

In addition it seems highly likely that attitudes towards asylum are shaped, at least in part, by local lived experience.

There is evidence that regional and local differences in the ethnic minority proportion of the population are strongly correlated with attitudes towards immigration (Stonewall 2003;

Valentine and McDonald 2004). People who live in areas which are more ethnically diverse and have a longer history of migration are generally more tolerant than those living in areas which are less diverse or for whom the arrival of asylum seekers and immigrants is a much more recent phenomenon (Hollands 2001; Finney and Peach 2004). This is generally considered to reflect the extent to which individuals have contact with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and for whom this personal experience acts as a counter to other information sources which would otherwise be an important contributory factor to attitude formation (Fetzer 2000; Stonewall 2003; Valentine and McDonald 2004).

Just as important as individual experiences of social contact are the social networks that connect communities together. There is substantial research evidence that, at a societal level, social networks play an important role in attitude formation and change (Zitek and Hebl 2007). This is because they create social norms within which individual cognitive processes take place. These social networks partly shape attitude formation because they provide the context within which individuals process messages about asylum and immigration. These networks then effectively serve to reinforce or undermine the attitude formation. There is also evidence that the presence of attitudinal diversity within a person's social network increases his or her openness to attitude change (Levitan and Clarke 2008).

Finally, it is worth noting the importance of the national and international political context within which attitudes towards asylum are formed and develop.

In the period since 1997, asylum and migration issues have been the subject of extensive political and policy debate in the UK. Indeed these issues have rarely been out of the headlines. In many respects this is nothing new and reflects a history of politics around asylum and migration that goes back at least as far as the immediate post-war period. Strict immigration controls have been widely viewed at both ends of the political spectrum as an essential pre-requisite for successful race relations policies for integrating Britain's own minorities (Spencer 1998; Statham 2002; Schuster and Solomos 2004).

Nonetheless it is clear that over the past decade the nature of the political and policy debate relating to asylum has changed. In particular, there has been constructed a discourse of 'managed migration' which is generally positive towards migrants arriving for economic reasons (particularly those who are highly skilled) but negative towards other groups of migrants, most notably asylum seekers and those who enter the UK illegally (Spencer 1998; Flynn 2003; Schuster and Solomos 2004).

Although there is insufficient space in this report to discuss the complex processes by which political discourse influences the formation of attitudes in relation to asylum and immigration,

it seems likely that political discourse has negatively affected attitudes towards asylum issues. In particular there appears to be a relationship between negative media coverage of asylum and immigration issues and an increase in government statements and proclamations on the subject, many of which have been negative in tone and content (McLaren and Johnson 2004).

These concerns can only be understood in the context of much broader and more general concerns about the implications of globalisation (for both economies and societies) and about security issues more generally.

As Beutin et al. (2006) suggest, European citizens are living through times of strongly perceived threats and insecurity. Fears include fear of unemployment and feelings of insecurity in a world of numerous and often ill-defined 'enemies'. There is a growing distrust of public authorities and the political establishment. This general perception of threat influences anti-immigration sentiments, bringing reactions of distancing or even hostility towards asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants. Against a background of felt insecurity, the public presentation of immigrants and migratory phenomena by the media and by politicians is often biased or negative, linking them often almost exclusively to security issues.

To a potentially very significant extent then, negative and hostile

attitudes towards asylum seem likely to reflect, at least in part, popular feelings of insecurity in which the outside world is perceived as a threat. To this extent, asylum may perhaps best be understood as a 'touchstone' issue which symbolises a range of much broader attitudes and concerns. This clearly has implications for campaigns to generate positive attitudinal change.

## WHAT IS A 'CAMPAIGN'?

Before considering their effectiveness or otherwise, it is useful to be clear about what exactly is meant by the term 'campaign'.

This is easier said than done because efforts to communicate information are not always called 'campaigns'. They can also be labelled programmes, projects or initiatives. In addition, campaigns do not have to be stand-alone entities, nor do they have to be highly formal efforts. In fact, very few campaigns stand alone. They are often part of an organised set of activities embedded within, or complementary to, a larger set of work plans designed to achieve a particular end.

Rice and Atkin (2001) define campaigns as purposive attempts to inform, persuade or motivate behavioural changes in a relatively well-defined and large audience, generally for non-commercial benefits to the individual and/or society at large. Campaigns typically take place within a given time period using organised communication activities involving mass media.

According to this definition, public campaigns are efforts to shape behaviour toward desirable social outcomes. These behaviours might include eating better, drinking less, recycling, and breastfeeding, reading to our children, voting, or volunteering. The outcomes of these behavioural changes – the campaigns' ultimate goals – may include healthier individuals, families, and communities or specific policy results that lead to better outcomes for the groups whom the campaign is targeting

and for society more generally. All campaigns are different and use different interventions. The common thread running through them is that they are trying to influence what people think, think about, and ultimately do.

Many campaigns appear to be very similar in that they use the same general techniques to promote their message. The distinguishing factor rests in what exactly it is the campaign is trying to accomplish – in other words, its purpose and objective. One of the most important aspects of any campaign is to be clear about what the campaign's core purpose is and what it is trying to achieve.

*Individual behaviour change campaigns*, also often called public information or public education campaigns, strive to change the individual behaviours that lead to social problems, or to encourage behaviours that will improve individual or social well-being. Many, if not most, individual behaviour change campaigns use a social marketing approach.

Many examples of behaviour change campaigns come from the public health arena but more recently this type of campaign has branched out into other areas such as education, criminal justice, and early childhood. Some campaigns seek to achieve influence on complex behavioural patterns rather than one-off actions (Schenk and Dobler 2003). These kinds of campaigns aim, for example, at changing eating habits, encouraging safer and more courteous driving habits, encouraging more environmentally aware behaviour or showing

support for working women.

*Public will campaigns* focus on creating the public will to motivate public officials to take policy action in relation to a particular issue or concern. Public will campaigns can be defined as organised, strategic initiatives designed to legitimise and garner public support for social problems as a mechanism of achieving policy action or change (Coffman 2002). They are also described by Schenk and Dobler (2003) as *value or attitude campaigns*.

This type of campaign is becoming increasingly common, yet there is far less understanding about what it is, much less how it should be evaluated. It focuses less on the individual who is performing the behaviour (e.g. the smoker, polluter or drug user), and more on the public's responsibility to do something that will create the environment needed to support that behaviour change.

These types of campaigns often also factor in the relationship between media coverage and public awareness and attitudes, and the relationship between public will and policy change. The goals of such campaigns might include, for example, improving attitudes towards children, the elderly, foreigners, or minority groups, accepting women in leadership positions or changing attitudes regarding public health (in general rather than in relation to a specific illness or treatment). According to Schenk and Dobler (2003), influencing such deeply-rooted values and attitudes is one of the most difficult tasks for any campaign.

The classification of campaigns according to this typology is not always straightforward. The most important thing to remember is that the goal of public will campaigns must be more than to generate awareness or influence public opinion as defined in terms of individuals' attitudes. Research shows clearly that simply knowing more about an issue does not have a direct effect on behaviour. Raising public awareness can be an important part of a campaign, but awareness and knowledge without action will only go so far. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any circumstances in which attitude change, *per se*, benefits those whom the campaign is seeking to support (Coe et al. 2004).

Before moving on to look at the mechanisms by which campaigns seek to achieve their objectives, it is worth highlighting a further additional distinction, this time *within* the category of public will campaigns.

Not all public will campaigns are the same; this is because the issues on which they are campaigning are not the same. Most significant for the purposes of this report is the distinction between *valence issues* and *position issues* (Votmer and Rommele 2002).

*Valence issues* address common values where there is broad societal consent, such as promoting world peace, protecting the environment or eradicating

international poverty. Hence, valence issues do not demonstrate alternative viewpoints but present issues with goals or symbols of which almost everyone approves.

*Position issues*, by contrast, show two contrary positions on one dimension e.g. pro or anti abortion, pro or anti military intervention or, arguably, pro or anti asylum. It is important to recognise that within the broad framework of a public will campaign, the strategies and messages adopted will need to reflect this distinction if they are to lead to change.

**Figure 1 Two types of campaign**

Source: Coffman 2002

Campaign Type/ Goal	Individual Behaviour Change	Public Will
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influence beliefs and knowledge about a behaviour and its consequences</li> <li>Affect attitudes in support of behaviour and persuade</li> <li>Affect perceived social norms about the acceptability of a behaviour among one's peers</li> <li>Affect intentions to perform the behaviour</li> <li>Produce behaviour change (if accompanied by supportive programme components)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase visibility of an issue and its importance</li> <li>Affect perceptions of social issues and who is seen as responsible</li> <li>Affect criteria used to judge policies and policy makers</li> <li>Help determine what is possible for service introduction and public funding</li> <li>Engage and mobilise constituencies to action</li> </ul>
Target audiences	Segments of the population whose behaviour needs to change	Segments of the general public to be mobilised and policymakers
Strategies	Social marketing	Media advocacy, Community organising and mobilisation
Media Vehicles	Public service/affairs programming; Print, television, radio, electronic advertising	News media; Print, television, radio, electronic advertising
Examples	Anti-smoking, condom usage, drunk driving, seat belt usage, parenting	Support for quality child care, afterschool programming, health care policy

Work on attitudinal change undertaken in the United States (Coffman 2002, 2003) usefully distinguishes between the two types of campaign (Figure 1).

## HOW DO CAMPAIGNS LEAD TO ATTITUDINAL CHANGE?

The academic literature relating to attitudinal and behavioural change is extensive. This is partly because the attitude concept is linked to so many other ideas and theories and partly because attitudes pertain to so many different fields of application. Although this report is unable to outline these debates in detail, the existing literature provides an important context within which the discussion and conclusions are framed and should be understood.

Although much past research reflects the notion that attitudes are simple tendencies to like or dislike attitude objects, contemporary research has begun to adopt more complex perspectives. Recent research suggests, for example, that attitudes (or their components) might not always be simply positive or negative (but may subsume both positivity and negativity). It is also clear that the reasons we hold particular attitudes are more complex than was previously assumed, and that strong and weak attitudes are associated with many different outcomes (Bohner and Wanke 2002; Haddock and Maio 2004).

Although there is insufficient space here to provide a detailed analysis of the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, campaign designers need to have an understanding of the reasons people think and behave in the way that they do and the factors that affect attitudinal change. It is also important to have an understanding about the inter-relationships between knowledge (actual or perceived),

and attitudes and behaviour (Vrij et al. 2003; Coe et al 2005).

In other words, campaigns need to be based on theory. A theory of change underpinning any campaign is necessary to help understand the process by which a public information or communication campaign might achieve attitudinal change.

As Coffman (2003) suggests, theories of change force us to think through and put down on paper what we are doing (our activities) in connection to what we are trying to achieve (our outcomes), and to lay out the pathways and variables through which we expect change (behaviour or policy) to occur. A theory of change identifies key strategies that should be used, and the outcomes each is expected to produce. A theory of change is a representation of what needs to be in place to make a given type of change happen. Here, the 'change' refers to a campaign's ultimate purpose, whether it is altering individual behaviour or public will and policy.

The general theory of change underlying most public will campaigns is based on the agenda-setting process, which encompasses media, public, and policy agenda-setting in that order and integrates the concepts of *priming* and *framing* (for further discussion of these concepts see Coffman 2003). Figure 2 (overleaf) presents a general theory of change for public will campaigns.

The idea behind this theory of change is that the policy agenda is influenced by what the public thinks, cares about, and does. Public

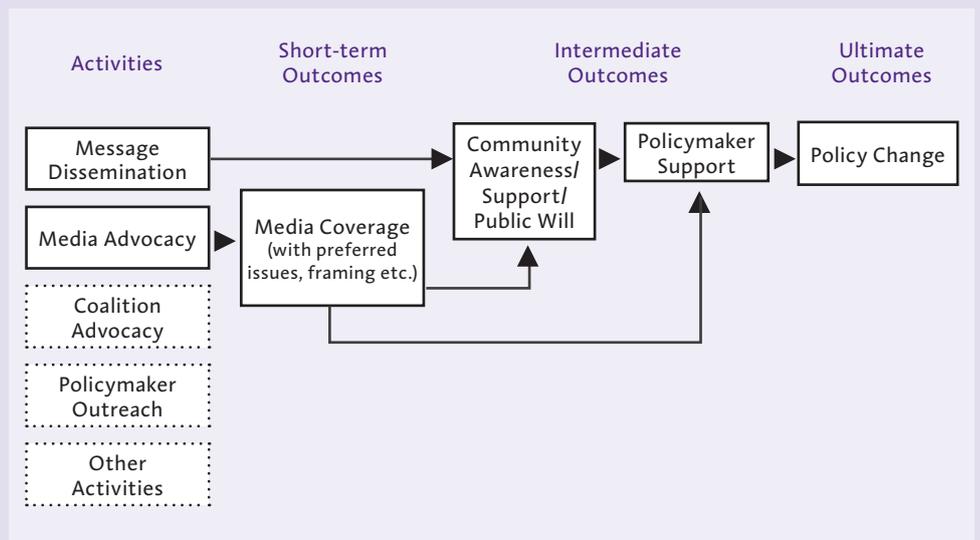
thinking and acting are in turn, thought to be influenced at least in part by the media. In this way public will campaigns try to ignite a chain reaction of sorts in the agenda-setting process. They do this primarily on two fronts – by working to influence what is on the media's agenda and how issues get reported (e.g. using media advocacy) and by communicating to the public directly. Public will campaigns typically coordinate these efforts with more traditional organising and policy advocacy work to bolster possibilities that the intended policy outcomes are reached.

There are two aspects of this theory of change which are worth highlighting here. The first is the concept of *agenda setting* which emphasises that the media do not necessarily instruct what people think, but what people should think *about*. In this way the media act as a 'gatekeeper' of information and determines which issues are considered important. This concept suggests that information or issues that appear more often in the media become more salient for the public and determine political and social priorities.

*Framing* is concerned with how the organisation and packaging of information (in messaging or in the media, for example) affect people's perceptions of that information. Put simply, framing refers to the construct of a communication - its language, visuals and messengers - and the way it signals to the listener or observer how to interpret and classify new information.

**Figure 2** General theory of change for public will campaigns

Figure 2 presents a general theory of change for public will campaigns. This model is not definitive. Rather it represents a composite sketch of common types of variables and relationships between those variables that begin with campaign (and other) activities and end with policy change (and implementation). While this model focuses on communications activities that are designed to affect policy change, it acknowledges the fact that rarely do communications activities alone achieve policy change. Typically they act as a complement to other policy advocacy activities, such as coalition or community organising, or one-on-one policymaker outreach. These additional activities are represented as boxes with dashed lines in the activity column.



Source: Coffman 2003: 6

## WHAT KINDS OF MESSAGES ARE MOST LIKELY TO WORK?

There is an extensive literature which explores the effectiveness of campaign messages in influencing behavioural and attitudinal change. Within this literature there is a consensus that messages must be tailored to the needs of the different audiences with whom the campaign wishes to engage. Not surprisingly, campaigns have a more easily persuasive task of attaining enforcement or predispositions for audiences that are favourably inclined.

This is because attitudes do not only influence behaviour: they also determine how we process messages regarding the attitude object. Individuals often search for and select information that confirms their beliefs and attitudes rather than information that may disconfirm them. Where the message is consistent with what an individual already believes or an attitude already held they are less likely to scrutinise the content than those messages which are counter-attitudinal. As a result, messages that seek to change existing attitudes need to be much stronger than those that simply reinforce or confirm what a person already thinks.

But the effectiveness of a campaign's message is not only dependent on the strength of the message. It also reflects the processes by which that message is interpreted by the audience at whom it is directed. The perception of messages is highly selective according to the receiver's cognitions and values.

By connecting new messages with pre-existing knowledge and judgements, the receiver constructs their own meaning out of what the message contains. One of the implications is that it is very difficult to know what kinds of messages are most likely to be effective (Dillard et al. 2007).

What is clear however is that the extent and way in which messages influence attitudes and behaviour are dependent on involvement in the issue (i.e. the extent to which a person is directly or indirectly affected) and on prior knowledge (Chebat et al 2001).

Both of these aspects are important because they impact on the depth of information processing, which is an antecedent to attitude formation and changes. Individuals – at least in their role as consumers – change their attitudes all the more when the message relates to their own personal experience, which in turn depends on their own prior knowledge.

## HOW EFFECTIVE HAVE CAMPAIGNS IN OTHER AREAS BEEN?

One of the difficulties with research on the impact of campaigns is that whilst campaigns have become more complex and strategic, evidence about their effectiveness has not. Both the number and quality of campaign evaluations is limited.

As Coffman (2003) notes, there is surprisingly little knowledge about appropriate outcomes for public campaigns, the different kinds of outcomes and their relative explanatory value, what to expect and when (short-term versus longer-term outcomes), and how those outcomes fit together using theory. This leaves many organisations wondering whether increased investments in campaigns have been worth it.

A number of problems are notable from a review of the existing literature.

**The first is a tendency to evaluate effort rather than impact.** Many campaigns deem themselves a success without the evidence to prove it. Measures collected during process evaluation are often mostly concerned with the direct outputs of the campaign. For example, some campaign evaluations try to dazzle with a long list of process measures or measures of their implementation and effort. In other words, they only measure the measurable. These measures include things like the number of op-eds written, the amount of media time purchased, the number of ads developed, or the number of brochures sent out. Another approach is to estimate how many people may have come into contact with a media message

(for example, a TV or newspaper advertisement).

It is important when considering the impact of a campaign not to be distracted by the media components of communications campaigns. Communication campaigns are like icebergs, partly visible and mostly hidden (Coffman 2003). The most visible parts are likely to be media news coverage, advertising, pamphlets and other materials - and may in fact be much smaller in scope than either the work that it took to create them or other non-communications aspects of the programme.

**Secondly, there is a tendency among campaigns which aim to influence public attitudes to over-rely on knowledge or awareness as a measure of success.** However whilst measuring increased knowledge or awareness is important, it does not give a complete picture of a campaign's effects (Coffman 2002). As indicated earlier in this report, common campaign outcomes, such as attitudes or behaviour, can in fact be quite tricky to measure. Social psychologists have been working for decades on how to measure behaviour change and the many variables known to affect it, yet this knowledge often does not get applied in campaign evaluations.

Finding the right measure to assess effectiveness should be based on the campaign's design. If a campaign is seeking behaviour change by trying to affect attitudes about the behaviour, then in order to assess whether

the campaign is working, the evaluation needs to measure the attitude *toward the behaviour*. A common mistake is to measure instead the attitude toward *the outcome* of that behaviour. For example, if a campaign is trying to affect attitudes about wearing a condom in order to reduce HIV transmission, then the evaluation should measure the attitude toward wearing the condom – *not* attitudes toward HIV transmission. Measuring the latter would not capture what the campaign was actually trying to affect (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980).

In addition, organisations need to be wary of assuming simplistic causal links between raised awareness, increased knowledge, changes in public attitudes, changes in public behaviour, manifested as public will, and changes in institutional policy and practice (Coe et al. 2004). Public communication and information campaigns are designed to affect outcomes that are also affected by a complex and broad set of factors. As a result it is difficult to isolate the effects of information campaigns on outcomes that are bombarded by so many competing influences.

Although the research underpinning this report has considered a wide range of campaigns, the focus is on public health initiatives (which are often campaigns aimed at securing behavioural change), mental health and campaigns to tackle the stigma associated with mental illness, anti-poverty campaigns (which illustrate how debates can

be reframed) and campaigns that promote equality and diversity. Campaigns in these areas have the most learning potentiality to offer in relation to future work specifically in the area of asylum. Exemplars, which are illustrative rather than representative, have

been drawn from the UK, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

### Public health campaigns

For decades, the public health community has relied on paid and unpaid advertising to communicate health related messages, ranging from cancer prevention, seat-belt promotion and efforts to reduce obesity, through to drink-driving prevention and anti-drug and anti-tobacco campaigns. Communication is rapidly coming to be recognised as a core function, or core competency, in the field of public health and there is now a substantial body of work in this area that is able to provide insights into the effectiveness of such campaigns in changing health-related attitudes and behaviours.

Within the area of public health, there is a considerable divergence in views about the ability or otherwise of public information and communication campaigns to influence behaviour across a wide range of issues. There is evidence that even in an area such as personal health (where the motivation for behavioural change is theoretically high), simply providing information and increasing knowledge about a topic is not enough to lead to attitude and behaviour change. Numerous studies of the effectiveness of media and direct health interventions suggest that these have been disappointing in terms of producing or sustaining attitude or behaviour change. Generally, research has shown that such campaigns have small-to-moderate effects on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to the primary message. Many of these effects are time-limited (see, for example, Hornick 2002; Caville and Bauman 2004; Maibach 2007).

For example, evidence from in-depth formal evaluations of the *National Youth Anti-Drug Media*

*Campaign* in the United States shows no connection between the campaign advertisements and youth drug use behaviour (Hornick et al. 2003; Orwin et al. 2004). Where evidence of a reduction in drug use has been found it has been impossible to link this reduction directly to the effects of the campaign. Indeed the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has argued that the campaign not only fails to reduce drug use, but may also make youth more likely to use marijuana in the future. According to NIDA, the ads may give youth the perception that drug use is common among their peers; and they may also trigger what psychologists call 'reactance', in other words, the more someone is told what not to do, the more they want to do it. Nonetheless the campaign is viewed by some as being successful and continues to receive significant public funding.

Another area of public health campaigning of potential relevance is that of national and international HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns. Starting in the 1980s, worldwide campaigns were launched to make people aware of the AIDS virus and of the precautions to be taken. Again, research evidence on the effectiveness of these campaigns is inconsistent and, in some cases, contradictory (Myhre and Flora 2000). For example, whilst evaluations of Dutch and Swiss safer sex campaigns have concluded that public campaigns to increase condom use and reduce levels of HIV transmission have been successful (de Vroom et al 1991; Yzer 2000; Hornick 2002), others have found that campaigns do not reach those at highest risk (Walls et al. 1998).

More importantly for the purpose of this research however, campaigns relating to HIV/AIDS illustrate very clearly the way in which the *primary purpose*

*or function of a campaign* can vary significantly even while the broad issue or concern that forms the focus of the campaign is the same. Many campaigns in relation to HIV and AIDS are aimed not at behavioural change - specifically increased condom use and the practising of safe(r) sex - but at increasing awareness of, and engagement in, HIV/AIDS related issues. In other words, the campaign aims to change public will and/or policy in relation to the issue rather than individual behaviour.

The *Stamp Out Stigma* campaign in Ireland provides an example of this type of campaign which is aimed at educating people about the effects of stigma and discrimination associated with HIV. Campaign strategies include anti-HIV stigma and discrimination advertisements in the media designed to encourage people to reflect on their attitudes and understanding of HIV; work with the equality authority to promote awareness of the existing legislation to prevent discrimination on the basis of HIV status; and work with NGOs to reinforce the anti-stigma campaign and challenge attitudes and prejudice.

### **Campaigns around mental health and the stigma of mental illness**

It is well recognised that one of the biggest potential barriers to mental health and early intervention is stigma and discrimination facing people with mental health problems (IPPR 2004). There is considerable evidence that members of the public have remarkably little factual knowledge about mental illness, although most do know someone affected. The extent of ignorance is hard to underestimate, with some surveys showing that many of those asked are unable to distinguish between epilepsy, mental illness and a learning disability.

Lack of awareness about mental illness and the discrimination and stigma faced by many of those with mental health issues and needs has resulted in a significant number of public information and communication campaigns across a wide range of countries. These include *beyondblue: The National Depression Initiative* (Australia), *Project Breakthrough* (Canada), *Like Minds, Like Mine* (New Zealand), *Changing Minds* (UK) and *See Me* (Scotland).

Although limited, the evidence that is beginning to emerge from these campaigns suggests that a carefully co-ordinated approach using social marketing techniques can produce benefits in terms of attitudinal change. This conclusion is, however, subject to a number of caveats.

**First, it is clear that attitudinal change will only take place once there is a sufficient change in the climate of opinion (social norms).** Although mass media campaigns are vital for ensuring any change in social norms, there are challenges and contradictions in working with the media. Despite efforts to engage and educate different sections of the media, providers have generally found the media a difficult group to work with and there is a feeling that mental health issues continue to be sensationalised. This day-to-day reporting and coverage of mental health issues, however, plays an important role in shaping public attitudes towards those with mental illness.

Because of these difficulties, mass media campaigns are generally more effective if they are coupled with community level initiatives. The problem with community level initiatives is that considerable effort can go in this direction with little to show for it. Evaluations of initiatives in the area of mental health suggest that community level initiatives are likely to be more successful if focused on those who have more influence within the community, such as opinion leaders and the media.

**The second important conclusion is that one of the most effective strategies for reducing stigma and discrimination in the area of mental health is to have people with experience of mental illness sharing with others about their experiences.**

Reflecting this, part of the community level initiatives has focused on training these people to take this role in workshops and presentations.

**Third, it is important to identify who will be champions for the cause.** If a project is to become self-sustaining, a body of people needs to be established who are able to champion a particular cause over the long-term. Realistically this has to be built primarily around people with experience of mental illness and their families. They are the ones who care and for whom this issue is important.

**Fourth, it is necessary to understand and recognise that however interesting a topic may be for those directly involved in a campaign, the public are generally not interested.** Traditional marketing of products and services works by identifying needs and designing products and promotions to meet or appeal to those needs. Most campaigns in the area of mental health are simply not able to appeal to public needs or wants. Predictably providers have found that there is low interest in the topic, often even among those who interact with people with experience of mental illness. This suggests that campaign activities will need to be targeted in order to be effective.

**Finally, evaluations of campaigns in the area of mental health acknowledge that beginning a process of change will be slow because attitudes**

**towards those with mental illness are deeply ingrained.** This is an important lesson to be learned by those engaging in any public information and communication work in relation to asylum.

One positive finding of evaluations of anti-stigma strategies in the area of mental health is that people are responsive to hearing service user stories and can change their minds after encountering user perspectives. This is an important lesson to learn from these campaigns. But people with first-hand experience of mental illness should not simply be used in an 'instrumental' way to help the campaign to achieve its stated objectives. Ultimately, it is changes in feelings of personal stigma *by users themselves* which should be the most valid indicators of the success or otherwise of expensive public campaigns. It is important that campaigns to reduce prejudice against groups in society have to be evaluated not simply in terms of attitudinal change within the general population, or in the targeted groups, but crucially by the experience of stigmatised individuals themselves in their interactions in the wider community.

## Anti-poverty campaigns

Campaigns to tackle poverty provide interesting insights into efforts to communicate and change the attitudes and behaviour of the public. Unlike public health campaigns or campaigns in the area of mental health, campaigns to alleviate poverty, particularly at the international level, often have no direct relevance to the audience whose attitudes the campaign is trying to change. Moreover because many of these campaigns operate at an international level and involve abstract concepts and communities, some of the principles of successful campaigning (for example, engaging the audience with those directly affected, identifying community champions to take forward the cause) do not apply.

For this reason anti-poverty campaigns provide a very clear example of efforts to change public will. They also provide a particular clear illustration of the ways in which such campaigns attempt, often successfully, to reframe public understanding of issues of national and international poverty.

For example the *Jubilee 2000* campaign aimed to cancel the debts of the poorest countries by the year 2000 by changing the dominant attitude among bankers, policymakers and the media who saw debt as a result of irresponsible governance on the part of developing countries. The campaign changed this perception in two significant ways: by transforming the issue from a technical financial one to one involving morality and religion, and by shifting the focus of the discussion away from the actions of corrupt and irresponsible past governments to the consequences borne by citizens, who had no part in taking on the debt and did not benefit from it. The success of the campaign can be attributed to this process of reframing, to timing (in particular in connection with the Millennium Development Goals) and to the fact that it was underpinned by a strong, credible evidence base.

Just as the *Jubilee 2000* campaign took advantage of the political context in the 1990s, so too the more recent campaign to *Make Poverty History* was able to take advantage of, and capitalise on, a series of events that took place in 2005. The campaign drew on and learnt from NGO experience of

working together in the *Jubilee 2000* coalition, and chose to strengthen rather than replicate existing organisations and networks. Through a programme of activities designed to mobilise the public, *Make Poverty History* not only managed to make almost everyone in the country aware of the campaign, it inspired a significant proportion to participate – many for the first time (Martin et al. 2005). It is clear that what made *Make Poverty History* different from many other campaigns, was the portfolio of popular communications tools – in particular the use of new media such as email, the internet and mobile phones – that made the brand and the message unavoidable over the year. It is also important to acknowledge the special conditions that provided the ‘campaigning hooks’, the agenda and the particular receptiveness of the government to lobbying on this agenda in 2005. In 2005, the coalition operated in a political and intellectual environment that was particularly receptive to development campaigning. Less clear is the effectiveness of the campaign in changing attitudes towards world poverty over the longer term.

A further example from the United States illustrates the importance of reframing issues where the objective of the campaign is to change public will and influence policy rather than affect behavioural change.

In 2001, the Ford Foundation funded an extensive research and framing effort to reach the public in different ways and to alter their perceptions about the working poor. An initial media analysis found the ‘fix the person’ model to be prevalent: individual failure was seen as the root of poverty. Based on this evidence, the *Fairness Initiative on Low-Wage Work* was launched in 2003 with the objective of promoting a new public understanding of poverty in the US rooted in the role of the economic system in creating low-wage work. Schulman (2006) suggests that the lessons of the *Fairness Initiative on Low-Wage Work* could be applied to any long-term campaign to reframe the debate on a major social-political issue.

## Campaigns to promote equality and diversity

The effectiveness of campaigns intended to change attitudes towards issues of equality and diversity is particularly hard to assess because of the difficulties associated with trying to disentangle the effects of public information campaigns from those associated with legal and policy initiatives.

There has been some research which explores the effectiveness of anti-racism advertising and, in particular, the messages used in this advertising. This research has found ambivalence to be an important characteristic of attitudes toward minority groups. People are said to have ambivalent attitudes when their attitudes contain both negative and positive elements. The key finding of research by Maio et al. (1996) is that this ambivalence moderates the impact of persuasive messages about immigrant groups.

Further research by Maio (2002) specifically explores this theory in relation to anti-racism advertising. In the UK, messages attacking prejudice and racism have been used by many organisations, including the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Racial Equality in Employment Project and Football Against Racism. The researchers designed a series of experiments that developed and evaluated the effects of anti-racism messages. These experiments set out to examine the numerous properties of the message recipients' initial attitudes toward ethnic minority people and test whether these properties are important moderators of the impact of anti-racism messages on prejudice.

The findings of this research suggests that people in two minds about their attitudes towards ethnic minority groups (i.e. showing ambivalence) become *more unfavourable* when exposed to anti-racism advertising or arguments. Because people in this group both like and dislike a particular ethnic group at the same time, they will carefully scrutinise messages that support a positive attitude toward that group, perhaps because they hope to reduce the conflict and tension in their attitudes. Ironically, however, this process leads to more negative

attitudes towards ethnic minorities where the material these people read contains weak arguments in favour of the group or critical of it. The 'backfire effects' occur both in conscious and non-conscious feelings towards people from ethnic minorities.

By contrast, for those who were not ambivalent in their attitude, anti-racism messages elicited less prejudice. The studies support past evidence that people with a conflict of attitude towards ethnic minorities are more likely to spend more time carefully reading the context of messages about such a group.

Murji (2006) has similarly examined the impact of anti-racist messages produced by the CRE, but her research focuses specifically on the use of stereotyped images. In 1998 the CRE launched what has arguably been its most controversial advertising campaign which consisted of 'set ups' designed to cause comment and controversy and to provoke complaints from the public about racist stereotyping. The rationale for the 'tease and reveal' advertising campaign was to force people into considering their own personal attitude to racism. The adverts were specifically intended to prompt a reaction – and ideally to provoke members of the public into complaining about the images presented. Unfortunately this was not what actually happened. There were in fact very few complaints from the public about the advertisements and it has been argued that the campaign simply reinforced racist stereotypes rather than challenging them (Murji 2006). Vrij et al (2003) have similarly concluded that this campaign may have been counteractive and increased the level of prejudice because of the negative context within which the campaign's messages were set.

The findings of this research have implications for our understanding of the way in which campaigns to promote anti-racism or pro-migrant attitudes may be interpreted by those that the campaigns seek to influence, and therefore for the success or otherwise of public information and communication efforts in this area. For example, there is evidence that portrayals of refugees which aim to elicit sympathy for their plight often do not present any cogent

reasons why this group should be supported or allowed to enter or remain (Maio et al. 2006). For people who are ambivalent toward the refugees, this lack of content might be an important deficit because ambivalent people are motivated to obtain information that might help them resolve the conflict in their attitudes. Because such portrayals lack content, ambivalent people might regard the portrayals as weak messages in favour of the refugees.

Thinking through the implications of research in relation to these kinds of campaigns is vitally important given the links between asylum, immigration and race in the UK context. It is critically important to develop messages that elicit more positive attitudes toward ethnic minority people among message recipients who are initially ambivalent toward them. At the very least, it is important to design new messages that do not yield increased prejudice in those who hold ambivalent attitudes.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CAMPAIGNING WORK ON ASYLUM

Processes of attitude formation and attitudinal change are highly complex. This is reflected in a vast body of research which explores the issues of attitude formation and the process of attitudinal change from a variety of perspectives – individual (cognitive), societal and institutional.

Whilst this report has not been able to explore these processes in depth, it has highlighted a number of issues that organisations and funders need to consider when trying to understand attitudes. These include not only factors relating to an individual (his or her psychological makeup, political values and ideology and social-demographic attributes) but also the social, economic and demographic context within which an individual lives (i.e. factors associated with locality) and the socio-economic and political imperatives of local and central government. The complex inter-connections and mutually reinforcing nature of these factors remains largely unexplored.

As is noted by Coe et al. (2005) attitudes, once formed, are relatively stable and notoriously difficult to alter. This is because they actually turn into traits of personality, and because each attitude tends to be correlated with others in clusters and constellations, rendering piecemeal change problematic. Moreover attitudes do not only influence behaviour, they also determine how we process information regarding the attitude object. Individuals often search

for and select information that confirms their beliefs and attitudes rather than information that may disconfirm them. When exposed to information that cannot be avoided, people tend to interpret it in line with their attitudes (Bohner and Wanke 2002).

These factors are relevant to our understanding of attitudes as they relate to asylum and forced migration.

Despite the significantly increased literature over recent years, attitudes towards immigration – and particularly asylum – are not well understood. There is a growing body of evidence that describes what people think (usually through opinion polls and surveys) and about patterns in attitudes, both by geographic area and by socio-demographic and other characteristics of individuals and groups. However survey and opinion polling on attitudes need to be treated with caution because correlation is not the same as causality. Opinion polls and surveys tell us little about *why* people hold the attitudes they do or what issues or concerns would need to be addressed for those attitudes to change. Moreover they tell us nothing about whether there is any relationship between attitudes and behaviour: individuals and groups may hold negative views about asylum but it is not known whether this translates into negative actions and behaviours.

In addition, it is important to recognise that attitudes towards migration seem likely to reflect, at least in part, popular

feelings of insecurity in which the outside world is perceived as a threat as well as growing distrust in public authorities and the political establishment. Asylum may perhaps best be understood as a ‘touchstone’ issue which symbolises a range of much broader attitudes and concerns. In order to be successful, campaigning work on asylum will need to take into consideration the fact that negative attitudes towards asylum may, in fact, be shorthand for a range of other concerns.

At the very least, it seems clear that asylum is a ‘position’ issue rather than a ‘valence’ issue. Valence issues do not demonstrate alternative viewpoints but present issues with conditional or goals or symbols of which almost everyone approves e.g. saving the environment or eradicating world poverty. Position issues, on the contrary, show two contrary positions on one dimension. As a result it cannot simply be assumed that successful campaigning work in relation to valence issues, for example, the stigma of mental illness, can be directly transferred to the asylum context.

So what are the implications of the evidence presented in this report for campaigning work in the area of asylum?

First, the evidence presented in this report suggests that **campaigns to change attitudes and engender public will towards particular issues are notoriously difficult**. Even within the area of public health there is considerable divergence in views about the

ability or otherwise of public information and communication campaigns to influence behaviour across a wide range of issues. This is despite the fact that these campaigns involve literally millions of pounds or dollars, take place over decades and are usually associated with potentially positive impacts for the individuals concerned. By contrast, public communication campaigns often aim for complex and hard-to-achieve change, for example, changing public will by affecting norms, expectations, and public support.

Second, although the evidence is mixed and in some cases contradictory, **it seems likely that many campaigns to change attitudes and behaviour are ineffective or have a relatively modest degree of impact over the long term.** The evidence presented in this report suggests that there are many reasons why campaigns do not have a strong impact. Audience resistance barriers arise at every stage of response, from exposure to behavioural implementation.

Given the difficulties associated with efforts to change attitudes, particularly where these are deep-seated, it is important to be realistic about impact and what can be achieved. In commercial marketing campaigns, attitude improvements of one-tenth of 1% are deemed important because they can represent millions of dollars. But sometimes funders of public will or policy change campaigns want to see attitudinal shifts of 10% to 30%.

Organisations seeking to generate public will around asylum will need to develop a long-term view, based on realistic understanding of how change can be brought about, and then persistently and consistently follow that course (Coe et al. 2005).

Third, there is strong evidence that **campaigns to change attitudes need to do more than simply provide information.** Information to increase a person's knowledge or awareness about the need to change or adopt a particular behaviour typically does not change behaviour on its own. The campaigns which appear to be most successful in changing attitudes are those which are designed to influence other aspects of how we think about and act on issues, such as whether we have the self-efficacy (perception in our capability to perform the behaviour) necessary to change the behaviour, or what our perceptions are about what our friends and family are doing (social norms) or want us to do (subjective norms).

There is clear evidence that social networks and norms play an important role both in the formation of attitudes and in the success (or otherwise) of campaigns directed at attitudinal change. Some campaigns may work because they activate a complex process of change in social norms rather than because they transfer knowledge that produces behaviour change.

This evidence suggests that whilst the practice of 'myth busting' (by countering widely accepted

misconceptions through 'laying out the facts') may make sense as a component of communications strategy where resentments are otherwise being fuelled, in itself such an approach is unlikely to have the desired effect. Successful campaigning in the area of asylum needs to do more than simply provide information or 'myth-bust': it needs to tackle some of the deeply held prejudices and misconceptions that manifest themselves in negative attitudes and behaviours.

Finally, it is important to be aware that **campaigns to change attitudes can – and sometimes do – have unexpected or unintended effects.** This particularly appears to be the case in anti-racist advertising, some of which has been shown to lead to 'backfire effects' in both conscious and non-conscious feelings towards people from ethnic minorities. This research suggests that people in two minds about their attitudes towards ethnic minority groups (i.e. showing ambivalence) become *more unfavourable* when exposed to anti-racism advertising or arguments where the material these people read contains weak arguments in favour of the group. This evidence suggests that particular care will be needed when designing campaign messages in relation to asylum and in evaluating the impact of any work directed towards attitudinal change.

## PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNING WORK

Campaigns to change attitudes and engender public will towards particular issues are notoriously difficult. It seems likely that many campaigns to change attitudes and behaviour are ineffective or have a relatively modest degree of impact over the long term.

But it is also clear that some campaigns are more successful than others. This is because they are based on a theory of change, have clearly defined aims and objectives, along with strong messages tailored to groups that the campaign is targeting. Successful campaigns also employ a range of strategies to ensure that they do not just rely on the mass media but engage with opinion leaders, grass-roots organisations and those on whom the campaign directly impacts in order to maximise effectiveness and campaign sustainability.

Based on the evidence presented in this report it is possible to draw out eight principles which, when incorporated in campaigns to influence attitudes towards asylum, will maximise the possibilities of success.

In order to change attitudes to asylum, a successful campaign will need to have:

- **A clear theory of change;**
- **Sensitivity to the political and policy context;**
- **Clear and agreed aims and objectives;**
- **Strong and explicit messages that reframe the terms of the debate;**
- **The involvement of those directly affected by the campaign;**
- **A range of mass communication and interpersonal communication channels;**
- **Strategies targeted at particular groups in society; and**
- **A commitment to research and evaluation.**

### A clear theory of change

Campaigns should be based on sound (and where possible research-based) theory for predicting how the campaign will achieve social change. Simply stated, theories are explanations of why things occur. In the desire to trigger social change and resolve social problems, it is necessary to understand change mechanisms and likely outcomes of communication campaigns. In addition to helping understand the manner or mechanism through which a desired change occurs, theories also provide inventories of likely intermediate outcomes that should be measured in comprehensive evaluations. Any successful campaign in the area of asylum must consider - at a theoretical level - how the process of change will occur in order that expertise and resources can be appropriately targeted.

### **Sensitivity to the political and policy context**

It is important to acknowledge that regardless of the issue or the approach taken, the timing of a campaign may be crucial to its success. Any campaign is only part of the larger picture; a number of other influences need to fall into place to tip the scales in favour of change. Many of the campaigns discussed in this report have been successful because of the convergence of several factors, some planned and some serendipitous – a ‘perfect storm’ of forces and influences. The problem with issues of asylum and forced migration is that they are, by their very nature, highly unpredictable. In order to be successful, campaigners will need to assess the political and policy context in advance. Campaigns in this area, as in any other, will need to seize windows of opportunity to have optimum impact.

### **Clear and agreed aims and objectives**

There is strong evidence that in order to be successful, a campaign’s aims and objectives needs to be absolutely clear and agreed at the outset. What is the campaign trying to achieve? Does the campaign aim at changes on the knowledge, attitude or behavioural level? Who or what is it trying to influence and why?

As has been noted throughout this report, very few, if any, campaigns are concerned with attitudinal change for the sake of attitudinal change. Raising public awareness can be an important part of a campaign, but awareness and knowledge without action will only go so far. Indeed as Coe et al. (2004) suggest, it is difficult to imagine any circumstances in which attitude change, *per se*, benefits those whom the campaign is seeking to support. The implication of this is that attitude change should be seen as a (possible) means to a desired end, and not an end in itself. Attitudinal change only matters if this translates into different behaviour and/or public will which can be harnessed to bring about political or policy change. This is clearly of relevance to any future campaigning work on asylum issues. It is vitally important that campaigners are clear on the campaign’s aims and objectives. It is also important that they are clear about the territory on which the campaign is being fought, and in particular, the relationship and connections between asylum, migration and broader issues of public concern.

### **Strong and explicit messages that reframe the terms of the debate**

The content of the campaign message matters. Where the message is consistent with what an individual already believes or an attitude already held, they are less likely to scrutinise the content. By contrast, where a campaign is on issues which are counter-attitudinal – such as asylum – the message of the campaign will be carefully considered by the target audience. This suggests that successful campaigns on asylum will need to have particularly strong messages that reframe the terms of the debate. Most of the successful campaigns discussed in this report use a powerful combination of moral messages and pragmatic, research-based arguments. The organisations involved in these campaigns framed their vision and perspective in strong moral terms; but they also anticipated their audiences’ objections and arguments and countered them with hard facts and solid information presented in ways that could be heard. Many of these campaigns also directed their efforts towards reframing the debate with which they wished to engage.

### **The involvement of those directly affected by the campaign**

The evidence from successful campaigns in the area of attitudes towards mental illness suggests that one of the most effective strategies is having people meet those who have experienced mental illness and hear about their experiences. This evidence suggests that whose lives are potentially affected by the campaign should be involved throughout the process of design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation. In any campaign on asylum, refugees and asylum seekers should not only be consulted about the effects of current attitudes, prejudice and discrimination, and potential target audiences but should also be brought into the campaign in order to challenge stigma and dispel stereotypes. There are numerous examples of user-led work that are successful because the target audience learns from those who are experts by experience. Moreover, the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees are a far better measure of attitudinal change than the views and opinions expressed by the public (or segments of the public). Ultimately the best measure of the success or otherwise of campaigning work on asylum is the experiences of the stigmatised individuals themselves – in this case, asylum seekers and refugees – in their interactions with the wider community.

### **A range of mass communication and interpersonal communication channels**

It seems likely that campaign strategies that use both mass communication and interpersonal communication channels are the most effective. This is because social contacts, social networks and social norms play a highly significant role in processes of attitude formation and change. There are a number of different campaigning possibilities here. For example, evidence that the attitudinal composition of the 'social network' within which an individual is situated affects the strength of his or her attitudes suggests that initiatives that bring together groups of people with diverse attitudes open up possibilities for attitudinal change that would not otherwise exist. Recognition that interventions aimed directly at changing attitudes and behaviour can be problematic could instead lead to campaigns which try to influence indirect factors, such as people's sense of self-efficacy and a perception of what is socially acceptable. Moreover, recognition of the importance of social networks may open up campaign strategies which rely on interpersonal communications rather than the mass media. It is important to the success of any campaign on asylum to identify opinion leaders who can serve as multipliers who pass on messages in everyday life, in small networks and groups.

### **Strategies targeted at particular groups in society**

The effectiveness of campaigns will vary widely, reflecting the range of audiences at whom the messages of the campaign are directed. Differences in audience response reflect not only demographic, socio-economic and educational characteristics but also levels of involvement and the type and amount of prior knowledge, both of which impact on the depth of information processing which is an antecedent to attitude formation and change. The evidence in this report suggests that multi-faceted, multi-level approaches are particularly effective in relation to campaigns which aim to reduce stigma and discrimination. These kinds of campaigns use a combination of approaches and intervention methods, at a variety of different times in a range of appropriate settings. In order to target effort and message, it is also clearly important to know and understand where the audience is coming from. The implications for campaigning work on asylum are clear.

## A commitment to research and evaluation

Finally, the complexity of attitude formation and the process of attitudinal change which has been highlighted throughout this report mean that any successful campaign on asylum will need to be underpinned by rigorous and systematic research. The evidence presented in this report suggests that those campaigns which have been most effective have been informed by detailed research and evaluation. Formative research will lead to the development of messages and strategies that have the greatest potential for resonating with selected audiences and reaching intended objectives. Process evaluation will provide information about campaign efficiency and the costs and benefits of various communication strategies. Efficacy evaluation can be used to determine the maximum potential of campaign messages under ideal conditions, which is helpful in terms of developing realistic expectations for campaign success. And outcome evaluation will determine whether objectives are met in one campaign while providing information for subsequent communications efforts in the next.

In relation to asylum, it is clear that we need to understand the factors that *cause*, rather than are simply associated with, particular opinions before we can seek to influence or change them. It is also clear that we need a better understanding of the extent to

which these opinions are specific to the issue of asylum and forced migration or reflect a broader set of attitudes towards, for example, immigration or ethnic diversity.

Any campaign relating to asylum issues will also need to think very carefully about impact evaluation and, in particular, how to measure longer-term change or causation. This is necessary to determine whether or not the campaign can be described as successful. Campaign evaluation should be based on a sound conceptual model of how the campaign will achieve social change (e.g. theory of change) (Coffman 2003). An alarming number of evaluations similarly present a list of activities undertaken as part of the campaign: in other words, they evaluate effort rather than impact. Given the complexities of attitude formation, in all areas but perhaps particularly in relation to asylum, it is important that evaluations avoid simply measuring effort or attitudinal change within a sample group. Simply reporting on what people think - in the ways currently seen in opinion polls and surveys - is unlikely to move public understanding of asylum forward or to generate the public will necessary for policy change.

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