



The Value of Prompts as a Behavioural Change Tool

David A. Comerford

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Behavioural Change Tools

More
coercive

Laws – prison, fines

Incentives – deposit return schemes, taxes, subsidies

Less
coercive

Persuasion – posters, tv ads



Behavioural Change Tools - Nudging

More
coercive



Laws – prison, fines

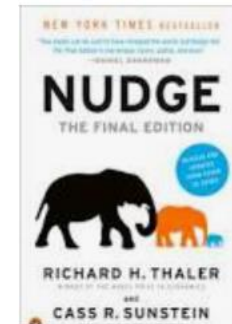
Incentives – deposit return schemes, taxes, subsidies

Nudges

- changing defaults (opt-in vs. opt-out)
- social norms (83% of visitors tidy up...)
- framing (90% fat free vs. 10% fat)

Less
coercive

Persuasion – posters, tv ads



Another behavioural change tool - prompts

What is stopping us from behaving in our own best interest?

Ignorance?

Inattention?

Impatience?

Failures of willpower?

Prompts should help

Background – Intention Behaviour Gap

In Scotland, one in five mothers who started breastfeeding stopped just two weeks after birth.

86% of mothers who dropped breastfeeding in those first two weeks report that they would have liked to have breastfed for longer.

Q: How to close the gap?

A: With a planning card

Solutions to common breastfeeding concerns	
Breastfeeding is uncomfortable or painful	Breastfeeding is a new skill and can take time to master. Check your baby is attached properly, try a different feeding position, ask your midwife or health visitor to observe a feed or attend a support group for practical support
I don't think I have enough milk	Your baby is weighed regularly by your midwife and health visitor, and is a good guide of how much milk your baby is getting. A new baby's stomach is the size of a marble; at day 3, it is the size of a ping pong ball; at week 1, it is the size of a plum; and at 1 month, it is the size of a chicken egg. They only need small amount of milk regularly
I can't get into a routine	A new person has joined your family. Everything will be up in the air for some time and new routines will be formed in time. Try to ensure you get some time as a new family and space your visitors out so you can get to know your baby and they can get to know you
I feel guilty others don't bond with the baby	There are many ways to bond with a new baby. Others can bring the baby to you before feeding and can rub the baby's back after feeding. Skin-to-skin contact is a good way for dads to bond, and bathing is an ideal time for siblings and grandparents to help with

The Experiment

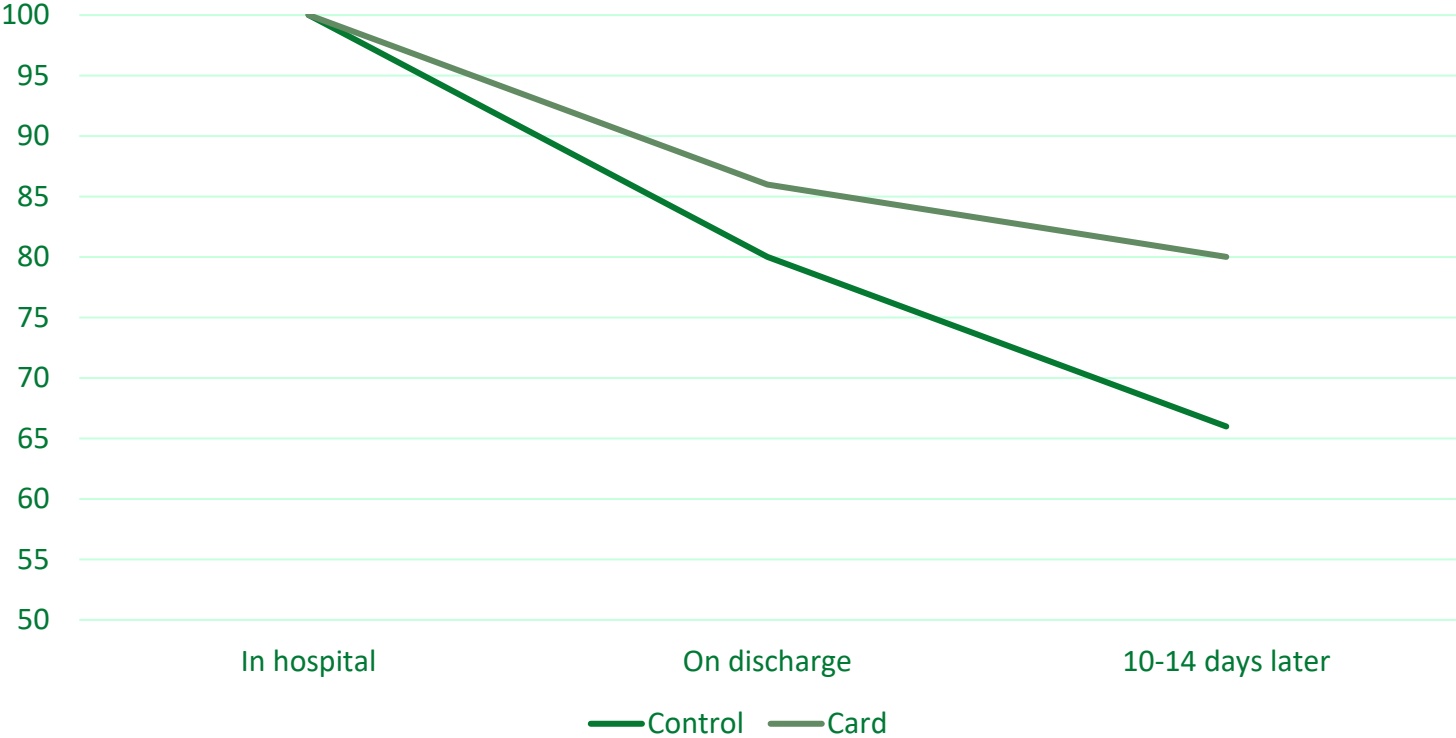
Women were recruited at antenatal classes around Edinburgh

Via random assignment:
Some received a card, others did not

We followed up 10-14 days post due date

Results

% Mothers Breastfeeding



Why does it work?

We don't know for sure but here are two suggestions:

Information

Breastfeeding is both “the most natural thing in the world” and it takes getting used to. The card let's women know that their experiences are not atypical.

A prompt to action

Giving pregnant women this information gives them time to prepare and make plans that can help transition from hospital to home.

Case Study 2: Energy Certification



Research Question

From 2007, homes for sale and rent were required to publish their energy efficiency on the EPC

Do sellers invest to boost their property into the next colour-letter band?

How to improve your SAP

Improvement	Rating can be improved by
Condensing Boiler	47 SAP points
Cavity Insulation	13 SAP points
Roof Insulation	10 SAP points
Cylinder Stat & Insulation	8 SAP points
Double Glazing	4 SAP points
Low Energy Lighting	2 SAP points

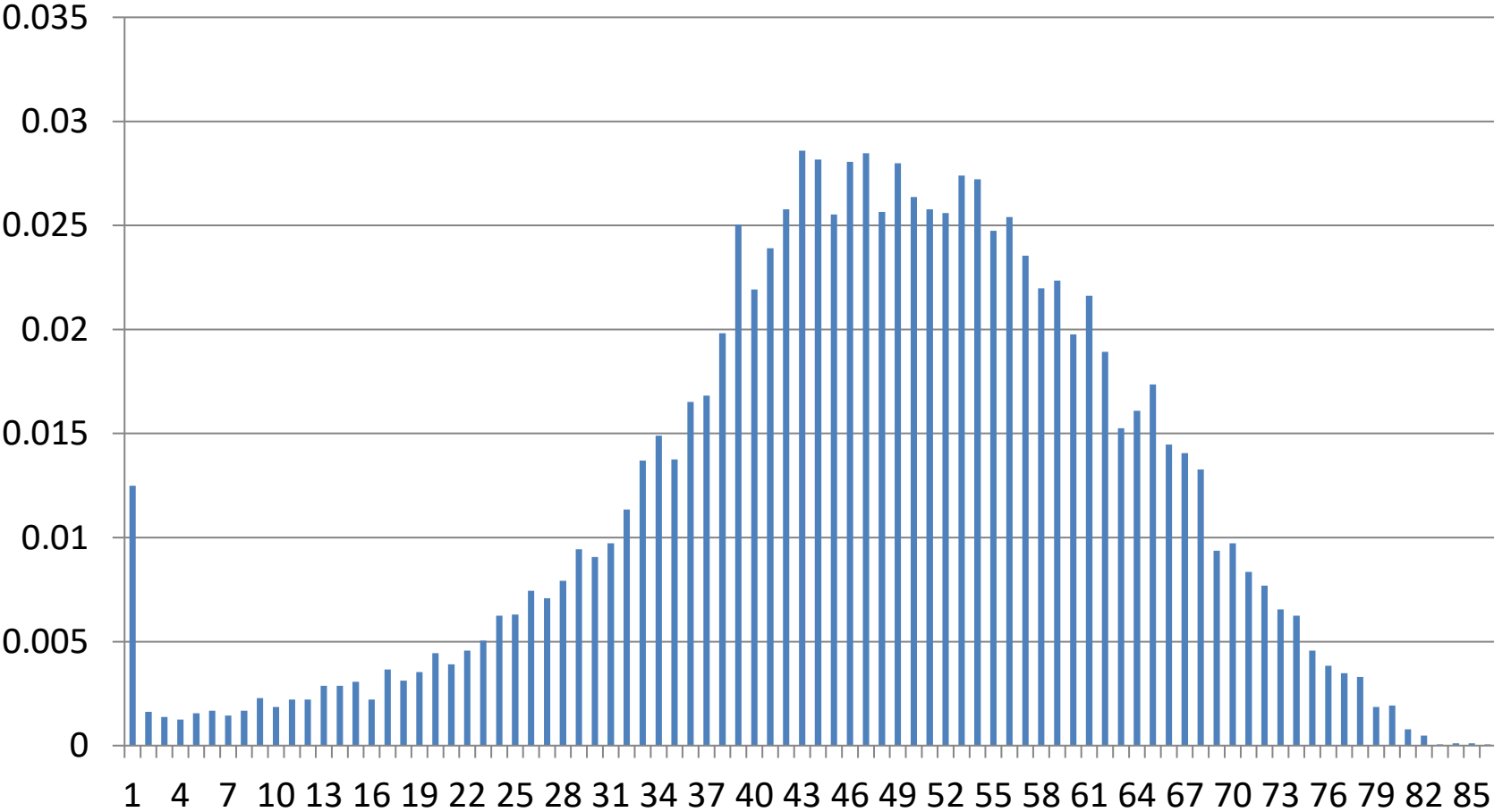
Data

English Housing Survey

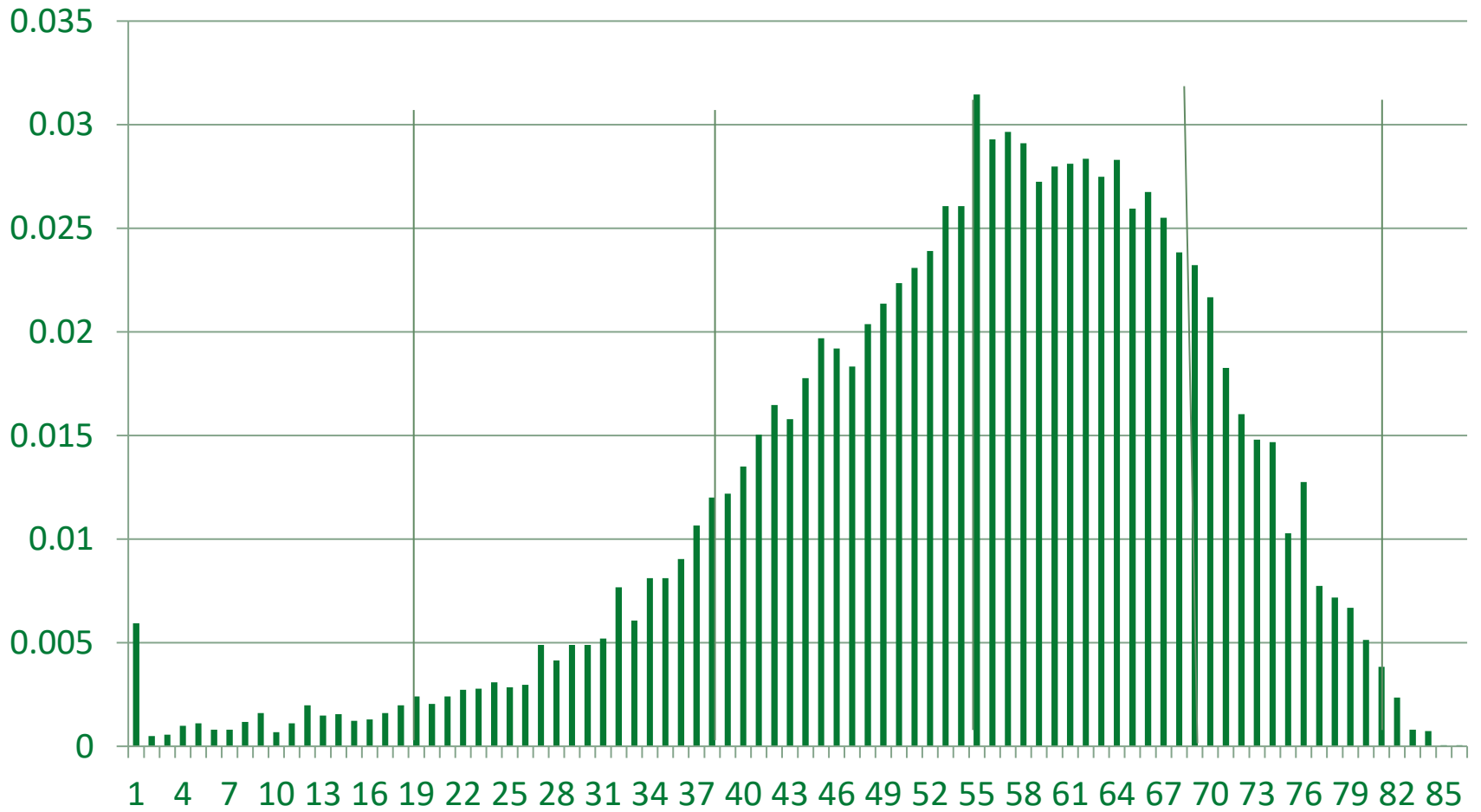
Repeated cross section of ca. 6000 homes

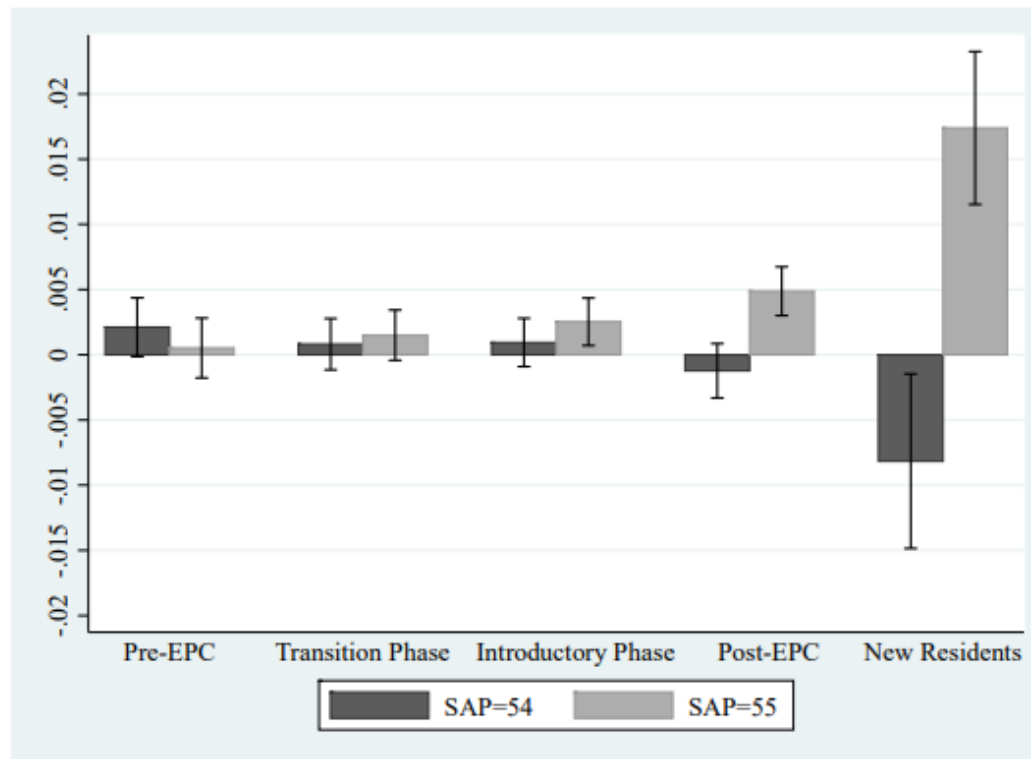
Included home energy audits

2004 Efficiency Distribution



2009 Efficiency Distribution





Notes: 90 percent confidence intervals. The sample size is 80 for all analyses. *Pre-EPC* is the 2003 wave of the English House Condition Survey; *Transition Phase* is the pooled 2005 and 2006 waves ($n = 32939$); *Introductory Phase* is the 2007 wave; *Post-EPC* is 2009 wave; *New Residents* is the 2009 wave restricted to homes that have been occupied by their current residents for less than twelve months. A score of zero on the vertical axis means that there is the same percentage of homes at a given SAP score as predicted by the best-fit polynomial modeling of the smooth distribution. A positive and significant result indicates that there are in fact more homes at that SAP score than predicted by the smooth distribution; a negative and significant result indicates fewer homes than expected at that SAP score.

Summary

A simple low-cost label causes people to upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes

There are ways the policymakers could leverage this effect to green the housing stock, reduce energy bills and reduce carbon emissions e.g. turn the label into an indicator of relative energy performance.

Summary

Prompts are useful tool that can help:

Deliver information that was previously unknown but is relevant

Call to mind relevant information at a pivotal moment

Remind us of our priorities in moments where goals are conflicting

Thanks!

David.comerford@stir.ac.uk

Comerford, D. A., & McGillivray, T. (2021). Effect of obstacles/tips card on breastfeeding drop-off. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 29(9), 510-515.

Comerford, D. A., Lange, I., & Moro, M. (2018). Proof of concept that requiring energy labels for dwellings can induce retrofitting. *Energy Economics*, 69, 204-212.