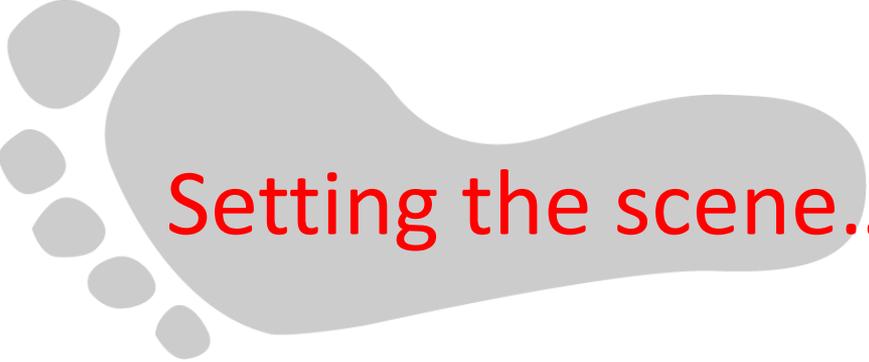


Collecting real-time qualitative  
data to understand health  
behaviour





## Setting the scene...

- The Department of Health estimates that a lack of physical activity across the UK costs the NHS over £1billion.
- Physical activity is good for their mental and physical wellbeing but people are quick to come up with reasons why they aren't as active as they should be.

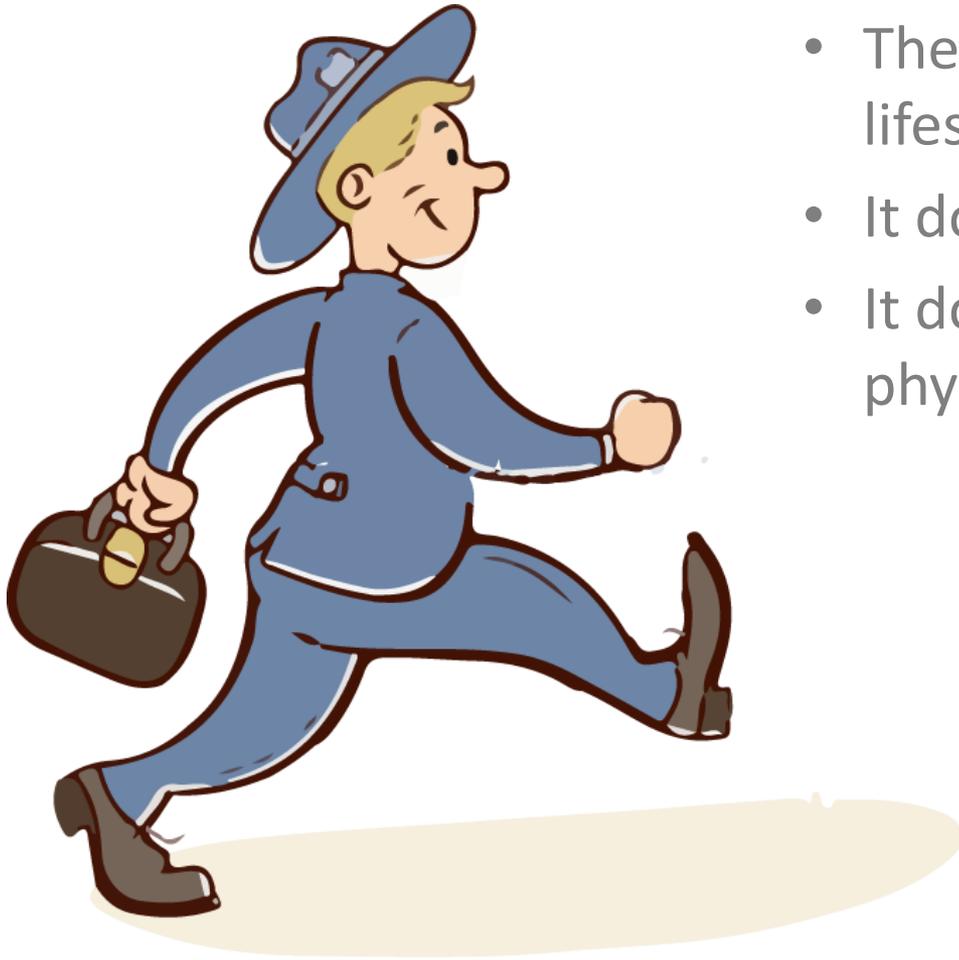
# Barriers



- Time-related pressures due to work
- Limited leisure time.
- Financial barriers, poor health and physical limitations,
- Psychological barriers
  - e.g. lack of confidence in ability;
  - Embarrassment or poor motivation.

## Benefits

- They can fit it into their busy lifestyles
- It doesn't cost too much
- It doesn't require too much skill / physical competence.





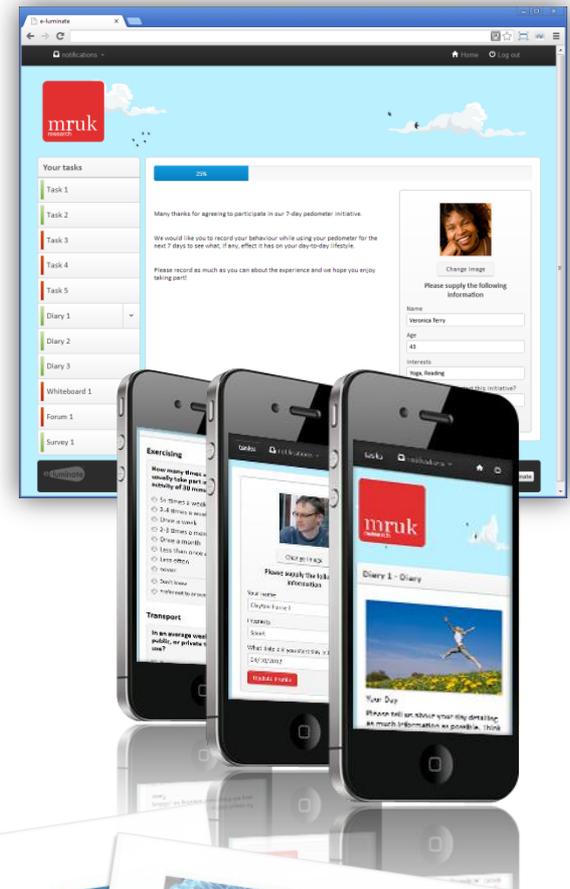
## What we did...

- A qualitative study to see whether simple interventions encouraging walking could help to change attitudes to a particular aspect of healthy lifestyles (namely physical activity).
- We wanted to look at the scope for using our in-house research tool, e-luminate, to conduct research to understand health behaviours
- Our study involved diaries to document behaviour while using a pedometer to document activity levels.



How we did it...

- E-luminate is our bespoke online data collection platform capable of collecting diaries, images, videos, surveys, whiteboards.
- Collected both quantitative and qualitative data over 7 days to assess number of steps taken but also gather qualitative data about reasons for taking part, outcome of initiative, what people learned about themselves, and any changes in behaviour.





## What we found out and its implications

- The research confirmed that the use of a pedometer fitted well with some of the barriers to exercising which I discussed earlier.
- Participants liked the fact that there was no preparation required
- It was inexpensive
- There was no need to plan a gym visit
- It was easy to fit into their lifestyle.

# Understanding the motivation of participants



- Most felt that taking part provided an opportunity to feel better about their health
- Most perceived the task to be a challenge.
- The use of a pedometer to provide a measurable assessment of physical activity was particularly appealing to participants
  - helped them to see it as a challenge
  - appears to help change attitudes to exercising
- The reasons why our participants engaged in this project offer some interesting insights into what might motivate people to be active.
- Might not have found this out via traditional methods

# Understanding the motivation of participants

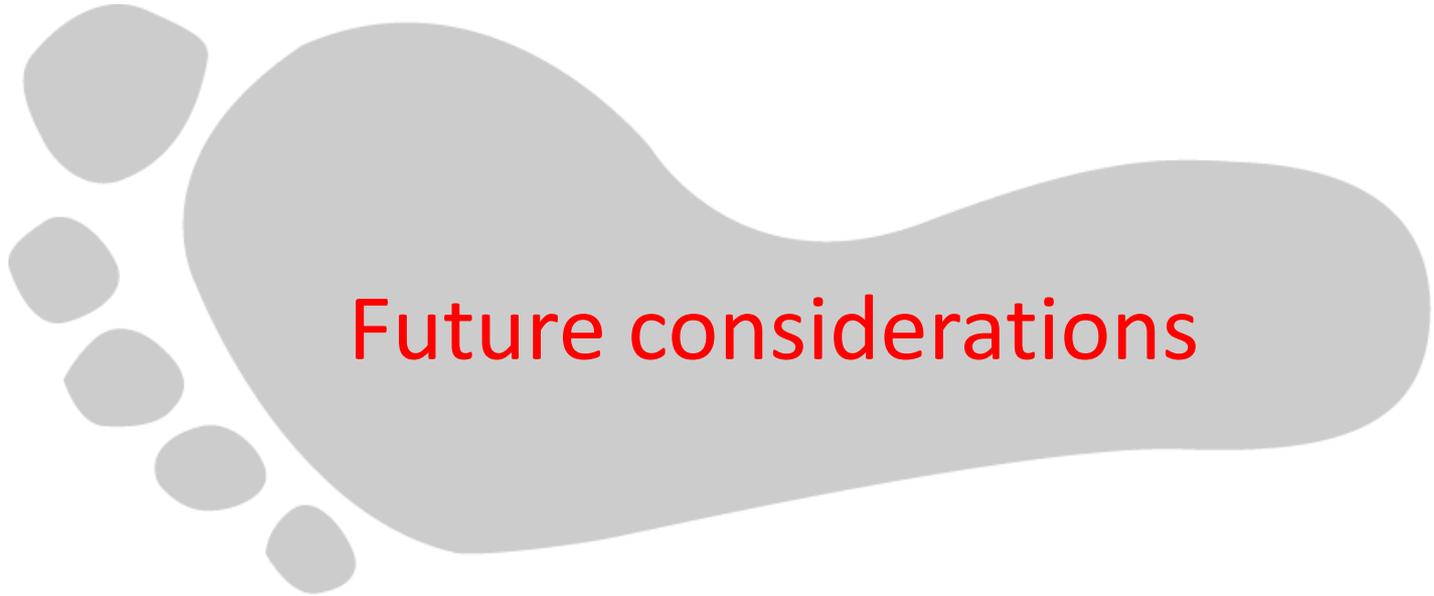


- Suggests that positive framing of a task increases engagement
- Found out about softer aspects of behaviour using e-luminate
- Identified common barriers to being more active
- Got behind issues which respondents might typically struggle to communicate (due to variety of tasks and communication tools) e.g. The role of guilt
- Some saw the study as an opportunity to counteract some of their less healthy behaviours, rather than replace them

# Adopting new health behaviours doesn't happen overnight



- Scope to undertake a longer trial of this study – probably over a period of 4 to 6 weeks, following on from what was effectively a pilot
- Would be able to monitor changes in interest and motivation via e-luminate
- A longer term study could establish whether any long-term changes in behaviour had been adopted as it is suggested that it takes at least 18 days but can take many months (Lally et al., 2009).



Future considerations



## Using e-luminate to access vulnerable and hard-to-reach audiences

- We studied a relatively healthy and active population of working-aged, Londoners, but the technology has obvious applications among vulnerable audiences who may not take part in traditional face-to-face surveys.
- Technology can actually remove barriers to participation. We carried out on-line qualitative research among rail passengers which including those with mental health problems and it became apparent that these individuals would not have shared their views in a face-to-face discussion group or via a one-to-one interview.



## The importance of good design!

- Use a quiet and unobtrusive device to reduce self-consciousness
- Choose a robust device!
- Trial the device before rolling it out.
- Consider setting an “equivalent number of steps” for activities that can’t be measured (e.g. for yoga and cycling)



## Joined up targets

- Some participants were aware of the “10,000 steps a day” challenge and many used this as their daily target and a gauge of their success.
- However, the fact that relatively few people met this target suggests there is potential to become demotivated and frustrated quite quickly.
- Current NHS guidance equates 10 minutes of walking to 1,000 steps so why not devise step targets that reflect this guidance? (i.e. that breaks down into 10 min blocks (e.g. 15 lots x 1,000 steps))
- Consider broadening the application to non walking activities (e.g. equivalent steps for cycling, swimming or yoga)



# Thank you

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