# CHAPTER 30
# Public sector communication

## Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

■ evaluate theories relevant to public communication

■ recognise the specific characteristics of relationships between non-profit organisations and their publics

■ compare and evaluate public communication practice across three non-profit sectors

■ identify the key elements for planning public communication.

## Structure

■ Theories of public communication

■ Central government communication

■ Local government communication

■ Health sector communication

■ A communication planning framework

# Introduction

Practise safe sex, wear a seatbelt, recycle waste, eat more fruit and vegetables, reduce the salt in your diet. And while you're about it, don't drink and drive, don't smoke in public places and don't forget to use your vote. Communication arising from the public sector has a very different set of driving forces from those of commercial enterprises where profit is ultimately the key concern.

Public sector communication is situated within the democratic context (see Chapter 5) and as such is driven by the need for transparency in how an organisation carries out its public duties, accountability to the public on how money from taxes is spent and, increasingly, as we shall see from the case studies in this chapter, public consultation and involvement in the services provided.

This chapter examines three specific areas of the public sector: central government, local government and the health sector. While, on the one hand, it identifies the special contexts of organisations within these sectors, on the other, it presents evidence that public communication practice is not so very different from public relations practice found in commercial enterprises and elsewhere.

To provide an understanding of public communication and public communication campaigns, we start by identifying theories drawn from North American and European literature. We then focus on three specific areas of public communication, with the main focus on the UK experience. In concentrating on three areas we recognise that we cannot do justice to a specific sector in one short chapter. However, what this chapter aims to do is present an idea of the scope of public communication for the student to take forward for further investigation.

## Theories of public communication

### Public sector communication in context

The term 'public' is generally used to denote affairs that affect everyone (Raupp 2004). Within a national democracy, central government departments (or ministries), local authorities, hospitals and other public sector organisations are legally and morally obliged to inform the population and the media about policy decisions and issues affecting everyone in society. However, it is not just national institutions that have a duty to keep the public informed. Supranational organisations such as the European Union are also included here.

Societies everywhere are faced with social problems that elected politicians and their officials are tasked with solving. In 2005, the re-elected Blair government in the UK announced that disrespect for others was becoming a widespread problem in society. The government promised that it would take action to encourage young people in particular to have a greater respect for their fellow citizens. Public policies formulated to tackle a wide range of social problems – from antisocial behaviour through to teenage pregnancies, binge drinking, car crime, drug abuse and the high number of fatalities in road accidents – can only be translated into action through effective communication. These policies take shape in the form of public communication campaigns (see later).

Public sector organisations also communicate with many stakeholders to demonstrate how the public's money is spent. Therefore, in market-driven economies such as the UK, the 'bottom line' for some public sector organisations such as hospitals is *accountability*: showing that public money is being spent wisely and responsibly in providing services. Communication is thus a key element in showing how an organisation is accountable to the public as citizens, voters, residents, patients or consumers. Within the context of public sector accountability, the news media play a crucial role. The news media may be regarded as friendly allies, critical opponents or neutral observers, depending on a wide range of factors concerning the nature of the news media and the nature of the public sector organisation itself. Any abuse of public money will make a newsworthy story, so it is in the interests of a public sector organisation to ensure that the issues it campaigns on are perceived as worthwhile. If the ethics of the organisation itself become the main story (for example, corruption on any scale will make headlines), then the policies it is trying to implement will receive much less public attention.

In the UK, the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act 2005 compels public sector organisa-tions to be further accountable to their publics. Access to official information is a right of all UK citizens, which means that public sector communication professionals need to be aware of disclosure rules concerning the types of information held by their organisations.

The context of public sector communication is also political. While it is sometimes difficult, from the public's point of view, to perceive a clear distinction between *political* communication and *policy* communication (for example, in the case of campaigns to increase voter turnout) it is important to bear in mind that in theory, at least, there is a distinction between the two. Political communication arises from political parties with the objective of putting across the party's views on a range of issues to the electorate; policy communication arises from the policies decided by elected politicians, with the support of officials who advise on policy implementation.

### Public communication campaigns

Public sector organisations' responsibilities to inform the public are often translated in the communication campaigns. 'Public information campaigns' and 'public communication campaigns' are terms that are often used interchangeably, but in the literature there is a distinction between the two. Public information campaigns are typified as one-way communication (sender to receiver) while public communication campaigns are seen as interactive (sender–receiver–sender). In practice, however, campaigns are usually a combination of both strategies and are characterised by an attempt to persuade citizens to think about or do something for their own well-being or the public good. *Public communication campaigns* can be summed up as: 'Purposive attempts to inform, persuade, or motivate behavior changes in a relatively well-defined and large audience, generally for noncommercial benefits to the individual and/or society, typically within a given time period, by means of organized communication activities involving mass media and often complemented by interpersonal support' (Rice and Atkin 1989: 7).

Dozier et al. (2001) argue that public communication campaigns fit in with the two-way asymmetric model of communication where a change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of target populations – or persuasion – is the organisation's intention. However, as we shall see later in this chapter, there is evidence that public sector communication is moving in the direction of public involvement and perhaps a more symmetric style of communication.

Rice and Atkin refer to the mass media in their definition of public communication campaigns. Table 30.1

TABLE 30.1   Two types of media campaign in public communication (*Source:* Coffman 2002, www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/pubs/onlinepubs/pcce)

| Campaign type/goal | Individual behaviour change | Public will |
|---|---|---|
| Objectives | <ul><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 acceptability of a behaviour among peers</li><li>Affect intentions to perform the behaviour</li><li>Produce behaviour change (if accompanied by supportive programme components)</li></ul> | <ul><li>Increase visibility of an issue and its importance</li><li>Affect perceptions of social issues and who is seen as responsible</li><li>Increase knowledge about solutions based on 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 audience | Segments of the population whose behaviour needs to change | Segments of the general public to be mobilised and policy makers |
| 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, drink driving, seatbelt usage, parenting | Support for quality childcare, after-school programming, healthcare policy |

highlights this use of media, identifying two types of public communication campaign.

From Table 30.1, it can be seen that *individual behaviour change programmes* include public information or public education campaigns that 'strive to change in individuals the behaviors that lead to social problems or the behaviors that will improve individual or social well-being' (Coffman 2002: 6). Many well-known campaigns are concerned with public health (e.g. anti-smoking) and are instigated by government ministries or departments which deal with health issues. However, campaigns arise from other policy areas such as education (e.g. teacher recruitment), social affairs (e.g. foster care recruitment), law and order (e.g. anti-theft) environment (e.g. recycling of waste) and transport (e.g. anti-speeding). As can be seen from Table 30.1, these campaigns use social marketing strategies (explained later in this chapter) and often paid-for media such as advertising.

*Public will* campaigns, according to Table 30.1, are about bringing social issues to the public's attention to influence awareness or knowledge. This is mostly done through the news media, using media advocacy and community mobilisation strategies. Public relations, in the form of media relations, plays an important role here. An example is the Holocaust Memorial Day, organised annually by the UK's Home Office to educate the population about the Holocaust and promote messages of social inclusion. In 2005, 12 senior journalists were taken to Auschwitz–Birkenau in Poland to see the place where millions of Jews met their deaths during the Second World War. Survivors who were willing to tell their stories were contacted and matched to relevant media outlets. Following widespread media coverage leading up to the Holocaust Memorial Day, it was estimated that 1.5 million people watched the memorial service on national television *(PR Week* 25 March 2005: 32). (See Activity 30.1.)

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### activity 30.1

**Two types of campaign**

Can you list further examples of the two types of campaign given in Table 30.1?

**Feedback**

You will probably find it easy to name the high-profile advertising campaigns that are specifically aimed at changing people's behaviour. However, by keeping a close eye on the national and local news, you will soon learn to 'spot' awareness-raising campaigns that public sector organisations carefully plan to achieve maximum impact around calendar events – e.g. news items about drink-driving fatalities around Christmas and the New Year.

## Objectives

As described earlier, public communication campaigns attempt to achieve changes in an individual's attitudes and knowledge (known as *cognitive* change) feelings (known as *affective* change) and behaviour about social issues. Table 30.2 shows campaign objectives drawn from the examples and case studies in this chapter and the types of cognitive, affective or behavioural changes they are attempting to achieve.

## Communication process

As we have seen in earlier chapters (especially Chapter 8, which examined communication theory), the communication process is mostly conceived around the SMCR model: sender, message, channel, receiver. It is these variables, with the addition of 'effects' or receiver impact, that form the basis of public communication campaigns. We will use a similar framework to discuss campaigns in this chapter.

While the SMCR model is a useful framework to discuss the elements of a campaign, a criticism is that it is one-way and linear: it does not acknowledge the involving, two-way nature of effective public communication where the citizen or consumer has to first engage with the message in order for change to be brought about. However, it is also important to acknowledge that public sector campaigns are initiated by organisations that have the political will, knowledge, resources and technologies to make them happen, so while a two-way symmetric style might be adopted, it is in the interests of the organisation to achieve the 'public good' campaign targets that are set.

## Source or sender

Public communication, particularly that of national governments and supranational governments such as the European Union, fits the asymmetric model of communication where a change in knowledge, attitudes or behaviour is intended – for example, where the 'sender' of the message is engaged in motivating populations to drink less alcohol, eat less fat, exercise more regularly, give up smoking or support the introduction of the euro (European currency).

Town or regional councils initiate campaigns locally to improve voter turnout at local elections, to increase the number of young people voting, to encourage people not to drop litter and to get people to recycle their

TABLE 30.2   Public communication campaign objectives

| Campaign topic | Objective(s) | Type of cognitive, affective and/or behavioural change intended |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Holocaust Memorial Day | 1 Educate general public about the Holocaust | Increase knowledge about a significant place and associated events during the Second World War |
| | 2 Promote social inclusion | Encourage positive attitudes towards people in society who are different |
| Banning smoking in public places | 1 Raise residents' awareness about proposals to create a 'smoke-free' city | Increase knowledge about proposed policy change |
| | 2 Gauge residents' views about proposed ban on smoking in public places | Test public opinion and attitudes about effects of policy change |
| | 3 Inform and educate people about the dangers of smoking | Increase knowledge and encourage public disapproval of smoking |
| | 4 Provide advice and support on giving up smoking | Behavioural change – encourage smokers to stop smoking |
| 'Name that Tag' (environmental crime – graffiti) | 1 Get people to report the names of 'taggers' who leave their 'tags' or graffiti signatures in public places | Behavioural change – discourage graffiti artists from leaving their 'tags' |

waste. These are not campaigns promoting a particular political party's views but they are all persuasive campaigns with the intention of achieving a behavioural change for the good of democracy and the community.

Sometimes it can be confusing as to who is actually the 'sender' of the message: is it the initiator (e.g. the organisation's policy department), the sender (e.g. the communication professional working on behalf of the organisation) or the communicator (e.g. the journalist working for the local newspaper)?

### *Multiple senders*

Public bodies increasingly work in close partnership with other public bodies, or with private enterprises to help solve particular social issues and to transfer both the cost and risk from the public to the private sector (Leitch and Motion 2003).

A recent example of public partnerships is the TOGETHER campaign to tackle antisocial behaviour, organised by the UK's Home Office. This campaign works on two levels, national and local, and relies on a range of local agencies, for example, the police, the courts and councils, to deal with nuisance neighbours, begging and environmental crime (e.g. graffiti). A key part of this campaign is to get people to report crime and name the wrongdoers. To catch the graffiti artists, a poster campaign called 'Name that Tag' was created to encourage people to phone a number to report the 'taggers' from their publicised signatures, and be rewarded with £500 (Home Office 2004). (See Think about 30.1.)

### Several channels

To reach a heterogeneous (dissimilar) public, multiple channels need to be considered in a public communication campaign. Publics should be segmented (broken down into definable groups) in order to determine channel usage. The campaign may need to address different levels of media use and information seeking within the community. One segment of relatively isolated elderly people may only listen to their local radio station for information, while a segment

of young mothers may not use the local media at all, but prefer to talk to their neighbours, family or friends to find out what is going on. Segmenting publics in a sophisticated manner, however, usually requires substantial data to discover specific media and information-seeking habits. Research, therefore, plays an important role here.

A wide range of media channels are available for public communication campaigns, but mass media advertising is most commonly used in large-scale, national campaigns. While advertising is an expensive medium, it does reach a wide spectrum of society in raising awareness of an issue. So, for example, to inform millions of people on low incomes about a new state benefit, the UK government often uses television advertising as a key channel, but this will be supplemented by a wide range of other channels (such as talk shows on local radio, leaflets and interpersonal communication through advisors) that provide more detail about the benefit, and to encourage take-up. This is because television advertising cannot successfully disseminate large numbers of facts. As Windahl et al. point out: 'All media have their strengths and limitations' (1992: 108).

### Many messages

A single campaign will have many messages simply because it needs to reach different sections of the community and because messages are attended to and perceived in different ways by different people. The two-step flow of information theory (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955) recognises the influence of reference groups on message reception. In other words, while the target receiver may not attend to a given message, their immediate family and friends might do. For example, a very elderly person may ignore all mass media and written attempts by a government organisation to get them to claim special allowances, but a campaign aimed at the families or carers of elderly people is more likely to be effective in getting the message across. This is because, in the eyes of the elderly person, governments are often associated with taxation, rather than giving money, so a direct

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**think about 30.1** **Senders – 'Name that Tag' poster campaign**

As a local campaign, who is the initiator, the sender and the communicator?

**Feedback** In this case, the initiator is the Home Office, the sender could be the local police (who deal with crime), and the communicator could be the communication professional who creates the poster on behalf of the police. In a national campaign, however, both the initiator and the sender would be the Home Office, and the communication professional could be an agency working on behalf of the Home Office to create a poster.

PICTURE 30.1   To catch graffiti artists, a poster campaign called 'Name that Tag' was created by the UK's Home Office to encourage people to phone a number to report 'taggers' from their publicised signatures, and be rewarded with £500 (*source:* Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, The Home Office).

message could arouse suspicion, whereas a family member or carer would be able to explain to the elderly person that they are missing out on a sum of money to which they are entitled.

The strength and tone of the message also has to be considered. Health messages have to tread a fine line between arousing too high a level of anxiety among the 'worried well' and encouraging message avoidance among high-risk groups (e.g. early HIV/AIDs campaigns). Similarly, campaigns that unintentionally glamourise risk taking (e.g. through 'cool' imagery of young people smoking) or are too patronising (e.g. 'just say "no"' in regard to drug use) will produce negative effects.
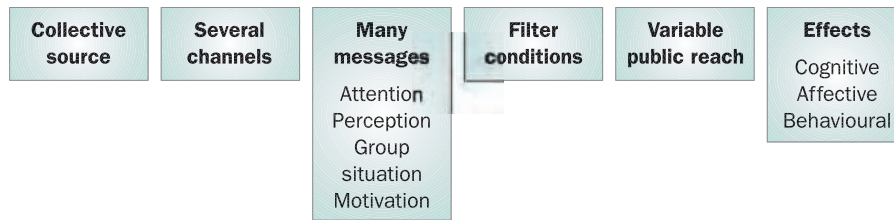
| Collective source | Several channels | Many messages | Filter conditions | Variable public reach | Effects |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Attention Perception Group situation Motivation | | | Cognitive Affective Behavioural |

FIGURE 30.1  A model of communication influence process (*source:* McQuail 1987 cited in Windahl *et al* 1992:104)

## Receivers

As we have already discussed, messages are received differently by different receivers. McQuail (1987) identifies four filters or selection processes that determine how an individual receives a message: attention, perception, group situation and motivation. These filters will be either favourable or unfavourable towards the intended effect of the message. The first filter is attention and this refers to whether a message 'grabs' or reaches the receiver in the first place. The second filter is perception and this refers to how the message is perceived by the individual – as we have already suggested, both the message content and tone could make a difference here. The third filter is the group situation and whether peers are likely to reinforce the message or discourage its acceptance by the individual. The fourth filter is motivation: is the individual ultimately motivated to think, feel or do something about the message?

## Effects

'Effects' refer to intended cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes that are agreed at the beginning of the campaign. These outcomes are expressed as objectives in a campaign plan (see the earlier section on objectives). Effects are also equated with campaign effectiveness or success. So, for example, if the objective is to encourage students to stop smoking, this will be measured behaviourally in terms of the numbers who give up smoking during the course of the campaign. If there has been a reduction in smoking, this is known as an 'intended campaign effect' and the campaign will be deemed effective. However, some campaigns have backfired, producing negative, *unintended* effects. Some anti-drug campaigns, for example, are thought to have stimulated drug use among high-risk drug users (Makkai et al. 1991) and widened the gap between authority and youth supporting a pro-drug culture (Cragg 1994). (See also Chapter 11 for a further discussion of evaluating campaigns.)

Windahl et al. present McQuail's communication influence process model, which helps us to see some of the breadth and complexity of a public communication campaign in Figure 30.1.

This model recognises that a given campaign will potentially have many sources or senders ('collective source'), multiple channels and messages and different success rates with different publics. (See Think about 30.2.)

Read Mini case study 30.1 and Think about 30.3, which considers the communication influence model.

## Communication models: a rethink

The communication roles involving some public institutions are becoming more diffuse, challenging the

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**think about 30.2** — **Public communication influence process and public relations**

Figure 30.1 presents the public communication influence process. How does this differ from the public relations planning process described and discussed in Chapter 10?

**Feedback** The public relations planning process includes some elements of Figure 30.1, but in the public relations process there is a clearer identification of the *organisation* as sender. In public relations, publics (receivers) are considered at an early stage in the process, following a definition of the 'problem' and situation analysis. Public relations also explicitly uses the terms 'strategy' to determine the overall communication approach and 'tactics' which refers to the public relations activities and media channels selected to influence publics. In public relations, 'effects' are the outcomes of a public relations programme and should relate back to the objectives set at the beginning (e.g. knowledge/awareness change). In public relations, this stage of the process is called 'evaluation'.

# Vote and post campaign

Crawley Borough Council in the UK wanted to improve voter turnout in the June 2004 council elections to combat a downward trend: less than one person in four had voted in the May 2003 council elections. Work on a campaign began in July 2003 with the theme of 'vote and post' to encourage postal voting. Postal voting gives people the choice of voting by post instead of visiting a polling station. The campaign objectives were: to raise awareness of the need to be on the electoral register; to encourage people to opt in to the postal vote scheme; and to encourage people to use their postal votes. Printed information was targeted at all 73,000 people on the electoral register in Crawley, and at council staff. A wide range of communication channels were used to promote the 'vote and post – make a difference' message, including media relations, direct mail, advertising and new media. Extensive use was made of established communication channels such as council tax mailings and electoral registration distribution. Campaign materi-

als were timed to reach the widest audience in the town during three phases between August 2003 and June 2004. One creative element of the campaign included the use of impactful colour photographic portraits of council staff who had volunteered. This element in itself provided a vehicle to raise awareness about the election process within the council as well as encouraging staff who lived in the town to use their votes. The campaign achieved a 600% increase in postal vote registrations and 70% who applied for a postal vote used it in the June election. The overall turnout in Crawley was 34%, an 11% increase from May 2003. Media coverage in support of postal voting was sustained throughout the different phases of the campaign.

*Source:* adapted from Excellence in Communication Awards 2004, CIPR Local Government Group (best campaign category)

whole notion of 'senders' and 'receivers' in the conventional SMCR transmission model of communication. An interactive approach, which considers the public sphere, is based on mutuality – both sender and receiver 'contribute their views to a shared universe of knowledge and interpretations' (Voltmer and Römmele 2002: 17). An example of a more involving approach to public communication is found in Case study 30.1 (Addenbrooke's) at the end of this chapter.

## Agenda-setting theory

When talking about the use of media advocacy as a strategy for drawing public attention to a social issue, this process is sometimes referred to as influencing the media agenda, or 'agenda setting'. Agenda setting refers to the theory (McCombs and Shaw 1973) that the news media highlight the importance of an issue by encouraging people to think and talk about it.

Thus, social issues are brought to the attention of the news media by 'political elites' – government policy makers, as well as pressure groups, with the intention of testing public opinion on an idea or creating the right climate of public opinion for behaviour change. A good example of this is anti-smoking campaigns. While high-profile advertising campaigns continue to persuade smokers to give up smoking, the news media are often employed to generate public discussion around, and support for, smoke-free environments. Eventually, the social pressures are such that smokers are prohibited from smoking in public areas and are forced to rethink their behaviours out of consideration for others (see Mini case study 30.3 (p. 591) on this specific issue to find out how this was done).

## Social marketing theory

In order to further contextualise public communication, and to shed light on some of the integrated

1. Who is the source/sender in Mini case study 30.1?
2. What are the channels? Can you explain the choice of channels selected?
3. What are the messages?
4. Who are the target audiences?
5. How are the 'four filters' identified earlier likely to affect the success of this campaign?
6. How was campaign success determined/measured? What effects were intended – cognitive, affective, behavioural?
7. Now reflect – what are the strengths and weaknesses of this model?

communication campaigns described later in this chapter, it is important that we explore the concept of social marketing. This draws on existing ideas in marketing but applied to non-commercial transactions. Kotler (1982: 490) described social marketing as follows:

> *Use of marketing principles and techniques to advance a social cause, idea or behavior. More specifically: social marketing is the design, implementation, and control of programs seeking to increase the acceptability of a social idea or cause in target group(s). It utilizes concepts of market segmentation, consumer research, concept development, communication, facililitation, incentives and exchange theory to maximize target group response.*

Social marketing does not assume that commercial marketing principles are unquestioningly applied to non-commercial communication planning. If we take the famous four 'Ps' of marketing – product, price, place and promotion (McCarthy 1975) – we can reinterpret these labels to fit the social context. 'Product' can be an idea, an issue, a service or a practice/behaviour, such as wearing a condom. 'Price' is what the customer pays for; in the case of condom wearing, it is prevention against disease. 'Place' refers to the channel through which the product becomes available. Obtaining condoms used to mean an embarrassing visit to the local pharmacy, which is why condoms were made available to both men and women through vending machines in public toilets. 'Promotion' involves persuading the target group to buy something or adopt a behaviour through creating awareness of the product. In the case of condom wearing, promotion will take place through many different mass media and interpersonal communication channels to reach the target public. Solomon (1989) added a fifth 'P' – 'positioning', which links to how a target public perceives a product or idea in relation to other products or ideas. This relates to the message and whether it is in tune with receivers' self-perception. In the case of condoms, some segments of the male population might be more inclined to take condom wearing seriously if the message fits in with their particular sense of humour, and is not seen as patronising.

To avoid a crude interpretation of marketing theory, it is essential to be aware of other important differences between commercial marketing and social marketing, as shown in Table 30.3. (See Activity 30.2 and Box 30.1, overleaf.)

As we have seen so far, there are different approaches to public communication, but literature and research findings have been synthesised to identify campaign success. 'Success' factors are shown in Box 30.2, on p. 587.

You should use these success factors to reflect on the case studies presented within this chapter.

## Central government communication

### Clarifying communication roles

It is important to distinguish here between the communication work done on behalf of political

TABLE 30.3   Differences between commercial and social marketing (based on Windahl et al. 1992)

| Commercial marketing | Social marketing | Example of social marketing |
|---|---|---|
| Targets most accessible part of the market (e.g. people with disposable incomes) | Often targets hard-to-reach segments or publics | Young people 'at risk' of drug abuse |
| Competitive environment | Environment is less competitive (sometimes only one service provider) | Public library service provided by local council |
| Services/products are paid for | Services and products are often free | New state benefit |
| Seeks to meet consumer needs and wants | Powerful interest groups are often challenged | Advertising industry (e.g. in targeting young children with fast food advertising) |
| Creates demand for a service/product | Balances demand with resource availability | Encourage pharmacy visits for common ailments to reduce demands on the local GP (doctor's) surgery |
| Product or behaviour promoted is desired/wanted by the customer | Product or behaviour promoted is not desired by the receiver | Sticking to a low-fat diet |

**activity 30.2**

**Five 'Ps' and social marketing**

Find out more about a public communication campaign with which you are familiar. Carry out an analysis of that campaign using the five 'Ps' discussed earlier. Consider also the special characteristics that make it a campaign that fits social marketing criteria in Table 30.3.

**Feedback**
Start by logging on to a government or local government (municipal) website.

parties (known as political communication) and the communication work done on behalf of elected governments and their departments of state or ministries. In the UK, since 1947, the latter role has traditionally been the role of civil servants possessing specialist public relations and communications skills who have been employed to support the government of the day. Cole-Morgan (1988) observed that departmental ministers were responsible to parliament for the information policy of their department (or ministry), and that each department had an information division whose objectives were defined as follows:

1   To create and maintain informed opinion about the subjects with which each department deals.
2   To use all methods of publicity, as suitable, to help the department to achieve its purpose.
3   To assist and advise in all matters bearing on relations between the department and its public.
4   To advise the department on the public's reaction to the policies or actions of the department. (Cole-Morgan 1988: 148)

In recent years, however, the lines between party political communication and government communication have become increasingly blurred. From the time of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s to the more recent Blair administrations, communication became politicised to the point where specially appointed political advisors such as Alastair Campbell and Jo Moore were providing the strategic communication advice to government ministers, while apparently overriding the 'official' senior communications professionals who were there to provide 'neutral' and less partisan advice. The problems faced by government communicators are well documented, eventually leading to an investigation by Sir Robert Phillis in 2004. (A summary of the Phillis Report is provided in Chapter 5.)

This section is about the communication work carried out by central government communication specialists who support a wide variety of government policies through campaigns. In the UK, the work is carried out by members of the Government Communications Network (GCN). Specialist communication staff are employed by other national governments. In Canada, citizens have a right to be informed about government policies. This information service is provided by Communication Canada, established in 2001 to conduct national information campaigns, ministerial tours, as well as maintain a website that acts as a key access point for information on the government of Canada (www.canada.gc.ca). In the Netherlands, the Dutch government's information service operates a centre for public information campaigns called Postbus 51 (www.postbus51.nl). The Postbus 51 website provides government information leaflets and publications but is also designed to answer individual questions by email within two days.

Campaigns globally include efforts to prevent a range of undesirable behaviours including drug use, drink driving and unsafe sex (as part of HIV/AIDS

**box 30.1** **Public relations or social marketing?**

Is public sector communication a type of public relations or is it social marketing? It all depends on how you look at it. If we look at it functionally, there will be a variation across different public sectors. In some public sector organisations, it is the task of public relations to coordinate all communications activities. In others, the task will fall to departments labelled 'corporate communications', 'corporate affairs' or 'marketing communications'.

The public relations or social marketing orientation will depend on a range of factors including the role and purpose of the organisation, the social issues it has to deal with, its resources and, of course, the experience, education and training of the staff performing the coordinating role. Referring back to Table 30.3, social marketing may be given a greater emphasis in public sector organisations where there is a significant emphasis on behaviour change campaigns and a large advertising budget (e.g. central government in the UK). Public relations is likely to be emphasised in organisations where the coordinating function for communications has a strong media relations orientation (e.g. local government in the UK).

prevention). Other campaign efforts are designed to promote desirable behaviours including using sunscreens, eating more fruit and vegetables ('5 a day') and crossing the road safely.

## Why some campaigns fail, why some succeed

The interesting thing about central government-instigated communication campaigns is that while many people will agree that they are a 'good thing', they are sometimes ineffective in achieving their goals because of their reliance on mass media. In support of this view, the leading American social psychologist McGuire asserted that there was little evidence of mass media persuasion having any effect on receiver attitudes, beliefs or actions (McGuire 1986). While this picture may not be entirely accurate – for example, out of 29 US health campaigns between 1980 and 1994, 20 were successful in changing behaviour and nine were not (Freimuth 1995) – health, in particular, does appear to be a hard area to campaign in.

A study of public information campaigns in Australia observed that some mass media campaigns in that country had been criticised for their irrelevance to the general community. For example, an AIDS 'Grim Reaper' advertisement was criticised for unnecessarily scaring people who were not at high risk of AIDS; the result being that screening centres were

inundated with low-risk clients (Noble and Noble 1988).

American scholars Hyman and Sheatsley as long ago as 1947 posed questions on why information campaigns fail and Mendelsohn (1973) identified reasons for success.

Hyman and Sheatsley (1947) attributed blame to a large group of uninformed receivers among the American population whom they critically called 'chronic know-nothings'. Common threats to the success of information campaigns were attributed to what is known as 'selective processes' or filters – selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention. Such filters ensured that the 'chronic know-nothings' were impossible to reach with any information. Mendelsohn, however, believed that campaign planners were the ones to blame in ignoring communication research and theory. For campaigns to succeed, three conditions had to be met:

1  Realistic goals had to be set, based on the assumption that the publics are not overly interested, if at all, in the message.
2  Information was not enough. Interpersonal communication played an important role, therefore a combination of mass communication and interpersonal communication should be considered.
3  Campaign publics needed to be segmented according to media habits, lifestyles, values and belief systems, and demographic and psychological characteristics. (Windahl et al. 1992: 101)

Other writers stress that in today's increasingly sophisticated media environment, and with higher cognitive levels among publics, it is no longer enough to 'broadcast' to undifferentiated publics using mass communication methods (if, indeed, it ever was). What is important is the correct utilisation of socio-scientific research tools for campaign planning, implementation and evaluation (Klingemann and Römmele 2002). This means the campaign planners should obtain a clear understanding of the publics targeted, their receptivity to particular messages and channels, and their willingness to adopt the core proposition of the campaign.

## Role of advertising

Having concluded that mass communication should not be the only method of reaching publics, it is still the case that governments use advertising as a key tool in public information campaigns due to its efficiency in reaching a wide audience. The UK government is one of the biggest spenders on media advertising, often the main channel in public information/communication campaigns. In 2004, for example, the Central Office of Information (COI), which buys advertising space on behalf of the UK government, reported a total advertising spend of £189m, second only to Procter & Gamble, the company famous for its soap powder and shampoo brands. This figure represented a 19% increase on the previous year, leading to accusations by the Conservative party that the government was 'sneaking' Labour party propaganda into public information commercials (BBC1 2004 online). This may or may not be true. However, advertising is often used by governments because the elected politicians who run them know it is highly visible and through advertising they are 'seen to be doing something' about a social issue. However, as the authors of a study of youth at risk in Australia concluded:

> *Advertising campaigns against specific social problems are too frequently chosen by politicians as a solution to a social problem. It is clear that they are ephemeral – last week drink-driving, this week AIDS. Social problems are not tidy political issues. They come attached to people and communities and the solution to them can only be found in people and communities. (Easthope and Lynch 1989)*

While there is controversy in the literature about the effectiveness of mass media campaigns, and especially advertising, it is clear that mass media channels play an important role at the early stages of a campaign in stimulating awareness and putting an issue on the public agenda.

## Role of public relations

Poster, billboard, and television advertising can be visually memorable, but it is the explanatory work done with the news media that draws attention to the advertising message in the first place and helps to stimulate public debate. Public relations (more narrowly interpreted as media relations within this context) is an accepted communication tool for central government campaigns. While government departments in the UK have their own media relations functions, staffed by news officers or press officers, campaigns are now more commonly outsourced to consumer public relations agencies in line with New Labour's ideas of citizens as 'consumers who exercise choice' (*PR Week* 26 November 2004: 19).

Within an integrated communication campaign, public relations may involve media relations activities such as a press conference announcing the launch of the campaign and creative tactics to keep the campaign momentum going. Tactics will involve: publicising key sources of information such as hotlines and websites; briefings with key journalists writing for target publics; and a sequence of press releases commenting on the campaign progress (e.g. in achieving public awareness targets), introducing supporting events (e.g. roadshows, exhibitions), reporting on human interest stories and putting on record what the campaign has achieved.

To generate media interest in 'Use Your Head', the integrated communication campaign to recruit more teachers to state schools in the UK, public relations activity was targeted at potential 'career switchers' among specific groups that the teaching profession lacked, such as male primary school teachers and people from ethnic minorities. The campaign was timed around the academic year, with the spring public relations activity aimed at ensuring that all places on teaching courses were taken up by the following September (*PR Week* 9 January 2004: 7).

A campaign may also be wholly 'public relations driven': in other words, the public relations activity will be the main focus of communication, such as the Holocaust Memorial Day mentioned earlier in this chapter.

## New priorities for government communication

In Chapter 5 we noted that a key concern for democratic societies is the inclusion of minority groups. These are regarded by society as marginalised groups because they often do not have contact outside their immediate community. Social inclusion is a concern for all governments that are operating within

a multicultural context – the Netherlands, Australia, the USA and the UK being four countries with sizeable diverse populations.

One of the key concerns for the UK government, for example, is finding ways of reaching out to black and minority ethnic (BME) groups using innovative communication strategies, instead of relying on translations of traditional media such as information leaflets. To support this initiative, an Inclusivity Unit has been set up by the Central Office of Information to commission research and devise communication strategies that will be most effective in reaching minority groups. Agencies that specialise in reaching BME groups are being taken on to the COI 'roster' (approved list of suppliers of services) to carry out communication campaigns (*PR Week,* 26 November 2004: 19).

As well as BME groups, other 'hard-to-reach' audiences such as small to medium sized enterprises, youth and elders (senior citizens) have also been subjects of research by the COI on behalf of government departments. A 'Common Good' website has enabled other government departments and communications agencies to access the research findings. (See Activity 30.3 and Mini case study 30.2.)

## Local government communication

### Local government in the UK

Local government in the UK comprises city, district, unitary and county councils. Elected politicians (known as councillors) are accountable to the local population for the money raised from taxes, which is spent on a wide range of services.

Services are organised differently depending on the type of council. However, most people live in a town where the local council is responsible for refuse collection and disposal, street lighting, road maintenance, culture and leisure facilities, planning regulations and environmental issues (see Mini case study 30.3, on p. 591). In larger towns, councils have wider responsibilities including education for children between the ages of 4 and 16 and social care. Council employees are known as 'officers' and usually have a job title such as 'environmental health officer'. Each council has at least one public relations officer and in some councils there are communications teams of 10 or more, incorporating media relations, internal communication, marketing communications and other functions such as graphic design.

### Local government public relations

The communication function in local government is commonly referred to as 'public relations', explained by its origins in media relations and the establishment , in 1948, of press officers to inform the public about the role of local councils. One of the oldest

### mini case study 30.2

# Segmenting minority groups

Segmenting the target population is important when communicating to minority population groups. Media messages need to be culturally appropriate, but they also need to recognise that a cultural group is diverse with different lifestyles and habits.

In its 'Why Start?' multimedia campaign aimed at reducing smoking-related deaths among Maoris (an indigenous tribe of New Zealand), the New Zealand government developed a three-year campaign using cinema and TV advertising, advertising in buses and bus shelters, health education materials and Maori radio advertising. Specific campaign components were directed at Maoris, taking into consideration their cultural needs and differences.

In Canada, a 'Second-hand Smoke' campaign, warning of the dangers of passive smoking, was specifically targeted at smokers, an estimated 70% of Aboriginals. The campaign highlighted the toxic chemicals found in cigarettes and the need to consider the health of unborn babies, families and co-workers. Campaign materials included television and radio advertisements, posters, print advertisements and a brochure – all translated into Inuktituk, a language of the Inuit people.

*Sources:* NZ Ministry of Health 1996; Health Canada
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnihb/cp/tobacco/
keepinginformed.htm

special interest groups of the UK's Chartered Institute of Public Relations is the Local Government Group.

Local government traditionally operated at the 'public information . . . end of public relations' (Harrison 2000: 173). Campaigns focused on increasing public awareness of social issues such as road safety and the environment.

Local councils in the UK are specifically prohibited by law to attempt to persuade publics. Recent advice states: 'Council communications should be informative rather than persuasive' (IDeA 2005). Within this context, persuasion is seen as providing information that is identifiable as one political party's views.

However, in order to cut through the clutter of media and messages faced by residents, and to use resources effectively, it is essential for councils to have clear objectives in what they are trying to achieve in public relations terms. Some of these objectives will be about raising awareness about the council's policies (e.g. Leeds City Council introducing 'Fairtrade' foods at all its catering outlets); other objectives will be a direct encouragement for people to do something such as using green bins for recycling waste.

Unfortunately, local government has always suffered from a lack of public knowledge, not only about the role of elected politicians, but also of what councils actually do. It is a truism that British people have held either indifferent or negative views of their local council, based on experiences of litter in the streets or dog excrement in the local park.

To demonstrate accountability to local residents, councils have had to shift away from passive 'information giving' to what is known as 'community engagement' where people are openly encouraged by their council to have their say on public issues. During the 1990s, for example, the London Borough of Lewisham opened its committee meetings to television cameras to enable the BBC to make a documentary series. It also opened a Video Box in an experiment to let the public have their say about local services (Walker 1997).

Since 2001 performance checks undertaken by the Audit Commission have helped to reinvigorate the communication function of local government.

Councils have to communicate corporately and involve a wide variety of stakeholders, including partners and employees, as well as citizens varying widely in age, ethnicity, and ability to communicate their own needs and wants. Communication is increasingly recognised as a two-way strategic function (Gaudin 2005). The role of public relations in local government is thus made clear: 'Good communication is central to community leadership and the delivery of services to local people' (Yeomans and Adshead 2003: 250). (See Think about 30.4 and Mini case study 30.3.)

## Health sector communication

### The health environment

Healthcare is a high priority globally. In 1998, the World Health Organisation (WHO) set challenging health targets for people worldwide in its HEALTH21 policy. The policy comprises three values:

- health as a fundamental human right
- equity in health across nations
- participation by, and accountability of, individuals, groups, communities, institutions, organisations and all sectors in the health development movement (WHO 1999: 4).

Within the context of the HEALTH21 policy, a four-part strategic action plan has been set out for countries in Europe. This action plan, with an emphasis on participatory health development within local communities, implies changes not only in healthcare delivery (i.e. through primary care organisations and hospitals) but in health communication.

While governments at national level will continue to have a responsibility in raising awareness through mass media campaigning on public health issues, such as those discussed earlier in this chapter, it is at the local level where the changes to people's behaviour can be achieved most through a greater involvement in decisions about their own health and healthcare. Here there is a clear role for locally based communication professionals.

**mini case study 30.3**

# Community engagement – banning smoking in public places

Coventry City Council in the UK wanted to take advantage of growing public support for banning smoking in public places. The aim of the three-month campaign 'Smoke-Free Coventry' was to position Coventry as a leader in the national debate on smoking and banning smoking. The key objectives were: to raise awareness of and gauge the views of Coventry residents about proposed plans to create a 'smoke-free' city and ban smoking in public places; to inform and educate people about the dangers of smoking and promote Coventry's Quit Smoking Team.

To gain local support, the campaign team involved partners and opinion formers including the media, health agencies, schools and the fire service. Local public opinion was tested using a residents' poll, a website questionnaire and a citizens' panel comprising members of the local community. Eight in ten residents

of the 6000 who responded to the consultation (including smokers) said they wanted the city to become smoke free in public places. This positive response gave impetus to the tactical campaign. The focal point of the campaign was a wacky character called 'Terminator' (in reality, a smoking cessation officer) who roamed pubs (public bars) warning people of the health risks of smoking and giving advice on quitting. This attracted television coverage and letters flooded into local newspapers in response to the debate. As a result of the campaign, Coventry City Council is a prominent lobbyist at the UK parliament on smoking legislation.

*Sources: PR News* (IPR Local Government Group) November 2004, I5: 8; Excellence in Communication Awards 2004, IPR Local Government Group

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As the WHO's 'Health for All' (HFA) policy states:

*More vigorous and open involvement of journalists and other professionals working in the media and the communication industry in creating and sustaining public knowledge and debate about health issues will be vital to the success of HFA policy, with its emphasis on public participation and the transparency of policy-making and implementation processes. Special training in such health issues should be part of the education of such professionals. The health sector itself must make a start by welcoming a more open dialogue on its affairs. (WHO 1999: 158)*

The role of the corporate communicator in a healthcare organisation such as a hospital is thus suggested as 'promoting the participation of all its stake-

holders in its corporate life' and strengthening 'the perception of health as a fundamental human right' (Kuteev-Moreira and Eglin 2004: 123). All this opens up a new dimension for the health sector communicator in terms of the communication style they adopt. (See Activity 30.4.)

## Health sector communication in the UK

The policy document *Shifting the Balance of Power: The next steps* (Department of Health 2002) announced a new way of organising and managing health services within the UK National Health Service (NHS). Since 2002 the hospital sector has also changed, with 'well-managed' hospitals being eligible to apply for foundation trust status to enable a greater degree of community autonomy and financial discretion. With the policy emphasis on partnership working and stakeholder consultation, communications practitioners (the term 'public relations' is rarely used) have had many new challenges to address, not least their own personal competences. Adopting an 'inclusive professional style' in working with partner organisations is identified as just one success factor (Beresford and Yeomans 2003).

The emphasis on consultation is undoubtedly a key change for communication practices in the National Health Service because it involves a shift in mindset away from traditional one-way public information giving to that of working with publics to identify healthcare problems and solutions. It implies, as we

**activity 30.4**

### A hospital's stakeholders

List the stakeholders of your local hospital. Now consider their relationships with the hospital in terms of expectations and level of involvement.

#### Feedback

Stakeholders will include: patients and service users, organisations representing patients and service users (these include voluntary organisations), purchasers or contractors, regulators, partners, suppliers, competitors/rivals, employees and potential employees (health service professionals), trade unions/professional associations, the media.

# Public involvement – Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The prospect of NHS foundation trust status in 2004 signalled a challenging opportunity for hospitals since the NHS was set up in 1948: a chance to be at the forefront of major change to deliver a responsive, accessible, inclusive health service accountable to the local community and free from central government control.

The basis for foundation trust status was establishing membership of the trust and involving staff, patients and the public in the running of the trust. It was therefore vital for any communications campaign to embody the values and spirit of the new NHS foundation trust itself.

Addenbrooke's' communication objectives were to:

- explain clearly the benefits and implications of NHS foundation trust status
- engage its publics' enthusiasm and engender dialogue
- translate involvement into support that would then establish a membership base of 10,000 by 1 April 2004.

All this was undertaken against the background of getting to grips with a new organisation still in the process of evolving.

The campaign comprised two phases: first, an initial 12-week consultation with staff and the local community, which informed the writing and acceptance of the application for foundation trust status and, second, the long-term commitment to recruit members of the trust – staff, public and patients.

Straplines were developed for both phases of the campaign – encapsulating the results Addenbrooke's wanted to achieve. The first phase was 'Your hospital – your chance to be involved' and the second phase which incorporated both a staff and public audience were 'Together we can make a difference' (staff) and 'You can decide how the future will look' (patients and public).

Printed material formed the basis of the campaign – for phase 1 an 'expression of interest' leaflet was distributed in the local newspaper, which offered further information available from a 50-page consultation document. This was supported by: the website; 55 meetings in the community where trust directors gave presentations and answered questions; a short video shown in shopping centres supported by literature and displays. This activity was mirrored in the trust with a tailor-made presentation developed for managers to deliver at team meetings.

Phase 2 concentrated on building up a membership base, but also tackled tricky issues like explaining to staff that they would be members of the new NHS foundation trust, unless they actively decided to opt out. This phase also used: newspaper advertising; radio advertising; direct mail shots to 100,000 addresses at random from the electoral register; awareness sessions for potential governors; posters in local doctors' (GP) surgeries, libraries, pharmacies, opticians and dental surgeries. All this was supported by media relations and articles in both the trust's internal and external newspapers and a central membership office which fielded questions and comments.

The evaluation of phase 1 – the consultation – was by the number of responses received. These responses then informed the writing of the application for foundation trust status. Eleven public meetings resulted in invitations from another 44 venues for further meetings.

The monitoring and evaluation of phase 2 was based on the number of members recruited. The target was 10,000 by 1 April 2004. By the middle of December 2003 only 1500 members had been recruited, so a change in tactics was needed involving a totally new design for campaign material. The colour chosen was part of the NHS corporate palette, but made a distinct statement from the more often used NHS blue seen on the logo. All photography was commissioned from Addenbrooke's Medical Photography department which used staff as models in the leaflets. The look was carried across to the website and other visual communication channels.

To further boost membership, radio advertising with two stations covered different age ranges, teens to 35 year olds and mid-30s onwards, together with direct mail shots to 100,000 households, plus newspaper and magazine advertising. A total of 16,203 members were recruited, which justified the change in tactics. Addenbrooke's achieved NHS foundation trust status in July 2004.

## Review

In March 2005 membership of the trust stood at 21,000 but the age of trust members was not representative of the local community. A new plan was developed to target young people aged 16–35.

*Source:* By kind permission of Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

noted earlier, less reliance on traditional mass communication methods of dissemination and more emphasis on interpersonal channels as part of a planned approach to health communication.

For communication professionals within the health service, health promotion projects such as breast or testicle self-examination may be a relatively minor element of their work given the corporate orientation of the communication effort: this can range from advising senior management on communication strategies, dealing with media attention and enquiries, organising or writing the internal newsletter and writing content for the web. Case study 30.1 illustrates the wide-ranging role of the communication function in a public involvement campaign. (See also Think about 30.5.)

## A communication planning framework

You will find a very rich body of literature and research to help with the planning, implementation and evaluation processes of a communication campaign. The bibliography at the end of this chapter will help you to develop your knowledge in this field. This bibliography draws on research and theory in public relations, persuasion, social psychology, health promotion, social marketing and mass communication. Some of these areas are covered in Chapter 14, where the psychology of persuasion is discussed. The planning process for public relations is discussed in Chapter 10, and the same sequence



PICTURE 30.2    A landfill site is always an issue of public concern when it's on our doorstep. See Case study 30.2. (*Source:* © James Leynse/Corbis.)

## case study 30.2

# Overcoming public opposition and mobilising support for the waste management site of Szentgál, Hungary

### Background

In 2003, 175 local councils in the western part of Hungary formed a consortium in order to build a new waste management site with the financial support of the European Union (EU) and the Hungarian government. Although the environmental experts and the environmental impact studies found the area on the outskirts of the village of Szentgál appropriate for the construction of the waste depot, the project – as were most of the previous attempts in other areas – was hindered by the opposition of the concerned local citizens.

The question of environmental technologies (such as sewage treatment systems, waste managing sites) in general, and the issue of 'waste' in particular, is an emotive topic not only in Hungary but in most European countries. The participants of the industry usually have to face serious challenges and trials, radical environmentalists and other pressure groups. As a result, there were at least half a dozen negative referendums preceding this campaign in other parts of the country with negative or scaremongering media coverage.

### Objectives

Six weeks before the referendum, the consortium turned to Sawyer Miller Group (SMG), a public relations consultancy, to reduce the negative effects of 'ecological scare stories' in the media, minimise the foreseen conflicts with local residents and build a constructive relationship network with other local organisations. A key objective was to turn public opinion around in Szentgál so that the majority of citizens would vote supportively at the referendum deciding the fate of the construction.

### Research

First, SMG had a local poll executed about support for the project. Out of the 3000 residents only 25% would have supported the investment, 49% of them would have rejected and 26% had not yet decided at the time. The poll also helped to better understand the demographics, the nature and strength of opinions, attitudes and beliefs.

One of the biggest concerns of the citizens was that their village would be associated and identified as the 'garbage village'. As the findings showed, people who opposed the waste management site wanted to preserve the status quo and were worried about the negative changes to their daily lives and lifestyles. They did not want decreasing property values or a polluted environment. In contrast, people in favour of the project wanted new benefits such as more workplaces, higher income tax, financial compensation and elimination of a local contaminated brownfield, infrastructural development. The most favoured compensation was the potential donation of a new school site.

The campaign was built around two major messages:

1 The depot was to be built with EU support in compliance with the strictest environment protection and security regulation.
2 Szentgál could benefit greatly by accepting the waste management site.

### Implementation

SMG's strategy was to build personal relationships with, and gain the trust of, the local residents and thus avoid the slightest suspicion that the decision would be made 'behind closed doors'.

During the six weeks of the campaign, four community meetings were organised for the citizens of Szentgál and the neighbouring villages. SMG invited independent experts and opinion leaders to these community meetings, and had them explain what had to be done to gain permission to use a site, what kind of planning consent and licensing consent was required in order to operate a landfill and how the environmental impact studies were conducted. Holding regular community meetings also helped to keep the issue 'local' and to keep out 'intruders' (e.g. 'green groups' from Budapest). Even the opponents of the depot did not like their 'outsider' opinions, and rejected their help and intervention. SMG paid special attention to avoid any associations with party politics.

SMG edited and published two periodicals that were distributed in Szentgál and the neighbouring villages. In addition to general technical information, readers could also find several 'testimony interviews'. In these interviews, both sides were given an opportunity to voice and explain their arguments. According to the feedback, this approach resulted in a lot of support for the project, and managed to balance the previously widely distributed leaflets of the opposition, which were poorly written and personal rather than factual in tone.

During the campaign SMG organised *excursions* to other waste depots where the citizens of Szentgál could see in person how an environment-friendly waste depot operates and how it can contribute to the development of the region.

Other communication tools included *leaflets*, giving in-depth explanations about all relevant issues, such as landscape, containment of litter, site management, security, drainage, noise containment, operational hours, traffic impact and the future of the local flora and fauna.

An information hotline was also set up, and a permanent exhibition organised to model the depot together with video clips. The media were informed through press conferences and special briefings.

### Result

In December 2003 nearly 60% of the population of Szentgál cast their vote and 56% of them voted for the investment.

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can be followed for a public communication campaign. However, it is important to bear in mind the particular characteristics and success factors of a public communication campaign highlighted at the beginning and throughout this chapter. Case study 30.2 demonstrates a public relations-led approach to public communication, involving a controversial issue.

## Summary

This chapter has considered the special characteristics of public sector communication: its context, goals, publics, media use and effectiveness. Theories of communication, including agenda-setting theory and social marketing, were considered to provide an understanding of the types of communication campaigns that are undertaken by public sector organisations. On the one hand, we identified that common public communication objectives were to change knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in tackling social problems, while, on the other hand, we identified that there is also a need for public organisations to work with communities to jointly solve these problems. We have also identified that within a multicultural context, a healthy democracy requires public participation. In achieving this, the public sector needs to understand and communicate with minority groups and 'marginalised' communities. Finally, through case studies we considered the use of campaign models, theories and approaches to campaign planning.

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Government of Canada: www.canada.gc.ca

Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnihb/cp/tobacco/keepinginformed.htm

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