

Coronavirus Discourses: Public Involvement Panel contributions and a Celebration and Evaluation Event

Authors: Coronavirus Discourses [team](#)

Understanding the reception of public health messages in public-facing communications is of key importance to health agencies in managing the Coronavirus pandemic. Our study took a community-focussed approach to better understand public perceptions about the impact of language and messaging surrounding Covid-19. We engaged a Public Involvement Panel or PIP, which was made up of 12 volunteer members from a range of diverse cultural and social backgrounds to be inclusive of the views of a wide range of people. All members of the group have relevant experience of living through the coronavirus pandemic in the UK.

what makes effective health messaging?

Throughout the project, we held sessions with our PIP online over MS Teams. Three group discussion sessions that we held with PIP member were on the topic of specific health messaging. For this, we showed the PIP images in advance and asked for their feedback on what was done well and how it could be done better. These sessions ensured the PIP were familiar with what constituted effective health messaging for them.

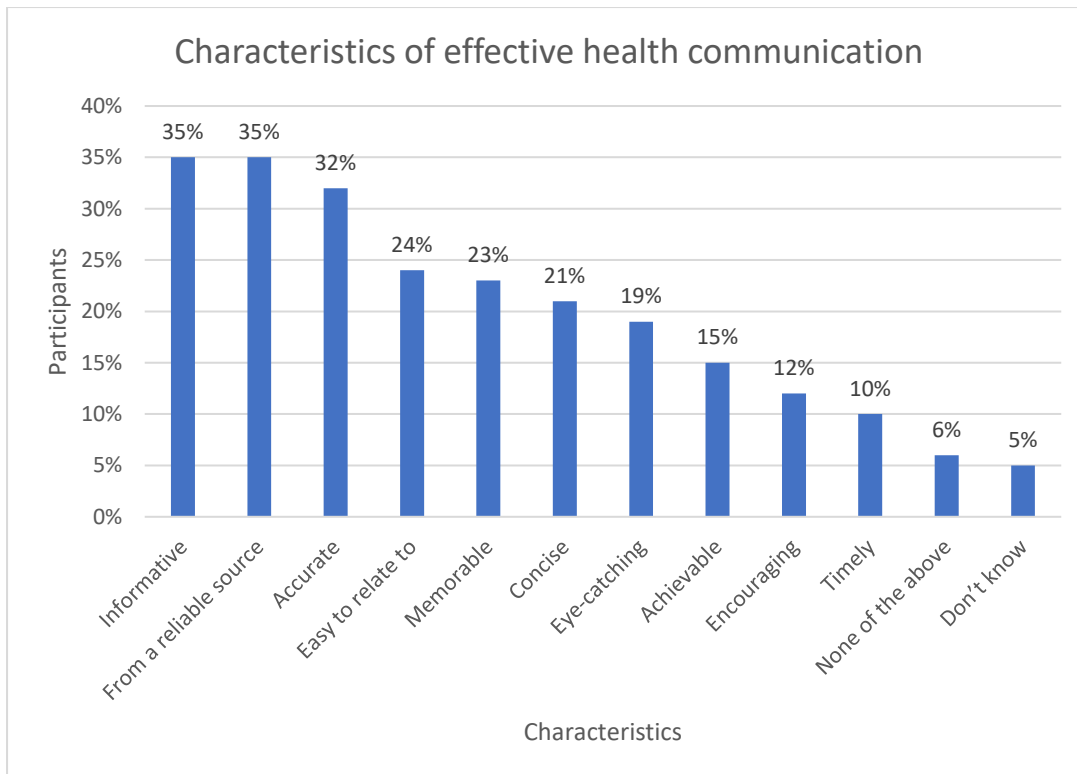


Then, in a live Google [Jamboard](#) activity, we invited members of our Public Involvement Panel to answer the question: *What makes public health messaging effective?* They drew on their prior knowledge from the discussion sessions to contribute notes to the board. We used their contributions to identify ten features or characteristics of effective public health messaging.

realistic	Scientifically accurate	Culturally aware	"Take home message"	emotive	Good spacing of information	Catchy slogan	simple	clear	1. Reliable
Culturally sensitive	highlight - one or two key words	Politically Correct (PC)	personalised	Good fonts and colours draw ones attention to messages	Does not contain jargon.	Not too wordy	Relevant	Has anticipated questions from public	2. Informative
A good image to provide context for the message	Uses catchy phrase or #hashtag	memorable	Captivating e.g. #doyourbit	Tells a story	Relevant and current information	Concise	informative	Knows the audience	3. Accurate
responsible	Concise - possibly has a strap line	Employs the use of Active Verbs	Achievable.	makes people reflect	relatable	informative	Visually representative	Not intimidating	4. Relatable
Encouraging	Impartial	from a reliable source	timely	Memorable	Eye catching	QR codes	Progressive	Respectful request rather than demand/command to obey.	5. Concise
									6. Memorable
									7. Eye-catching
									8. Achievable
									9. Encouraging
									10. Timely

These ten features were used as multiple-choice items for a representative public survey, where we asked our 1089 respondents *Which of the following, if any, do you think would be most important in making COVID-19 public health messages effective?* We allowed them to select up to three options.

Our survey respondents valued messaging that was **informative** most highly, followed by the **reliability of the source** and **accuracy** of the content. They valued the characteristics **achievable**, **encouraging** and **timely** as the least important characteristics.



A celebration and evaluation event

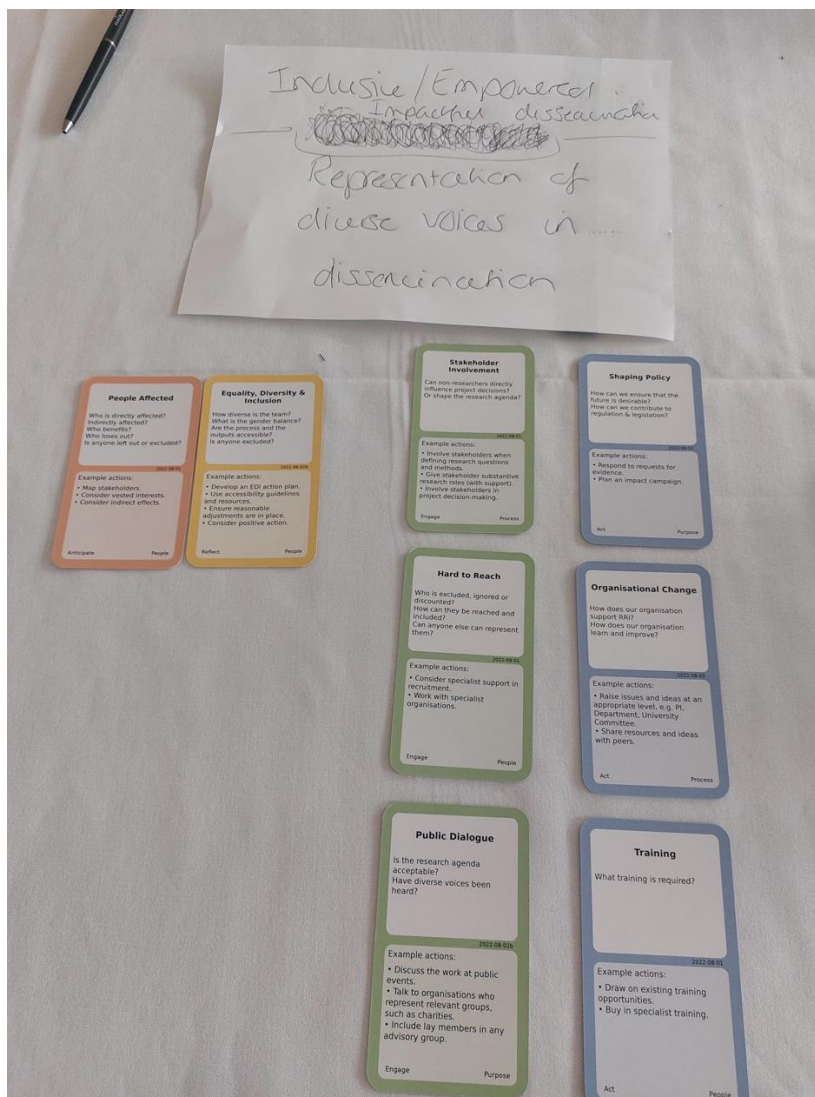
We held a project evaluation and celebration event on Wednesday 5th October to thank our PIP for their contribution to the project. We summarised the project outputs and the PIP's involvement in bringing these to fruition and ran reflection exercises with PIP members to gather feedback that may be implemented in future.



At the event, we also welcomed Elvira Perez, who ran a Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) card sorting task with the PIP in two groups. The cards are designed to facilitate reflection and discussion about the potential strengths and weaknesses of a project or topic as it relates to RRI.

Two groups completed the exercise. The first group focused on how to ensure diverse voices in research dissemination and selected one top priority card from each section of the card deck 'Anticipate', 'Reflect', 'Engage', 'Act' (A.R.E.A), adding cards below these where they felt subordinate categories were needed.

The other group critiqued the 'hard to reach' card (the middle green card shown in the image). Their conversation centred on the card's title, the framing of which they felt places emphasis on under-represented people as the 'problem'. They suggested 'representation', 'under-represented', 'underserved' or 'ignored' would be appropriate alternatives.



The final event appeared to be successful and enjoyed by all. It was a useful opportunity for the project team and PIP members to reflect on the experiences of participating in a PIP in this type of project. Considering the positive experiences and what could be improved in this way is valuable for individual projects engaging with the public and more widely, for organisations engaging with communities.

Enquiries about the Coronavirus Discourses project should be directed to: Professor [Svenja Adolphs](#).

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