

Project Summary – A randomised controlled trial on pledging

Project Description

The research will set out to discover whether making a pledge encourages people to carry out a civic activity: are those who make a pledge to do something more likely to later carry out the activity, compared to people who were not asked to pledge?

We will conduct the research with approximately 3000 people. This sample will be randomly split into three groups:

a) Pledge group – we will email/write/phone to each individual asking them to pledge to make a charitable donation during a specified week/day. They will be asked to complete and return a pledge card. A few weeks later we will contact them again and remind them to bring the item on the specified day/week to a named drop off point.

b) Pledge plus publicity group – we will write similar letters to the pledge group, but in addition, people will be told that the list of those who pledge will be made public (ie a list posted on notice board or on website etc).

b) Control group – we will write a similar letter asking them to make a charitable donation, but without the pledge card. A few weeks later we will contact them again and remind them to bring the item on the specified day/week to a named drop off point.

At the same time as this is happening, there will be a short publicity campaign about the charitable campaign – posters, intranet, email etc.

We will then see whether we get more books from the pledge group/ pledge+ publicity group/ control group.

Progress to date

- IPEG was commissioned by Communities and Local Government to undertake a brief literature review of the evidence on pledging. The report will be published at the end of July 2009. The review found that there is very limited evidence on whether people who make a pledge are more likely to then carry out the pledged activity. Pledging is most likely to be successful if it is part of a promotional campaign and if the pledge is personalised; easy to do; something the person was already considering; and if it is undertaken as part of a group activity.
- We have had preliminary discussions about working with Community HEART, a UK registered charity which supports local self-help initiatives in South Africa. They collect children's story books, novels, information books in the UK and transport them to South Africa, where they are used to set up school libraries. Further details can be found at <http://www.community-heart.org.uk/projects/books/books.htm> Community HEART can also trade in mobile phones to provide funds for transporting the books.

- We are in discussion with some potential partners about sites where we could conduct the research. It will take place during the autumn of 2009.

Outputs

- Sarah Cotterill and Liz Richardson (2009) "Pledgebanks Desk Research" report to the Department for Communities and Local Government, London: CLG

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/pledgebanksresearch>

- 'Pledge campaigns to encourage charitable giving: a randomised controlled trial' presentation to the Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) in the Social Sciences Conference 2009: Evaluating Policy Interventions, York 14th – 16th September 2009

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