

Clever Commuters



Around 650 staff are commuting to Hillmorton Hospital during office hours. At the start of this project, over 80% of staff (540) drove alone in their car and shared 470 onsite carparks with 90 patients. This was causing congestion onsite and parking issues for patients and local residents; and this was likely to increase as staff numbers increase by 245 people when new services shift onsite in the near future.

The Clever Commuter project was developed to increase staff commuting via alternative travel – cycling, walking, carpooling or taking the bus. It also aimed to increase exercise for staff wellbeing, increasing parking availability for those in need, and decreasing the environmental impact of commuting.

To instigate behaviour change, the project used community-based social marketing methodology. This involved selecting the desired behaviours to promote (cycling, walking, carpooling or taking the bus), understanding the barriers and benefits of those behaviours, building tools to overcome those barriers and developing a commitment mechanism.

Staff were surveyed to find out how they travelled as well as what they perceived were the benefits and barriers to using alternative travel. The most common benefits were:

- 👁️ spending less time stuck in traffic (52%)
- 👁️ saving money (43%)
- 👁️ avoiding difficulty finding a parking space (42%)
- 👁️ reducing environmental impact (40%)
- 👁️ being more active (35%).

The biggest barrier to all forms of alternative transport was 'I need to use my car before/after work'. Barriers for cycling were 'it is too dangerous' (51%) and 'I live too far away' (36%). For carpooling 'not knowing anyone to carpool with' (43%) was the biggest barrier. Barriers for taking the bus were 'not having a direct bus route' (55%) and 'it takes too long' (44%).

A range of initiatives were developed to reduce these barriers (where possible). These included development of an intranet site including information about each type of alternative transport, creation of 10 carpool carparks and a carpool website, free cycle training, maps for safe cycle commuting, mentor programmes, cycling gear discounts, free metro cards and walking maps. The project was launched in late 2015.

To assist in the promotion of alternative transport and to break down the barriers (where possible), 401 staff were interviewed individually. If willing, staff were asked to commit to alternative travel (clever commuting) twice a week and a commitment magnet was placed by their place of work.



Of the 401 staff interviewed, 259 (65%) committed to clever commuting, 25% by cycling, 21% by carpooling, 18% walking and 5% by bus, with some people picking multiple modes.

Staff who had committed to clever commuting were then consulted 2-4 months later to see if they had taken it up or maintained it. 47% of staff responded to the consultation and of these 68% had either maintained or taken up alternative travel, with a higher positive response coming from those that had already tried the activity. Due to the limited response to the survey it can be assumed that clever commuting has gone from 16.6% at Hillmorton to anywhere between 20-40% of all commuters interviewed.

Selected bike parks and the main carparks were also monitored during the intervention period and as the project progressed there was an increase in both the number of free carparks and an increase of 40% in the number of bikes in the bike parks.

The project benefitted from collaboration with site management, staff, Environment Canterbury and the Christchurch City Council and now offers a model for behaviour change for future relocations in the city and other hospital campuses.

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