

A blue speech bubble containing the text 'opinion leader'. The bubble is connected to a larger blue circle below by a thin, light blue curved line that forms a partial arc across the top of the page.

opinion leader

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**BETTER INFORMATION,  
BETTER ENGAGEMENT,  
BETTER COMMISSIONING**

How Opinion Leader can help



## *Better Information, Better Engagement, Better Commissioning – How Opinion Leader can help*

Successful commissioning relies on being able to:

- **Use information effectively.** PCTs need to become more skilled in collating and analysing public health and other sources of data which provide the evidence base for their commissioning decisions;
- **Engage with patients and the public.** To succeed, commissioning decisions must have local input and reflect the needs of local people.

Breakthroughs in healthcare service organisation combined with changing needs and expectations from patients create a challenging delivery environment. Thriving within such an environment requires partners that can deliver powerful insights from the patient and practitioner viewpoint. At Opinion Leader we are currently exploring these issues with a number of PCTs, using a range of technologies focusing on patient experience and behavioural drivers across different audiences.

## *A one-stop shop for commissioning support*

**Opinion Leader is a research-led consultancy. We have worked extensively with PCTs across the country. We help PCT commissioners to:**

- Evaluate existing services and provide evidence on their impact and effectiveness. Where necessary, we recommend options for changes to service delivery and design;
- Design and deliver engagement activities that help staff, stakeholders, patients and the public to express their views and contribute to on-going service design and development;
- Design and deliver engagement activities for specific pre-consultation and consultation exercises on issues such as service reconfiguration in primary and secondary care;
- Carry out research to inform social marketing campaigns aimed at real change-in-behaviour goals for individuals and community groups;
- Capture real-time experience of patients at any point(s) on their journey through care, and develop reporting to support immediate action at the local level, as well as for Board level KPIs;
- Help build skills within the PCT (and in local stakeholders such as community groups) by providing training in facilitation, participatory research and engagement techniques. This helps to build confidence and improve relationships, ensuring that everyone can be involved in decision making;
- Use participatory techniques to develop policies and strategies. Experience suggests that participation is key to successful implementation;
- Conduct reputation and stakeholder audits, using market intelligence and research that gives a clearer picture of stakeholder and public perceptions. The findings can be used, for example, to help shape marketing and communications plans.

## Our approach

To support these activities we draw on the widest range of research techniques to unpick complex and often controversial issues. We provide our clients with information, insights and recommendations that are grounded in reality.

We use a range of qualitative methodologies, including in-depth interviews, small group discussions, focus groups and deliberative events for anything from 30 people upwards. We undertake quantitative research including questionnaire surveys, and we design and manage online surveys that reach large numbers of people.

Opinion Leader is part of a wider research and communications group, over the last 15 years this group has remained at the forefront of new technologies and creative disciplines. Below are two examples of our sister companies that we believe will be of interest to you:

- **Caucus**, an online research and engagement team specialising in encouraging the young, and enabling disadvantaged groups, to participate in research;
- **Naked Eye**, specialists in ethnographic research which provides a holistic understanding of patients day to day lives, how they cope with their condition, and what their experiences are when interacting with healthcare providers.

Overleaf are some examples of our work.

## Our experience

### **EVALUATING EXISTING SERVICES**

Commissioned by the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, Opinion Leader carried out a process evaluation of the Vulnerable Workers Pilot. A suite of measurable objectives were developed alongside a performance management toolkit.

### **HELPING BUILD STAFF AND STAKEHOLDER SKILLS**

The Department of Health's Your Health, Your Care, Your Say was one of the largest and most complex consultation programmes ever carried out. Following the main consultation, Opinion Leader trained staff and developed resource packs to enable PCTs, SHAs and other healthcare providers to run their own self-facilitated events.

### **INVOLVING THE PUBLIC IN DECISION-MAKING**

When Liverpool PCT launched The Big Health Debate, Opinion Leader were commissioned to run a day-long deliberative programme with 100 members of the public and 50 staff and stakeholders. The findings (alongside subsequent discussions with seldom heard and vulnerable communities) informed the planning of community-based health care services in Liverpool.

### **UNDERTAKING EFFECTIVE PRE-CONSULTATION**

A partnership of six London PCTs asked Opinion Leader to run a series of public engagement activities before their main programme of consultation began. This pre-consultation exercise ensured that the public and patients were at the heart of the service design and that the options for future services could be clearly communicated.

## **ACCESSING PUBLIC VIEWS ONLINE**

On behalf of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, Opinion Leader developed a consultative panel of more than 750 people who had undergone, were having or considering fertility treatment in the UK. At the heart of this process was the desire to better advise and communicate with patients receiving treatment.

## **CREATING PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE BETTER HEALTH**

Commissioned by the Government and subsequently by the Department of Health, Opinion Leader have been heavily involved in the design and delivery of summits and social marketing partnerships to tackle the issue of obesity. The findings and practices have been taken forward in the Behavioural Goals Strategy and the Health Promotion National Marketing Strategy for England.

## **HELPING ORGANISATIONS UNDERSTAND THEIR STAKEHOLDERS**

Understanding what creates and changes a reputation is a cornerstone of the Opinion Leader offer. Stockport NHS Foundation Trust commissioned Opinion Leader to understand perceptions amongst key stakeholder audiences. These findings were then shared with public relations consultants, Bell Pottinger North and developed into a detailed marketing plan.

If you would like to discuss these issues or learn more about the case-studies that are outlined please contact Frances Chinemana, Research Director-Health, tel: 020 7861 3227, email: [fchinemana@opinionleader.co.uk](mailto:fchinemana@opinionleader.co.uk)

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