How Far to Nudge?
Assessing Behavioural Public Policy
New Horizons in Public Policy series

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This book addresses the wave of innovation and reforms that has been called the nudge or behavioural public policy agenda, which has emerged in many countries since the mid-2000s. Nudge involves developing behavioural insights to solve complex policy problems, such as unemployment, obesity and the environment, as well as improving the delivery of policies by reforming standard operating procedures. It reviews the changes that have taken place, in particular the greater use of randomised evaluations, and discusses how far nudge can be used more generally in the policy process. The book argues that nudge has a radical future if it develops a more bottom up approach involving greater feedback and more engagement with citizens.

‘In How Far to Nudge Peter John has written an outstanding introduction to the large and growing field of behavioural public policy.’
– Peter Wells, People, Place and Policy

‘How Far to Nudge? is an excellent book on the development of BE since infancy. John has great skill in conveying complex ideas with efficiency and simplicity. He makes interesting what a lesser writer would make tedious, and he provides us with innovative insights to the development of the area.’
– Stephen Weir, Administration

‘John’s book is not just a very useful discussion of the current state of play of behavioural insights in government. It challenges the nudge movement to develop more ambition and to be open to critical questions. The book does so by raising questions about practices, ethical concerns, policy implications and political prerequisites. How Far to Nudge? offers a valuable and reflective corrective to the often highly advocative nature of nudge-related publications’
– Martin Lodge, Wiley

‘Overall this is a fascinating and thoughtful reflection on the important story of ‘nudge’ to date, and ways it could change to have wider and more lasting impacts. For practitioners, it offers an easy introduction to the theory behind nudge and the history to date. And a challenge on applying this thinking to a much wider range of public policy issues at local level.’
– Jason Lowther, Local Government Studies

‘Peter John’s How Far to Nudge? provides a thoughtful, insightful and original take on the behavioral science revolution in public policy and administration. The book serves as a helpful resource for those looking for an overview of the current status of nudge in government, and it would provide a useful text for graduate courses that include a focus on behavioral public policy and administration. And yet the book is thought-provoking for those already familiar with the topic as well because, having worked extensively at applying nudge tactics in government and having read widely in the behavioral sciences, John is able to provide a uniquely informed perspective on the practices, limitations, ethics, and political implications of the behavioral turn in public policy and public administration as this approach assumes an increasingly prominent role in governments around the world.’
– Gregg G. Van Ryzin, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory
‘Peter John is a relatively rare breed – a political scientist working in the burgeoning field of behavioural public policy. In this new book, he takes the reader on a journey, in discussing how the field has developed, its limitations and the ethical challenges that it faces. Ultimately, John reveals himself to be a strong proponent of a principal aspect of behavioural public policy – i.e. so-called nudges – and yet, interestingly, advocates for nudges to be supplemented by approaches that encourage deliberative consideration by those targeted for behaviour change. This, he defines, as nudge plus.’

– Adam Oliver, The London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

‘This is an important book on how governments and others can affect the behavioural habits fundamental to addressing many contemporary policy challenges. Particularly valuable is the argument that nudge involves not just choice architecture and social messaging but a reform of political institutions and bureaucracies. The promotion of self-reinforcing and beneficial behaviours, including by an “agent-centred” version of nudge, is expertly illustrated through a range of cases from Professor John and others’ research. Overall, the book makes a powerful case for “nudge plus” as a more open, reflective and decentralised form of nudging.’

– Oliver James, University of Exeter, UK