


Recommendation 7 
Communications Plan

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The aim of this Communications Strategy is to focus on both internal and external communications and public relations activities. It seeks to reflect the objectives of the Local Delivery Plan and fall in line with the organisation's values and principles. It will further contribute to the Primary Care Trust's agenda to improve the health of local people and reduce inequalities of access to healthcare for local residents.
- 1.2 This Communications Strategy commits the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Media and Communications Service (MCS) to developing a co-ordinated approach to communications and public relations, with the external elements seeking the best means of enabling the PCT to:
- help the PCT promote a positive image
 - manage potentially negative stories thereby limiting adverse impact on the PCT.
- 1.3 The clear link is recognised throughout this strategy between internal and external communications. Much has been done in recent months to improve the internal communication needs of the PCT and to ensure that staff can feel fully involved in the business of the PCT.

2. PRINCIPLES

2.1 National context

- 2.1.1 The importance of effective communications has been highlighted by publication of the Government's paper *Shifting the Balance of Power: Communications*, published February 2002 signifying that communications is central to driving the process of change within the NHS. Key to developing services to suit local needs and forging new and closer relationships with the public is an effective system of communications.
- 2.1.2 The national planning guidance "*Improvement, Expansion and Reform: the next 3 years priorities and planning framework 2003-2006*" published by the Department of Health in September 2002 aims to streamline all previous plans into production of one Local Delivery Plan for each PCT. Each Local Delivery Plan will need to show how it will involve and communicate with stakeholders, its patients, its public, its staff and its partners.

- 2.1.3 The Government's commitment to deliver improvements in the working lives of all NHS staff resulted in 'Improving Working Lives' initiative. PCTs will be expected to keep staff informed of the progress being made to deliver better working lives for staff.

2.2 Local context

- 2.2.1 The Local Delivery Plan 2003-2006 encompasses both national targets and local service aspirations and will form the framework for the business of the PCT. It is crucial that communications and public relations support the Local Delivery Plan whilst linking into national campaigns, health promotion, patient information and recruitment.

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The following objectives of this strategy aim to support the PCT in fulfilling its role, ensuring that communication is integral in its relationship with its patients, its public, its staff and its partners.
- 3.2 **Supporting the business of the PCT** – planning proactive communications, supporting the Board's activities and ensuring that public meetings and reports are widely accessible
- 3.3 **Developing public awareness of local health services and issues** - being clear about the actions of the PCT and why decisions have to be made, developing confidence in the PCT
- 3.4 **Managing the reputation of the organisation** – by ensuring corporate decisions of the PCT are made after communications have been considered, ensuring effective crisis management plans are in place and ensuring compliance of the PCT's corporate identity
- 3.5 **Ensuring that the PCT's communications meet national policies and legislation** such as the NHS Plan, Freedom of Information Act
- 3.6 **Promoting a wider ownership of communications** – encouraging staff to be aware of the importance of promoting the work of the organisation to both internal and external audiences

4. KEY MESSAGES

- 4.1 The PCT needs to carefully consider the image it is seeking to portray amongst its external audiences.
- 4.2 One way of establishing a positive identity/perception of the organisation, would be to develop a system of key messages, which can be promoted regularly in any communications work the PCT undertakes.
- 4.3 The messages need to reflect the stated aims and priorities of the PCT, be capable of being used in a variety of settings appropriate to both internal and external audiences, and be adaptable to meet changing priorities as the organisation develops.

- 4.4 Appendix 1 identifies the key messages as part of a suggested action plan for the PCT to adopt.
- 4.5 The commitment of members of staff in delivering the key messages is crucial to the success of establishing the PCT as a major organisation with significant local responsibilities.

5. TARGET AUDIENCES

- 5.1 To fulfil the needs of the objectives of this strategy the key audiences are:

5.2 Internal Audiences

In recognising that internal audiences can also be perceived as forming part of the PCT's wider external audience, these groups should also be considered:

Executive Directors
 Professional Executive Committee
 Non-Executive Directors
 Staff
 GPs
 Optometrists
 Dentists
 Pharmacists

5.3 External Audiences

Local PCTs
 Fareham and Gosport PCT
 Portsmouth City PCT
 Local NHS Trusts
 Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust
 Neighbouring PCTs
 Isle of Wight PCT
 West Sussex
 Hampshire and Isle of Wight Strategic Health Authority
 Local Representatives Committees
 Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Community Health Council
 NHS Direct
 Directorate of Health and Social Care
 Department of Health

BUPA Hospital, Havant

Local MPs
 East Hampshire District Council
 Havant Borough Council
 Local Councillors
 Portsmouth Social Services
 Hampshire County Council
 County Councillors

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Councils of Community Services
Voluntary organisations

Members of the public
Patients
Media

5. ACTION

Internal

- 5.1 The PCT has an established staff monthly newsletter, EcHo. To ensure it remains a major method for communications with staff it is important that staff see communications as everyone's role. It is recommended that 'communications' becomes part of senior managers' objectives.
- 5.2 The PCT has a further effective method of communication cascade in "Information Exchange". This enables all staff to be briefed monthly on local and national issues within seven days of issues.
- 5.3 A further method of internal communications "Bulletin" will be used in the event of significant information needing to be communicated to staff within a given period, e.g. 24 hours, to ensure as many members of staff are aware of a situation before hearing about it in the press.

External

- 5.4 The first step towards introducing this strategy is to look at the way in which the key messages can be delivered. For this to happen effectively a lead person for each messages will need to be agreed, audiences priorities and associated themes identified. Please see Appendix 1.
- 5.5 The second step is to produce an annual communications plan, which picks up on the regular communications activities, such as national campaigns, board meetings, publications, websites etc. Please see Appendix 2.
- 5.6 The third step would be from the regular meeting with the Chair and Chief Executive to produce a monthly communication plan, identifying issues and developments within the PCT two months ahead. Please see Appendix 3.

6. EVALUATION

- 6.1 Key to the success of communications and public relations activities is the ability to review and amend.
- 6.2 Each individual campaign will need to identify a success criteria by which it can be measured.
- 6.3 Staff communications will be reviewed in a number of ways, as the ongoing IWL process, annual staff opinion surveys and feedback mechanisms in EcHo, the staff newsletter.

- 6.4 The first national survey of PCT patients takes place in the spring 2003 with the results informing the 2003 performance ratings. This survey will be an excellent measure to monitor public perception of the PCT. It is further recommended that surveys be incorporated in Your Health which would give a local flavour and thereby complement the national survey.
- 6.5 Meetings with the Chair and Chief Executive would include a mechanism of reviewing the previous months communications activities. Please see Appendix 4.

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Media and Communications Service

13 May 2003

MESSAGE: Encouraging a healthier lifestyle

LEAD: **Code A**

MAIN AUDIENCES: 1. Public 2. Patients 3. Staff 4. Partners

THEME: Set weeks, topics, national campaigns

Campaigns	No Smoking Day	Sun Awareness	NHS Week	Mental Health Day
Action by the PCT for the public:	Involvement in events to promote No Smoking Day Provide information on dangers of smoking Links into CHD initiative	Involvement in events to promote Sun Awareness Week Provide 'sun awareness' information Links into Cancer Services/initiatives	Provide information about how treatment and services changed between 1948 and 1998 (50 th anniversary) and have modernised in the past five years. Launch the PCT website?	
Action by the PCT for patients:	Campaign materials	Campaign materials		
Action by the PCT for staff:	Information in newsletters promoting the events Campaign material		Acknowledgement of services Information in newsletters	
Action by the PCT working the partners	Ensure consistent messages are promoted		Celebrate 55 years of NHS.	

MESSAGE: Modernising local health care and facilities

LEAD: **Code A**

MAIN AUDIENCES: 1. Public 2. Staff 3. Partners 4. Patients

THEME: LDP, HealthFit, LIFT, Elderly Medicine Re provision

	LDP	HealthFit	LIFT	EMR
Action by the PCT for the public:	Information Updates on progress Roadshows	Awareness information and invitations to public consultation meetings	Public meetings Personal letters Information	
Action by the PCT for the partners:	Meetings with key partners	Series of meetings/workshops with LA/voluntary organisations/key audiences	Meetings with key partners	
Action by the PCT for the staff:	Articles in staff newsletters Staff briefings What it means to staff	Newsletter articles Staff briefings Involvement in working groups	Newsletter articles Staff briefings	
Action by the PCT for the patients:	Information Update on progress	Information awareness	Information	

MESSAGE: Investing in a capable and responsive workforce

LEAD:

Code A

MAIN AUDIENCES: 1. Staff 2. Public

THEME: Improving Working Lives, Recruitment Fayres

	Improving Working Lives	Recruitment Fayres		
Actions by the PCT for staff:	Newsletter articles Staff briefings Workshops			
Actions by the PCT for the public:	Promoting the PCT as a good employee with high quality staff	Promoting the PCT to be the best organisation to work for in ? Hampshire		
Actions by the PCT for partners:		Presence at recruitment fayres of partner organisations Split posts?		

MESSAGE: Involving patients and the public in local health services

LEAD: **Code A**

MAIN AUDIENCES: 1. Public 2. Patients 3. Partners 4. Staff

THEME: MORI, PALS, Freedom of Information Act

	MORI	PALS	FOI Act	
Actions by the PCT for the public:	Sharing information from the results – will services change	Information sharing	Raising openness of the PCT	
Actions by the PCT for patients:		Raising profile of PALS		
Actions by the PCT for partners:	Sharing results – can we work together	Working with partners on the issues highlighted where appropriate		
Actions by the PCT for staff:	Praise and thanks for good result Acknowledging where improvements need to be made and supporting staff in those changes	Working with staff to improve working practices where highlighted	Reassurance and training issues for staff	

COMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR 2003/2004

March	April	May	June	July	August
<p><i>No Smoking Day</i></p> <p>NSF Older People (2nd anniversary)</p> <p>Cancer – LDP – reducing rate of smoking by local residents and targeting women who smoke during pregnancy – Health Promotion – Primary Care teams Promote local initiatives for cancer treatments</p> <p>Raise awareness to national PCT surveys</p> <p>Begin audit of patient information – proactive with members of the public – invitations for out of date information</p> <p>Board meetings?</p> <p>Internal PCT newsletter</p> <p>Briefings</p> <p>Local Authority publications</p> <p>Websites</p>	<p><i>Mental Health Action Week</i></p> <p>Mental Health – LDP – raise awareness of mental health services – recruitment opportunity?</p> <p>Board meetings?</p> <p>Internal PCT newsletter</p> <p>Briefings</p> <p>Local Authority publications</p> <p>Websites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>National Breastfeeding Awareness Week</i> • <i>Walk to School Week</i> <p>CHD – LDP – promote work in primary care in updating practice based registers</p> <p>To encourage people to take regular exercise thereby reducing the risk of CHD – Health Promotion – proactive opportunity with Margaret Scott and member of LA?</p> <p>Reducing Health Inequalities – LDP - Promote the advantages of breastfeeding</p> <p>Board meetings?</p> <p>Internal PCT newsletter</p> <p>Briefings</p> <p>Local Authority publications</p> <p>Websites</p>	<p><i>Sun Awareness Week</i></p> <p>Promote the dangers of skin cancer (Health Promotion)</p> <p>Vulnerable Children – LDP – promote the joint work between health and local government</p> <p>Board meetings?</p> <p>Internal PCT newsletter</p> <p>Briefings</p> <p>Local Authority publications</p> <p>Websites</p>	<p><i>NHS Week</i></p> <p>Access – LDP – promote the direct booking system – (Visit to hospital – Margaret Scott)</p> <p>Need to use this week (probably 4-12 July – 8 day week!) to promote the work of the PCT – recruitment opportunity</p> <p>Board meetings?</p> <p>Internal PCT newsletter</p> <p>Briefings</p> <p>Local Authority publications</p> <p>Websites</p>	<p><i>PCT Performance Ratings</i></p> <p>Improving Patient Experience LDP – to promote the local implement plans as a result of surveys which have been undertaken involving members of the public</p> <p>Board meetings?</p> <p>Internal PCT newsletter</p> <p>Briefings</p> <p>Local Authority publications</p> <p>Websites</p>

Appendix 2

September	October	November	December	January	February
AGM Publication of the Annual Report	<i>Breast Cancer Awareness Month</i>	Publication of the Patient Prospectus?	<i>World Aids Day</i>		<i>Contraceptive Awareness Week</i>
Invitation to key stakeholders – displays of services and those taking part – need to be specific Margaret Scott to lead	What are the local priorities? What has been the result of the AGM?	Promoting winter messages – pro-active involvement of primary care staff	Where will the PCT be with LIFT	CHD – LDP Promoting physical exercise – following Christmas - Health Promotion	Reducing Health Inequalities – LDP Raise awareness to the high rate of local teenage conception - Health Promotion-
Board meetings?	Board meetings?	Board meetings?	Board meetings?	Board meetings?	Board meetings?
Internal PCT newsletter	Internal PCT newsletter	Internal PCT newsletter	Internal PCT newsletter	Internal PCT newsletter	Internal PCT newsletter
Briefings	Briefings	Briefings	Briefings	Briefings	Briefings
Local Authority publications	Local Authority publications	Local Authority publications	Local Authority publications	Local Authority publications	Local Authority publications
Websites	Websites	Websites	Websites	Websites	Websites

Italics = national campaigns

MEETINGS WITH CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

April	May	June	July	August
Identify issues and developments for June	Identify issues and developments for July	Identify issues and developments for August	Identify issues and developments for September	Identify issues and developments for October
Check still on course and changes for May	Check still on course and changes for June	Check still on course and changes for July	Check still on course and changes for August	Check still on course and changes for September
Evaluate communications activities undertaken/press coverage in March	Evaluate communications activities undertaken/press coverage in April	Evaluate communications activities undertaken/press coverage in May	Evaluate communications activities undertaken/press coverage in June	Evaluate communications activities undertaken/press coverage in July

**MEETINGS WITH CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CHAIR
PLANNED AND REACTIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

MAY MEETING

Check notes of May meeting that we are still on track for June.

Identify issues and developments for July as follows:

Communication methods	Topic areas: NHS Week/
Information exchange	Article
EchO	Series of articles
Your Health	NHS Week highlighted
Press Release	Series of press releases
Website	✓
Meetings	Board meeting? Attended by CE/C
Other	

Review activities undertaken and press coverage in April

Activities	
Press releases issued	Coverage
Mental Health Action week	