

WIRRAL SHADOW HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

Meeting Date	4 September 2012	Agenda Item	4.3
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Report Title	Communications and Engagement Strategy
Responsible Board Member	Fiona Johnstone

Link To Shadow HWB Function	Board development	√				
	JSNA/JHWS					
	Health and social care integrated commissioning or provision					
Equality Impact Assessment Required & Attached	Yes		No		N/A	√
Purpose	For approval	√	To note		To assure	

Summary of Paper	Communications Strategy to promote the work of the Health and Well being Board		
Financial Implications	Total financial implication	New investment required	Source of investment (e.g. name of budget)
	£ N/A	£	£
Risks and Preventive Measures	The Communications Strategy will mitigate the risk of the work of the Board not being clearly understood by Stakeholders.		
Details of Any Public/Patient/Service User Engagement	N/A		
Recommendations/Next Steps	To approve the Communications Strategy and to request further work to ensure the Health and Well being Strategy has appropriate communications, marketing and engagement support during its development.		

Report History		
Submitted to:	Date:	Summary of outcome:
N/A		
List of Appendices	None	

Publish On Website	Yes	√	Private Business	Yes	
	No			No	√

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Health and Wellbeing Board
DRAFT Communications Strategy

1.0 Introduction

This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Board with a draft Communications Strategy, which will drive the promotion and engagement work required to assist the Board deliver on their priorities. Health and Wellbeing Boards will occupy an important place in local communities as the forum for establishing aspirations for improving health and wellbeing outcomes based on an understanding of needs and assets.

A wide range of stakeholders will be involved in or interested in the work of the Board and good communications will be at the heart of ensuring that they remain engaged and able to help shape the future. Therefore, a cross-agency Communications and Engagement Group has been established ensure the work of the Board is promoted and communicated to all stakeholders in an effective, timely and appropriate manner.

2.0 Communications and Engagement Group

Communications related to the work of the Board will primarily be led by Wirral Council through the Head of Communication and Community Engagement and the Director of Public Health. Further membership of the group is drawn from the following organisations:

- NHS Cheshire, Warrington and Wigan Cluster
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- NHS Wirral Community Trust
- NHS Wirral Public Health
- Wirral University Teaching Hospital
- Cheshire and Merseyside Partnerships for Health (ChaMPs)

During the shadow year of the Board this group will meet bi-monthly, and the role of chair will be rotated between the Head of Communication and Community Engagement at Wirral Council and the Director of Communications and Engagement at NHS CWW Cluster. Additional members will also be drawn from stakeholders in the community, voluntary and faith sectors as the work of the Board the Communications Group develops.

3.0 Objectives

The shadow year of the Health and Wellbeing Board presents an opportunity for the members of this Group to develop effective joint communications and engagement mechanisms for two-way communications with stakeholders and the wider population of Wirral.

The Group will work to the following objectives in their work of communicating the Board:

- Ensure all relevant resident and community stakeholders are effectively informed and engaged with the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Ensure that communication channels across the network of agencies represented by the Board are utilised to their fullest effect
- Ensure that stakeholders have appropriate, accessible and appealing mechanisms to feed into the work of the Board, to ensure the highest possible levels of engagement and consultation

- Ensure employees from the entire public, community, voluntary and faith sectors are fully engaged with the work of the Board

The Group will additionally work to reduce and limit any costs associated with communicating the work of the Board through working together across the network wherever possible.

4.0 Delivery

The Communications Strategy for the Health & Wellbeing Board will contribute towards the relevant priorities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan. Formal minutes, agendas and reports associated with the work of the Board will be placed on the Wirral Council website, as is standard for a committee of this type. However, in terms of wider communication the Communications and Engagement group will work together to ensure messages are disseminated via the most appropriate channels and methods.

4.1 Stakeholders

Members of the Group will work with the Board to determine the most suitable audience(s) for each Board priority, which will in turn assist in determining the most suitable message, messenger, timing and channel for each message.

Health and Wellbeing issues affect everyone, and we will attempt to ensure that all stakeholders have appropriate opportunities to find out about the work of the Board. While we will employ a number of methods to communicate the work of the Board, specific efforts will be made to target those groups who are traditionally hard to reach.

4.2 Messages

The formation of this Group and agreement of the above objectives will assist communications staff across the network to implement consistent messages on all communications covering Health and Wellbeing, and the work of the Board.

It is important that key messages are clear, consistent and worded in a way to engage the defined target audience(s). We will be employing many different communication channels targeted at a diverse population so it is important to implement an agreed protocol that becomes embedded in existing communications activity.

4.3 Messenger

The Communications and Engagement Group will define appropriate 'messengers' for each Board priority and project, in agreement with Members of the Board. This will ensure that the most appropriate agency leads on specific areas and that designated spokespeople are identified to front publicity.

4.4 Timing

The Group will work together to ensure that communications relating to the work of the Board are disseminated to the relevant stakeholders in a timely manner, and at the most appropriate times to ensure the highest level of engagement (for example working with local media deadlines).

4.5 Channels

Each member of the Group owns and operates a number of communication channels, which provide direct access to stakeholders and residents. It is agreed that members of the Group will share the use of these channels, to ensure messages related to the work of the Board can be communicated to as wide an audience as possible for minimal cost.

Promotion and engagement methods will aim to achieve communication objectives through five main strands of activity;

1. Direct Engagement
2. Targeted Activity
3. Media
4. Online
5. Staff Engagement

4.5.1 Direct Engagement

All partners on the Group operate individual direct engagement programmes, including events, forums, public meetings and workshops with their customer base, stakeholders and the wider community.

This full programme of activity will be utilised to encourage the highest level of involvement from the community in the work of the Board.

4.5.2 Targeted Activity

The Council and partners on the Group will utilise existing relationships and networks with community, voluntary and faith sector organisations in order to actively promote the work of the Board to Wirral communities.

Groups who share protected characteristics are traditionally seen as being 'hard to reach', and therefore will require additional communication methods to be employed in order to effectively engage with them.

All partners represented on the Group have worked hard to establish relationships, contacts and networks within these communities and therefore it will be beneficial to share those networks to ensure the work of the Board is promoted as effectively as possible with residents who share one or more of the following characteristics:

- Older people
- Younger people
- People with disabilities
- People from BME communities
- Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual people
- People who have undergone gender reassignment

Many of the priorities contained within the Public Health agenda will have direct bearing with these communities and therefore it is vital for the success of the Board's work that these Groups are fully engaged and informed as to its work programme.

4.5.3 Media

Media support will be essential to the success of any communications activity. Research has shown that residents' preferred method of finding out information is through the local media. The media will play a vital role in informing people about the work of the Board and press activity will be developed to explain their work, promote opportunities for involvement, inform people of developments and publicise outcomes.

The media strategy will focus on providing the facts and encouraging a spirit of partnership through a direct and transparent tone as well as localised messages.

Advantages of this direct approach include:

- A clear message

- Unambiguous – allows just the facts to be communicated
- Contains 'how to' or action information
- People may notice it more because it relates to important services or issues that are relevant to them

In line with best practice, the Communications Strategy will ensure that:

- Media work is proactive and totally integrated with the wider communications activities.
- Publicity is linked to real local issues so that residents can relate to it.
- Identified spokespeople exist that can be called upon when needed.
- Details of the Board is readily available for journalists.
- Case studies are available wherever possible to illustrate the Board's work.
- Targeted follow-up calls are made to find out what information, in addition to the standard news release, journalists may want in order to develop stories that may interest them.
- All media coverage will be monitored and recorded.

4.5.4 Online

Web-based communication channels will be maximised to promote the work of the Health & Wellbeing Board.

Internet use is linked to various socio-economic and demographic indicators, such as age, location and education:

- 99% of 16 to 24 year olds have used the internet.
- 82% of people 65 and over have used the Internet.
- 97% of adults educated to degree level have accessed the Internet.
- 45% without any formal qualifications have done so.
- 4 million disabled adults have never used the internet.

Online channels will supplement other communication methods which will be required to ensure that the consultation reaches people who do not use the internet, particularly people over 65, those with fewer formal qualifications and people with disabilities.

To ensure the transparency of the Board's work, all agendas and reports will be quickly and easily accessible on the Council website as is standard for all committees. News stories will also be published online. The Council website is accessible to people who are blind or partially sighted who can use the additional technology to assist their use of the internet.

Wirral Council has over 2,300 followers on Twitter and over 850 followers on its Facebook pages. These channels will be utilised to keep people informed. There are also many local interest websites that relate to Wirral. Some of these sites carry place-related content e.g. Hoylakevillage.co.uk, wikiwirral and others relate to partner organisations such as VCAW and WIRED (Wirral Information Resource for Equality and Disability). These websites carry local news and often include blogs and forums where local people can carry out online discussions. They will be provided with all press releases and asked to carry news items which will contribute to communications objectives.

Wirral Council has a database of 7,000 local people who have requested e-mail updates about Council services. Where appropriate, these people will be e-mailed with opportunities to get involved with the work of the Board. This has proven to be a very effective way of promoting Council consultation exercises.

4.5.5 Employee Engagement

Internal Communications is one of the key methods of the Council achieving the vision and objectives set out in its Corporate Plan. It is also a vital element of the authority's Improvement Plan.

Engaging staff through Internal Communications methods and channels is important at any time, but times of change present different challenges and need a particular focus. The Council and the NHS have both been going through significant periods of change and this will continue as Public Health transfers over to the Local Authority.

The readiness for this transition change and the reaction to it will vary from person to person and internal communications should engage all employees, ensuring that they feel valued and listened to as the Public Health function develops. Systems need to be in place to ensure that all staff are included and engaged and the information needs to be reliable, consistent, timely and regular to limit rumours, misinformation and ultimately mistrust. Internal Communications is now a standard item at the Council's Executive Team meetings and the senior management team fully understand the need to properly engage the workforce. As a member of the Executive Team, the Director of Public Health is ideally placed to ensure that important messages relating to the work of the Health & Wellbeing Board are included in staff briefings.

Staff engagement activities will assist in:

- Creating a 'listening' culture, offering and promoting a range of opportunities for staff to 'have their say' on the key issues affecting the organisation(s).
- Communicating consistent, honest, accurate, timely, regular information.
- Offering and promoting opportunities for staff to interact and be inspired by good practice.
- Promoting opportunities for staff to access help, training and support to carry out their work.

Members of the Group will share the use of internal communications mechanisms to ensure messages are communicated to as wide an audience as possible, including hard-to-reach staff.

5.0 Resources

Individual communication projects associated with the work of the Board may have their own costs and budgets included, but for the work of this Group as outlined in this report the only financial impact will be related to the time spent by the officers involved from all agencies.