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CORPORATE REPORT

Communication Strategy 2014-17

1 Introduction

This strategy sets out the Commission's goals and objectives in relation to its communication activities for the next three years. It has been developed to support the achievement of our goals and objectives, as set out in our five year strategic plan. The broad consultation which contributed to the development of our business strategy is complemented here with specific feedback from evaluations of our communication activities and input from consultations with stakeholders.

2 Our strategic goals

We aim to ensure that care, treatment and support are lawful and respect the rights and promote the welfare of individuals with mental illness, learning disability and related conditions. We do this by empowering individuals and their carers and influencing and challenging service providers and policy makers

Our communication strategy has been structured to make it clear how each activity and programme strand supports the achievement of our broader strategic organisational goals in relation to:

- Visiting and monitoring
- Investigations and Casework
- Advice and Information
- Management and governance

3 The context

National policy

The Scottish government has outlined its purpose – to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth. The strategic objectives are a Scotland that is wealthier, fairer, smarter, healthier, safer, stronger and greener. In our five year plan, we have set out the ways in which our work programme will generally and specifically respond to national government objectives. In addition to contributing to the achievement of our own strategic objectives our communication strategy will specifically:

- Seek to influence policy makers and raise issues of concern
- Work to reduce inequalities in access to information about care and treatment rights related to mental health and incapacity legislation
- Work with service providers to promote a human rights based approach to the treatment of individuals with mental illness or learning disability
- Work with service users and carers to support them to access their rights under mental health and incapacity law
- Work to reduce our carbon impact, reduce waste and be as sustainable as possible
- Work with other public bodies where appropriate to make best use of public funds
- Regularly evaluate our communications impact to ensure effective use of our communication resources

Experiences and views of our stakeholders

Over the past four years we have developed our evaluation systems to ensure that the experiences and perceptions of our stakeholders are independently gathered and assessed. In addition to independent evaluation we have also, through consultation, sought to gather views on the work we have done and our direction of travel.

We have a National Advisory Committee that is a standing committee of our Board. It has representatives from 25 stakeholder groups along with Commission Board members and staff. It meets twice a year to give advice on our strategic direction and how we carry our work.

When we develop our good practice guides we do so in consultation with relevant stakeholders. We hold a consultation event to discuss the issues through case studies. The guide is written up and sent to the consultees for comment before it is finalised. We have also commissioned some research to find out what people think of the good practice guides and how they might be improved. We will review the reports from this research and implement changes.

Feedback from stakeholders highlights the value that practitioners, service providers, advocates, service users and carers all place on having an opportunity to share information, discuss key issues and contribute to the Commission's 'local intelligence' about mental health and learning disability welfare issues. A number of stakeholders highlighted the need for themed and/or regional events to address particular issues. Others highlighted the opportunities provided by information and communication technologies to develop effective networks across Scotland. Service users and carers were acutely aware of the shift to community based services, the prevalence of mental health issues in the community and the corresponding need to raise our general profile in order to effectively safeguard individuals.

Information technology, social media and communication

Over the past five years the use of social networking sites and mobile phone technology has widened the options for communication and changed the expectations of audiences. There is an increasingly 'flattened' approach to communication and information sharing, where individual blogs, networked information and open-forum discussions are the norm. The trend is toward more conversational communications. E-mailing information; providing online resources; and creating on-line environments that meet the expectations of increasingly empowered communicators provides opportunities and challenges for the Commission.

Access to and use of technologies may have expanded hugely and it is now expected that reports, information and resources may only be available online. However there are still significant issues around access for people with mental illness and learning disabilities which we need to take into account. We will consult with and obtain feedback from service users and carers to determine how they can best benefit from the use of information and communication technologies.

Visiting and monitoring

One of the best ways to check that people are getting the care and treatment they need is to meet with them and ask them what they think. From our visits we can not only intervene to improve individual care and treatment, we can build a picture of rights and welfare issues across Scotland. By sharing the learning from our visits through effective communications, we can help to improve care and treatment of other people who may be at risk of having their rights overlooked.

We have a statutory duty to report and publish information on the operation of mental health and incapacity law in Scotland. We provide annual reports on the use of mental health and incapacity law. Our annual reports are a means by which organisations can regularly check their own performance against national averages and trends.

Over the next three years we will:

- consult with stakeholders through our Advisory Committee on our priorities for visiting and monitoring
- publish visit and monitoring reports that are accessible and support improvements to individual care and treatment; local and national practice.
- support accessibility, efficiency and sustainability of our reporting through online publication.
- provide editorial support and advice for our staff to assure quality and accessibility of our reports.
- actively engage with and support our stakeholders to feedback on our reports and to contribute to accessibility improvements.

- deliver learning events to improve care and treatment that include key findings from our visit reports.
- support community awareness of our visiting service by increasing awareness of our role with mental health and learning disability service user and carers and those working in community-based services. We will do this by
 - developing our database of service user and carer organisation contacts to support distribution of our publicity materials.
 - providing expert input and building our profile through exhibiting at a range of service user and carer events.
- work proactively with national and specialist press to increase awareness of issues and recommendations that come out of our work

Investigations and casework

Reports from our statutory investigations are a key mechanism by which the Commission can raise the profile of human rights issues for individuals with a mental illness or learning disability. Our full scale investigations highlight issues which we consider to be of wider concern to policy makers, service providers and - equally importantly - to those people likely be affected. More implicitly, our reports also communicate the Commission's role and priorities.

In their ability to tell a human story and in their critical focus, our investigation reports are at once the most accessible, most sensitive and most controversial of our communication outputs. Ultimately, however, the purpose of our investigation reports is to safeguard individuals by:

- accurately identifying previous failures in systems and practice;
- raising awareness of current risks in services; and
- identifying actions that will reduce those risks in future.

In their essence investigation reports are a means by which professionals and services can learn from their own and others' mistakes. We know that Adult Support and Protection committees review all recommendations from our investigation reports. Learning depends in large part on making sure that that information is shared and key messages are clearly heard. This can be supported through coordinated, professional stakeholder communication supported by strategic media relations. Our ability to do this well is even more critical where we are drawing attention to other people's failures.

Given the nature of the subject matter, it is essential that our public communication is done with respect for the people at the heart of the investigation, in a manner that is proportionate to the case and in ways that are sensitive to existing stigma surrounding mental illness. How this is achieved is discussed on a case by case basis. The Board, with advice from the Operational Management Group, will determine the individual approach to be taken for each report.

Over the next three years we will

- ensure investigation teams are given advice and support on all matters surrounding editorial, publication and launches of investigation and inquiry reports;
- publish our investigations and inquiries reports to our website
- ensure investigations teams and members of the Operational Management Group are given advice about potential media issues and provide appropriate media relations support to raise the profile of lessons learned and actions to be taken amongst key stakeholder groups;
- support events to share key learning from our investigations.

Information and Advice

We receive around 4,000 calls for ethical, clinical and legal advice each year. The advice and information we provide over the phone is highly valued by our stakeholders. Over the past five years we have seen a significant increase in regular use of our corporate website amongst our practitioner stakeholders.

We will ensure that our advice and information service is as accessible as possible to people with additional communication support needs.

We believe that we have an important role to play in influencing policy makers, service providers and regulatory bodies to ensure the best possible care and treatment for each individual. Influencing and challenging frontline practice is also an important part of what we do. We produce good practice guides for practitioners and provide excellence into practice seminars on key areas where legal and ethical issues impact on individuals' care and treatment. We also facilitate the principles into practice network and awards.

Over the next three years we will:

- produce and disseminate relevant and challenging good practice guidance in partnership with professional, provider, service user and carer stakeholders;
- provide excellence into practice seminars throughout Scotland and develop some topics for webinars;
- produce and deliver targeted e-bulletins (Chief Executive's Advice Note) highlighting key issues around the operation of legislation for practitioners in mental health and related fields and linking stakeholders to relevant online content and guidance;
- capture and share learning about best practice in the operation of mental health and incapacity law through the Principles into Practice Awards process;
- develop the Commission's accessible information policy;
- provide information and advice in a range of community languages including easy-read, BSL and DVD formats on request and in accordance with our accessible information policy;

- develop the provision of information on our website for those receiving or providing care under welfare guardianship arrangements;
- audit our web-traffic, consult with web-users to ensure that our website is accessible, informative and reflects our values and key messages.

Management and governance

Effective communication helps deliver accountability for the Commission. We will ensure that over the next three years any changes to our accountability structures are supported and communicated effectively.

We will also support effective stakeholder engagement in the governance process.

Over the next three years we will

- produce an accessible annual report and accounts that clearly communicates our values, impact, effectiveness and efficiency.
- work to ensure that the Commission's management and executive has the appropriate information about the views and experiences of stakeholders to support effective decision-making.
- provide advice and support to the development of Commission stakeholder engagement policy and practice.

Action Plan and Budget for 2014/15

Visiting and monitoring

Action	By when	Responsible	Cost
Identification of new case studies from our visiting and monitoring work for inclusion in annual report and website	May 2014	Communications Manager	nil
Publication of end of year reports to each NHS Board on website	October 2014	Communications Manager	nil
Communication plan and publication of visit and monitoring reports on website Young people in secure care visit report June 2014 (web) People with dementia visit report June 2014 (web) Specified persons monitoring report June 2014(print) Recorded matters monitoring report June 2014(web) Individuals in older people's functional inpatient units March 2015 (web) Individuals in adult acute wards focussing on those with enhanced observation status Feb 2015 (print) Individuals receiving services in the community under sections 25 - 27 of the MHA March 2015 (web) Individuals on suspension of detention for over 6 months March 2015 (web) Individuals on CCTOs March 2015 (print)	Ongoing	Communications Manager	6,000
Communication plan and publication of learning disability census (web) Easy read summary of findings (print)	February 2015	Communications Manager	2,000
Subtotal			8,000

Investigations and casework

	By when	Responsible	Cost
Communication plan and publication (print and/or web) and distribution of 4 investigation reports full and summary	March 2015	Communication Manager	8,000
Write summary of investigation reports, where appropriate	Ongoing	Communication Manager	nil
	TOTAL		8,000

Information and advice

Action	By when	Responsible	Cost
Review and reprint (if appropriate) service user and carer leaflets	June 2014	Communication Manager	4,000
Publication of good practice guides that are being reviewed and updated during the year From 2013/14 Information for general hospitals Nutrition by artificial means Safe to wander Use of seclusion Being reviewed during 2014/15 Working with the AWIA in care homes Mental Health Act care plans Working with independent advocacy Money matters Supervising and supporting welfare guardians Specified persons	May 2014 December 2014	Communication Manager	15,000
Development of accessible material mainly for individuals to complement good practice guides	December 2014	Project Officer / Communications Manager	20,000

Publish Chief Executive's advice notes	Quarterly	Communication Manager	nil
Subtotal			39,000

Influencing and challenging

Action	By when	Responsible	Cost
Heads of social work services event	March 2015	Chief Social Work Officer	3,000
Project manage the annual report process, including identifying case studies and first draft of annual report	September 2014	Communication Manager	nil
Communication plan and publish Annual report and easy read annual report	October 2014	Communication Manager	7,500
Attendance at conferences and events (approved by OMG on ongoing basis)	March 2015	Communication Manager	5,000
Subtotal			15,500

Communication work to support all key strategy areas

Action	By when	Responsible	Budget
To review the feasibility of developing the MWC website for mobile phones and produce a report for OMG with costs	June 2014	Communication Manager	Nil
To provide quarterly reports on the use of the website through google analytics	Ongoing	Communication Manager	
To ensure our brand is communicated clearly across all of our publications and that staff are supported to use the brand key messages in their work	Ongoing	Communication Manager	
MWC website hosting and support			1,500
Sub total			Nil

GRAND TOTAL BUDGET

£72,000



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