



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this communications strategy is to establish a framework to enable the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency to communicate more effectively with our staff, clients, other stakeholders and the public.

It is important to have a co-ordinated and consistent approach to internal and external communications to enable us to carry out our role and meet our obligations as a public body.

The purpose of the communications strategy can be summarised as follows:

- To meet our obligations to inform and involve
- To build and maintain understanding about the work that we do
- To influence behaviour and opinion
- To support public involvement in decision making
- To support change management
- To enlist the support of other HSC organisations
- To build trust and openness and give stakeholders a say and involvement in the services provided by the Agency
- To motivate employees and to encourage identification with our aims and values
- To combat injurious rumours, speculation and inaccurate media coverage
- To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNICATION

The Agency is committed to:

- Acting in an open and transparent fashion
- Working in partnership with other HSC organisations to promote the work of the Agency
- Working in partnership with other public sector and voluntary sector organisations to improve patient care
- Communicating in a clear, concise and inclusive manner
- Promoting high quality communications with staff and all stakeholders
- Responding in an effective and timely fashion to media and other enquiries
- Maintaining client confidentiality

TARGET AUDIENCES

The Agency needs to communicate internally within the organisation and externally with the public and other stakeholders. These can be identified as follows:

Internal

- Board members
- Staff employed by the Agency
- Medical and dental professionals acting on behalf of the Agency
- Members of the Agency's specialty training committees and other committees of the Agency

External

- Doctors, dentists and dental healthcare professionals
- Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety
- HSC organisations – Trusts, Boards and Agencies

- Universities
- Statutory training authorities
- Other Deaneries
- Royal Colleges
- Local education providers
- Staff organisations
- Community and voluntary sectors
- The media

KEY VEHICLES FOR COMMUNICATION

Internal

The Agency's internal communications are paramount. It is important that all staff understand the Agency's principles and aims and that staff are willing and able to communicate those to the outside world. The Board of the Agency must be included in this communications activity and have a vital role to play as ambassadors for the Agency.

The Agency will use a variety of methods to communicate with its staff and keep the Board informed of the work of the Agency. These will include:

- Monthly senior management meetings
- Regular reporting to the Board of the Agency
- Regular team leader briefings
- Staff meetings as required
- Staff notice board
- Staff handbook
- Access to information via email/internet
- Communications objectives included in the business planning process and in the performance development plans of senior staff

External

All information and communications material produced by the Agency should be easily accessible to all stakeholders and sectors of the public

Information should be clear and concise and available in other formats on request i.e. large print, Braille, audio cassette and other languages as appropriate.

Communication with external audiences will be carried out through a variety of methods which include:

- The website – as well as providing access to information the website will act as a portal to other organisations
- Board meetings – the Agency's Board meetings will be open to the public and publicised in the local media
- The use of existing networks – the Agency will seek to utilise existing forums for communicating with the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety, HSC organisations, educational bodies and other voluntary sector organisations
- Publications and reports – documents will be published and circulated to target audiences. Copies will be made available on request in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act
- Deanery visits – the Agency will communicate information to the Chief Executives and Medical Directors of Trusts through the use of formal visitations
- Press releases and publications in professional journals – job advertisements and press releases in relation to the business of the Agency will be advertised in the local press and national journals as required
- HSC internal job trawl – advertisements for job vacancies will also be advertised through the HSC internal trawl mechanism housed within the website of the BSO

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Agency's recruitment and selection procedures and its website information policy

Policy Proforma

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Amendment Form

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