



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

This strategy is to enable effective two-way communication with staff, clients, the public and the media. The vision, therefore, is of an organisation that staff, stakeholders and the public are aware of, confident in and feel able to contribute to.

The Company will actively look to create a working culture where communications are:-

- Scheduled
- Timely
- Open Door
- Appropriate
- Clear

It is essential that we have a structured approach to internal and external communications, with common values messages. To enable us to achieve this, the Communications Strategy and its associated plans will be reviewed annually.

The Management will implement and lead this Strategy, however every member of the company are responsible to ensure that it is supported carried out.

STRATEGIC AIMS

The Company is well prepared to handle the communications implications of key issues, maximising positive, accurate coverage and actively managing adverse publicity.

The Company communicates at all times using easily understandable language that is free from industry jargon and abbreviations.

All staff are well informed about the work of the Company and are empowered to voice their ideas, questions and concerns.

The Company is open, honest and transparent in the procedures it follows and the decisions it makes concerning the population and the workforce.

The public feel able to contribute appropriately to decisions about the services and policies which may impact them.

Suppliers and partners that work with the Company are well informed of its activities and feel empowered to contribute as appropriate.

This Strategy is not intended to be a static document and new actions will be added to the Plan as developed and required.



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OBJECTIVE 1

The Company is well prepared to handle the communications implications of key issues, maximising positive, accurate coverage and actively managing adverse publicity.

Action	Timescale
Reviewed at Management meetings. Identify communications issues and prepare media releases / staff briefings as required.	Monthly
Build and maintain positive working relationships with local media.	Continuous
Circulate and implement "Media Handling" guidelines. (See Appendix 1)	At Induction
Produce communications plans for untoward incidents and controversial issues, in line with Strategic Health Authority guidelines.	As required

OBJECTIVE 2

The Company communicates at all times using easily understandable language that is free from industry jargon and abbreviations.

Action	Timescale
Review all new "Public Domain" information to ensure that it is clearly understandable.	Ongoing
Ensure that staff taking "minutes" at meetings have the support and training to comply with this Aim.	Ongoing
Incorporate this Aim into each "Freedom of Information Act" cascade to staff. Since the majority of written and electronically stored information will be accessible by the public under the terms of this Act, we should embrace this Aim in everything that we do.	Ongoing

OBJECTIVE 3

All staff are well informed about the work of the Company and are empowered to voice their ideas, questions and concerns.

Action	Timescale
Supervisors/Management to visit each staff site in person to introduce and explain role. Actively encourage staff use as main point of contact for sharing "good news".	Ongoing
Identify and agree action required from Appraisal results	In line with Appraisal Schedule
Ensure that regular updates and opportunities for discussion are given as information becomes available for key staff issues.	Ongoing
Work to ensure that staff are engaged in the determination of plans and priorities for the Company through the Assignment Instructions.	Ongoing



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OBJECTIVE 4

The Company is open, honest and transparent in the procedures it follows and the decisions it makes concerning the population and the workforce.

Action	Timescale
With due regard to the Freedom of Information Act, ensure that as much information as possible is in a freely accessible form.	Ongoing
Cascade important decisions and information to staff via staff memorandums or face-to-face as applicable, in a timely manner.	As required
Respond to requests for information from public <u>and</u> staff in the same manner, following the procedures devised for the Freedom of Information Act.	Ongoing

OBJECTIVE 5

The public and consumers feel able to contribute appropriately to decisions about services and policies.

Action	Timescale
Actively support the Management and involve in such things as the website and environmental issues.	Ongoing
Maintain a steady flow of information in the public domain when new policies or decisions are being created, encouraging feedback and two-way involvement at every step.	As required
Review and revise the advertising process with a view to increasing public awareness and involvement.	As required

OBJECTIVE 6

Company suppliers and partners are well informed of its activities and feel empowered to contribute as appropriate.

Action	Timescale
Management team to Consider how to develop more effective engagement of the Company contractors and staff.	Management Meetings

APPENDIX 1

Media Handling Guidelines

These guidelines give details of how both reactive and proactive communications with the media should be handled within the Company. They are intended to ensure consistency and accuracy, and to support all staff in creating a positive public image for the Company.

1. Basic principles

The media should always be responded to promptly.

“No comment” is not an acceptable response.

Every effort should be made to provide interviews if requested, unless it is agreed that it would be inappropriate in a particular case.



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2. Proactive communications

All media releases should be agreed through by the Management team.

Were possible, media releases should be authorised by the Managing Director.

Quotes in media releases should normally be from the Managing Director. However, where a specific project is the subject of a release, quoting the manager concerned should also be considered.

Anyone quoted in a media release must be prepared to give a radio/TV interview if required, or provide relevant information to enable this to be undertaken by a member of the Management Team.

Anyone asked to authorise or comment on a media release must respond promptly to enable media deadlines to be met.

3. Reactive communications

All media enquiries should be passed to the Management Team in the first instance. If the media contacts staff or Management Team, they should:

Ask what information the journalist requires.

Take a contact name and phone number.

Confirm that someone will call them back.

Contact the Management Team for advice.

Staff and Management Team members should NOT:

Speculate about an issue or guess an answer.

Say "no comment".

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Mr. S Graham

Managing Director