

Communications Policy

Reference No:	P_CoG_13
Version:	4
Ratified by:	LCHS NHS Trust Board
Date ratified:	10 July 2018
Name of originator/author:	Communications Team
Name of approving committee/responsible individual:	Trust Leadership Team
Date Approved:	July 2018
Date issued:	July 2018
Review date:	July 2020
Target audience:	All Staff
Distributed via:	Websites

Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust

Communications Policy

Version Control Sheet

Version	Section/Para/ Appendix	Version/Description of Amendments	Date	Author/ Amended by
1		New Policy	March 2013	Sue Barnston
2		Revision	Sept 2015	Sue Barnston
3		Revision	Nov 2016	Sharon Bradwell
4		Revision	June 2018	Sharon Bradwell
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				

Copyright © 2018 Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust, All Rights Reserved.
Not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the permission of the copyright owner.

Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust

Communications Policy

Policy Statement

Background	It is recognised that effective and efficient communications strategies can significantly enhance and protect both the reputation and delivery of services in any organisation. Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust is committed to providing a framework through which the organisation can disseminate effective communications, capitalise on positive publicity and minimise the effects of negative media.
Statement	Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust is committed to providing an open and honest approach to communicating with staff, the local community, members of the media, patients, carers and other stakeholders.
Responsibilities	All external communications made by Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust should be made in line with the Communications Policy and with prior approval of the Communications Team.
Training	Training will be provided to any member of the organisation who is likely to be involved in the external communication of messages.
Dissemination	Website
Resource Implication	The Communications Team will take the lead in any requests for information from the media and will ensure that any external communications meet the requirements of all communication policies, guidance and guidelines

Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust

Communications Policy

Policy Statement

- i. Version control sheet
- ii. Policy statement

Section	Page
1. Introduction	5
2. Roles and responsibilities	5
3. Methods of communication	6
4. Internal communications	7
5. External communications	7
6. Media handling	8
7. Trust website and intranet	9
8. Social media	10
9. Noticeboards, posters and leaflets	10
10. Corporate branding	10
11. Consent and copyright	10
12. Training	10
13. Further reference and related policies	11
Appendix A	12
Appendix B - Equality analysis	13
Appendix C – NHSLA Monitoring Template	14

1. Introduction

Good communications are crucial to an organisation's success in the provision and development of effective services. The Communications Policy provides staff with information on how communications will be made and how they will be handled by Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust.

Communication activities should always inform and educate, emphasising our strengths and dealing with negative publicity in a positive manner. This policy acknowledges the importance for the Trust to maintain a good reputation with local involvement, in order to capitalise on new opportunities and continue to be the first choice provider of local community health care.

Communications have a number of benefits, including:

- Keeping people informed of the Trust's activities and events.
- Developing and improving services through feedback.
- Maintaining and promoting Trust membership.
- Raising awareness of the organisation's achievements in quality, excellence and innovation.

This policy applies to all staff within the organisation and relates to all types of internal and external communications. Communications should always be two-way, transparent and carried out in a timely and effective manner.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for all communications made by and on behalf of Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust.

Directors

Directors who are approached directly by the media to comment on specific issues may respond directly if they feel it is appropriate. Directors dealing directly with the media should advise the Communications Team that they have done so in order for the enquiry to be logged.

Managers

All managers have a responsibility to establish effective communication systems within their areas of responsibility. They should ensure that all staff are aware of the contents of this Policy and develop a culture in which staff feel able and confident to raise ideas or concerns.

Managers also have a responsibility to manage and monitor noticeboards within their scope of responsibility to ensure that the content is up to date, relevant and compliant with trust policy.

Staff Members

All media enquiries received by members of staff, should be forwarded to the Communications Team immediately for a response. If the request is being received verbally (i.e. telephone conversation), staff should take details of the request, forward

them onto the Communications Team and inform the caller that a member of staff will call them back shortly. Staff should not be tempted to provide a response themselves and should not pass the caller directly through to the Communications Team.

Non-Executive Directors

If approached by the media they should direct all calls to the Communications Team who will deal with the enquiry as appropriate.

Communications Team

The Communications Team works to develop the reputation of the Trust and manage expectations in the local community by ensuring clear and open communication channels are maintained.

The Team's main functions include:

- Receiving and dealing with media requests (reactive)
- Produce press briefings/media releases/pitching for interviews (proactive media)
- Preparing briefing and speeches for senior staff as required
- Preparing Team Brief
- Developing and maintaining the content of the Trust website and intranet sites
- Providing media training and advice as required
- Liaising with the local healthcare community in respect of joint healthcare messages/projects
- Overseeing compliance with corporate branding
- Handling the Trust's social media
- Supporting national health campaigns
- Advising on Trust campaigns
- Producing staff and membership newsletters
- Arranging events including Annual Public Meeting and Staff awards
- Producing Annual Report, Quality Account and other statutory documents
- Overseeing patient and service user information
- Encouraging and supporting award submissions from staff
- Working with stakeholder engagement lead to support communications with external stakeholders
- Ensuring they are visible and accessible to provide support to other teams internally within the Trust.

They will receive notification of media enquiries either directly from the media themselves or from a member of staff. On receipt of this information they will ensure that an appropriate and timely response is provided and the details of the enquiry and response are recorded. It is the responsibility of the Communications Team to ensure that this policy is implemented and maintained.

3. Methods of Communication

The Trust should expect to receive and send communications via a wide variety of methods, both internal and external to the organisation. These may include, but not be limited to, staff newsletters, press briefings, forms of social media (e.g. Twitter, YouTube, Facebook etc), LCHS website and intranet, public meetings, exhibitions, radio interviews, television filming etc.

All communications should reflect the diversity of the population, comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, and use positive images and language for the nine protected characteristics for equality and diversity.

Communications in a variety of formats, for example Braille, audio or other languages, can also be made available on request via the Equality and Diversity team.

4. Internal Communications

Our staff are our biggest asset and they act as the day to day ambassadors for the Trust. Developing effective staff communication, involvement and participation skills is essential for the Trust's operation and reputation. Staff play a vital role in relaying messages to patients, carers and other stakeholders and therefore form an essential part of the Trust's overall development of stakeholder participation and partnership.

When communicating internally, all messages should be consistent with the Trust's values, up to date, consistent, relevant and presented in a clear and concise manner. They should be available in a range of different formats and disseminated in a manner appropriate for the type and nature of the communication.

The Communications Team will take the lead in facilitating and promoting effective staff communication strategies and will offer advice and support to managers as requested.

Internal communications may take various forms, such as but not limited to team briefings, one to one meetings, intranet communications, staff magazines, and emails.

5. External Communications

Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust communicates with a wide range of external stakeholders in addition to patients, carers and other members of the public. These stakeholders may include GPs, commissioners, local authorities, Members of Parliament, other NHS organisations, voluntary sector, the media and Public and Patient Involvement Groups.

Prior to any communication being made, the Trust must decide how it wants the communication to be received and composed in an appropriate manner. For example is the purpose of the communication to promote good practice, provide urgent information to patients, highlight successes, or provide reassurance? Whatever the reasons behind the communication, they must all be credible, open, honest, timely, realistic and professional. Target audiences should be identified and the most appropriate and effective method of delivery chosen to ensure maximum coverage.

It is important that the Trust develops robust two-way communication channels between members, patients, carers and the local community to provide reassurance and promote confidence in the services provided. Feedback on service provision, is essential for the future development of the Trust and to provides information on the challenges being faced.

6. Media Handling

To protect the reputation of Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust, all media enquiries must be directed through the Communications Team on 01522 309751.

a. Guidance for staff

Directors

Directors who are approached directly by the media to comment on specific issues may respond directly if they feel it is appropriate. Where issues may be deemed contentious it will be more appropriate to issue a written response via the Communications team. Directors dealing directly with the media should advise the Communications Team that they have done so in order for the enquiry to be logged.

Members of Staff

If a call from the media goes directly through to any other member of staff it should be referred immediately to the Communications Team. Members of staff should only speak to the media after they have spoken to the Communications Team and after they have been briefed about the enquiry.

Non-Executive Directors

If approached by the media they should direct all calls to the Communications Team.

b. Responding to media enquiries

The Communications Team, or appropriate Director in the circumstances outlined above, will deal with the media enquiry, either providing the information verbally, in writing, or by arranging with the journalist to put them in contact with the appropriate staff or board member.

One of the Communications Team will contact the relevant staff member and brief them about the media enquiry. Having agreed what the response should be, and considering the availability and appropriateness of the staff member, the Communications lead will then set up the interview. This will involve either putting the call through directly if the journalist is from a newspaper or magazine, or setting up a radio or TV interview either over the phone, in a studio, or at another location.

All quotes given on behalf of Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust should be attributable. Attributable quotes should only be made by agreed media spokespeople.

Every effort should be made to meet deadlines wherever possible.

c. National and specialist press enquiries

All national and specialist press media enquiries will be cleared and agreed by the appropriate Director and/or Chief Executive if necessary.

d. Media enquiry audit trails

All media enquiries, and their progress and outcome, will be recorded by the Communications Team.

e. Media monitoring

A weekly report of press coverage will be kept by the Communications Team and will be circulated to Directors, Board Members and senior managers.

f. Out of Hours enquiries

On occasions it may be necessary for the Communications Team to contact nominated officers when they are offsite, in meetings or out of hours if an urgent reaction to a media story is required.

g. News release procedure

News releases are issued to present a positive message about Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust and its work amongst the public and partner organisations. They will inform others about our aims and achievements and should at all times promote positive messages. The Communications Team will issue statements that explain or defend the organisation's position on issues that may arise. All news releases and statements from Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust will be planned, coordinated and released through the Communications Team.

All news releases which refer to other NHS Trusts, local committees and local authority partners will not be issued until the approval of the content has been confirmed with their Communications department.

All news releases and statements will be copied to Trust Board members, other Lincolnshire NHS Trust Communications leads and local MPs when they are issued to the media. They will also be available on the Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust websites.

7. Trust Website

The Communications Team will oversee the Trust website and intranet for editorial content. It will be used to provide relevant information to patients, carers, staff and other stakeholders with policies, news and information about the Trust and the work that the Trust is doing.

The Trust website will be supplemented by the Trust Intranet for staff members only. This will include information such as training course updates, local processes and procedures, useful contact information, Team Briefs, and other related documents and updates. The purpose is to ensure that staff are fully informed and updated on what is happening in and around the Trust and ensuring that they are able to easily access and utilise information and appropriate documentation as required.

8. Social Media

Social media should be treated the same as any other communication channel. A published message has the potential to be as widely read as a newspaper headline. All staff members should acquaint themselves with the Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust Social Media Policy.

9. Noticeboards, Posters and Leaflets

Noticeboards are positioned in most of the Trust locations around the county. They should be used to display posters, leaflets, staff notices, newsletters and media releases to enhance and develop communications amongst staff, patients, carers and members of the Public.

Content should be carefully monitored and managed by the senior manager responsible for that service area and should always be up to date and relevant. Particular care should be taken to ensure that the noticeboards are not used for private advertising by either individuals or private companies, unless prior approval has been sought from either the Communications Team or the senior manager responsible. Please refer to P_CoG_03 'Standards of Business Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy (including Hospitality, Gifts, Sponsorship and Advertising)'.

All leaflets produced by the Trust must be approved by the Communications Team for branding and content. If the leaflet is intended for patient use, it must first be reviewed by a sample of the trust's membership and approved by the relevant internal scrutiny group prior to being published. All leaflets designed for staff only should be forwarded to the Communications Team who will ensure content and corporate branding compliance and make arrangements for them to be uploaded onto the staff intranet.

10. Corporate Branding

It is essential that any form of communication, documentation or information being produced, has the correct corporate branding and is designed to complement the Trust's image. The Communications Team will provide advice and guidance to staff on appropriate branding, as well as monitoring communications to ensure that they comply with the Trust's corporate image and values.

11. Consent and Copyright

Copyright laws dictate that work such as photographs, films, sound recordings etc require the permission of the owner prior to its use. Staff should always ensure that appropriate permissions are sought prior to the work being used. A copy of the Communications Team consent form can be found in appendix C.

Should a person be photographed, consent must be obtained prior to it being used in either internal or external publicity. UK data protection legislation regulates the use of photographs, CDs, and videos and should be consulted by staff should they wish to utilise any of these sources. The Communications Team will provide advice and guidance as required.

12. Training

The Trust will ensure that all relevant staff will receive adequate media training in order to facilitate their performance when being required to provide media briefings and take part in interviews with members of the press.

13. Further Reference and Related Policies

- P_CoG_03 – Standards of Business Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy (including Hospitality, Gifts, Sponsorship and Advertising)
- P_CoG_04 – Policy for the Development and Management of Policies and Procedural Documents
- P_CoG_15 Production of Patient Information Policy

- P_CoG_18 – Social Media Policy
- P_HR_27 – Promoting Equality, Valuing Diversity and Protecting Human Rights Policy
- P_HR_38 – Interpretation and Translation Policy
- P_IG_01 – Information Governance Management Framework
- P_IG_07 – Email Policy and Procedure
- P_IG_08 – Freedom of Information Policy
- P_IG_09 – Information Security Policy
- UK Data Protection Legislation
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Equality Act 2010

Annex A

General Model Release

In order for Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust to comply with data protection and confidentiality regulations, it is necessary for us to obtain written consent so that we can use photographs, videos, voice recordings and words that feature you for information and exhibition purposes.

You can contact us at any point and ask us not to use these for any new purposes. Remember that once anything is published and in circulation (especially online) it may be copied and used by others. If you ask us not to use the photograph, film or words in future, we will comply with your request and will do our best to stop others doing so, but we cannot guarantee this.

Project: _____		
Date: _____		
Distribution: (tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> All	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers/magazines
	<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/> Websites
	<input type="checkbox"/> Information leaflets	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational purposes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Social media	<input type="checkbox"/> Trust publications
	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentations	<input type="checkbox"/> Events
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	

Your name: _____
Age of person in the photograph if under 16: _____
Address: _____ _____ _____
Telephone Number: _____
I, the undersigned, agree for Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust to use my photograph/film/voice recording/words in future publications and PR material.
Signed: _____
Print: _____

Dated: _____

Equality analysis

Appendix

B

Name of Policy/Procedure/Function*	
Communications Policy	
Equality Analysis Carried out by:	Sharon Bradwell
Date:	14th June 2018
Equality & Human rights Lead:	Rachel Higgins
Director\General Manager:	Andrew Morgan

***In this template the term policy\service is used as shorthand for what needs to be analysed. Policy\Service needs to be understood broadly to embrace the full range of policies, practices, activities and decisions: essentially everything we do, whether it is formally written down or whether it is informal custom and practice. This includes existing policies and any new policies under development.**

Section 1 – to be completed for all policies

A.	Briefly give an outline of the key objectives of the policy; what it's intended outcome is and who the intended beneficiaries are expected to be	To ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to their communications both outside of the organisation and internally		
B.	Does the policy have an impact on patients, carers or staff, or the wider community that we have links with? Please give details	No		
C.	Is there is any evidence that the policy\service relates to an area with known inequalities? Please give details	No		
D.	Will/Does the implementation of the policy\service result in different impacts for protected characteristics?	No		
		Yes	No	
	Disability		X	
	Sexual Orientation		X	
	Sex		X	
	Gender Reassignment		X	
	Race		X	
	Marriage/Civil Partnership		X	
	Maternity/Pregnancy		X	
	Age		X	
	Religion or Belief		X	
	Carers		X	
	If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the questions then you are required to carry out a full Equality Analysis which should be approved by the Equality and Human Rights Lead – please go to section 2			
The above named policy has been considered and does not require a full equality analysis				
Equality Analysis Carried out by:		Sharon Bradwell		
Date:		14 th June 2018		

NHSLA Monitoring Template

Appendix C

Minimum requirement to be monitored	Process for monitoring e.g. audit	Responsible individuals/ group/ committee	Frequency of monitoring/ audit	Responsible individuals/ group/ committee (multidisciplinary) for review of results	Responsible individuals/ group/ committee for development of action plan	Responsible individuals/ group/ committee for monitoring of action plan
	Monthly review of relevant sites	Communications Team	Monthly	PPSSEG	Communications Team	PPSEG