

Communications Policy

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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		Full Revision	Nov 2020	Sharon Bradwell
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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, to better inform staff, key stakeholders and support effective service delivery.

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

Appropriate support and further training will be provided to any member of the organisation who is likely to be involved in the external communication of messages.

Dissemination

Website, social channels and email

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 relevant communication policies, guidance and guidelines.

Equality Statement

As part of our on-going commitment to promoting equality, valuing diversity and protecting human rights, Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust is committed to eliminating discrimination against any individual (individual means employees, patients, services users and carers) on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, disability, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, religion or beliefs, marriage or civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, appearance, nationality or culture

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Communications Policy

Policy Statement

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1. Introduction

Excellent communications are crucial to an organisation's success in the provision and development of effective services. This Communications Policy provides staff with information on how communications will be developed and maintained by Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust.

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

Best practice communications have a number of benefits, including:

- Keeping staff informed to support them to carry out their duties to the best of their ability
- Engaging colleagues to maximise discretionary effort and to deliver services in line with the LCHS Way
- Keeping the public informed of the Trust's activities and events.
- Developing and improving services through two-way communication channels.
- 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.

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 play a key role in helping to establish effective, open internal and external communications systems for the organisation.

Directors also provide out of hours on-call support for urgent media enquiries.

Managers

All managers have a responsibility to maintain effective communication systems within their areas of responsibility. This includes supporting the Communications Team in the delivery of, and ensuring accessibility to, Trust-wide Communications channels to keep staff informed and updated, and direct communication with their teams and individuals to support efficient and effective service delivery. Managers should ensure that all staff are aware of the contents of this policy.

Staff Members

All staff members are actively encouraged to support and participate in a culture of open, two-way communications. They should be aware of, and adhere to, the

contents of this policy.

Communications Team

It is the responsibility of the Communications Team to ensure that this policy is implemented and maintained.

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

It is the responsibility of the Communications Team to ensure all corporate communications are made via the most appropriate channel for the intended audience.

All communications should reflect the diversity of the population, comply with the Public Sector Equality Act (2001) and the NHS's Equality Delivery System 3 legislation, 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 and opportunities for involvement and participation is essential for the Trust's successful 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.

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, but are not limited to, GPs, commissioners, local authorities, Members of Parliament, other NHS organisations, voluntary sector, the media and Public and Patient Involvement Groups.

All communications must all be credible, open, honest, timely, realistic and professional. Messages should reflect LCHS's values. All communications should consider target audiences to ensure messages and the method of delivery are appropriate and effective.

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 provide context about the challenges being faced.

6. Media Handling

All media enquiries must be directed through the Communications Team on 01522 309751 or via email to lhnt.lchsecomms@nhs.net.

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 to do so. Directors dealing directly with the media should advise the Communications Team that they have done so in order for the enquiry to be logged.

Directors also provide out of hours on-call support for urgent media enquiries.

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 it is appropriate for them to do so.

b. Responding to media enquiries

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

It is the responsibility of the Communications team to ensure staff members are appropriately briefed before any interviews. All quotes given on behalf of Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust should be attributable. Attributable quotes should only be made by agreed spokespeople.

All responses should be accurate, open, honest, professional and provided in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to meet deadlines wherever possible.

c. Media enquiry audit trails

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

d. Media monitoring

A record of coverage will be kept by the Communications Team.

e. Out of Hours enquiries

Any urgent out-of-hours media enquiries will be dealt with by the director on call.

f. News release procedure

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 organisations and partners will not be issued until the approval of the content has been confirmed with their Communications department.

7. Social Media

Social media should be treated the same as any other communication channel. All staff members should refer to and follow Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust's Social Media Policy.

8. 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 national NHS branding guidelines and the Trust's corporate image and values.

9. Consent and Copyright

Staff should always ensure that appropriate permissions are sought prior to using any photographs, films, sound recordings or other materials which are subject to copyright laws.

In line with data protection legislation, written consent must be obtained prior to an

individual participating in activities used for information and exhibition purposes. Consent can be withdrawn at any time and the Trust will cease use of these materials as soon as possible. However, once materials have been published in other domains, such as by the media, the Trust cannot guarantee their withdrawal by other parties. A copy of the Communications Team consent form can be found in appendix A.

The Communications Team will provide advice and guidance as required.

10. Training

The Communications Team will support and provide training where appropriate to those who participate in interviews with media outlets.

11. 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 Framework
- 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



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:

If under 16 years of age, signature of parent/guardian required to confirm consent

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: _____

Appendix B Equality Analysis

Equality Impact Analysis Screening Form

Title of activity	Communications Policy		
Date form completed	18/11 /2020	Name of lead for this activity	Catherine Leggett

Analysis undertaken by:		
Name(s)	Job role	Department
Sharon Bradwell	Communications Officer	Chief Executive's Office

What is the aim or objective of this activity?	To ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to communications both internally and externally to the Trust
Who will this activity impact on? <i>E.g. staff, patients, carers, visitors etc.</i>	All stakeholders

Potential impacts on different equality groups:

Equality Group	Potential for positive impact	Neutral Impact	Potential for negative impact	Please provide details of how you believe there is a potential positive, negative or neutral impact (and what evidence you have gathered)
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage & civil partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pregnancy & maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional Impacts (what other groups might this activity impact on?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Carers, homeless, travelling communities etc.)				
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If you have ticked one of the above equality groups please complete the following:

Level of impact

	Yes	No
Could this impact be considered direct or indirect discrimination?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, how will you address this?		

	High	Medium	Low
What level do you consider the potential negative impact would be?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the negative impact is high, a full equality impact analysis will be required.

Action Plan

How could you minimise or remove any negative impacts identified, even if this is rated low?
How will you monitor this impact or planned actions?
Future review date:

