# Project communications plan template

## Project background

* Describe the project and outline the background to give your communications activity context.
* Outline the project’s main objectives (what is the aim of the project, what are we trying to achieve overall)
* List the key project partners
* Describe the scope of this communications plan

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## Communications objectives

Make sure your objectives relate specifically to your communications activity and are not simply a repetition of the objectives of the overall project. These need to be measurable and will relate closely to the Evaluation section.

Objectives should be SMART:

* S - specific
* M - measurable
* A - achievable
* R - realistic
* T - time-bound.

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## Target audiences

Who do you need to communicate and engage with to make your project a success – and why? You might want to split this into primary and secondary stakeholders. Explain what you want to achieve by communicating/engaging with these different groups. Be as specific as you can - what do you need/want them to do? Simply ‘being aware’ of your project isn’t good enough!

Remember internal communications too – how will you keep all project partners and key colleagues informed?

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## Channels

Take each audience or stakeholder group in turn and list the channels you can use to communicate with them. Reach people through the channels they are already using, rather than creating new ones wherever possible. And remember your ‘channel’ doesn’t always have to be to a newsletter or website – it can be a task for an individual team member or regular meetings with key individuals or groups.

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## Tactics table

It can be helpful to bring together the information you have on your audiences and channels into a ‘tactics table’ like the example below.

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| **Primary stakeholders** | | |
| **Audience** | **What do we want the audience to do?**  **What is their role in making the project a success?** | **Channels** |
| ICSs | * Raise awareness and encourage GPs and healthcare professionals to promote the project to patients * Endorse the project within their healthcare community * Help to share best practice and learning from project | * Direct contact with key individuals (via project lead and communications lead) * Launch event / roadshow * Project email newsletter / website * Project social media * Learning events * ICS / Trust newsletters |
| Acute trusts |
| GPs and healthcare professionals | * Encourage patients to enrol with the project * Endorse the project within their healthcare community * Provide feedback to the project * Help to share best practice and learning from project | * Direct contact with key individuals (via ICS or provider lead) * ICS / Trust communications channels (email newsletters, website, social media etc) * Launch event / roadshow * Project email newsletter / website * Project social media * Learning events |
| Patients | * Enrol with the project * Spread the word to friends and family * Provide feedback to the project from a patient perspective | * Launch event / roadshow * Patient ambassadors / public contributors * Relevant charity communications channels (email newsletters, website, social media etc) * Local patient groups and networks * GPs and healthcare professionals * Printed information materials * Local and regional press * Social media |
| **Secondary stakeholders** | | |
| NHS England | * Feel satisfied funding is being used to deliver agreed objectives * Champion the approach and achievements of the project | * Direct contact with key individuals (via project lead and / or communications lead) * F2F meetings and teleconferences * Launch event * Evaluation reports * Project email newsletter / website * Project social media * National media and professional / academic journals * Health Innovation Network annual report |
| NHS Digital |
| Innovate UK |
| Department of Health |
| Office for Life Sciences |
| Other projects funded through the programme |

## Key messages

List the key messages about your project.

Generic messages: explain the basics of your project in a way that is a meaningful for all your audiences. Focus on what makes your project interesting, unusual and beneficial.

Specific messages for each of your target audiences: these should be tailored to their specific needs, interests, concerns and motivations, using appropriate language and tone.

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## Brand identity and communication assets

If a separate brand identity needs to be developed, explain the reasoning for this here and any guidelines.

It’s likely your project will need to create a range of assets for use across different channels and tailored to the needs of your various audiences. These might include:

* PowerPoint templates
* Infographics
* Email signatures for the project team
* Animation or video ‘explainers’
* Toolkits and learning support materials
* Printed reports and publications
* Social media and website graphics
* Image library

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## Communications timetable

What will happen and when? Explain who is responsible for delivering each activity.

| **Action** | **By whom** | **By when** |
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## Communications protocol

If appropriate, include the approval process for all communications activity and how media enquiries are handled and by whom. Who needs sign-off, and on what? The more specific you can be here, the easier the process will be, particularly if you are working in partnership with other organisations.

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## Evaluation of communications activity

How do you know your communications activity is working and how will you measure success? Include both qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as output, outtake and outcome metrics.

* **Outputs:** communications delivered, and target audience reached. Distribution of content, audience exposure to contents, its reach and reception.
* **Outtakes:** what the target audience think, feel or do to decide, measured by awareness, understanding, interest, engagement, preference and support.
* **Outcomes:** the effect of activity on the target audience relating to a change in attitude or behaviour.

Example

| **Objective** | **Output metrics** | **Outtake metrics** | **Outcome metrics** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stakeholders are **aware** of the project and its aims | * Number of events organised * Number of people attending events * Number of visitors to website * Number of hits on website news articles, blog posts and videos * Number of Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn followers * Number of Twitter impressions, Facebook and LinkedIn visits * Number of email newsletter opens * Number of email newsletter click-throughs to articles | * Message recall (surveys, feedback forms, ‘mystery shopper’ telephone interviews) * Number and tone of blog and article comments on website * Number of social media engagements (shares, likes, mentions, retweets, comments, click-throughs and downloads) * Sign-up to newsletter * Toolkit downloads * Email enquiries |  |
| Stakeholders are **aware** of significant achievements and milestones reached |
| Stakeholders are **aware** of the benefits and opportunities on offer via the project |
| Primary stakeholders **understand** their role in making the project a success | * Number of key people / organisations represented at stakeholder events | * Purpose recognition and behaviour change (learning events, surveys, feedback forms, ‘mystery shopper’ telephone interviews) |  |
| Primary stakeholders are actively **engaged** in their specific roles within the project | * Number of people attending learning events | * Number of articles in stakeholder communications channels | * Stakeholder support and satisfaction (surveys, feedback forms, ‘mystery shopper’ telephone interviews) * Enrolment numbers (referral route via website data / communications evaluation survey) |
| Primary stakeholders **share** best practice and learning with each other during the test bed project | * Number of people attending learning events * Number of blog posts by primary stakeholders | * Number of social media engagements (shares, likes, mentions, retweets, comments, click-throughs and downloads) | * Changes implemented to project design / approach / roll-out in response to stakeholder input |
| Partners **feel informed and are resourced** to deliver agreed actions and to collaborate both effectively and creatively |  | * Stakeholder satisfaction (surveys, feedback forms, anecdotal) |  |
| Stakeholders **champion** both the approach and achievements of the project |  | * Positive endorsements by stakeholders in media / online articles / publications / social media / events * Number and tone of blog and article comments on website * Number of social media engagements (shares, likes, mentions, retweets, comments, click-throughs and downloads) | * Stakeholder support and satisfaction (surveys, feedback forms, ‘mystery shopper’ telephone interviews) * Enrolment numbers (referral route via website data / communications evaluation survey) |