

ICP communications

1.0 Background

The ICP has been operational in its current form since April 2019, but has not had consistent communications support since July 2020, when the director of communications seconded to this role left for another post.

In November 2020 a new Director of Communications started at Sherwood Forest Hospital NHS Trust, with additional responsibility for supporting communications in the ICP. To date there is no additional or specific resource to deliver this work, but it is envisaged that by working using the range of communications talent across all member organisations and by working to a clear strategy, operating plan and set of guiding principles, we can work together collaboratively within our existing to ensure that the sum is greater than the individual parts.

Currently the ICP communications work has stalled. This is due to the combination of a lack of dedicated staff and Covid. Some excellent work has continued to be delivered and to be badged as ICP work and maintenance work has continued to happen to ensure that basic communications requirements for the website and social media are met. Now is the time to reinvigorate plans to fully exploit the opportunities offered by joint working and to ensure that the ICP communicates both its intent and its successes and nurtures its relationships and networks in order to future proof itself.

2.0 ICP strategy

The ICP has a broad aim to: “Create happier, healthier communities with the goal of reducing differences in healthy life expectancy (the number of years that people live in good general health) by three years.”

To achieve this it has a core set of five objectives which are:

- To provide outstanding care
- To promote and support health and wellbeing
- To maximise the potential of our workforce
- To continuously learn and improve
- To achieve better value.

To achieve this and to ensure system working, it operates on a set of guiding principles to ensure that it can deliver for the people in its community. These are:

- The ICP will “do what only it can do” – confining its activities to those where our collaborative approach adds value over and above that of a single body or organisation
- We will be inclusive - overtly reflecting that all member organisations are of equal importance and value, irrespective of their size or sector
- We will listen to our citizens, act on what we hear and we will put this feedback at the heart of what we do
- We will connect with those neighbourhoods that have the greatest need and will prioritise them for support
- We will be clear about who is accountable for leading any piece of work but we will involve as many partners as possible, bringing diversity of thought to our work

- We are tenacious about the objectives we have set and we resist dilution of our effort through diversification unless there are compelling reasons to do so
- We will work in line with the wider needs of the system
- We will pay attention to the impact of Covid

3.0 ICP communications objectives

Our objective is not to build the awareness of the ICP among the local community and our citizens. This is in recognition of the fact that the organisation and administration of public services is of no interest, use or relevance to the average citizen. This is especially true when the 'organisation' involved is a collaborative and would never be the place someone should contact for help and support. To use this as a measure of success would be a measure of ego rather than a measure which makes a difference to our citizens. We will of course badge these projects as ICP, but we will not have an objective around raising awareness of the brand name to our citizens.

We will, therefore, have three broad communications aims, one which supports our citizens and communities, another which support the ICP's continued growth and development and one which helps to embed the ICP and system working across our organisations.

- We will ensure that our citizens and communities are aware of the services they can benefit from, across the full system. We will support them to find the right service at the right time, regardless of organisation or where they start their search.
- We will promote the work of the ICP and its successful projects to local and national stakeholders and senior decision makers. We will work closely with the ICS to demonstrate how the ICP supports the ICS to meet its own strategic objectives
- We will promote the principles of the ICP across our workforces and will develop communication strategies that support colleagues across all organisations to recognise opportunities for system working, to know how to access support to make that happen and to understand the aims of the ICP and how they relate to their work

These are broad aims which will need clear and measurable objectives and a defined tactical plan to make them real.

4.0 Principles for communications

- Between our partner organisations, we already have an unparalleled reach into our communities and influence on our citizens and behaviours. Rather than trying to create new tools and communication channels, we will use those already in existence to amplify, support and share messages across our systems, in a way which is organisationally neutral
- We will not confuse our citizens with a plethora of logos. When we deliver a project we will focus on the ICP logo and that of the lead one, or sometimes two, organisations. Involvement will be implied and shown through quotes, case studies and other mechanisms.
- We will communicate through telling stories about where we have had impact. We recognise that these stories are integral in building advocacy and involvement from our local communities.

- We will focus on communications messages that have impact and ‘heart’ as these are where can add most value as a communications collective. Operational messaging and communications should be managed in the relevant home organisation, although such messages may be shared more widely to support adoption and uptake
- We will consider any project which involves two or more partners and which supports the ICP objectives as being in scope for ICP branded communications
- The role of effective communications falls across all organisations. Whilst the director of communications will have an overall coordinating role, the success of delivery will depend on the communications teams in individual organisations and on the strength of relationships and personal commitment within the communications delivery group

5.0 Next steps

5.1 Developing a communications strategy (by July 2021)

We will develop a communications strategy which develops SMART objectives to take the team to the end of 21/22 and which also identifies the channels we have available to us and which audiences they reach. The objectives will be realistic, taking into account the fluctuating situation with Covid and the changing structures of the ICS commissioning landscape.

Activity will aim to develop the ICP as a key strength for the region before the new NHS systems are launched in April 2022.

5.2 Communications tactical plan and delivery milestones

The communications delivery group will develop a tactical delivery plan to accompany the strategy, but this will be highly dependent on the operational plan for the ICP as a whole, as much of the operational communication which will help us to meet our objectives will hinge on projects and activities being delivered through the ICP.

5.3 Reconvening communications delivery group and agreeing governance and principles outlined above (by end of April 2021)

The communications delivery group will be reconvened and will be chaired by the head of communications at Sherwood Forest Hospitals Trust. It will develop its own reporting mechanism into the Board, through the Director of Communications, with the first deliverables being the strategy and plan.

5.4 Developing an ICP narrative (end of April 2021)

A narrative is a way to develop a shared understanding of who an organisation is, its purpose and how it presents itself to the world. It aims to become the ‘story’ of an organisation in a short page of text which people can use in full or in part to describe the organisation. It also supports prioritisation as it distils an organisation’s ‘essence’ and objectives into one short document and as such, if something is being developed that can’t be backed up by the narrative then either the narrative isn’t properly representative or the activity isn’t core to the organisation.

A narrative is inspirational in tone and approach, rather than descriptive,. It aims to win hearts and minds rather than act as an instruction manual.

The director of communications will work on a first draft of a narrative to bring to April's private Board for discussion and further development.

- **Brand development**

A brand is more than a logo. A logo is the badge you use to identify your organisation, but a brand is you organisation's personality. If a brand were a person, a logo might be a signature item of clothing or eye catching hairstyle, but their brand is the sum total of the person – their personality, the way that they talk, the way that they look, the people they spend time with, their family, their jobs etc etc.

At the moment the ICP has a logo but it doesn't have a brand. Some of our values are already on display and will be a key part of our brand, but over the next few months we will work on defining these more clearly and developing a brand strategy which considers all aspects of our brand and not just our logo. This will support the development of communication materials as it will help us to have a tone of voice and approach which is demonstrably the ICP.

- **Funding**

To date communications in the ICP have not been formally funded. Whilst all organisations are being asked to give some time from their communications teams, it is recognised that at some stage funding will be needed to enable us to take full advantage of the alliance. This is not a request for money but over the coming months conversations will be required about whether and what funding mechanism is required for this work. This will become clearer with the development of the strategy and tactical plan.