

Communications strategy – 2006/7

1. Objectives of the strategy

The Health Professions Council's main objective is to protect the public. The objective of its communications strategy is therefore to aid public protection by informing people about its work.

2. Communications objectives, principles and key messages

Communications objective

In short HPC must tell people who they are, what they do, and how they can be contacted? In a simple, clear and innovative manner with the objective of increasing public protection.

Principles

HPC will deliver the strategy through a programme of work that informs the public and registrants about the work of the Health Professions Council. In doing so HPC will be collaborative, in particular with key stakeholders, and ensure that there is equitable access to its services.

Key message

The strategy will aim to introduce 'choice' to the users and commissioners of health care professionals services.

In doing so the HPC will work with a wide range of groups including health professionals themselves, their professional associations and key stakeholder groups such as charities and pressure groups.

The promotion of 'choice' ties in with the wider UK healthcare agenda of ensuring patient choice is embedded into the point of delivery. HPC's objective would be to introduce choice one step before delivery – when you choose which professional you wish to see.

In doing so HPC can offer a large degree of public protection by the promoting the benefits of using a registered professional as against a non-registered professional. With the fact before them the patient or user can then make their choice aware of the potential consequences.

'Check that your health professional is registered' will be the key message supporting the objective of introducing choice to patients and users.

Through promotion of its established 'brand' www.HPCheck.org HPC will take the message of introducing choice to a range of specific audiences through a variety of different channels.

3. Key Audiences

1. Health professionals; Using of the network of the 167,000 health professionals on the Register will be key to the success of the strategy. Through our listening events and MORI poll we know that health professionals value communications highly and there is now a willingness to work with the regulator to help spread the message of using a registered professional.

Those professionals in private practice may gain more financially from such a programme but the campaigns should be equally relevant within the NHS as all health professionals should be interested in public protection from rogues.

Health professionals will also gain a real sense of value from seeing their regulator promote their services and capabilities helping answer the age old question *'What do I get for my £60?'*

2. Public; A huge task for a relatively small regulator to undertake is to get it's key message across to the public and get them 'checking' that their professional is registered. Among the many different groups there are three sub-groups HPC should target this year.

Elderly – the most vulnerable users of health professional services

Women – the most frequent 'choosers' of health professionals services for the family

Physically active (sports) – an increasing amount of health professionals services are used in sports and those who undertake sport or regular exercise. This group are more likely to go direct or use services outside of a GP referral.

3. Stakeholder groups; Another large group to tackle but particular focus should be given to those stakeholders with a key role in servicing or promoting the needs of the three public segments identified above e.g. Help the aged, Local authorities responsible for provision of services to the elderly, Womens groups, gym and sports clubs.

The addition of their support toward our campaigns would be of great assistance in us achieving our objective. Along with these key stakeholder groups the professional bodies of the professions whose skills we are indirectly promoting should also be engaged.

4. Internal (Council/Employees/Partners); Ensuring that employees, Council and Partners are informed of activities and on-board with the key message of the campaign will lead to increased effectiveness. The more people from within HPC's network singing from the same hymn sheet the better as far as achieving our objective is concerned.

4 Target audience ranked by importance	Preferred/appropriate channel of communication
Health professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the MORI poll showing that ‘point of sale’ literature is second only to TV advertising in terms of public ‘wants’ from HPC then the production of ‘www.HPCheck.org’ and ‘Check I am registered’ promotional packs for distribution or download among the network of health professionals is key. Packs could include posters, leaflets (including one entitled ‘benefits of choosing a registered professional’) other promotional branding and advertising that could provide a number of generic formats that could then be taken to a printers for adaptation by an workplace or individual. This would also help provide health professionals with a form of HPC branding with the intention that it develops into a badge of ‘trust’. • Campaigns supported by media relations campaigns highlighting health trends or case studies to support our message. • Professional bodies would be asked to support the promotion of our campaign via their websites and magazines while offering supportive quotes to any media activity. • Use of newsletter and website to promote up and coming campaigns.
Public – Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media campaign targeted to our audience highlighting the benefits of choosing a registered professional (will require case studies) including articles in relevant charity newsletters, websites (perhaps an opportunity for parliamentary support?) • Supported by poster and leaflet campaign delivered through network of care homes • Opportunities to check must include phone number, asking to see I.D., or other methods.
Public – Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number of women and family

(Regional)	<p>health sites on the internet so will target this sector with media campaign aimed at establishing links to www.HPCheck.org and highlighting the importance of choice for women and the family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support by using a number of ambient media opportunities such as advertising on pharmacy bags, doctor/dentist/hp appointment cards • Potential for targeting schools, post-natal clinics or kindergartens with promotional material with the idea of targeting the ‘referrers network’ and get the message to this group early in the development of family health needs • This may be best tested regionally due to costs with its success measured and adapted for a future wider campaign
Public – Physically active (Regional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific adverts to be designed for sports enthusiasts targeting appropriate media (sports magazines, Walkabout pubs internal tv, radio – opportunities to sponsor the ‘sports report’ on radio) making the appeal more relevant to audience • Posters and leaflets to be distributed via sports clubs and gyms (Use of materials such as bandages to promote the message could be considered) • HPC Yell.com advert listing to be expanded to include sports clubs and gyms taking account of the increasing trend in this group for going direct (MORI)
Internal - Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of extranet site for posting of latest campaigns, materials, Q&A’s and targeted campaigns • Communications section • Regularly updated measurement data and campaign successes • Potential for blog or message board for comments to be explored
Internal - Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of communications processes for managers to ensure information is filtered to front-line effectively and back

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurement of staff engagement in projects at the beginning and end of year through independent means (wider issues than just communications activities but seeking the same outcome) • Key messages developed in conjunction with front-line operators • Use of training days to enforce communications activities and their importance to the overall operations of HPC • Information packs and promotional material available to staff before campaigns are begun
Stakeholder groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking and audit of appropriate groups • Hosted meeting of professional bodies communicators at Park House to establish feedback and input to the registrant campaign • Website links between key groups and HPC • Article in their Newsletter/magazine carrying the 'check' message and the importance to their group • Potential advertising features in larger magazines such as gym's • Establishment of media spokespeople from these groups to speak in support of HPC's communications objectives
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure coverage of campaigns features in partner newsletter with a 'call to action' • Seek opportunity to deliver communications talk to the Partner conference updating on past and future campaigns and their role • Use network to gather case studies for use in media campaigns

5. Achieving your objectives – working project plan

*The communications plan is a living document and will need regular reviewing and updating.

Activity	Budget /resources	Deadline/timeframe	Success criteria
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Identity/general PR			
Creation of www.HPCheck.org publicity material and downloadable advertising kit.	Box of tricks Victoria Nash £20-£30,000 (including distribution)	April 2006	Adoption by registrant population. Hits to website.
Distribution of posters and leaflets to hospitals	Bonnie Hart Victoria Nash Box of Tricks	May/June 2006	Hits to website Survey of departments
Internal communication			
Creation of internal communications post (rolled into the communications officer post)	N/A	ASAP	Filling post
Media relations			
'Check I'm registered'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Nash • Bonnie Hart • Professional bodies comms 	April-May-June 2006	Media push on the 'benefits of using a registered professional' and that health professionals will now be using a new logo.
Elderly campaign. A media partnership with groups such as 'Help the aged' to highlight the benefits of using a registered health professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Nash • Bonnie Hart • Lansons PR 	August 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of media coverage • Distribution of material to targeted users • Increase in web traffic and phone calls
Women campaign. Targeted on-line news and regional media campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Nash • Lansons PR 	November 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of media coverage • Market research (?) • Traffic to website

Advertising			
Elderly campaign; targeted magazine campaign and possibly UK wide radio which proved successful previously	£50-£100k (depending on whether radio is an option)	August 2006	Increased traffic to website
Women; looking for more ambient media such as prescription bags, post and anti-natal clinic advertising and on-line advertising etc. (regional)	£20-£50k (depending on whether magazine advertising is chosen)	November 2006	Increased traffic to website
Fitness; targeted publications, sports venues and clubhouses (regional)	£20-£50k (depending on media chosen)	January 2007	Increased traffic to website
Publicity materials			
Bi-monthly electronic newsletter used to support the campaigns and inform key stakeholder groups		Next edition April 06	Increasing number of subscribers Feedback monitored
Production of 'benefits of using a registered health professional' leaflet	£10-£15k depending on print number (figure does not include)		
Events			
Listening events; Include campaign as part of presentation and take samples and advertising kits to each one	£3k per event plus expenses	8 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct feedback
Conference attendance; Target conferences addressing key audience groups in line with the campaign being run	Varies from free to £6k plus expenses	All year	

Website/electronic communication			
Development of Council extranet site	N/A		
On-line facility for downloading publicity material	£5-£15 k depending on complexity of pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony Glazier • Reading Room 		
Development of on-line survey group for market research purposes	£10-£20 k depending on software packages available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony Glazier • Reading Room 	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost savings on market research long-term • Increased flexibility to survey people on a variety of issues • Successful implementation of budget on-time and to schedule

6. Evaluating Success

A variety of measurement tools can be used such as analysing media coverage for key messages or by measuring before and after public awareness percentages.

The most cost effective and direct measurement will be traffic to www.HPCheck.org. By measuring this we will know that people are beginning to check their health professional is registered and that the various campaigns are working.



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