

Communications Committee 25 February 2008

Communications Strategy

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The attached document is the HPC's draft communications strategy. It outlines our main strategic and operational activities and sets out our key messages and objectives in support of these activities.

It covers the period from April 2007 until the next planned Department of Health review of regulation which is anticipated in 2011.

Decision

The Committee is asked to discuss the draft strategy, agree the contents and agree to continue to keep the document under review.

Background information

This document is intended to provide communications focus and support for the objectives and priorities set out in the HPC's Strategic Intent document. It outlines our main strategic and operational activities and details our key messages, objectives, audiences, communication values and evaluation plans.

The overall implementation of the communications strategy is the responsibility of the Communications Committee and the Communications Department is responsible for the day to day management of the strategy and its related annual workplan. It should be read in conjunction with the 2008 – 2009 communications department workplan.

Resource implications

Not applicable.

Financial implications

Not applicable.

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2008-02-14	a	COM	PPR	Comms strategy cover paper	Draft DD: None	Public RD: None

Appendices

Communications Strategy

Date of paper

13 February 2008

Health Professions Council

Communications Strategy 2007- 2011

Contents

- 1 Introduction 3
- 2 Strategic and operational issues 4
- 3 Communication objectives 5
- 4 Communications messages 6
- 5 Key audiences 7
- 6 Guiding principles 8
- 7 Implementing the communications strategy 9
- 9 Measurement and evaluation 10

1 Introduction

Good communication is essential for the HPC to engage effectively with its audiences and to fulfil its primary role of protecting the public. As a regulator of healthcare professionals, it is important that we tell the public about our role in protecting their health, inform and educate our registrants as to the benefits of regulation and what we require of them and communicate our successes to stakeholders.

Much has already been achieved. The research undertaken by MORI in 2005 provided a valuable insight into the perceptions, needs and priorities of the public and our registrants. We have worked to increase public and professional awareness of our role. In particular, our activity has focused on explaining to members of the public what registration means, our powers to protect common professional titles and the importance of checking that health professionals are registered.

The 2007 - 2011 communications strategy aims to build on this work, actively seeking to promote the core work of the Council and its Committees. It covers the period from now until the next Department of Health review of regulation in 2011 (as indicated in the Foster Report) and is intended to provide focus and support for the objectives and priorities set out in the HPC's Strategy.

2 Strategic and operational activities

The HPC's strategy, set out in the Strategic Intent is "to continually improve the organisation, influence the regulatory agenda and promote best practices."

In addition to this, there are a number of strategic and operational activities highlighted in the Strategic Intent. These include developing our home country engagement, agreeing operational procedures for continuing professional development, proactive regulation of aspirant groups, embedding patient and public involvement in all HPC's processes, developing and revising rules, standards and guidance and monitoring trends in Fitness to Practise.

The White Paper, issued in February 2007, sets out the Government's vision for the future of healthcare regulation and impacts on the working of the organisation in a number of ways, in particular its corporate governance arrangements and the intention to regulate new professions, for example applied psychologists, counsellors and psychotherapists.

The communications strategy will seek to drive and deliver these activities and the work of the Council and its committees through the actions set out in the annual workplan.

3 Communications objectives

The overarching objective of the communications strategy is set out in Article 3 (13) of the Health Professions Order (2001) which states

- The Council shall inform and educate registrants, and shall inform the public, about its work

The main purpose of the communications strategy is to directly implement this objective and we will aim to do this with the following five objectives:

1. To raise awareness and understanding of the HPC's role in regulation across all our audiences
2. To extend our reach to the public enabling them to access easily information about the HPC
3. To influence the regulatory agenda through ongoing dialogue and engagement with key stakeholders
4. To engage with our registrants to ensure they understand the benefits of regulation, the work of the Council and what is required of them
5. To further strengthen and ensure effective internal communications within the organisation

4 Communications messages

In all our communication activities we will promote the following core messages to all our audiences:

- The HPC's primary role is to protect the public
- We are a multi-professional regulator, regulating 175,000 health professionals from radiographers to physiotherapists, paramedics to biomedical scientists, dietitians to podiatrists
- We protect the public by setting standards of education, conduct and performance for the health professionals we regulate, by dealing with complaints and by ensuring that health professionals who do not meet our standards are held to account
- We are a modern, efficient and effective regulator which aims to be at the forefront of professional regulation
- We actively contribute to the health regulation agenda and promote good practice and standards

These core messages are not fixed and can be modified in line with changes in the organisation and its strategic intent.

5 Key audiences

It is important that we communicate our messages efficiently and effectively with all our audiences and the table below sets out the different people with whom we need to communicate.

These key audiences have been drawn from the full list of stakeholders set out in the HPC's Strategic Intent.

Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members of the public• Patient groups• Consumer associations• Referrers• Clients and service users
Registrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing registrants• New registrants• Prospective registrants
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parliamentarians from the four home countries• Professional bodies• Employers• Other regulators• Trade Unions• Higher Education Institutions• Other education providers and education organisations• Other health organisations
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees• Partners• Council

6 Guiding principles and communication values

The HPC uses six guiding principles which are set out in the Strategic Intent:

- protect the public
- communicate and respond
- work collaboratively
- be transparent
- provide value for money and audit
- and deliver a high quality service

The communications strategy and workplan will adhere to these principles and will ensure that all our published communication will be

- Accessible
 - Accurate
 - Clear
 - Honest
 - Open and transparent
 - Professional
 - Timely
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- In accordance with the HPC's house style and visual identity
 - Meet Plain English guidelines where applicable

7 Implementing the communications strategy

The Communications Department and Council will be supported in the delivery of the communications strategy by the Communications Committee which exists to

- oversee the implementation of the communications strategy
- monitor the delivery and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy
- advise the Council on the strategy

It should be recognised that whilst the communications strategy is the primary contributor to delivering recognition for the HPC, the consistent high quality delivery of operations and activities is also an essential factor in how the organisation is perceived by its key audiences.

The Communications Department is responsible for the day to day management of the strategy and its related annual workplan, however, the success of the strategy also rests with the Council and Executive.

8 Measurement and evaluation

The effectiveness of the communications strategy and the communications department annual workplan will be gauged through continuous measurement and evaluation, including

- Feedback from HPC events
- Participation and evaluation of exhibitions
- Attendance and feedback from talks, presentations and conferences
- Web statistics
- Market research
- Bi-annual opinion polling
- Press coverage

The HPC's strategy is to continually improve the organisation, and the information gathered through this measurement will be used to formulate further activities and strategies.