

Council

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Title	Communications Strategy Update
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Executive Summary

This paper provides the Council with an update on delivery of the communications strategy.

Over the period of the strategy, we have focused on putting in place the foundations needed for the HCPC to communicate more clearly, consistently and effectively. We have made good progress by building skills in the team, improving how communications work is planned and agreed, learning more about our audiences, and updating our brand guidance. This work has been delivered alongside day-to-day communications support across the organisation.

In our previous Council update in July 2025, we identified a number of areas of work that were still to be delivered or underway. These included:

- brand refresh and implementation;
- user research and channel review; and
- website upgrade.

These areas of work have now moved forward significantly and provide the final pieces needed to move from building capacity into more active engagement with our audiences.

While the strategy has sought to build the capability of communications across the organisation, the team has continued to support major organisational priorities and deliver communications activity.

The paper also outlines how recent developments will build on this delivery and how this work is shaping future communication priorities.

Action required	The Council is invited to: • note the conclusion of the previous communications strategy; • note the progress relating to the brand refresh and channel review activity; and • note the proposed direction for future audience engagement and public awareness activity.
Previous consideration	The Council last received an update on the communications strategy in July 2025. This update was reviewed by the ELT on 7 July 2026.
Next steps	Communication activity will continue to be reported via existing performance reporting.
Financial and resource implications	All communication activity is delivered within existing departmental budgets.
Associated strategic priority/priorities	Putting patients at the centre of smarter, preventative regulation. Supporting healthcare workforce development through proportionate, agile regulation. Technology-enabled regulatory excellence and organisational sustainability.
Associated strategic risk(s)	4. We are unable to effectively build trust, engage with and influence our stakeholders, reducing our ability to understand their perspectives and regulate effectively
Risk appetite	Communications - Seeks
Communication and engagement	As detailed in paper.
Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) impact and Welsh language standards	The communications strategy considers and supports EDI objectives and achievement of Welsh language standards.

Communications Strategy Update

1. Background

- 1.1 The communications strategy was agreed by the Council in July 2024 and aligned with the previous corporate strategy that concluded earlier this year.
- 1.2 The communication strategy sought to:
 - increase understanding of our role and why our work matters with registrants, stakeholders, and the public;
 - increase the impact of our work across the health and care sector by convening, leading or being part of conversations that matter to the existing workforce or the future of health regulation;
 - shape our activity and its delivery so our audiences can access, contribute, and use it where and when they need it; and
 - equip our employees to act as ambassadors for the HCPC, communicating coherently, consistently and powerfully about our work.
- 1.3 The activity to achieve those objectives was split across three workstreams:
 - deliver high-quality communications across our corporate channels;
 - build the capability of the communication function; and
 - develop organisational communications and engagement capability.
- 1.4 Two of those workstreams have been focused on creating the tools, skills and ways of working needed to support a modern communications function in the HCPC.

2. Progress since our last update.

- 2.1 Our last update to the Council set out the substantial progress made against the priorities identified in the strategy, alongside a number of ongoing or future priorities. We have continued to deliver the activities over the last 12 months and have now completed or due to complete in the coming months the outstanding activities set out in our plan. This section provides an update against each of the outstanding priorities from the last update.

Recruitment

- 2.2 At the last update, the Council was advised that further recruitment was planned, including additional communications officer posts and support for stakeholder engagement. This work was completed by January 2026. The team now has dedicated support in place for strategic communications, digital engagement, media, public affairs and content, which has reduced reliance on outsourced support and strengthened our ability to plan and deliver communications in-house. Further recruitment activity is ongoing to ensure the levels of resourcing remain at the levels achieved in January 2026.

Building our understanding of our audiences

- 2.3 We have completed a substantial piece of user research looking at awareness, views, communication preferences and experiences across key HCPC audiences.

- 2.4 This evidence is now informing communications planning, decisions on our preferred corporate communication channels, service improvements and future campaign development. It has also helped identify where public awareness remains low, where regulation is valued, and how different audiences prefer to hear from us.
- 2.5 The user research complements our existing work to track our progress over time. Last year we introduced a regular check of trust across our audiences, which will be repeated every two years. This will help us understand whether our work is improving awareness, confidence and understanding of the HCPC.

Channel review and social media

- 2.6 The findings from our user research are informing the ongoing review of HCPC communication channels.
- 2.7 Our data confirms that the website and email should remain our main communication channels for specific information. They are the channels most used, trusted and valued by our audiences. Future investment will therefore continue to focus on improving these channels and supporting wider digital improvements.
- 2.8 The research also showed that social media plays a different role. Audiences do not see social media as a main service or contact channel, but it can help build awareness, visibility and understanding of the HCPC among people who may know little about regulation.
- 2.9 Reflecting audience behaviour and how platforms are performing, the HCPC has stopped active engagement on X. This follows declining value for our audiences and changing user behaviour identified through internal data and external research.
- 2.10 At the same time, we are exploring opportunities to use channels where our audiences are increasingly active but where the HCPC currently has limited reach. This includes looking at platforms such as Instagram, particularly to build awareness and engage with future registrants and younger audiences.
- 2.11 The focus will be on making sure we use the channels our audiences use, rather than expecting audiences to come to us.

Brand refresh

- 2.12 Our previous update identified the brand refresh (delivered within the existing communication budget) as a future priority to help bring out the values, personality and confidence of the organisation more clearly. This work has now moved from review into delivery. The purpose has not been to create a new identity, but to make sure the organisation presents itself consistently, professionally and confidently wherever people hear from us.
- 2.13 Our brand review identified ways to give colleagues better tools to create a consistent HCPC experience, including how we look, sound and describe the organisation. The work completed includes:
- development of refreshed brand guidance and principles;
 - updated tone of voice guidance;
 - standardised messaging about the HCPC's purpose and role;.
 - new templates and branded materials.
 - development of a dedicated intranet resource hub; and

- introduction of a network of brand champions across the organisation.

- 2.14 Engaging with IT colleagues to integrate branded templates into Microsoft Office tools and everyday workflows.
- 2.15 The refresh has been designed to make it easier for colleagues to apply the HCPC brand consistently while maintaining flexibility for different audiences and communication needs.
- 2.16 Implementation is now underway, with materials being rolled out across the organisation from July/August 2026. We are supporting the changes with training, guidance and practical tools to help colleagues adopt the new tools.
- 2.17 This work also supports one of the key themes from the user research: people need HCPC communications and interactions to feel trustworthy, professional, clear and consistent.
- 2.18 The refresh will also support colleagues to act as advocates for the organisation in a clear and consistent way. Tools will include improved guidance, key messages for priority projects and issues, and better support for identifying opportunities where the HCPC should speak more confidently.

Website upgrade

- 2.19 We have undertaken work as part of the digital roadmap to build the capability of our website, which seeks to improve this channel and embed it as the core access point for all our key audiences. The upgrade, which was completed in February 2026, allows us to utilise features to improve the personalisation of content allowing us greater ability to surface key information in support of our standards. It strengthens our ability to adapt to changes in user behaviour (e.g. the use of AI over traditional search engines).

Targeting our public affairs and the media activity

- 2.20 We have maintained strong engagement with professional bodies, sector representatives and senior health officials across all four UK nations, while increasing our public affairs activity over the last six months.
- 2.21 We have substantially increased our engagement with ministers, shadow ministers, MPs, parliamentarians and senior political stakeholders across the UK to discuss regulatory reform, workforce issues and the contribution of HCPC registrants to health, education and wider public services.
- 2.22 We also supported parliamentary engagement on allied health professionals (AHPs), providing factual briefings and workforce data to the All Party Parliamentary Group and to interested MPs that were referenced during a House of Commons debate on the importance of AHPs.
- 2.23 Further meetings with government and parliamentary stakeholders are scheduled throughout the year.
- 2.24 More recently, we have also taken steps to intervene in relevant media narratives in line with our role and legal responsibilities around specific cases. We will be seeking further opportunities to undertake this in the coming months.

A continued focus on delivery

- 2.25 With clearer foundations now in place, the communication function's focus is shifting from building capability to using it to have greater impact. We are not currently seeking to create a new communications strategy but closely align our workplans and activity with the objectives set out in the new corporate strategy.
- 2.26 There are clear opportunities for us to be more proactive in finding and using moments where the HCPC's voice can be heard. We will increasingly use insight from stakeholders to respond to relevant policy, professional and public conversations, and to increase visibility where it supports our regulatory role.
- 2.27 Our refreshed approach to social media will form be an important part of this shift. It will help us build awareness beyond existing audiences and contribute more confidently to conversations that matter to patients, the public, registrants and stakeholders.

Campaign development

- 2.28 Our recent research reinforces the challenge identified throughout development of the communications strategy: awareness of the HCPC remains low, even though regulation, standards and registration are valued once people understand them.
- 2.29 We are developing options for a public and registrant awareness campaign to be delivered this financial year.
- 2.30 The campaign will seek to:
- enhance public awareness of our professions - increase recognition of the safe, effective care delivered by HCPC-regulated professionals and the positive impact they have on people's everyday lives;
 - clarify the HCPC's role - help people understand that the HCPC is an independent regulator that protects the public through standards, regulation and taking action when needed, building an understanding of the types of concerns relevant to the HCPC;
 - show regulated status - support professionals to show their HCPC registration clearly as a sign of quality, assurance and public confidence; and
 - support leadership confidence - increase confidence among registrants to take on leadership and advanced practice roles by improving recognition and understanding of regulated professional practice.

Developing a patient panel

- 2.31 Alongside campaign development, the team is currently exploring the creation of a patient panel and wider network. This would provide an ongoing way for patient and public voices to inform communications, engagement and service improvement work.
- 2.32 The work will build directly on the user research findings, which showed that public awareness of the HCPC remains low, that people value regulation once they understand it, and that there is a need to communicate more clearly about the HCPC's role, the professions it regulates and how concerns can be raised.
- 2.33 The panel would support the commitments in the new HCPC corporate strategy by helping ensure our work is centred on patients, informed by evidence, inclusive and responsive. It would provide a structured way to test messages, understand what the

public knows, identify barriers to engagement, and ensure communications are shaped by the experiences and expectations of people who use health and care services.

- 2.34 Further work will consider the panel's purpose, membership, governance, accessibility needs and links with existing insight, engagement and equality, diversity and inclusion work. This will help ensure the panel adds clear value, reflects a wide range of public perspectives, and supports more proactive engagement with patients and the public as future campaign and service improvement proposals are developed.

3. Conclusions and next steps

- 3.1 Our work to implement the communication strategy over the last two years has delivered the foundations needed for a more confident, consistent and audience-led approach to communications, engagement and public affairs. The next phase will focus on using these foundations to increase awareness and understanding of the HCPC, strengthen relationships with key audiences, and ensure the voices of patients, the public, registrants and stakeholders continue to shape our work.

4. Recommendation(s)

- 4.1 The Council is invited to:
- 4.2 note the conclusion of the communications strategy;
- 4.3 note the progress relating to the brand refresh and channel review activity; and
- 4.4 note the proposed direction for future audience engagement and public awareness activity.

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