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1. INTRODUCTION

NHS services in Scotland have always been subject to change and this is set to continue over the next three years with work to implement NHS Forth Valley's new Healthcare Strategy, progress health and social care integration, develop new regional delivery plans and implement key national strategies.

A rising elderly population, growing numbers of people experiencing dementia and an increase in the number of people living with long-term health conditions such as diabetes, asthma and heart disease will also require new and innovative ways of working with a major shift to deliver care in people's homes and local communities rather than in hospitals. There will also be an increasing requirement for 7 day working in both hospital and community-based health services.

In addition, developments within the media and wider culture such as the increasing expansion of online media and the ever growing use of social media present require a shift in emphasis from traditional communication channels such as print media to online and digital communication channels.

These changes will require a joined up approach to communications with greater partnership working at a local, regional and national level, more creative, innovative and cost-effective use of resources, innovative approaches and greater use of technology.

The NHS Forth Valley Communications Strategy sets out the key communication aims, principles and priorities for 2018 - 2021. It builds on the previous Communications Strategy for 2015 – 2017, reflecting the changes and improvements which have taken place during this period and provides a framework for next three years.

This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the following documents which are available on the NHS Forth Valley intranet.

[Media and Communications Policy](#)

[Social Media Policy](#)

[Social Media Guidance](#)

[Person Centred Health and Care Strategy](#)

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

NHS Forth Valley aims to improve the health and healthcare of our population by providing health services that are efficient, effective, equitable, patient-centred, safe and timely. The Communications Strategy seeks to support this by:-

- Effectively communicate with patients and other key stakeholders using a range of different tools – working collaboratively with partners to maximise coverage and reach
- Ensuring staff across the organisation are well informed on developments, changes and decisions which affect them and have access to expert communications support and advice
- Promoting key health service developments and changes and improvements across Forth Valley
- Encouraging engagement with local services and screening programmes by developing clear, compelling and effective health campaigns and messages
- Providing advice, support and feedback to local staff to ensure information produced is accessible and easy for patients and the general public to understand
- Ensuring the achievements of staff, volunteers and fundraisers are recognised, internally and externally
- Protecting and enhance the reputation of NHS Forth Valley as an excellent employer and service provider
- Ensuring the communication tools evolve to reflect best practice, address feedback and meet the future needs of the organisation
- Effectively managing the communications response for key incidents and outbreaks, working closely with relevant partners including Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue and local councils

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

The Board has a good track record in communicating with the public, patients and staff, ensuring that key stakeholders are involved in the ongoing development of services across NHS Forth Valley. This Communications Strategy, which builds on this work, is underpinned by the following key principles:-

- Open, honest, timely and accurate communications
- Respect for patient and staff confidentiality
- Clear and accessible information which avoids the use of jargon
- Commitment to ensuring, wherever possible, staff and other key stakeholders are informed about key NHS Forth Valley initiatives or announcements before information is shared externally
- Consistent and co-ordinated communications on joint issues, services and initiatives
- Two way communications with managers taking responsibility for ensuring staff are regularly updated on relevant information
- Willingness to listen and learn from feedback and reflect good practice internally and externally
- Adherence to NHS corporate identity guidelines

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

NHS Forth Valley's Communications Department has a central role to play in achieving the objectives of this strategy however, communication is everyone's responsibility. This means every member of staff has a role to play in communicating effectively with patients and their families, members of the public, community groups and partner organisations as outlined below:-

All Staff

- Ensure patients, public and staff receive accurate and up-to-date information which is easy to understand and free from jargon
- Take personal responsibility for being well informed by seeking information on relevant issues and making use of the range of communication tools available
- Share relevant information from briefings, meetings and other forums with patients, relatives and colleagues
- Share news and information about local awards, achievements and successes
- Contact the Communications Department for advice and support, if required
- Notify the Communications Department of relevant communications issues raised by patients, visitors or general public and refer any media enquiries to the Department if they are contacted direct by a journalist
- Alert their line manager and the Communications Department of any potential issues or concerns which may generate media interest

Heads of Service, Managers and Clinical Leads

- Alert the Communications Department to service developments, changes and potential good news stories as well as highlighting any potential risks and reputational issues
- Ensure effective systems are in place for two-way staff communications and that corporate information provided by the Communications Department is cascaded effectively
- Ensure the service has a nominated lead (s) who maintains information on the staff intranet and regularly reviews information published on the NHS Forth Valley website, patient leaflets and other printed materials to ensure these are accurate, up-to-date and meet the needs of patients and their families
- Ensure regular and timely communication with patients, carers and staff within their department/service
- Hold regular staff team meetings to share information and updates
- Capture and respond to feedback from patients and visitors

5. POLICY CONTEXT

National

The next few years will see changes to the way health services are designed in response to a number of key national strategies and plans. These include:-

[Health and Social Care Delivery Plan](#)

[A National Clinical Strategy for Scotland](#)

[Best Start – a five year forward plan for maternity and neonatal care in Scotland](#)

[Pulling together: transforming urgent care for the people of Scotland - The Report of the Independent Review of Primary Care Out of Hours Services](#)

[Mental Health Strategy 2017 – 2027](#)

[Realising Realistic Medicine – Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2016-17](#)

Local

NHS Forth Valley's healthcare strategy [Shaping the Future](#) describes our Vision for the future and outlines ten key priorities which will guide how local health services will be delivered across Forth Valley from 2016 – 2021. It was developed following a major review of clinical services and reflects widespread discussion and engagement with local staff, patients, partner organisations and community groups. It also takes account of key national and the [Strategic Plans](#) developed by the two Forth Valley Health and Social Care Partnerships which set out local priorities to meet the needs of local communities and describe how these will be achieved.

6. KEY AUDIENCES

Our potential audiences are broad and vary depending on the nature of individual health issues and priorities.

These audiences include:

Internal

- NHS Forth Valley Staff
- Local Health and Social Care Partnerships
- Staff of other organisations working within our premises - e.g. SERCO, voluntary and charitable organisations e.g. Friends of Forth Valley Royal Hospital, RVS, Maggie's Forth Valley
- Independent contractors and their staff
- Non-Executive Board members

External

- Patients and their families

- Carers
- General Public
- Local councils – Clackmannanshire, Stirling and Falkirk, including elected representatives
- Local voluntary and community groups/organisations
- Third sector service providers of health and social care services
- Patient/Public involvement groups – e.g. PPFs, PPP
- Partner organisations e.g. Forestry Commission Scotland
- Local service user groups – e.g. cancer services and women and children’s services
- Charitable organisations and fundraisers – e.g. RVS, Maggie’s, Friends of Forth Valley Hospital, So Precious
- Scottish Government
- Police, fire and prison services
- Media – local, national and specialist health media
- NHS Boards operating within our area - NHS 24, Scottish Ambulance Service
- Neighbouring NHS Boards – regional partners in the West and East of Scotland
- Special NHS Boards (e.g. National Services Scotland, NHS Health Scotland, NES)
- Further and Higher education institutions in the Forth Valley area
- Local businesses

7. OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS

Significant progress has been made in improving internal and external communications across the organisation since the development and implementation of the last Communication Strategy for 2015 - 2017. These have included ongoing development and growth of social media channels, the wider use of digital communications and significant improvements to the layout, design and functionality of the NHS Forth Valley website and intranet.

Comprehensive communication plans were implemented to support key services and developments and a new Media and Communications Framework and Protocol was developed for the two Health and Social Care Partnerships.

The Communications Department continued to manage communications for a wide range of events and initiatives including the Annual Review, official visits, service changes and a number of high profile media issues. These included the national launch of the new Scottish baby box pilot at Clackmannanshire Community Healthcare Centre by the First Minister. Staff featured in a number TV programmes and news reports including a live broadcast of Reporting Scotland, which was filmed at Forth Valley Royal Hospital, and Landward. NHS Forth Valley’s Nurses Choir also made a special guest appearance on Michael McIntyre’s Big Show which was seen by more than 5.6m viewers across the UK. Collectively, this work has enabled us to reach a far greater and more diverse audience, enhanced the reputation of the organisation and considerably increased our profile, locally and nationally.

A number of new communication tools were introduced during the period including a new monthly e-bulletin and a shorter, easy-to-read Annual Report. A major exercise was also undertaken to apply new promotional livery to NHS Forth Valley’s transport fleet of more than 80 vans, cars and lorries. These are initially being used to promote a range of services including the Minor Injuries Unit, the ALFY helpline and NHS Forth Valley’s social media platforms. The vehicles, which are seen daily by thousands of local patients and members of the public across Forth Valley, make best use of our own internal resources and are a cost effective alternative to traditional transport or outdoor advertising. The TV screens at Forth Valley Royal Hospital have been replaced and new screens have been installed in the Minor Injuries Unit and Maternity Unit to share health information and advice on a wide range of issues as well as highlight current health campaigns.

In addition, a range of educational videos have been produced which help reduce the need for patients to travel to hospitals to attend a wide range of outpatient clinics including antenatal, hip and knee and respiratory exercise classes.

8. COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES

The main communications priorities for 2018 – 2021 are listed below. Each will be supported by a more detailed action plans and additional plans will be developed to support any new and emerging priorities over the next three years.

NHS Forth Valley's Healthcare Strategy

This will include work to raise awareness of how the Strategy (Shaping the Future) is being implemented to ensure staff, patients and the general public are kept updated on progress over the next three years. Communication plans will also be developed to highlight service developments and changes linked to the implementation of our Healthcare Strategy and other national strategies (e.g. the national review of Out-of-Hours care).

Health and Social Care Integration

Work will be undertaken in partnership with council communication leads to highlight local plans, progress and achievements in line with the joint Media and Communications Framework and Protocol which has been developed to ensure a joined-up and co-ordinated approach to communications.

West of Scotland Regional Delivery Plan

Communication leads from West of Scotland NHS Boards are working together to develop a communications and engagement plan to support the development and implementation of a new Regional Delivery Plan for the West of Scotland. This will include work to raise awareness amongst staff, patients and other key stakeholders of key challenges facing local Boards and highlight how these will be addressed, in line with the recommendations of the National Health and Social Care Delivery Plan. Communication leads have already established a West of Scotland Communications Group which meets regularly to identify opportunities for joint working, share learning and look at ways to work together more collaboratively, making best use of available skills and resources.

National Campaigns and Developments

NHS Forth Valley Communications Department is involved in both the Strategic NHS Communications Group, which meets monthly, and the West of Scotland Communications Group, which meets every 6 weeks.

Staff will continue to work with regional and national communications colleagues to make best use of communications resources, share good practice, develop joint communication plans and coordinate a wide range of joint initiatives and health campaigns.

This joint working has proved beneficial for a number of key issues including flu vaccination, winter planning and medicines management. It has also ensured a joined up and co-ordinated approach to the promotion of a number of important health campaigns such as detect cancer early, smoking cessation and organ donation.

Future priorities include the launch of a new campaign to support the early detection of cancer (the existing Detect Cancer Early campaign is being revamped in 2018) and work to raise awareness of new national legislation which will ban smoking directly outside hospitals.

Communication plans will also be developed to respond to the recommendations from regional or national service developments such as out-of-hours care, major trauma services and maternity and neonatal care.

Staff Recruitment and Recognition

Efforts will continue to positively promote NHS Forth Valley as an excellent place to work and highlight its ongoing commitment to staff training and development. This will include work to recognise the commitment and achievements of staff across the organisation which often goes unnoticed or unrewarded. Highlighting these achievements not only raises the profile of the organisation, but also helps boost morale by helping staff feel valued and appreciated.

Plans to highlight individual awards and achievements, develop and improve the content and design of recruitment web pages (national and local), adverts and induction resources will also be taken forward. In addition, work will be undertaken in partnership with HR and OD colleagues to ensure staff are well informed and involved in decisions which affect them. This will include plans to promote the organisational roll out of iMatter and respond to feedback from staff.

Public Engagement and Involvement

The Communications Department will continue to provide communications support and advice to the Patient Relations and Person Centred Care Team who are responsible for public engagement and involvement across Forth Valley. Work will also be undertaken with the Scottish Health Council and local patient representatives to ensure they are aware of any proposed future service changes or developments and have the opportunity to inform the development of future plans.

Many complaints received from patients and their families cite communication issues as one of the key factors. This coupled with rising public expectations, means that it is important to ensure that all staff communicate effectively with colleagues, patients and families. While the vast majority of patients are very satisfied with the care they receive, it is important to acknowledge when things do go wrong and to take steps to help prevent similar problems from happening in the future. In addition, although NHS Forth Valley has a good track record of involving and engaging staff, patients and the wider public on the way services are designed and delivered, there is a need to ensure that this work continues to help maintain confidence and trust as we take forward the implementation of our new Healthcare Strategy.

Fundraising and Volunteering

There are currently more than 400 volunteers supporting patients and families in a wide range of wards and departments across NHS Forth Valley. These include the Oncology Unit, the Children's Ward, the Mental Health Unit and the Emergency Department. Many are individuals while others volunteer for organisations such as the Royal Voluntary Service who run cafes in local hospitals.

In addition, there are hundreds of fundraisers who collectively raise thousands of pounds every year to improve healthcare facilities and services. These include individual patients and families as well as local fundraising organisations such as So Precious and the Friends of Forth Valley Royal Hospital.

The Communications Department will continue to work closely with local staff to ensure that the work of our local fundraisers and volunteers is recognised and valued. This will include work to highlight the contribution made by fundraisers and volunteers across NHS Forth Valley and support local volunteer events and initiatives

Communication Tools and Resources

Existing internal and external communications tools will develop and evolve to ensure they meet the changing needs of the organisation. The Communications Department will also continue to explore creative and cost-effective methods of reaching target audiences, working closely with local and national partners to share best practice and maximise the use of the resources available. This will include specific plans to:

- Expand our audience on existing social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as well as test the use of additional platforms such as Instagram
- Use more efficient and cost-effective methods of communicating with patients and the general public including short information and educational videos which provide an alternative to attending classes/outpatient clinics or help people prepare for a hospital admission. A number of these have already been produced and others are currently in development
- Continue to grow an online database of individuals, community and voluntary organisations who we can communicate with direct to share information (including monthly e-bulletins) and obtain feedback on a wide range of issues
- Develop a new style guide for staff to ensure documents and reports are written and presented in a consistent and professional manner
- Create a web steering group to review, update and adapt website content in line with organisational requirements and feedback from service users. Website analytics will continue to be used to monitor website usage and inform future development and design decisions
- Trial the use of paid for advertising on social media for specific health campaigns or initiatives

Partnerships

Partner organisations, community groups and local businesses have an important role to play in sharing information and gathering feedback. Efforts will therefore continue to develop and build our relationships with key local partners to raise awareness of health service developments and provide important health information and advice. This will include work with communication colleagues from local council police and fire services on a number of joint issues including child protection, GIRFEC, community planning, emergency planning, hate crimes and substance misuse. In addition, we will explore opportunities to develop joint campaigns and initiatives with partners such as Forestry Commission Scotland, Maggie's Forth Valley and Serco.

A communication plan has been developed for the new Stirling Care Village which is being taken forward as part of a partnership between NHS Forth Valley, Stirling Council, the Scottish Ambulance Service and Forth Valley College. The construction project, which is on time and on budget, is scheduled for completion in 2018/19.

Communications staff will continue to participate in and support relevant multi-agency training exercises and contribute to the work of the Regional Resilience Partnership (RRP) Communications Group for the East of Scotland.

Reputation Management

The Communications Department will continue to develop and implement plans to raise the profile of the organisation, enhance and protect its reputation, promote key service developments, celebrate successes and highlight achievements. This includes developments linked to innovation and research and a wide range of national health campaigns and initiatives.

Emphasis will be placed on effectively targeting and tailoring stories in line with the needs and priorities of local and national media, developing feature ideas and working with colleagues across the organisation to identify potential stories, case studies and initiatives which are likely to be of interest to the media. In addition, work will continue to protect the reputation of NHS Forth Valley by effectively managing the communications response to future major incidents, outbreaks, sensitive, high profile or contentious issues.

9. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

NHS Forth Valley's Communications Department uses a wide range of communications tools and resources available to support effective internal and external communications.

External Tools

(i) The NHS Forth Valley website

The NHS Forth Valley website (www.nhsforthvalley.com) is one of the most important and increasingly popular tools used by patients and the general public to access information and advice on a wide range of local health services and facilities. People can feedback comments via an online feedback form or email FV-UHB.yourhealthservice@nhs.net

(ii) Social Media Channels

Social media enables the organisation to quickly share information and updates with a wide range of followers and plays an increasingly important role in communications, particularly in relation to fast changing and developing incidents or health issues. It also provides a useful vehicle for sharing health information and advice and encouraging feedback from service users, staff and local organisations.

NHS Forth Valley has a corporate Twitter account (@NHSForthValley), a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/nhsforthvalley) and a YouTube channel which are monitored and updated by the Communications Department. The sites are used to provide our followers with updates on the latest news, events, service developments and changes as well as highlighting health campaigns and initiatives.

(iii) Health e-bulletins

A monthly e-bulletin is produced by the Communications Department to update patients, the general public and local organisations on key developments, news and achievements across NHS Forth Valley. The distribution list is also reviewed and updated regularly to share news and updates with as many individuals, organisations and community groups as possible.

(iv) Media Relations

NHS Forth Valley's Communications Department receives a wide range of enquiries from national and local media including newspapers, magazines, television, radio and press agencies. The Department also proactively works with the media to raise awareness of key service changes, developments and improvements across the organisation as well as highlighting the work and achievements of staff. A forward planning system is in place to ensure all media opportunities across the organisation are captured and managed to maximise coverage and avoid potential duplication.

The Communications Department also provides a 24-hour, seven day-a-week service on behalf of the organisation, ensuring prompt, accurate briefings and statements are issued in response to all media enquiries and major incidents. In addition, the Department also provides advice on working with the media and arranges media training for key service leads and managers who may require to speak to the media on a regular basis. Further information is provided in NHS Forth Valley's [Media and Communications Policy](#).

(v) Health Campaigns

The Communications Department works with a number of services to develop and promote a wide range of health information campaigns. These include local Public Health and Health Promotion campaigns to raise awareness of specific health issues e.g. cancer detection, flu vaccination, Hepatitis C screening and others which are designed to encourage healthier lifestyles and behaviours. The Department also works closely with the Scottish Government, Health Scotland, Health Protection Scotland and West of Scotland communication leads to promote key national and regional campaigns and health initiatives.

(vi) Consultations

Formal consultation is a statutory process for communicating proposed service changes to the people affected by the change. The Communications Department co-ordinates public information and publicity for all consultations on proposed major service changes and also provides communications advice and support in relation to local service changes and developments.

(vii) Public Affairs

The Communications Department works closely with the communication leads from the Scottish Government's Health and Social Care Directorate to ensure a joined up and consistent approach to communications on key national and local issues. It also assists in responding to enquiries and requests for information from Scottish Government Ministers and elected representatives and ensures that local MSPs are kept informed of key developments. In addition, the Communication Department plays a key role in the planning, organisation and promotion of Ministerial visits, MSP briefing sessions and official events.

(ix) Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback from patients and members of the public is gathered in a number of ways. This includes an email address (FV-UHB.yourhealthservice@nhs.net) for general enquiries, feedback and comments, a freephone telephone number for general enquiries, social media and an online form on the NHS Forth Valley website for general queries. In addition, the Patient Relations team gathers feedback from patients and service users in a variety of ways including regular surveys and focus groups. Staff also respond directly to feedback received via the Care Opinion website.

Internal Tools

NHS Forth Valley employs more than 6,000 members of staff and, together with their families, they make up an important part of the local Forth Valley population. Many of our staff are therefore both service users and employees with significant power to influence public and patients' perception of the service and the organisation. As a result, staff can play an important role in communicating effectively, acting as ambassadors for the organisation and managing the reputation of NHS Forth Valley.

In addition, there are more than 600 independent contractors working within Forth Valley including GPs, dentists, pharmacists and opticians who interact with thousands of local people every day and are therefore ideally placed to help share important health information and advice.

(i) StaffNet - the NHS Forth Valley Staff Intranet

StaffNet – enables staff to access a wide range of service information, resources and systems from a single online portal. This includes policies and procedures, staff phonebook, clinical guidelines and training information. It is updated daily with the latest news and has links to recent staff briefs and an online version of the latest staff newsletter. Staff can also access a social zone to highlight non-work related activities including fundraising and sponsorship events. In addition, the Communications Department provides ongoing support and advice to departments on the development of their own local intranet pages to help improve the quality and range of information available for staff.

(ii) Staff News – NHS Forth Valley’s staff magazine

The Communications Department produces a quarterly staff magazine (*Staff News*) which is widely distributed to staff across the organisation to update them on key service developments and changes as well as highlighting the work and achievements of staff across the organisation.

An online version of the Staff Newsletter <http://staff.nhsforthvalley.com> is also available to increase access across the organisation and also enable staff employed by Serco and local independent contractors to view content. The portal, along with an electronic PDF of the newsletter, can be accessed via the Staff Intranet.

(iii) Staff Brief

Staff Brief is regularly distributed to staff across the organisation to keep staff updated on relevant local and national NHS news, events, training opportunities and service changes. The *Staff Brief* is sent electronically to all users across NHS Forth Valley and posted on the Staff Intranet. Managers are also asked to share information or make copies available to staff who do not have access to the intranet.

(iv) Chief Executive’s Brief

The Chief Executive issues regular briefing updates to staff to provide information and updates on a number of key issues and service developments, highlight local awards and achievements and recognise the work of staff across the organisation.

(v) Board Briefing Updates

Briefing updates are issued after every Board meeting to update staff on the discussions and key decisions taken as well as highlighting the presentations made by frontline staff.

(vi) Partnership Forum

The Area Partnership Forum provides a valuable arena for joint working on a wide range of issues affecting staff, including the development and approval of key policies. Staff representatives also play an important role in informing, engaging and communicating with staff across the organisation on a wide range of workforce and service issues.

(viii) Staff Meetings

Every member of the organisation has a responsibility for communication and Line Managers have a specific responsibility for ensuring that their staff have access to information and feel enabled to seek information and express their views. All staff should have regular opportunities to meet face-to-face with their managers and regular meetings are also held to agree and review the development and performance of staff as part of the NHS Scotland Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF). Each

department and service is required to meet the requirements of the NHS staff governance standards which aim to ensure staff are informed of the key issues which affect them.

(iv) Staff Feedback

Staff can contact the Communications Department direct via the communications email nhsfvcomms@nhs.net or by phoning 01786 457243. Many staff also use social media and provide feedback and comments direct via the organisation's Facebook page and Twitter feed. Feedback from staff is also obtained via national and local staff surveys, focus groups, briefing sessions, meetings and engagement engagements coordinated by HR and Organisational Development leads.

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A number of tools, methods and feedback mechanisms will be used to assess the effectiveness of the Communications Strategy in line with the overall aims and key priorities. These include:

- Media monitoring and evaluation
- Feedback from internal and external audits
- Feedback from external reviews and assessments including Investors in People (IIP) reviews and Healthcare Environment Inspections
- Feedback from key meetings – regular discussions on communications take place at key meetings and quarterly updates are discussed at the NHS Forth Valley Board
- Evaluation of specific health initiatives and campaigns
- Feedback from staff, patients and the general public
 - Comments and feedback received from patients and the public via email, phone and social media, complaints and patient opinion
 - The results of the national and local staff surveys
 - Feedback and enquiries from Staff Brief, Staff News and Chief Executive's Brief
 - Feedback from NHS Forth Valley's website – via the online feedback form
 - Staff focus groups and responses to questionnaires and surveys on specific issues