

Health Professions Council
Council
6th July 2006

Communications Department Strategy and Workplan

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

The following documents are the communications strategy and workplan for the financial year 2006/2007. The documents have been approved on an interim basis by the Communications Committee at their meeting in May.

Decision

The Council are asked to approve the following interim communications workplan and strategy

Background information

None

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

Detailed in the approved 2006/2007 communication budget

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Communications Strategy

Appendix 2 – Communications Department 2006-2007 Workplan

Date of paper

6th July 2006

Appendix 2

Communications Department 2006-2007 workplan

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Introduction

The HPC's responsibility and requirement to communicate is set out in Article 3 (13) of the Health Professions Order (2001).

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

The Communications Department has changed and grown at a rapid rate since its inception in April 2002. Originally consisting of just one person, the team had grown to seven over the past four years. As with other aspects of the business, the communications department is both proactive and reactive, requirements may change and the department must react accordingly. Therefore this document is intended to be a working document; it will be continuously reviewed by the department and adapted where appropriate following approval by the Communications Committee and/or Council.

The communications strategy is detailed in a separate document. This document provides a more detailed breakdown of how the strategy will be fulfilled. All projects are accounted for in the 2006-2007 draft communications budget.

Throughout the document where reference is made to 'the department' this refers to the Communications Department

Aim

The Communications Department has three key aims:

- To ensure that all stakeholders are informed about the HPC and its aims and objectives
- To ensure that information gathered through market research and feedback from stakeholders forms part of the evolving workplan
- To support effective internal communications within the organisation

Resources

The financial budget currently assumes a team of seven Communications employees and a budget of around one million pounds. This workplan is drafted based on this budget.

Projects for 2006-2007

There are eight substantial pieces of work to be undertaken within the financial year 2006-2007.

1. www.HPCheck.org – Raising the HPC's profile **Introduction**

In early 2005, the communication department's aim was to inform the public about its work through a series of advertising campaigns, educating the public about the HPC, our purpose and the professions we regulate. It became apparent that whilst this is effective, it is difficult to measure in an objective way.

The department therefore established the need for a more 'proactive' approach when communicating with the public. In November 2005, www.HPCCheck.org, a website dedicated to the public, was launched. It hosts the Register on the home page and consists of a further four pages providing concise information about the HPC to members of the public. This formed the basis of a proactive campaign to inform the public about what we do by asking them to check the professional they were using or intending to use is registered. The website can produce statistics, by monitoring traffic to the site.

Following market research carried out on behalf of HPC (Mori, September 2005), the feedback from both the public and registrants indicated that HPC should have a strong and constant presence in 'point of need' areas such as hospitals and GP practices. The message of 'check your health professional is registered' will be delivered through a number of campaigns throughout 2006-2007:

Advert e-kit

This is an initiative aimed at registrants. The 'kit' will be available to download from the HPC website free of charge. It will allow registrants to download the HPCCheck logo, a visual identity guide, examples of how to use the logo in their advertising, stationary, business cards etc. Although the need for a 'kite mark' has been established, further market research will be carried out with members of the public to verify the proposed approach. This project will utilise the health professionals on the register, encouraging them to display the logo in their practices, on advertising and on appointment cards thus increasing public awareness. The HPCCheck logo will also be trademarked to avoid misuse by non-registered people. Whilst this aimed predominantly at registrants in private practice, registrants working within the NHS and other settings will be encouraged to display promotional materials such as posters, leaflets and car stickers.



Registrants will also be encouraged to request posters, car stickers and public leaflets for their place of work that will also carry the HPCCheck message. The launch of the advert e-kit package will be promoted to all professional bodies and private practitioner groups.

Hospital and GP surgery mailing

Two and a half thousand hospitals throughout the UK will be sent HPC posters. Half the posters will be aimed at registrants and should be placed in staff rooms, asking registrants to keep in touch and keep their details up-to-date. The other half should be placed in public areas such as waiting rooms or treatment areas that will encourage patients to check their health professional is registered. This is a cost effective way to reach a large number of people at the 'point of need'. The posters will be distributed amongst the relevant departments within the hospitals. GP practices will also be given posters and leaflets, distributed by a company who act as 'reps' distributing relevant information to GP practices throughout the UK. They then revisit the practices to re-stock the leaflets on a regular basis.

Older people

Older people can often be a vulnerable group; they are also the highest users of the services offered by registrants on the HPC Register. The HPC will form a partnership with a well known charity, for example Help the Aged (across the UK) to produce a targeted media and advertising campaign aimed at increasing awareness amongst the elderly and their carers. . A leaflet will be produced, that will outline the different ways in which someone can check, for example asking for an ID card or phone the HPC. Posters and leaflets will be distributed to the 7,000 care homes across the UK. Adverts will be placed in appropriate media aimed at older people for example Saga and Reader's Digest. A comprehensive media campaign will take place, including briefing journalists with an interest in consumer rights and providing them with 'case studies' who will be briefed to talk about their experiences of using health professionals.

Regional campaigns

A cost effective means of measuring campaigns is to target specific regions in the UK. Quantitative research is then carried out before and after the campaign to establish its success. Mori research (2006) established the awareness levels in major cities throughout the UK. This will form the base line from which to measure the success of the regional campaigns. In the 2006-2007 financial year, Birmingham and Glasgow will be targeted with regional media activity including a targeted advertising and public relations campaign. The campaigns will engage regional celebrities, MPs and journalists. A targeted advertising campaign will utilise such mediums as pharmacy bags, hospitals and private clinics and public information agencies such as Citizen's Advice Bureau. Quantative research will be conducted after the campaigns completion to establish any increase in awareness. Depending on the campaign's success, it will be rolled out and modified to other cities and areas of the UK over the next three years (to include all four home countries).

2. Stakeholder Communication

The department will continuously engage with all its stakeholder groups throughout the year (see box below). A targeted public affairs campaign intending on increasing awareness and gaining support amongst relevant MPs and pressure groups will be implemented. In addition, campaigns will support the business' needs when communicating with registrants, for example during renewal periods. Arts therapists, dietitians, chiropodists/podiatrists and operating department practitioners are due to renew their registration this financial year. A comprehensive series of student talks has proved to be successful over the last two years and will continue to form part of the stakeholder manager's remit. Each stakeholder group will have targeted messages developed for their needs. Information exchange and feedback will form part of the organisation's developing relationships with stakeholder groups.

HPC's key stakeholders include:

Carers	Higher Education Institutions
Clients, Patients, Users	Media
Consumer Associations	Members of the Public
Employers	Professional Bodies
Government	Regulators
Prospective registrants	Special Interest Pressure Groups
Registrants	Trade Unions

Public Affairs

This financial year will see the expansion and continuation of a campaign to raise awareness of our function and remit to enhance credibility, reputation and understanding with key political stakeholders. A public affairs strategy will be presented to the Communications Committee for its consideration at the meeting in May. The strategy will position HPC as a modern regulator, dedicated to consumer protection. Key advocates will be identified and targeted, allowing political stakeholders to lobby on our behalf. The strategy will target Ministers and high level influencers, MPs, MSPs, MEPs AMs who have an interest in health policy and backbenchers who may have a limited knowledge of the Council. Backbenchers will be targeted with the message 'HPC are here to help your constituents'. Analysis of policy developments will be necessary as will dialogue with MPs and officials.

It is hoped the HPC will have the opportunity to host a Parliamentary reception and allow the President the opportunity to speak about our aims and remit. Briefing will take place before debates, motions and Parliamentary questions. The organisation will aim to attend at least one party conference this financial year.

Electronic newsletter

The department will continue to utilise the newsletter, launched in November 2005. To date, 1,500 registrants have signed up to receive the newsletter. It is hoped this number will sharply increase as a direct result of the 'special edition' sent out to all registrants along with the CPD brochure. The e-newsletter is a cost effective way to reach a large number of registrants and keep them informed of positive news stories at HPC.

Other projects in this workplan will refer to stakeholder communication. The relevant stakeholder groups will be engaged on a frequent basis and a stakeholder strategy will be developed later this year for Council's consideration.

3. External events

External events have always formed a vital part of HPC's function, from consultations to professional conferences. In addition to presenting at a number of professional conferences, the following timetable details the external events being held during the financial year 2006-2007.

Date	Event	Location
25 th - 27 th April	HR in the NHS (Exhibition)	Birmingham
4 th - 5 th May	Primary Care 2006 (Exhibition)	Birmingham
13 th June	HPC Listening Event	Bangor (Northern Ireland)
15 th June	HPC Listening Event	Ayr
20 th - 22 nd June	Trading Standards Institute Exhibition	London
7 th July	Annual Public Meeting	London, Park House
5 th September	HPC Listening Event	Newcastle
7 th September	HPC Listening Event	Burnley
27 th - 28 th November	Partners Conference	Scotland

All HPC employees are encouraged to attend and participate in events when the business allows.. Feedback and ideas gathered from events is used to form part of the ongoing work plan and future strategies.

4. Publications

Since its inception, the HPC has published a large number of documents. A basic corporate identity was established in 2002. The number of publications has increased and each department has taken responsibility for producing the content of their relevant documents, a need for a more definitive guide to corporate identity has emerged. For this reason, the Communications Department will produce a publications process and clear guidance on how to produce HPC documents. This document will provide detailed guidance on the organisation's visual identity and a house style. The guidance will conform to ISO 2006 and will maintain high quality, consistent standards throughout the organisation. The department will control the production of all documents and take responsibility for editing, designing and formatting every document produced by HPC. This will also apply to letters, guidance and information sent to registrants. Guidance will ensure that all documents are accessible in terms of translating publications into other languages and braille.

5. Business needs

The communications department continues to support the wider work of the organisation and its goals. Key projects this year include:

Continuing Professional Development

The communications department will support the organisation in communicating CPD standards and guidance to registrants and employers. This support will include press releases, publications, web support and delivering talks.

Foster & Donaldson Reports

The publication date of the reports is yet unknown; however preparation has already begun around communicating the Council's response. The department will utilise this opportunity to gain coverage in national, regional and broadcast media by holding briefings with key journalists and the President/Chief Executive where appropriate. The outcome and HPC's response to the reports will be communicated to all professional bodies and relevant stakeholders. Our response and implications will be communicated internally; the message will be adapted to meet each department's requirements.

New professions

When operating department practitioners (ODPs) joined the HPC Register, a communications process was developed. This process will be applied when new professions join in the future. Communicating with all stakeholders is important, particularly with members of the new profession and their professional body. Advertising, promotional material, the website and publications will be rewritten and replacements made to include the new profession(s). It is assumed that applied psychologists may join the HPC Register during the financial year 2006/2007.

Fitness to Practise (FTP)

In 2003, the Council approved a paper on how the organisation should communicate fitness to practise decisions. This approach has proved to be successful and the department will continue to support the FTP team by publicising conduct and competence hearings and

alerting press to forthcoming hearing dates. Press releases are sent to key stakeholders, professional publications and to journalists who write for regional publications in the area the registrant is from. The coverage achieved by the press releases helps to raise our profile and enhance our reputation as a consumer rights organisation (as we are already referred to in the media).

Crisis management

The department will develop a clear and concise crisis management strategy that will contain details about dealing with potential crisis situations, the impact they may have on the organisation and guidance about what should be communicated and to whom. This is incorporated into the Disaster Recover Plan.

Scottish presence

The Communications Department will work with the Policy and Standards Department to begin research into implications of an HPC presence in Scotland (a report will be bought back to Council in October 2006 for discussion, including issues around cost, resources, aims, benefits etc). The organisation will continue to build on relationships with government in other home countries, using Council member's contacts where appropriate.

6. The Website

The HPC website was revised in March 2005. The feedback on the revised site has been largely positive. Any comments or criticisms are acted upon and the appropriate action taken. The website is one of the most cost effective and useful ways in which the organisation can communicate with a large number of our stakeholders. A number of key projects will be undertaken over the 2006-2007 financial year including:

Public website

- 'Education' to be created as primary menu item
- Improvements to how content managed data is displayed
- Improvements to how content managed data is searched for (hearings/publications)
- Improvements to website search facility
- Homepage redesign (more focus on hpcheck.org & relevant information)
- Improvements to feedback forms

Content management system (CMS)

- Additional CMS modules will be created including 'Register of approved courses' & 'Professions'
- Improvements to CMS user security
- Improvements of document management

Extranet developments

- 'Online renewals' module to be integrated
- 'Change of personal details' module to be integrated
- 'Authentication model' to be integrated

Online applications

- Online application facility to be launched with new website design

7. Internal Communications

Employees

The department will present an internal communications strategy to the Communications Committee in May for its consideration. Internal communications will involve internal qualitative research with randomly selected employees across the business. This research will form the basis of the future internal communications strategy. The strategy will include recommendations about how information should be shared across the business and it will identify any areas that need improvement. The department will provide a clear communications process for the Executive Management Team to follow. Better internal communications will lead to greater productivity and cooperation throughout the organisation. Organising Internal events will also fall within the remit of internal communications, including the annual employee training day, summer BBQ and Christmas lunch. Any issues raised about staff events as part of the research will be addressed and recommendations will be made and form part of the strategy.

Council

As part of the internal communications function, the department will work with the Secretariat and Council to produce a comprehensive and useable extranet for Council members. It will be updated regularly to contain current and relevant news, events, meetings and issues. Council members will be encouraged to contribute to their site.

Partners

The partner conference will be held in Glasgow, Scotland in November 2006. The event will build on the strong foundations already in place following the 2004 conference in Manchester. Along with the partner manager, the department will organise and run a conference, which will encourage partners to network, and to share ideas and best practice. The conference will be entitled 'A Partnership in Progress'.

8. Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

A PPI strategy is currently being drafted in collaboration with the Policy and Standards Department. The HPC is a member of the UK Health and Social Care Regulator's PPI Group. : HPC is part of a working group to establish (via market research), how to make registers more useable, this will engage the public including vulnerable groups and organisations such as ICAS and PALS. Other projects include a joint PPI handbook, a joint leaflet and a series of seminars to promote best practice across the nine regulators and CHRE. HPC is taking the lead on one of these seminars A PPI strategy, written by the Policy and Standards Department will be considered by the HPC Council at the July meeting.

9. The Future 2007-2009

The 2006-2007 financial year will focus on targeted and measurable campaigns. The feedback and analysis of these campaigns will provide the basis of future strategies. Foster and Donaldson's recommendations allow the organisation to demonstrate our adaptability and the importance of modern legislation to the press, political and non-political stakeholders. The department will always ensure that information and feedback received is utilised whenever possible.

Appendix 1

Communications Strategy 2006/2007

Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London
24th May 2006

Victoria Nash, Communications Manager

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- I. Foreword
- II. The Communications Department
- III. Key objectives
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I. Foreword

The objective of the Communications Department is set out in Part II, Article 13 of the Health Professions Order (2001)

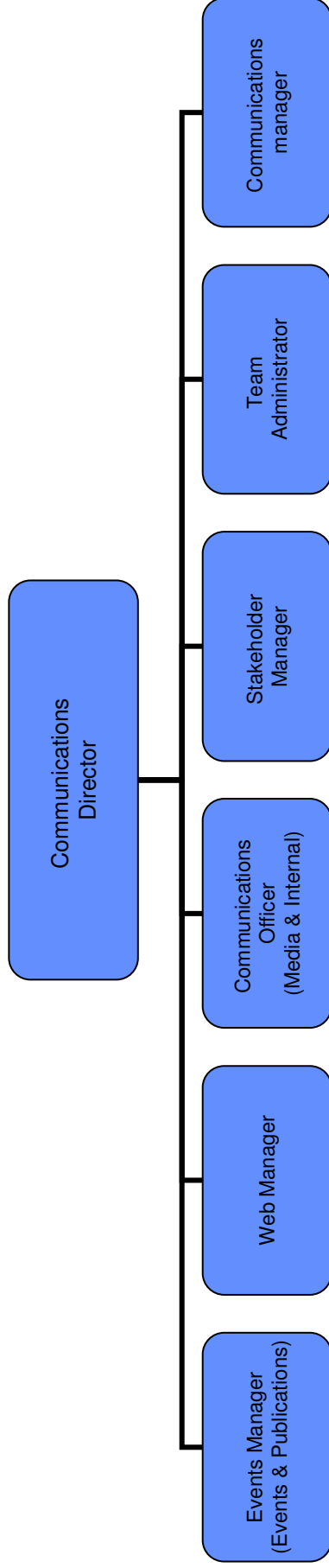
The Council shall inform and educate registrants, and shall inform the public, about its work

Key objectives of the Communications Department

1. To engender a fuller understanding of the benefits of professional self regulation amongst all stakeholders
2. To ensure that information gathered through research and feedback informs HPC's decision making processes and maximises public involvement
3. To support effective internal communications within the organisation

II. The Communications Department

Communications Department Structure – Facing slide



III. Key objectives

1. To engender a fuller understanding of the benefits of professional self regulation amongst all stakeholders

- **Public**

Raising HPC's profile thorough proactive, targeted advertising, marketing and public relations campaigns (regional and client group specific), dedicated website www.HPCheck.org

- **Referrers**

Raising awareness via the referrers network (including GPs surgeries, hospitals, patient groups, Citizen's Advice Bureau) to promote and allow easy access to the services offered by HPC

- **Registrants**

Communicating with registrants via professional journals, website, newsletter and listening events. Increase the ways in which registrants can engage with the HPC. Oversee CPD/Foster Donaldson/New professions/FTP communications campaigns. Launch Advert ekit

- **Other stakeholders**

Establishing ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders including political stakeholders, consumer groups, employers, education providers, professional bodies and political agencies.

2. To ensure that information gathered through research and feedback informs HPC's decision making processes and maximises public involvement

- **Listening events**
Continue to use listening events throughout the UK to give public and registrants the opportunity to give feedback about the work of HPC
- **Work with Joint Regulators PPI Group**
Continue to work with other regulators on a shared programme aimed at involving patients and the public (PPI Handbook, Joint leaflet, joint website, seminar programme)
- **Develop a PPI strategy**
Work with Policy and Standards Department to draft an HPC PPI strategy for Council which will impact on all the work of all departments

3. To support effective internal communications within the organisation

- **Periodic Qualitative research**
Conduct qualitative research with staff to determine whether or not internal communications are improving and developing over time
- **Clear protocols for internal communication**
Develop clear protocols for internal communications and monitor their use
- **Extranet for staff and Council members**
Enhance use of extranet by staff and Council members
- **Partner Conference**
Lead on Partner Conference, November 2006

IV. Measurement and feedback

The success of the strategy should be gauged through continuous measurement.

- Where possible, all events and campaigns should be cost effective and measured to determine their impact
- Feedback should be gathered from all events, talks and conferences
- Proactive campaigns should be measurable via market research and traffic to website
- Outcomes and feedback should be used to formulate future strategies
- Where appropriate, feedback and measurements should be in the public domain to ensure transparency