



Healthwatch South Tees Digital Communications Strategy October 2020

freephone
0800 118 1691

1. Statement of Purpose: What do we want our communications to achieve?

This strategy aims to show how effective communications and marketing can:

- Maximise the impact of organisational objectives, such as highlighting local health and social care information and increasing responses to consultations.
- Engage with local communities and professionals, by providing effective methods of reaching out to hidden populations.
- Demonstrate our successes through sustained increases in social media followers, post reach, post engagement and conversions.
- Promote interaction between service providers and service users to drive positive development in the health and care sector.

This document will review the approach to communications over the past two years, highlighting what has been achieved and what can be improved upon. It will also outline future opportunities and threats which are likely to affect the organisation's communications goals.

The strategy will also identify the key objectives of Healthwatch, its key stakeholders and the most effective ways of communicating with them. Finally, the strategy will introduce a workplan which sets out new ways of communicating with stakeholders, followed by methods to evaluate success.

2. Our Current Situation - Where are we now?

Healthwatch exists to find out what matters to people regarding publically funded health and social care services and helps to make sure their views shape the support they need. Healthwatch South Tees is delivered across the following local authority areas:

- Middlesbrough
- Redcar and Cleveland

Our previous strategy committed to working with partner agencies to ensure our messages are circulated through their networks. This approach has been effective, and we have seen a sustained increase to our audiences digitally. To maximise the impact of this, we now need to focus on increasing audience engagement to ensure we hear from the people we reach.

Notable changes to our communications:

- Increased use of images / graphics.
- New software integrated into our workplan, allowing us to produce new types of interactive content.
- Our websites have been upgraded and are now w3C AA Accessibility Standards compliant.
- We have developed a list of contacts and social media pages / groups that we can share content with to expose it to new audiences.

3. Organisational Objectives:

All Healthwatch contracts are expected to consult with communities to gather thoughts and experiences of publically funded health and social care services, feed this information back to stakeholders, answer information and signposting requests and highlight local developments in the sector to the public.

Communication goals can be tailored to reflect these objectives and help to achieve them in more effective and creative ways:

Objective 1: Consult with communities to gather thoughts and experiences of health and social care services

Operational objective:	Communications objective
Run consultations based on work-plan priorities or to determine priorities.	Prepare both physical and digital consultations, making use of platforms such as Survey Monkey.
Identify and engage with seldom-heard communities such as BAME, Autism and Learning Disabilities, children and young people and older people.	Ensure diversity in consultation formats, exploring options such as translation into other common languages and BSL where available, as well as forming relationships with community leaders who represent these groups.

Objective 2: Report the findings in a clear and accessible format

Operational objective:	Communications objective
Publish a report containing the background research, results of the consultation and how this will inform health and social care services in the future.	Ensure the report follows the branding guidelines set out by Healthwatch England: Fonts, colours and logos should all be in line with the guidance.
Highlight the report's findings through various channels to reach as many local people as possible.	Support the report's publication with social media graphics, email marketing and other multimedia where relevant, always linking back to the Healthwatch website's report page.
Ensure that the report is accessible in the form of BSL, other common languages etc., if this is required.	Publish a statement alongside the report committing to acknowledging requests to provide the report in other formats to improve accessibility If possible, incorporate accessibility software into the website.

Objective 3: Provide an information and signposting service, answering queries from the public about health and social care services and signposting to relevant support services

Operational objective:	Communications objective
Ensure that the I&S service is accessible during working hours.	Co-ordinate between team members to ensure that phone lines and general email inboxes are monitored - this could be a rota system where each staff member takes responsibility per day.
Promote the service and make its objectives clear, as well as what it can offer and how it can be accessed.	Organise a campaign to advertise the service, for example, the #JustAsk campaign ran by Healthwatch South Tees.
Identify and form relationships with organisations who are likely to be signposted to (e.g. ICA, PALS).	Include these organisations in the campaign and improve relationships by including their contact information in e-bulletins / social media regularly.

Objective 4: Highlight local sector news and developments

Operational objective:	Communications objective
Publish regular news updates to members of the public and stakeholders.	Publish monthly e-bulletins using the Healthwatch CRM system or a third-party platform such as MailChimp.
Provide live updates online and support other stakeholder publications by sharing them.	Post news updates on social media and share relevant content from other feeds.
Provide a platform to host news content for people to access at any time.	Publish content to a website which can be linked back to from social media, email marketing etc.

4. Identifying Stakeholders:

It is crucial to identify all our main audiences and determine the most appropriate communications methods for them. Healthwatch has multiple audiences:

- Internal communications (staff)
- Public
- Health and social care professionals
- Commissioners / Decision Makers
- National bodies (Healthwatch England, Care Quality Commission etc.)

Audience	Consultations	Information & Signposting	Local sector news
Staff	Yes	No	Yes
Board members	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public	Yes	Yes	Yes
H/SC professionals	Yes	No	Yes
Commissioners	Yes	No	Yes

Messages:

Audience	What they need to know	Key communications channels
Members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We can offer them an information and signposting service• They can help to inform health and social care services• News updates in health and social care locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E-bulletin• Consultations• Social media• Website• Reports
Health and social care professionals, Board Members & Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We ask members of the public about services and publish reports based on our findings• We have statutory powers, such as being able to enter and view a service• We'd like you to tell us about relevant news and updates so we can inform the public about them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E-bulletin• Consultations• Social media• Website• Reports
Healthwatch staff members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to provide Healthwatch services most effectively• How staff are supported to meet their aims and objectives• Where staff can raise issues and which colleagues are best placed to handle them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Email• Team meetings• Intranet (Enyware)• Telephone• Collaborative working platforms (Jamboard etc.)• Supervisions and Action Plans• Impact Plans and quarter reports

5. Workplan: How will we reach people and encourage them to act?

The new workplan aims to build on the success of the previous strategy while addressing the shortcomings. The last two years has seen an increase in exposure to new audiences, so to build on this, a new content strategy needs to be implemented to increase engagement.

How do people find us?

We currently engage with our audiences using the following digital channels:

- Email Marketing
- Public relations and local media
- Social Media
- Website

Each of these channels have their own unique strengths and can be utilised individually or integrated into an approach that utilises all of them.

Email Marketing: A monthly e-bulletin is useful to reach people in our audience who are not on social media but do use email. As well as this, it can be sent to addresses that represent an entire organisation, such as a GP Practice. E-bulletin content mostly consists of organisational news (new reports etc.), partner updates and events, and most stories feature a hyperlink to another website.

Public relations and local media: We make use of various lists of local contacts which we are confident will publish our content through their own channels and expose it to new audiences.

This approach has proven effective, with posts that were shared with other organisations consistently outperforming those that were not. There is potential to expand this approach even further through use of targeted engagement.

Social media: We share Healthwatch updates or consultations, evergreen content such as highlighting our information and signposting service and partner updates, which are often accompanied by an image or (less frequently) a video.

Most of our posts feature a photograph or graphic which makes our content more accessible and likely to feature on news feeds. However, to maximise the potential of our posts, we should use more types of multimedia content.

Social media platforms such as Facebook have extensive options for paid promotion, based on demographical and characteristic data. This can be as broad as focusing on locality areas, or it can be refined to characteristics such as age and gender. This means that if a consultation would benefit from hearing from people from a particular background, Facebook advertising can be used to target them.

Facebook can be provided with a budget and will promote content accordingly for a set amount of time.

Content should be optimised for paid promotion, and can be in the form of a photo, video, story, Messenger ad, carousel or slideshow.

Website: Our websites act as a hub for all our organisational information, events and news, and offers multiple ways for people to get in touch with us directly. This means it is ideal to act as the landing page for users to engage with us, having clicked a hyperlink on an e-bulletin or social media post.

The sites already meet accessibility requirements and make use of alt-text in images for screen readers, but there is potential to further increase this by integrating specialist accessibility software such as [Browsealoud](#) or [Recite-Me](#).

As well as our own platforms, we also utilise other platforms to interact with our audience:

- **Survey Monkey:** We use Survey Monkey to conduct digital consultations and enter data we have gathered using traditional engagement methods to gain a complete dataset, from which we can produce reports.

Mentimeter: This platform can be used to present information and ask questions to the audience simultaneously. While the presentation is being delivered, users



can use their smartphone to log in and answer questions as they are being asked. This promotes conversation between Healthwatch and the audience and is useful for gathering quantitative information in the form of graphs and charts, as well as qualitative information in text boxes and word clouds.

Encouraging people to act:

To increase engagement and achieve meaningful interaction with our audiences, we will utilise all of our digital channels to create ‘referral traffic pathways’, which will offer people the opportunity to find more Healthwatch content they are interested in. For example, someone may see a post on our Facebook page which directs them to our website, where they can view other articles or reports about topics they are interested in.

We can also direct them to services we offer, or consultations we are currently running, to encourage further engagement.

Campaigns:

Campaigns are an ideal exercise to develop a referral traffic pathway and plan content to be posted across various channels. They can take multiple forms:

- Awareness weeks: Weeks hosted by other organisations that place emphasis on a particular issue.
- Organisational campaigns: We commit to promoting one of our products or functions for a set amount of time, for example a new report, our information and signposting service, or Community Champions initiative.
- OASIS Projects:
 - Objectives
 - Audience / Insight
 - Strategy / Ideas
 - Implementation
 - Scoring / Evaluation

These campaigns should have a clear purpose, such as increasing the number of social media followers, visits to the websites etc.

An effective campaign will set out a clear referral traffic pathway, so that users visit multiple Healthwatch channels, as explained previously. It will also utilise a call-to-action, whether this is awareness raising, or a physical action like completing a consultation or liking our social media profiles.



5. Evaluating Success

This strategy places emphasis on increasing audience engagement, which can be measured by monitoring the following channels:

Increase in email click and / or open rates: The impact of email marketing should be measured by how engaged an audience is, as opposed to its size. This is measured by the percentage of subscribers opening an email and clicking hyperlinks within it. We use the third-party client MailChimp to send out e-bulletins, which produces reports outlining the number of opens and clicks we have achieved.

Social media engagement: Using Sendible, a third-party social media management tool, we will produce a monthly Engagement Report which presents key information such as audience growth, post engagements within a period, posts published and how many times Healthwatch accounts were mentioned by other organisations.

Unique website visitors (new and returning): Google Analytics tracks both Healthwatch websites and can tell you the number of unique visitors that accessed them in any given date range. We will monitor the amount the new and returning users we receive each month.

Implementing this Communications Strategy should result in a sustained increase in all of the above.

healthwatch

Middlesbrough

www.healthwatchmiddlesbrough.co.uk

Freephone: 0800 118 1691

Email: healthwatchsouthtees@pcp.uk.net

 @HwMiddlesbrough

 facebook.com/HwMiddlesbrough

healthwatch

Redcar and Cleveland

www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk

Freephone: 0800 118 1691

Email: healthwatchsouthtees@pcp.uk.net

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Working for you,

across South Tees

Healthwatch South Tees is the operating name for Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland.

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