

Board of Directors' Meeting: 13 March 2025

Agenda item	046/25		
Report Title	Trust Communication Strategy		
Executive Lead	Inese Robotham, Assistant Chief Executive		
Report Author	Jennifer Fullard, Chief Communications Officer		
CQC Domain:	Link to Strategic Goal:		Link to BAF / risk:
Safe	Our patients and community	√	N/A
Effective	Our people	√	
Caring	Our service delivery	√	Trust Risk Register id:
Responsive	Our governance		N/A
Well Led	Our partners	√	
Consultation Communication	<p>Board members: December 2024/ February 2025 (Email) EDI Patient Advocacy Group 27/02/25 (meeting) Patient Information Panel: 30/10/24 (meeting) and December 2024 (Email) Taking Part: December 2024 (Email) Staff inclusion networks: October 2024 and December 2024 (Email) JNCC: 15/10/24 (Meeting) and December 2024 (Email)</p> <p>Additional engagement activity took place as detailed in section 2.0.</p>		
Executive summary:	<p>This paper outlines the approach taken to develop the Trust's Communication Strategy for 2024-2029. The Board's attention is drawn to the communications principles and priorities that have been developed following feedback from patients, staff and partners. These priorities are aligned with the Trust's overarching strategic priorities.</p> <p>This strategy will support the Trust to deliver its statutory duties in terms of communication, involvement and equalities.</p> <p>Following approval the Strategy will be published on the Trust's website and disseminated throughout the organisation to ensure the communications principles are embedded by all staff.</p>		
Recommendations for the Board:	<p>The Board of Directors is asked to:</p> <p>Approve the Communication Strategy for publication.</p>		
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Communication Strategy		

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Communications affects everyone and we all have a role in improving the way we communicate with one another. The Trust has an ambitious long-term strategy for transformation and improvement and good communications are essential in the delivery of the strategic priorities. Good communication builds trust and leads to better care and a more positive experience for all.
- 1.2 Listening to feedback from patient groups, colleagues and partners the Trust has developed a Communications Strategy. This sets the strategic direction for the way the Trust will communicate with stakeholders over the next five years (2024-2029).
- 1.3 The target audience for this strategy is everyone who uses, works in, or with the Trust. As the target audience is broad, covering all staff, volunteers, contractors, service users, communities and partners, a particular focus has been on seeking input from patient groups and staff to ensure it is written in plain language and accessible to a range of audiences.

2.0 Development of the strategy

- 2.1 The Trust would like to thank the patients, colleagues and partners who contributed their ideas and suggestions to the development of the document. The Communications Team has engaged with a range of groups, both internally and externally, to inform the strategy. This includes an initial engagement phase in 2023 with patient groups and staff to understand what is working well, what could be improved and what the priorities should be. During Autumn/Winter 2024-25 a draft strategy was then shared with staff, patient groups, partners and community networks to test and refine the final narrative and priorities.
- 2.2 The draft Communications Strategy was promoted internally during Autumn/Winter 2024, including through e-newsletters, the intranet, inclusion networks, staffside and through a series of roadshows to gather feedback from colleagues and stakeholders. Draft versions were also shared with the Senior Leadership Team and Board members for comment. Key themes for improving communications in the Trust, included:
 - Increased reward and recognition – more stories about the positive work happening
 - Sharing stories and visuals representing different areas of the Trust – more meet the teams features
 - Tailoring information to different internal audiences and giving time to read the communications
 - Using more digital channels to communicate, but recognising not all colleagues are regularly on emails
 - Sustainable communications – reducing paper/ printing
- 2.3 The draft Strategy was shared with members of the Trust's Public Assurance Forum, Patient and Carer Experience (PACE) panel, the Trust's Community membership (c.5,800 members) and feedback sought through roadshows in the hospitals. Key themes for improving communications in the Trust, included:
 - The importance of accessible communications (visual and written), including reducing acronyms
 - Ensuring communications are inclusive

- Improving communications between departments and different parts of the NHS
- Improving communications during the discharge process
- Compassionate communications
- More information to help patients access care/understand their choices
- Removing barriers to communications, for example easy access to information on the website/ signage within buildings
- Sustainable communications – reducing paper/ printing.

2.4 The Trust would particularly like to recognise the work of the Patient Information Panel who have worked closely with the Communications Team to refine the language and to reduce the reading age of the document.

3.0 Delivering the strategy

3.1 This is a high-level strategy for 2024-2029 outlining the Trust's key principles and priorities and how they support everyone to deliver the Trust's overall strategy. Communications is a key enabler service and this strategy should be read alongside other strategies, including People, Digital, Quality and Public Participation. Every year the Communications Team will develop an accompanying action plan that aligns with the Trust's Operational Plan.

3.2 The Chief Communications Officer will review progress against the strategy on a quarterly basis, including measuring usage of channels, feedback on tools and feedback from patients and staff. An annual update will be provided to the Senior Leadership Team and any Committees advised by Board.

4.0 Dissemination of the Strategy

4.1 The Trust recognises there are a range of audiences, who may need this strategy in different formats. As part of the publication of the Strategy, an Easy Read version will be produced. This will be shared with local networks, to ensure it is accessible. The Communications Team will also work to produce a version in British Sign Language. These formats will be published on the Trust's website and alternative formats will be made available on request.

4.2 Recognising that communication affects everyone and is everyone's responsibility, the Communications Strategy, and especially the principles, will be promoted internally, including on the intranet and through divisions to ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of the Trust's approach.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 The Board of Directors is asked to:

Approve the Communication Strategy for publication.



Communication Strategy

2024-29

Good communication leads to excellent care



Welcome

We are pleased to share our Communication Strategy. It sets out what we want to do over the next five years. We would like to thank patients, partners and colleagues who have helped us write this.

We want to deliver excellent care for everyone. The way we talk and listen to people will help us to improve care. Everyone has a role to play. This strategy is for people who use, work in or with our services.

We have come a long way as a Trust but there is more to do. The next five years will bring changes that will help us to deliver better care. We will listen to people's views and involve them in our work. We will be open and honest, sharing the actions and improvements we make.

Our focus is to:

- Give people the information they need
- Listen to their experiences and ideas
- Be human and kind every time
- Write and talk in a way people understand
- Make it easier for people to access the care they need
- Support a positive experience.

We value our amazing colleagues. We will help them to share their stories of improvement. Through this we will build trust and confidence. We want everyone to recommend our hospitals as places to get care and work.

We believe strongly in the power of communications. We ask everyone to get involved and be part of our story.



Andrew Morgan
Chair



Jo Williams
Chief Executive



Jennifer Fullard
Chief Communications
Officer

How this supports our hospitals

The goals in this document will help us deliver our vision and our big priorities.

Our Vision

“To provide excellent care for the communities we serve.”

Our PACT Values

Our PACT values are what we believe and guide all we do. We will celebrate our colleagues who live by these values. Our stories will show the difference we are making through our values.



Partnering

Caring



Ambitious

Trusted





Our priorities

If we talk to people and work together, we will deliver our six big priorities:



If we do this well, we will help people to:

- Know how to use our services
- Stay well and at home for longer
- Understand their choices
- Be part of their care using new tools
- Share their ideas.

You can find out more about our other strategies on our website:
<https://www.sath.nhs.uk/about-us/trust-strategies/>.



**We have
exciting
plans to
improve
care for
all**



Our story

We are making steady progress as a Trust. We have come a long way but know there is more to do. By working together and listening to people we can deliver excellent care.

Many patients tell us of their good experience and our kind staff. We want to share more of these stories to build trust. We will also be honest when we don't get things right and listen to people. Our PACT values guide who we are, how we act and how we communicate. We want everyone to have a positive experience. We want people to feel listened to and that they were treated with kindness and respect.

We also need to listen to our staff to provide the best place to work. We are one NHS. We will work to deliver the national NHS People Promise for everyone. The NHS People Promise is a set of values to create a kind and positive culture where everyone feels they belong.

A positive future

We have exciting plans to improve care for all. We will have new services and use new technology. We want to become university hospitals known for our training.

In 2028 we will be changing the way we deliver care. We will be opening our new services through the Hospitals Transformation Programme. We have been working towards this for a long time. Our plans will help our staff to deliver more joined up care. This will mean changes for local people and we need to help them through this. We will share updates and involve people at every step. You can read more on our website: www.sath.nhs.uk.

We will help people to use the right services, at the right time. This means giving information in the right ways and at the right times. We will share more stories about our work to deliver better care. If we do this well, we can build confidence and trust in our hospitals.



NHS People Promise

Communication builds trust

Our communications principles

We have listened to people's views. This helped us set principles for the way we talk to people.



Open and honest

Human and kind

Listen and respond

Make a difference

Easy to understand

Everyone matters and belongs

Visible



Our communications priorities

Our communications will support our priorities. Everyone has a role to play.

Every year our communications plan will set out what we will do. Our goals will be agreed, based on the Operational Plan for that year.

Trust themes	We will...
Make SaTH a great place to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support our people to feel they belong. Promote our values at every opportunity. Inform and involve staff to improve staff engagement and morale. Share our positive stories, as a quality employer. Celebrate our diverse and talented workforce.
Improve the quality of care that we provide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share examples of excellent care. Share more case studies showing our improvement work. Share reflections on learning in the organisation.
Deliver a better patient journey and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give the information people need. Build confidence and trust by promoting our work. Listen to people to improve services.
Ensure seamless patient pathways - better care and less barriers for patients when using services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work together on communications across health and care services. Help people understand the changes happening. Listen to people when making decisions.
Make our organisation more sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share examples of excellent care. Share success stories of teams.
Enhance the wider health and wellbeing of communities - helping people stay healthier and more independent for longer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure our communications represent our communities. Write in a way that is easy to understand.

Who are we talking and listening to?

Everyday our hospitals support and work with many people. We need to find the best ways to reach all of these people. We have put them into four groups.



People who use our hospitals

- Patients
- Visitors
- Carers, families and friends



People who work in our hospitals

- Staff
- Volunteers



People in our communities

- Residents
- Voluntary groups
- Local media



People we work with

- Partners
- Healthwatch and Llais
- Contractors

How do we do this?

People who use our hospitals

Going to hospital can be a worrying time. Patients tell us they want us to make it easier to use our services.

They want to know what will happen and when. They want to know they will receive safe care. We do this through many different ways:

- Letters
- Text messages
- Digital screens
- Leaflets
- Video and phone appointments
- Website
- Apps



What will this mean over the next five years?

- Through our digital work we will have more modern ways of reaching patients. Patients will be able to view their notes and results and be part of their care. We will be able to reduce the letters we send by post.
- Patients will know how to access their services and feel confident



People who work in our hospitals

We have more than 7,500 staff and volunteers who work with us. We value our colleagues and want to give them a positive work experience. We want to support them to deliver excellent care. We will listen to their ideas and recognise their achievements. Everyone has different needs and ways of reaching them. Most of our staff are away from desks. We need to talk and listen in a way that is best for them. Our staff want to know what affects them and their patients. They want to know we are listening and acting on their ideas.

They want us to celebrate the good work happening. We do this through many different ways:

- Daily: Intranet
- Weekly: Newsletters
- Monthly: Cascade, team briefings
- Focus groups and roadshows

- Quarterly: People Pulse Survey and Impact magazine
- Yearly: NHS Staff Survey
- Yearly: Staff awards

We will encourage our staff to:

- Share their stories
- Speak up and act on feedback
- Celebrate success



What will this mean for staff over the next five years?

- Time: updates are shorter and more relevant
- Connected: easier to find information
- Rewarded and recognised: more positive stories
- More modern tools: digital networks

People in our communities

Our hospitals cover an area of over 500,000 people. We need to help people use the right service for their needs. We know we need to keep our tools more up-to date and easier to use. This includes:

- Website
- Local news and radio
- Social media: Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram
- About Health events

- Going to community groups

What will this mean over the next five years?

- More trust and confidence by sharing more good stories
- More tools to support patient choice
- Personal content to support self-care
- Better digital tools, including our website



People we work with

We work with many people and groups to deliver care. This can be local businesses through to large companies. We work together with our NHS, council and other partners. We do this by:

- Website
- Emails
- Meetings
- Focus groups

What will this mean over the next five years?

- More trust and confidence
- Easier to contact the right person or team
- Better digital tools, to refer to our services
- Better links between us and our partners



New ways of working

The way we deliver care in the NHS is always moving forward. We need to help patients feel confident as we make positive changes. In future...

- More patients may be seen outside of hospital or use digital tools to help them stay at home
- More patients may leave hospital on the same day as their surgery
- We will use more modern tools, for example robots
- We will make the most of both hospitals and this may mean patients use services on both sites

Our doctors, nurses and other colleagues tell us we need to make these improvements. This will mean the care we give is better and more modern. During all of these changes we will tell you what we are doing and why.

Using digital

Over the next five years we will use more modern, digital tools. This will give patients more choice and information. It will mean our updates can be more personal. It could also reduce the number of missed appointments. No one channel will meet everyone's needs. We will listen to people's needs and provide our communications in different formats.

We will:

- Use new tools and technologies
- Connect people
- Empower people to look after their health

Using data

In the NHS we have access to a lot of information. We work hard to keep your information safe. We will use this to target our communications. We will aim to understand our audiences. We will design campaigns that meet local needs.

Using resources wisely

The Trust has a large financial deficit. It will take time, effort and discipline to restore balance. We will share what this means for our teams and patients. We will share examples of new ways of working. This will help others to reduce waste and think differently. Our aim is for every pound to benefit patients.





Our roadmap

We know our hospitals have many challenges and opportunities. This means new ways of working.

To be successful, and improve care, we will need to talk and work together with everyone who uses or works in our hospitals.

We have exciting ideas for the future, but when we can do these things will depend on the money and staff we have. This may mean that we cannot do things as quickly as planned. We will still do them, but it may take us longer.

We will also review our plans when the national 10 Year Health and Care Plan is known.

Our roadmap is a guide to what we will be working on.

More positive stories
Working with the media
Social listening
More videos

New channels
Podcasts
Social media
Interactive networks
Different formats

Thought leadership
Awards
Behaviour change
campaigns

Moving to Excellence

Digital appointment letters
Patient online library
Patient Portal
Modern intranet
Accessible website
Digital screens
Apps
Artificial Intelligence

Staff recognition
Your voice counts
One SaTH – inclusive

Our campaigns

Our strategies

Our future

Our people

People Promise

Stronger Together

Digital

People

Healthy workforce

University Trust

Clinical

More modern buildings

Greener NHS

Estates

Quality

Outstanding care

Financial balance

Patient Experience

Communications

Delivering NHS constitution

Public Participation

Sharing our stories through pictures

Everyone has different needs. Some people may find words difficult to understand. We plan to use more pictures when sharing our stories. Our pictures and campaigns will use real people. This connects us with our patients and staff.

Through pictures we will help everyone feel they belong. This will build trust in a modern NHS.

We will care about people's needs. This means the way we talk should be:

- Easy to understand
- Easy to access
- In different formats

By asking people about their needs, we can deliver better care. As our systems become more modern, we can offer more choice. Our teams will be better connected. People will then not need to repeat information.





We will be honest about our progress and our exciting plans





Measuring success

We will review our progress every three months. Our yearly plan will include the latest goals and tools. We will review the difference our work makes and seek ways to improve. We will monitor:

- Patient and staff feedback
- Usage of our channels
- Feedback on our tools, for example website
- Data from our services

We will know we are making a positive difference, with:

- Improved staff survey feedback
- Positive feedback from staff and patients
- Reduced complaints about the way we talk and listen
- Improved services, for example:
 - o Reduced waiting times
 - o Fewer missed appointments

Summary

Communications affects everyone. If we do this well and listen, we will improve care.

We are entering a new chapter in our story. We will be honest about our progress and our exciting plans. We will be open about areas where we need to improve and share learning. We will also celebrate our staff who are giving excellent care. Using real stories and pictures, we will promote people living our values.

Our focus on the right information and tools will empower people. This will improve access for all. As we invest in more modern systems, we can help offer more choice.

Good communication builds trust. This attracts the best staff to work for us. It gives confidence for our patients. This means better care and experience for all.



For more information:

Visit our website: www.sath.nhs.uk

Email: sath.commsteam@nhs.net

Phone us: 01743 261000 or 01952 641222

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