

Communications Report

October 2017 - April 2018

Purpose

1. This report is a strategic overview of how communications activities are developing to meet the needs of our two local Healthwatch services. It outlines what the current approach is and plans for future communications developments. Detail on the take up and impact of our communications activities is covered in the appropriate section of the CEO report and our annual report.

Key issues

2. Our websites are the front door to our services for many local people but at the moment they are not working hard enough for us. We have two Healthwatch websites that look very different. There are limitations in the accessibility and functionality of each website and how engagingly we can present information. We have plans in place to address this and develop one site, but this will be complex to make sure that we stay within the requirements of the brand license agreement. We are working closely with Healthwatch England on this issue, however, it will take time to implement and require a significant level of staff input from the communications team and other colleagues.
3. Our Healthwatch organisation needs to provide information to people with disabilities in a way that is accessible to them. We also need to provide a Healthwatch service to people who communicate in different languages. Making sure our information is accessible to different people in our communities is a key driver for future communications activities, but it needs to be done in a consistent and sustainable manner.
4. Now that we are 12 months into our life as a merged organisation, it is an optimum time for a review of our communications activities to make sure they are targeted to meet the needs of the organisation.

Action required by the Board

5. The Board is asked to:
 - Note the report.

Author

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16 May 2018

Development of one website

6. We have been working with Healthwatch England to support the development of the upgraded local Healthwatch website. This includes taking part in webinars and feeding back on potential website structures, design, wording and features.
7. Healthwatch England is currently finalising its own website refresh and the work on the stand alone Healthwatch websites which is due to complete in June. After that, they will scope the work to look at a website template for organisations that host more than one local Healthwatch service. The website developers have confirmed that it should be possible to present the work of both our local Healthwatch services in a way that is not going to be confusing to the public.
8. Healthwatch England plans to offer the option to have a support package for local Healthwatch that will include website hosting, maintenance and support. This is something that would be very useful for our Healthwatch.
9. An audit of both the Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough websites was undertaken in March 2018. This included reviewing all pages, simplifying website structures and removing items that are no longer relevant. This will be used to help plan the future website structure. We have identified which pages are unique to that Healthwatch area and which are equally relevant to both.
10. The current proposed structure detailed below, but we would want to do our own work involving Directors, colleagues, volunteers and other relevant stakeholders on the reviewed site.
11. There will be various options on the home page to create visual links to different content, so we can highlight current projects, calls for volunteers, etc. We anticipate that we should be able to bring in the new website around the third quarter of the year.

Share your views	Advice and information	News and reports	What we do.	What we do	Contact Us
Feedback on your experience	Find a service	News and views	Projects	Our people	
Polls	Advice and guidance	Blogs?	Consultations	About us	
Surveys		Reports	Events	How we are run - (board papers, etc)	
				Volunteer with us	
				Work with us	

Developing new promotional materials

12. Last year we developed some postcards to help us promote our merged Healthwatch. These were developed early in our life as a merged organisation and now need to be updated. The aim is to move away from a graphics approach to one with pictures of people on, as evidence shows that this is what people respond more to. The challenge is doing this in a way that includes, rather than excludes.

13. We are now looking at what other materials we need to support promoting our Healthwatch. These will be done with the key priorities of:
 - Telling people who Healthwatch is and what we do
 - Encouraging people to tell us what they think about local health and care services
 - Encouraging people to contact the Information Service
 - Encouraging people to volunteer with us

14. **Postcards:** Staff like the Healthwatch postcard option and this is eye-catching and economical to give out in large numbers. We can look at doing a selection of designs so that we can have different options on display to appeal to different people in our community.

15. **Information leaflet:** There is also a need for more detailed information about our Healthwatch, particularly when talking about the information service or volunteering. We can look at the idea of doing separate volunteering and Information service leaflets or postcards, however, need to consider the cost of producing and translating these.

16. **Translations:** In addition, staff have requested information to be translated into other languages to help with targeted engagement work in these communities. This includes Arabic, Kurdish, Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian and Portuguese. This is something we have not had the capacity to develop in the last 4 months but would like to take forward in the next 2-3 months as a project to increase our accessibility to different people in the community.
17. **Easy read:** We also wish to produce a new easy read leaflet about our Healthwatch. We can ask the Access Champions in Peterborough if they will help us make sure this is understandable.

Other promotional items we have introduced

18. New items include:
 - New branded Healthwatch clothing for our engagement staff to wear out at engagement events. This was at their request.
 - New branded Healthwatch table cloths to make our stall stand out at engagement or other events.
 - New Healthwatch paper bags for giving out at events. These are more eye catching, are recyclable and cheaper for us to buy than the cotton bags.

Ideas we are considering

19. A goody bags for local Healthwatch supporters to encourage them to be the Healthwatch link to their local support group. This may be something we could roll out to our volunteers too as part of our special 5th anniversary celebrations.

Making information accessible

20. We introduced a new text to email service to increase access options for people in the Deaf community. This will also help to make our Healthwatch more accessible to young people, who may prefer to text rather than talk or email. We need to develop a communications plan to promote this.
21. James Saunders, our new Communications Officer, is taking on the role of Information Access Champion. As part of his role he will be helping us make sure that the materials we are producing are accessible to people with sensory and learning disabilities.
22. James is currently sourcing EasyRead training and will help us develop more of our materials in EasyRead.
23. He is looking at developing a more accessible plain text version of our regular e-news, as blind people have reported issues with the current automated plain text version produced by MailChimp.

Social Media

24. We maintained established Twitter accounts for both Healthwatch where we are followed by a combined total of 4,896 at the end of March 2018. We use twitter to primarily engage with professionals and other key people in local communities.
25. Facebook accounts were combined in August 2017, with a following of 449 people at end of March 2018. We use Facebook primarily to engage with individuals and maintain a good level activity on the page.
26. We aim to develop an Instagram account which will help us engage with young people in the community. We are planning to do this in June 2018.

E-Newsletters and newsletters

27. We have a number of publications that we are currently managing. Overall, the production of online materials has been supported more successfully than hard copy materials. It's important to address this in relation to future communications activities so that any publications are achievable, sustainable and have a measurable impact.
28. ***Volunteers' e-newsletter - internal e-news.*** This is currently sent every 4-6 weeks. It is managed by the Communications team working closely with the Volunteer Manager. Its editorial focus is on giving volunteers information they need to help them in their volunteering role and encouraging them to volunteer on different activities. This is popular with the volunteers, with more than 60% opening each edition.
29. ***Healthwatch e-newsletter.*** This was merged in October 2018 after engagement with readers looking at how frequently they wanted to hear from us and what issues they were most interested in. Use Mailchimp which gives us analytics that shows who is opening the e-news and which articles are most popular.
30. We currently do a segmented version of the Healthwatch e-newsletter so that people are getting information relevant to their local area, i.e. Cambridgeshire, Peterborough or both. The majority of the information across the segmented editions is very similar because of how health and social care commissioning and service provision is delivered locally. The primary difference is the priority items are given in each newsletter, and which website they link to - the Healthwatch Cambridgeshire site or the Healthwatch Peterborough site. This is scheduled to be sent approximately every three weeks, as that is how often people wanted to hear from us.

31. **Youth Connect** - monthly newsletter across Cambs and Peterborough. The mailing list for this is quite small as we removed people who did not open any editions or who had left their posts. There are currently 135 people on the mailing list, of which we know 38 are professionals. The last edition was sent in December 2017 which was opened by 21% of recipients.
32. We need to consider capacity to manage this going forward when we have no youth project. It may be worthwhile to merge with Healthwatch e-newsletter, but no decision has been made about this as yet.
33. **HealthAware bulletin**, formerly issued by Healthwatch Peterborough was merged with e-newsletter in January 2018 when analysis showed that the circulation was very small, and half were already receiving the e-newsletter.
34. **Opportunities update**. We produce a monthly hardcopy update of the opportunities to get involved in local health or care service development. This is primarily used by our engagement team when they go out into the community, but also sent to individuals who are not on email.
35. **Newsletter** - we want to introduce a regular short hardcopy newsletter to send out to people who are not on email and for our engagement team to give out at events. This will help us promote where our Healthwatch has made a difference and encourage people to contact our service or get involved as a volunteer. This hasn't previously been developed to go out consistently since the merger as other activities were prioritised over it. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire previously produced hard copy newsletters but these could be irregular in production. Healthwatch Peterborough produced no hard copy newsletters.

Media and other external publication activities

36. We have maintained a reasonable level of media coverage in the traditional media, however this has often been reactive to circumstances within the local health and care economy, for example the results of the IVF and Fairer Contributions Policy consultations. Our greatest success in engaging the media was around the launch of the Accessible Information as Standard report, where our activities led the news coverage on a number of local media platforms. We want to develop a more people focussed story-based approach to our communications. There are challenges here in creating a balanced story, making sure our Healthwatch messages are not lost in the media focus on the person's story, and protecting people from often hostile online comments.

37. We have good relations with a number of local voluntary and community organisation and often appear in their publications. There is room and, with staff development, capacity to develop these further.

Campaigns

38. *It Starts with You* - we are looking at launching the It Starts with You Campaign to run from July - August to encourage people to share their stories by show casing the difference this makes. This campaign is supported by Healthwatch England and is focussed on examples of where individuals sharing their experiences can help make a service change. We can develop materials to share on online, in hard copy and with external publications. It is a good opportunity to raise awareness of the work of Healthwatch and encourage more people to share their stories.

Annual Report

39. We are currently working on the Annual Report 2017-18 for our two local Healthwatch and have agreement from Healthwatch England that the reports can be contained in a document. Their requirement is that we need to make clear which activities relate to each area and the brands are clearly separate. We are planning to do an impact focused mini edition of the report that we will print out and produce at the AGM. We are also aiming to produce an Easy Read version of this.

Communications plan refresh

40. We plan to refresh our communications approach to support the work plan for 2018-19. This will be a good opportunity to clarify messages about our local Healthwatch services, priorities about our local Healthwatch services.
41. Review the routes we currently have to communicating with different stakeholder groups and evaluate how effectively we are reaching them.