

## **Effective communication**

Good communication is an essential ingredient to the smooth running and performance of any organisation – whether in the public, private, community or voluntary sector. Without it, an organisation cannot be effective in its work and will ultimately underachieve and fall short of its key aims and objectives.

The development of effective strategic communications is one of the PHA's key corporate objectives. To communicate effectively, it needs to develop and communicate accurate and consistent messages, both internally and externally, in such a way that they are clearly understood and accessible by all key stakeholders and publics.

Only by communicating effectively will the PHA help to improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Northern Ireland and be recognised as the credible organisation and leading authoritative source of information on public health issues in Northern Ireland.

## **Health and communication**

Health and communication are inextricably linked. To improve an individual's or community's health it is globally accepted that accurate and relevant health information plays a vital role.

The following definition from the National Cancer Institute and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States expertly sums up the role of communication in the health arena.

“Health communication encompasses the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health. It links the domains of communication and health and is increasingly recognized as a necessary element of efforts to improve personal and public health.”

## **Multi-disciplinary team**

The responsibility for the PHA's communications function – covering both external and internal communications – falls to the communications team, located within the Operations Directorate.

The communications demands facing the PHA are both varied and challenging, requiring the full support of a multi-disciplinary team working across and supporting all areas of the organisation and spanning the full gamut of communications disciplines including:

- design and electronic communications;
- public information campaigns;
- publications development;
- corporate and public affairs (incorporating public relations and corporate communications).

## **Responding, tailoring and achieving quality**

The communications team works to respond, where possible and within available resources, to all of the internal and external information needs identified proactively by the PHA as well as to requests received for information and resources from external stakeholders.

We tailor our messages and information according to need – taking into account levels of awareness, understanding and access to different communications channels by the target group and are mindful of the requirements of the groups detailed within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act including persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status sexual orientation, and persons with a disability.

We are committed to achieving high quality standards in all aspects of our communications practice and aim to be at the cutting edge of communications practice and technology. We work proactively to identify best practice and the latest communications techniques and implement these where possible into our daily work and business.

## **Processes, priorities and responsibilities**

Through this proactive approach we are establishing the appropriate communication processes, priorities and responsibilities for the PHA that will support everyone

within the organisation to ensure effective communication that will in turn ensure our external communications are appropriate, professional and effective.

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