



Londonwide LMCs
The professional voice of London general practice

Communications Strategy 2008 - 2010

**Londonwide LMCs
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(Strategy approved at Governance Board January
2008)**

Communications Strategy 2008 – 2010

Summary

This strategy provides a framework for ensuring effective, efficient, high quality communication following approval of the 2007-2010 Business Plan¹ and the organisation's vision to position itself *as the voice of general practice across the capital*.

The healthcare environment in London is facing radical change over the next 10 years and Londonwide LMCs and local LMCs will need to respond proactively and flexibly to this, supported by high quality, effective and efficient communications.

Working with colleagues across Londonwide LMCs, the communications directorate will provide advice and support on best practice. However, to be truly effective, all staff at Londonwide LMCs and LMC members will need to embrace, and recognise the benefits of communicating (and listening) effectively and efficiently with staff, members, constituents, stakeholders and opinion formers.

Progress on improved communication since the Communications Review 2006²

- New Communications Directorate formed with a compliment of 3 full time staff experienced in: strategic communications, public relations, lobbying, media relations and damage limitation, marketing, internal communications, web/e-communications, market research and event management
- Improved internal communications, including: monthly e-bulletin from the Joint CEOs to LMC Chairs and Vice Chairs, improved newsletters and frequent email alerts for practice staff, regular staff meetings and e-bulletin from CEOs to all staff
- New website offering improved navigation, content and accessibility
- New corporate identity and production of a suite of branded materials and guidance
- Introduction of media training for Chairs and Vice Chairs
- Plain English training for Londonwide staff
- Proactive media coverage in the medical and consumer press
- A suite of communication tools and resources for GPs and practice teams on a range of issues, most recent being a *keep my NHS GP local* resource pack
- Improved administration and event management supported by a new Administration Manager within the Corporate Affairs Directorate

¹ Business Plan 2007-2010

² Singing our own praises' review of Londonwide LMCs Communications June 2006

Next Steps: Corporate Key Messages

An essential part of any specific communication planning by Londonwide LMCs or individual LMCs is the development and sharing of key messages on a particular topic or issue. The following messages have been developed in response to the business plan and the main issues affecting LMCs and general practice at this point in time. Namely, the changing nature of healthcare services across London³, Diversity⁴, Fitness for Purpose Development programme for LMCs⁵.

Changing nature of healthcare across London

- Londonwide LMCs is the voice of general practice
- Londonwide LMCs and local LMCs are determined to secure the future of general practice across the Capital
- The essence of general practice must be retained (this includes: maintaining patient satisfaction with their locally-based GP; that GPs continue as the gateway to the NHS; continuity of care is maintained via a registered patient list; valued local GP services must not be sacrificed for a 'polyclinic' model of care)
- The future of general practice is at stake – no change is not an option; secure your future now by getting informed and engaged for the benefit of patients, NHS general practice and practice teams
- The valued family doctor/patient relationship is essential - *Keep my NHS GP local*

Diversity

- Discrimination on any grounds (age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation) is wrong and totally unacceptable
- Our LMCs must reflect the diverse constituents they represent
- Londonwide LMCs is the professional voice of all NHS GPs – partners, salaried, sessional, freelance/locum and welcomes all interested GPs in standing for election
- Our staff equal opportunities policy (2007) states: *we will not tolerate sexual harassment or any other form of harassment, victimisation, bullying or other unfair discrimination on any grounds including age, disability, ethnic or national origin, race or colour, gender, religion and belief, marital status, responsibility for dependants, sexual orientation, or because a person intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment*

³ Consulting the Capital 'A Framework for Action'

⁴ Londonwide LMCs Diversity Report 2007

⁵ 'Singing our own praise's review of Londonwide LMCs communications review June 2006

Fitness for purpose

- Secure your future now by getting informed and engaged for the benefits to your patients and your practice team
- LMCs will continue to ensure GPs are represented at all times in the planning and delivery of primary care business by PCTs

Target Audiences

For Londonwide LMCs, its target audiences include: staff, LMC members, constituents, opinion formers and decision makers across the healthcare sector (GPC, Colleges, etc) and media (medical and consumer). Following the results of Londonwide LMCs *Diversity Review 2007*, all GPs, particularly those GPs who have not traditionally engaged with LMCs (sessional, freelance/locum among others) will require increased effort to reach them. In addition, with the emerging threats and opportunities facing general practice as a result of NHS London and government priorities, more effort will be required to communicate with a wider range of stakeholders including MPs, Councillors and patients.

LMCs will need to ensure they communicate with constituents and potential constituents to ensure they continue to be perceived as relevant and important by those GPs who may perceive that the LMC does not represent them.

Communication Principles

The following principles govern all communication activity across Londonwide LMCs and individual LMCs:

- Londonwide LMCs and individual LMCs recognise the value of, and support, effective communication
- Effective communication is the responsibility of all staff and members
- Communication must be clear, accurate, timely, targeted and cost effective
- Londonwide LMCs and individual LMCs are committed to communicating effectively
- Communication is a two-way process – feedback, listening and engagement with audiences is essential

Communication Priorities

The following section outlines the broad direction and priorities for communication activity over the next two years. The communications directorate will produce and monitor an annual action plan detailing its key activities and timelines. It must be noted that for any plan to remain relevant, it needs to be flexible enough to respond to emerging issues and opportunities.

Internal Communications

Aim: to facilitate effective and efficient communication across Londonwide LMCs, and between and within individual LMCs

We will do this by:

- Continuously improving the way we communicate: greater use of electronic communication for distributing newsletters, committee papers, fliers - as well as a reduction in printing documents/emails internally
- Promoting the use of list servers to support LMC members information and communication sharing
- Continuously improving the opportunities for staff and members to be informed and engaged through: e-briefings, e-news, events, meetings and workshops
- Ensuring, jointly, with the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs, that systems and applications are developed to facilitate improved internal communication, data capture and monitoring
- Developing, with Sector colleagues and Corporate Affairs, an annual programme of Public Relations and information-sharing events (these include a national conference, AGM, workshops/seminars)
- Increase brand recognition and recall of Londonwide LMCs and local LMCs through targeted and timely internal communications

External Communications

Aims: to position Londonwide LMCs and individual LMCs as the voice of general practice across the capital; to raise the profile of the benefits to all GPs of LMCs; to ensure opinion formers understand the value of general practice

We will do this by:

- Running a range of PR campaigns around specific issues eg '*keep my NHS GP local*' designed to support practices in getting their voices heard
- Developing a rolling programme of media training for media spokespeople from across LMCs and within Londonwide LMCs
- Building on our proactive approach to media relations coverage and support to LMCs and individual practices on a range of issues and angles
- Providing a suite of communication materials to promote Londonwide LMCs, and individual LMCs around the '*keep my NHS GP local*' initiative, LMC election campaign, general practice as the patient's advocate campaign etc
- Implement phase ii of the website development to increase usage/access
- Lead on the development and corporate support for Londonwide LMCs events (major conference, AGM, opinion leaders' seminars). Note: the definition of

'events' refers to pan London events. At a sector level, it is the responsibility of sectors to plan and arrange events for Practice Managers, Chairs etc supported by the Corporate Affairs Team.⁶ The Communications Team will provide Public Relations support where relevant.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The success criteria for evaluating the effective implementation of this strategy will be determined by:

- Evaluating performance and deliverables
- Monitoring media coverage to assess impact of key messages
- Evaluation of website, list server, e-news, usage and comments
- Evaluation of events by attendees via evaluation forms
- Newsletter and e-news readership survey
- Feedback on the election and membership campaign

A budget to deliver the strategy has been agreed and includes a communications team of 3 staff (wte) and investment in: web development, internal communications, promotion and media relations. This sits with the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs.

⁶ Agreed at Corporate Management Team meeting 18.12.2007

Communications Strategy – Action Plan for 2008 (updated annually)

Activity	Responsibility	Outcome	Timing
Promote benefits of list servers, roll out guidance	Communications team with Sector Teams monitoring/supporting use at individual LMC level	More effective and rapid communication between LMCs	Feb 08 – Jan 09
Phased move towards increased use of electronic communications for newsletters, committee papers, event fliers	All staff – Communications Team and Corporate Affairs team to support the process. Ultimate responsibility – all staff to implement over a phased period	More cost effective, efficient and rapid communication with LMCs, GPs and practice teams	March -08 Jan- 09
Review pilot e-newsletter with K & C LMC; undertake readership survey, create e-newsletters for all LMCs, promote, roll out	Communications team to develop and manage; Sector teams for producing content/approval via LMCs	Swifter and more flexible communication	Jan-May 08 June 08 – Jan 09
Integrated IT and database systems review	Joint responsibility between Corporate Affairs and Comms team	Clarity over business processes. Focused 'tender' brief for any new systems eg database required	Mid Feb – May 08 for review Tender brief to CMT Autumn 08
Plan, manage, promote and evaluate Pan-London conference for GPs	Communications team with support from all Londonwide staff to make event a success	Position Londonwide LMCs as the voice of general practice; reach those GPs and practice teams not historically in touch with us or their LMC	Jan – Nov 08
Coordinate the work of the Diversity Project Group Develop, implement and monitor activities around an electoral campaign, promotion, education/training for LMC	Communications Director Communications Team, Medical Directors/Sectors and Corporate Affairs	Timely focus on implementing Diversity Report recommendations. Leadership and consistency across diversity activity to increase GP confidence in using LMC services	Jan 08 – Jan 09 Feb 08 – Jan -09

Activity	Responsibility	Outcome	Timing
Proactive PR and media relations activity across Londonwide LMCs and across all LMCs (includes a programme of media training)	Communications Team supporting LMC Chairs and Vice Chairs	Increased awareness of the value of LMCs amongst local populations (patients, GPs, MPs, patient groups etc)	Jan 08 – Jan 09
Provide PR support to GP Support/Medical Directors and Sectors on key issues & Educ & Training events	Communications Team	Clarity around messages, improved targeting and promotion of services and events	Jan 08 – Jan 09
Healthcare for London/Polyclinic/Keep my NHS GP Local campaign – stakeholder engagement, media relations planning and roll out on a sector by sector basis	Communications Team supporting Medical Directors	Promoting Londonwide LMCs and individual LMCs as the voice of general practice and key concerns/solutions around PCT plans.	Jan 08 – Jan 09
Develop proposals and roll out of phase ii of the website	Communications Team	Continuous improvement to functionality and usage	May 08 – Jan 09