



**Communication and Engagement Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027**

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Author: Julie Treharne	Head of Communications and Engagement	Version:	V 5
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## Change record form

Version	Date of change	Date of release	Changed by	Reason for change
2.0	March 2019	April 2019	J. Treharne	Amended and updated to reflect changes in the trust's vision, goals and delivery approach. Also, in response to the revised internal structure and external stakeholder landscape and the new approaches and initiatives needed to support delivery of the trust's strategic objectives through a programme of targeted communications and engagement activity.
3.0	July 2020	July 2020	J. Treharne	Amended to reflect the trust's response to the pandemic and associated revisions to our internal and external communications and engagement activities.
4.0	May 2021		J. Treharne	Amended and updated to reflect changes in the trust's vision, goals and delivery approach. Also, in response to the revised internal structure and external stakeholder landscape and the new approaches and initiatives needed to support delivery of the trust's strategic objectives through a programme of targeted communications and engagement activity.
5.0	July 2024		J. Treharne	Amended and updated to reflect changes to the NHS landscape, the infrastructure of NWAS, challenges and opportunities and new approaches to support delivery of the trust's strategic aims. In line with the trust's approach to strategy and supporting strategies/strategic plans, this document is now termed a strategic plan. Summary examples are provided of targeted communications and engagement activities that directly support the trust's strategy and more detail is provided on these activities at Appendix 1. The plan has been reviewed to meet accessibility guidance.

**This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.**

**Please contact the Communications Team via email: [communications@nwas.nhs](mailto:communications@nwas.nhs).**

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# 1. Introduction

This document sets out the strategic direction for the communications, engagement and involvement activities of North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust (NWAS) for the period 2024 to 2027

NWAS is geographically the largest ambulance services in the country and as a key service provider, has numerous stakeholders with whom it needs to have effective relationships, in order to deliver the trust's vision and strategic objectives.

The provision of urgent and emergency care for patients continues to evolve as detailed in the NHS Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Plan. The current service model advocates helping people access the right care, the first time by embedding 111 as the first port of call and expanding new services in the community - thus reducing the need to go to hospital. Whilst we continue to see the growth of digitally enabled care, we have also increased our workforce. We now have more 111 clinicians and emergency medical technicians increasing our capacity to help those in need. Working collaboratively with our Integrated Care Boards (ICB) and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICP), this means that where, and how patients are assessed and treated for their care is changing, to ensure services and organisations are effective and sustainable for the future and patient experience is improved.

This strategic plan has been reviewed to ensure it remains up to date, reflecting the current environment, and adapts to the varying needs of the organisation. This includes increasing demand on ambulance services and an emphasis on urgent and emergency care recovery, changes to our infrastructure with the introduction of Integrated Contact Centres, a greater focus on digital technologies and a new operational leadership model.

It also reflects improvements in ambulance service culture, Freedom to Speak Up and a focus on both staff and patients from mixed ethnic backgrounds, supporting the trust's plans to improve inclusivity, diversity and reduce inequalities.

This strategic plan will directly support delivery of the trust's current strategic priorities to achieve our aims and ultimately, our vision. of delivering the 'right care, at the right time and in the right place; every time' for all patients. Supporting communication actions and activity will also be aligned to the trust's new strategic priorities when these are confirmed in 2025. TA key driver for this strategic plan over the next three years is to close the gap between public perception and expectation of the ambulance service, and what its future offer and operating model looks like.

Our evolving digital strategic plan brings together the implementation of a significant number of digital enabling solutions to bring benefits for staff, patients and partners. Our future delivery of urgent and emergency care is dependent on these solutions.

The trust continues to improve its service model to ensure patients with serious or life-threatening emergency conditions receive timely, high quality care to maximise their chances of survival and recovery. By developing and implementing a robust integrated urgent care model, which provides highly responsive and personalised services for those people with non-life threatening conditions in the community, we will not only improve services for patients but also continue to help to ease the pressure on the emergency health system.

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An ongoing focus for the trust is our management of calls that come in to 999 and NHS 111. Giving people advice and arranging treatment for them over the phone ('Hear and Treat') or on scene ('See and Treat') remains vital to enable us to transform patient care. Whilst we have made considerable progress in the last few years, we will continue to work hard to increase the number of both Hear and Treat and See and Treat patients, when clinically safe to do so.

This will also reduce pressure on other emergency services and the number of patients we 'See and Convey' to hospital. An additional benefit is to reduce the number of patients who attend A&Es, which is vital to keep urgent and emergency care services available to those who really need them.

Effective two-way communication with the public and patients, staff and partners will improve the services NWAS provides, strengthen our reputation and achieve mutual understanding of our goals and the needs of our patients and staff. As advocated by the NHS England Patient and Public Participation Policy (November 2015), NWAS embraces a commitment to listening to and involving communities, their representatives and others, in the way we plan and provide our services.

The Communications and Engagement Strategic Plan supports these aims by developing our vision and values into a compelling narrative about the changes that we want to make – with stories and campaigns that can explain to our staff, patients and the public why and how we are changing. We will continue to listen to the needs of our patients and local communities, support managers and clinicians to work together on improving quality and involve our patient and public panel members in the redesign of services that better meet the needs of our communities, his strategic plan's main aims are to ensure effective and inclusive communication and engagement, ensure the patient voice is at the heart of the organisation and support the delivery of excellent care for our communities.

## 2. Scope

The strategic plan covers the trust's strategic approach to communication and engagement with all key stakeholders in particular patients and the public, staff, partners, members, volunteers, political influencers and statutory organisations. It is delivered by the Communication and Engagement Team, which is split into two dedicated sub teams providing the full mix of communications and patient engagement and involvement services. The Communications Team provides staff and stakeholder engagement, press office, film; website, campaign and event management, using the full range of digital and traditional media channels. The Patient Engagement Team manage the trust's Patient and Public Panel, an annual programme of specialist patient and community engagement, community listening events, the Friends and Family Test and the proactive distribution, receipt and analysis of thousands of patient experience surveys in order to better understand the needs of our patients, realise service improvements and enhance patient experience. In addition to this, the trust's FOI Officer works within the Communications Team to ensure our mandatory duties in responding to these are met.

The strategic plan is monitored by the Strategy Partnerships and Transformation Directorate, Trust Management Committee and Board of Directors and is delivered via annual business plans. Patient and Public Panel and community engagement activities are also reported to the trust's Board and Diversity and Inclusion Group.

This plan underpins the communication and engagement requirements of the trust's overall strategy, the integrated business and operational plans as well as individual directorate strategic objectives.

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### 3. Background and context

In spite of our high number of stakeholders, the size and spread of the area that we serve, and the growing reliance on social media and other digital channels, we continue to work hard to communicate with our communities using a range of face to face, electronic and digital channels... This strategic plan supports the continued exploration of innovative and efficient ways to engage and listen with as wide a group of stakeholders as possible, using their communication channels of choice.

This approach has been enhanced through the trust’s investment in the development and implementation of a Patient and Public Panel. Effective engagement and genuine patient and public involvement in service improvement can be a challenge, so by engaging with panel members based on the level of participation they are able to offer, and in a clear and structured way, it is intended to maximise all levels of involvement. The trust has worked hard to continue to recruit, induct and offer meaningful engagement opportunities with Panel members and we have now reached our target membership of 350 members. In the months to come we will now focus on maintenance of our valued membership, together with a range of investment and development opportunities.

Learning from the Francis report (February 2013) outlined the absolutely essential need for organisations to put patients at the heart of its services and listen to the views of patients and staff in order to deliver the very best standards of care. NHS England’s statutory guidance on ‘Working in partnership with people and communities’ (July 2022) similarly confirmed without insight from people who use, or may use, services, it is impossible to make truly informed decisions about service design, delivery and improvement.

The illustration at Figure 1. below shows how we place patients and public in the forefront of everything we do, the levels of involvement, the audience groups from which we have recruited our panel membership; examples of participation activities for each level of involvement and the overall themes of patient and public relationship with the trust.



**Figure 1: placing patients and public at the forefront of everything we do through our Patient and Public Panel**

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The ways in which services are provided by the ambulance service have and will continue to change, to meet demand and to ensure patients receive the right response for their needs. This is relevant for all service areas the trust provides, emergency, urgent care including NHS 111 and patient transport services, emergency preparedness and resilience. These are supported by a number of corporate service teams including Strategy, Partnerships and Transformation, Human Resources and Organisational Development, Finance, Quality, Innovation and Improvement, Corporate Affairs and our Medical Directorate.

In 2017 the trust adopted the new ambulance response model which focused on getting the right resource for the patient’s needs first time, a significant change in terms of approach, fleet and culture. In the early part of 2019, NHS 111 online went live, and the trust actively supported the national awareness campaign, as well as rolling out a supporting North West campaign which included a mix of digital and face to face engagement work. In December 2020, the trust played a key role in the delivery of the new NHS 111 First model throughout the North West region, working closely with NHS England and Improvement colleagues to develop a consistent regional approach and produce a range of assets, materials and communication toolkits to support this work.

The ever changing landscape of the NHS means that effective communication and engagement is vital to ensure that stakeholders are aware of and understand how the trust works with other partners to provides services. The Health and Care Act of July 2022 saw the establishment of geographically placed integrated care systems, partnerships that bring together providers and commissioners of NHS services with local government and other local partners to create shared plans and forge new relationships to benefit the population.

The NHS Constitution establishes the principles and values of the NHS. It includes staff pledges, which state what the NHS expects from its staff and what staff can expect from the NHS. We view this as part of our commitment to being a good employer, making our staff feeling valued. NWAS will ensure that all engagement activities comply with the underlying principles of the Constitution and that of the NHS People Promise - to work together to improve the experience of working in the NHS for everyone.

The evidence to date also shows the North West suffers from worse health inequalities and worse health outcomes than other regions. Our stakeholder engagement plans must include a focus on public health in order to support a reduction in this effect.

The trust has a duty under the Health and Social Care Act 2006 to involve and consult with patients and the public in the way it develops and designs services. This strategic plan describes our approach to involvement, participation and consultation as well as our duty to warn and inform the public as a category 1 responder within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

We are committed to a Duty of Candour and this strategic plan reflects a position of openness and transparency in our communication with the public, when appropriate to do so.

## 4. Trust vision, aims and approach to delivery

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# Our vision...

is to deliver the right care, at the right time, in the right place;

## Right care

We will provide outstanding care that is safe, effective and focused on the needs of the patient.

## Right time

We will achieve all operational performance standards for our paramedic emergency service, NHS 111 and patient transport service.

## Right place

We will provide care in the most appropriate setting for each patient's needs, taking fewer people to emergency departments by providing safe care closer to home or referring people to other health and care pathways.

## Every time

We will provide services which are consistent, reliable and sustainable.

Figure 2: our vision

# Our aims

Our aims are the areas we need to focus on to achieve our vision to deliver the right care, at the right time, in the right place; every time by 2025.

## Provide high-quality, inclusive care

We recognise there are health differences between groups in the communities we serve. We will listen to understand and make sure our services are accessible to everyone. We will work to prevent harm while using learning and research to continuously improve patient care and experience.

- Self care
- Effective care
- Person-centred care

## Be a brilliant place to work for all

We will create an environment where our people feel happy and safe, have access to equal opportunities and are supported to be at their best.

- Looking after our people
- Investing in our people
- Leading our people compassionately

## Work together to shape a better future

We will work together to improve the services we provide. We will work with our partners and the public to find solutions which improve access, outcomes and experience for everyone. We will work together to become more sustainable and have a positive effect on our communities and environment.

- One NWAS
- One North West
- One future

Figure 3: Our aims

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## 4.1 Approach to delivery

We achieve our goals through the delivery of a number of enabling strategies, delivery programmes and plans in support of the 'Right Care', the 'Right Time' and the 'Right Place'; 'Every Time'.

Our four supporting strategies outline what we will prioritise over the next three years to achieve our aims and ultimately, our vision.

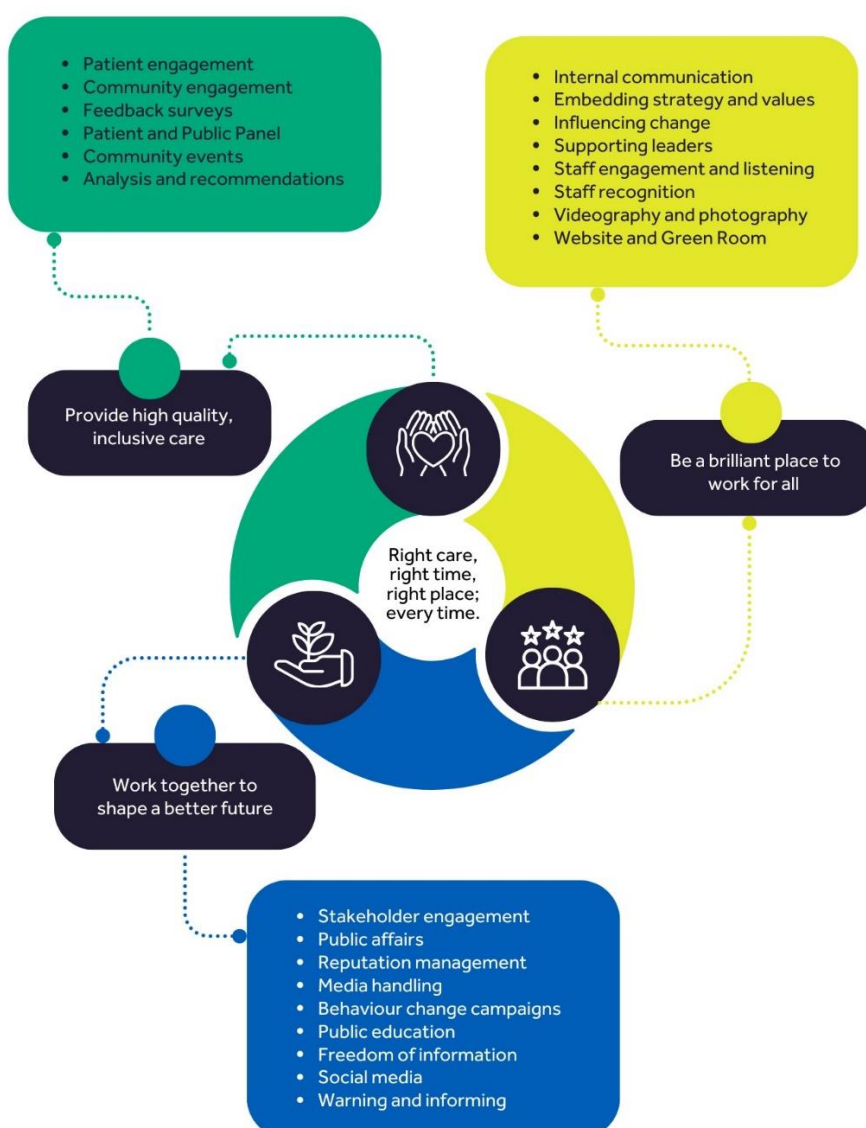
- **People Strategy** – aims to develop the culture and leadership environment to facilitate the delivery of the overall organisational goals.
- **Quality Strategy** – aligns to our aim “provide high quality, inclusive care” and sets out the ambitions, standards and framework which will help us to deliver safe, high quality, person-centred care for patients, every time.
- **Service Development Strategy** – aligns to our organisational aim to “work together to shape a better future” and provides a framework for developing our operational service lines to make sure we deliver operational performance across all service lines in a sustainable way.
- **Sustainability Strategy** – explains how we aim to fulfil the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations through environmental sustainability, social value, population health and financial sustainability.

## 4.2 Supporting the trust’s vision and aims through communication and engagement activities

Annual improvement plans support the trust's vision and aims with dedicated communications plans, events and activities. The image at Figure 4 below summaries these.

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## Supporting our strategic vision and aims through communications and engagement activities



**Figure 4: supporting the trust’s vision and aims through communication actions and activities**

It is important to be clear what the key messages are that we want to communicate to our stakeholders and engage with them to influence our strategic direction.

The following key messages have been produced to support both our vision and priorities. The language and content of the messages will be adapted to reflect the views and needs of stakeholders.

### 4.3 Vision and aims – key messages

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## Our vision - Key messages

- Demand on ambulance services continues to grow, we need to continue to better integrate our urgent and emergency care systems and work differently with our partners to provide the right care, at the right time and in the right place, every time for our patients.
- There is more to the ambulance service than a trip to hospital – patients may be treated and/or referred via a number of pathways following a 111 or 999 call.
- We aim to be the provider of choice for both patient transport and NHS 111 services.
- We work in partnership with our communities and lead ICB to develop integrated healthcare services and promote health and well-being.

## Our aims – Key messages

- We are working closely with our lead ICB and other partner organisations to develop digital solutions to deliver high quality services that will meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Change is vital to provide sustainable, high quality urgent and emergency care in the future.
- The changes we are making will improve services for patients by ensuring no one is left needlessly waiting and where possible services will be delivered in their local community.
- We have clinicians working across all services to allow for earlier clinical decision making to support both patients and our staff.
- We have strengthened our non-emergency patient transport services, providing additional health information and referral services and strive to become a market leader and provider of choice.
- We have built confidence in our NHS 111 service which offers patients excellent help for their urgent care needs.
- We are actively listening and working with our communities to better understand their needs and develop solutions that are right for them.
- We are supporting people to look after their own health and wellbeing in the community.

## 4.4 Our values

Our values form the foundation of and drive the whole organisation, ensuring we lead by example and create the right culture and conditions for patients to receive safe care every time.

Behaviours have been identified with staff to support the delivery of our values and demonstrate our commitment. Our values and our agreed behaviours are shown at Figure below.

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## WORKING TOGETHER.

We work together to understand and value every role in achieving our shared purpose. We live and breathe inclusivity, everyone matters.

### THIS MEANS:

- I take care of myself and others: I take responsibility for my own health and wellbeing and share good practice with others.
- I am approachable: I visibly show how I support others, work across boundaries and break down silos.
- I live and breathe inclusivity: I am aware of my own bias and my impact on others and am prepared to challenge behaviour that is not inclusive or acceptable.
- I embrace a diverse range of views: I ensure that all voices are heard and actively seek out the opinions of those who may have a different perspective.



## BEING AT OUR BEST.

We challenge ourselves to be the best we can be. We are curious and push boundaries to improve everything we do.

### THIS MEANS:

- I turn up: I bring my whole self to work each day and take ownership for my actions and behaviours.
- I am responsible for my own learning and development: I continually build on my knowledge, skills and experience to be the best I can be at work.
- I am brave and bold: I continually learn when things go well and when they don't. I speak up if something isn't right.
- I am professional: I am adaptable and forward thinking and go the extra mile if required. I take pride in how I work.



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

We make a difference through doing the right thing by our staff, patients, partners and communities. We act with compassion and kindness.

### THIS MEANS:

- I behave with compassion and kindness: I treat everyone based on their individual needs and culture. I show empathy and do not judge others.
- I act with integrity: I do what is right, not what is easy. I readily share information and knowledge and deliver on my commitments.
- I am optimistic: I am proactive in recognising and celebrating my own and others' success in achieving outcomes.
- I listen with intent: I listen to understand before I speak. I create space to listen to others.

Figure 5: Our values and agreed behaviours

## 5. Where are we now?

### 5.1 Achievements

The trust has developed a robust communication and engagement function since its inception in 2006 and has demonstrated year on year delivery of the objectives set for communications and community and stakeholder engagement. The two images below summarise the current position and achievements. These are explained in more detail in the Appendix accompanying this strategic plan.

### 5.2 Patient public and community engagement

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# Achievements: Patient, Public & Community Engagement

## Our approach

Our Patient, Public and Community Engagement Framework 2020-2025 is supported by annual Patient, Public and Community Engagement Implementation Plans. We use a range of ways to engage, listen and learn from our patients, public and wider community including traditional surveys, proactive engagement with specialist patient and cultural groups and a programme of community listening and awareness days. This helps us get feedback on access and use of our services which we use to make service improvements.

## 65 ENGAGEMENT EVENTS ATTENDED IN 23/24

These include Health Melas, the annual Disability Awareness Day, PRIDE events and high footfall county fairs and shows as well as freshers fayres.



## 5 COMMUNITY LISTENING EVENTS PER YEAR

Hosted by NWAS, these special events include 'lightning' talks from guest speakers and sections on our volunteers, careers, and time for questions and feedback.

## How we gather feedback

- Patient experience surveys
- Patient stories
- Community engagement
- Listening events
- Focus groups
- Patient and Public Panel
- Friends and Family Test

## Our survey says!

**93% PATIENTS FEEL THEY WERE TREATED WITH COMPASSION, DIGNITY AND RESPECT**

We have dedicated surveys for our 999, Urgent Care, PTS and NHS 111 services, inviting patients or those who care for them to provide feedback on all aspects of their experience with us. Each year these are reviewed by service teams and our PPP for suitability.

The FFT asks people if they would recommend their friends and family to use our services and offers the opportunity to qualify their response with supplementary information.

Feedback over the year has consistently demonstrated a general high regard for the ambulance service and in particular the high percentage of patients feeling they were treated with dignity compassion and respect.

## Common feedback themes

- Lack of awareness of the NHS 111 online service across the board, but especially within ethnic minority groups.
- Uncertainty about the criteria to access the patient transport service.
- Extra support that crews can offer for those with a learning disability, with a focus on autism.
- The usefulness of knowing the estimated time of arrival for an emergency ambulance when calling 999.
- Negative PTS patient feedback in relation to the service provided by some of our third-party taxi companies.
- Concerns about how an organisation or member of the public can inform NWAS about access details to a property or street, particularly a new build or difficult to access property.

## Patient and Public Panel (PPP)

## 88 INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES 23/24

PPP members have been involved in various projects including a blood pressure data sharing project, end of life care research study, electronic patient referrals, privacy notice review, our winter demand management campaign and friends and family test survey cards review.

During 2023/24 over 30% of the panel were young members (16-24), 20% of members declared they had a disability and almost 25% (79) members were from mixed ethnic backgrounds.



The PPP has been shortlisted for a Patient Experience Network Award on two occasions!

## Making a difference

The team produces learning dashboards for PTS, PES and 111 service improvement ambassadors to share feedback and learning to co-design service improvements

Our top improvements include:

- Based on feedback from deaf communities, we introduced an 'Insight' language communication app on clinicians' iPads. The app also supports translation between ambulance crews and patients for whom English is not their first language.
- A refreshed version of our Pictorial Communications Handbook has been made available on clinicians' iPads after the Patient and Public Panel members shared their feedback.
- Easy-read formats of key service information have been developed to aid interaction with people with learning difficulties who attend our listening events.

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## 5.3 Communications

### Achievements: Communications

#### Campaigns

Every winter we deliver activities to help manage demand for our services. In 2023/2024, our key themes were using 999 wisely, falls prevention, repeat prescriptions, mental health awareness and patient transport services.

Outputs of the campaign included:  
25 positive pieces of media coverage, including a national interview on BBC Breakfast.  
Over 30,000 physical leaflets with six language translations.  
Over six million pairs of ears heard our Bauer radio adverts.  
Four Winter Watch editions were issued to stakeholders.

Results:  
A 10% reduction in 999 calls during October, a 25% reduction in NHS 111 calls for repeat prescriptions throughout December, a 17% decrease in 999 calls from November 23 - February 24 for 'falls or faints without injury'.

A new recruitment campaign to attract people who want a job where they can make a difference was a success in 2023/24:

**CAREERS WITH HEART**  
Views to the vacancies pages up **105%**  
Views to careers pages up **64%**  
Views to apprenticeships pages up **40%**

#### Social media

Focusing our efforts on LinkedIn in 2023/2024, our audience increased by 61.4% and the page has seen an 836.7% increase in engagements.



**68.4k followers** **83k followers** **19k followers**

#### Videography 106 films produced in-house last year

Topics: chief executive and other executive director messages, staff discussing their careers, cultural backgrounds and health conditions, recruitment, training, seasonal messaging and patient stories.

#### Stakeholder engagement

**450** freedom of information and environmental information requests are handled by the Communications Team each year

**98%** responded to within 20 working days, against a legal target of 90%

**50** letters in response to issues raised by members of parliament

**4** stakeholder newsletters issued per year

Strong links have been forged with many community groups, statutory bodies such as Healthwatch and health scrutiny committees, commissioner and health and social care partners, and Health and Wellbeing Boards in the region.

#### Media relations



Since 2018, we have featured in an award-winning BBC documentary which shows the highs and lows of life on the frontline of a busy ambulance service - popular with young and diverse audience groups.

**150** operational commanders and managers received media training to prepare them for intense media scrutiny during major incidents.



**700 MEDIA ENQUIRIES** Average enquiries per year dealt with by the press office and on call team.

#### Website and Green Room



Investing in accessibility - Considerable changes have been made to the infrastructure of the site together with the conversion of our many key documents into accessible versions.

**70,000 FILE DOWNLOADS**

The Green Room is our extranet site which is available to all staff via laptops, mobile phones and iPads. It contains a wealth of information including news, policies, guides, learning and various reporting forms.

#### Internal communications

Priorities in the last year:

- NWAS strategy and key priorities
- recognising and celebrating our staff
- increasing the board member's profile
- supporting the health and wellbeing
- recognising national celebrations - King's Coronation and NHS 75
- ensuring staff have access to the latest updates.



#### Advocating inclusivity

Communications support is provided to all our staff networks including the Religion and Belief Forum, the Armed Forces Network, the LGBT group, the Disability Forum, the Race Equality Network and most recently the Women's Network.

#### Staff recognition

In 2024, we relaunched our thank you card initiative which allows staff to show their appreciation to colleagues and formally recognise their positive contributions. Since relaunching the initiative has received over 400 submissions!

Our annual Star Awards event has grown bigger and better in recent years, with record numbers of peer nominations and record attendance - it even won a CIPR silver award for Best Event a couple of years ago. The 2023 event attracted over 400 guests. The event is funded entirely by generous sponsorship secured by the Communications Team.

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## 6.0 Challenges and opportunities

The large footprint covered by NWS will always present a challenge for effective stakeholder engagement and public involvement. We serve a population of more than seven million people across approximately 5,400 square miles in the communities of Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Cheshire, and Glossop in Derbyshire.

The diversity in our region makes the North West a unique place to live, but also presents some challenges. In the North West, 32% of people live in the highest levels of deprivation and have significantly worse health outcomes, healthcare experiences and life expectancy than the general population. More work is needed to reach these communities, identify their needs and work with them to improve health and care services.

Work will start in the autumn of 2024 on quality improvement programmes to increase the amount of feedback we receive from diverse communities as well as to find ways to increase our understanding of areas of health deprivation and find ways in which to develop targeted solutions.

The high level of demand is an ongoing challenge nationally and there remains a gap between public perception of what is expected and is available from the ambulance service. Communication and engagement activity will continue to focus on reducing this gap in order to ensure patients get the most appropriate response to their needs.

The need for strengthened communications in an ever changing environment is always important and ensuring that this is done in the most cost effective and appropriate way is paramount. By the nature of the trust's business, it enjoys a high media profile and maintaining public confidence is a high priority.

Often public perception is concentrated on the trust 999 emergency service; however, with the increased abilities of NHS 111 not only to signpost but also to make direct referrals into community based services and the increased profile of the non-emergency service (PTS) to support urgent care in times of exceptional need and the recent retendering of non-emergency services in the region, there is a greater focus on all 3 service lines.

The trust currently operates patient transport services in four of the five counties of the North West and has worked hard with the public and their representatives to ensure the service meets their needs, that they can feedback any issues and to introduce new health initiatives. The trust has been delivering the NHS 111 service contract since October 2013, first as a stability partner and then via subsequent contract awards.

As already referenced, the level of interest in NHS performance and standards of care is high and maintaining public confidence and ensuring transparency will need to be at the root of all communication and engagement activity.

We are the only regional NHS organisation in the North West that operates across five ICSs: Cheshire and Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and South Cumbria, North East and North Cumbria, and Derbyshire (which includes Glossop). While there are challenges with working across many ICS areas, we have gained experience as a key partner within the urgent and emergency care (UEC) system. We deliver UEC services across a large area and have valuable data and insight which helps to identify opportunities for improvement, share learning and best practice, and predict future demand.

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We will continue to work collaboratively but also to ensure joined up dialogue, sharing of assets and materials and avoid duplication of communication and messages. It is important to get the right message, in the right forum to the right stakeholders.

In terms of staff engagement and internal communications, good progress has been made to increase the level of staff engagement through the delivery of more targeted communications, tailored to the needs of mobile staff with limited access to computers. This has included use of the staff app, producing more short films, use of wallboards in key sites and stations, and information available on staff ipads.

However, more is still needed to have a constant ‘barometer’ of staff morale and views. In 2034/24 the trust committed to the NHS England Sexual Safety Charter and launched a new sexual safety campaign ‘Stop, Speak, Support’ encouraging people to stop inappropriate behaviours, speak out about it and understand where they can go for support

A toolkit has been provided for managers and a programme of sexual safety roadshows are underway. Encouraging staff to speak up, improving sexual safety, reducing misogyny and improving culture are challenges for the months and years ahead.

Increased use of digital technology to support a mobile workforce requires regular investment and effective management but is an enabler for improving staff communications and will be a continuing driver for this strategic plan.

The capacity and capability of the Communications and Engagement Team also requires frequent assessment to ensure we continue to deliver an effective communications and engagement function for the trust whilst acknowledging the need to do things differently in order to work more efficiently. We must constantly evaluate our performance and deliver creative and innovative approaches to ensure our communications remain both fresh and engaging with our diverse stakeholders.

## 7. Communication and engagement strategic approach

### 7.1 Communication principles

All corporate communication activities will reflect the trust’s values and the following principles:

- An emphasis on two way communication mechanisms and relationship management
- Information which is clear, accurate, consistent and uses appropriate language
- Dialogue which is respectful and constructive
- Communications and engagement delivered in partnership with ICBs, other health care providers and other stakeholders wherever possible
- Timely communications with our staff in advance of other stakeholders, wherever possible
- Open and honest communication that demonstrates the trust’s accountability to its stakeholders
- Inclusive communication that reflects the needs of patients, the public and our staff
- Adherence to the duties outlined under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004)
- Communication that supports improved health outcomes and reduces inequality
- Communication and engagement activities which demonstrate value for money.

All communications activities and materials will comply with legislation in terms of the Data Protection Act 2018, the EU General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR), the Freedom of Information Act

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2000 and equality and diversity legislation. All promotional work will be carried out in accordance with the Department of Health's Code of Practice for promotion of NHS Services, published in March 2008.

## 8. Stakeholders and audiences

The trust has a diverse range of stakeholders with varying needs and interest in the organisation. Communication must be tailored to suit their differences and requirements – in terms of age, involvement or connection with the service, behaviours, where they live, lifestyle and beliefs etc. - in order for there to be genuine understanding and engagement.

Using stakeholder mapping to identify the level of interest and influence that individuals and organisations have, we can prioritise those we need to engage more closely. The concept allows us to align communications activities, key messages, delivery channels and frequency with the needs of each stakeholder group and ensures our approach is based on insight to be as effective as possible.

Figure 6 below shows a stakeholder mapping concept based on each stakeholder groups' level of interest in the trust and their influence.



**Figure 6: Stakeholder mapping concept**

The table at Figure 7 below shows our communication approach to each stakeholder group.

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Communication aim	External/ Professional	Internal	Public and Patient
<p><b>To influence</b></p> <p><i>Key stakeholders with a shared vision who we will work in partnership with to deliver our strategy and achieve our vision.</i></p>	<p>NHS England</p> <p>Care Quality Commission</p> <p>Public Health England</p> <p>Lead ICB</p> <p>Local A&amp;E delivery boards</p> <p>ICS</p>	<p>Board of Directors</p> <p>Trust Management Committee</p> <p>Trade union representatives</p>	<p>Patient and Public Panel</p>
<p><b>To engage</b></p> <p><i>Stakeholders who we will actively inform and involve/engaged with on key projects and decisions.</i></p>	<p>North West Members of Parliament</p> <p>Overview and scrutiny committees in the North West</p> <p>Healthwatch and interest groups</p> <p>Local resilience forums</p> <p>Emergency services</p> <p>Higher education institutes</p> <p>Out of hours providers</p> <p>Health and wellbeing boards</p> <p>Urgent care networks</p> <p>Public Health England</p>	<p>Senior managers</p> <p>Service leads</p> <p>Clinical leaders</p>	<p>Patients from priority groups – children, mental health, stroke etc.</p>

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<p>To involve</p> <p><i>Stakeholders who we will make aware of developments and progress, with the opportunity to respond and provide feedback on areas of interest.</i></p>	<p>NHS provider organisations</p> <p>Voluntary ambulance services</p> <p>Government ministers</p> <p>Local councillors</p> <p>Nursing and care homes</p>	<p>Middle managers</p> <p>Clinical supervisors</p> <p>Human Resources and Organisational Development</p>	<p>Other patients</p> <p>Service users (friends, family and carers)</p>
<p>To inform</p> <p><i>Stakeholders who we will communicate generically to and aim to increase their level of interest.</i></p>	<p>Media (local and trade)</p> <p>Health care professionals</p> <p>Relevant charities e.g. British Heart Foundation</p> <p>Parish/Town Councils</p>	<p>All employees</p> <p>Community first responders</p> <p>Volunteer car drivers</p>	<p>North West population</p> <p>Community groups (including hard to reach groups and those with specific interests)</p>

**Figure 7: Table showing communication approach for each stakeholder group**

When planning communications activities, consideration also needs to be given to the requirements of the relevant service line or project. Where possible therefore, stakeholder mapping is undertaken during the planning phase of any communications campaigns or activities.

Relationships with stakeholders will evolve and change depending on a wide range of factors both local and national. We review our list of stakeholders annually to identify gaps and assess any changes in relationships.

## 8.2 Supporting the wider NHS

We target communications, where appropriate, to priority areas as identified in the NHS Urgent and Emergency Care Service Recovery Plan and annual NHS England communication plans and approaches.

We will also consider the communication needs of hard to reach groups in order to tackle health inequalities in mixed ethnic communities and those who live in deprived areas.

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## 9. How will we deliver this strategic plan?

Our strategic approach is to consolidate existing communication and engagement practices whilst developing new communication initiatives to support the delivery of the trust's strategic objectives. This is achieved via the following communication and engagement aims:

- Service users and potential users will have improved understanding, and will be meaningfully engaged and involved in service design, to improve quality and patient experience
- Patients, the public and their representatives will know what to expect from the ambulance service and have high levels of confidence in its service
- All staff can relate to the trust's vision and values and feel that they are listened to, involved in trust decisions and valued
- All stakeholders and partners fully understand and are engaged with the evolving operational model and digital objectives for NWS
- NWS continues to have a trusted brand profile which reflects its vision and values and the main services it represents
- We are an employer of choice for professionals pursuing a rewarding career
- Information is shared by the trust which meets the needs of its stakeholders and promotes openness inclusivity and transparency
- Be the provider of choice for NHS 111 and PTS services
- Public confidence is maintained in the trust's abilities to publicly warn and inform during major incidents and during periods of increased demand or service escalation

The above aims will be delivered through the annual improvement plans of the Communications and Engagement Team. The plans include detailed actions, timeframes and measures of success.

## 10. Strategic plan enablers

The communications and engagement team will use a number of channels and techniques to support delivery of this strategy including:

- social, on line and digital media channels and campaigns
- channel management and correspondence
- horizon scanning and news gathering
- stakeholder profiling and mapping
- consultation exercises
- watching briefs and specific handling strategies
- stakeholder impact assessment techniques
- political monitoring
- regular stakeholder briefings
- staff and patient feedback via traditional and new media
- patient involvement via the patient and public panel
- social marketing and behavioural insight techniques
- community engagement programmes
- creative campaigns and marketing collateral
- written and face to face communications

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- patient and public information
- press releases and media statements
- videos, stories and filming
- events and conferences

## 11. Risks

A number of risks have been identified in the delivery of this strategy. These include:

- Capacity to deliver effective communications and engagement activities across the large footprint and with a high number of stakeholders.
- Loss of public confidence in ambulance services due to delays and potential harm experienced by patients
- The ability to effectively engage with staff because of the nature of a mobile workforce and some of the technology limitations.
- The changing NHS environment and financial climate requiring increased communication levels to support our urgent, emergency care and digital strategic objectives.

Any specific projects within the delivery plans will link to the trust's risk register.

All risks are captured on the trust wide corporate risk register which is populated from the risk assessments carried out at all levels and across all directorates within the trust. These are monitored through the relevant directorate and service area risk registers. It is recognised that the type and levels of risk will change over time and will be monitored accordingly.

## 12. Implementation – annual improvement plan

The strategic plan and its objectives will be delivered through annual improvement plans which will be published alongside the strategic plan with regular progress reports. Progress will be monitored by the Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Transformation, the Trust Management Committee and Board of Directors.

## 13. Resources

The Communications and Engagement Team has a finite non-pay budget to support communication and engagement activities. The team will ensure all activities are within planned budget spending and best use of resources and value for money are provided. Any requirement for additional funding will be subject to the approved business case process.

The strategic plan will support the delivery of the directorate's required cost improvement plan.

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## 14. Monitoring and evaluation

The strategic plan will be delivered through annual action improvement plans.

Progress reports on the strategic plan and improvement plans will be presented to the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis. Quarterly updates will be provided to the Executive Team via the communications and engagement dashboard.

Specific project updates will also be shared with relevant Committees or Groups as appropriate e.g., the patient and public panel's activities will be presented to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Group.

The progress reports will focus on delivering the objectives outlined in section 9.

## 15. Communicating the strategic plan

The Strategic plan will be emailed out to Directors/senior managers/heads of service and will be presented to all service line senior management teams.

The Strategic plan will be published on the trust's website for patients, the public and other external stakeholders to view. It will be made available to staff via the intranet. Both internal and external communication channels will be used to increase awareness of the new plan being published.

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