

**TITLE OF REPORT: Health & Wellbeing Board
Draft Communications Strategy**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the views of the Health & Wellbeing Board on a draft Communications Strategy for the Board. The draft has been prepared in response to a need identified by Board members for a communications strategy to be developed to raise awareness of and promote the work of the Board.

Background

2. Health & Wellbeing Boards were established as statutory boards from April 2013 as part of a range of health reforms introduced at that time. They were identified by the Department of Health as having a key role to play to modernise the NHS to:
 - ensure stronger democratic legitimacy and involvement
 - strengthen working relationships between health and social care, and
 - encourage the development of more integrated commissioning of services
3. It was envisaged that Boards would give communities a greater say in understanding and addressing their local health and social care needs.
4. The Gateshead Health & Wellbeing Board has built on the foundations of partnership working that were in place through the previous shadow health and wellbeing board and other local partnerships linked to health and wellbeing.
5. Members of the Board have raised the need for a communications strategy to be developed to raise awareness of the Board's work, including its role in leading change to better meet the health and wellbeing needs of local people.

Draft Communications Strategy

6. An initial draft Communications Strategy was developed and circulated to Board members for comment in July. Feedback was positive and also highlighted:
 - the opportunity to use the communications strategy to promote behavior change around some of our major health and wellbeing challenges;

- the important role of social media and websites as ways of engaging on issues linked to the work of the Board and opportunities to develop these communication channels;
 - the opportunity to develop more co-ordinated communications between partner organisations and closer working between communications teams.
7. The feedback received has been incorporated into a second draft communications strategy (attached). The document sets out:
- the objectives of the communications strategy and key messages underpinning it;
 - its target audience and details of communication channels that will be used to communicate with stakeholders and the general public;
 - arrangements for reporting to the Board on progress in implementing the strategy (six monthly) and providing a 'forward look' of activity over the next six month period;
 - a summary of commitments required of Board members, some of which are already in place.
8. Implementation of the communications strategy will need to be achieved within existing resources, having regard to existing capacity across partner organisations. However, it is also recognised that actions to join-up communications activity across health and wellbeing partners will yield benefits around:
- more consistent and timely messages on issues linked to the work of the Board
 - more efficient ways of working across partner organisations

Proposals and Next Steps

9. The Board is asked to consider the draft Communications Strategy attached at Appendix 1.
10. It is proposed that communication leads meet to discuss arrangements for taking forward the strategy and to develop an initial communications plan for the Board for the six month period ending 31 March 2016. This will then be brought back to the Board for endorsement.

Recommendations

11. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:
- (i) consider the draft Communications Strategy attached at Appendix 1.
 - (ii) Agree to the next steps set out in paragraph 10 above.

Contact: John Costello (4332065)