Communications plan considerations

Communications guidance when implementing Right Care Right Person in force – including identifying your audiences and key messages.

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About this guidance

Effective communication is highly important in the implementation of Right Care Right Person (RCRP). It ensures your staff and officers, partners, stakeholders, members of the public and the media understand its purpose and role.

This guidance sets out considerations and messaging for your communications plan.

Considerations

Aim of RCRP

Understanding the aim of RCRP forms the basis for all engagement. RCRP is about ensuring that vulnerable people are given the right support by the right agency when they need it.

Police officers are often left looking after people with mental health or social care needs who require specialist medical care that our officers cannot provide. This also has an impact on the vulnerable person, who may not be receiving the right care from the right agency. This can escalate the situation or make matters worse.

Threat to life

RCRP will not stop the police attending incidents where there is a threat to life. We have a duty to protect our communities and we will continue to do so. RCRP is about working with our partners in health and social care to make the necessary changes to service provisions to ensure that vulnerable people are given appropriate care by the appropriate agency.

Communication is a shared responsibility. Achieving positive results depends on enabling others, including capturing the views of service users to understand the impact of change.

- **See further communications guidance in the Communication authorised professional practice (APP)**

Objectives

Every communication plan should include SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) objectives. These should be about outcomes (what you want people to do as a result of your communication activity), not just outputs (what you are going to do).

Some considerations when setting RCRP communications objectives are to:

- explain the purpose of RCRP from a national policing perspective
- demonstrate the practical application of RCRP
- show how RCRP supports policing in delivering its core mission of keeping communities safe
- demonstrate the success to date seen in forces where RCRP has been rolled out

Key messages

While each force will create a bespoke RCRP communications plan that's tailored to local needs and partners, these key messages help ensure consistency across local and national communications.

Use the following key messages to form the basis for your communications materials.

- RCRP is focused on giving the most appropriate and beneficial care to all members of our communities.
- The police are not always the right agency to respond to all incidents. There are circumstances where our partners in health or social care are best placed to offer help and support to vulnerable people.
- RCRP will not stop the police attending incidents where there is a threat to life. We have a duty to protect our communities and we will continue to do so.
- We are working with our partners in health and social care so they can make the necessary changes to their service provision and ensure that vulnerable people are given appropriate care by the appropriate agency.

Adapting your message

The messaging may need to be adjusted for different stakeholders depending on their role or their concerns. Messages that resonate with one stakeholder group may not resonate with another.

Make sure the content of what's being released and the tone used is culturally appropriate. It should consider any known communication preferences of identified groups.

- **See further guidance on community engagement in the Engagement APP**

Statistics

The following statistics can be used to support key messaging for RCRP engagement. The statistics are taken from the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) operational productivity review, which conducted a mental health review with forces. (The full review has not yet been published.)

- If all forces in England realised time savings similar to those reported by Humberside police, this could save around one million hours of police officer time per year. There is currently no standard measurement for estimating police officer time spent on mental health incidents. This figure is an estimate using local population figures as a proxy for potential mental health demand to calculate the overall officer hours saved for England, assuming the number of Humberside officer hours saved (1,441 per month) was achieved elsewhere. These monthly officer hours saved represented reduced deployment to concern for safety and mental health incidents reported by Humberside Police.
- There were almost 37,000 individuals detained by police in England and Wales under Section 136 in 2021/22.
- Use of Section 136 has increased by 10% in the last four years.
- In 2021 there were 4.3 million referrals to NHS mental health services. (This is an increase from approximately 3.8 million referrals in the years 2019 and 2020.)

Audiences

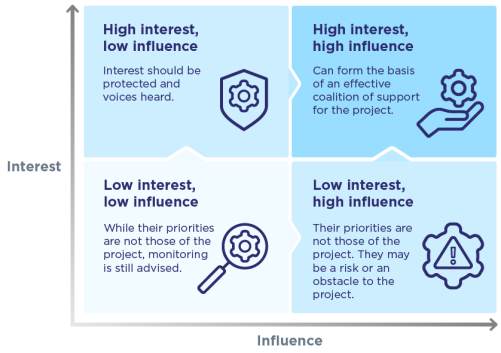
Identifying and prioritising stakeholders

Identify your stakeholders as specifically as possible – who does the project need to engage? Once stakeholders have been identified, they can be prioritised.

Mental health and responding to people requiring health and social care can attract significant media interest. The influence of social media should also be considered and monitored during any RCRP changes.

For stakeholders with:

- high interest and high influence – these individuals can form the basis of an effective coalition of support for the project
- high interest and low influence – their interest should be protected and voices heard
- low interest and low influence – their priorities are not those of the project but monitoring is still advised
- low interest and high influence – their priorities are not those of the project and these individuals may be a risk or an obstacle to the project



Diversity in communication needs

At this stage of planning, think about the different communication needs and cultural differences of your stakeholders and draw up your communication strategy accordingly.

Stakeholder mapping will vary from area to area, depending on the complexity of partnership structures, geographical differences and demographics. Consider differentiating on the basis of internal and external stakeholders as follows and develop key contacts for each.

- **See further guidance on community engagement in the Engagement APP**

External stakeholders

External stakeholders may include:

- the general public – service users, the families of service users and the general public
- the NHS – integrated care boards, general hospitals
- mental health trusts – mental health hospitals, children's mental health teams, crisis teams, private mental health hospitals
- the ambulance service
- local government
- national government
- media
- coroners
- the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)
- the Care Quality Commission (CQC) or Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

Internal stakeholders

Internal stakeholders may include:

- frontline officers and staff
- control room staff – see **Control room considerations in the Senior responsible officer (SRO) role guidance** for more information on creating organisational culture change
- custody staff
- safeguarding staff
- press office and digital team responding to media enquiries and social media comments
- police and crime commissioner (PCC)
- legal services

Content ideas

- Police officers and healthcare practitioners giving examples and personal reflections on real situations they have attended – for example, a police officer attending an incident where an individual was in mental health crisis and how hard it was trying to support them with limited skills in this specialised area.

- Media briefings with local partners to answer key questions about RCRP principles and to allay concerns around how it will work in practice.
- Writing personalised articles and/or conducting interviews with key spokespeople delivering RCRP in force to explain the approach in a more accessible way.

For an example of how content can shape the narrative around RCRP, see our **smarter practice example**.

Suggested checklist for communications plan

- **Download the communications plan checklist as an editable Word document**

- Contact centre teams trained and briefed.
- Wider internal staff briefings.
- Intranet content to explain approach.
- Officers and staff briefed.
- Press release for website and local media – quotes from local partners included.
- Social media content to explain approach, including key messages.
- Digital team briefed with questions and answers (Q&A) to answer public questions on social media.
- Press teams briefed with Q&A to respond to media enquiries.

Communications strategy template

Key points to consider in development of a force communication strategy are as follows. **See our Engagement and communication APP** for further guidance.

- **Download the communications strategy template as an editable Word document**

Introduction and background

Set the scene. Explain the context in which the communication strategy has been developed. Set out what you already know about the situation and your stakeholders. What research has been done to inform the communication strategy?

Scope

What will and won't be addressed through the strategy?

Roles and responsibilities

Outline who is responsible for what. This may include explaining the relationship between communication and business change.

Stakeholders

Set out who the stakeholders are, as well as how they are being prioritised, engaged and contact tracked.

Aims and communication objectives

Give the SMART objectives of the communications strategy here. There will be a number of objectives – possibly a different set for each stakeholder group – and these will change over the life of the project.

Strategic approach

Explain the strategic approach here. For example, is this a campaign that simply needs to 'tell' stakeholders something or does it require a co-creation approach, with stakeholders contributing to the debate and shaping the decisions?

Key messages and narrative

What is the overarching narrative? The narrative gives the rationale for the change and explains what is going to happen.

Key messages go into more specific detail. Give the key messages here. Messages will be different according to the stakeholder group. They should be designed to deliver the communication objectives.

Channels

Talk here about what channels will be used to deliver the communication strategy. For example, will existing trusted channels be used or is there a need to create new channels? What channels will

work best for your stakeholders? Explain how they will be used – for example, what type of content will go into each channel.

Media and external relations

This section may or may not be needed depending on the nature of the project. If the project is largely external facing, then the whole strategy will reflect the need to work with the media. However, even when the project is mostly internal, there will still be the potential for media interest.

Risks and dependencies

Explain that risks and issues should be captured and tracked within the appropriate risk register. Highlight any dependencies for the successful delivery of the strategy. This might include budget or other resources.

Resources and budget

Who will do it and how much will it cost?

Sign-off protocols

Set out how communication messages and products will be signed off.

Evaluation

Explain how the strategy will be evaluated. This should be against the objectives that have been set and agreed.

Reporting

Set out how and when performance against the strategy will be reported.

Tags

Mental health Response policing