

Communication Strategy
North West London Cardiac Network

Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to establish a framework to enable the North West London Cardiac Network to communicate in a consistent, more effective manner with all stakeholders, including:

- National NHS organisations
- Regional NHS organisations
- Teams and individuals within Local NHS organisations
- Patients and the public
- Media
- Non-NHS organisations/voluntary sector

The strategy aims to identify the core principles of the Network, the key audiences and the principal vehicles for delivering communications.

The communication strategy is complemented by our user involvement strategy and action plan and should therefore not be considered in isolation.

Background

Cardiac Networks are being established within each Strategic Health Authority across England with the aim of bringing together different organisations including local PCTs, Trusts, Ambulance services and tertiary centres to improve patient care across the entire patient pathway. By working outside traditional organisational boundaries, Networks can link professionals involved in every aspect of the patient's journey through primary, secondary and tertiary care to ensure the delivery of consistently high quality care.

The overall purpose of the NWL Cardiac Network is to:

- Ensure that cardiac services develop to meet the standards in the National Service Framework, comply with NICE guidelines and generally improve the services and health of the people in North West London

Effective communication is therefore an intrinsic part of the Network's plan in supporting the delivery of this principal.

Aims

The aim of the Communications Strategy is to:

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- Raise awareness of the role and function of the NWL Cardiac Network with organisations, patients and the public
- Promote a positive image of the NWL Cardiac Network including all aspects of the Network's activities and achievements
- Facilitate access for patients and carers
- Encourage and facilitate feedback from organisations, individual staff members and the public
- Promote good practice

The communication strategy is fundamental in planning how we will inform organisations, both nationally and locally, as well as members of the public of all that we are undertaking in a timely manner, which will facilitate participation and ownership.

General Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide all aspects of communications carried out by the Network. The NWL Cardiac Network is committed to:

- Acting in an open and transparent manner
- Providing meaningful and timely communication
- Working in partnership with all our local organisations to promote the work of the Network
- Communicating in a clear, concise and inclusive manner
- Promoting high quality communications with staff within all organisations , patients and carers and the general public

Stakeholders

The key audience for the NWL Cardiac Network is detailed below. As the Network develops, this may need to be reviewed.

National NHS organisations

- Department of Health
- Modernisation Agency
- Healthcare Commission
- National Institute of Clinical Excellence
- British Heart Foundation
- British Cardiac Society
- Other Cardiac Networks

Regional NHS organisations

- Strategic Health Authority
- Workforce Confederation

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- Other NWL Networks e.g. Diabetes, Cancer, Critical Care etc

Local NHS organisations

- PCTs
- Primary Care
- Local authorities
- London Ambulance Service
- NHS Acute Trusts
- Network Board members
- Network service improvement team

Patients and the Public

- Patients
- Carers
- Public
- User groups, community groups, health forums

Media

- Local press
- Local radio

Non-NHS organisations/voluntary sector

- Charities
- Independent sector

Methods for Communicating

Methods of communication need to be adapted to meet the needs of the recipients and the particular circumstances. All individuals within the network, particularly the Network Board members, have a responsibility for the successful implementation of this strategy and the promotion of good communications across the sector.

Corporate Image

The Network will use the NHS lozenge as its logo and it will adhere to the national guidelines on NHS identity.

Patients and the Public

The Network is committed to ensuring that services are developed with patients at the centre. This will be achieved through involving patients in the Network's work programme and decision making process. The Network will consider how to

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involve patients and carers in each specific piece of work it is committed to delivering.

The Network will also consider how best to reach 'hard to reach groups'. This will involve a combination of direct contact via specific community groups and, where appropriate, making publications available in other formats e.g. audio tapes and in other languages.

The Network will seek the advice of specific 'hard to reach' community groups about the most suitable methods of communication for particular circumstances.

The Network's User Involvement Strategy details mechanisms for communication with patients and the public in more detail.

Direct Contact

Opportunities to meet with individuals, local groups and organisations in the public, private and voluntary sector will be actively pursued so that views can be sought as part of the consultation/decision making process for the Network. In time, the Network will explore ways of utilising technology including tele-conferencing and video conferencing to ensure the most effective use of time and individuals, appropriate to the needs and circumstances.

The Network's service improvement lead and/or Director will continue to attend national and regional events, meetings and conferences ensuring 2 way communications is maintained with our wider stakeholders and that relevant information is brought back to local organisations and clinical teams.

Media

In due course, the Network will link with the communication teams within each of the local organisations. Relationships will be established with local media to promote Network events and awareness of the role and work of the Network.

Publications

The Network is committed to ensuring that all communications on sector decision making will be reported in minutes and disseminated to local clinical teams. Minutes of Board meetings and sub-groups will be communicated at all levels. In time, these will be available via the Network web site. Through membership of the Board, 2-way communication will be improved by receiving reports on local implementation team's progress in developing cardiac services from each LIT representative who attend the Board.

Where appropriate, leaflets, posters, newsletters and reports will be used to inform our external audiences; ensuring the most appropriate medium is used to reach the intended target group. Where appropriate, mail shots will also be used.

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The aim will be to ensure that any publications used will provide clear, jargon free information.

The Network will aim to produce an annual report detailing achievements over the preceding year and intended work priorities for the forthcoming year. This will be widely distributed to organisations and individual clinical teams.

Statistics and Data

The Network has developed an Information strategy to ensure the provision of accurate, comprehensive and timely information to enable the Network to monitor progress towards achievement of the NSF and local targets and to assist in the ongoing development of cardiac services across the sector. This strategy should be read in conjunction with the Information Strategy.

Web-site & electronic communication

Email will be used as a significant source for communication to the various Network mailing lists to distribute general information. However, it will also be used to distribute more specific information to particular groups e.g. specific staff groups, clinicians, managers, other network leads etc.

Over the coming months, it is intended to develop the existing NWL CHD Collaborative web site integrating Network and service improvement initiatives across the sector into one accessible area, utilising existing resources.

www.nwlchdc.co.uk

The intention will be to use this web site to post contact details for all Network members along with information about the NWL Cardiac Network. In addition to service improvement activities, it is also intended to use the web site to post minutes of all meetings, specific activity information, agreed sector wide protocols, policies, news items etc. This mechanism will therefore allow access by both internal and external audiences to the work of the NWL Cardiac Network.

Exhibitions, Workshops, Conferences and Road shows

Where appropriate, road shows, events, exhibitions and workshops will be organised to inform external stakeholders, patients and the cardiac workforce about plans and priorities for the Network. These events will offer an opportunity for the Network to receive feedback on plans and priorities and to have a more inclusive programme for involving a wider audience in our work.

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Communicating with different staff groups

In addition to specific events detailed above, the Network will aim to communicate with different staff groups via existing programmes e.g. NWL heart failure nurses forum, rehabilitation nurses forum, London/SE Cardiac Physiology meeting. The Network will also aim to link directly to service managers, nursing leads and allied health professional leads within PCTs and acute Trusts so that information about the network can be cascaded to relevant teams within the various organisations.

The service improvement team of the Network will play a crucial role in communicating the work of the Network to various staff groups within the local health economies.

Implementation

The implementation of this strategy will be led by the Network Board members.

Evaluation

Success will be determined by feedback from organisations and staff groups. This strategy will be reviewed and evaluated in 12 months time (December 2005).

Conclusion

Communications will have a significant and increasingly important role within the future of the Network and will be central to the Networks continued development and success.

This strategy aims to set out the priorities and principles for communication to ensure a consistent and effective approach is implemented across the Network and the wider community.