

CHANGING LIVES COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (December 2008 – December 2009)

INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Government are committed to the aspirations of *Changing Lives* and our communications strategy reflects this. We will continue to work with a wide range of individuals, organisations and groups with an interest in social work services to meet the aim and objectives set out in the previous communications strategy, which remain relevant today.

The five change programmes are focussing on delivering national and strategic pieces of work over the next twelve months that will see the groups conclude with the launch of a number of **core products** to help support local delivery. Our communications focus has now shifted primarily to the core products, preparations for their individual and collective dissemination and follow up activities.

It is important that the *Changing Lives* agenda is recognised and owned at a local level, with service providers at all levels taking responsibility for making the aspirations of *Changing Lives* a reality. As such we will continue to develop opportunities to promote this message and raise the Changing Lives profile in general, and promote and deliver information from the programme, in to the programme and across the sector.

Stakeholder engagement remains a priority and we will continue to build on the work done over the last 18 months to develop and improve communication with our target audiences.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

What will success look like?

“The overall success measure of this communications strategy is that it will enable the right information to get to the right audience in the right format at the right time, in support of the aspirations of Changing Lives.”

This remains the success measure for the communications strategy. We have access to many more stakeholders than eighteen months ago and strong communication links throughout the sector, and we must use this and the tools created to continue to meet the success measure.

Aim

The overall aim is to support the realisation of the aspirations of Changing Lives.

Objectives

1. Engage with all of our stakeholders, internal and external, including service users and carers, developing a two way flow of information, ensuring that they are aware of and understand *Changing Lives*
2. Ensure that this strategy makes the appropriate links to the government's strategic objectives and so supports the delivery of these
3. Promote dialogue, information sharing and opportunities for joint working within the sector
4. Integrate the communications strategy with policy approach to ensure most effective and co-ordinated communication of information and developments
5. Promote, support, and facilitate the development of the local practitioner forums

KEY ACTIVITIES

These are the six areas that the communications strategy will focus on for 2009:

1. **Working with leads of individual core products** to develop their respective communication activities (and strategies where applicable) – not just launches and publications, but longer term communications too.

Core Products Communications Sheet

We will develop an individual chart for each of the core products, to monitor, analyse and record all of the product's communication activities and identify further communication opportunities.

2. **Identifying opportunities for joint communication of core products** and other communication opportunities, and using a strategic overview to co-ordinate better communications across the sector.

Calendar of Communication Activities

At this stage not all of the core products are in a position to confirm their communication plans for the next 12 months. The communications plan will be replaced by a Calendar that will identify communication activities across the social work sector over 2009.

This calendar will require input from all involved in communicating information across the sector, and is intended to help identify opportunities for joint communications and collaborative working, and to provide a focus for the communication of the Core Products in particular.

3. **Ensuring that we continue to engage with and extend access to stakeholders**, building on work already done and utilising current networks to ensure that a consistent set of messages are delivered in the right place, at the right time, to the right people.

Key messages

Our key messages will evolve with time and we will ensure that we continue to promote those messages in a clear and consistent manner.

We will work with the individual leads of the core products to help identify, develop and promote their key messages and co-ordinate a set of messages from all of the products.

We have commissioned a report on how the core products relate to the aspirations of Changing Lives and each other, that will underpin all of the communication activity taking place.

4. **Re-invigorating communications across the sector**, including working with the Learning Networks to develop the Communications Network and encouraging communications officials across the sector to share information with each other, using the Calendar of Activities as a starting point.

Stakeholder Engagement

We will continue to use tried and tested routes of communication to disseminate the key messages and details of the core products, such as newsletters, ebulletins and website, and will seek new ways to enhance our engagement such as with the development of RSS feeds on the website.

We will maintain, monitor and develop the revised Contacts Database and mailing list, to ensure that the right information reaches the right people at the right time.

We will continue to seek opportunities to improve the sharing of information across the sector, including acting as a link between the communications officials of our key partners, prompting and promoting collaborative working where appropriate. This is already evident through our collaborative work with ADSW, on the 40 years celebrations and local practitioner forums.

Local Practitioner Forums (LPFs)

We have continued to support and develop LPFs, and we will continue to work with ADSW to provide LPFs with a consistent level of support and guidance to help them develop; including providing guidance, administrative assistance (ie updating contacts lists), news, information, facilitating meetings and potentially holding a LPF Conference in 2009.

5. **Website development** – as the key communications platform it is important that we continue to make the website as user friendly and accessible as possible.

Having secured a further one year contract extension in November 2008, we will continue to use the website to provide news and updates on Changing Lives and other events of partners throughout the sector, and seek to find ways to improve accessibility (such as introducing RSS feeds).

The site will continue to be downsized, in a phased approach, in line with the policy decision to migrate content to a new site towards the end of 2009. Work will continue during early 2009 to identify the best destination for content and work will begin on migrating content thereafter.

6. **Knowledge Management Strategy/SSKS Portal** – working with NES and IRISS to develop their Knowledge Management Strategy for the social services sector in Scotland and their portal, which potentially provides a natural home for the core products and the current content of the socialworkscotland website – and ensuring that this is effectively communicated across the sector.

IMPLEMENTATION

In seeking to achieve the objectives of this strategy we will continue to:

- build on networks, resources and other assets currently available
- manage within the resources available seeking to add value in cost-effective ways and exploit opportunities for joint working / joint engagement to achieve this
- regularly evaluate the costs and impact of individual pieces of work being done – specifically seeking stakeholder feedback to inform this (for example website and newsletters).

EVALUATION

We will continue to monitor and evaluate individual communication activities on an ongoing basis. We will hold an informal interim review of the strategy in Summer 2009 and undertake a full review towards the end of 2009.