



Communications and Patient, Care-giver and Public Involvement Strategy

2020-2024 Review



How we have made a difference

Since the introduction of [Wessex Cancer Alliance's \(WCA\) Communications and Patient, Care-giver and Public Involvement Strategy](#) in 2020, people have been increasingly involved in our work, and we have strengthened our communications with our partners, patients and the public. We have established a culture that understands the importance of effective communications and meaningful patient, care-giver and public involvement (PPI). As a result, people are much better informed about our activities, as well as involved in shaping and influencing them.

Alliance stakeholders receive regular updates about WCA's work through, for example, our fortnightly bulletin and social media channels. Our public and patient facing messaging is now more timely, through our [Cancer Matters Wessex website](#) and [Facebook](#) as well as our partners' communication channels. WCA has been more proactive in seeking media coverage, as well as responding to media enquiries to help to raise the profile of a project, campaign or outcome. We have shared press releases as part of a number of cancer campaigns and undertaken numerous radio and telephone interviews with journalists.

More recently, we have further strengthened the team who coordinate and support colleagues to undertake communications and PPI. The additional capacity and expertise is focussed on health inequalities, which has already led to more involvement of communities who experience poorer access, experience and outcomes in cancer care. The additional resource gives us a greater ability to share our learning and insight, which we will continue to improve.

These improvements are the result of:

- Building trusted relationships with an increasing number of patients, care-givers and the public, who are committed to making a difference to other cancer patients and their families
- Having a greater presence and visibility at many more public engagement and community events, spreading cancer awareness to people who are less likely to hear these messages
- Clear and committed leadership from WCA's management team who set expectations that people and communities will be involved in our work
- Capacity building within the team around this agenda
- Support from [Involving People](#), a voluntary sector organisation, who provide us with independent advice around meaningful public and patient involvement
- Better connections with the Dorset and Hampshire Isle of Wight Integrated Care Boards as well as wider statutory and voluntary sector partners who help us link to communities



What we said we would do

Increase our reach and engagement with the public and our partners, via our website and social media

What we have achieved

We share a fortnightly bulletin that goes to more than 50 organisations involved in cancer care and support across Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight. We also produce a monthly Primary Care Newsletter and a quarterly Cancer Workforce bulletin.

We started to create a social media presence in 2020 and our followers and engagement has continuously grown, for example, to 934 followers on [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#) with an average of 5.9K impressions every month and engagement of approximately 5% each month. In the last year on [LinkedIn](#), we have seen in excess of 819 reactions to our posts with 749 page views from 306 unique visitors. In this time period, we have doubled our number of followers and currently have 530; the most followers out of all the South East Cancer Alliances.

In 2021 we created [Cancer Matters Wessex \(CMW\)](#), our patient, care-giver and public facing website. It features the Cancer Care Map, who host details of a wide range of local and national support services for cancer patients and their supporters.

CMW hosts important information about fast track referrals. In Dorset we use the GP IT system to send this to every patient who needs it. It is a place to share videos for the public too, for example, to support the launch of the new Targeted Lung Health Checks.

Visits to CMW have increased each year, now achieving about 3500 visits a week. We have and continue to seek people's feedback on it to improve the information and the site's navigation. People tell us that they find the information useful on the most visited pages.

Our [Youtube](#) channel now hosts over 100 videos that support our workforce development and public and patient messaging, including patient information in British Sign Language.

We have been improving our website and pdf accessibility. We have [Easy Read information](#) on CWM and produce some of our key leaflets in this format.

Our newest creation is our CMW [Facebook page](#) and we are increasing our followers to this.



What we said we would do

What we have achieved

Improve stakeholder satisfaction with Alliance communications

Our fortnightly bulletin has over 340 recipients with an average readership of 55%.

We are a member of the National Cancer Communications Network, the South East Regional Network, as well as the Dorset and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board communications network meetings. These include communication and community teams from our local hospitals, police, fire and councils. Our presence at these meetings has ensured that we have good connections with national and local communications teams. This has led to more shared learning and resources (for example, Ovarian Cancer campaign videos, templates from other Alliances and we have shared artwork in return). It has also led to more awareness of the work we do and has allowed more people to contact us directly.

Improve media coverage around cancer services

Since 2019 [Communities Against Cancer](#), funded by WCA, has worked with under-served communities to undertake cancer awareness raising activities that have reached over 7.2 million people. One of which included a BBC Breakfast feature.

In addition we have conducted several radio interviews with Greatest Hits Radio and Radio Solent, and had coverage in a national women's magazine. We now have better links with local and regional journalists.

Members of our team, including managers and clinical leads, have undertaken media training to allow us to field more media opportunities.

Increase confidence in the team to undertake patient and public involvement

From a limited amount of patient and public involvement in 2020, undertaken by Involving People on our behalf, primarily around early diagnosis, we now have an ever growing number of PPI activities across our programmes and projects.

We ran a 6 month "Empowering Engagement development programme" for WCA team members to grow their confidence to undertake PPI.



What we said we would do

Improve the reach of patients, care givers and the public that are involved in activities, and people's satisfaction in getting involved

What we have achieved

In 2021, working with Involving People, we established a patient, care-giver and public involvement Steering Group of 13 people and a wider network of around 20 people. The Steering Group are increasingly involved in shaping how we go about our engagement activities, and they and the Network get involved in giving their views on specific activities.

Recognising that we need to engage with a diverse range of communities, we have worked in partnership with a number of other organisations to help us do this:

- Action Hampshire support us through the delivery of [Communities Against Cancer](#), a programme of cancer awareness training and grants provided to a wide range of seldom heard groups.
- Help & Care strive to improve health and care outcomes in the communities they serve, including through [Involving People](#). As well as supporting our Steering Group, facilitating relationships with Healthwatch in the region and other bespoke support projects, they have partnered with us, Macmillan and Bournemouth University to understand the [needs of disabled and neurodivergent people](#). This work has gained a lot of attention, with the project's community researchers being invited to an All Party and Peer Review at the Houses of Parliament, and the presentation of a digital poster at the 24th International Conference on Integrated Care. Help & Care are now working with us on the [Trans Aware Cancer Care project](#).
- [Macmillan Cancer Support](#) and [Wessex Cancer Support](#) connect us to cancer support groups, patients and care-givers, as well as provide other valuable insight and support.



What we said we would do

Improve outcomes from WCA projects as a result of better communications and patient, care-giver and public involvement

What we have achieved

- Communities Against Cancer has raised cancer awareness to millions of people who need to know this information
- Black men and black-led community groups have spread awareness of their higher risk of prostate cancer to many more people in their communities
- A service name changed to the Rapid Investigation Service and is more accessible because of patients and care-givers' feedback
- Patients and care-givers were at the heart of shaping the Right by You service, that has transformed patient experience in cancer care
- Hearing the experiences of cancer services directly from children, teenagers and young adults and their carers led to some 'quick fix' improvements and will shape future practice
- Cervical screening uptake improved in Dorset as a result of sending video text messages to those not responding to their invitations

Cervical Screening Video Texting Pilot

The aim of this project was to encourage people who had not responded to their last three invitations for cervical screening to book an appointment with their GP practice sooner rather than later. The campaign involved sending a text message with a link to a video that explained the cervical screening procedure and was introduced by two nurses. As a result of this campaign, we saw a 9% increase in uptake.

- [Read the full evaluation here.](#)

What we still need to do

We know there is more to do, especially to improve the quality and consistency of our communications and how we involve people early in our thinking.

We commit to becoming a Health Literate organisation to improve the clarity of our communications and information. We also need to continue to improve our accessible formats, including Easy Read and British Sign Language.

We are also determined to reach out to and involve more people who have poorer cancer outcomes and are less likely to have a voice in decision-making. We will use data to drive more targeted communications and involvement activity to address inequalities in access, outcome and experience and make best use of our resources.

We will get better at sharing our patient insight and intelligence across our team and partners so we can all make best use of it, to inform what we do and make a difference.

It is important that we get better at monitoring our involvement activities to ensure they are meaningful and of a high standard; that we learn from each experience so we improve every piece of work we do. We need to share the difference people's involvement makes to our work and outcomes for patients, carers and the public.

This review of our Communications and PPI Strategy is the first step to developing a new one in the coming year.

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