



**Waltham Forest
Clinical Commissioning Group**

Communications Strategy

2015 - 2018



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1 Foreword

Good communication is at the heart of a well-functioning Clinical Commissioning Group. First and foremost, we need to listen to and engage with our local community, the residents of Waltham Forest. Many aspects of the CCG's communication are discussed in our separate Community Participation Strategy and these two documents should be read together.

This document focuses on how we communicate within our organisation; with our partners in health and social care; and with the wider community. Our objective is to improve communications with our GP member practices and staff; and with our external stakeholders such as Waltham Forest Council, MPs and provider organisations.

Communication is a 'two way street': it is not just about informing people of what we are doing, but also about listening to stakeholders and collaborating closely to improve the delivery of local health care services and ensure value for money. This will help avoid duplication or gaps in service provision and make sure that we focus on the areas of greatest need.

The key to successful communication will be finding the most effective methods to keep everyone informed and to receive feedback. This strategy lays out our current plans. We would of course welcome your ideas and would be delighted to hear your suggestions.

The Communications Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Community Participation Strategy.

With best wishes,

Alan Wells OBE

Deputy Chair and Lay Member for Governance

2 Where are we now?

Our previous communications strategy for 2013 – 2016 was developed when the CCG was first formed. It was focused on building strong relationships with our stakeholders and making sure they were always up to date, fulfilling our statutory communications responsibilities (such as responding to Freedom of Information requests), providing communications and engagement support to CCG staff, forward planning, working flexibly and ensuring the communications function is proactive.

Two years on we have had many successes, including the recent re-launch of a more patient-focused public website, and establishing a range of channels that help us communicate and engage with different stakeholder groups on a regular basis. They are:

Audience	Channels of communication
Patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCG reference group (local residents who meet every two month to review CCG policies and strategies) • CCG rapid feedback group (local residents who provides email feedback) • Focus groups and workshops • Healthwatch newsletter¹ • Maternity Services Liaison Committee (patients who advise on maternity services) • SMS messaging through GP practices
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public website • Press releases • Publications, such as flyers and posters • Awareness outdoor advertising campaigns • Public events, such as the annual general meeting
GP and practice staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP website • Email briefings • Monthly e-bulletin • Monthly locality meetings • Monthly training meetings • Practice manager's forum • Practice nurse's forum
CCG staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email briefings • Monthly e-bulletin • Staff meetings • Centralised filing system of key communications resources and information about CCG work

¹ We would like to extend our thanks to Healthwatch for their support in disseminating key CCG information

Audience	Channels of communication
Other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing papers for and attendance at Health Scrutiny Committee meetings • Briefing papers for attendance at Health and Wellbeing Board meetings • Email correspondence and meetings with local MPs and councillors • Email correspondence and meetings with Waltham Forest Council • Email correspondence and meetings with healthcare provider organisations • Email correspondence and meetings with neighbouring CCGs • Email correspondence with NHS England and Department of Health

There are also areas where our communications need to improve. A recent evaluation highlighted that communication to GPs in Waltham Forest could be much better, and more support needs to be given to CCG staff to ensure messaging about the CCG's work is clear and consistent.

This revised strategy has considered the changing needs of the CCG and our stakeholders, and builds on those areas where there are opportunities to make improvements.

3 Our objectives

- Key stakeholders will know what we're doing, and the CCG will be seen as the local healthcare leader
- Staff and GPs will have access to the information and communications and engagement support they need to do their jobs well
- Patient and public engagement will be innovative and delivered in line with the NHS Constitution
- The CCG will have communications and engagement support to improve the health outcomes of our local population
- Communication and engagement projects will be delivered in line with our statutory responsibilities
- Work will be managed proactively and urgent issues will be dealt with effectively

4 Opportunities for improvement

4.1 Improve current communications platforms

We will improve current platforms, including the GP website, to ensure they are all clear, engaging and accessible.

4.2 Establish new communications platforms and processes

We believe that the following additional platforms and processes are required to communicate more effectively with our stakeholders. These are:

- Mailing list and newsletter for patients and key stakeholders
- A platform for communicating regularly with voluntary and community organisations
- Staff intranet

- Formalised processes for communicating regularly with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Local Medical Committee and Adult and Child Safeguarding Boards
- The use of social media will be reviewed and introduced if we believe it will provide tangible benefits to the community

4.3 Improve coordination of communication channels across the CCG

In the past, some communication platforms have been managed by the communications team, with others (such as GP locality meetings) managed elsewhere in the organisation. We will improve governance structures to ensure the communications team is involved with all key communications platforms and there is consistent messaging across them.

4.4 Embed high quality communication across the organisation

We have developed a central communications resource to ensure that CCG communications on key work streams are consistent. We will do further work to embed the use of this resource throughout the organisation, and ensure the materials are updated regularly. This will help ensure that messaging is aligned across all our channels.

We will also provide more guidance to staff on how the communications and community participation function can support them, and highlight processes for day-to-day communication with stakeholders, such as emails to CCG staff and GP practices.

4.5 Review governance and resources

We will review the resourcing and governance arrangements within the communications and community participation functions to ensure they are robust, that new channels are of a high quality and that the team is working as effectively as possible.

We will ensure the communications and community participation functions are aligned and work together to develop plans that support staff within the CCG, and the local community, and is able to address the following challenges:

- the CCG's new responsibility for commissioning GP services
- delivering the Transforming Services Together transformational change programme
- addressing pressure on A&E services
- increasing demand for communications and engagement support as our newly formed organisation develops and undertakes larger and more complex pieces of commissioning work
- introduction of the NHS England accessible information standard

5 Evaluating the strategy

Once the strategy has been approved, an action plan for 2015-2016 will be devised to help deliver it. At the end of every year progress will be reviewed, and the strategy itself will be refreshed if required.

We also want to make sure that we are communicating with people from as many groups as possible, whether or not they have one or more of the 'protected characteristics' described in the Equality Act 2010. (These protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.) Given our commitment to

this, we will consider the impact that this strategy is having on different groups and take any action that is required to ensure no group is adversely impacted.

6 Conclusion

Good communication is at the heart of any well-functioning Clinical Commissioning Group. Through this strategy we hope to improve all forms of communications at Waltham Forest CCG so that we can support the CCG in delivering its vision, its objectives, and the tenets that lie at the heart of the NHS.

We want this strategy to be successful and positive for everyone it impacts and will follow the principles we have outlined in order to achieve this. We will monitor our progress carefully to ensure that we are achieving our objectives.

Most of all, we hope to hear your feedback and suggestions. With your help we know we can improve our standards of communication to the level that the organisation and our stakeholders deserve, and maintain those high standards on an ongoing basis.

**To request a copy of this document in another format or language, please contact:
communications@walthamforestccg.nhs.uk**

Appendices

Appendix A Information on Waltham Forest CCG

NHS Waltham Forest Clinical Commissioning Group became the new statutory leader for commissioning local NHS services from the 1st of April 2013. CCGs are different from previous health organisations in that they are led by GPs and other clinicians to help ensure that services reflect local patients' needs. Having leaders who have clinical expertise and maintain close contact with patients offers great potential to make improvements in health and social care for local people. The CCG's commitment to community participation will also help improve health and social care for the residents of Waltham Forest.

It is essential that the CCG communicates well with its residents and its stakeholders in order to achieve our vision. This vision is: *'we will put patients at the heart of everything we do and use our joint experience to improve the delivery of local health care and ensure value for money.'* Through effective communication we also want to support our organisation in achieving its objective.

Our objective is to improve the health outcomes of our local population through the effective commissioning of high quality services by:

- meeting our statutory requirements;
- being clinically led;
- strengthening collaboration with WEL/WELC (our partners in East London and the City) and local providers; and establishing commissioning arrangements;
- improving the patient experience across all services; and
- involving patients, communities and hard to reach groups.

This strategy sets out how we will establish formal communications pathways that will support the CCG to achieve these aims.

It provides a guide for staff, GP member practices and everyone with an interest in working with us. It is part of our approach to working in partnership and our aim to bring the best of modern healthcare to local people.