



Communication and Engagement Strategy 2023 - 2025

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Strategic Lead.	Head of Strategic Planning and Performance.
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Contents

1. Communication and Engagement – Introduction	3
2. Background	3
2.1. The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014	3
2.2. Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.....	3
2.3. National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes.....	4
2.4. National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2004.....	4
2.5. NHS Staff Governance Standard	4
2.6. Co-production.....	4
2.7. National Standards for Community Engagement	4
3. How will the IJB Communicate and Engage?	5
4. Our Communications and Engagement Activity.....	5
4.1. Publicity.....	6
4.1.1. Newspaper and Radio	6
4.1.2. Social Media and the Website	6
4.1.3. Staff Engagement and Communication	6
4.2. Consultation	6
4.2.1. Orkney Opinions.....	6
4.2.2. Joint Consultations	7
4.2.3. Specific Questions.....	7
4.2.4. Social Media	7
4.2.5. Patient Public Reference Group	7
4.2.6. Person Centred Care.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3. Summary.....	8
5. Communication and Engagement Groups.....	8
5.1. The Orkney Partnership Board.....	8
5.2. Service User Focus Groups	8
5.3. Staff Communication Groups	9
5.4. Patient Participation Groups.....	9
6. What Happens Next?.....	9

Note: Links are included to several websites where you can find more information. They are highlighted in blue, [like this](#).

1. Communication and Engagement – Introduction

In 2014, the Scottish Government [introduced an Act](#) that required local Councils and NHS Boards to work much more closely together, delegating some of their services, such as social work and community health services, to a new organisation, called an Integration Joint Board (IJB).

IJBs are responsible for planning what community health and social care services the area needs, and how those services can be better delivered, making sure they are more “joined-up”.

The IJB wants to make sure that everyone in Orkney, especially the most vulnerable, are heard. This means working with our partners who deliver services, Orkney Islands Council (OIC) and NHS Orkney (NHSO) making sure they are involving people who need to use services, their families, their carers, staff, the Third Sector, and other key partners, to help us make decisions about community health and social care services.

We know that people who better understand services, how they are delivered, and feel their voice is heard, are far more likely to feel satisfied with those services.

Making sure that everyone has a voice is known as **Communication and Engagement**, and this Strategy is designed to guide the work of the IJB over the next two years in how it communicates and engages with all its partners, especially the wider Orkney community.

This strategy sits alongside the Communication and Engagement Strategies of OIC, NHSO, and [The Orkney Partnership Board](#), who are Orkney’s Community Planning Partnership.

2. Background

There are several Acts, passed by the Scottish Government, that tell IJBs, as well as many other public authorities, how and when they should communicate and engage with their partners and the wider public. Please click on the links below if you wish to read more about these acts and how they affect communication and engagement.

2.1. The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014

This is the [Act](#) referred to in the Introduction, above, which led to the formation of the IJB. This Act describes how health and social care services should be planned more effectively and includes aspects of communication and engagement.

There are several other Acts, local and national policies, and official guidance, which tell IJBs to communicate and engage with the public.

2.2. Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

This [Act](#) gives community organisations the power to own and control some land and buildings that were previously owned by local councils and other public authorities. It also strengthens their voices in decisions about public services.

The [Orkney Partnership Board](#) leads on this work, here in Orkney. They have produced a [Local Outcomes Improvement Plan](#) (LOIP), a document that describes what the member organisations of the Orkney Partnership Board aim to achieve by working in partnership, over-and-above what could be achieved by working as individual organisations.

2.3. National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

The [National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes](#) are Scottish Government's description of what health and social care partners should be attempting to achieve through the integration and, ultimately, improvement of services.

There are 9 Outcomes, in total. Outcome 8 concentrates on engagement: 'People who work in health and social care services feel engaged with the work they do and are supported to continuously improve the information, support, care and treatment they provide'.

2.4. National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2004

This [Act](#) describes how NHS Boards must engage with local communities when shaping local health services. This applies to every part of NHSO, including those areas of NHS services that are not the responsibility of the IJB.

2.5. NHS Staff Governance Standard

This is the [NHS policy](#) that describes how NHS staff should be managed and, importantly, how they feel they are managed. The policy specifies that all staff are entitled to be:

- Well informed.
- Appropriately trained and developed.
- Involved in decisions which affect them.
- Treated fairly and consistently, with dignity and respect, in an environment where diversity is valued.
- Provided with a continuously improving and safe working environment, promoting the health and wellbeing of staff, patients, and the wider community.

2.6. Co-production

Co-production is where professionals, like the NHS and the local council, and people share power to plan and deliver support services together, recognising that both partners have a vital contribution to make. Further information on co-production can be found at the [Scottish Co-production Network](#).

2.7. National Standards for Community Engagement

The Orkney Partnership Board has written [guidelines](#) for how local organisations should communicate and engage with people here in Orkney; all IJB consultations are based upon these guidelines.

Included in the guidance are the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#), a description of how public organisations, such as the local council or the NHS, should communicate with their local community. Here are the seven standards:

Impact: We will assess the impact of the engagement and use what we have learned to improve our future community engagement.

Communication: We will communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement.

Methods: We will use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.

Working together: We will work effectively together to achieve the aims of the engagement.

Planning: There is a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on a shared understanding of community needs and ambitions.

Support: We will identify and overcome any barriers to participation.

Inclusion: We will identify and involve the people and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement.

3. How will the IJB Communicate and Engage?

Several years ago, we put together a set of principles which would be at the heart of our communication and engagement activity, and we feel they are as relevant today as they were a few years ago. Those principles are:

- Good communication is everyone's responsibility - from the Chief Officer to their respective front-line staff.
- This needs to be a two-way process: it is important to seek and listen to the views and opinions of the public and staff.
- Communication and engagement activity will be focused, targeted and relevant.
- Communication should be timely, with information quickly communicated once available.
- Communication will be proactive, open, and transparent.
- The language and format used to communicate and engage will be right for the target audience. In most cases this means in plain English and jargon free.
- Written materials will be made available in formats that are accessible to all.
- Staff have a right to be well informed and have the opportunity to provide views, ideas, and other feedback.

4. Our Communications and Engagement Activity

The way we communicate and engage needs to evolve over time, reflecting changes in the way people expect to be informed, find information for themselves, and

provide us with feedback. This is especially relevant following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it prevented people seeing each other in person.

4.1. Publicity

4.1.1. Newspaper and Radio

Traditional media, such as newspapers and the radio, remain important, perhaps more so in Orkney than elsewhere. We work closely with the Communications Teams at both OIC and NHSO and will continue to look for opportunities to issue press releases, undertake interviews, and promote the work of health and social care services in The Orcadian and on Radio Orkney.

4.1.2. Social Media and the Website

As a result of the pandemic and, especially, lockdown, many people have become used to meeting, and using social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Tik-Tok, using their laptops, tablets and smartphones. This provides a great opportunity for the IJB to reach a wider number of people, as well as offering a valuable opportunity for people, communities and organisations to provide feedback.

The [Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership](#) section on the OIC website, with links from the NHSO website, provides information including case studies, news items and video content, and is updated on a regular basis.

We are also increasingly using video, filmed and edited in-house, and shared on social media channels, to highlight the positive impact of services commissioned by the IJB on people across our community.

Since March 2015, OIC has provided the opportunity for people to [listen to meetings](#), including the IJB and the Performance and Audit Committee, held in the Council Chamber. This is known as audio casting.

Audio casting gives people the opportunity to listen live to meetings, as they happen, helping people to understand the policy and decision-making process, and giving people a greater understanding of the work of the organisation. There is also a listen-again facility available on the Council website, which is available for one year after the original recording.

4.1.3. Staff Engagement and Communication

Almost all communication with staff across both OIC and NHSO is via email. Whilst rare, there are still some groups of staff who do not have access to secure NHSO or OIC email accounts, and are contacted through postal services, or through noticeboards.

4.2. Consultation

4.2.1. Orkney Opinions

The IJB has been a consistent user of Orkney Opinions, OIC's public consultation group, whose volunteer members are consulted when a range of views is sought on

a given topic. Both the numbers of responses, and the quality of those responses, were consistently high.

Unfortunately, Orkney Opinions has been on hiatus for just over a year. The IJB has been pushing to reinstate Orkney Opinions, as soon as possible, as it became a 'go-to' method of reaching a wide range of people in Orkney and will continue to do so.

4.2.2. Joint Consultations

It has become clear over recent years that people are increasingly suffering from 'consultation fatigue', where they are tired of being given the opportunity to have their say. To tackle this, some consultations have run alongside those from other services, giving the public the opportunity to contribute to several consultations at the same time.

For example, we have used information obtained for the NHSO Clinical Strategy, and have used responses to the Isles Wellbeing Survey, when writing our new Strategic Plan.

4.2.3. Specific Questions

Experience in recent years has demonstrated that people are more likely to respond to specific questions that directly affect their health and social care needs. For example, responses to requests that people read a document and "have their say" have seen a poor level of response. However, a question asking people to rate their health and social care priorities, based upon a list of Orkney Health and Social Care services, delivered a much higher level of engagement.

4.2.4. Social Media

It has been some years since the trial of a Facebook chat was held as part of the consultation on the Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership's Strategic Plan, using the OIC Updates Facebook page. The response during the live discussion, and subsequent feedback, suggested this was popular with the public.

This method has been trialled elsewhere at OIC, with more limited success. However, NHSO has continued with several similar events, so this will be considered, once again, as a suitable way of reaching people.

4.2.5. Patient Public Reference Group

The Patient Public Reference Group was set up to ensure that staff, patients and their carers, as well as the wider public, are involved in the development of health services.

The group is made up of members who represent a wide range of patients, carers, members of the public, voluntary organisations, and community council representatives. Each member brings to the group particular knowledge or expertise. They are also able to seek advice from and consult with groups, organisations, networks or individuals when they feel it is relevant.

4.3. Summary

Our communications and engagement activities need to be relevant to people and their lives. They will help people to better understand the arrangements for integrated community health and social care, as well as the differences these arrangements are making, and will reassure people that excellent community health and social care services continue to be provided, throughout Orkney, under the oversight of the IJB.

Through our engagement and communication activities we will:

- Discuss what areas of community health and social care matter most to people.
- Help ensure people are able to influence their own health and wellbeing and contribute to the improvement of services.
- Support measures to ensure people are helped to live at home, or in a homely setting, for as long as they want.
- Explore ways to get people involved.
- Enable people to engage with health and social care providers, and all associated community planning partners, to help improve and transform services,
- Try to give a voice to all in our community – we will work hard to communicate with seldom-heard groups or individuals.
- Provide feedback on the impact of their engagement with us and how their views have been considered.
- Recognise ‘consultation fatigue’ amongst people in Orkney by working with OIC, NHSO, other public authorities and the Third Sector to deliver co-produced consultation and engagement, wherever possible.

5. Communication and Engagement Groups

There are several established local groups which communicate and engage with the public, elected members and IJB members, as well as the Health Board and health and care services.

5.1. The Orkney Partnership Board

As we mentioned above, the Orkney Partnership Board leads on communication and engagement in Orkney. This is overseen by three delivery groups, two of which have elements of health and care services provided in Orkney. The groups engage with a wide range of people and organisations, including IJB members, OIC, NHSO, people who use services and the voluntary sector, to ensure they can meet their priorities, aims and outcomes.

5.2. Service User Focus Groups

These groups are set up in specific locations, such as care homes, with the aim of engaging with residents or people who use the services, their families and carers, and provide an opportunity to contribute to changes in the delivery of services.

5.3. Staff Communication Groups

The IJB has established a Joint Staff Forum, involving trade unions from both OIC and NHSO, which is jointly chaired by the Chief Officer and both staffing representatives on the IJB, which meets quarterly. NHSO has an Area Partnership Forum involving union representatives, and an Area Clinical Forum involving clinical staff. OIC also has monthly meetings with Trade Unions and members of the Corporate Leadership Team.

5.4. Patient Participation Groups

There are currently two groups set up in Orkney at Dounby and Heilendi GP Practices. These groups were set up to support and improve the services of their surgeries through patient engagement.

6. What Happens Next?

This updated Strategy sets out the broad aims for the IJB's communications and engagement activities. It will be reviewed and updated again in 2025.