

Communications strategy for arts projects in healthcare

What do you need to communicate?

Who needs to know, and how will you communicate with them?

Decide on the key benefit(s) to communicate:

- Enhancing buildings
- Improving staff morale
- Involving the community
- Engaging the media
- Adding an extra dimension to patient services

Decide on the best communication methods:

- Trust e-mail / intranet / website / newsletter / posters on notice boards (in liaison with Trust's internal communications)
- Arts newsletter or mailing
- Press release (in liaison with Trust's PR agency)
- Arts Council England e-mailing lists
- Local Arts in Health network
- Through an event, such as an open day, festival or conference

A memorable name and logo for the arts programme will help to give it an identity and will give clarity to communications

The wider community

- Involve community groups in projects and invite them to launch events
- Give talks about the arts programme to local groups such as Women's Institutes
- Start a mailing list for people who are interested in the arts project at the hospital
- Keep in touch with arts projects at other hospitals; you may be able to share information or even set up initiatives in partnership with each other
- Look for opportunities for arts projects involving the Trust's partner organisations such as the Primary Care Trusts and Social Services
- Start an arts newsletter or website to showcase your completed projects
- Look out for regional or national initiatives in the NHS and in the arts which you could contribute to

The press

- Decide which projects will make the best press stories— is the artist local? Is a community group involved? Does the project benefit a particular patient group?
- Research information for press releases
- In the release, focus on the benefits of the arts project and don't forget to explain where the funding comes from
- Provide any extra facts or information journalists need
- Set up photo opportunities
- Collect press clippings and send them to the project team and to key supporters

Funding / supporters

- Keep in touch with anyone who's given you funding or who might do so in the future.
- Invite funders to events and don't forget to send any feedback that is specifically requested (comments, photographs, press coverage, budgets, evaluations)
- Gather information on which funders are supporting arts and health initiatives elsewhere
- Look out for possibilities for support in kind

Hospital staff and volunteers

- Invite staff and volunteers to join the Arts Steering Group
- Keep in touch with staff using Trust e-mail, intranet, newsletter and posters on notice boards
- Build a mailing list of staff and volunteers with an interest in the arts
- Invite staff and volunteers to events within the Trust such as exhibition openings
- Alert staff and volunteers to arts events and opportunities outside the Trust
- Consult staff and volunteers on projects to enhance the buildings and to involve patients
- Give presentations to staff and volunteers about the arts project
- Make sure every artwork is labelled with information and contact details for the arts programme

Patients

- Match the artform to the patient group
- Think of ways to involve families and siblings
- Think of ways to involve patients in isolation
- Make sure you get consent for any photographs taken
- Familiarise yourself with the Trust's child protection and patient confidentiality policies
- Remember communications are two-way: ask patients for their feedback about arts projects
- Show ward staff how arts projects will fit into the ward routine

Build a wide support base

COMMITMENT AND EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT AN ONGOING DEVELOPMENT