



Communications Strategy

October 2013

Introduction

Hartlepool Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) has a statutory obligation to communicate and raise awareness of their activity.

Regulation 5 of the **Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006** sets out that the functions of the LSCB, include, *'communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so.'*

Stakeholder and wider public communications in an area as complex as safeguarding can present many challenges. However, if carried out effectively, it can have a significant impact in supporting the work of the HSCB.

This includes ensuring that partner organisations, are aware of safeguarding arrangements. It is also important that members of the local community have an increased understanding of the work that is being carried out to keep children safe.

HSCB will communicate with the following audiences:

- Parents
- Children and Young People
- The General Public
- HSCB Partner organisations
- NHS England Area Team
- Schools
- HBC Employers
- Voluntary Groups
- The media
- Other stakeholders

HSCB is responsible for ensuring that all agencies across Hartlepool work together to protect children and young people.

Communication between these agencies is key in ensuring the effectiveness in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people across Hartlepool.

Aims and Objectives

A sound understanding of how partners work together collaboratively to keep children safe is key to effective communications. The aims of this Strategy and all planned communications are:

- To promote the work of the HSCB and what the term 'safeguarding' means to the general public, children and young people of Hartlepool.
- To inform the general public (including children and young people) of how they can keep children safe and how to report or respond to safeguarding concerns.
- To ensure that the children's workforce across Hartlepool are aware of the work of HSCB, and the positive outcomes of this work.
- To highlight the need for HSCB Partners to promote the work of the Board.

Partners include:

- Hartlepool Borough Council Child and Adult Services
- Cleveland Police
- Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group; North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust; Tees, Esk and Wear Valley's NHS Foundation Trust
- Safer Hartlepool Partnership
- CAFCASS
- Cleveland Fire Brigade
- Barnardos
- National Probation Service
- Non HBC Education providers

By maximising these relationships and communicating through existing communication channels, HSCB will be able to circulate the message quickly and efficiently.

Communicating through member organisations and their networks can often prove a highly efficient way of sharing information and messages.

How to Communicate

Communication within or through HSCB (internal)

- Successful internal communications sets a precedent for good communication with external audiences.
- Communicating effectively internally begins with the members of the board and the work that members are doing to safeguard children and young people.

Communication through the Media

- Proactive press releases are to be issued to the media by HBC Press Office with regards to any work undertaken as a result of HSCB Board meetings. Promoting good safeguarding messages is key in raising awareness of work being undertaken in the town.
- Messages should include the emphasis on agencies working together for the benefit of children and young people in the town and how robust strategies are put in place to ensure the safeguarding of these children and young people.
- Reactive press releases or statements may need to be issued in response to negative coverage of safeguarding issues or where the media want a response on a particular issue. These can be avoided by planning a response to serious case reviews or individual cases at the earliest opportunity. On most occasions reactive press responses leave little time for member organisations to be informed of the response given, however agencies should be informed where appropriate at the earliest convenience.
- Articles for internal publications and/or intranet sites should be generic in format but quotes and contact information can be adapted for the different member agencies. This gives a uniformed approach with member agencies publishing the same information.
- Member agencies are encouraged to make links to the HSCB website on their own websites.
- Board members may have their own public relations team for their relevant organisation and are asked to remember their links to the HSCB when publicising any work that has not directly derived from the Board but is for the benefit of children and young people in Hartlepool.
- Board members are also responsible for ensuring that any appropriate information from the board is cascaded to people within their organisation and vice-versa should there be any relevant information from their organisation.
- Types of local media include; the Hartlepool Mail, Evening Gazette, Northern Echo, Darlington and Stockton Times, BBC Tees, TFM Radio, Real Radio, Radio Hartlepool, Tyne Tees, and BBC Look North.
- Other media outlets include websites, national media, journals and other relevant sector publications.
- Media opportunities can be presented in several forms and it is important to use every opportunity at the HSCB's disposal to ensure maximum exposure. Seasonal press opportunities such as the safeguarding around the increased activities for children in the summer

holidays, or big events such as Halloween and Bonfire Night can provide an opportunity to communicate key messages.

- Important timescales, milestones, and achievements can also be a good tool for promoting the work of the HSCB and in particular when highlighting any good practice coming out of Hartlepool.

Communication outside of HSCB (external)

- External audiences such as parents, carers, children, young people, local residents, and service providers should be made aware of the work that is taking place in the town to safeguard children and young people.
- Due to the different target audiences, several mediums would need to be used to get messages out into the community about the work of the HSCB. Information needs to be easily accessible and in a format and language suitable to the target audience taking into account the possible need for large print, audio, Braille, or translations.
- The HSCB also needs to communicate with other national statutory organisations and Government bodies and material should be adapted accordingly.

External messages include:

For children and young people

- Who to contact and what to do if they or someone they know is being harmed
- How the HSCB helps children and young people in Hartlepool
- How to keep safe throughout the year

For parents and carers

- How to protect your child or young person
- Which agencies can help you with parenting issues
- What is child protection
- For those involved, what are the child protection procedures
- Who to contact if a child is being harmed or harming themselves

For service providers aimed at children and young people

- How to access appropriate training and guidance
- Who to contact and what to do if a child is being harmed
- What are the procedures for child protection
- What is the HSCB and how is it helping the children and young people of Hartlepool

- How to deal with issues in relation to dealing with staff, children, and young people

For statutory agencies and Government bodies.

- Best practice from the HSCB in Hartlepool
- New procedures brought into place by the HSCB
- How the HSCB is communicating in Hartlepool

Generic

- What is 'safeguarding'?
- Why is it important to ensure the 'safeguarding' of children and young people?
- What is the HSCB and who is part of it?
- How does the HSCB fit in nationally?

Communication responsibilities within HSCB

- **Response to press enquiries** All press releases regarding the work of the HSCB should be sent via HBC, Public Relations Manager at Hartlepool Borough Council Press Office who will co-ordinate the dissemination to the media.

Partner organisations who mention the HSCB within their own press releases are asked to forward copy to HBC Public Relations Manager and the HSCB Business Manger to make them aware of the content.

Any media issues from Board meetings are to be forwarded to the Hartlepool Borough Council press office by a nominated representative.

With regards to Serious Case Reviews, a response will be drafted once the HSCB is aware of the outcome of a review and all board members should be made aware of the response and any implications it may have on their individual organisation.

Board members should co-ordinate any enquiries through Hartlepool Borough Council press office with regards to a Serious Case Review.

- **Response to paid advertising requests.** In response to paid advertising requests, a representative of the HSCB will be nominated to deal with all advertising enquiries.

Methods of Communication

There are several tools available which can help communicate effectively. It is important to choose the most effective method for the message and the audience. It is also important to make sure that the information being given by HSCB is consistent and easy to understand. The communication method selected affects:

- The impact of your communications with your target audience
- Timetabling:- different methods of communication require different levels of preparation and delivery time

Methods of communication to be considered include:

- Broadcast – TV or radio advertising and promotion.
- Print – includes leaflets, flyers posters and postcards, it might also include briefing documents and printed guidance.
- Online – includes websites, email, electronic bulletins, social networking sites and blogs.
- Other methods of communication – includes local newspapers and magazine opportunities, face to face meetings and newsletters.
- Stakeholder / Partner channels – the use of HSCB partners and stakeholders strong relationships with other important local groups, such as third sector and community bodies, working with children, and communicating through the existing channels in place.

The timing of communications

Well-timed communications are more likely to make an impact with your audience.

Communications will be either:

- Reactive – one off communications, often responding to an incident, outside of the HSCB's control, or
- Proactive – long term communications, such as a planned campaign.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation is essential for all communications activity as it helps to assess the effectiveness of different types of communication and the mediums used.

Media coverage can be evaluated in terms of the size of column inches that the HSCB received but this does not account for whether or not the target audience read, understood, and reacted to the coverage.

Qualitative and quantitative research can be undertaken before and after a campaign or branding exercise to determine possible changes in people's perceptions over a longer period of time.

Hits to a website, or increased calls to a dedicated phone number can also help to determine if a communications campaign has raised awareness.

A poll of board members opinions in relation to communications activity and the changes in the way the HSCB communicates internally may help to evaluate whether or not these changes have been positive.

The HSCB is urged to maintain this communications strategy as a working document and to adapt it where necessary year on year.

Branding

A brand gives an organisation an identity in which to raise awareness of its work both internally and externally. The HSCB brand should be used on all external publications and alongside member logos where appropriate.

For more detailed information on branding, please visit the HSCB Brand Book, available through HSCB.

Review and Audit

This strategy will be reviewed and audited annually by Hartlepool Safeguarding Children Board.