

The logo for the CIPR Pride Awards 2019 Gold Winner. It features the text 'CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019' in white on a black background, followed by 'GOLD WINNER' in large, multi-colored letters (pink, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple).

Category: Internal Communications Campaign

Company: Vale of Aylesbury Housing

Entry title: Step Up Step In

Brief and objectives:

Vale of Aylesbury Housing is a social landlord in Buckinghamshire, with almost 8,000 properties across a large area.

Following the discovery of some extreme mental health and hoarding cases, the Head of Customer Services identified a need to encourage early interventions around safeguarding. She streamlined the referral process and created a response team to manage incoming cases, but wanted to engage everyone as the eyes and ears of the business. She commissioned the Communications team to develop an impactful campaign that would drive the message that it was everyone's responsibility to respond to the clues that a resident wasn't coping, whether frontline or not.

Brief:

- Drive staff engagement with a new safeguarding referral process through an internal communications campaign

Objectives:

- Create an identity for the referral process for vulnerable residents, working within existing brand and style guidelines
- Deliver training sessions that would raise awareness of the issues facing some of the most vulnerable residents and options to help them
- Promote the referral system to all parts of the business through an official launch of the initiative
- Encourage staff to make referrals
- Create appropriate marketing materials that would act as an aide memoire.

The idea, research and planning:

We consulted with frontline employees to look at how the issue had been tackled before,

understand where the existing process had failed, and where clues to a problem had appeared but not been acted on. The campaign needed to drive the message that everyone, irrespective of role, had a part to play in taking responsibility for an issue that had previously only been shared with certain teams and departments. A shift in thinking was needed.

Delivering training to a diverse workforce, 30% of which are remote workers, was challenging, but the annual employee conference (managed and organised by the Communications team) presented the ideal opportunity, so the subject was incorporated as a workshop, led by the Head of Customer Service.

Research within the business revealed the need to make it easier to raise concerns directly with the right people, and share outcomes of reports more widely, especially for remote workers.

Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:

Communications developed the identity Step Up Step In (abbreviated to SUSI) for the project, which in itself was a call to action, including an easy-to-remember email address for direct referrals, particularly useful for remote workers.

The structure of the conference presented an opportunity to deliver harder hitting messaging than previous information on the subject, to ensure employees understood the seriousness of the issue, as well as what to look for. To achieve this, they advocated for the use of real-life footage showing a property in an extreme state, with hoarding, damage and long-deceased pets. Although distressing, the team felt that it was appropriate, and along with the Head of Customer Services put a case forward as to why it should be included. Despite some initial resistance by senior management, the footage was incorporated.

A second case study of a young woman who had been helped manage her hoarding made the session more hopeful, and emphasised this was not just an old person's problem.

Delivery:

Timing the workshop so that it was followed by free time meant employees had headspace to reflect on the workshop. The conference was held in Buckinghamshire Railway Museum, which facilitated networking, so employees could talk through what they had seen in the gardens and (literally!) let off steam on a train ride. As a result, the negative feedback senior management had feared did not materialise.

Bespoke pin badges of the SUSI logo and a wallet-sized card with details of what look for and how to make an internal referral were handed out to every delegate. They helped employees to see how they could make a difference once they were back in the office.

Following the launch, momentum was maintained by a series of posts on the company Workplace account and internal information boards, using #SUSI and #StepUpStepIn, reminding people of the process to report suspicions of welfare issues and running some case studies and success stories.

Measurement and evaluation:

- 260 badges and cards handed out to employees
- 88% of people attending conference rated the SUSI workshop “very good” or “excellent”
- 78% of people rated the conference as “very good” or “excellent”
- Positive feedback from senior management and Board
- On average, five referrals made through SUSI each month

SUSI has been so well received, we will be developing a SUSI ‘E-Learning’ module so the impact of the original session will not be lost. In just 12 months, SUSI has changed the way we work to better benefit our residents.

Staff comments included:

‘Olivia Jackson’s workshop with Bernard and Dee particularly stood out for me; very well organised and carefully crafted workshop’.

"An excellent presentation from Olivia Jackson and team."

"The best workshop was SUSI as it conveyed the point they were making very well and in a clear and concise way."

Budget and campaign impact:

The campaign was designed and delivered by the in-house Communications team, so costs were minimised.

Most of the costs for the launch of SUSI were absorbed within the annual employee conference.

The budget for SUSI collateral was £500.

The campaign raised the profile of an important issue in a compelling way. As a result, 62 residents are now getting help.

It also helped to strengthen our relationship with senior colleagues and encouraged them to involve us in other projects.

The Head of Customer Services said:

‘The Comms Team recognised the need to get this important message out to the staff in a way that changed words into action, so not just another Powerpoint presentation but one that really showcased the way forward for others to become more involved. I wanted to share what could only be described as a harrowing video. The help and professional support from the Comms team enabled this to happen in a constructive way’.

The campaign also received the support of the Chair, who asked for it to be delivered to the Board.