

Excellence Awards - 2021 Entry
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Entry ID: 9712

Third Party Authorization

Are you entering on behalf of, or in association with, any third party?: No

Basic Information

Category: 23. Best COVID response - FREE

Entry Information

Entrant company name: Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

Entry title:

Royal Free London: response to Covid-19

Entry

Brief, objectives and budget:

Our communications team is at the heart of the NHS response to Covid-19. We were one of the first four hospitals in the country to receive patients with Covid-19 in February 2020 and went on to play a pivotal role on the national and international media stage. Not only did we need to ensure recognition for the outstanding work of frontline staff, and showcase the NHS response in a time of crisis; but we had to not lose sight of our equally important role - to equip our staff and patients with vital information to help keep them safe.

One year on, we have told our story and the story of the NHS to millions. Through TV appearances such as the BBC Two Hospital documentary series and regular BBC and Sky News bulletins/special reports, we have given a crucial insight into the heroism of staff and bravery of patients and their families.

There was no budget. Our response has been led by our in-house communications team, committed to the hospital's world class values.

The idea, research and planning:

We separated our strategy into key areas:

1. Equip our staff with the information needed to do their jobs at a time of crisis, keep them safe and celebrate their success.

2. Showcase the NHS response to a global pandemic, arming patients with information and reassuring stakeholders about our approach.

This was broken down into clear objectives:

1. Deliver timely updates to every single member of staff, supporting them to do their jobs effectively.
2. Provide information, reassurance and public health advice to patients/local community.
3. Inform stakeholders and partners.
4. Tell the story of the NHS across the world.
5. Roll out our Covid-19 vaccination campaign to protect one and other and slow the spread of the disease.

Strategy, creativity and innovation:

- The potential negative impact of having to suspend services for patients was addressed by a clear campaign that helped ensure all patients understood how they could seek care.
- We worked closely with the local press to ensure that members of our community who may not see website or social media updates would still be aware of changes. We communicated regularly with stakeholders such as GPs and partner NHS trusts.
- Celebrating staff, promoting two-way communication. The new Good Deed Feed proved particularly beneficial, with hundreds of posts from staff celebrating the achievements of colleagues.
- The Royal Free Hospital opened one of the first hospital vaccination centres (8 December 2020). Since then, we have opened vaccination centres at all our hospitals with plans for a new mass vaccination centre. To support these centres, we have shared targeted messages with priority groups and organised VIP visits.

Delivery/implementation of tactics:

- A Covid-19 resource hub for staff, packed with key information, clinical guidance, FAQs and health/wellbeing resources.
- A daily e-newsletter to share essential updates quickly with 10,000+ staff across 70 sites. The email was stepped up during Covid-19 surges (we have now sent over 100 Covid-19 e-newsletters).
- Weekly 'Just Ask' sessions giving staff the opportunity to raise questions with our executive team and clinical leads. Hosted live on MS Teams, hundreds of staff attend each week.
- A wellbeing campaign with regular news stories signposting staff to support. A collaboration with the Royal Free Charity has helped us recognise staff with a series of thank you gifts.
- A Covid-19 vaccination campaign, featuring blogs from staff 'champions', regular news stories, comprehensive FAQ content and the opportunity for staff to ask questions or raise concerns.
- A 'Good Deed Feed' where staff can pay tribute to the work of their colleagues and celebrate success. Staff have also contributed blogs/vlogs detailing their team's response to the pandemic. This has opened up two-way communication, allowing staff to share thoughts and reflections.
- More than 500 covid-related media enquiries/requests to film in our hospitals. Working with journalists allowed our staff and patients could share their stories, and gave the public an honest portrayal of Covid-19. During the pandemic, the trust has featured in more than 22,000 media stories from outlets including BBC News, ITV News, The Times Saturday Magazine, Daily Mail, New Statesman, National Geographic and the New York

Times.

- BBC Two documentary Hospital, broadcasting eight hour-long programmes demonstrating the impact of Covid-19 and shining a light on our patients and staff. After our detailed proposal was approved by Number 10 and NHS England, camera crews filmed from day one of the lockdown when the virus was hitting its peak and returned later in the year as we headed into the second surge.
- In January 2021, the trust invited Sky News on site. A crew filmed over a four-week period, allowing both staff and patients to tell their stories. Part one was broadcast as a lead Sky News story, attracting millions viewers and accompanied by an online article which was seen by over 1m unique users. The film was also viewed by nearly 2m people across social media. Part two was also broadcast on Sky News, and viewed over 1m times on social media. An accompanying online item was read by nearly 1m unique users.
- A comprehensive suite of communication materials for patients: new leaflets, online information for patients/families, personalised text messages, FAQs.
- Regular stakeholder updates to keep 477 key stakeholders fully briefed: MPs, councillors, NHS partners, GPs, clinical commissioning groups, health scrutiny committees, patient representative groups.

Measurement, evaluation and impact:

- The 'Hospital' documentary was viewed by three million people, scooped the Edinburgh TV Festival award for creativity in crisis and was nominated for a Royal Television Society award.
- A video clip of our patient Nancy (Hospital episode one) recorded over 770,000 views on social media, while our tweets about the programme earned 1.8m impressions.
- Our website received 6.25m page views (+6%), with the Covid-19 hub visited over 190,000 times.
- Website homepage views up 7% compared to previous year (February 2020 – February 2021).
- Covid-19 intranet 'hub' visited over 80,000 times (February 2020 – February 2021).
- Intranet news viewed over 270,000 times (February 2020 – February 2021).
- Patient information shared via social media was accessed by a large audience. Our tweets earned 11.8m impressions compared to 3.3m the previous year (February 2020 – February 2021).

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information (images, artwork, clippings and other media):

Provided

Campaign image (if entering individual/team awards, upload headshot/team photo here):

Provided

Company logo:

Provided

Please write a 30 word entry summary in the third person:

The Royal Free London communications team share how they kept staff and patients informed throughout the crisis, and showed the world how the NHS responds to a global pandemic.
