

Basic Information

Region (Check Region):

North East

Category:

22. Best COVID response

Entry Information

Entrant company name:

South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

Entry title:

#TeamSTSFT COVID-19 response

Entry

Brief, objectives and budget:

To manage effective, reliable and timely communications for our patients, staff, stakeholders and the general public.

Our objectives were to:

- Keep our staff informed, safe and supported
- Keep our patients and the public informed
- Manage the unprecedented enquiries from media, stakeholders, staff and the public while working within a national NHS command and control structure
- Build public confidence in the NHS' ability to respond to COVID-19
- Challenge misinformation and act as a reliable source for COVID-19 guidance

Budget approx. £17K (allocated from outside of Team budget)

The idea, research and planning:

We quickly realised that in such a fast paced, unknown environment we needed to understand:

- What people needed and wanted to know
- What channels we had and what we needed to develop
- How we could cut through the 'noise'
- What support our staff, patients, stakeholders and wider network colleagues would need from us
- How we could effectively deliver everything asked of us within strict command and control

arrangements

- How we could galvanise national and media contacts to position the facts, build confidence in the NHS effort and control the narrative

Members of the team joined command and control meetings (Bronze – operational and silver – senior decision making), which were initially four times a day, seven days a week.

We also developed a communications network of peers from other local NHS Trusts and joined local authority, local resilience forum meetings and national NHS communications sessions.

Strategy, creativity and innovation:

We positioned ourselves as a critical function within the organisation and managed the flow of information from national sources and Trust management, while also providing a conduit for information / messaging to come back through the organisation.

Internally, our messages were clear and concise with no room for misinterpretation. It was vital that our busy staff had access to the most up-to-date information to help them do their jobs effectively.

We were quickly branded as the 'Trust Alexa' and had to develop expertise knowledge in areas such as PPE, infection, prevention and control and Government guidance in order to quickly answer the enquiries we received.

We developed a suite of video content at pace, positioning our Executive Team as trusted advisors and making them more accessible. Our Chief Exec held a number of sessions with staff via Facebook Live and MS Teams where he took questions live. Each session attracted on average 2.7K views.

A motivational "Thought of the Day" was also included in each staff update and included in 'comfort packs' to boost staff morale and promote good teamwork.

To ensure our staff had specific places to go to share experiences, find information and ask questions quickly, the team developed:

- a staff Facebook page
- intranet page
- staff website portal
- branded email inboxes

Externally, our messages were informative and easy to understand. The branding and colours we used were aligned with the Governments national campaign and resources. We also worked with local NHS and local authority partners to develop messaging that we knew would resonate with local people, such as the #DoYourBit campaign.

Delivery/implementation of tactics:

A range of tactics were employed, including:

- Daily internal communications
- A constant stream of COVID-19 messages via social media
- Regular stakeholder updates

- Media relations to challenge misinformation
 - Proactive PR with a regular stream of good news stories
 - Marketing collateral including, patient leaflets, posters, booklets, magazines, digital assets
 - Videos
 - Facebook live sessions with the Chief Executive
 - Comprehensive intranet hub and website portal
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Measurement, evaluation and impact:

Measurement:

- Produced and sent over 125 COVID-19 updates
- Delivered 600 graphic design requests
- Answered 738 staff enquiries
- Attended over 500 Bronze and Silver Command and Control meetings
- Generated 60,795 views on intranet portal. (In April 2020 at start of pandemic the page was viewed over 14,000 times which equates to almost a quarter of all visits during the year) and 196,446 visits to website staff portal
- Generated 11,784 views on the intranet Health and Wellbeing portal
- 307K visits to website, COVID pages viewed 13,160 times and COVID-19 maternity information pages viewed 11,382 times
- Produced eight patient leaflets with 1,749 downloads
- Produced 31 videos with Exec Directors (12,722 combined views on YouTube. Reach of 52K on Facebook group)
- Hosted six Facebook live sessions with CEO, resulting in 16.3K views
- 4.4K people joined staff Facebook group (50% of workforce)
- Return-to-work booklet sent to approximately 300 members of staff. Downloaded 112 times via the staff portal on website
- Produced five videos with consultants reassuring patients coming into hospital (2,431 YouTube views)
- Produced seven Infection Prevention and Control videos (2,760 YouTube views)
- Commissioned a videographer to produce:
 - one community infection prevention and control video for care home colleagues, (1,182 YouTube views)
 - four Maternity videos, including Health in Pregnancy, Water Birth, Preparation for Labour and Postnatal Care (43,014 YouTube views)
 - 19 refresher training videos for staff returning to practice during COVID-19 (5,505 YouTube views)
 - nine health and wellbeing videos for staff (1,231 YouTube views)
- Produced five vaccine videos for internal and media use (562 YouTube views and 1.7K reach on staff Facebook group. Produced several audio clips for BBC Radio Sunderland and BBC Radio Newcastle
- Issued eight stakeholder updates and 17 GP updates
- Delivered 691 Sending Love letters to patients on wards
- Responded to 312 media enquiries
- Issued 84 press releases
- 13,207,363 impressions, 576,121 engagements and 57,381 link clicks and 476,436 video views were generated across our social media channels

Impact

- 90% of staff said internal staff update was their main source of information.
- 87% felt well informed by Trust communication about COVID-19.
- 80% public satisfaction with Trust's COVID-19 response.

Engagement:

Comments from staff around our COVID-19 communications include:

“I really think you do a great job - the communications especially in March, April, May were fantastic compared with colleagues in different NHS trusts”

“I think you have undertaken a mammoth task during current times Continue to keep information available in different arenas like magazine Facebook etc”

“I'd struggle to give any areas of improvement for the team, to be honest. It has been a fantastic 'offer' to staff over the past 12 months, it has really helped, especially for those staff who have had to work from home for the duration.”

Supporting Information

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

Provided
