

Basic Information

Region (Check Region): North East

Category: 28. In-House PR Team of the Year

Entry Information

Entrant company name: South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

Entry title:

South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust #TeamSTSFT

Entry

Number of employees within the PR team and annual PR budget:

8.4 whole time equivalents (11 headcount)
£50k non-pay budget

Business objectives and analysis of team performance against budget over the last two years:

South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust (STSFT) appointed its first ever Director of Communications in the Executive team in April 2019.

Activity is focussed around four strategic objectives:

To improve internal communications and engagement focussing on health and wellbeing of 8,000+ staff

To support major NHS transformation projects ensuring public involvement (i.e. new Sunderland Eye Infirmary and reconfiguration of hospital services).

To increase stakeholder understanding of strategic priorities and grow confidence in STSFT following a period of significant change.

To build positive reputation and profile for STSFT and increased brand awareness to attract more staff.

Key performance metrics over past two years:

- 12% increase in staff feeling informed (69% in 2019 to 81% in 2021).
 - 80% staff awareness of Trust's Health and Wellbeing strategy in 2021.
 - STSFT amongst best nationally for equality, diversity and inclusion (88% of staff feel treated fairly at work in 2021).
 - Successful implementation of major (controversial) hospital changes.
 - Stakeholders 'expressly agree clinical services have improved'.
 - 30% of public feel services have improved during past two years.
 - 85% patient satisfaction during past year.
 - 80% public satisfaction with Trust's COVID-19 response
 - Reduction in nurse vacancies from 4.5% to 2.5% in March 2021
 - 74% increase in social media audience (now almost 30,000), 97% increase in impressions (now almost 30 million), 41% increase in engagement (now over 2 million), 1,332% increase in video views (now over 1 million).
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A brief overview of business / team strategy:

STSFT serves almost half a million people across South Tyneside, Sunderland, Durham and Gateshead, with many services spanning the whole region.

The team provides expertise in:

- strategy development
- PR campaign planning, delivery and evaluation
- media relations
- research and marketing
- stakeholder engagement
- social media / digital content planning
- issues and crisis communications
- reputation management
- corporate communication
- graphic design
- video production

Measurement and evaluation is intrinsic to our work. Quarterly performance reports are shared with the Board, resulting in increased appreciation, understanding and investment into the communications function.

The team also provides external support to other NHS 'clients' generating income of approx. £45k per annum which off-sets internal non-pay costs.

Simultaneously, this ensures a joined up approach and alignment of communications and engagement activities across the local health economy with less duplication and better value for money.

In addition to core 'business as usual' activities, during 2020, the team provided an all-encompassing response to the global pandemic, ensuring staff, patients and the public had the right information and advice about COVID-19.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

Director of Communications achieved CIPR Chartered Practitioner status in 2020 and

Executive Healthcare Leadership award from NHS Leadership Academy.

Head of Communications currently undertaking ILM level 5 in Leadership and Management and 2021 Common Purpose Global Leadership Programme.

All team members regularly access training, including courses such as crisis management, video training, google analytics and media law.

We are committed to continuous development and each team member has a personal development plan.

Recently recruited the region first NHS PR Apprentice and created other secondment opportunities to allow people to progress.

Director of Communications part of a national steering group which champions strategic role of PR in the NHS and is mentor to younger practitioners. She has written multiple articles sharing best practice and is professional lead for communications within local NHS footprint (providing support voluntarily).

A summary of recent outstanding achievements:

Our response to COVID-19 involved a herculean effort from the team:

- handling 312 media enquiries, 738 staff enquiries, 600 graphic design requests
- representation at command and control meetings (initially 4 times daily, including weekends)
- launching a Staff Facebook Group (4.4k members, over 50% of staff)
- producing 132 videos, 223 staff bulletins, weekly CEO/director updates
- creating a 'welcome back' pack for shielding staff
- rolling out staff vaccination with over 90% uptake
- marking 'One Year On' with surprise parcels sent to all staff at home including a commemorative print from a local artist, custom pin badge and CEO thank you letter
- Media features with Sunderland Echo, Shields Gazette and local BBC featuring our CEO and first COVID patient (36 pieces of coverage, 1.8 million audience reach, over 13,000 social media engagements)
- Themed staff magazine with special 'one year on' pull-out

In August 2019, we successfully communicated highly controversial changes to children's A&E and maternity services. Widespread awareness amongst the local community was critical to ensure people knew what to do. In maternity, over 400 babies have since been born in the new Midwifery-Led Birthing Centre, securing its longevity long-term.

The team has nurtured fantastic relationships with local, regional and national journalists, particularly during COVID-19. Highlights include:

- Daily Mail NHS hero feature
 - Sunday Times coverage about digital monitoring of care home residents
 - Championing men's mental health with Sky Sports News
 - Impact of COVID-19 on those with obesity on BBC Breakfast / News Channel
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A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

In March 2021 we unveiled plans to build an iconic new Eye Hospital in Sunderland. We were tasked with creating a public awareness and involvement campaign to garner support and ensure a successful planning application. Four connected strands of activity included both qualitative and quantitative methods:

- Online public engagement events
- Targeted equality focus groups and in-depth interviews
- An online survey
- A PR and social media campaign

Tactics:

- Microsite hosting a range of information in accessible formats
- Posters and leaflet advertising online events and QR code link
- Videos with clinicians, nurses, a young person, RNIB, and animation
- Targeted social media and digital advertising
- Engagement with over 900 people with sight loss
- Syndicated content shared with partners

Outputs:

Widespread coverage including BBC Look North, ITV Tyne Tees, BBC News online and 19 articles in regional media. Front page story in Sunderland Echo and lead feature on BBC Radio Sunderland.

- 9,500 microsite page views
- 3.5 million media reach
- Over 360,000 organic social reach (over 8,800 engagements)
- Over 74,000 paid social reach (over 7,500 engagements)
- Over 1,000 video views
- Nine online public engagement events (49 attendees)
- 336 survey responses
- 14 focus groups, 71 participants

Outcome

- Overwhelming positivity for new Eye Hospital.
- 92% of people welcoming plans, 94% happy to use new Eye Hospital
- Planning application successfully submitted in June 2021

Budget £15k

Supporting Information

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

Provided
