

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 25 JANUARY 2007

SOCIAL WORK COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise committee of the development of a communications strategy for the Social Work service.
- 1.2 To seek agreement from committee for implementation of the Strategy.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 An effective Communications Strategy is required to promote and improve communications throughout the Social Work Service in our dealings with staff, service users, other council services and partner agencies. The strategy has been developed in response to a number of key areas of service improvement outcomes highlighted through:-

- Staff briefings as part of the “Making a difference” process led by the Executive Head of Social Work.
- Consultation with Service Users.
- European Framework for Quality Management (EFQM) review of strategic self assessments of the social work service that included internal communication and consultation processes.
- The Council wide Best Value and Community Planning Audit.

2.2 An effective communications strategy will also support implementation of multidisciplinary working to meet requirements of local and national policies. These include the 21st Century Changing Lives Review of Social Work, Joint Future Agenda, Getting It Right For Every Child Proposals and the development of the Community Justice Authorities. Coupled with these are Council wide commitments to deliver Community Planning and Best Value and to evidence that we are continually improving the way we deliver our services.

3. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY PURPOSE AND AIMS

3.1 The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that we use our available resources effectively and efficiently. In this way we will keep our employees, service users and all other stakeholders informed of strategic planning and policy developments together with the important operational work we carry out to support some of East Ayrshire’s most vulnerable population.

- 3.2 The three key aims in establishing an effective and meaningful internal communication strategy and guidance procedures are to:
- Ensure that the views of our workforce is valued and wherever possible taken into account in the planning and delivery of services.
 - Actively seek out the views of employees when consulting and communicating directly on their day to day work activities.
 - Ensure all forms of communication will be clear, brief, well presented and understandable with “Plain English” used at all times.
- 3.3 Through staff briefings, 63% of staff indicated that better communication would have the single best impact on service improvement. The preferred route of communication for 75% of staff was through face to face team briefings at front line level.
- 3.4 The strategy will streamline and standardise the ways in which we communicate national and local policy and encourage a culture of transparency, openness and consultation. Better outcomes for service users will be achieved through better sharing of information and the use of a range of internal and external communication methods.
- 3.5 The strategy addresses:-

Why is Communication Important?

Only 50% of communication is understood the first time round. We therefore need to use a variety of communication methods based on the nature of the information we need to convey. Further, we must ensure the right information is available at the right time and in the right format to all those who need it. An effective communication strategy should:

- Help to minimise confusion
- Encourage constructive feedback on our services
- Help the Service to explain its policies, procedures and operational activities
- Make sure the Service is promoted in a positive light
- Build motivation and empower staff

Who Should communicate?

The need for two way communication at all levels is emphasised with constructive feedback equally important.

How Should We Communicate?

Team Meetings will be the central staff communication mechanism supported by other mediums including Briefing Papers and Intranet.

4. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy and legal implications.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Council has provided resources to develop information leaflets for Social Work.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The strategy will further improve internal and external departmental communications within East Ayrshire's Community Planning Partnership and in so doing support the core themes of the Community Plan.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Social Work Committee is asked to:-

- (i) endorse the draft strategy; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
EF/WB
January 2007
Enc (1)

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL
SERVICES

**DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL
SERVICES**

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FOREWORD

East Ayrshire's Department of Educational and Social Service's is committed to ensuring effective communication with all who have an interest in our services. We want to let everyone know that we deliver high quality social services by achieving our aims of **Protection, Partnership and Performance**.

This Communications Strategy for Social Services has been developed to promote and improve communications in our dealings with staff, service users, and other partners. The strategy is a response to a self-evaluation using the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), and consultation with staff through the Council Wide Employee Survey, Making a Difference Staff Briefings and a survey undertaken by Social Work Inspection Agency during an inspection of Learning Disability Services.

A number of national reforms evidence that we are continually improving the way we deliver our services. Some of these include the 21st Century Changing Lives Review of Social Work, Joint Futures The Child Protection Reform Programme, HMle self-evaluation frameworks and the advent of the new Criminal Justice Authorities. These, together with the council wide I commitment to deliver Community Planning and Best Value promote and highlight the importance of effective communication.

This strategy streamlines and standardises the ways in which we communicate. It encourages a culture of transparency, openness, consultation and the sharing of information using a range of communication methods. It is consistent with East Ayrshire's Council's Corporate and Community Planning policies and objectives.

Excellent two way communication will improve relationships, build trust, foster co-operation, enabling a skilled and competent workforce to meet the challenges of the 21st century. As a service we will be able to communicate our aims, priorities, policies, celebrate our successes, inform of significant events around staffing, service performance and developments and the emerging inspection agenda. So that everyone has a clear understanding of what we need to achieve, namely, to continually improve our services for our service users and carers.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and
Social Services

Jackie Donnelly
Executive Head of Social Work

PURPOSE

The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that we use our available resources effectively and efficiently. In this way we will keep our employees, service users and all other stakeholders informed of strategic planning and policy developments together with the important operational work we carry out to look after some of East Ayrshire's most vulnerable population.

Aims

The three key aims in establishing an effective and meaningful internal communication strategy and guidance procedures are to:

- Ensure that the views of our workforce is highly valued and wherever possible taken into account in the planning and delivery of services.
- Actively seek out the views of employees when consulting and communicating directly on their day to day work activities.
- Ensure all forms of communication will be clear, brief, well presented and understandable with "Plain English" used at all times.

Customer First Service Commitment

The Council has produced a policy "Customer First Service Commitments" which is available at every public access point in our buildings and on the Council website. The standards include:-

- Talking to customers face to face
- Telephone management
- Written correspondence and timescale for responding
- Complaints

A robust communication strategy supports social Services deliver on this commitment

INTRODUCTION

Why is communication important ?

Only 50% of communication is understood for the first time round. We therefore need to use a variety of communication methods based on the nature of the information we need to convey. Further, we must ensure the right information is available at the right time and in the right format to all those who need it. An effective communication strategy should:

- Help to minimise confusion
- Encourage constructive feedback on our services
- Help the Service to explain its policies, procedures and operational activities
- Make sure the Service is promoted in a positive light
- Build motivation and empower staff

Who should communicate ?

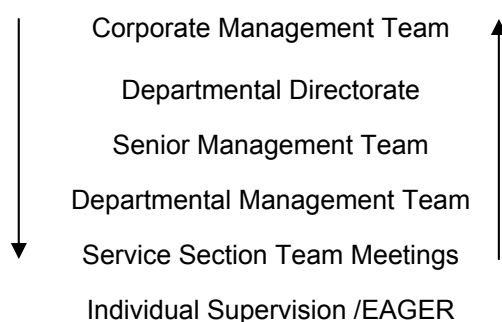
“People often think of communication as being speaking, listening and writing, but the reality is that everything you do communicates something to those around you.”¹

It is everyone’s responsibility to communicate effectively.

We use a variety of communication methods in order to carry out our daily work activities. This is usually through team meetings, with line managers, individual staff supervision, our colleagues in other council departments, service users and carers and inter-agency partners. We especially need good communication with all of our staff so that everyone has a clear understanding of all policies and services to enable them to fulfil the requirements of their job. Meeting the communication needs of our employees will directly improve the quality of our frontline service delivery. As a result our service users and carers should experience better service outcomes.

Communication is a two-way process. There are clear communication lines between the various levels of management. There is also a need for information to be effectively disseminated out to all staff. There also is a need to ensure that problems, concerns and complaints can be raised with line managers and addressed as near to the point of origin as is possible.

Communication should flow up and down the departmental structure this includes the Corporate Management Team, Senior Management Team, Departmental Management Team, Team Meetings, individual supervision and EAGER. As illustrated below:



¹ Improvement Network Web site <http://www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/>

It is also necessary to be clear about what the purpose of communication is , who the intended audience is and what the desired outcomes are. Gathering feedback on how we communicate is key to service improvement and therefore success , Appropriate channels are therefore essential for staff, service users and partners to respond constructively.

Creating an environment culture for effective communication is vital. Everyone has a responsibility for communication. Communicating clearly and effectively makes everyone's job much easier and more enjoyable. Such communication is the basis of effective teamwork. In some cases, such as Child Protection, it may even be the key to saving lives.

The prerequisites of excellent employee communication are openness, feedback, recognition, delegation and teamwork. To communicate well we should:

- clearly identify who we want to communicate
- take account of others' schedules, and respond to their communications on time
- explain ourselves clearly, professionally, and positively
- listen to what others have to say
- understand the communication needs of staff, service users and stakeholders
- give people the information they need and at the tight time
- give accurate information
- ensure communications arrive in the best form for the recipient, taking into account the appropriate use of language, method of communication and level of formality

Always think about how your communication will be received. Imagine what your response would be to receiving the message. Is this response what you are intending ? A "please", a "thank-you" and/or a "It is hoped this is helpful", or the offer of further discussion can make all the difference for the recipient.

Always re-read written messages to check if they could be misunderstood or misinterpreted. It is better to state what has to be, or will be done rather than what should not or will not be done.

How should we communicate ?

The more a message needs to change behaviours and win over hearts and minds, the more it has to be delivered face-to-face. It is often said “The Medium is the Message”. In other words the choice on how we deliver a message is just as important as deciding the content of a message. Some examples are suggested in the following table²:

Delivery Mechanisms	Examples
Face-to-face	Meetings, one-to-one meetings, team briefings, cascades and ‘walking the talk’.
Print-based media	Magazines, newsletters, circulars, briefing packs, letters and memoranda.
Electronic media	Phones, audio-conferencing, voice mail, fax, video and business television.
Computer	Email, bulletin boards, multimedia, web-conferencing, internet and intranets, corporate portals and instant messaging. (This can include print based media)

There are many different communication methods available to organisations. A summary of some of the standard and innovative ways of communicating with staff across the department is given in the table below.

Delivery methods	Explanation and examples
Fast news	A method of getting news onto everybody’s desk fast or at an agreed time, e.g. fax messages to multiple locations, forced messages onto PC screens and intranet home pages, global TV broadcast.
Face-to-face	A method of ensuring that everyone in the organisation can receive a face-to-face briefing on an important subject (often around change issues).
Instructional	A method for ensuring that instructions can be communicated and acted upon throughout the organisation, e.g. circulars or bulletins.
Other news and information	A method for the delivery and subsequent retrieval of all company news and information, e.g. newsletters, intranets and magazines.

² Taken from Improvement Tools – Communication, Improvement Network Web site <http://www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/>

Delivering effective communication

Team Meetings -

Departmental team meetings will be the central communication mechanism as this is considered to be the most essential two way channel for information and enable to staff provide feedback on service delivery. Currently there are regular meetings within some teams however not all employees are included. To allow effective communication with all employees a departmental team briefing structure will be put in place.

Team meetings may not cover all staff, especially for those without regular direct contact with their line managers, for example homecare workers. Written team-briefing documents will be provided for these employees. This will be more efficient than alternatives to achieve 100% coverage. Further guidance will be issued to include a meetings structure and associated advice on audit recording, and the types of items to be included on meetings agendas.

Core Briefings Papers / Staff Information Leaflet - Core team briefings will be prepared on specific issues for example public performance reporting, audits and inspections. These will be disseminated throughout the service.. In association with the core briefings employee information leaflets will be prepared. These will relate to specific items of interest, for example learning disability, and the annual standards and quality report. Managers will also have the opportunity to add any service specific information that they feel needs to be discussed and distributed to staff. This will give consistency in the messages being delivered across a dispersed workforce.

Briefings and staff information leaflets will be short and to the point – they will contain bulleted information that is current and authoritative.

Social Work Staff Newsletter - A quarterly social work newsletter will be introduced, providing information about national and local policy, service quality and performance reporting, training programmes, service awards, and staff survey results. The newsletter will be made widely available.

Staff involvement will be encouraged and key staff will be nominated to assist this aim.

Eastwords - To communicate to the other East Ayrshire employees we will utilise opportunities to publish articles in Eastwords. This is a different target group from internal social work communication and usually will be either a copy or modified version of information already provides to social work staff.

Council Internet Site – The internet provides ready access for staff, partners and the public to news and developments across Council services.

Social Work Intranet site - The Intranet provides up to the minute information on relevant policy and council activities which is easily accessible to all. It includes information about training and staff events

The 21st Century government initiative envisages the use of information technology to deliver public services and public information. It is characterised by citizen focus, a choice of means of access, convenience, effectiveness and continuous improvement. The development of the Internet and the Intranet are fundamental stepping stones to help us achieve these objectives.

Full use needs to be made of the intranet. Information about national and local policy, training programmes and Continuing Professional Development, minutes of meetings, reports, consultations, examples of good practices and information about our services will all be published through the intranet.

A protocol will be developed to promote consistent use of the intranet across all service areas. Provision for will also be included.

Global E-mail - Information prompts for employees will be provided, including direction to other communications as described above,.

Corporate Management Team Reports - Reports to Corporate Management Team enable Social Work to report on areas that have implications across the Council for example protection or supported employment. Reports will also promote achievements and service improvements.

Social Work Committee Reports - Regular reports will be provided to the Social Work Committee on key performance areas, inspection and audit outcomes (similar to present reports on finance and absence).

Partnership Group Reports - Regular reports will be provided to partnership committees on key performance areas. Specific reports will be provided for inspections and audits.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

External effective communication ensures communities and service users can make their voice heard and opinions known when policies are being developed. This requires us to have a clear understanding of the external communication needs, public performance reporting requirements and service user needs.

In order to promote continuous improvement service delivery communication mechanisms will be built into the regular management and planning cycles. Consideration of communication will be high a priority in all business and service plans.

We will make better use of a variety of other communication methods so that all of stakeholders are kept well informed of our service activities and how we plan to improve them. Methods used will use include the following:

Social Work Newsletter – A bi-annual social work newsletter will be introduced and will be circulated to the wider partner organisations. This will include information about performance and requests to assist in the evaluation of impact on service users and any given policy.

Headlines - the Council magazine is produced twice a year and is distributed to all postal addresses in East Ayrshire (over 55,000) and is also displayed on the website. This is therefore an effective means of communicating with the overall residential population of the Council area.

Planned Events, Photo calls and Publicity – the Corporate Communication Plan enables the Council to become more proactive in securing publicity for key service departmental initiatives. The plan lists all main publicity events for the forthcoming year.

Service Information Leaflets - The Regulation of Care Act requires us to provide information about our registered services to service users and carers. We need to extend our obligations to include the production of information leaflets on social work services as a whole and other services not yet required to register.

We will review the effectiveness of all publicity information and consider more efficient “house style” and cost effective way for producing this material.

Internet - The internet is one of the most powerful methods valuable to the departments to communicate to the wider public, partners and other organisations, our service users and carers. Regular updates on social work policy and performance and consultations will be made widely available. The Communications Working Group will develop a protocol to promote usage and consistency across the service areas.

Since the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act there is a requirement to publish all of committee reports, including Social Work. All of these, together with the associated formal minutes are now made available for any of our stakeholders to download.

Monitoring and Liaison Meetings - We need to ensure effective communication is supported through existing structures of meetings with external organisations. This will include service user forums, carers, contracted providers and partner organisations. Mechanisms for recording feedback require to be developed.

WIDER DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

The Executive Head of Social Work is a member of the Departmental Directorate and attends fortnightly meetings chaired by the Executive Director. This provides access, for example to information from the Corporate Management Team, or the opportunity to transmit the social services viewpoint to that forum. Equally importantly, it is an opportunity to represent social services interests to other departmental services and co-ordinate the wider work of the Department.

At the operational level it is of critical importance that there is excellent communication on all matters to do with protection. There are well-established procedures for this. It is every officer in the department's responsibility, irrespective of the nature of their work or its location, to deliver effective communication on all protection cases, and to quickly report any perceived defects in the systems. The hallmark of this communication is immediacy, accuracy and ensuring that the message is received.

Officers from social services have an open invitation to all Departmental working groups dealing with routine matters or service developments. This is either as standing members or on an ad hoc basis. These officers are expected to act as a main channel of two-way communication with their services and to influence any decisions taken in the wider interest. Conversely, it is anticipated that other departmental officers will be invited onto relevant social work groups to perform the same function. This is particularly important in promoting effective integrated services, especially for children. The Integrated Children and Young People's Service Plan and its associated processes is perhaps the clearest example of such an opportunity for co-operative planning and communication.

For the same reason, social work are represented within each of the nine learning partnerships. This opens the channel for communication in relation to operational and local area issues.

In parallel to this strategy, an equivalent exists for educational services. This latter strategy identifies a variety of meetings and mechanisms established to facilitate communication. The opportunity, and standing invitation exists therefore for social services officers to attend meetings of headteachers, early years heads, additional support needs heads, community learning and development, parents, children's forums, young people's forums and parents forums or any other grouping. This would be for the purposes of communicating policy developments or listening to the views of others on service developments.

Using the established departmental procedures, it is possible therefore for social work to quickly disseminate information to all households in East Ayrshire with a school-aged child. This can be done by e-mail to schools, or by leaflet distribution using the tried "school bag system.

PLAIN ENGLISH AND DIVERSITY

Part of the strategy will be to promote the use of Plain English in all written materials, in line with the Council's policies.

The Council's Customer First Service Commitment provides guidance in relation to Equal Opportunities and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. We will provide information that meets the needs of our employees and service users. Information will be provided in preferred formats, including video, audio and Braille and the language of the home wherever there is a requirement. By following the Council's service commitment we will improve the flow of information to staff and ensure improved access to information for all service users.

As part of this process all communication materials will contain contact details for further information, or assistance, to ensure easy access to the most up to date information for all staff and partner agencies

We will continue to ensure that all staff are fully aware of corporate policy through team meetings and individual supervision. Social services will make sure that all published material considers inclusion issues. Systems will be developed that specifically address:

- English is not a first language
 - Visual and Hearing Impairment
 - Presentation of material to support service user access for example for learning disabled service users
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INDUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES

In addition to the communications mentioned above the Council recognises that effective induction of new employees is important in achieving its objectives and the provision of quality services. The comprehensive induction programme ensures that all employees have a common understanding of the way the Council operates.

The programme involves four stages, Pre-employment, Corporate, Departmental and Job, with appropriate support materials provided at each stage to ensure their effectiveness.

The outcome of effective Induction for new employee will be;

- Awareness of the Council's commitment to the citizens of East Ayrshire and its employees.
- Know how the Council and its services are structured
- Be aware of the principal policies which support good personnel practice towards employees.
- Know their obligations in terms of the Council's Health and Safety policy.
- Be aware of the Council's Information and Communication Technology policies.

Pre-Employment

The Induction process begins when the first contact is made between potential employees and the organisation. In many cases, this will be when a job advertisement is placed and read. The Council's Recruitment and Selection Procedures include advice on recruitment advertising and will ensure that the Council will professionally represent itself in advertising posts, in details forwarded to, and interviewing of, prospective employees through the following stages:

- Advertising
- Information Pack
- Confirming Details for Interview
- Interviews
- Letters of Appointment

Corporate

Collective induction will be arranged for groups of new employees each month the aim being to provide employees with an overview of the organisation and encourage social contact between new recruits, thus creating a network of shared experience which can be extremely supportive. Employees are given the opportunity to ask questions on organisational issues, policies and practices.

Departmental and Job

This area applies to new employees and current employees moving into a different post. Induction schedules have been devised with the aim of decentralising induction to the workplace and establishing good and consistent practice and must be covered with employees in the first four

weeks of their taking up post. This will include a general welcome and introduction to the service, administration of issues and work procedures.

Overall Aims of Induction Process

- To help individuals establish themselves in a new job.
- To enhance understanding of Corporate and Departmental Strategies and Policies.
- To help establish good standards of practice.

A “Social Work Employee” pack will be provided to new employees this will include information on communications with specific reference to departmental policies and procedures.

ACHIEVING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

A Communications Working Group will be formed. This group will have a remit to further review and improve internal and external communications. The group's main focus will be to implement and monitor the communications action plan which is appended to this strategy. The action plan outlines the work tasks as identified through audit and review processes. Membership will be drawn from each of the relevant service units and a senior officer will chair meetings.

The tasks of the Communications Working Group will include :

- Review the levels of management information which require to be reported and published and the associated timescales.
- Supervision of the production of the bi-annual external newsletter according to an agreed brief supported by the extended management team who will support this by forwarding relevant articles.
- provide articles for "Headlines" in consultation with the extended management team.
- Develop a programme of planned events, publicity and photocalls in consultation with the extended management team.
- Develop a protocol to promote effective and consistent use of the Internet across service areas.
- Arrange for information to be shared through use of the Internet and Intranet.
- Develop clear guidance on the collection of audit evidence including consideration of standard items to be included.

CONCLUSION

As a result of our audit, consultation processes with staff and service users we will develop effective internal and external communication within and about the services we provide. The information provided will be targeted specifically for different audiences. All mechanisms will have in-built feedback systems to ensure that the processes are effective and efficient.

Effective communication is everyone's responsibility. All staff will be required to work in partnership to ensure effective delivery and improvement of communication.

ACTION PLAN

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Community Planning Theme: Improving Health *improving support and care services for vulnerable groups such as older people, carers, homeless people, people with physical disabilities or learning difficulties and people with mental health problem*

Departmental Objective: Ensure that there are effective communication routes for managers and staff to do their job

Action	Who (Input)	When	Anticipated Cost	Outputs	Outcomes
Policy guidance will be issued and will include a meetings structure with clear guidance on audit recording, and what types of items should be included on meetings agendas.	Communications Working Group	March 2007	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Number of team meetings held across all service areas over the year.	Well informed workforce - all staff are kept fully informed of policy, procedures and performance.
Develop format of core briefing, circumstances in which this would be used and sign off arrangements.	Communications Working Group	March 2007	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Number of core briefings held across all service areas	Standardisation of briefing process improved communication mechanism and feedback effects of decisions.
A quarterly social work newsletter will be introduced, providing information about national and local policy, service quality and performance reporting, training programmes, service awards, staff survey results.	Communications Working Group - The extended management team will support this by providing articles for inclusion.	April 2007	To be reviewed	4 newsletters produced per year	Well informed workforce
Eastwards - communicate to the wider East Ayrshire employee group across departments we will utilise opportunities to publish articles in Eastwards.	Communications Working Group - The extended management team will support this by providing articles for inclusion.	As per Eastwards schedules	Will be met within current social work staff and corporate budget resources	Bi annual	Improved understanding of social work activities across the Council
Develop an intranet protocol to promote consistency and the use of the intranet across all service areas. Feedback	Communications Working Group - The extended management team will support this by providing articles for	April 2007	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Number of articles published	Quicker access to information across the social work workforce

Communications Strategy for Social Services

elements will also be included.	inclusion.				
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Communications Strategy for Social Services

Action	Who (Input)	When	Anticipated Cost	Outputs	Outcomes
Develop a protocol for Global E-mail Information prompts for employees including other communications as outlined above.	Communications Working Group	April 2007	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Number of global emails posted	Quicker access to information across the social work workforce
Regular reports to Corporate Management Team would enable Social Work to report on areas that have consequences across the Council.	Communications Working Group - The extended management team will support this by providing articles for inclusion.	As per Council Timetable	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Number of reports to Corporate Management Team	Corporate management Team will be better informed social work achievements and development of performance and quality improvements.
Regular to the Social Work Committee on key performance areas, inspection and audit outcomes (along the model as already provided for finance and absence). A review of the levels of information and timescales for reporting will be undertaken.	Communications Working Group - The extended management team will support this by providing articles for inclusion.	As per Council Timetable	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Number of reports to Social Work Committee	Elected members and the wider public will be better informed of social work achievements and development of performance and quality improvements.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Community Planning Theme: Improving Health *improving support and care services for vulnerable groups such as older people, carers, homeless people, people with physical disabilities or learning difficulties and people with mental health problem*

Departmental Objective: Ensure that there are clear communication routes for all stakeholders

Action	Who (Input)	When	Anticipated Cost	Output	Outcome
Social work newsletter will be introduced and will be circulated to the wider stakeholders and organisations. This will include information about performance and requests to assist in the evaluation of impact on service users and any given policy.	The Communications Working Group will be given a brief on the production of the newsletter and the extended management team will support this by forwarding articles for inclusion.	May 2007	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Bi-annual newsletter	All stakeholders will be better informed on our performance and will assist in the evaluation of impact on service users and any given policy.
We will review all publicity information and consider more efficient "house style" and cost effective way for producing this material.	The Communications Working Group to review	March 2007	Costs will be identified once reviewed	Number of publicity materials available	All stakeholders will be better informed of social work achievements and development of performance and quality improvements. How to access to services.
Develop an internet protocol to promote consistency and the use of the intranet across all service areas. Feedback elements will also be included.	The Communications Working Group	May 2007	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Number of articles published	Quicker access to information across all stakeholder levels
Since the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act there is a requirement to publish all of our Social Work committee reports all of which are now widely available for any of our stakeholders to download.	The Communications Working Group	As per council timetable	Will be met within current staff and budget resources	Number of reports published	All stakeholders will be better informed of social work achievements and development of performance and quality improvements.

Communications Strategy for Social Services

Action	Who (Input)	When	Anticipated Cost	Output	Outcome
<p>Develop clear guidance and collection of audit evidence to ensure effective communication is supported through existing structures of meetings with external organizations. Including service user forums, carers, contracted providers and partner organisations.</p>	<p>The Communications Working Group will consider what standard items will be included.</p>	<p>May 2007</p>	<p>Will be met within current staff and budget resources</p>		<p>All stakeholders will be better informed of social work achievements and development of performance and quality improvements</p>