

Meeting of Joint Transition Committee

Date: Friday 3 October 2025

Time: 10:00 – 12:00

Location: MS Teams

Agenda Number:	5	
Title:	Stakeholder communications: current practice and future alignment	
Confidential Papers	Commercially Sensitive	N/A
	Legally Sensitive	N/A
	Contains Patient Identifiable data	N/A
	Financially Sensitive	N/A
	Time Sensitive – not for public release at this time	N/A
	Other (Please state)	N/A
Purpose: Update		
Key Points for Discussion:		
<p>This paper sets out how NHS Gloucestershire and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) currently communicate with stakeholders and how we propose to move towards a more aligned and strategic approach as we transition into a cluster ICB ahead of a future merger.</p> <p>It outlines our current practices, the principles that will guide future communications and a proposed framework for delivery that supports organisational development, staff engagement and builds external stakeholder awareness and confidence.</p>		
Recommendations:	The Committee is invited to endorse the proposed communications framework as a basis for future alignment across the cluster.	
Previously Considered By and feedback:	N/A	

Management of Declared Interest:	N/A - no potential or actual Conflicts of Interest.
Risk and Assurance:	See Communications and Engagement (below).
Patient and Public Involvement:	See Communications and Engagement (below).
Financial / Resource Implications:	N/A
Legal, Procurement, Policy and Regulatory Requirements:	N/A
How does this impact on health inequalities, equality and diversity and population health?	N/A
ICS Green Plan and the Carbon Net Zero target?	N/A
Communications and Engagement:	<p>The paper provides an overview of current communication practice and sets out a framework for aligning stakeholder communication.</p> <p>The paper supports the management of organisational risks (reputational and operational) through effective communication arrangements.</p>
Author(s):	<p>Anthony Dallimore, Associate Director, Communications, NHS Gloucestershire ICB</p> <p>Becky Balloch, Head of Communications and Engagement, Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire ICB.</p>
Sponsoring Director:	Sarah Truelove, Chief Executive (Transitioning), NHS Gloucestershire ICB.

Agenda item: 5

Report title: Stakeholder communications: current practice and future alignment

Purpose of the paper

This paper sets out how NHS Gloucestershire and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) currently communicate with stakeholders and how we propose to move towards a more aligned and strategic approach as we transition into a cluster ICB ahead of a future merger.

It outlines our current practices, the principles that will guide future communications and a proposed framework for delivery that supports organisational development, staff engagement and builds external stakeholder awareness and confidence.

What we do now in BNSSG and Gloucestershire

At present, NHS Gloucestershire and BNSSG ICBs operate distinct stakeholder communication approaches, shaped by their respective organisational structures and local contexts.

Staff communications - our approaches and channels are well-established in both organisations. In Gloucestershire, all staff meetings are held fortnightly, and planned briefings are issued weekly. In BNSSG, staff meetings are weekly and written briefings are fortnightly.

These similar approaches provide regular opportunities for colleagues to stay informed and connected. Both organisations also support this through regularly updated staff intranets that share key information. These internal communications are vital for maintaining openness and transparency, supporting engagement, morale and a sense of organisational identity.

We take a staff first approach to all updates on NHS changes and utilise our existing channels for sharing information and providing space for discussion. If required we will stand up ad-hoc briefings (particularly in the case of national or regional ICB organisational development announcements or guidance), issue all-staff emails and our HR teams also host regular drop-in sessions.

External stakeholder communications are also structured, but vary between the two ICBs.

NHS Gloucestershire ICB issues a quarterly (seasonal) One Gloucestershire e-bulletin to a wider range of strategic and public stakeholders that shares updates on strategic priorities, developments and service improvements.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) meet six times a year, usually bi-monthly. NHS Gloucestershire ICB has a long-established confidential 'no surprises' NHS Reference Group, to which HOSC representatives (Chair, Vice, political party and District)

and Healthwatch Gloucestershire (HWG) are invited. The organisation also engages with Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board.

NHS Gloucestershire ICB also holds quarterly system MP meetings and issues associated quarterly written briefings ahead of those meetings. Content is similar to the One Gloucestershire bulletin, but also includes a performance update. Other meetings with one or more MPs can be arranged to discuss 'single issue' matters.

BNSSG ICB engages with three separate HOSCs and Health and Wellbeing Boards - Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire - each meeting three or four times per year. A Joint HOSC is also convened once or twice a year bringing together representatives from all three councils. Occasional closed briefing sessions are convened as required bringing together all HOSC and HWB Chairs to discuss specific issues.

MP engagement similarly follows a mixed pattern, reflecting the complexity of the areas. Regular meetings are routinely held with the majority of the 11 MPs and written stakeholder updates are shared with all MPs and their teams.

These differences reflect the unique operational needs and cultures of each organisation. However, as we move towards closer collaboration as a cluster, there is a clear opportunity to align our approaches while respecting local strengths.

Throughout this period of NHS change, both organisations have committed to providing regular written stakeholder briefings/updates on ICB organisational development and planning, including the 10 Year Health Plan that are closely aligned. These are shared directly with stakeholders and also published on our respective websites. In addition, if requested updates on ICB organisational development and wider NHS changes have also been presented at meetings.

Moving forward - what we are trying to achieve / our principles

We aim to develop a structured approach and framework that reflects a clear understanding of our current situation.

We will follow these principles when communicating with our staff and external stakeholders:

- **Sensitivity to change** – Changes to existing briefing and meeting arrangements will happen at the right pace and time, supporting a smooth transition and helping staff and stakeholders feel informed, involved and supported.
- **Sequencing** – Communications will be carefully planned and shared in the right order, starting with Boards, followed by staff (including primary care), stakeholders and media.
- **Consistency** – We will work towards speaking with one voice, aligning the frequency, tone and content of communications across both organisations.
- **Timeliness** – We will prioritise timely communication, anticipating and meeting the information needs of our audiences.

- **Visibility of progress** – We will ensure achievements and developments are clearly communicated, helping staff and stakeholders see the value of local delivery and the direction of travel.
- **Support for assurance** – Communications will help demonstrate progress in organisational development and performance to oversight and regulatory bodies.
- **Practicality and flexibility** – Our approach will be achievable within available resources and adaptable to respond quickly to major developments or incidents.

What we are proposing

To deliver against these principles, we propose a communications framework that begins with a high-level stakeholder analysis and separates out our approach to staff and external stakeholders. It should be noted that a more detailed analysis, review and recommendations will be developed over the coming months in terms of wider communications activities, processes and other key audiences.

High-level stakeholder summary

This summary is based on three broad stakeholder groups, each with distinct communication needs:

1. **Staff** – our most important ambassadors. Communications must be timely, clear and supportive, particularly during periods of change.
2. **System partners, and public-facing stakeholders** – including NHS Trust Boards, primary care teams (including POD), MPs, local authorities, Health Overview and Scrutiny committees and Health and Wellbeing Boards, patient groups, voluntary and community sector organisations and media. These groups require regular, structured and accessible updates that support assurance while highlighting local achievements and developments of public interest.
3. **Regional and national stakeholders** – including NHS England (regional and national) the Department of Health and Social Care and regional ICB clusters. Communications with this group will focus on strategic progress and organisational development.

Staff communications

Staff engagement will remain a top priority. We will maintain existing rhythms of engagement - with each organisation continuing with their established weekly or fortnightly meetings and briefings - while ensuring that messaging (and timing of key updates) is aligned across the cluster during this current phase.

As governance structures evolve, particularly with the establishment of a single executive team, we will plan for unified staff meetings and briefings, fronted by a single leadership.

We would recommend these take place on a fortnightly basis so there is parity across the cluster. We will need to ensure this proposition is introduced with sensitivity to staff feedback and experience, so we know that people are in the right mindset for this change to

happen. No substantive changes will be made until the executive leadership team are in post. We will continue to celebrate local achievements and provide reassurance during periods of change.

With the Transition Committee now established, we will ensure consistent and regular updates are provided from this group to our organisations, so staff have an understanding and clarity on the transitional stages and steps, areas of focus and the progress being made.

System partners and public-facing stakeholders

External communications will be structured around a combination of planned and responsive activity.

Each organisation will maintain its existing rhythm of engagement through meetings and briefings for core stakeholder groups and review the approach further when appointments have been made to the ICB cluster executive structure.

However, we will jointly produce a monthly written update for stakeholders, focusing on organisational change and strategic priorities. This will help ensure key messages are agreed across the cluster and support consistency in how we communicate.

The update will inform existing briefing arrangements within individual organisations – for example, Gloucestershire's quarterly MP briefing - and strengthen coordination across the cluster.

The monthly update will also ensure that the ICB Boards, including NEDs, Trust Boards and local authority partners, receive a structured update on developments, as well as receiving the single issue updates referred to below.

We will continue to produce timely written briefings on significant national, regional or local announcements/developments when needed (usually single-issue updates). Communication teams will work together to make sure messages are agreed across the cluster.

We will maintain existing arrangements for logging and actioning MP enquiries and Parliamentary briefings. This will be reviewed in early 2026 with the appropriate teams to ensure greater alignment and consideration of where processes may be able to come together during transition.

This framework will ensure that communications are timely, consistent and relevant, while remaining achievable within existing resources.

In respect of immediate actions, we would suggest that we make arrangements for some initial introductory correspondence and meetings for the Chair/CEO with MPs and other key stakeholders that they are yet to meet (particularly in Gloucestershire). A proactive approach will help to build relationships and trust, setting a strong foundation for future conversations and ways of working.

Regional and national stakeholders

We will continue to ensure we are aligned and briefed on national and regional developments and keep our colleagues at NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care informed by sharing our plans and briefings as they are developed.

We will also ensure our communications as a cluster are broadly aligned with that of our colleagues in other ICB clusters across the south west region.

ICB system communication leads meet with the NHS England Regional Director of Communications and senior team on a weekly basis to discuss the latest developments and approaches.

A bi-weekly regional NHS communications leaders meeting is also now in place for NHS England, ICBs and Trusts.

Recommendation

Communications colleagues across the two organisations are already working very closely together to ensure consistent messaging for both internal and external audiences.

The committee is invited to endorse the proposed communications framework as a basis for future alignment across the cluster. This approach is sensitive to the needs of staff and stakeholders as we navigate the transition and ensure smooth transition to one unified organisation.

It is recognised that further work will be required over the coming months to continue to align and develop our communications activities (e.g. branding, online platforms, social media channels etc).