

Draft

**COMMUNICATING CHANGE
GUIDANCE**

December 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

Successful organisations develop a communications culture where it is accepted that the basic principle of open, honest and clear communications is everyone's responsibility.

However, during periods of significant change, those in leadership roles have a particular responsibility to facilitate and encourage effective communications both on a formal and informal basis so that they support those affected by the proposed changes.

This document:

- Looks at the wider context for change, in particular, the significant financial challenges facing the whole of the NHS and other public sector organisations and the impact this will have on Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust.
- Clarifies the responsibilities of managers within the Trust to seek authorisation from the Executive Management Team to proposed changes in advance of them being developed.
- Provides an overview of the basic communications principles which need to be in place to support a programme of change management effectively.

This paper is linked to a number of other documents including the Trust's Management of Organisational Change Policy and the Corporate Communications Strategy (available on the Trust's intranet).

2. THE REASONS FOR CHANGE

The NHS, in common with other public sector organisations, faces considerable financial pressures over the next few years. The Department of Health is looking for efficiency savings of around £20bn nationally over the next three years. This can only be achieved through improvements in quality, efficiency, and productivity, facilitated by greater innovation. Local authorities also face very serious financial challenges, which also have an impact on the Trust. Like all NHS providers, the Trust is already required to make annual efficiency savings of at least four per cent per year by modernising the delivery of its services and this will continue year on year.

This means the Trust will be under increasing pressure to demonstrate that it provides high quality, cost effective services which represent best value for commissioners and the tax payer generally. This in turn means that the way health services are provided and where they are delivered is likely to change significantly over the next few years. The focus of mental health care policy nationally is on reducing the number of inpatient beds and lengths of inpatient stay and, as far as

is clinically appropriate, providing care as close to patients' homes as possible. This has already led to changes locally with a significant reduction in the numbers of inpatient beds in use. Over time, there will be further changes in how and where services are provided and how staff work, with more patients being supported in the community rather than in inpatient settings.

3. THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS WITHIN THE TRUST

Changes to services can be uncomfortable and challenging to those who use them and to staff. They can be seen as a threat rather than an opportunity to improve services further. Change can be difficult for patients and their carers as services they rely upon are proposed to change and they may be concerned about the implications for their own care.

There needs to be well planned, effective, communications and wider engagement with patients, carers, their representatives and other key external stakeholder groups to explain the changes in advance, ensure the benefits are understood and that the process of change is clear. Patients, carers, their representatives and other external stakeholders need to have the opportunity to input their views and influence the proposed changes as they are planned, rather than be presented as a firm decision.

Patients, carers and other external stakeholders' views are often significantly influenced by the views of staff within the organisation. Having well-informed staff, who understand the reasons for change and can communicate them to others, is an important part of the overall management of change. From a staff perspective, change can have an impact on the arrangements staff have in place which support their ability to work, including where they live and their childcare and transport arrangements. Staff may sometimes have strong personal agendas around proposed changes. Change can also make staff feel disempowered so they may become indifferent and disengaged. Effective engagement of staff is vital to ensure they remain engaged and feel empowered to influence the change process and ensure it is achieved effectively for the good of patients and their carers, as well as themselves and the organisation.

It is therefore important that any significant potential changes to how or where services are provided are discussed and agreed internally within the Trust first and then are discussed with key external stakeholders. These include patients and carers and their representatives and the local Clinical Commissioning Groups, the local authorities and the three local Overview and Scrutiny Committees / Health Scrutiny Panels. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees / Health Scrutiny Panels have statutory responsibility for ensuring appropriate, effective, engagement and, in some cases, formal consultation, with patients, carers, the public and others. The Trust has an on-going strategic approach to working together with these key partners to manage future change through the *Changing for the Good* programme.

In order to ensure all of the above, it is essential that any potential service change is discussed and explicitly agreed with the Trust Executive Management Team

before being progressed, so that they can be managed effectively, both internally and externally.

Any proposal to change a service which affects patients, carers or staff must therefore be formally agreed and signed off by the Trust Executive Management Team through the relevant Clinical and Service Director, before it can proceed further.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMMUNICATIONS AROUND CHANGE

Effective communication is critical to support any change management programme. Good communications are important in:

- Explaining the proposed change to patients, carers and staff
- Ensuring the right information is provided to all those potentially affected at the right time and keeping them informed
- Empowering patients, carers and staff to be able to contribute their views
- Ensuring Trust staff are skilled and confident in communicating change and supporting patients and carers through a change process

Effective communications rely on developing relationships that are based on mutual understanding, openness and trust. Good communications also involve developing an understanding and appreciation of the views held by others, why and where they may create barriers to change and how these can be managed. To be effective, communications need to be clear, planned and sustained.

Experience shows that organisations that manage change well:

- Develop a culture where all staff believe communications is their responsibility (not the sole responsibility of the communications staff who are there to provide specific support and expertise)
- Have clearly defined aims of the proposed changes where everyone has sight of the benefits and their role in making it happen
- Develop and support staff to be skilled and confident communicators with patients and carers
- Develop messages which are clear, unambiguous, tailored, targeted, timely, and have the right tone.
- Listen, learn and respond to what they hear from both internal and external stakeholders

- Are flexible and are able to adapt their communications strategies to respond to changing circumstances

The Trust will seek to apply these principles to ensure the effective communication of potential future changes internally with staff and externally with patients, carers and other organisations.

5. SUMMARY

This document has summarised the Trust's approach to communicating change, the process through which proposed changes must be authorised and the communications principles which need to be followed.

The NHS is facing a period of unprecedented change due to the scale of the financial challenges across the NHS and also in local authorities. The Trust is committed to managing the process of change to its services as effectively as possible and to engaging patients, carers, staff and other stakeholders in the process so that they are informed and engaged in planning and delivering change.

Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust
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