



**NORTHERN IRELAND PRACTICE AND EDUCATION  
COUNCIL FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY**

# **Engagement and Communications Strategy**

**February 2016**

**Review date: March 2018**

Any request for the document in another format or language will be  
considered

Centre House  
79 Chichester Street  
BELFAST  
BT1 4JE

Tel: 0300 300 0066

[www.nipec.hscni.net](http://www.nipec.hscni.net)

## Introduction

NIPEC's core business is clearly laid out and reported on within our Corporate and Business Plans and our Quality and Annual Reports<sup>1</sup>. These documents reflect how we will continue to communicate, engage, involve and collaborate in partnership with our stakeholders<sup>2</sup> that will assist in supporting the improvement of standards of practice, education and professional development of nurses and midwives.

This Strategy, which describes the values and principles governing our external and internal communication and engagement activities and the communication tools we will use, should be read in conjunction with our corporate documents.

## Our engagement and communication goal

Good communication and engagement is essential in supporting our aim for openness and transparency and our communications approach will reflect the core values of our organisation in how we work and how we engage with our internal and external stakeholders.

Effective communication with our internal and external stakeholders is important in ensuring they are aware of, engage with, understand our role and are supportive of our organisation and our objectives. We will work in partnership with our stakeholders in an innovative and accountable way demanding excellence in everything that we do.

## Aim

Our overall aim is to deliver effective communication and engagement that is accurate, timely, relevant and reliable through a range of appropriate methods and formats which support the delivery of the strategic objectives detailed in our corporate documents.

The core aims of this strategy are to:

- be proactive in engaging, communicating with our internal and external stakeholders;
- strengthen our relationships with all our stakeholders;
- maintain and enhance our profile and strengthen our identity with registrants and within the health and social care sector; and
- ensure that communication is co-ordinated and focused to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

We will also strive to achieve an organisational culture where our:

- staff are valued, informed, educated/developed, engaged and supported in their communication activities;
- policies, strategies and decisions are communicated in an open, accurate and timely fashion; and
- reputation as an employer and service provider is highly regarded by staff, nurses and midwives and other key stakeholders.

---

<sup>1</sup> From herein, these will be referred to as our Corporate documents

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to our Stakeholder Map on page 4

## Strategic context

NIPEC was established in 2002, as an Arm's Length Body (ALB) which undertakes commissioned and non-commissioned work on behalf of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, its sponsoring body, and other statutory organisations.

NIPEC is strategically and appropriately placed to translate regional direction and policy into practice. Due to its core functions and the strategic positioning and breadth of its stakeholder base, NIPEC is well placed to create high quality innovative solutions which aim to support employers as well as nursing and midwifery staff, enhance professional practice and, in turn, facilitate the delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care.

As outlined in our corporate documents, our key strategic objectives are to promote:

- high standards of practice among nurses and midwives
- high standards of education and learning for nurses and midwives
- professional development of nurses and midwives

and provide:

- guidance on the best practice for nurses and midwives
- advice and information on matters relating to nursing and midwifery.

## Our values

Our values, which underpin everything we do at NIPEC, are to:

- act at all times with integrity and transparency
- be accessible to individuals and interested organisations
- be accountable to the public and our stakeholders
- be open-minded and creative in our approach to our work.
- provide leadership that will have a positive impact on the nursing and midwifery professions
- promote a culture of equality and diversity
- work in partnership with our stakeholders

## Situational analysis

When NIPEC was established under Chapter 9, Section 2(1) of the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2002, it was set up as a successor body to the National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting for NI (NBNI). The functions of NIPEC are different to that of the NBNI as set in legislation and detailed in other corporate documents.

NIPEC's initial aim was to establish and strengthen its role through the configuration of robust communication and partnership arrangements. This was done formally through a *'Memorandum of Understanding'* with a number of statutory bodies. This early communication arrangement enabled NIPEC to assist with the improvement of the quality of care by supporting professional development of nurses and midwives through various evidence based methods.

In the last number of years we have actively enhanced our engagement and communication processes and partnership arrangements to accomplish its statutory functions. For example, we hold an annual stakeholder event and established our PPI e-Forum in 2014.

As Health and Social Care Services continue to evolve, our mission statement has been revised to reflect this:

*The Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council (NIPEC) aims to improve standards of practice, education and professional development of nurses and midwives to facilitate their delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care (2013).*

In addition to the change of its mission statement, the growth and transparency of our core business is demonstrated through its various websites:-

- [www.nipec.hscni.net](http://www.nipec.hscni.net)
- [www.nipecportfolio.hscni.net](http://www.nipecportfolio.hscni.net)
- mini websites at <http://www.nipec.hscni.net/minisites.htm>
- [www.nipec.org](http://www.nipec.org)

## Our reputation

NIPEC's reputation is shaped through its mission and values. The outcomes of its core business is monitored and evaluated as described within the Indicators for Success section on page 8. We pay careful attention as to how NIPEC is perceived by all of its stakeholders and values their input, views and opinions on all of our work. Therefore, the management of and interaction with, stakeholders is very important as illustrated in figure 1 below:



**Figure 1:  
Components of Reputation**

## **Our stakeholders**

The importance of engaging, involving, communicating and working with our stakeholders, internal and external, is central to this strategy and to the work we do. The stakeholder map in figure 2 has been developed to illustrate the breadth of our stakeholders, but as we operate in a dynamic environment, it will be kept under review and amended to reflect any changes as these are identified.



## **Our staff**

Our staff are our greatest asset and one we wish to continue to involve, engage, empower, develop and support as they assist the organisation in achieving NIPEC's quality, strategic and business objectives. All staff should feel they are kept informed, valued and have the opportunity to influence the planning and decision making process within the organisation. It is anticipated that well informed and motivated staff will be better placed to contribute to the effectiveness of our organisation and actively participate in the improvement of our services. We will strive to create a working environment which actively encourages open and honest communication, which is two-way and responsive to feedback, to ensure we listen, learn and take appropriate action.

## **Our approach to engagement and communication**

In undertaking the various engagement and communication activities described in this strategy, we will apply the following principles:

- To be open and transparent in the conduct of our business.
- To ensure timely, accurate and relevant communications.
- To ensure consistent messages through the use of established corporate communication mechanisms.
- To widen access to our work by communicating in the appropriate language and format for the target audience.
- To encourage involvement, dialogue and feedback.
- To support staff in gaining the skills necessary to communicate well.
- To listen and respond to incoming communications with the aim of continuously improving.

In addition, we will take a number of factors into consideration when planning internal and external engagement and communication, including the target audience and their level of need and the range of method and type of communication required, ensuring this meets the intended purpose and takes account of the equality legislation and any identified impact on equality of opportunity.

In recent years, we have developed communication plans for specific work-streams and projects which are tailored to reflect the nature of the work being undertaken as well as the communication needs of those we wish to involve and communicate with throughout the lifetime of the project.

This strategy should also be read in conjunction with our Public Involvement Strategy which outlines how NIPEC aims to inform, establish accountability and credibility, build good relationships and seek feedback from its stakeholders.

### **❖ External engagement and communication**

We will use a range of methods to encourage an open dialogue with external stakeholders, including:

**Business, Governance and Accountability meetings** with our sponsoring branch (the Chief Nursing Office at the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety), other ALBS and special Agencies, HSC Trusts, Health and Social Care organisations, the voluntary, independent and private sector, the education institutions, the Business

Services Organisation and other key stakeholders, such as the NMC and those across the devolved UK administrations. This is important in ensuring the role and responsibilities of NIPEC is fully understood and in influencing, developing and maintaining working partnerships and relationships which support NIPEC as an organisation and ultimately the nursing and midwifery workforce.

**Corporate publications and information** will ensure we provide accurate and accessible information to stakeholders on our role, and the quality and function of our activities. We will ensure that this information is provided in a cost effective way and in plain, jargon free language. Our corporate guidance on the development and production of information will assist in ensuring this follows a consistent style and format, and where requested, we will make every effort to provide information in an alternative format and language.

**Media communication** will include press releases as and when appropriate and the notification of Council meetings in the regional press at the start of the financial year and on our website prior to each meeting. NIPEC related news stories will be communicated through stakeholder organisations, where appropriate, and we will support the sharing of relevant and topical news with external stakeholders as appropriate.

All media enquiries should be directed to and responded to through either the Chief Executive or the Head of Corporate Services. Any member of staff who is contacted directly by the media should not make any comment or statement. Journalists/ photographers/camera crews will not be permitted access to NIPEC premises without the prior agreement of the Chief Executive.

**Internet**, whilst not universally accessible to all stakeholders, our main website and other mini-websites are seen as a valuable communication tool. These are constantly monitored and developed to ensure their content provides accurate and up to date information about our activities, plans and strategies and on our activities and workstreams. Our Publication Scheme will outline the types of information we hold and how members of the public can access these. Within our website, we have developed an enquiry e-mail system for capturing general queries from individuals and external stakeholders.

We also use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Survey Monkey as a means of engaging and communicating with the wider public and in particular with individual nursing and midwifery registrants and a separate protocol on how this is used, maintained and monitored has been developed.

**Stakeholder Events** are held annually to engage with, listen to and elicit the views of our stakeholders so their needs and ideas contribute to shaping what we do and inform our Corporate and Business Plans. In addition, **Focus Groups** are established as and when required to gather information and/or explore potential feasible options relating to specific workstreams and activities. The membership of focus groups is voluntary and can comprise of nurses and midwives, members of the public and/or their representatives, and health related voluntary and charity organisations.

**PPI e-Forum** was established in 2014/15 with the aim of providing a mechanism of engagement with service users and carers in relation to our workstreams, projects and initiatives. A password protected member's area on our website has been developed to allow access to information and updates and provide feedback. Members of our e-Forum are also invited to our stakeholder events and conferences. Through engagement and involvement of the members of our e-Forum, NIPEC ensures that its workstreams remain

informed by the desires of the public of Northern Ireland, whom nurses and midwives provide care and services to.

**Communiques** and **Newsletters** are used to update nurses and midwives, project groups and stakeholders on progress of a particular work-stream or project.

**Bulletin Board** can be established within our main website or one of the mini-websites, to assist in the transfer of information, ideas and updates within working groups set up for specific workstreams. This enables working group members to communicate and input comments on proposed issues within a secure environment.

**Professional networks** and **events** are important ways of engaging and communicating with multi-professional colleagues and organisations on a range of issues relating to nursing and midwifery practice, education or policy. We will work with external stakeholders to ensure there is a coherent and coordinated approach to communicating key messages to the nursing and midwifery registrant, the media and the wider public.

**Roadshows** and **Information/Awareness Sessions** are organised for specific projects or work-streams where there is a need for extensive engagement with nurses and midwives over a prolonged period. For example, a new standard or regulatory requirement for nurses and midwives.

**Council meetings** are open to the public and we actively publicise when these will take place and encourage attendance by the nursing and midwifery profession and members of the general public. We will ensure that all relevant papers are made available to those attending our Council meetings and the agenda and minutes published on our website following the meeting.

**SCAN (Senior Nurse/Midwife Current Awareness from NIPEC)** is a monthly publication providing executive and senior nurses and midwives with a brief update about local, regional, national and international topics of interest, major publications and articles, new policies and strategies, and major events/initiatives. It also provides an update on NIPEC projects or resources which have been launched or are available for use, the web links to access them and contact details for the lead Senior Professional Officer at NIPEC.

#### ❖ **Internal communication**

To ensure effective internal communication a wide range of channels and methods will be used to communicate with our Council lay and professional members, staff, and representatives of staff and professional organisations, including:

**Staff induction** ensures new members of staff are provided with information on our various communication channels in use and the aims of this strategy.

**Team and staff meetings**, and on occasion, **team effectiveness events**, provide an opportunity for sharing and updating on key issues and developments, and ensure the cascade of information from NIPEC Council, the Chief Executive and the Business Team and, as appropriate, any other relevant groups.

**E-mail** is used to send key messages to 'all staff' and enable staff to obtain core information on our organisation as well as other relevant documentation via our IT server.

We will ensure that staff are aware of and adhere to the e-mail policy and etiquette guidelines

**One-to-one meetings** with individual members of staff are essential and offer an opportunity for communicating, checking understanding and allowing for two-way communication. These meetings include performance and development review meetings between individual members of staff and their line manager, enabling individuals to be clear about their role and contribution to the organisation's aims and business objectives, as well as identifying their training and development needs.

**Notice Boards** are used to display staff notices, newsletters, media releases, information relating to issues within the HSC and relevant and appropriate health and social care events

**Circulation of written information**, such as journal articles and updates from health organisations, literature searches, electronic newsletters from external organisations and NIPEC reports and publications are examples of how we keep professional and corporate staff informed of nursing and midwifery and wider health related issues.

**Staff Suggestion Box** is available to all staff as a means of raising issues in a confidential and anonymous way.

## **Accessing our information**

We are committed to making our information as accessible as possible and to promoting meaningful engagement with our stakeholders. We will strive to provide our information in as wide a range of methods as possible to meet the needs of all our stakeholders.

Where reasonably practicable, our documents can be made available, on request, in an alternative format, Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or in a minority language to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

## **Equality and Human Rights Screening**

This strategy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these.

A copy of the screening document can be viewed at <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2166.htm> and will be provided as hard copy on request.

Using the Equality Commission's screening criteria, no significant equality implications have been identified. The strategy will therefore not be subject to an equality impact assessment.

Similarly, this strategy has been considered under the terms of the Human Rights Act 1998, and was deemed compatible with the European Convention Rights contained in the Act.

## **Indicators of success**

A programme of continuous measurement is undertaken to ensure that our information routes are disseminated in a timely and appropriate way. This ensures that our stakeholders are aware of NIPEC and its role and remit within the health and social care system. In addition, we will be evaluating the effectiveness of its partnerships through the development of a Partnership Framework on the principles of engagement.

The programme of measurement includes:

- Website surveys
- Stakeholder events
- Staff surveys
- Stakeholder feedback following specific events and project completion
- Attendance and interest shown to attend events, eg. Annual conference
- Impact Assessment Framework
- Final Project Reports.

We report on these indicators of success through its annual Quality Report using quality improvement methodologies.

We have also developed an Impact Measurement Framework to assess the effect the business of NIPEC has on the registrant population. In essence the purpose of this is to ascertain how we have facilitated the improvement and development of nursing and midwifery practice. By assessing this impact, we should be in a position to demonstrate how we have linked into the Quality 2020 agenda in terms of a safe and effective service with positive patient experiences.

## **Conclusion**

Our engagement and communication strategy is aimed at supporting the work of NIPEC and achieving its strategic and business objectives. The strategy is a 'live' document and will be guide our Council and staff in achieving the organisation's objectives in an open and transparent way.