



General
Osteopathic
Council

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2021-24

Listening. Sharing. Supporting.

Introduction

As the statutory healthcare regulator for the practice of osteopathy in the UK, our approach to communication and engagement is critical to the successful delivery of our Strategic Plan 2019-24.

This strategy sets out our approach to communication and engagement with our stakeholders, enabling us to build trust in our regulatory approach and to support the GOsC to deliver on its overarching goals, as set out in the Strategic Plan 2019-24.

This will be achieved through effective and innovative use of two-way channels of communication; and information that is clear, timely and relevant; strengthening the position of the GOsC as a credible, robust regulator.

GOsC Strategic Goals 2019-24

- We will support the osteopathic profession to deliver high quality care, which will protect patients and the public in the context of changes in the dynamic landscape of healthcare.
- We will develop our assurance of osteopathic education to produce high quality graduates who are ready to practise.
- We will build closer relationships with the public¹ and the profession based on trust and transparency.
- We will be an exemplar in modern healthcare regulation – accessible, effective, innovative, agile, proportionate and reflective.

¹ We have interpreted 'the public' here to mean osteopathic patients and potential patients rather than the wider public who we are not able to influence with our small budgets and specific focus.

Vision, purpose and aims

The vision and purpose of the Communications and Engagement Strategy are set out below alongside three specific aims through which the vision will be achieved:

Vision: we will promote patient safety, and support osteopaths to deliver high quality care through a responsive, inclusive, contemporary, creative and agile approach to communication and engagement.

Purpose: this strategy supports and provides direction for the efficient and effective delivery of our overarching strategic goals and business plans by informing the engagement activities that we undertake now and in the future.

Our aims

Aim 1: Promote trust:

Continue to improve our relationships and engagement with our stakeholders so we can increase levels of trust in us as a regulator and increase understanding of our role.

Aim 2: Be timely and responsive:

Take a timely approach and be responsive both to stakeholder needs and to changing situations and requirements, based firmly on insight and effective planning.

Aim 3: Be a forward looking regulator:

Ensure that our communication channels and products are relevant, contemporary, and forward looking, and that we utilise creative and innovative approaches where helpful and required.

Our principles

We have developed a set of core communication and engagement principles which underpin our work and which help us use this strategy as a decision making tool for all current and future activities. The core principles are:

- **Open, inclusive and coherent:** we will be open and transparent, inclusive and personal; creating a unified approach across our channels; and reflecting our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion including, but not limited to, recognising disability in our audiences.
- **Reflective and insight-driven:** we will seek feedback, actively engaging with – and listening to – our audiences to increase our understanding so that our approach is reflective, outward-looking and insight-driven.
- **Targeted and purposeful:** we will communicate and engage with a clarity of purpose and direction that is aligned to our overarching strategic aims and goals.

- **Appropriate in tone:** we will ensure our tone and approach is supportive, wherever appropriate, and encourages engagement.
- **Proactive and timely:** we will respond to arising communication needs in a timely way with a clear emphasis on building positive relationships with our stakeholders.
- **Two-way:** we will ensure we have a proportionate balance between what we say – ‘informing’ – and the insight we gain through engagement and research – our ‘listening’.
- **Forward looking:** we will ensure our approach, channels and products are contemporary, creative and forward looking, taking account of user feedback and wider societal context and trends.
- **Cost effective, environmentally aware and evaluated:** our communications and engagement activities will be planned, costed and will include measures of progress and success. We will also seek to minimise any negative environmental impact in what we do.

Delivering our aims

We will focus our activity over the next three years on these aims: **to promote trust; to be timely and responsive;** and **to be a forward looking regulator;** and we will do this by putting our communications and engagement principles into practice.

AIM 1: Promote trust

Continue to improve our relationships and engagement with our stakeholders so we can increase levels of trust in us as a regulator and increase understanding of our role.

- The ultimate purpose of increasing trust and understanding amongst osteopaths is to help support our shared values around the importance of ensuring patient safety.
- By providing clear information; being open and transparent; creating consistency and coherence across our channels; by being inclusive and personal in our approach; and by explaining our role and our shared values; we will help increase trust and reduce fear. We know from our research that fear and anxiety reduce compliance with the Osteopathic Practice Standards.

How we will do this:

- We will evolve our communication messaging to highlight that the values of the GOsC, and the values of the profession, are aligned, particularly around patient safety and the delivery of high quality care.
- We will be **open** and **inclusive**, and we will consult on key policy or guidance updates in a way which is consistent with our consultation principles, making clear how the feedback has influenced our thinking.
- We will help close the gap between the regulator and the regulated by being more personal using our staff to be the voices and faces of our organisation to improve engagement, through eg videos, blogs and webinars. An open, approachable and **inclusive** organisation increases trust and creates better working relationships with stakeholders. We will also use other voices such as Council and Committee members and osteopaths and patients to bring material to life.
- We will ensure that our channels are fresh, current and **forward looking** and support our aims to bring clarity and increase understanding and trust by making straightforward information easy to find, delivered in a fresh appealing way.
- We will create consistency and **coherence** across our channels and products by continuing to roll out our updated look and feel across our portfolio. Consistency

and coherence makes an audience feel more at ease as they recognise the provenance of the messages.

- We will be **purposeful** in our efforts to increase understanding through a continued focus on explaining our role as the regulator, our shared values, and how our work supports osteopaths to deliver high-quality patient care.
- We will continue to be **inclusive** through transparency – explaining what and why we are doing things, therefore including stakeholders in our processes.
- We will avoid regulation through fear by continuing to focus on ensuring we are being empathetic and our language and tone is positive and supportive, where appropriate.
- We will be **inclusive** by trying to understand and meet our audiences' different needs and views, including around disability.
- We will ensure an **inclusive** balance in our visual representation of gender and race of osteopaths and patients. We will work to break down the more hidden barriers for example in recruitment to our committees. We will establish an equality and diversity steering group to provide extra input and be a sounding board for our outputs.
- We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure we are **inclusive** of those who are less able to use digital technologies or use specific formats.²

² More detailed activity can be found in the Business Plan for 2021-22

AIM 2: Be timely and responsive

Take a timely approach and be responsive both to stakeholder needs and to changing situations and requirements, based firmly on insight and effective planning.

- We will collect insight which we will reflect upon and utilise.
- Through being timely and responsive we will be better able to meet the needs of our stakeholders and therefore improve our stakeholder relationships, and improve trust.
- We will ensure our channels are fit for this purpose.
- Through being timely and responsive we can meet information needs and allay concerns before they grow.

How we will do this:

- We will be **reflective and insight-driven** remaining outward looking, continuing to seek and act on feedback and insight, actively engaging with and listening to our audiences to increase our understanding.
- We will ensure we keep **insight** top of mind when we communicate and engage, making use of what we know works and providing support where we know there are information and support needs.
- We will communicate our messages clearly and in a **timely** way, making use of appropriate fit-for-purpose and agile digital channels.

- We will be **timely** and responsive to change, working in partnership with, and listening to, our stakeholders – their changing needs and the barriers they face – utilising the **insight** we have collected so we can meet needs before concerns grow. As well as being reassuring to our stakeholders, this approach is resource and **cost-effective**, allowing us to 'nip issues in the bud'.
- We will provide guidance and information and where we are not yet sure of the answers, for example in a fast moving situation, we will acknowledge this in a **timely** way.
- We will continue to engage with patients, using our patient involvement forum as we develop a co-production model for future policy making.
- We will **evaluate** to check that our actions have had a positive impact, and adjust where necessary.
- We will continue to gather regular **insight** utilising surveys and consultations (including those to which we need to respond), independent research, through examining our own data, and through talking and listening to stakeholders utilising a **two-way** approach. We will ensure that we share our organisational knowledge with each other and will continue to seek further opportunities to gather new insight.

AIM 3: Be a forward looking regulator

Ensure that our approach and our portfolio are current, relevant and forward looking.

- We will ensure that our look is fresh and current and our language is respectful and inclusive.
- As a regulator that is innovative and forward looking in its work, our portfolio of communications materials and our methods of engagement, including our digital offer, should reflect and support this.

How we will do this:

- We will commit to creating an attractive and fit-for-purpose digital offer and complete the work we have started to make all our channels and materials look **fresh, current** and inviting.
- We will redesign the **o** zone and the main public facing website. Our websites will have better structures and more straightforward navigation making information easier and quicker to find. We will utilise user research and testing so the work will be based on **insight**.
- Our websites will become the 'go-to' place for information, guidance and engaging features. Our social media channels will be **fresh**, engaging and **inclusive**.
- Creating a **fresh** look and feel will reflect our care and pride in our outputs within which we can emphasise the values we share with our stakeholders.

- Our renewed focus on our digital offer will allow us to increase our use of images, social media, videos, animations and podcasts creating alternative methods of providing information to meet the varying needs of different people, and allowing our audiences the flexibility in how and where they access it.
- We will do this in a **cost effective** way, making sure our activity is planned and costed and we will measure progress so our projects are **evaluated**.
- We will utilise **insight** to help us be forward looking and to do things differently and in ways that our audiences find engaging, ensuring our policy development is informed by **insight**.

Working with our stakeholders

Underlying this strategy is the work we do with our stakeholders. Putting the above principles into practice and meeting our three aims will help improve engagement with all our audiences.

Improving engagement

- Increasing trust and understanding will help us to continue to improve our working relationships and engagement with our stakeholders. This will enable us to work in a more effective way, helping to achieve our shared goals of ensuring patient safety and high quality care.

- We will demonstrate that we are a proactive, approachable and inclusive organisation by explaining and clarifying our role, bringing consistency and inclusivity to our language and our products.
- We will actively listen and respond to patients and osteopaths, across all parts of the UK, working to understand their needs while staying focused on our aims. We will endeavour to develop the hands-on personal relationship building approach with these key stakeholders that is so effective.
- We will continue our work towards developing a co-production model with patients; working with the regional groups to understand their needs and providing them with more support; we will continue to engage with students; and we will support the educators, recognising their particular needs with a view to helping them become exemplars for the next generation of osteopaths.
- We will ensure that we share our organisational knowledge about our stakeholders with each other and we will continue to seek further opportunities to gather new insight.

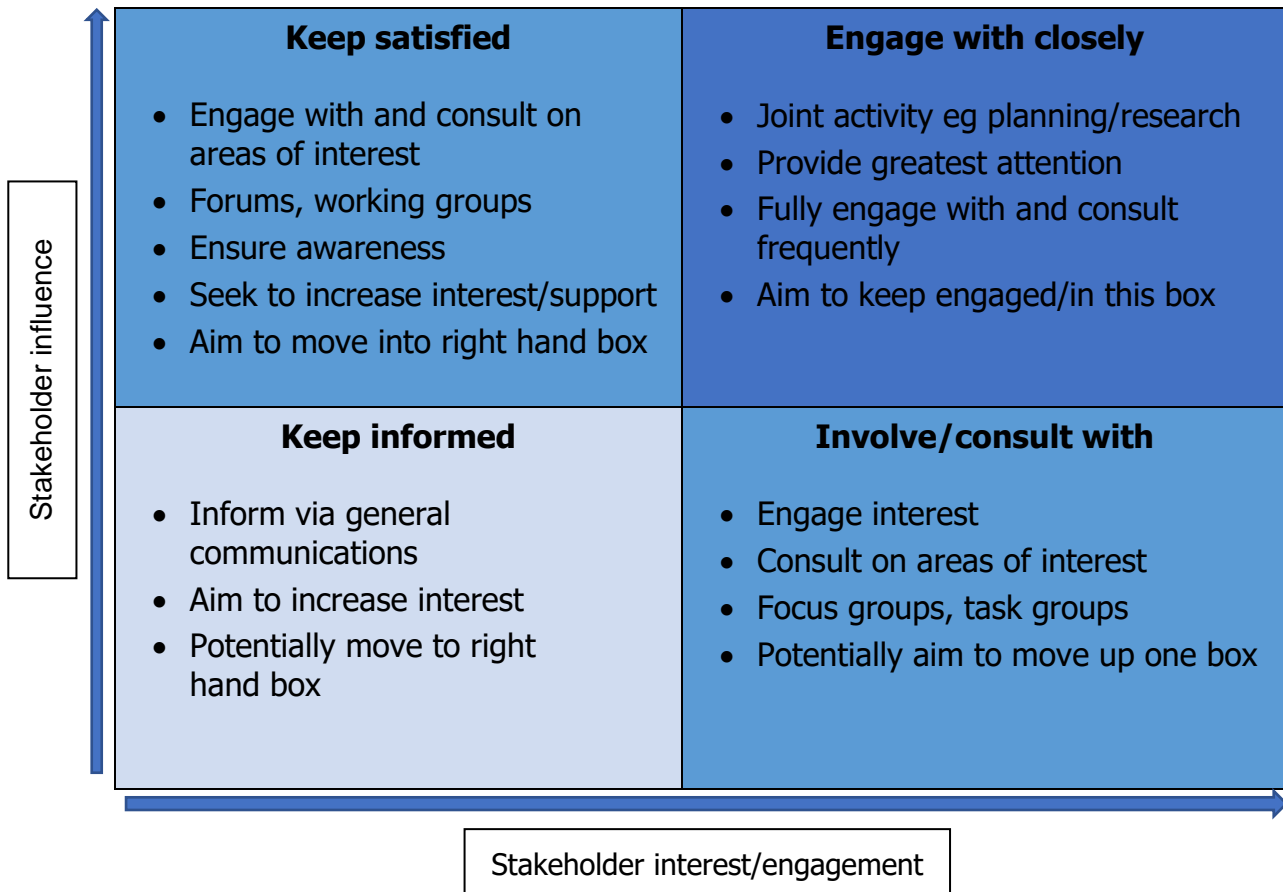
Our stakeholders

We need to communicate and engage with multiple stakeholders across the four nations of the UK and internationally. All of whom have a different level of interest and engagement with us. Each of the following could be broken down further, and there is some crossover between groups:

- osteopaths
- patients and the public (potential patients)
- educational providers and students
- regional groups and special interest groups
- professional membership body: the Institute of Osteopathy
- Osteopathic Development Group
- CPD providers
- researchers, including the National Council for Osteopathic Research
- Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care
- Government health departments across the four nations
- insurers
- healthcare regulators and professional bodies
- Advertising Standards Authority
- international: students, osteopaths, schools
- media/commentators

Mapping our stakeholders

The matrix below indicates our approach to engagement with our stakeholders, dividing them by their influence on key audiences, and their level of interest and engagement with us.



Communications/Engagement planning

We will make use of planning tools such as this to help us with our stakeholder engagement.

| Stakeholder | Aims | Messages | Insight | Potential channels | Success measures |
|-------------|------|----------|---------|--------------------|------------------|
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Evaluation

- We will create an evaluation dashboard. We will use a number of different measures, both quantitative and qualitative, all of which will provide an aspect of the whole picture. We will focus on our key aims to **Promote trust, Be timely and responsive, Be a forward looking regulator**.
- As part of the development of the evaluation dashboard, we will engage our Council in the development of Key Performance Indicators for our communication and engagement activities and report on them regularly, for example annually, so that our delivery of the strategy can be assessed.
- The dashboard may include, but will not be limited to:
 - levels of stakeholder engagement and changes in attitudes
 - YouGov survey results
 - outcomes from research
 - relevant benchmarking against comparable organisations, where that information is available
 - assurance audits as commissioned by the Audit Committee