

Communications and engagement: our strategy 2022-27

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Executive summary

We want to develop and improve our approach to communications and engagement over the next five years, to help us achieve our vision of safe and effective pharmacy care at the heart of healthier communities.

Our key challenges

1. How to ensure that all those we engage with understand our primary role of providing assurance to the public about safe and effective pharmacy care.
2. How to ensure that patient and public voice is fully embedded in all our work.
3. How to ensure the speed and clarity of our communications in an increasingly fast-paced and changing external environment.
4. How to ensure we have the necessary skills, capability and capacity to provide accessible, flexible, and innovative communications through our website and other channels.

Our strategic aims for communications and engagement

1. Work in partnership with patients and the public to make sure their voices are heard in our work, and inform patients and the public about the standards they can expect when using pharmacy services.
2. Support pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, students, trainees and pharmacy owners to provide person-centred care and drive improvements in patient safety, by sharing our data, insights and examples of good practice with the people we regulate and the wider sector.
3. Make sure people engaging with us have a good experience, by building our capabilities and capacity across the organisation to produce high-quality and accessible communications.

Our strategic objectives for communications and engagement

We will:

- listen to patients and the public about their experiences of pharmacy and health services and use what we learn from our engagement with patients and the public to shape all of our work, including our standards and guidance
- proactively seek opportunities to engage with patients and the public about the standards they can expect from pharmacy and how our work helps make sure they receive safe, effective pharmacy care
- engage effectively with the people we regulate and all other stakeholders and listen to their views and experiences, to inform our work and build our insights into key issues
- work closely with other teams and external partners to proactively share data, insights and good practice, facilitate and influence discussions and show leadership on key issues
- transform our website and other digital platforms so everyone has a good experience of engaging with us online

- build communications skills and improve processes across the organisation, so we can use every interaction as an opportunity to explain our role and how we work to everyone who engages with us
- use insights and evaluation to inform and improve our communications and engagement

Part 1: Our approach to communications and engagement

We want to develop and improve our approach to communications and engagement over the next five years, to help us achieve our vision of safe and effective pharmacy care at the heart of healthier communities.

This strategy sets out how we plan to do this, to help us achieve our **Vision 2030** and **Strategic plan 2020-25**, which underpin all our regulatory activities.

The strategy is not limited to the work of the Communications team; it also includes building capability and capacity across the organisation to improve our communications with everyone we engage with.

Implementing this strategy will also support the delivery of other strategies, including our strategies on **managing concerns about pharmacy professionals** and **delivering equality, improving diversity and fostering inclusion**.

It will also help us to meet **our commitment to working in partnership with patients and the public**, which outlines how we will listen to patients and the public and involve them in our work, and was co-produced with the the help of a working group of patients and members of the public.

We will need to take a strategic approach to communications and engagement to help us to respond effectively to the significant changes, challenges and opportunities ahead. These include significant changes to pharmacy services and to the regulation of health professionals, major reforms to the education and training of the pharmacy team, and the long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key changes

This strategy sets out key changes to how we will communicate and engage. Making these changes will mean that in five years' time we will be working differently to how we work now, to help us achieve our aims and objectives.

The key changes will include:

- **how we will work in partnership with patients and the public**
The most significant shift proposed in this strategy relates to how we will engage with patients and the public. We will move to a co-production approach, so that the patient voice is embedded across our functions and we are actively listening to what matters to people who use pharmacy services. We will also increase our proactive communications with the public to help maintain and increase their confidence in pharmacy services and help them access safe and effective care.
- **how we will use communications and engagement to enhance patient safety and drive improvements in pharmacy practice**
We will proactively share our insights, intelligence and data to influence and inform discussions and decisions made by others, and to drive improvements in pharmacy practice. We will find further opportunities to show leadership on key issues and areas of work, including by bringing people together and facilitating discussions, and by clearly articulating our position and role.

- **How people will experience engaging with us**

Through improving our website and other communications channels and processes, and building the skills and confidence of colleagues, we will help make sure people have a positive experience of engaging with us. Through our open and person-centred approach to communications and engagement, and our clear focus on improvement and learning, we will help to make sure people see us as a good-quality, effective regulator focused on improvement.

We will develop an action plan to set out the detail of how these changes will be delivered.

Development of the strategy

The strategic aims and objectives have been developed using an evidence-based and collaborative approach. This has involved proactively seeking and listening to the views of internal and external stakeholders, as well as considering available evidence and information.

This strategy has been informed by discussions and engagement with:

- patients and the public at three meetings of a working group to help develop the strategy
- our Council members through two meetings of a working group and one Council workshop
- our Senior Leadership Group, Directors for Scotland and Wales and the Communications team
- colleagues responsible for communications and engagement within other regulators and pharmacy representative bodies

We have also carefully considered feedback we have received from pharmacy professionals, pharmacy owners, students and trainees about the approach they would like us to take when communicating and engaging with them. This includes feedback through previous surveys of pharmacy professionals asking about their experiences of our communications and engagement and our website, and through events and engagement activities we have held, as well as informal feedback we have received.

The strategy has also been informed by:

- our Vision 2030 and Strategic plan 2020-25
- our strategy for managing concerns about pharmacy professionals and our strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion
- our commitment to working in partnership with patients and the public
- reports from national inquiries into major patient safety concerns, and their learnings and recommendations in relation to public and patient involvement and engagement, organisational culture and communications
- our strategy for communications and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, which set out a more flexible, responsive and tailored approach
- the external environment in which we are working, and key developments we are seeing and expect to see within pharmacy, regulation, health and social care, legislation and governments within the three countries in which we regulate

Our Vision 2030

Our Vision 2030 is for 'Safe and effective pharmacy care at the heart of healthier communities'. This helps us to focus on the difference we want to make for patients and the public, and is structured around three main ambitions:

1. **A good quality, independent regulator of pharmacy for the public**
2. **Practising an anticipatory and proportionate approach to regulation**
3. Operating as a professional and lean organisation.

The Vision 2030 sets out our ambition to use communication and engagement proactively as a powerful regulatory tool to **empower pharmacy users, enhance patient safety and drive improvements** in pharmacy and in the communities pharmacy serves.

This strategy for our communications and engagement will help us to achieve that ambition.

Our strategic plan 2020-25

Our Strategic plan 2020-2025 sets out the work we plan to do to help us achieve our Vision 2030.

This strategy for communications and engagement will help us to deliver key aims set out in the strategic plan, including:

- communicating more directly with the public as well as with pharmacy
- raising the public's awareness and understanding of the standards they should expect from pharmacy
- using data, intelligence and insights to help us get ahead of issues before they happen or become a bigger issue
- improving customers' experiences of our services

Our strategy on managing concerns about pharmacy professionals

This strategy will help us to deliver key commitments in our strategy for managing concerns about pharmacy professionals, including:

- increasing awareness of how we manage concerns to support professionalism and encourage openness
- making it easy to raise a concern and understand the process and what it means to everyone involved
- better explanations of our processes for managing concerns on the website

Our strategy on delivering equality, improving diversity and fostering inclusion

This strategy for communications and engagement will help us to deliver key commitments in our strategy for delivering equality, promoting diversity and fostering inclusion, including:

- supporting pharmacy technicians, pharmacists and pharmacy teams to provide person-centred care that recognises and respects diversity and cultural differences. We will do this by working with key

stakeholders, across all three nations, to develop and share best practice information about reducing health inequalities, providing inclusive services or tackling other barriers such as language, literacy or other communication challenges

- developing our policies and procedures in line with best practice, better reflecting the voices and lived experiences of our stakeholders and workforce

Our approach to regulation

Our vision and strategic plan set out that our approach as a regulator is to:

- work **collaboratively** with others
- promote **professionalism** and **person-centred care**
- focus on what makes a **difference for patients and the public**
- base what we do on **evidence**
- regulate in a way that is **effective and responsive** to developments in the three countries in which we regulate

The implementation of this strategy will help make sure this approach is consistently reflected in all our communications and engagement.

Principles for communication and engagement

We will be:

- **accessible and inclusive:** we will make sure our communications and engagement are accessible and inclusive for everyone; reflecting our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
- **open and collaborative:** we will seek feedback, actively engaging with – and listening to – our audiences and working collaboratively with our stakeholders, so that our approach is outward-looking and insight-driven
- **targeted and tailored:** we will make sure our communications and engagement meet the needs of each individual audience
- **anticipatory and responsive:** we will anticipate the needs of people we communicate and engage with, and actively look for opportunities to communicate and engage on key issues in a timely way to build positive relationships with our stakeholders
- **strategic and focused on improvement:** our communications and engagement activities will be planned to help us achieve our strategic aims and will include measures of progress and success

Our audiences and stakeholders

As an organisation, we need to effectively communicate and engage with a wide variety of audiences and stakeholders, including:

- patients and the public
- pharmacists
- pharmacy technicians

- pharmacy owners
- the wider pharmacy team (including people working within pharmacies and in management roles)
- trainee pharmacists and pharmacy technicians
- students and potential students
- organisations that represent any of the groups referenced above
- other regulators and organisations with a role relating to pharmacy, health and social care
- governments and officials
- parliamentarians
- journalists and the media

Words matter

We have described below what we mean by some of the key words and phrases that we use throughout our strategy.

Patients and the public

In this strategy, we use ‘patients and the public’ and ‘people’ as short-hand to cover a wide range of groups who may use pharmacy and health services, which will each have their own views, priorities and needs. Many individuals will belong to several different groups. We will make sure that in our communications and engagement, we work to engage different groups of patients and the public, and to understand individual needs and perspectives.

Audiences and stakeholders

We also use ‘audiences’ and ‘stakeholders’ in this strategy as short-hand to cover all of the different individuals, groups and organisations who have an interest in health, pharmacy or regulation in some way, and who we may need and/or want to engage and communicate with. The section on ‘Our audiences and stakeholders’ above includes a list of some of our key audiences and stakeholders, but it is important to emphasise that this is not a complete list. For each activity or project, we will analyse which individuals, groups or organisations may have an interest, and we will develop a stakeholder/audience list based on that analysis.

Accessible communications and engagement

Making sure our communications and engagement are accessible is about responding to the fact people have different communication needs, and making sure that there are no barriers preventing someone from accessing information or using a service. This helps to create an inclusive environment for everyone, by making sure as many people as possible can access the information we provide and interact successfully with us.

We have a legal duty to make websites and mobiles apps accessible, by meeting accessibility requirements.

Part 2: What challenges do we need to address through the strategy?

Through the work to develop the strategy, we have identified a number of challenges in relation to our communications and engagement, which this strategy will help us to address.

1. How to ensure that all those we engage with understand our primary role of providing assurance to the public about safe and effective pharmacy care

Our engagement with patients and the public suggests that there is currently limited awareness among patients and the public of our existence and our role. While it may not be necessary or realistic to achieve high levels of awareness of our role and work among the general public, we need to identify appropriate opportunities to raise awareness among pharmacy users of the standards they can expect.

We also need to make sure that people who may need some information about the standards they can expect from pharmacies, or want to raise a concern, can quickly and easily find us and feel confident that we are here for patients and the public.

There is also a separate challenge of patients and the public having a lack of awareness and limited understanding of the evolving role of pharmacy, for example the increase in pharmacist independent prescribers.

Our engagement with pharmacy professionals, pharmacy owners, students and trainees suggests that many of these audiences also do not fully understand our role. In particular, there is sometimes an expectation that we are there to represent the interests of pharmacy professionals, or the pharmacy sector, rather than to protect the public.

2. How to ensure the patient and public voice is fully embedded in all our work

The majority of our communications and engagement activity and capacity at the moment focuses on pharmacy professionals, students, trainees and employers, and the organisations that represent and support them. Most of the capacity within the Communications team is currently used in supporting other teams to promote our consultations, regulatory activities and key programmes of work.

While we do undertake successful engagement with patients and the public, this is usually focused on consulting with patients and the public on our main programmes of work due to limited capacity (although with some notable exceptions, such as our successful work on valproate and Safe Spaces). This means we may not fully understand key issues affecting patients and the public, as we only ask them about issues that matter to us. In particular, we may not understand different communities and their different needs.

A key challenge will be to redress this balance, so we can free up capacity and resource to focus more on our engagement with patients and the public, and embed patient and public voice in our work, while still meeting the needs of the people we regulate and the wider pharmacy sector.

3. How to ensure the speed and clarity of our communications in an increasingly fast-paced and changing external environment

We are experiencing a fast-moving agenda in each of the three countries in which we regulate, which we need to keep abreast with and respond to.

We are anticipating a major programme of legislative change over the next five years which will have an impact on the way we work. We are also expecting to see major changes to the education and training of pharmacy professionals, the roles of pharmacy professionals and how pharmacy services will be delivered, and ongoing divergence in health and social care policy across England, Scotland and Wales.

There also remains significant uncertainty about the long-term impacts of the COVID pandemic and its implications for our future communications and engagement.

A key challenge will be to respond effectively and rapidly to this fast-moving agenda in a way that gives people confidence that we are a good-quality regulator, through timely and clear communications. It will be vital for us to effectively prioritise what issues we engage with.

We need to make sure there is flexibility in our approach, so we can quickly respond to emerging issues.

4. How to ensure we have the necessary skills, capabilities and capacity to provide accessible, flexible, and innovative communications through our website and other channels

The corporate website is our main communications channel, with over 7.5 million visits a year.

Our current corporate website is outdated and does not provide a good user experience. As a result, people who cannot find the information they need, or complete key tasks online, often contact customer services or the communications department for help, increasing the workload of these teams.

There is a major project underway to update the website by Autumn 2022 which should bring significant improvements in user experience.

There are currently relatively limited skills across the organisation in relation to day-to-day communications tasks such as creating accessible documents, drafting emails, updating website content, preparing presentations and agendas for events, setting up external meetings and developing basic forms. This means that a significant proportion of the capacity of the Communications team is taken up with helping colleagues to complete these tasks.

There are also some potential skills gaps within the Communications team and wider organisation such as expertise in new digital technology to produce rich content (for example videos and infographics) and the use of digital tools to evaluate our work. A key challenge will be to upskill staff across the organisation to undertake key tasks and to build colleagues' confidence so all our engagement and communications, in all teams, are consistent and of good quality.

Part 3: Our strategic aims and objectives for communications and engagement

Over the next five years, our communications and engagement activity will be focused on achieving the following three strategic aims.

1. Work in partnership with patients and the public to make sure their voices are heard in our work, and inform people about the standards they can expect when using pharmacy services.
2. Support pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies to provide person-centred care and drive improvements in patient safety, by sharing our data, insights and examples of good practice with the people we regulate and the wider sector.
3. Make sure people engaging with us have a good experience, by building our capabilities and capacity across the organisation to produce high-quality and accessible communications.

Our strategic aims and objectives explained

Our **three key strategic aims** will be delivered through **seven strategic objectives** within the strategy period. Implementing this strategy will enable the organisation to understand people's needs and experiences of pharmacy, and health and social care more widely. This will help us to regulate more effectively.

Strategic aim 1: Work in partnership with patients and the public to make sure their voices are heard in our work, and inform patients and the public about the standards they can expect when using pharmacy services.

Our strategic objectives to achieve this aim

1. **We will listen to patients and the public about their experiences of pharmacy and health services, and use what we learn from our engagement with patients and the public to shape all of our work, including our standards and guidance**

We will demonstrate through our communications and engagement that we are a listening organisation, which is committed to learning about what is important to patients and the public and the issues they are experiencing.

We will put in place new methods of listening to patients and the public and sharing what we learn.

We will use communications and engagement to make sure the voices of patients and the public are heard when we develop standards, policies or processes. This will involve seeking feedback and insights from patients and the public at an early stage of developing our standards, guidance or policies.

We will work with colleagues to carefully consider all of the different views and perspectives that we hear through our engagement, and assess if and how we can reflect those views and perspectives in our work. We will also make sure people know how their feedback is used. When

people raise issues or concerns that we are not able to respond to, because they are not within our role or remit, we will signpost them to other organisations who may be able to help.

What we learn from our engagement with patients and the public will inform our priorities, as we will focus on issues that people tell us are important to them and that affect their health, safety and well-being.

This will involve shifting our focus, so we spend more of our capacity and resources on engaging with patients and the public.

We will transition to a co-production approach for our patient and public engagement, so that the patient voice is embedded across our functions and in the future development of our strategy and governance.

We will involve and engage a wide cross-section of society, focusing on reaching groups who may find it more challenging to have their voices heard or who may experience health inequalities or patient safety issues when using pharmacy and health services. Through engaging directly with different communities, we will be able to understand their different needs and consider that in our work.

Case study: listening to patients and the public

Over the last two years we have developed an online patient and public panel with over 200 members, who we regularly engage with through focus groups and other surveys. Their feedback has helped inform key policies and publications.

We recruited six members of the panel to be on a working group to help us develop our commitment to working with patients and the public, as well as this strategy. The working group was involved from the very beginning of developing the commitment and strategy, and we have met regularly with them and incorporated their feedback at each stage. This is a model we would like to build on for future engagement with patients and the public.

2. We will proactively seek opportunities to engage with patients and the public about the standards they can expect from pharmacy and how our work helps make sure they receive safe, effective pharmacy care

We will actively look for opportunities to explain to patients and the public about our work and the standards we set for pharmacy professionals and pharmacies. We will use a range of methods and communications channels to provide advice and information to people about what safe and effective pharmacy care looks like and what standards they can expect.

This will help to maintain and improve high levels of public confidence in pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies, by explaining that they need to meet standards which focus on making sure people receive safe and effective care.

We will focus our resources on engaging with patients and the public about issues that they have told us matter to them, that affect patient safety or public confidence in pharmacy, where we identify an opportunity to help address health inequalities, and where we have a clear role to play.

For example, patients and the public may have questions and concerns about pharmacy professionals taking on new roles (such as independent prescribing) and whether they have the education, training and skills needed to undertake these roles safely.

It is for other organisations (such as the NHS in each country) to promote these new roles and services. We do however have a responsibility to explain to patients and the public about the standards we set for education and training and how we make sure those standards are met. Consequently, patients and the public can have confidence that pharmacy professionals have the appropriate education, training and skills to take on new roles safely.

This would also include engaging with patients and the public on how to keep safe when accessing pharmacy services online, or continuing our work to help make sure that women and girls who are prescribed sodium valproate get the information and support they need.

We will also look for new ways to promote our inspection reports to the public, to share the positive message that most pharmacies are meeting all of our standards. This will help to maintain public confidence in pharmacy and to give patients and the public the information they may need to access all services safely and effectively.

Other organisations, including Governments and the NHS in each country, will play a leading role in sharing information with patients and the public about pharmacy services. We will seek opportunities to work closely and effectively with Governments and the NHS in each country to help share key messages and uphold public confidence in pharmacy. Where possible, we will also identify relevant opportunities to work at a local level, for example with Integrated Care Systems in England, the Health Boards in Scotland and the Health Boards in Wales.

Case study: seeking opportunities to engage with patients and the public

In 2020 we published a new guide to help people make sure that medicines or treatment they get online are safe and right for them. We led on developing the online guide which was supported by ten leading regulators and representative bodies for health professionals, health services and medicines across the UK.

We worked closely with the other health organisations to develop six top tips for patients and the public, using insights from concerns raised with us by patients and the public about online healthcare services, as well as direct feedback from our patient and public panel.

We plan to build on this approach when developing resources for patients and the public in the future.

Examples of how we will achieve this strategic aim

We will:

- develop and evaluate new ways of engaging with patients and the public, working towards a co-production model for our standards, guidance and policies
- set up a 'sounding board' of patients and the public, drawn from members of our patient and public panel, and holding regular sessions with the sounding board to listen to their key experiences, needs and views, and identify insights, intelligence and issues
- undertake research and surveys with patients and the public to help us understand their experiences and what's important to them
- produce and share resources that help patients and the public understand the work we do to protect patient safety and understand the standards that pharmacy professionals and pharmacies have to meet. we will work in partnership with patients and the public, other regulators and

organisations to achieve this. For example, we will look to produce a resource for patients and the public which explains what they can expect when a pharmacist is prescribing medicines for them or carrying out a medicines review

- work with colleagues to make sure patients and the public have a positive experience of raising concerns with us through improving our online form for raising concerns and the information people receive from us at each stage of the process

The outcomes we aim to achieve

The outcomes we aim to achieve by carrying out this strategic aim are:

- we meet our commitment to work in partnership with patients, carers and members of the public, and to listen and learn from them
- we develop our policies and procedures in line with best practice, including co-producing them to better reflect the voices and lived experiences of patients and the public, and pharmacy staff
- we respond quickly to patient safety issues and give patients and the public engaging, helpful resources to help them access safe, effective pharmacy services

Strategic aim 2: Support pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, students, trainees and pharmacy owners to provide person-centred care and drive improvements in patient safety, by sharing our data, insights, and examples of good practice with the people we regulate and the wider sector.

Our strategic objectives to achieve this aim

- 1. We will engage effectively with the people we regulate, students and trainees and all other stakeholders and listen to their views and experiences, to inform our work and build our insights into key issues**

We know that individual relationships and engagement with our staff, Council members and associates are really valued by the people we regulate and our wider stakeholders. Working collaboratively with individuals and organisations across GB is essential if we want to achieve our aims and ambitions.

We want to build on the strong relationships that we already have; for example the relationships that the Directors of Scotland and Wales have with key stakeholders in their countries, and the relationships that our inspectors have in their local communities.

We will demonstrate through our communications and engagement that we are a listening organisation, which is committed to listening to the experiences, views and concerns of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy owners, students, and trainees, and other members of the pharmacy team through our engagement with them. We will share what we learn with the rest of the organisation and with other stakeholders.

We will make sure we engage effectively with the people we regulate, students, trainees and other stakeholders in each of the three countries in which we regulate. This will help us build our understanding of the context in which pharmacy services are being delivered in each country, and tailor our communications, engagement and our wider work within England, Scotland and Wales

in response. We will clearly explain our role and our work whenever we engage with people, to build their understanding of what we do.

We know that the people we regulate have welcomed the more supportive and personal approach we have taken in how we have communicated and engaged during the pandemic. We want to support pharmacy professionals and pharmacy owners to provide safe and effective care to patients and the public.

Through our tone and our approach to communications and engagement, we will encourage people to know us as an organisation that is focused on learning and improvement (rather than the traditional view of a regulator as a 'policeman' focused on punishment).

There is sometimes an incorrect perception among some of our audiences that our role is to represent the interests of pharmacy professionals. We will need to make clear that it is the role of other organisations to represent the personal interests of pharmacy professionals and signpost pharmacy professionals to these organisations for personal support and advice.

2. Work closely with other teams and external partners to proactively share data, insights and good practice, facilitate and influence discussions and show leadership on key issues

We will build on the more flexible, agile, responsive, proactive approach to communications and engagement we used in the pandemic.

We will clearly explain our role and our impact. In particular, we will explain the benefits of having an independent regulator for pharmacy, which regulates both professionals and the pharmacies in which they work.

We will look for opportunities to demonstrate leadership on key issues and areas of work, including by bringing people together and facilitating discussions, and by clearly articulating our position and role.

One example of how we are already doing this is through our ongoing work with partners and stakeholders in the area of education and training. We have worked collaboratively on implementing new standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists, and developing the approach to regulating the post-registration education and training of pharmacy professionals. In these areas, we have worked closely with key stakeholders to discuss key issues and how we can work together in the best way to implement change.

We will proactively share our insights, intelligence and data including from inspections, the concerns raised with us and our work around equality, diversity and inclusion, to inform and influence the decisions made by others and to drive improvements in pharmacy practice. This will include promoting the learning shared via our knowledge hub for inspections and our insights from managing concerns, to inform and influence practice in pharmacy, and to encourage changes in behaviour with professionals showing more openness and insight when things go wrong.

We will also work with other regulators and leadership bodies to communicate and engage with the health and social care professionals we regulate, as well as governments, parliamentarians and other decision-makers in England, Scotland and Wales. For example, we will look for opportunities to work with other regulators to help increase understanding among other health professionals of the developing roles of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians (for example in prescribing) and to promote good practice in multi-disciplinary working across professions and settings (such as by sharing examples of pharmacists and GPs working in collaboration).

As outlined in our strategy on equality, diversity and inclusion, we will also support pharmacy professionals in providing person-centred care that recognises diversity and cultural differences, by developing and sharing best practice examples or communications messages.

We will use powerful and compelling narratives about our vision, our work and the impact we have, using data and insights to explain the benefits and value we bring. Our narrative will focus on how we are improving patient safety through our work; highlighting emerging risks and the actions we are taking to protect patients and the public.

This will help people to continue to have confidence in us as a good-quality regulator.

Case study: working closely with other teams and external partners

We have worked closely with other teams and partner organisations to proactively highlight to pharmacy professionals and pharmacy teams what they must do when dispensing sodium valproate to women of childbearing age.

This has included promoting the MHRA's Pregnancy Prevention Programme (PPP) for sodium valproate, developing and sharing a patient safety video with the Independent Foetal Anti-Convulsant Trust (INFACT) and working with our inspection team and other regulators to identify and share examples of good and excellent practice when dispensing sodium valproate.

Examples of how we will achieve this strategic aim

We will:

- set up **sounding boards of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy owners, students and trainees**, to facilitate direct two-way conversations about key issues that may affect patient safety or public protection
- **engage directly with different sectors and groups across pharmacy**, to make sure we can effectively gather and share greater intelligence and insights into pharmacy practice and the experiences of the pharmacy team in different settings
- **engage directly with key stakeholders, including Ministers, members of key committees and all-party groups**, other parliamentarians, and officials/ civil servants in each of the three countries in which we regulate, to build their understanding about our role, work, insights and the value we add, and to inform key decisions
- work proactively **with the media and via social media** to help us tell our story, respond quickly to emerging issues, and look for opportunities to build understanding of our role, work and insights among patients and the public, as well as the pharmacy sector

The outcomes we aim to achieve

The outcomes we aim to achieve by carrying out this strategic aim are:

- we have a good understanding of key issues within pharmacy that affect patient safety, public confidence and health inequalities through our engagement and our relationships
- we respond quickly and effectively to emerging issues, using an agile approach, showing leadership and effectively informing and influencing wider discussions and decision-making

Strategic aim 3: Make sure people engaging with us have a good experience, by building our capabilities and capacity across the organisation to produce high-quality and accessible communications.

Our strategic objectives to achieve this aim

1. Transform our website and other digital platforms to make sure people have a good experience of engaging with us online

We will develop, build and launch a new corporate website, and use other innovative digital tools, so everyone can have a good experience of engaging with us online. This will help people to perceive us as a professional organisation offering a good-quality service to patients and the public and to those we regulate.

The new website will:

- enable us to effectively explain our role and share our standards and other key information with all audiences, to enhance patient safety and drive improvements in pharmacy
- help us to engage and inform patients and the public, to support and empower them when using pharmacy services
- effectively engage other key audiences, including the people we regulate and job applicants
- help all visitors to quickly and easily achieve their goals or complete tasks
- be well-designed, secure, reliable and accessible

The new website will have clear sections for each key audience, with tailored content for each audience to help make the information and resources as useful and engaging as possible. The website will offer accessibility tools and the option to translate the website content into Welsh or other languages, to make our website as accessible as possible to different audiences.

We will also continue to develop our approach to engaging with our audiences on social media, increasing our direct engagement with those who want to interact with us via our social media channels.

We will have processes in place to respond quickly and appropriately when concerns or major issues are raised with us on social media and will be more open, personal, person-centred and supportive in our responses to queries on social media. We will also increase our monitoring of social media as far as possible within our resources, to help us 'listen' to key discussions on social media and understand key issues experienced by the people we regulate, the public and our other stakeholders.

We will increase our use of infographics, social media, videos and other digital content to help us promote our work and raise awareness of our standards, data and insights.

2. Build communications skills and improve processes across the organisation, so we can use every interaction as an opportunity to explain our role and how we work to everyone who engages with us

Communications and engagement need to be everyone's job if we are to achieve the Vision 2030, and everyone will need the appropriate skills to do that job well. We will work with teams across the organisation to make sure we are taking a person-centred approach to every interaction, and

that we are using a consistent and helpful style and appropriate tone of voice (both internally and externally) which reflects our culture and values.

This includes providing training and support to help colleagues in teams such as the Customer Contact Centre, Registration team and the Fitness to Practise directorate, to write emails and letters to people that are clear and person-centred.

These teams engage directly with external audiences, including patients and the public, on a regular basis and their communications with these audiences will have a significant impact on how people perceive us as an organisation. Working with these teams to improve their communications will help people to see us as a professional organisation which is actively demonstrating its culture and values.

Channels and tools for communicating and engaging with people are developing rapidly and the way people engage with media and social media is likely to change significantly over the next five years. We will take an agile approach to reviewing these developments and considering what changes we should make to the channels and tools we use, to continually improve our approach to communications and engagement. We will also regularly review what training and skills the Communications team and other colleagues need to effectively use new tools and channels.

We will continue our work to make sure our communications and online content meet accessibility requirements, so they are accessible to people with a wide range of needs.

A key priority will be making our communications short and sharp, as we know our audiences receive lots of information and are short on time. Tailoring messages to particular audiences and channels also needs to be a priority.

Internal communications

We will continue to work closely with our Internal Communications Manager to ensure that our staff are kept informed and up to date on external developments and communications. We will provide targeted communications and guidance to individuals within our organisation, such as our contact centre, inspections team and others who interact with external stakeholders, to ensure that they feel informed and supported to communicate key messages in their day-to-day work, where relevant. We will use a multi-channel approach in our internal communications, including more video content.

3. Use insights and evaluation to inform and improve our communications and engagement

We will evaluate and learn from our communications and engagement activity, and use those learnings to continually improve the experiences of people engaging with us.

We will keep up-to-date with good practice in evaluating communications and engagement activity, and utilise appropriate methods and technology to help us understand the impact of our activities.

Examples of how we will achieve this strategic aim

We will:

- work with the learning team to conduct a learning needs analysis to identify communications and engagement knowledge gaps in our workforce and implement a plan to address skills gaps

- invest in upskilling colleagues across the organisation so they can successfully take on day-to-day activities such as writing for digital channels, optimising documents for accessibility requirements, creating user-friendly forms and facilitating at workshops and events
- invest in upskilling colleagues within the Communications team so we are following best practice in developing engaging and accessible content across all of our channels, including video and infographics
- develop a new manager-level role within the Communications team, which will focus on planning and evaluating all of our communications and engagement activity, to make sure learnings are embedded in our work
- introduce annual surveys to understand the experiences of website users

The outcomes we aim to achieve

The outcomes we aim to achieve by carrying out this strategic aim are:

- patients and the public visiting our website or interacting with us have a good understanding of our role and how we are working to help improve the pharmacy services and care they receive
- our audiences (including those who rely on the support of assistive technology tools) can access information and complete tasks successfully and efficiently
- our staff feel confident and capable to communicate and engage effectively with external individuals and organisations
- we continually evaluate our communications and engagement activity and use what we learn to improve
- we continue to meet the Standards of Good Regulation set by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA)

Part 4: Monitoring, reviewing and reporting our performance

The effective delivery of our strategic aims and objectives will be underpinned by an annual action plan, which will detail the specific activities that are aligned to the delivery of each objective.

The key measures we will use to consider and assess our progress will include:

- levels and value of engagement with stakeholders through meetings, social media and attendance at our events, and feedback from these stakeholders
- regular surveys of our website users and the people we regulate
- insights from our website analytics and other data from our evaluation of communications and engagement activity

The Senior Leadership Group will review the delivery of the strategy on a quarterly basis. We will also report to our Council every quarter on our progress in delivering the action plan and the overall strategy, through our regular communications and engagement report. We will also provide an annual update to the Finance and Planning Committee.

We will report our progress every year in the GPhC annual report. Our objectives are reviewed annually in line with our business planning cycle.

As an organisation, we have already committed to keeping our Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan under close review, to make sure we are able to adapt quickly to changes in the external context, the delivery models of pharmacy services and wider changes across the health and social care sector.

We are applying the same approach to our communications and engagement strategy and we will keep this under review, to ensure we can anticipate and respond appropriately to emerging internal and external issues, challenges and opportunities.