

Equality and Diversity Council Meeting Paper

28th July 2015

Communications Proposal Paper

Purpose and context

The Equality and Diversity Council provides visible and robust leadership on equality issues across the NHS. Establishing an effective and robust communications approach is essential for the Council. It will provide the Council with a consistent and timely means of communicating its work to the system, reinforcing to the Council its own purpose and added value, and helping to maintain its credibility and momentum.

The refresh of the work programme and membership of the Council has highlighted key recommendations for its future communications element. This paper presents options for the Council's communications workstream going forward.

Action taken to date

Currently, the Council relies on its key members to use their influence in communicating out to the rest of the system the work of the Council, via a 'virtual' communications subgroup. This group is composed of communication experts from a number of national organisations and will help in the dissemination of consistent and timely EDC messages across the sectors

Working with Council members, the Communications colleagues at NHS England scoped the initial key messages and the 'EDC Communication Strategy'. At the time, the Strategy was circulated to and engaged upon with Council members.

Current communication mechanisms for the EDC include:

- An EDC webpage – providing background and information to the Council and where EDC material including minutes of meetings and membership details can be found
- An active EDC twitter account
- An email account for communicating to EDC members and beyond

To date, communications support has been provided for Council activities including:

- Re-launch of the EDC
- Launch of EDS2 at the London NHS Values Summit
- EDC system alignment session at the 2014 Health and Social Care Expo
- System leaders signing the joint EDC statement of declaration on promoting equality and tackling health inequalities
- Inclusion of the proposed Workforce Race Equality Standard and the Equality Delivery System for the NHS – EDS2, within the NHS contract 2015/16 consultation.

Current position and options

The current refresh of the Council's work programme and membership highlighted key recommendations for its future communications element. In particular, it suggested the pooling of resource from national organisations represented on the Council, and of NHS England taking the lead role in the proposed communications element.

NHS England has identified an internal communications lead that will be the organisation's key contact for work on the EDC.

To date, the following national organisations have nominated specific communication experts to work on the Council's communication element:

- Care Quality commission
- Health education England
- NHS Employers
- NHS England
- NHS Providers

The following options and are presented to the Council for discussion and agreement:

1. Bringing together of a pooled resource for communications, of circa £50k, from the major national organisations represented on the Council. This resource can be used to recruit communication consultant(s) to work specifically on the Council's communications element, reporting to NHS England;
2. Reinstate the EDC Communications Subgroup with the nominated communication experts from the national organisations represented on the Council, with the NHS England communications expert taking the lead.

Key risks

The absence of an EDC communications element is likely to have a negative impact upon:

- Keeping equality high on the agenda.
- Positively positioning the EDC as a body of influence in promoting equality within the NHS and beyond.
- Promoting the key work products of the EDC in a timely and consistent way.
- Improving understanding of how people's differences, cultural expectations and social status can affect their experiences and health outcomes.

Actions requested and recommendations

- EDC to consider and agree on the operational structure and resourcing option for the communications element of the Council.
- National organisations represented on the EDC to identify communications leads to work on this element of the Council, where this has not already been undertaken.