

**CHILDREN'S
SERVICES
COMMUNICATIONS
FRAMEWORK
2015 - 2017**

Agreed by:

Date Agreed:

Contents

Item	Description	Page
1.	Introduction aim and objectives	1
2.	Our Vision for Children and Young People	1
3.	Children's Services One Team	1-2
4	Roles and Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managers• Staff• Corporate Communications	2-3
5.	CS Audiences	3-5
6.	Tactics and Channels	5-6
7.	Key Principles	6
8.	Monitoring & Evaluation	6
9	Tactical Plan	7-9

1. Introduction

Central Bedfordshire Children's Services has a statutory responsibility for the protection and promotion of welfare and well being of children and young people. The core business of the service is to provide social care (protection and support), promote inclusion, and partnership working.

Effective communication is imperative to the work of the service. This Communication Framework outline how information is communicated between Children's Services Stakeholders, partners and service users.

- **Strategic Aim**

To build confidence and manage the reputation of Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Services through effective and timely communications to partners, stakeholders and service users and ensure people know who to turn to if they are concerned

- **Objectives**

1. Deliver effective operational and communication arrangements
2. Work collaboratively to enable an intelligence led approach to managing communications and ensuring a two way flow of information
3. Ensure targeted information to achieve a sustained increase in understanding about what the service does and why, it's eligibility criteria and allocation of resources
4. Promote ways in which service users can engage with and support the decision making process helping to build and sustain a positive image of Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Services
5. Provide advance communications in order to raise awareness of critical issues and challenges and manage expectations and mitigate as far as possible any negative reaction to the work of the Children's Services
6. Promote dialogue, information sharing and opportunities for joint working.

2. Our vision for children in Central Bedfordshire

We want every child in Central Bedfordshire to enjoy their childhood and have the best possible start in life. We want every child to do well in education, make friends and build strong relationships with their family. By the age of 19, as young adults, we want every young person to have the knowledge, skills and qualifications that will give them the best chance of success, so that they are prepared to take their full place in society as a healthy, happy, contributing and confident citizen.

3. Central Bedfordshire Children's Services

Children only get one childhood. In Children's Services we can all make a big difference to children's lives and their experience of childhood. We can help to keep them safe and inspire them to achieve. Everyone will champion children at every opportunity and everything is underpinned by our belief that:

- **everyone deserves respect**
- **everyone deserves to be heard**
- **everyone deserves to be safe and achieve.**

What we want for every young person in Central Bedfordshire

We want every child in Central Bedfordshire to enjoy their childhood and have the best possible start in life. We want every child to do well in education, make friends and build strong relationships with their family. As young adults, we want every young person to have the knowledge, skills and qualifications that will give them the best chance of success, so that they are prepared to take their full place in society as a healthy, happy, contributing and confident citizen.

Which values underpin our work

- respect and empowerment – we will treat people as individuals who matter to us
- stewardship and efficiency – we will make the best use of the resources available to us
- results focused – we will focus on the outcomes that make a difference to people's lives; and
- collaborative – we will work closely with our colleagues, partners and customers to deliver on these outcomes.

How we work with young people and as *one team* in Children's Services

- seeking out young people's views so that they shape the support and help they get
- giving the most vulnerable a strong voice and support
- putting young people first and championing their rights
- building resilience in young people and their families
- working with young people and partners to ensure they get a good quality education
- helping families early and quickly and recognising that working successfully with young people will mean working successfully with the family
- treating families with respect
- sharing young people's information with each other and partners to keep children safe and making sure that young people's information is stored, recorded and handled securely
- knowing whether we have made a positive difference

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Service Managers, Senior Manager, Head of Service, and Director

- Ensure systems are in place within their service or department for two-way communications, which supports the Communications Framework and adheres to policy and practice.
- Senior Managers, are responsible for the day-to-day practice of good communications within their own area and:
 - Cascade information to team leaders and feedback responses
 - Engage with corporate communications for advice at the start of projects
 - Understand the principles of good communication and engagement and be capable of delivering them
 - Feed corporate communications team with positive media and internal news
 - Contribute to the communication and engagement planning processes
 - Encourage a climate of two-way communications at all levels
 - Meet staff regularly in team meetings to ensure that they are well informed and have the opportunity to contribute
 - Hold regular one-to-one meetings with directly reporting staff
 - Ensure all staff has time to read internal bulletins, etc.
 - Ensure the right message to the right people

Role of all staff

It is the role and responsibility of every member of staff to communicate in an open and timely fashion. It is everyone's responsibility to pass on important and relevant information as well as taking responsibility for receiving information. All staff should be aware of communications methods and existing ways to receive and give information their role is to:

- Refer media issues and enquiries to the Corporate Communications
- Take responsibility for seeking information by reading relevant publications /newsletters /emails.
- Maintaining notice boards in their work area to ensure that details are up to date.
- Review and report on information that is not up to date.
- Be responsible and sensitive to different communication needs of service users and stakeholders.
- Recognise that good communication and engagement is an integral part of the job that they do.
- Be responsible for ensuring that they attend team meetings, read the staff newsletter and intranet to keep themselves up-to-date with current information.
- Be responsible for contributing and making their voice heard.

Corporate Communications

Corporate Communications is the main gateway for external communications with the media and for key communication tools such as the website, Central News, members and with staff across the Council. Their role is:

- Liaise and work with service areas on specific Communication and Engagement secure senior management / member approval where required
- Develop a key messages with the service/projects
- Support the creation of core communication materials for key audiences
- Lead on media relations
- Comment on or edit communication materials as required
- Work with service/project to develop timely and bespoke engagement situations appropriate to the needs of the service and developments

5. Children's Services – Our Audiences

Different groups of people will be affected in different ways by the work involved in Children's Services. This plan aims to capture the different audiences and how we reach them through various types of communications delivery. The following table shows key audiences and describes their involvement.

	Audience	Detail/Numbers	Contribution / Role
CBC MANAGERS	Corporate Management Team	Chief Exec and Directors	Champion / represent decisions based on key messages.
CBC EMPLOYEES	Council staff	Directorate Specific and Across all directorates	Relevant staff cited on plans in case of queries and able to respond based on key messages. Promote locally where appropriate.
OTHER & DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY	Executive Members	Leader/Exec Members for Sustainable Communities and others	Champion / represent decisions based on key messages Attend events where appropriate.
	All other CBC ward members	All ward members	Attend events where appropriate Represent ward on decisions based on key messages.
	MPs	With constituencies in Central Bedfordshire	Attend events Keep informed on progress of the programme

	Ceremonial/ Dignitaries	CBC Chairman/Vice- Chairman Dunstable Mayor/Deputy High Sheriff Lord Lieutenant	Attend events if appropriate
EXTERNAL	Partners in education	All Central Bedfordshire Schools	Attend relevant events and meetings Encourage partnership working/involvement Receive regular updates on the progress of specific programmes based on key messages. Informed on wider issues affecting CYP and work of the directorate
	Partners in health	NHS SEPT Others	Attend relevant events and meetings Encourage partnership working/involvement Receive regular updates on the progress of specific programmes based on key messages. Informed on wider issues affecting CYP and work of the directorate
	Police	Police and Crime Commissioner Police Partners subject specific	Attend relevant events and meetings Encourage partnership working/involvement Receive regular updates on the progress of specific programme based on key messages. Informed on wider issues affecting CYP and work of the directorate
	Voluntary Organisations	To include – youth, family focused organisations	Attend relevant events and meetings Encourage partnership working/involvement Receive regular updates on the progress of the programme based on key messages. Informed on wider issues affecting CYP and work of the directorate

	Town and Parish Councils	Across Central Bedfordshire	Encourage partnership working/involvement Informed on wider issues affecting CYP and work of the directorate
	Media	Local / regional print and broadcast	Promote key messages and developments Minimise impact of negative press by keeping informed
	Residents	All our residents across Central Bedfordshire	Promote key messages about work of the Children's Service Encourage involvement locally to help inform work undertaken

6. Tactics / Channels

The right tactics need to be chosen to reach each audience group depending on the communication objective. These include:

Channel and key characteristics/benefits	Existing CBC	Project Specific
<p>Face to face (F2F) methods Key communication channels for securing understanding and commitment to action. Resource intensive but offer vital opportunity to check that information has been received and understood, gauge reactions, debate issues, receive feedback and respond to questions. Vital for community members and colleagues in partner organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMT meetings • CBC Exec Member briefings • Management Team Meetings • Team meetings • Supervision • Briefing sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme related meetings and workshops • Targeted member briefings • Targeted / bespoke activity in the community
<p>Electronic channels Helpful for disseminating general information and to raise awareness and secure some understanding. Also opportunity for more tailored messages to specific groups and two-way communications dialogue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails to senior managers / members /staff • Staff Central • Central Essentials (CBC) • Directors' blogs (CBC) • Leader's blog (CBC) • Members information bulletin (weekly CBC) • CBC Social Media – Let's Talk Central; Twitter; Facebook • Partner social media eg. Town/Parish Councils • CBC website • Intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email newsletter • Email briefings/updates • Specific pages on CBC website incl Q&As • Central Bedfordshire Council email alerts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC Updates • Partner websites 	
<p>Print channels Provide the opportunity to provide more background, use more images and to personalise projects. Sensitivity required They require time and money for print and design. Good practice material</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas, reports and minutes • News Central • Local media • Town/Parish newsletters • Service leaflets and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing Info packs • Reports to meetings • Q&A sheet • Invitations • What works what doesn't

7. Key Principles for Communication and Engagement

- The use of Plain English in written and spoken communications
- Avoid the use of jargon when communicating with service users or colleagues who are not from Children's Services and explain the technical or management language we are using
- Not speaking/writing in acronyms or initials before explaining them first
- Being aware of our body language and how it might communicate to those we are talking or listening to. Trying to actively listen and hold eye contact when involved in face-to-face communication.
- Recognising that people do not always absorb information completely at first hearing.
- Give people the opportunity to ask questions there and then or on another occasion if they need to.
- Feeling comfortable about telling people when we do not understand what they are saying or what they have written.
- Being comfortable with challenging others and being challenged ourselves and as a learning organisation welcoming feedback and constructive criticism.
- Always trying to put ourselves in the position of those we are communicating with and treating people how we would like to be treated through both face-to-face and written communication

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation of communications will help ensure that the framework is fit for purpose and will capture any issues or changes which communications can help address. Key evaluation activity suggested includes:

- Feedback from meetings with key audiences
- Staff Survey
- Monitoring feedback on social media
- Media enquiries and coverage
- Monitoring other enquiries and amending communications as appropriate

9. Tactical Plan for Communications

Audience	What (Task/Action/Activity)	How (Communication channel(s))	Outcome	Who (Task owner)
CMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating on specific subjects and matters impacting on MTP and MTFP and the legal/statutory duties of the Council . Provision of information impacting on the Council's duty as Corporate Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at weekly CMT Presentations Reports Email 	Raised profile at senior management level increased engagement and ownership prompting a two way flow of information	SH/GJ/KO/HR/HOS
Executive Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating specific subjects and matters requiring political approval and governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing meeting Reports Circulate key messages Members bulletin Emails 	Informed political leaders and robust democratic procedures	SH/GJ/KO/HR/HOS
All CBC Members Ward Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating key information on service and projects that maybe ward related 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee meetings Reports Targeted activity Briefings 	Informed political leaders	SH/GJ/KO/HR/HOS
Partners in education, health and police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating general and specific Directorate information Sharing of information about practice/ project development Opportunities for joint working Subject specific activity/concerns and issues Performance/funding related activity Service /project development and activity Opportunities for involvement and support in the work of the Directorate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings Central Essentials(schools) Press Releases Emails HT/Gov Ref Group Website Consultations Use of social media 	Targeted information for stakeholders and partners. Promoting dialogue, information sharing and joint working	SH/GJ/KO/HR/HOS
Voluntary organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informing on opportunities for collaborative working. Provide details of opportunities for commissioning Service /project development and activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings Press Releases Consultations Website Emails 	Promoting dialogue, joint working and information sharing opportunities	SH/GJ/KO/HR/HOS

Audience	What (Task/Action/Activity)	How (Communication Channel(s))	Outcome	Who (Task owner)
CS Officers involved in operational and support for service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating general and specific Directorate information Updates on specific projects and developments Information relevant to individual posts and service Updates on Corporate matters Updates on CS performance/practice Information from C.Gov. Informing on change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written briefings Team meetings Q&A sheet Staff Central Bedfordshire Council Directors' Blogs Intranet 	Informed and engaged Children's Services staff	SH/GJ/KO/ HR/HOS/ Team Managers
Other CBC staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating general and specific Directorate information Informing on opportunities for collaborative working. Service /project development and activity Communication cross cutting matters Good practice Staff related news 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Central Directors' blogs Intranet Team visits 1-1 with service managers 	Informed and engaged Council officers promoting dialogue and joint working and shared learning	SH/GJ/KO/ HR/HOS/ Team Managers
Town and Parish Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress communication on projects/service matters impacting at T&PC level Opportunities for engagement and involvement in specific service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email bulletin Monthly briefing note via Ward Cllrs Town and Parish Conference Consultations 	Targeted information promoting dialogue, joint working and information sharing opportunities	SH/GJ/KO/ HR/HOS/
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating general and specific Directorate information and service delivery Information about the projects/programme in local areas Opportunities for engagement and involvement in service design What we do – across the whole directorate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good news stories in local media News Central Residents Magazine CBC website including Q&A section Social Media updates on Twitter and Facebook Email / letters if appropriate Invitations to public events 	Informed and engaged communities and residents.	SH/GJ/KO/ HR/HOS/

Audience	What (Task/Action/Activity)	How (Communication Channel(s))	Outcome	Who (Task owner)
Local media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share our plans and information to secure understanding and support • Encourage positive promotion • Respond to media enquiries • Tell our story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted media briefing • Press releases • Radio/TV interviews 		SH/GJ/KO/ HR/HOS/
Service Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build good relationships with families involved, encouraging two way dialogue • Promotion of services available and the way we work • Informing how we work with them and other professionals • IAG • Informing on opportunities for participation and engagement opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-1 support • Family Meetings • Conferences • Letters and emails • Websites • Forums • Training 	Informed service users promoting increased engagement and involvement in decision making process.	All