

Greater Manchester Communications Strategy

2025 - 2028

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Overview

This Communications Strategy covers the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership (GM ICP) and NHS Greater Manchester (NHS GM).

It describes

- the context and landscape in which we are working
- our goals, purpose and strategic objectives
- how will we deliver and our functions
- how we prioritise and measure the impact of our work to ensure we are adding value

The strategy covers GM ICP and NHS GM to ensure we are supporting and addressing system-wide, organisational, and place priorities.

This is our first formal communications strategy and it covers a three-year period (2025 - 2028).



Our organisation and system

NHS Greater Manchester is the name of the NHS organisation, overseen by a board, that is in charge of the NHS money, planning and making decisions about healthcare in Greater Manchester.

Its formal name is 'NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board' and sometimes referred to as 'the ICB' and its abbreviation is 'NHS GM'.

A key responsibility of the ICB is to orchestrate how the whole health and care system in GM works. We call that system the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership. Sometimes referred to as 'the ICP' or 'the ICS' and

its abbreviation is 'GM ICP'. Together as partners, we take actions which make a difference to the health of the population of Greater Manchester.

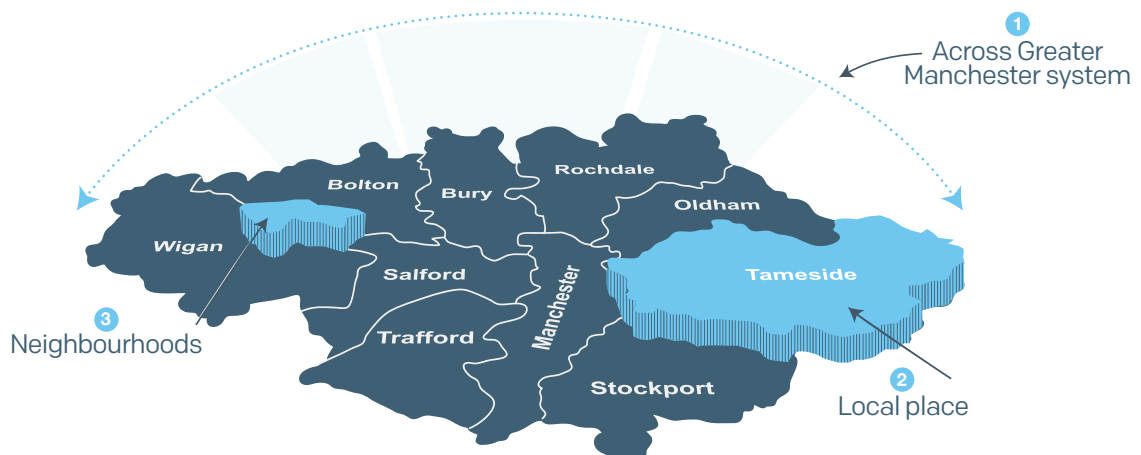
As well as working together at a GM level, the ICB convenes the partnerships of health and care services in each of the 10 places of GM. They replicate the GM partnership relationships at a local level.

Health and care partners include primary care providers, councils, local hospitals, voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VSCFE) organisations such as Healthwatch. They all work together to make a difference to the population in their local neighbourhoods.

Greater Manchester was the first city-region to secure a health and care devolution deal, which plays a crucial role in the way we work across our system and collaborate across our communications teams.

GREATER MANCHESTER INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP

Operating at 3 levels



Context

Greater Manchester faces some very difficult challenges in the NHS and social care - as many other areas in the country do.

This is because:

- our people are spending more years in poorer health with worsening inequalities
- our patients face ongoing issues with accessing health services and experiencing long waiting times
- of our need to bring our NHS finances back to balance, improve our performance, quality of care, access and leadership capability
- social care services for adults and children are under pressure due to high demand with challenging financial positions
- our staff survey findings report low morale whilst we grapple with the worst workforce crisis in the history of the NHS and social care
- our population is reporting its lowest rates of trust and confidence in the NHS through national and local perception insight (although we are starting to see improvements particularly in satisfaction with primary care services).

Our goal

The primary goal of the communications strategy is to support achievement of the outcomes outlined in the GM ICP strategy, which are to ensure that everyone in Greater Manchester:

- has the opportunity to live a good life
- has improved health and wellbeing
- experiences high quality care when they need it
- receives integrated and sustainable health and care services.

Our purpose

Purpose of the communications function:

- to provide a comprehensive and connected communications service for NHS GM, GM ICP and the 10 local integrated care partnerships, which supports both the system and place levels, recognising that some activity can be best done once on behalf of all, with clear and strong connections to place, and that other work will need delivering at a local level
- to grow and maintain stakeholder trust and confidence in NHS GM as an organisation; at place and GM as places overseeing and providing effective integrated care, and in the GM integrated care system as one which functions well and delivers for our people.

Our principals, aims and objectives

NHS GM is an organisation with circa 1800 staff who work in central functions and in each of the 10 places within Greater Manchester.

With responsibility for convening the whole health and care system at GM and place level, our aims, objectives and actions support:

- ✓ the organisation (NHS Greater Manchester)
- ✓ the health and care system (Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership) and...
- ✓ the 10 places (local integrated care partnerships)
- ✓ *and ultimately the people of Greater Manchester - our residents and our front-line teams.*



We do this by adhering to a set of communication principles as follows:



Clear, coordinated and consistent

To ensure our communications can be clearly read and understood by the audience, avoiding jargon and technical language. Maintaining a consistent tone and style across all channels.



Accessible and inclusive

Ensure communication is accessible to all, avoiding biased or exclusionary language. Upholding integrity, ethical standards and communications practices.



Insight led and audience focussed

To ensure we are tailoring communication to meet the needs, expectations and preferences of different audiences. Actively finding ways to reach diverse audiences. Using appropriate language, tone and medium for each stakeholder group. Actively listening and encouraging dialogue.



Transparent and open

Communicating openly, honestly, promptly.



Evidence based and latest best practice

Using the latest proven methods and approaches recognising that the way people consume information is ever changing. Using behaviour change approaches to drive action and sustained change.



Make best use of resources

Avoiding duplication, collaborating with partners, realising efficiencies of scale and simplifying audience experience.



Aligned with strategic plans

Adding value, supporting system priorities.



Compassionate and authentic

Showing kindness, empathy and understanding.

Our strategic objectives

ICP Mission	Supporting communications and engagement strategic objectives
Strengthening our communities	Through targeted communications, community engagement and empowerment we will help people, families and communities gain confidence in managing their health and making healthier lifestyle choices ultimately changing behaviour
Help people to get into, and stay into good work	We will support and promote the wider social and economic benefits of integrated care systems, working with our system communications and engagement colleagues to showcase the benefits and elevate stories of lived experience
Recovering core NHS services	We will lead a coordinated communications and engagement response to system pressures and recovery of services where needed, including, waiting times, primary care access, core mental health (MH) services and quality improvements
Helping people stay well and detecting illness early	We will provide communications and engagement support and activity that will ultimately aim to improve health outcomes and risk of long term conditions
Support workforce and carers	We will promote integration, better partnership working and good employment practices, as well as supporting our workforce to be well and addressing inequalities faced in the workplace. We will develop communications to encourage more people to choose health and care as a career and to feel supported to develop and stay in the sector
Achieve financial sustainability	We will lead activity that will support the ongoing involvement of our communities in our challenges and developing solutions. We will take an open and honest approach to communication, create more consistent and simple messaging and a more common understanding of the challenges that we face

Communication aims - System

We aim to:

- increase public confidence in our health and care services across the whole of GM
- support the missions and work that sits within the GM ICP strategy (see P8)
- continuously promote healthy lifestyles and behaviours and to be seen as a trusted source of health information
- embed prevention, equality and sustainability into everything we do
- promote the benefits of integrated care and neighbourhood working at every opportunity
- prioritise promotion of the individual or 'neighbourhood' impact in all communications
- to have established a strong and recognisable brand identity for the GM ICP.



Communication aims - Organisation

To our local population:

- for NHS GM to be regarded as an organisation that is committed to producing clear, timely, accessible and transparent messaging
- promote awareness and understanding of the role and purpose of the ICB, its strategy and plans
- raise awareness that listening is central to the organisations values and that feedback will be acted upon through establishing open, two-way communications channels
- to foster an ongoing professional relationship with our local and national media
- to establish a strong and recognisable brand identity for NHS Greater Manchester.

For our workforce:

- to be regarded as a listening organisation by our workforce, ensuring we use communications to promote active staff engagement
- to remain responsive to communicating and coordinating system messaging, both during business-as-usual and in crisis situations
- improve internal communication and enhance employee engagement supporting cultural transformation and organisational change.



Communication aims - Place focused

We aim to:

- ensure that communications and campaigns that are developed to support system wide plans can be adapted and made relevant in all localities
- work with local ICP partners to ensure communications priorities align with place
- prioritise promotion of the individual or 'neighbourhood' impact in all communications.



Partnership working

One of our greatest strengths is the partnerships, relationships and networks in place across our communications teams in GM and beyond.

As an ICB in the local integrated care partnerships (10 places) - the communications function supports the role of the ICB in each place, in its role of convenor of the health and care partnerships, and supports on delivery of locality plans alongside the other partner comms teams.

System co-ordinator across GM ICP - focusing on communications to support the ICP strategy, co-ordinating any required proactive and reactive system-wide health messaging, or any messaging covering more than one locality or provider, identifying areas for joint working.

As a partner in the GM system - working very closely with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and 10

council communications teams plus the voluntary sector, Health Innovation Manchester (HInM), Transport For Greater Manchester (TFGM), Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and others.

As part of the NHS England North West region - We work closely with NHS England (NHSE), the two other ICBs in the North West, North West Ambulance Service (NWS) and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) disseminating national messages and collaborating on key campaigns.

As a partner of the voluntary, community and faith sector and Healthwatch - We extend message reach in our communities and obtain feedback on our communications effectiveness and impact.

In Greater Manchester our partnership working approach is aligned with our aims and objectives.

To achieve our aims and objectives, several key communication components (or functions) are essential to delivering an effective service



How do we prioritise...

To help to ensure that we cover all the work that comes from the system, organisation or locality plans, we set up 'theme' teams or project teams.

Members of the theme teams are drawn from our various functions i.e. campaigns, digital, stakeholder, internal and media.

Theme team members develop comms plans and priorities for that theme, overseeing action plans.

In 2024/2025 we have done the bulk of our work under the following themes:

- ✓ screening and immunisation
- ✓ primary care
- ✓ urgent and emergency care
- ✓ maternity
- ✓ suicide prevention
- ✓ consultation or service change
- ✓ mental health
- ✓ population health.

If you would like to see our annual delivery plans for 2024/25 or 2025/26 contact our digital team, email: gmhscp.digital@nhs.net

To note – these themes do not represent all of our work. We also work on smaller, time limited projects, for example, with GM adult social care team, the workforce team and the children's programme both at system and place levels.

Function work and further development plans

Communications strategy				
	Digital/social media development	Campaigns	Media	Internal/ Stakeholder
Current work	Eight accounts, distinctive voice on both NHS GM and GM ICP channels. Strong focus on accessibility and providing tools/training/ guidance Development work including campaign resource centre, regular publication of position statements Ongoing development work on staff intranet	Branding pack and templates in place for ICP and NHS GM All campaigns align to strategy Campaign briefs now have clear KPIs	Agile and responsive/reactive media management in place with established sign off process Min three proactive pieces per week On-call rota in place Refreshed OPEL communications plan	Well established internal communications including live leadership briefing, Keep Connected newsletter, intranet, exec briefings, all-staff briefings GP newsletter established MP webinar Stakeholder newsletter (GM ICP news)
	Further development	Find ways to engage younger audience Using our social channels to promote debate on our challenges and social listening Further website development including locality sections and presence Bring hub sites in-line with brand/purpose	Agree annual campaign plan for 2025/26 Continue to offer support to the wider organisation as brand guardians Streamlining of partner toolkits to ensure maximum usage	Looking at how people consume their news and developing use of media packages Programme of media training

Metrics, evaluation and reporting

By ensuring that our communication aims, objectives and delivery plans are aligned to strategic plans we measure the effectiveness of our communications activity.

For example, our work with screening and immunisations on measles in 2024 contributed to a sharp increase in MMR uptake.

Key Performance Indicators are built into all campaigns - measured by pre and post evaluation, social and online engagement rates, media coverage, comparison of previous uptake or behaviour change

We also produce a quarterly impact report that include outputs and contribution to outcomes, for example, increased uptake rates, usage of a service, decreased attendances/admissions, reduced prevalence

We produce a weekly communications and engagement update providing a regular overview of activity, media coverage and feedback. We also undertake a monthly digital channel audit, which includes our social media channels, to review what kind of content is most engaging.

We also run an annual internal communications survey and adapt our approaches depending on staff feedback.

We work very closely with our engagement team colleagues who help us with testing messages and obtaining feedback. For example, in 2024 we worked with them to gather input from young people on the young people' s charter wording and design.

Challenges we continue to work through...

- How we fulfil our role to support our organisation at all levels, how we contribute to achievement of ICP missions and how we contribute effectively at a place level
- How we navigate the different priorities within the strategies and plans that sit at both system, local partnership and organisation level i.e. GM ICP strategy, joint forward plan, 10 local ICP plans, sustainability plan, operational plan, single improvement plan and agree which ones we prioritise with the resources we have
- How we manage delays in campaign timescales as a result of budget restrictions

