Government Communication Service

Strategic communication: MCOM function guide

The Government Communication Service (GCS) is the professional body for people working in communication roles across government. Our aim is to deliver world-class communications that support Ministers' priorities, improve people's lives and enable the effective operation of our public service.

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Introduction

" Communication is a powerful force for good in public service. When practiced effectively it can help save, improve and enhance lives.

Strategic communication sits alongside the other disciplines but has a particular role to set, co-ordinate and guide the implementation of activity, based on insight, in a timely way, as part of an overarching plan to deliver against agreed priorities to measurable effect. "

The purpose of this guide is to:

- **set** out the functions a strategic communications team should provide to its department and ministers
- **show** how to run brilliant campaigns
- **structure** strategic communications teams around four key functions
- **share** best practice between GCS teams and our partner bodies"

The MCOM function guide developed by the GCS Heads of Strategic Communication network identifies the core functions of a strategic communication team, key principles of structure and practice.

The operational detail of how the core functions of strategic communication are carried out will vary across government departments and their partner bodies subject to HM Government and departmental business priorities and resources.

The guide is intended to be a 'live-document' that will be regularly reviewed by the GCS Heads of Strategic Communication network and updated to reflect emergent themes and best practice.

Functions

GCS Heads of Strategic Communications have identified the core functions of the strategic communication team and practitioners: Strategy, Horizon scanning, Insight and Evaluation.

Structure for strategic communication teams

There is no mandated one-size-fits-all structure for strategic communication teams. Each organisation has team structures which are designed to meet their priorities. Some smaller departments do not have separate strategic communication teams but instead integrate the functions across their teams.

The key is to ensure that, whatever the organisation's chart may look like, strategic communication functions are influential and central so that all activity is:

- aligned to the delivery of HM Government priorities;
- planned to GCS best practice standards;
- focused on audience understanding;
- evaluated to demonstrate value and capture future insight; and
- integrated with all other communication.

Audiences

As strategic communicators one of our key roles is to align government communication activity more consistently by target audience.

This means knowing more about who different government organisations are communicating with, and when. And it is also about becoming more consistent in the methods and techniques we use to reach these audiences.
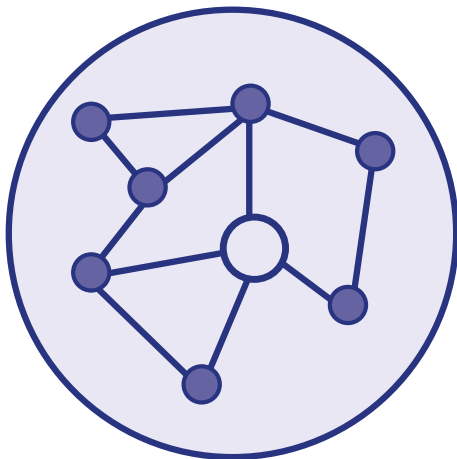
Strategic communication: core functions
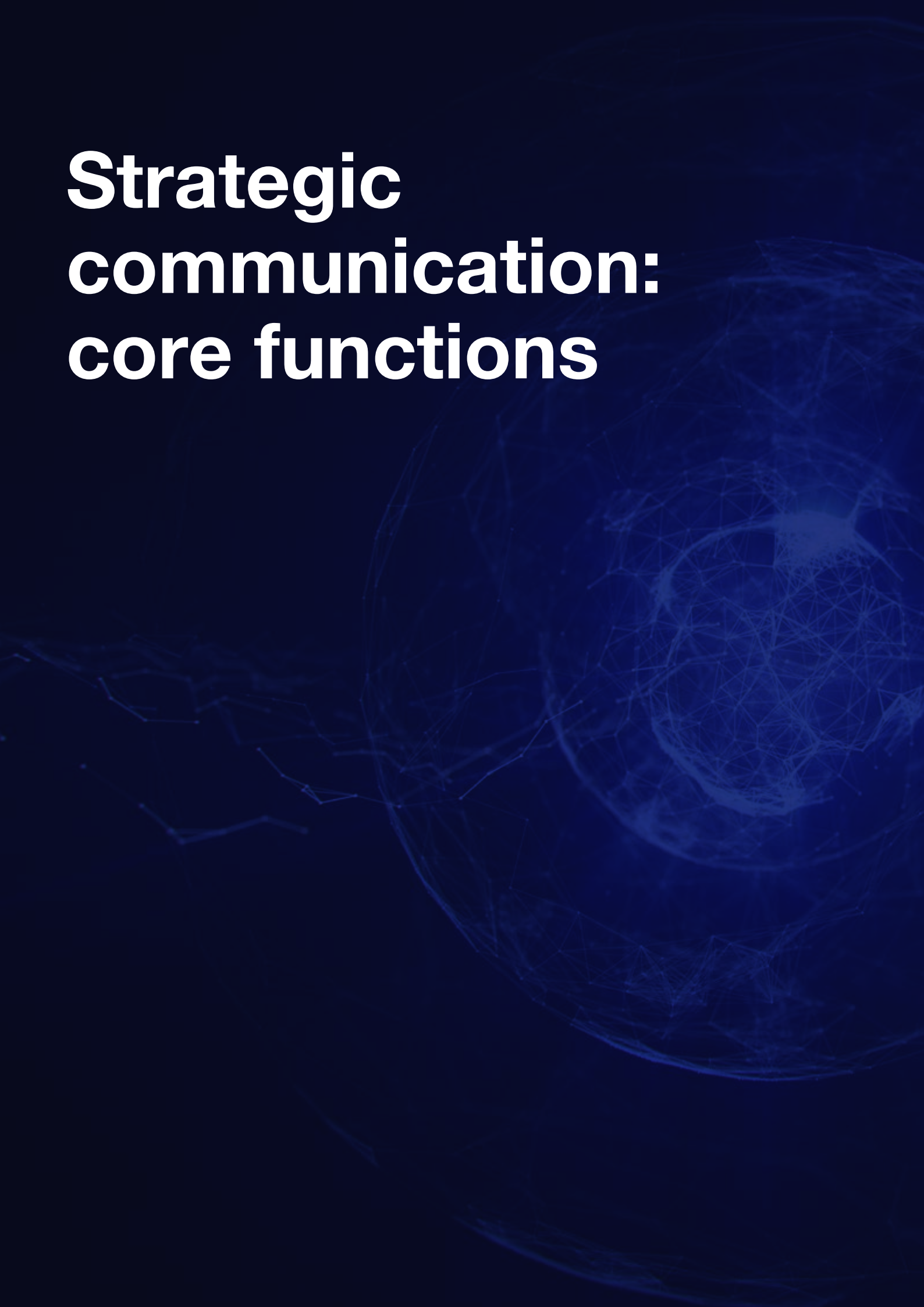
Listed below are the four core functions across which a strategic communication team and practitioners are required to operate with confidence and appropriate expertise.

Directors of Communication (and their equivalent in public services), in consultation with the Head of Strategic Communication, should seek to ensure that their teams have the requisite capability in these aspects in order to deliver effective day-to-day operations. They should also plan and enable the necessary professional development activity to ensure that capability is optimised across the team, and that the team is equipped to cope resiliently when individuals leave and new colleagues join.
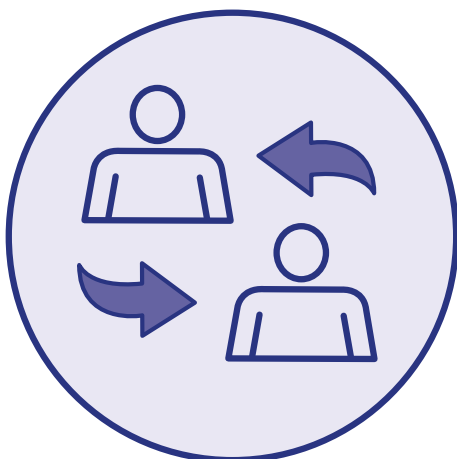
For each of the four functions identified, the tables on the following pages set out the key requirements for best practice.
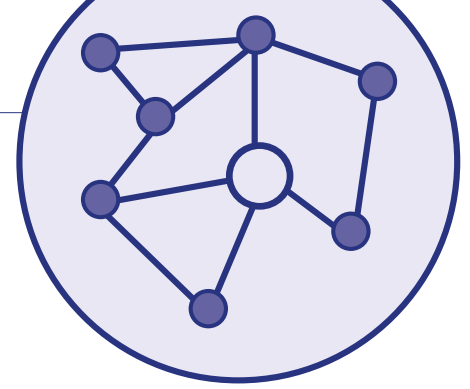
Strategy

Horizon Scanning

Insight

Evaluation

Strategy

e) Leadership on any communications project	i)	Contributing to understanding the problem and offering solutions
	ii)	Offering the appropriate range of communications tools to successfully address the problem
	iii)	Research audience motivation and insight to address the issues
	iv)	Constructing a hypothesis for action and creating SMART objectives
	v)	Drafting an OASIS plan and project milestones
	vi)	Commissioning evaluation
	vii)	Prioritising the plan to senior officials and ministers
	viii)	Reporting on lessons learned and adding these to the library of professional practice

b) Setting communications priorities for the department	i)	Implement an annual process that agrees priorities for the plan
	ii)	Close liaison with strategy and wider policy teams
	iii)	Agree the underlying strands/programmes of work to deliver against the annual priorities
	iv)	Work with teams to develop OASIS plans (full or mini) or communications handling plans for each
	v)	Triage incoming requests for communications support for new or emerging communications priorities from ministerial/policy requests/wider horizon scanning

c) Owning the narrative and messaging for the department	i)	In parallel with strategy, media and campaigns, agree key messaging for priority communication work
	ii)	Minister packs / comms offer developed/updated as required
	iii)	Ensure alignment for key products providing challenge where necessary
	iv)	Ensure plain English and accessibility guidelines are complied with

d) Providing strategic advice on communications priorities	i)	Work with policy/operational colleagues to jointly diagnose the issues and provide strategic communication advice
	ii)	Work with project leads across communications to ensure robust communication strategies are developed for priority campaigns and programmes
	iii)	Advise on priority via triage process to strategically deploy resource for impact based on an agreed set of measures
	iv)	Provide advice based on research and audience insight on implementation tactics

a) Delivering the annual departmental communication plan	i)	Checking alignment to the single departmental plan and HM Government communication plan
	ii)	Agreeing high level objectives and KPIs with policy and strategy
	iii)	Securing sign off from executive committee, directors and directorate
	iv)	Launching and embedding the plan within the directorate and department

Horizon scanning

a) Providing long-term horizon scanning for the department, including identification of risks/opportunities	i)	Development and upkeep of a master grid – a compilation of all comms activities including announcements
	ii)	Cross-government Europe communication grid produced monthly
	iii)	Programme Management Report produced monthly to track projects across communications
	iv)	Quarterly chief of staff return produced every quarter to update No.10 and SoS

b) Managing short-term planning through the fortnightly grid	i)	Collaborating internally and externally to gather and share intelligence and ensure alignment
	ii)	Departmental items for each day identified and circulated
	iii)	Department weekly and rolling grids produced
	iv)	No.10 rolling grid weekly submission, and close liaison to secure grid slots
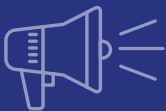
Insight

a) Carrying out research to understand our audiences and the impact of communication	**i)**	Undertake new and/or regularly bring together existing quantitative and qualitative research to inform communications strategy
	ii)	Desk research of publically available data from other sources – e.g. ONS, YOUGOV
	iii)	Provide advice and consultancy from lessons learned across government

b) Building an evidence base of what techniques work best with different audiences	**i)**	Audience profile and channel research – using TGI, Ofcom and publically available data
	ii)	Recording audience reach information via evaluations

c) Sharing knowledge about our audiences to help improve communication	**i)**	Recording audience reach information via evaluations
	ii)	Implement insight (and evaluation) champions network or working group to share knowledge within their teams
	iii)	Regularly share industry best practice and cross-departmental insight where it is relevant to the communication strategy
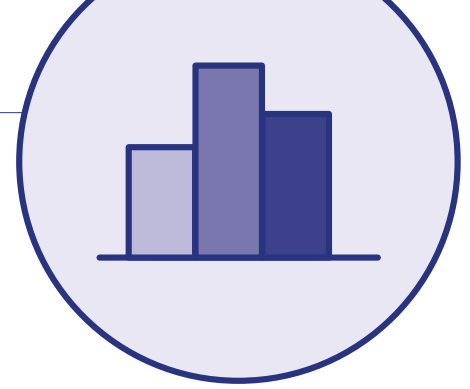
Evaluation

a) Setting SMART objectives and evidenced-based KPIs for communication priorities and OASIS plans	**i)**	Review and quality assure project OASIS or comms handling plans
	ii)	Agree evaluation framework metrics and work with delivery teams to set KPIs
	iii)	Regularly track data to create evidence based benchmarks to help set KPIs

b) Ensuring that lessons are learned and shared	**i)**	Implement evaluation (and insight) champions network or working group to peer review evaluations and share knowledge within their teams
	ii)	Hold regular show and tell sessions on evaluation
	iii)	Circulate evaluation highlight reports/campaign evaluations across the directorate

c) Demonstrating the impact of the team's work in an engaging way	i)	Develop an evaluation hub to showcase evaluations
	ii)	Update regularly so hub looks smart and current
	iii)	Hold evaluation wash-ups by the hub involving policy as well as communications

d) Ensuring high standards of evaluation across all communications activity	i)	Quality assure all evaluations and ensure SMT engagement and sign off
	ii)	Carry out regular peer reviews
	iii)	Deliver in-house training programme and contribute to GCS comms exchanges

The engagement framework

The engagement framework

In 2015 GCS published the Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM). MCOM provides the proposed structures, skills and capabilities required for a high performing communications directorate or team and emphasises the importance of strategic communication.

Strategic communication puts audience understanding at the heart of policy and service design, resulting in better decision-making and improved delivery. Communication, policy and operations colleagues working together leads to improved diagnosis of the problem we are seeking to solve, the most appropriate combination of government levers brought to bear on the issue, and a more co-ordinated approach to implementation.

The engagement framework (see below) outlines the strategic communication interventions from problem identification through to implementation.

The engagement framework

PROBLEM /ISSUE

Policy Operations Crisis

policy and operations diagnosis → agreed diagnosis → policy and operations delivery → assessment and learning

Communication interventions

strategic communication advice

communication leadership

operational and delivery communication

strategic communication guidance
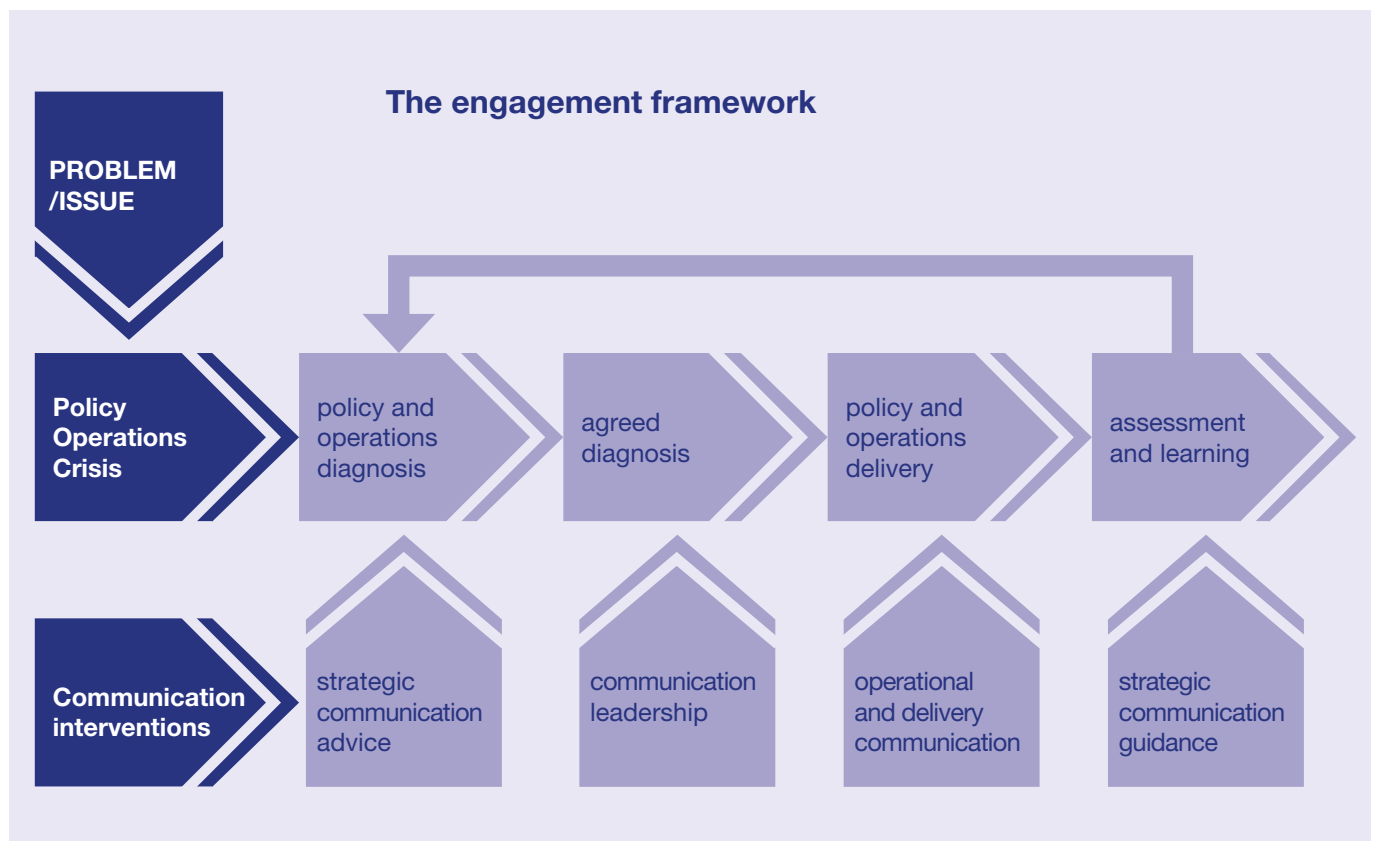
Building capability: guidance, tools, resources and professional development

Building capability

To develop full capability in the four functions of strategic communications a practitioner will require:

- the ability to set clear communications objectives and understanding of the principles and application of behavioural theory;
- the ability to carry out basic desk research and analysis using a range of insight tools and resources;
- experience in development and delivery of OASIS plans and the application of GCS evaluation and insight frameworks; and the personal impact and leadership skills to persuade and influence.

Guidance, tools and resources

The GCS professional competency framework is designed for all professional communicators in government up to, and including, Grade 6. The framework is designed to help government communicators broaden their range of skills under the four competency headings of Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact.

The OASIS Campaign Guide is designed to aid government communicators to deliver world class government communication. It should be used by all government communication professionals regardless of discipline, department or grade.

Strategic communication: a behavioural approach is a framework for applying behavioural insight to OASIS so communicators can make their work more strategic and effective.

The GCS Evaluation Framework is designed to help standardise the set of evaluation measures we collect and report on for each type of communications activity and for the range of communication objectives we set out to achieve. The use of consistent data and reporting means that we can draw more meaningful conclusions about our work. It can also assist with benchmarking and target setting.

The GCS Knowledge Hub* brings together industry data, insight reports and research materials into a single space. Its overarching purpose is to provide communication experts across government with access to current and relevant research that could be used to support and inform campaigns.

Professional development

The GCS curriculum is a blended learning offer developed to build skills across the key MCOM areas, including strategic communication and leadership. For the latest courses and resources visit the GCS website.

All GCS members are encouraged to share best practice across the profession through sharing case studies, participation at events, networking and mentoring opportunities. The Heads of Strategic Communication work with the GCS Professional Development team to develop and deliver relevant development opportunities.

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* GCS Knowledge Hub live November 2018, contact GCS insight mailbox *<insight@cabinetoffice.gov.uk>* for further details

Case studies

The following case studies reflect strong organisational practice and illustrate the four core functions in action.

As well as providing a useful resource for strategic communication teams across GCS and for all public service communications professionals, these case studies may be used to inform job shadowing, exchanges and secondments between departments to ensure best practice is shared across GCS.

Case study	Theme	Topic	Department
1	Strategy	Developing an annual communication plan	BEIS
2,3	Strategy	Developing high impact strategic communication plans	FCO, DFT
4,5	Horizon scanning	Developing horizon scanning capabilities	BEIS, HMRC
6	Horizon scanning	Producing weekly grids and working with No.10	BEIS
7,8,9	Insight	Carrying out audience research	BEIS, DHSC, DfE
10	Evaluation	Carrying out quarterly reporting	BEIS
11,12, 13	Evaluation	Demonstrating impact	DWP, HMPS, IPO

Case Study 1
Developing an annual communication plan

**Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy**

Challenge

In developing the 2018/19 Communication & Engagement Plan we needed to:

- ensure alignment with the HM Government Communication Plan;
- synchronise the plan with the Secretary of State's ambition for the Industrial Strategy as the flagship for delivery across all BEIS policy areas;
- proceed while the Single Departmental Plan is in the early stages of development;
- rebrand to reflect the overarching Industrial Strategy theme; and
- meet challenging deadlines aligned to publication of the HMG Communication Plan and secure sign off from the Executive Committee.

Approach

Early in 2018 we approached the team responsible for collating the information for the Single Departmental Plan, ensuring early sight of emerging themes and priorities. We devised a new structure for the plan consisting of three pillars, rather than the previous five in the 2017/18 plan, and showing the Industrial Strategy as the unifying policy for the department. EU Exit and Transformation formed the other pillars.

We consulted early with directors of communication, lead officials and special advisers and mapped across underlying policy areas and milestones and main campaigns for 2018/19, including the Industrial Strategy's Grand Challenges and the white paper's five pillars.

Many of the Grand Challenges and pillars cut across multiple departments and partner bodies and so we fed into the HM Government Communication Plan to ensure coherence and co-ordination. Our senior team met with all Directors General to share the plan and take on feedback prior to a session with the Executive Committee and the process of formal sign-off.

Impact

Agreement was secured in line with the deadlines. The plan has been well received by stakeholders and we now have a roadmap to deliver communication and engagement for the department across 2018/19.

Case Study 2
Developing high impact strategic communication plans

Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Challenge

The Global Coalition Communications Cell was created by the Prime Minister in September 2015 to reduce Daesh's capability to recruit, incite attacks and inspire support by tackling its propaganda.

Approach

The Cell is embedded in FCO and made up of a multinational team of diplomats and communication experts from a range of coalition countries. This is a truly integrated team.

The Cell degrades Daesh's brand in two main ways by:

1. building networks of local, credible voices to reach vulnerable people, making them more resilient to Daesh propaganda
2. delivering public-facing campaigns which give media, governments and other influencers across the world the information they need to undermine Daesh

Impact

The Cell has enjoyed considerable success in building partnerships with coalition countries to deliver effective, multinational strategic communications campaigns. These are being achieved through:

- **adapting strategic communications efforts** to address the new 'post-caliphate' threat from Daesh as it seeks to capitalise on lone actor attacks and regional successes of affiliates;
- **protecting the coalition legacy** and ensuring accounts of Daesh rule depict their failures;
- **working with social media companies** to tackle extremist content online;
- **engaging with the mainstream media** to encourage responsible reporting of terrorism and discourage media outlets from reproducing terrorist propaganda; and
- **exploring ways in which we can share best practice and lessons learned** to tackle future propaganda threats from other violent extremist organisations.

Case Study 3
Developing high impact strategic communication plans

Department for Transport

Challenge

In August 2017, ten platforms were shut at Waterloo station for more than three weeks while Network Rail carried out crucial work to boost capacity at the UK's busiest station. DfT needed to keep passengers informed about disruption to services and reduce the number choosing to travel.

Approach

The DfT strategic communication team worked with Network Rail and South West Trains (SWT) to deliver a 12-month communication campaign.

The team co-ordinated Network Rail and SWT led communication, and ensured that lessons from other major station closures, such as London Bridge, influenced delivery. A monthly review group was set up to scrutinize and agree communication plans and messaging. We took an insight-driven approach, testing messaging with passengers and using passenger awareness

data to target communication materials. The DfT digital team created an animation for our social media channels, highlighting the long-term passenger benefits and warning passengers to check before they travel.

We prepared communication contingency plans to defend the reputation of the department in case severe or prolonged disruption led to passenger outcry and large volumes of negative coverage. Hundreds of civil servants, a number of MPs and ministers were affected by the work so the team also provided briefing and internal communication in DfT and across Whitehall.

Impact

Research by Transport Focus showed that over 90% of passengers were aware of the work and a third (1.4 million passengers) decided not to travel – working from home or taking holidays. Two-thirds of the media coverage was neutral or positive and key messages on long-term passenger benefits featured strongly. Our animation performed well and feedback on our internal communication was also very positive. While there were still lessons to be learned, over 70% of passengers polled said they were left with a positive impression of how the closure was handled.

Case Study 4
Developing horizon scanning capabilities

Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Challenge

Provide a strategic overview of BEIS and external activity to identify risks, emerging issues and opportunities.

Approach

We produced a horizon scan in a simple, easily updated and shareable format that is aligned to the communication plan, with priority items highlighted. This product is continually updated with items sourced internally and across BEIS partner organisations and is shared regularly with strategy teams, private offices, special advisers and partner organisation communication leads. We formally commission communication teams to update the horizon scan each month, and follow up with a meeting to quality assure and discuss implications.

We also meet weekly with strategy team colleagues to discuss status for priority items so we can provide a cohesive advance view to ministers and private offices. We have developed a six-month rolling forward look, including anticipated announcements, which feeds into the production/priority areas outlined in the horizon scan.

Impact

The horizon scan aligns views across the department and has been useful in helping teams across BEIS with their longer term planning by providing a snapshot of BEIS priority announcements. We have been approached by other government departments to share expertise and have delivered training on horizon scanning for GCS.

Case Study 5
Developing horizon scanning capabilities

HM Revenue
& Customs

Challenge

The strategic communication team at HMRC recognised it needed to capture, collate and utilise communication activity across the department in a more structured and organised way, so that delivery and outcomes were more effective and efficient.

Approach

The first tool required was a communication activity grid to capture all planned activity (circa 200 items a month) – this grid is shared internally with staff and externally to customers and stakeholders. The horizon scan was then developed and informed by a series of presentations, telecoms and roundtable discussions, along with feedback from senior leaders and communication professionals. The horizon scan gives an overview of our communication milestones and prioritises activity across key core campaigns, internal, cross-government and corporate activity. It incorporates risk and potential reputational. With the activity, priorities, risks and opportunities identified, we then filter to select the key opportunities and assess the information to build core narratives ahead of time.

Impact

This filtration helps us be proactive by providing foresight of planned activities. We are able to spot upcoming trends or emerging issues, giving us the opportunity to mitigate risk and strengthen our campaigns.
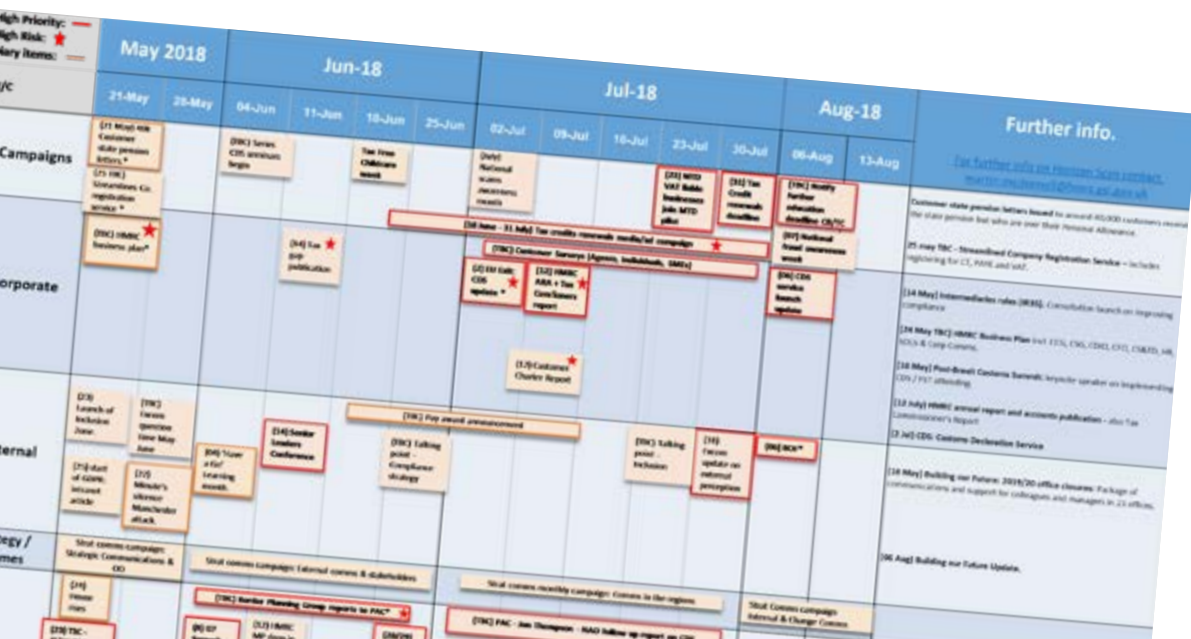
Case Study 6
Producing weekly grids and working with No.10

Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Challenge

To produce a robust and reliable planning process that feeds into weekly grids and a rolling log of items for clearance and information for No10.

Approach

To aid the planning process and equip us with the correct information, we produced a 'gridlet' for policy colleagues to complete. 'Gridlets' provide our communication planners with an easy to understand summary of the activity/ announcement and a clear rationale for why it needs to happen on a particular date. We also run a diary meeting every week where we go through grids for the next fortnight, update on all activity and ensure a co-ordinated approach with communication leads and parliamentary and strategy teams. We have also produced a 'super grid' database which syncs with the other products we manage, including weekly grids, a rolling log for No10 and various other bespoke products for policy teams and ministers. Grids are shared daily across the directorate to provide early insight for upcoming announcements.

Impact

The BEIS grid is used across the department and also feeds into No.10 cross-government planning. Our robust process has ensured activity is co-ordinated so it has the greatest impact. We have also developed strong relationships with planners across other departments and the No.10 planning team, which helps gather insight of wider activity. The super grid has enabled us to produce a streamlined and effective way of working, especially as the demand has increased for more planning products and grids.

Case Study 7
Carrying out audience research

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Challenge

Following the EU exit referendum, the change of government and resulting machinery of government changes to departments, we needed to adopt new ways to monitor the new policy priorities and be able to assess the impact of our communication.

Approach

We developed a long-term strategy to track audience insight and determine whether communication activity was reaching and influencing the intended audience. We applied principles generally used to monitor paid-for campaign activity and applied them to our overall research approach to understand our audiences, how best to reach them, and track their awareness and perceptions of BEIS priority policies. This is in addition to bespoke campaign tracking and research and audience segmentations. We employ two rounds annually of large scale quantitative research and two rounds of small scale omnibus surveys across the whole of the UK for both business and the general public. Additionally we have provided targeted creative concept research for the Industrial Strategy and the Clean Growth Plan.

Impact

We have provided teams with robust audience insight so they can develop a strategy and messages that will have the greatest cut through. We are also now able to track a range of measures such as awareness over time and perceptions around whether government is doing enough, for example to support small businesses. This information is shared with teams via presentations, one-to-one support and a range of insight two-pagers to help staff develop their OASIS strategies and implementation approach.

Case Study 8
Carrying out audience research

Department of Health & Social Care

Challenge

Social care is a government priority we undertook an extensive research programme to obtain an audience view of the reform of the social care system in England.

Approach

Our research project covered:
- a literature review;
- qualitative research with the general public, system users and carers; and
- a quantitative survey with the general public.

With many of the issues relating to social care cutting across government, such as saving for later life, the literature review included existing research from DHSC, its ALBs, other government departments and the private and third sectors. This work was then fed into the design of the qualitative and quantitative research to provide a detailed understanding of the public's view of social care. The qualitative research revealed what audiences knew about social care, how the system works and how it is paid for, the issues the system faces and what it might mean for individuals and their families. The quantitative research then provided insight to the scale of the issues raised, such as quantifying the challenges in building understanding of how the system works.

Combining these strands of research allowed us to develop a three-phase communication strategy. The first phase was to fill the significant knowledge gaps and the perceived lack of personal relevance. The depth of research also allowed an initial segmentation to be built based on levels of understanding and attitudes to the role of the state and individual, which were in turn driven by generational and socio-economic factors.

Impact

This insight programme provided the foundation for the development of the green paper on social care and was used to inform ministers. It ensured the public view was at the forefront of decision making.

Case Study 9
Carrying out audience research

Department
for Education

Challenge

High profile child abuse cases – including the uncovering of sexual exploitation in Rotherham and Rochdale – have highlighted where child abuse had gone unnoticed.

Approach

The 'together we can tackle child abuse' campaign was launched to raise awareness among parents of the signs of child abuse, and encourage them to report it.

Following a successful first wave in 2016 we used in-depth audience research to understand the challenges we faced for the second wave. This highlighted that:

- until people are certain, they are unlikely to report potential abuse; and
- the target audience are highly conscious of their own parenting and are keen not to judge others, which means they are unlikely to report individual signs of abuse or neglect, especially about strangers.

We revised our strategy to focus on normalising the reporting of child abuse (shortening the gap between a person having suspicion and acting on it), and supporting people through this process. We refreshed the creative and strapline – 'Child abuse. If you think it, report it' – which tested positively with target focus groups.

We then selected media that our insight showed would be the most impactful and relevant to explain the issue to our target audience. This included:

- national week-long radio partnership including interviews on LBC Radio;
- refreshed low cost toolkit for local authorities;
- paid-for advertising campaign in target regions; and
- online digital adverts and social media campaign.

Impact

Half of adults in England are now confident they can identify signs of child abuse/neglect, rising to two thirds of those who have seen the adverts. And 70% of people felt confident or very confident about reporting a suspicion of a child experiencing abuse and/or neglect having seen the advert.

Case Study 10
Carrying out quarterly reporting

Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Challenge

Following sign off of the department's communication plan for 2017/18, the Executive Committee asked for quarterly updates showing progress made against delivery of the plan. Up to that point, measurement of communications had been through evaluation highlight reports, which are single page evaluations of announcements and campaigns focusing on inputs, outputs, outtakes and outcomes.

Approach

We developed a template that covers the priority pillars of the plan. This template details top level objectives and audiences, what was delivered by communications over the quarter, the impact of that activity, and insights from the quarterly tracking research. The template also includes a RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green) against delivery for each pillar.

The insight and evaluation team works with delivery teams to draft the reports, check accuracy and provide commentary and milestones for the next quarter. Drafts are shared with the Senior Responsible Officer and directorate Senior Management Team for sign off before being shared with the Executive Committee.

We delivered quarterly reports throughout 2017/18, demonstrating to policy and senior leaders our robust grip of the communication task and the impact we were having. In addition we produced an annual report showing the overall impact of our work.

Impact

Executive Committee feedback has been very supportive, acknowledging the steps taken by the directorate to build standards and scrutiny.

Case Study 11
Demonstrating impact

Department
for Work &
Pensions

Challenge

The Department for Work and Pensions aims to get millions more people to change their behaviour in relation to planning and saving for later life. The challenge for the Workplace Pension and State Pension campaigns is to encourage employees not to opt out of their workplace pension by re-enforcing personal and social norms, and by making people aware of the level of their State Pension entitlement.

Approach

To gauge the effectiveness of the campaigns, we used a variety of innovative evaluation techniques, including a Theory of Change to map the different components, assumptions and logic of the campaigns. This enables the development of more sophisticated key performance indicators and audience segmentation.
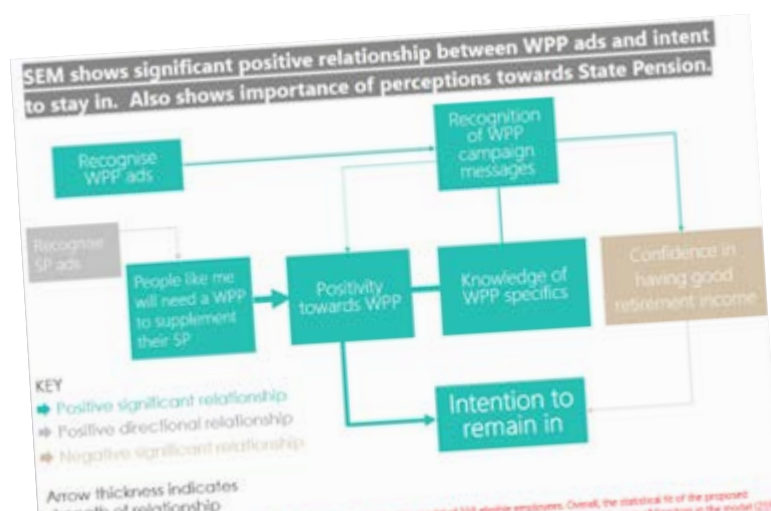
A robust evaluation framework is also in place to measure public attitudes towards saving for retirement and the campaign. The framework uses regular tracking research, performance dashboards, and real-time analysis to make the most effective use of campaign channels. Campaign monitoring also draws on operational data to understand opt-out and compliance rates with workplace pensions among employers and employees.

'Structural equation modelling' conducted by Ipsos Mori explored the relationship between the campaign and the behaviour of employees. The model showed that ad' recognisers are more likely to recall campaign messages. This increases positivity towards workplace pensions, and in turn drives employees' intention to remain opted in to a workplace pension.

Impact

74% of employees affected by automatic enrolment now agree that saving into a workplace pension is a normal thing to do, and ad-recognisers are more likely to have this view.

The evaluation framework drives innovation, ensures value for money and supports further integration of the campaigns. By the end of April 2018, the campaigns had supported the successful roll-out of policy, with more than 9.6 million employees enrolled by over 1.2 million employers.

SEM shows significant positive relationship between WPP ads and intent to stay in. Also shows importance of perceptions towards State Pension.

Case Study 12
Demonstrating impact

HM Prison &
Probation Service

Challenge

HM Prison & Probation Service was asked to help colleagues reduce the number of self-inflicted deaths in custody by increasing prisoner awareness of support and coping techniques and by giving staff the confidence to engage someone who might be at risk. Being able to talk to someone was the most frequently cited suggestion for prevention. We used this insight to build the 'It's OK to talk' campaign, encouraging those in prison to speak out and ask for help. This ran alongside the 'take a minute, save a life' campaign for staff.

Approach

The campaign used self-help booklets, colourful posters, Inside Time articles and dedicated prison radio shows for men and women in prison – and prompt sheets, intranet articles and training videos for staff.

Impact

Our suicide prevention training videos for staff, produced by the Samaritans, received almost 10,000 views in the first month and 58% of those who heard the campaign on Prison Radio said they took action – like speaking to fellow prisoners about mental health or trying out new coping techniques.

In 2016 there were 122 self-inflicted deaths. This was reduced to 70 in 2017 – a five-year low. This campaign was shortlisted for the Internal Communications Campaign and Low Budget Campaign of the Year at the UK Public Sector Communications Awards.

Case Study 13
Demonstrating impact

Intellectual
Property
Office

Challenge

One of the our strategic goals and ministerial targets last year was to educate businesses, helping them understand, manage and protect their intellectual property.

Intellectual property protects inventions, branding, the design of products, written material, films and music. Research showed that small business owners feel that access to information about intellectual property (IP) is important for the success of their business but many of them did not know how to access information and support on how to consider IP as part of their strategic business planning.

Approach

We created a campaign called IP for Business, using OASIS and the GCS evaluation framework. The channels we decided to use to reach our audience were a split of face-to-face business events and digital channels, including case study videos, blogs, social media, webinars and podcasts. During our evaluation planning we found capturing outputs and outtakes for these channels fairly straightforward – finding outcomes was more difficult. We decided to send follow-up surveys to businesses who had attended our events or used some of our digital tools, asking if they had made a decision about their IP as a result of their engagement with us. This took us a

step further in the evaluation process than we had previously considered.

Impact

The evidence showed we had achieved our objectives and made a real impact. We reached 130,511 businesses through our events and digital channels. 95% of businesses who attended our events told us that they were better able to understand intellectual property, with 86% making an informed decision on how to use their intellectual property. The results of the follow-up survey showed that 26% had taken informed action e.g. by registering, selling franchising or enforcing their intellectual property, 39% hadn't yet, but intended to,.22% felt that they didn't need to, and 14% were still unsure.

Delivering world-class communications

Afterword

I endorse this guide as a key resource from which to build capability, share best practice and reach even higher standards. Strategic communication teams are at the forefront of everything we do, providing leadership to colleagues and departments by setting direction and making key decisions about what, when and how we communicate.

The reputation of communication has grown in recent years. We have been better able to demonstrate our value and shifted away from short-term tactical work. Strategic communication is aligned to HMG priorities, audience understanding is at the heart of our approach, and we always evaluate to evidence our value and continuously improve.

Our strategic communicators deliver annual communication plans for their departments, setting out key campaigns and programmes for the year ahead. They gather insight so we can deliver approaches that resonate with our target audiences – from businesses that need to prepare for Brexit, to parents who we want to take more control of their children's diets. To ensure effective delivery they lead their communication colleagues and report outcomes to ministers, capturing lessons for future activity.

The value and skill of our strategic communicators – in understanding complex data, devising strategies and evaluating outcomes – is now well established. But until now there has been no attempt to set out, in one place, the activities an effective strategic communications team should carry out.

This guide captures the best practice that exists across GCS so our strategic communication teams can remain the best at what they do. Heads of Strategic Communication have agreed to standardise what strategic communication teams should do so we can run coherent cross-government campaigns based on a shared methodology and standards.

The importance of strategic communication will only grow in the years ahead. We need to recruit more people with the skills to interrogate the increasing availability of data and navigate an ever-more-fragmented media landscape.

Current and future GCS strategic communication colleagues will be central to making sure our practice is world class, now and in the future.

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