

Dear NHS communicators,

Date

14.09.2021

Open letter of thanks to NHS communicators

Ahead of our NHS Communicate 2021 Conference and Awards, NHS Confederation, NHS Providers and the Centre for Health Communication Research (CHCR) would like to publicly acknowledge the professionalism that healthcare communicators have displayed during the pandemic.

The work you have led to ensure local health services have continued to engage and communicate effectively with patients and staff during COVID-19 has been a vital part of the response to the pandemic.

The communications response has been a story of partnership working in common cause against an unprecedented challenge. This has seen communicators working well across organisational boundaries - from acute, community, mental health and ambulance service providers; integrated care systems; clinical commissioning groups; primary care networks and federations; voluntary sector providers; to communications colleagues working in government and the national bodies.

Collectively, you have ensured there have been clear, consistent and timely communications, making sure the public and NHS staff have had access to the information they need. This remains critical to the delivery of healthcare services.

This work has been recognised by the public. Research conducted by Survation for the NHS Communicate Conference indicates that the NHS continues to be by far the most trusted source of information on COVID-19. Twice as many people said they “completely trust” the NHS as they do any other information source. This is a great tribute to the work that you do.

With the virus often being unpredictable, it has required communicators and their colleagues to move at pace, with flexibility and expert management of their communications channels. Like most

other colleagues working in the NHS, this has often come at a high price, with staff regularly working long hours with high levels of stress and anxiety to contend with. We know from the research that our three organisations carried out last year that this was already having a huge impact on communicators. We are following up this research to understand the long-term impact on the profession.

We have a collective duty to look after colleagues across the communications profession and our three organisations will work with the CIPR Health Group, PRCA and others who want to support our profession. This will be a key feature of our conference programme and we look forward to hearing your experiences and reflecting on what we can do in partnership to improve health and wellbeing of communicators up and down the country.

We hope to see as many of you as possible at our conference and awards this week. The 300 entries we have received to the awards have once again demonstrated the excellence in communications that you are collectively delivering. We thank you for taking the time to share your expertise and insights and we will be highlighting this best practice across the profession throughout the autumn.

Once again, we thank you all for your service, dedication and professionalism and know you will continue to provide exceptional communications counsel and support to our colleagues throughout the NHS.

Kind regards,

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