

26. Scottish Public Sector Team of the Year

I lead a team that positively thrives on a challenge ...and I'm sure many other small public sector teams do likewise.

But I am nominating my hard-pressed talented team of 10 communicators because of the way they have coped with an astonishing series of situations, campaigns and emergencies without dropping the ball of normal high pressure business.

Business objectives

The team are responsible for informing, explaining, and engaging with the public, patients, staff and partners - including the media - on all aspects of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Key responsibilities include:

- Strengthening the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde 'brand'
- Keeping 44,000 staff well informed
- Communicating effectively and proactively with all media
- Building an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and elected representatives
- Developing co-ordinated business continuity planning and emergency resilience response

An example of a particular campaign

A boy aged 15 in a deprived area of Glasgow has only a 50 percent chance of reaching his 60th birthday. His counterpart in a more affluent area has a 90 percent chance of living well beyond 60.

This stark statistic is the reality of health inequalities in the city and surrounding areas.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has made tackling this unacceptable gap a top priority.

An ambitious social marketing campaign was developed to raise awareness of the complex issues and the consequences of health inequality and to encourage people to realise they can play a vital part in creating a fairer and healthier society.

Our strategy was to create a year-long "discussion" with all target audiences with a stark "curtain raiser" issue of *Health News* in February 2009 and conclude with a powerful "health manifesto" call to support the most vulnerable in our population and create vibrant cities, towns and communities.

With target audiences including our staff, the public, the media, policy makers and influencers and educators, every member of the team would play a vital role in ensuring the campaign was a success.

In total, the 12-month campaign included two dedicated editions of our public *Health News* newspaper (400,000 copies per edition) inserted into The Herald, Sunday Herald

and Evening Times and throughout direct distribution networks, a major staff event, an educational pack for schools, an edition of our staff magazine and a dedicated biennial Director of Public Health Report launched at a major public event. All stages of the campaign were supported by a full-blown PR campaign.

From the start we managed to grab headlines across a significant variety of mainstream and specialist broadcast and print media – culminating in international coverage of a controversial call by our DPH on her medical profession to take a pay cut as part of a wider redistribution of wealth.

By researching, writing and designing all our own materials and organising our own PR activity and event management (right down to the creation of the education packs for schools and universities) we were able to deliver the campaign within our budget of £90,000.

List of outstanding achievements

A few of the other big ticket items that we managed in the past three years include:

- In the UK vanguard in responding to H1N1 (Swine Flu), first cluster of cases; first school closures and tragically the first death
- Terror Attack at Glasgow Airport and aftermath
- Supermarket e-coli 0157 killer outbreak
- The opening of two “controversial” £100m walk-in walk-out hospitals to replace ageing traditional inpatient hospitals
- Handling all communications activities for the outbreak of anthrax laced heroin which resulted in multiple deaths amongst addicts in Scotland
- An intensive 12-month “get active” campaign linked to the forthcoming Glasgow Commonwealth Games with the city’s evening newspaper
- A police inquiry followed by a Public Inquiry into an outbreak of C-diff at the Vale of Leven Hospital
- Creating and delivering a professional quality bespoke photo-library on behalf of NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government
- A marketing launch for a new single NHS Scotland Credit Union

“Normal business” in a single year includes designing, writing and editing 12 staff magazines, issuing more than 100 electronic staff Core Briefs; writing, designing and editing five mass circulation public newspapers “*Health News*”; dealing with 240 media Freedom of Information requests; responding to 1,000 MSP and Parliamentary

inquiries; writing 200 ministerial briefings; maintaining and updating our website which attracts 60,000 visitors a month . . . and with a staff of only three dedicated press officers running the busiest single health press desk in Scotland dealing with everything from a BBC network news package about a revolutionary anaesthetic technique to Radio 2's Jeremy Vine popping along to a small closure threatened tea-bar run by volunteers in one of our hospitals!

Evaluation of those achievements, including analysis of performance against budget

Multi-award winning team, including two best campaign awards, best magazine and best newspaper.

The achievements have been won at a time of expansion of responsibilities and a streamlining of the Corporate Communications resource (delivered a reduction in real budgets of more than 20 percent), which has been overcome by flexible working, an incredibly positive attitude and a determination to deliver the highest of standards at all times.

The reason the team is considered special

Innovation, creativity, pushing the boundaries with new ideas ...my staff have the talents that you would expect from any communications team.

What sets them apart from others is their ability time after time to deal professionally with the complex and highly contentious issues they face as communicators representing Scotland's largest health authority.

In the past three years alone they have been called upon to respond to some of Scotland's biggest stories including the Airport terror alert, the C-Diff outbreak at the Vale of Leven and the first wave of the H1N1 flu pandemic to hit the UK.