

Corporate Communications Strategy

2024-2028



FOREWORD

“Good communications is an essential component of successful organisations and central to everything we do at Leeds Teaching Hospitals”.

Communicating well with our staff, patients and wider audiences, inviting and listening to their feedback, not only creates awareness of our services and ensures well-informed colleagues, it also helps us to understand what really matters to the people we serve. There is highly regarded evidence to show that in healthcare organisations, good communications, and a highly motivated workforce, lead to an improved experience and outcome for patients.

By ensuring we have consistent and effective communications, internally and externally, we can engage and build strong relationships with all our stakeholders. In turn this ensures a culture of openness and transparency, it allows us to listen and collaborate, build trust, and ultimately improve patient care.

We are a large and diverse organisation with almost 22,000 staff making us the second largest employer in Leeds. We see 1.6 million patients each year and treat people from across Leeds, West Yorkshire and beyond. We are regularly carrying out leading-edge research and innovation, performing UK and world-first procedures and supporting people at their most vulnerable time. The impact we have is immense and it is important that good communications is at the heart of everything we do.

Effective communications are even more important now, with the NHS under enormous pressure and facing significant challenges, patient satisfaction with the NHS at an all-time low and the communications landscape constantly innovating, bringing with it the challenge of misinformation and fake news.

This corporate communications strategy will guide us in what and how we communicate with our internal and external stakeholders. It will help us to align our messages and narrative, not only against our vision and goals, but against the needs and expectations of these stakeholders, and encourage us to use the most appropriate, effective, and inclusive ways to do this.

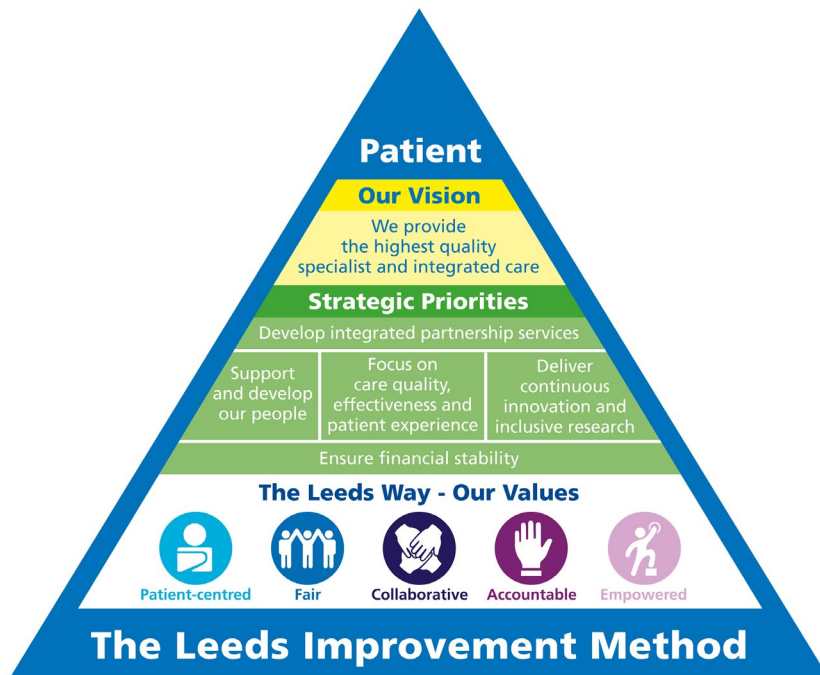
And underpinning all of this is the way we do this; Living the Leeds Way, our values are in everything we do so we deliver on our vision to provide the highest quality specialist and integrated care for our patients.



Prof. Phil Wood
Chief Executive

OUR STRATEGY

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust is an ambitious organisation with a clear vision to provide the highest quality specialist and integrated care. Our vision, values and strategic priorities are summarised in our strategic triangle below, which shows patients at the centre of everything we do.



- One of the **largest teaching hospitals** in the country
- A **regional and national centre for specialist treatment** and the **local hospital for the Leeds community**
- **Seven hospitals** across **five sites** in the city
- Treat around **1.6 million patients** every year
- Spend around **£1.9 billion** each year
- Almost **22,000 staff**
- Established **Centre of Excellence** for Research and Innovation at scale and a top recruiter for clinical trials

Our mission:

to be an internationally renowned academic healthcare institution, working in partnership to deliver the highest quality, safe, effective and innovative care which improves outcomes.

To support delivery of the strategy, we have seven multi-year goals which drive our long term activity and seven annual commitments which are refreshed each year to consolidate our in-year priorities.

Our multi-year goals are:

- Deliver fit for purpose healthcare.
- Deliver top quartile healthcare performance.
- Deliver a sustainable surplus by becoming the most efficient teaching hospital.
- Have an embedded culture of service improvement and innovation.
- To be a leading academic healthcare institution.
- Have a consistent, high performing and sustainable workforce.
- People receive person-centred care in the most appropriate setting.

Our 7 annual commitments are available on our [website](#).



The Leeds Way

The Leeds Way is what we stand for and what we want to achieve. It is how we do things around here and what makes Leeds Teaching Hospitals different to other organisations. The Leeds Way is described in our strategic triangle; it encompasses our ambition through our vision and strategic priorities and our culture through our values, as created by our staff. It sets out what our stakeholders can expect from us as a Trust.



Patient-centred



Fair



Collaborative



Accountable



Empowered

The Leeds Improvement Method

The Leeds Improvement Method (LIM) is our philosophy of continuous improvement that underpins all our organisational strategies. It brings the principles of daily management methods, improvement methodology, respectful behaviours and the removal of waste from processes together.

Our strategy framework

This strategy is part of a wider suite of strategies that work together to support the Trust to meet its overarching vision. At the centre of this is the Trust's corporate strategy, supported by three core strategies and ten enabling strategies. This strategy framework enables us to ensure our strategies align and are updated appropriately to reflect and support the overall Trust strategy.



Why do we need a corporate communications strategy?

The purpose of the corporate communications strategy is to support the Trust to communicate the trust strategy and goals clearly and consistently to our key stakeholders and share our achievements and successes. In doing this we will build positive and effective relationships, a culture of openness and transparency, trust and a strong reputation.

During times of change, effective communications is more important than ever and as we write this strategy, the NHS is facing some of the biggest challenges during its lifetime with significant operational and financial challenges and patient confidence in the service at its lowest. Internally, pressure on NHS staff is mounting and the importance of health and wellbeing cannot be underestimated. More flexible working styles means effective communications is essential, but more complex to get right. The rise in citizen journalists and bloggers working outside of the traditional media framework, particularly on social media, has added a further element of complexity in an already high profile, politically sensitive environment. Misinformation and disinformation present additional challenges for the trust to manage.

But we are in a good position at Leeds Teaching Hospitals. We have a strong culture through our Leeds Way values, a staff engagement score moving in the right direction and a positive reputation on our ability to deliver. We are never short of amazing stories about the work our staff deliver. Despite our challenges, staff across the organisation continue to improve and innovate to see how we can work differently to deliver the best possible care for patients.

Our stakeholder groups

The Trust's stakeholders are diverse, and it is essential that we tailor information which is relevant to each of them and their areas of interest for maximum impact. They are categorised into the groups below and further analysis of their information requirements and desired outcomes, along with plans for communicating with them is shown on page 17.

- Trust staff
- Patients and their families
- The public
- Partners and providers, (NHS partners, local authority partners, primary care, anchor organisations)
- Industry and research partners
- Academic partners
- Regulatory bodies
- Political/democratic individuals and bodies
- Media and opinion formers

SHAPING OUR STORY

Strategic aims

The corporate communications strategy guides the Trust in all its communications, internal and external. It supports the Trust to bring to life its goals and priorities for each of its stakeholders and supports delivery of the overarching strategy.

As a Trust our organisation strategy is clear and strong. We have a vision, strategic priorities, long and short-term goals and commitments, all underpinned by a well embedded culture and values. Taken together, this is The Leeds Way – what we want to achieve and how we will do it, our brand.

The aim of this corporate communications strategy is to ‘bring The Leeds Way to life’ and make our brand stronger. It is what sets us apart from others. We will do this by providing clear, open and consistent communications which enable our staff, patients and wider stakeholders to be informed, inspired and involved; and have confidence and trust in our hospitals as a great place to work and receive care.

The Leeds Way content pillars

To bring The Leeds Way to life, we have organised our narrative into three content pillars, which are guided by our strategy and multi-year goals. These pillars enable us to clearly position the Trust in the areas that are important to us, to tell our stories, and promote the breadth of activity, achievements, ambition and opportunity from across the Trust.

Each year we will review this high level narrative and create a message house which helps us to ensure consistency across our key messages, factual accuracy and will align to the priorities of that year through the 7 commitments.

The Leeds Way is:

Everyone deserves their best health

By providing the right healthcare, at the right time, to the right person, in the right place, we will create a healthier and more caring city for people of all ages and all backgrounds. We will improve our understanding of the people who use our services so the poorest can improve their health the fastest. We will embed health promoting opportunities throughout the Trust to prioritise prevention and treatment. We will diagnose early and treat in a timely way to truly take a personalised and holistic approach and design our services with regard to prevalence and premature mortality. Our patients will be at the centre of everything we do but when things go wrong, we will ensure the highest level of openness and duty of candour to put matters right. We will improve the efficiency of healthcare across the board, reducing the inequality gap. Strong and robust stewardship of the taxpayer’s money will enable us to develop efficient and sustainable services with minimum waste.

Aligned Trust multi-year goals:

- Deliver fit for purpose healthcare
- Deliver top quartile healthcare performance
- Deliver a sustainable surplus by becoming the most efficient teaching hospital

We always learn to improve

Without research and innovation, we wouldn't have come as far as we have. Without our continuing commitment to research and innovation, in all areas of the Trust, we won't move forward from here. That's why we're relentlessly looking for ways to cement our position as the leading academic healthcare institution. We want all patients to have the opportunity to participate in research because research active organisations have been shown to deliver better care and better patient outcomes. By building a strong culture of research across the Trust, in all specialities, we can ensure research is for all. But we can't do this alone, a robust infrastructure and wide range of proactive partnerships will support us to ensure research is an always event at the Trust. We deliver world-class outcomes through our leading-edge services and our centres of excellence. These services are at the forefront of the latest innovations and we will continue to build on this work through the development of our Leeds Innovation Village and our innovative partnerships with industry, academia and other stakeholders. This will enable us to lead the way with the latest treatments, technology and care and bring these to the patients' bedside as quickly as possible. We continue to invest in our equipment and buildings to ensure they reflect the quality and standard of our services, and these services impact far and wide – across Leeds, West Yorkshire, the wider region and even nationally.

Our improvement and learning will be underpinned by our very own locally developed methodology, The Leeds Improvement Method, which will become engrained within our culture and day-to-day work. By bringing together tools of quality improvement with daily management methods, respectful behaviours, and lean processes and our excellent training and education as a teaching trust, we will reduce variation and waste and empower staff to continuously improve the quality of care for our patients. This learning to improve approach is both a proactive and reactive philosophy which means it also helps us to find the positives in even the most difficult of situations, because sometimes the worst experiences show us the way to change. We will always learn, improve and come back stronger.

Aligned Trust multi-year goals:

- Have an embedded culture of service improvement and innovation
- To be a leading academic healthcare institution

We're in this together

Ambitions are seldom achieved alone. We make the most progress when we work in partnership. This means pulling together within the Trust, having each other's backs, supporting one another through thick and thin. Living The Leeds Way. Listening, being inclusive and respecting each other's voices. We will prioritise the wellbeing of our people because they consistently prioritise the wellbeing of others over themselves on a daily basis. This is all part of our desire to create a sustainable workforce and be recognised as a high performing organisation, and the best place to work. And by going beyond our organisational boundaries, breaking down barriers to create unique partnerships with people and organisations, we will break new ground together, deliver services in a patient-centred way and create better healthcare solutions for all of us.

Aligned Trust multi-year goals:

- Have a consistent, high performing and sustainable workforce
- People receive person-centred care in the most appropriate setting



Brand and service level communications

Against each pillar, we will develop brand and service communications content and activity that informs, inspires and involves our stakeholders. We will show tangible achievements in progress against the strategy but also not lose sight of what Leeds Teaching Hospitals stands for and what sets us apart from others - our vision, ambition and wider context of our work.

We will bring stories to life by using case studies and human-interest stories or by aligning our news with topical events or issues. Visually we will use infographics, video and powerful imagery to make our news more accessible and impactful.

- **Brand communications and content** will focus on our longer-term ambitions and vision and also on our collective priorities and achievements that reflect and provide evidence of our commitment to delivering the Leeds Way brand. Examples include a focus on our ambition and vision as part of Building the Leeds Way to build a new hospital on the site of the Leeds General Infirmary, including our opportunities within the Innovation Village (longer term ambitions), or our collective achievements across the Trust in transplants, as one example, highlighting our history, achievements, strength of expertise and innovative approaches (collective priorities). In the main these brand activities will highlight how Leeds Teaching Hospitals is different and stands out from other organisations and will tell a story around the content pillars which show progress towards delivery of the multi-year goals and vision while reflecting the values of the organisation.
- **Service communications and content** will focus on more immediate and shorter-term activities we are delivering to achieve the 7 commitments, such as standalone initiatives or news stories. These could include improvements in waiting times or opening a new service, for example or staff recognition, examples of strong patient experience and our ongoing innovation and research achievements.

SHARING OUR STORY

To deliver this communications strategy over the next five years we will focus on the following key areas of work to bring to life our brand and service communications content against our three content pillars so we can inform, inspire and involve.

Managing effective internal communications and engagement

Good quality internal communication can help build trust, inspire, drive innovation, build a compassionate culture and improve staff experience. There is a direct correlation between highly engaged staff and patient safety outcomes.

- We will create fresh and creative content, which is inclusive, engages staff and reflects the values of The Leeds Way and celebrates the achievements and success of our staff.
- We will ensure staff are able to access internal communications messages through accessible channels which work for them, their way of working and their role.
- We will improve the opportunities for two-way communications with staff ensuring we always 'close the loop' and that staff feel listened to.
- We will support more personalised and relevant internal communications by working with Clinical Service Units and Corporate Teams to develop local strategies, communications channel infrastructure, toolkits, training and tailored content.
- We will develop the Trust's intranet as a dynamic and invaluable central repository for all information, making it intuitive, personalised, accessible, and ensuring it is up-to-date and accurate at all times.
- We will undertake an annual survey of staff to gather feedback on communications activity which will inform a continuous improvement approach.

Defining a clear brand identity and supporting strategies

- We will use our three content pillars to promote a clear strategic brand narrative for the Trust which reflects its ambition and strategic direction using creative channels.
- We will develop and embed a consistent Trust visual identity, brand guidelines and style guide to reflect the Leeds Teaching Hospitals brand and support inclusive communications.
- As the Trust develops its commercial activities we will develop a commercial marketing strategy to support this. We will create a brand architecture to appropriately reflect the relationship between the Trust and its commercial activities.

Amplifying social media and digital communications

- We will continue to grow our social media following and engagement through organic and paid activity on those corporate and service level platforms which are providing the highest level of reach and interaction
- We will focus our content strategy on high performing and high-quality content which includes video, on brand photography and human-interest stories. We will explore creative video content and thought leadership pieces to maximise our brand content and share our ambitions more widely.
- We will build skills and expertise across all social media account owners to ensure a consistent, high-quality approach to social media and digital content across all of the Leeds Teaching Hospitals channels
- We will continue to explore new channels to target new audiences if we believe these will support the Leeds Teaching Hospitals brand and generate effective engagement
- We will continue to develop our website to respond to user feedback and build opportunities for increased digital interaction where appropriate ensuring at all times that this is meeting the required accessibility standards.
- We will continue to build our podcast series library to promote the Leeds Teaching Hospitals brand, recognising the growth in this channel and building on experience and evaluation of previous series.

Maximising media relations opportunities

Media relations enables the Trust to promote its reputation, celebrate the achievements of its staff and build trust with staff, patients, the public and wider stakeholders. It provides patients, families, and carers with information to make informed decisions, be a responsible citizen and feel confidence in the care the Trust provides. In current times of misinformation and fake news, it can, in some cases, also be a credible source of accurate information.

- We will ensure the work and achievements of the Trust are regularly featured in local and regional media through a proactive programme of sustained news aligned to the seven Commitments.
- We will provide a strong press office function which is respected across the industry and ensures the Trust responds to media enquiries in a timely, open and transparent manner and supporting the reputation of the Trust.
- We will build stronger relationships with national and specialist trade journalists to enable us to promote the Trust, its specialist services and projects on a wider platform and develop a rolling forward feature plan, targeting trade and specialist publications in key priority areas to proactively submit features content, raising the profile of the work of the Trust.
- We will engage with production companies to explore proactive and reactive opportunities for the Trust to feature in TV documentaries which align with our content pillars
- We will increase the number of expert commentators and thought leaders from the Trust featured in the media by developing and promoting an 'experts' facility on the Trust website to signpost journalists to the wealth of knowledge and expertise we have. We will also build a proactive programme of brand-focused thought leadership against our content pillars to share through social, digital and media platforms.
- We will utilise multi-media and web-based content where appropriate to enhance our press releases, recognising the decline in journalist capacity, as a way to generate more substantial and wide-ranging coverage for the Trust.

Delivering effective stakeholder communications

Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with our stakeholders is a fundamental part of delivering our business. These relationships are managed across different roles within the Trust.

- We will undertake a biennial survey of our key stakeholders to gather feedback to inform a continuous improvement approach to how we communicate and engage with them to meet their needs and interests.
- We will proactively share information about the Trust and its work on a regular basis through a corporate Stakeholder Update and reactively we will commit to 'no surprises'.
- We will engage with stakeholders to showcase the work of the Trust with invitations to meet staff and hear about their work and achievements.
- We will continue to use LinkedIn channels to promote brand and service content and target specific stakeholders with tailored content aligned to the content pillars.

Proactive approach to communicating in a crisis

As a category one responder, the Trust has a responsibility under the Civil Contingencies legislation to effectively warn and inform the public on matters of emergency or harm.

- We will ensure we have the correct processes and channels in place to be able to respond to a major incident and ensure we are effectively sharing information with staff, patients, families, the public and other stakeholders in a timely way.
- We will identify key public health messages or issues we need to warn and inform our stakeholders about and develop integrated marketing campaigns to support, working with partners across the City or wider region as appropriate.
- We will continue to learn and improve our responses through live incidents and desk top exercises and build experience and skills across the team to respond.

Evaluation

We will develop annual key performance indicators (KPIs) to demonstrate progress against the commitments set out in this strategy. This will be done in a proportionate way which provides assurance against progress without consuming significant capacity and resource. Typical KPIs will focus around:

- Open rates of internal communications materials
- Attendance at internal communications events
- Feedback in the internal communications survey/other surveys
- Targeting of media coverage and breakdown between positive and negative sentiment
- Engagement levels across social media and benchmarking against other Trusts
- User activity across digital platforms
- Open rates and click throughs for external publications
- Individual project outcomes such as behaviour change etc.



MAKING IT HAPPEN

The communications strategy will be owned by the communications team but will require input and commitment from colleagues across the organisation to support its delivery.

It is everyone's responsibility to identify opportunities to promote and share their achievements across the organisation and beyond. Creating a culture of celebration and recognition is part of the Leeds Way values and fosters a successful and positive thinking organisation. We will work with teams to support and encourage this.

To successfully deliver this strategy the communications team will adopt the following approaches.

- We will follow the key principles of good communications:
 - clear, timely, accurate and accountable
 - two-way
 - open and honest
 - targeted and relevant
 - inclusive and accessible
- We will continue to follow the hub and spoke communications delivery model and work with CSUs to understand their communications requirements and support. We will build a network of trusted communications professionals who can provide interim support for stand-alone projects to manage peaks in activity when there is funding to do so.
- We will develop and support the communications team through appropriate professional development to be a skilled, engaged and high performing team working to the Leeds Way values and the Chartered Institute of PR Code of Conduct.
- We will encourage a culture of celebration and recognition, supporting colleagues to recognise and promote their achievements, sharing tools, skills and best practice as appropriate.
- We will build and develop strong partnerships and relationships with colleagues and key stakeholders to enable us to work effectively, share best practice and maximise promotional opportunities.
- We will develop an annual plan to support deliver of the strategy and a supporting dashboard to monitor progress and success.
- We will use resources wisely, use technology, where appropriate, and the Leeds Improvement Method, to drive efficiency, and ensure our activities generate best value for money. We will explore opportunities to support commercial and innovation activities.

Stakeholder summary

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder description	Content pillars – primary areas of interest	Desired outcome	Channels
Trust Staff	Trust staff, honorary contract staff, office based/ward based, volunteers, staff networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves their best health • We always learn to improve • We're in this together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to do role and understand their contribution • Feel valued and included by the organisation • Ambassador • Recommend Trust as a place to work/ receive care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IC channels • Managers and colleagues/peers • Local/regional media, website, social media
Patients and families	Existing patients and their families, families of previous patients,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves their best health • We always learn to improve • We're in this together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in care/staff • Feel supported and valued • Recommend as a place to receive care • Understand the challenges? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff/personal experience • Media, social media, website • Posters and notices
The public	Local, regional and national members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves their best health • We always learn to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in services and the Trust – proud of their local NHS hospitals • Choose the Trust for care • Choose as a place to work • Understand the challenges? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff as friends and family • Local/Regional media, social media • Website
Partners and providers	NHS providers, LA partners, Primary care, ICS, anchor organisations, WYAAT, charity partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves their best health • We always learn to improve • We're in this together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well informed and clear about the Trust strategy • Ambassador for the Trust • Confident in the services • Seen as a trusted and approachable partner • Able to work in partnership to make improvements • Promote and amplify messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Networks • Stakeholder bulletin • Local/regional/national media, social media • Website

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder description	Content pillars – primary areas of interest	Desired outcome	Channels
Academic Partners	Universities, prospective workforce, LAHP, AHSN, NHSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We always learn to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and involvement of research activity • Promote and amplify messages • Keen to work with the Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff (particularly research focused staff) • Networks • Stakeholder bulletin • Local/regional/national/specialist media, social media • Website
Industry & Research partners	NIHR, research charities, funders, pharma companies, research & healthtech industry, entrepreneurs,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We always learn to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keen to work with Trust • Promote and amplify messages • See the Trust as innovative and leading the way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry/Innovation networks • Government partners • Stakeholder bulletin • Regional/national/specialist media, social media • Website
Regulatory bodies	CQC, professional bodies, NHS England,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves their best health • We always learn to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in Trust • Open relationship • Championing best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Relationship managers • Stakeholder bulletin • Regional/national/specialist media, social media • Website
Political/ democratic	Cllrs, MPs, Combine Authority, LA, pressure groups, Ministers, Govt ALBs, select committees, civil service,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves their best health • We always learn to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in the Trust and leadership • Confidence in services and the Trust – proud of their local NHS hospitals • Ambassador for the Trust • Keen to work with the Trust • Seen as best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Senior leaders • Relationship managers • Stakeholder bulletin • Regional/national/specialist media, social media • Website
Media/opinion formers	Media, social media commentators,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone deserves their best health • We always learn to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See LTHT as the place to go for expert comment • Aware of reputation of LTHT • Seen as a place for best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships and engagement through communications team • Website • Local, regional and national media • Social media