

# Human Tissue Authority

## Board Meeting Conducted in Public

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## Update on the Communication and Engagement Strategy

### Purpose of paper

1. To provide an update on the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

### Decision making to date

2. The board approved the HTA Communications and Engagement Strategy in May 2023. SMT made additional decisions on the stakeholder approach, internal comms activity and regulatory updates in Q2 & Q3 of 2022 to 2023

### Action required

3. To note what has been delivered since the strategy was agreed in May 2022 and the plans for 2023/24.

### Background

4. On 5 May 2022 the Board approved the Communication and Engagement Strategy. The strategy outlined four strategic principles: be present, be relevant, be proactive, be clear and consistent. These principles have shaped the approach taken over the last year.

5. It should be noted that delivery of the strategy has been against a background of staff turnover, with two existing team members leaving in Q1 and Q2 and new members joining in Q1 and Q3. The team now consists of Head of Communications and Engagement, Stakeholder Manager, Communications Officer and Content Designer.

## **Media**

6. Engagement with the media has gradually increased throughout the year. There has been work in the background to review and improve our contact lists, drive up our responsiveness to enquiries and shift the internal culture to be more open to engaging with the media. Whenever possible, we provided a spokesperson response and we have put forward Heads of Regulation and a Regulation Manager to provide journalists with background briefings. This shift has also seen an increase in enquires we receive.

### ***Moving forward***

7. We aim to deliver two proactive stories a quarter, covering the work of the HTA, this will include updates to guidance, new or innovative licence approvals and HTA business such as the annual report and business plan. To supplement this, we have increased the use of blogs and use of HTA data to highlight activity on the website and social media. For example, every month we now publish the live donation approvals data and are working with colleagues to agree a plan to increase proactive messages around our data releases and inspection reports. A forward look of activity can be found at Annex A.

## **Stakeholder relations**

8. The Communications and Engagement Strategy included re-establishing stakeholder groups. Internal feedback had been to change the governance and structure to ensure they were reflective of all sectors and could work as a useful tool to listen and engage with representative organisations across the sectors we regulate.

### ***Events***

9. The approach outlined (summer 2022) was for a series of sector focused engagements in Q4 and roundtables in-between. Following executive review a revised approach was rolled out in Q4, with more structured sector engagement forums twice a year, with the option for roundtables between.
10. To align with a more modern approach, the forums and roundtables are reported via blogs externally and supported by internal meeting notes.

In Q3 there was a roundtable with the Devolved Administrations and in Q4 sector-focused forums covered Post Mortem, Anatomy, Human Application and Organ Donation and Transplantation.

11. The forums came together virtually, and feedback from attendees was positive overall. A common thread was the importance of collaboration and engagement with the sectors we regulate.
12. Blog posts about HTA stakeholder engagement activity are below.
  - [HTA and devolved administrations - working together | Blog | Human Tissue Authority](#)
  - [Introducing our sector-focused stakeholder forums | Blog | Human Tissue Authority \(hta.gov.uk\)](#)
  - [An update on our stakeholder forums for Anatomy, Human Application and ODT | Blog | Human Tissue Authority \(hta.gov.uk\)](#)
13. In March 2023 we attended the NHSBT/BTS congress in Edinburgh and for the first time had a modest stand. Footfall and engagement with colleagues on the stand was steady and provided an opportunity to engage with a range of stakeholders. We have supported regulation colleagues providing training presentations at events in the PM sector.

### ***Newsletters and Alerts***

14. We have shifted the stakeholder newsletter from every two months to quarterly. This change followed an assessment of the newsletter performance and in recognition of the quality and quantity of updates regulations teams were able to provide. With a lower frequency, the newsletters contain more information and there has been a slight increase in engagement with them.
15. In Q3, we introduced regulatory updates to build flexibility to how we message establishments. These sit at a level below alerts. **Alerts** are now issued when immediate action might be needed to protect patient safety. **Updates** are used when the standards or guidance are changed or updated, and other important but non-urgent information needs to be relayed. In Annex B you can see data on the performance of the stakeholder newsletters and regulatory alerts and updates.

### ***Moving forward***

16. Summer roundtables are being scoped. We are exploring opportunities to work with the National Crime Agency to focus on trafficking for organ donation and transplantation and are developing a roundtable on the management of the deceased for July.

17. The plan is for the sector-focused forums to be held twice yearly in Q1 and Q3. With the next set planned for autumn 2023. The autumn series will also include engagement with public display and research.
18. We are currently scoping options for face-to-face activity either later in 2023 and/or 2024. We will update the Board on their involvement with these as the plans become firmer.

## Website

19. At the end of March 2022 the HTA website passed the final assessment of NHSX's quality assurance scheme which allowed the site to move from public beta, into the live. Since then, the focus has been on incremental content improvements and driving more traffic. We have built a section where users can find the most recent inspection reports and increased the number of news items published on the site.
20. In Q4 the website was independently audited by GDS for accessibility. UK law required all public sector websites to be fully compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidance (WCAG 2.1) AA accessibility standards by 28 September 2020, or be demonstratively working towards this standard. The global standards define how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities.
21. GDS assessed the HTA site and published a report on 9 March. [Accessibility report for www.hta.gov.uk \(accessibility-monitoring.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.hta.gov.uk/accessibility-monitoring.service.gov.uk). The report highlighted template issues, which impact all pages of the website. The four issues were:
  - the close button within the search banner is not accessible using the keyboard
  - at 400% zoom, once opened the menu does not reflow correctly
  - at 400% zoom and in mobile view, the privacy setting button covers content at the bottom of the webpage
  - there is poor colour contrast when the keyboard tabs onto buttons in the cookie banner, this refers to the green privacy button in the bottom of the webpage.
22. The website templates were updated in spring 2023 to address the website design issues raised in the GDS audit. The remaining areas that need to be addressed are publications on the website.

## ***Moving forward***

23. As part of our content improvement work, we are looking at converting more of our content into HTML. This will make the content accessible and improve how the content performs in search. Search engines cannot search inside pdf documents. These pages include a downloadable pdf. There are between 40-50 pdfs that we plan to convert. A couple of examples where we have done this are:

- <https://www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-professionals/guidance-sector/human-application/human-application-sector-hta-standards>
- <https://www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-professionals/guidance-sector/post-mortem/post-mortem-examination-licensing-standards-and>.

24. GDS reported that HTA inspection reports are not accessible. The main issue is the use of text-based tables, where the headers and content do not match and are not labelled. To make the reports accessible, we are working with Regulations Directorate to consider the overall design of the reports to see if the tables can be designed out. We will also take the opportunity to remove any non-essential information that can be found elsewhere on the website.

25. Working with the organ donation and transplantation and post-mortem regulation teams we are trialling different approaches to make it easier and clearer to understand guidance, find content on the website, develop content in other formats such as video and improve content related to our most common enquires to try and reduce email enquiries.

## **Social Media**

26. Social media activity and engagement has increased, seeing a modest uplift in engagement and followers. The team are going to focus in on Twitter and LinkedIn as the primary social media channels for HTA.

27. We have been trialling a range of approaches, building on national and international themed weeks and causes, capitalising on high profile activity like the documentary on body donation in December 2022 and trying to generate more content through blogs, data and case studies.

28. Each month we use social media to report on the live donation approvals that have been made by HTA. We have also responded to questions we get asked on social media channels. With a commitment to regularly post and to engage more, our social channels continue to grow. Virtually all of our social content drives through to published material on our website. The website has also seen an increase in traffic. Data on the website and Twitter account are available at Annex C.

### ***Moving forward***

29. We will continue to test and learn different approaches across social channels, increasing the range of content we produce and engagement with other stakeholders on social media. In the autumn, we plan to support body donation week, which continues to perform well on social and is one of our most viewed pieces of content on the website. We will link social media activity to areas of the website where we have made improvements.

## **Internal Communications**

30. Following a pilot in the summer, which showed an increase in engagement with reduced frequency, we have moved the internal newsletter to every fortnight.

31. In Q2 following feedback at an all-staff event, we introduced an “Ask the CEO” teams call. This call is every other month and provides a dedicated opportunity to ask Colin any questions. Engagement with these remains stable, the main focus of questions has been about pay and terms and other conditions. It has shown that Colin and SMT are listening and responding, with the January Ask the CEO event leading to a blog by Richard to clarify the pay position.

32. In Q4, we restructured the weekly exchange call to provide a wider range of voices on the call, and developed a plan for a different area of HTA to share how their work is supporting the vision and mission. Staff have shared informally that they like hearing about the work of teams across HTA.

33. In Q4, we have supported the development of the HTA values, consulting with colleagues on design options and bringing in line with brand guidelines. Following changes in the HR team, the communication team picked up the Superbowl call, which provides an informal way for colleagues to get to know each other through a Q&A session. We aim to deliver at least one a quarter.

### ***Moving forward***

34. The team supported the development of the HTA business plan, providing an engagement plan and visual timeline to help enable a more collaborative approach to its development. The team will provide similar support this year for the business plan and the HTA strategy.

35. We have developed a narrative for the HTA, which builds out from the vision and mission to provide top level descriptions about the work of the HTA. It also enables us to share case studies and short descriptions of each team. The narrative will be shared across the organisation in Q2 of 2023/24.

## **Recommendation**

36. To note what has been delivered since the strategy was agreed in May 2022 and the plans for 2023/24.

**Annex A**

	<b>April – June (Q1)</b>	<b>July – Sept (Q2)</b>	<b>Oct – Dec (Q3)</b>	<b>Jan-March (Q4)</b>
<b>Media/ Stakeholder</b>	<p>ODT roundtable tbc HTA business plan Code F update (NI) Stakeholder newsletter Quarterly closed incidents stats ODT comms plan Trafficking sentencing Media monitoring renewal PM guidance videos</p>	<p>PM roundtable 5 July HTA Annual Report tbc Stakeholder newsletter Quarterly closed incidents stats Annual report of accounts PM guidance videos</p>	<p><b>Forums</b> Post Mortem – Wednesday 13 September Public Display – Monday 2 October Human Application – Friday 13 October ODT - Wednesday 8 November Anatomy - Wednesday 22 November Research - Monday 4 December Stakeholder newsletter Quarterly closed incidents stats Sectors annual review</p>	<p>Stakeholder newsletter BTS congress Quarterly closed incidents stats</p>
<b>Social Media and Website</b>	<p>Accessibility web design fixes, accessible inspection reports, Accessibility audit Stakeholder forum blogs Monthly living donation stats (Accessibility fixes)</p>	<p>Retender website contract Content improvement plan World Transplant Games AAPT consent training Monthly living donation stats Quarterly spend data</p>	<p>Content Improvement Plan Monthly living donation stats Quarterly spend data HR transparency data</p>	<p>Content Improvement Plan Monthly living donation stats Quarterly spend data HR spend data</p>
<b>Internal</b>	<p>Staff newsletter Daily news round-up Ask CEO HTA Superbowl Values design</p>	<p>Staff newsletter Daily news round-up Ask CEO HTA Superbowl Publish the narrative</p>	<p>Staff newsletter Daily news round-up Ask CEO HTA Superbowl</p>	<p>Staff newsletter Daily news round-up Ask CEO HTA Superbowl</p>



## Annex B Stakeholder Activity

### Newsletters

37. There were three newsletters issued in 2022 to 2023, we are able to monitor and track performance and check against similar campaigns: average open rate 31.7%, average click rate 4.2%, average unsubscribe rate 0.1%. The first two newsletters had lower than average open rates, but higher click throughs. The March newsletter outperformed the benchmark.

Newsletter	Recipients	Opened	Clicks	Unsubscribed
<b>July</b>	4842	1196 (26.3%)	270 (5.9%)	6 (0.1%)
<b>November</b>	4875	1216 (27.5%)	230 (5.2%)	10 (0.1%)
<b>March</b>	4669	2138 (48.7%)	187 (9.7%)	11 (0.1%)

### Regulatory Alerts and Updates

38. In 2022 we issued two alerts and two updates. In 2023 there have been one alert and four updates issued so far. We are monitoring performance, but the increase frequency of updates has not impacted performance against industry standards of 32.7% open rate, 7.7% link click and 0.1% unsubscribe.

Alert/Update	Recipients	Opened	Clicks	Unsubscribed
<b>Alert 001/2022</b> West Nile Virus (NI only)	14	3 (25%)	19 (8.3%)	0
<b>Alert 002/2022</b> Dengue cases in France	411	229 (58.15%)	133 (37.3%)	1 (0.3%)

<b>Update 001/2022</b> PM sector guidance	167	110 (66.7%)	87 (52.7%)	0
<b>Update 002/2022</b> ODT sector guidance	166	63 (41.1%)	43 (28.3%)	0

<b>Alert/Update</b>	<b>Recipients</b>	<b>Opened</b>	<b>Clicks</b>	<b>Unsubscribed</b>
<b>Alert 001/2023</b> HA and ODT product defects	304	116 (40.1%)	23 (8%)	0
<b>Update 001/2023</b>	1066	455 (47.7%)	329 (34.5%)	2 (0.1%)
<b>Update 002/2023</b>	88	52 (59%)	25 (28.4%)	0
<b>Update 003/2023</b> HA and ODT update on product defects	301	92 (32.2%)	30 (36.2%)	0

<b>Alert/Update</b>	<b>Recipients</b>	<b>Opened</b>	<b>Clicks</b>	<b>Unsubscribed</b>
<b>Update 004/2023</b> Data collection exercise	3376	1001 (32%)	240 (7.7%)	4 (0.1%)
<b>Update 005/2023</b> Code of Practice F, Part two update	128	47 (40.2%)	25 (21.4%)	0

**Annex C Social media and website**

39. To provide supporting data from across communication activity, how we are bench marking and measuring through our KPIs and PIs and comparing to other similar organisations. Comparing Twitter activity in April 2022 and April 2023 you can see there has been an increase in followers by 193, or around 16 a month. Impressions have increased. We are aiming to achieve a good engagement rate of 3.7% which across most months we are meeting.

Month	Followers	Engagement Rate	Impressions
April	2,666	4.3	4,000
May	2,688	2.2	10,000
June	2,694	3.6	6,987
July	2,711	3.9	5,772
August	2,714	4.1	8,294
September	2,718	3.9	6,972
October	2,723	5.0	11,300
November	2,739	6.5	5,581
December	2,783	4.8	14,300
January	2,788	3.3	9,701
February	2,840	4.6	15,600
March	2,859	4.3	12,200

**Website performance April 2022 to March 2023**

40. From April 2022 to April 2023, there was a significant increase in activity across all categories on the website. The total site activity measured as page views grew from 29,337 to 44,339. Overall, the website experienced a substantial uptick in engagement and growth across all areas. The bounce rate remain fairly static during this period of growth and is comparable with an average bounce rate. With improved content and navigation, this rate may improve.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Users</b>	<b>Sessions</b>	<b>Page views</b>	<b>Average time on site</b>	<b>Bounce rate</b>
April	11,554	16,382	29,337	2.03	49%
May	11,887	16,876	29,701	1.59	50%
June	10977	15,287	26,841	1.59	50%
July	13,393	17,939	29,195	1.39	55%
Aug	14,153	18,882	30,585	1.62	54%
Sept	14,757	19,659	32,405	1.45	53%
Oct	16,468	22,534	37,127	1.53	53%
Nov	16,794	25,584	40,143	1.53	53%
Dec	16,958	22,159	35,832	1.47	50%
Jan	19,142	26,360	44,399	2.12	50%
Feb	17,873	24,249	41,135	2.17	52%
March	18,992	26,300	44,835	2.19	53%