Corporate Communications, Marketing and Brand

Strategy 2022-2024

Contents

This is the refreshed Corporate Communications, Marketing and Brand Strategy for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS).

This new and updated strategy runs from September 2022 to September 2024, and will be reviewed in March 2023. (The new Community Risk Management Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan will be published in 2024).

It sets the strategic direction for communications, marketing, and brand, and explains clearly what our staff, volunteers, public and other stakeholders can expect from us.

Context

As one of the largest fire and rescue services in the UK, communications, marketing and engagement are critical to the successful delivery of ECFRS's strategic priorities and delivery against our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and Fire and Rescue Plan.

It is the means by which information is shared, safety advice is given, views and opinions are sought and formed, and by which feedback is received.

The effective two-way flow of information should ensure that communication with both internal and external staff and our public is purposeful, clear, honest, timely and relevant.

The way in which we communicate with our stakeholders, and the way they engage with us, is central to their perception of the Service and our reputation.

Our communication and engagement principles

Inform
Providing our audiences and stakeholders with the information they need, either to perform their role, understand our Service, share data or make our public safer.

Listen
Through surveys, consultations and two way channels, we enable the Service to listen to stakeholders and respond to feedback.

Engage
Audiences and stakeholders are actively encouraged to be involved. This can be through conversations, employee forums, feedback surveys etc,

Digital by default

Digital communication continues to increase people's choice over how, where and when they communicate with others, watch or listen to content, engage services, seek information, shop and participate in the digital world.

In addition, the media and communication sectors have become ever more diverse and dynamic and overall, people expect to be connected everywhere and at any time through a range of devices.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic had also caused a shift in the way digital media is consumed with video being the biggest beneficiary during the crisis.

At ECFRS, the use of channels continues to evolve to meet the various needs and trends.

For our colleagues, the preferred use of internal communication channels varies. While some of our people are using SharePoint and Workplace daily, other colleagues are less actively using our digital channels due to their roles not providing enough time (for example, On-Call employees), or not feeling confident in using technology, or maybe just not seeing the benefits of engaging online with our channels. See Appendices - Internal Communication Audit 2022).

What this does mean is that, although we are committed to evolving how we communicate to meet the increasing expectations and trends, we also need to take our people with us.

Mobile video consumption rises by 100% every year, and is here to stay.

It is a medium that will actively be adopted where possible to help generate more sharing of information and promoting collaboration.

Video has been particularly helpful during the pandemic to communicate to all our employees and our communities, and our Ask Me Anything - live sessions with the CFO - continue to engage our colleagues.

Using our external digital channels, we continue to engage our external stakeholders which supports the prevention and protection agendas by delivering advice to reduce risk to the public from fire and other emergencies.

The need for measurable, clear, responsive, and flexible communications is greater than ever and will allow us to raise awareness and keep staff, partners, communities, and wider stakeholders informed of our progress.

Resources and Budget

Resources

The Corporate Communications, Marketing and Brand team has lead responsibility for delivering this strategy with the support of the Chief Fire Officer, Service Leadership Team, and the involvement of individuals and teams across the Service.

The team will deliver effective internal and external communication strategies and plans that promote our core values and mission, and enhance the brand of the Service.

- Marketing and campaigns
- Brand management
- Social media management
- Public and media relations
- 24/7 media support
- Crisis communications
- Internal/ employee communications
- Reward and recognition
- Design – some outsourced
- Video – some outsourced

- Responsible for ensuring the Service is compliant with legal duties to warn and inform the public in preparing and responding to emergencies

- To act as the lead officer for ensuring effective communication with staff and stakeholders

- Responsible for identifying opportunities to promote and enhance our brand to communities, partners and key stakeholders

- Lead officer for engaging with stakeholders during public consultation (CRMP)

- Responsible for ensuring the Service is compliant with localism act with regards to transparency and accessibility of information

- To act as principal advisor to the CFO on matters of corporate communications, crisis communications and brand

As a corporate resource, the communications team delivers communications activities, advice and guidance across all departments and the whole Service.

Budget

There is currently an identified budget to deliver ECFRS communications and engagement activity on an annual basis. Alongside this, opportunities for additional sources of resource will always be explored on a project specific basis.

The team will also seek to secure sponsorship for specific projects where possible - for example the People Awards ceremony.

Budgets for specific projects - eg public consultation - will be identified and negotiated as required.

Objectives

- Warn and inform the public and keep people safe including during critical and major incidents

- Deliver communications and engagement designed to support ECFRS vision and priorities, maintain community confidence and help our communities be safer

- Help prevent fires and incidents through effective advice, behaviour change and campaign promotion

- Tell our people first - ensures our colleagues are informed and engaged

- Challenge errors, misinformation and misconceptions

- Deliver a targeted approach via appropriate channels to ensure we continue to reach different audiences (including our people)

- Innovate and introduce new methods of communication to ensure we remain relevant to our communities and staff

- Collaborate with our partners and stakeholders, including the OPFCC, to share safety messages, campaigns and joined up statements

- Position the Communications, Marketing and Brand team as an 'enabler' of activity, rather than simply the sole deliverer.

The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) includes public awareness, and warning and informing, as two distinct legal duties for first responders (which include fire and rescue services), advising the public of risks before an emergency and maintaining arrangements to warn and keep them informed in the event of an emergency.

This priority will also form key messaging.

Our Communication Principles

Our Communication Principles

Our communications, marketing and engagement will always align to the following principles:

- Communicate as one organisation #WeAreEssexFire

- Use plain English. We will commission this externally for consultation documents, and meet the Plain English Campaign Crystal Mark.

- Strive to make our communications accessible to all

- Be open, honest, transparent and proactive

- Be clear and consistent with our messages and narrative

- Be professional

- We will provide opportunities for two-way communication and engagement with all our stakeholders. Demonstrating active listening

- All communications will be accurate, targeted and timely

- We will work with stakeholders and partner agencies

- Paid for communications and advertising will be cost effective and planned

Working with us

We will work with and alongside our leaders and people, supporting Service priorities and objectives.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity (positive action), Prevention, Protection and Response are the key areas that the communication team continues to work closely with to support strategies for effective campaigns for specific stakeholders.

All communication plans (internal and external) are subject to:

• **Objective/s being identified and agreed**
• **Data or metrics**
• **Audience/ stakeholder insight**

All activity will be subject to measurement and evaluation to illustrate effectiveness of techniques and to inform learning for future activity.

Colleagues in the communication team should have access to continuing professional development (CPD) and access to resources and equipment to support their roles.

Developing communication training programmes for the Service as a whole will allow colleagues to be better equipped to deliver communications and engagement to their teams and external stakeholders.

Our Challenges

• Successful communications and engagement must involve everyone

• Staying ahead of emerging communication trends and channels

• Proactive outweighing reactive communications
• Information fatigue and overload (particularly our internal staff)

• Lack of time for communications team to respond to opportunities or activities

• Managers seeing communications and engagement as a core part of their role

• Negative media coverage/ social media comments and conversations

• Potential ongoing national and regional challenges to Fire and Rescue Services

• Communications, marketing and brand team capacity and resilience

Stakeholders

We have many different stakeholders who have varying needs and interests in our Service.

Stakeholders are people, groups or organisations who have an interest in, or can be affected by our work.

Our stakeholders/ audience includes:

- ECFRS employees
- ECFRS volunteers

- Our Public – communities and individuals (residents)
- Visitors and tourists to Essex
- Potential future ECFRS employees

- Representative bodies

- OPFCC
- Fire and Crime Panel

- Local government
- Essex MPs
- Leaders

- Partners in the public sector across Essex, including Essex Police, East England Ambulance Service, Essex County Council, Southend Council, Thurrock Council, district councils, community partnerships, faith groups and third sector partners

- HMICFRS
- Other FRS

- Press and media - regional, national and trade

To deliver our vision and our strategic objectives, we will work closely with our stakeholders to ensure we engage them fully in our services at every level.

Their varying degrees of interest and influence are taken into consideration when communication channels are being set up.

Advocacy - those who share our vision, values and priorities, and who are most likely to speak or act in our support. For example, ECFRS employees, the OPFCC

Reputational - those who stake their reputation (in full or part) on our performance. For example, government ministers, PFCC

Delivery - those on who we depend to deliver our strategy. For example, the public who rely on and experience our services, and ECFRS employees

Influencers - those who influence others to act in our favour. For example, the public, HMICFRS, representative bodies, Local Government
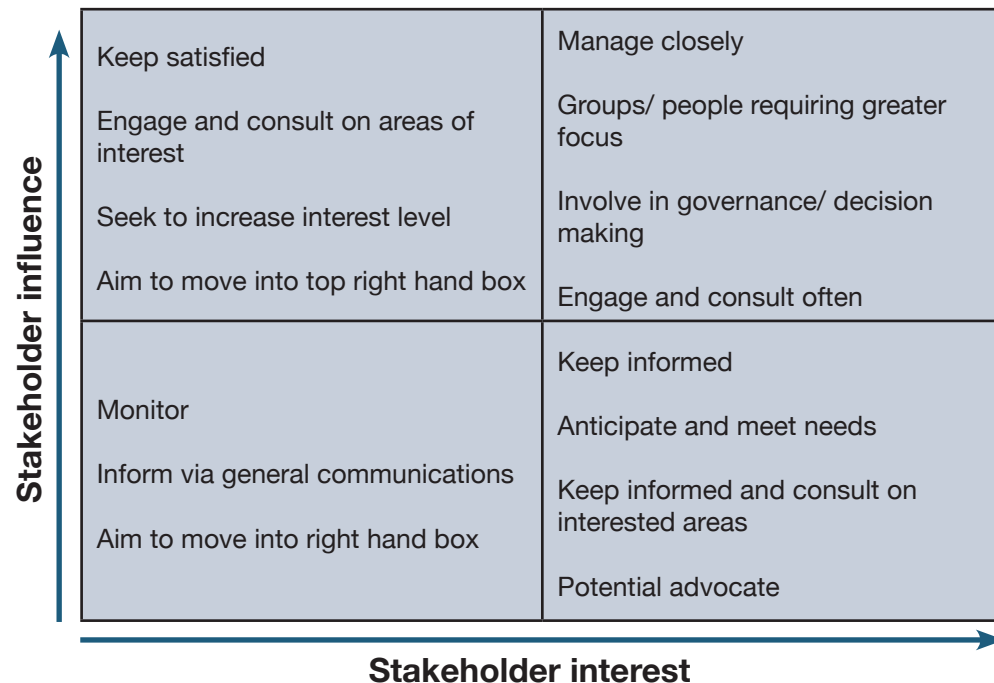
We use stakeholder mapping to align our activity with the differing levels of stakeholder interaction, communication and engagement needs.

This means we can align our messaging, frequency, and delivery channels against the identified needs of our stakeholder groups.

There are a number of ways that we work with and engage with our stakeholders, including:

- Participating in strategic planning, key meetings, forums and events

- Sharing publications

- Our people (staff), and public involvement activities, including surveys and feedback

- Media campaigns and advertising

- Specific targeted engagement events and public consultations

- Digital marketing and communications, including social media, our websites, email and digital newsletters

Communication and engagement planning matrix					
Stakeholder/ audience	Timing	Stakeholder involvement	Messaging	Delivery channel	Delivery lead
Identify target stakeholder (role or name) and group as required	*Identify timing, sequencing and frequency of communication/ engagement*	*Identify involvement of each stakeholder (high/ medium/ low/ not known)*	*Select messaging appropriate for target stakeholder*	*Define best channel/s. Can be more than one channel.*	*Identify who sends messaging. Can be comms and spokesperson*

Stakeholder influence (vertical axis) / **Stakeholder interest** (horizontal axis)

Top left:
Keep satisfied

Engage and consult on areas of interest

Seek to increase interest level

Aim to move into top right hand box

Top right:
Manage closely

Groups/ people requiring greater focus

Involve in governance/ decision making

Engage and consult often

Bottom left:
Monitor

Inform via general communications

Aim to move into right hand box

Bottom right:
Keep informed

Anticipate and meet needs

Keep informed and consult on interested areas

Potential advocate

These stakeholder mapping and matrix principles should be embedded within all key ECFRS projects and developed and adopted by project leads and stakeholder relationship owners.

Our Channels

Internal/ employee communication	
Channel	**Good for...**
The Shout - Digital weekly newsletter	Summary of information all in one place - reduce email noise. Cost effective. Reach mass audience
60 Seconds - Digital weekly newsletter for On Call	Bite size version of The Shout for on-call colleagues, quick and easy to read/ digest
Daily News	Can access on any device. Searchable. Building pride and sharing information. Two way communication and feedback
Intranet	Information/ policy etc storage. This is being updated and will launch in 2023 (SharePoint)
CFO communications Blog (video or email) CFO/ SLT ask me anything	Opinion pieces, leadership transparency, building brand and trust
Workplace	Accessible by all, on any device. Social media style communications. Community building. Transparent
Manager briefing	Face to face and virtual - engaging and opportunity to discuss
Talking Points - Workplace	SLT direct feed to all staff - includes SLT decisions
Printed material/ posters	Used for direct communication to staff. Often used as posters to stations.
SMS/ Page One	Direct to officers and managers only

Our communication channels aim to build a strong brand, enable managers to self-lead, improve and increase employee engagement and a culture of two-way communication, help achieve our Service mission and priorities, and engage effectively with our stakeholders.

External Communications	
Channel	**Good for**
Facebook Twitter Instagram	Quick communication. Reach mass audience fast. Build brand. Engage with communities. Used for warn and inform, prevention behaviour change and recruitment. Cost effective paid for ads. Able to target audiences by location, age, interests.
YouTube	Engaging with audiences. Using subtitles to meet accessibility requirements. Keeping up to date with communication trends
Website	Seen as official site. Brand awareness. Documents and policies
Join.Essex site	Specific recruitment site - supports positive action and attraction strategy. Strong brand design. Easy to navigate and use
Press releases	Message to media and partners. Free
Published publications	For example annual report and statement of assurance, strategies, finance report. Demonstrates transparency and professionalism.
Fire station advertising	For example banners, branded bay doors. Brand piece, iconic and eye catching. Direct to local communities.
Digital newsletter	About ECFRS to those subscribed. Targeted to those interested. Supports campaigns and recruitment

Other channels include communication networks (Essex Communicators Group and FRS FirePRO), focus groups, events (business events, station open days, surround the town community events etc), engagement and outreach events, leaflets and printed materials.

Inclusive Communications

ECFRS Communications Team will work to ensure that equality is a key part of our core business and that we deliver on the duties of the Equality Act 2010. We will also take into account the nine protected characteristics in all we do (age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race including nationality and ethnicity, religion or belief/lack of belief, sex and sexual orientation).

Inclusive communication means sharing information in a way that everybody can understand.

That includes people with sensory, cognitive, literacy or language challenges. We believe that everyone should be able to access and understand our information and services.

Being accessible also means being flexible in our approach so that no one misses out and everyone is included.

Inclusive communication relates to all channels of communication:

- Written information
- Online information/ digital
- Telephone
- Face to face

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), there are over one billion people who live with a disability. Of those, 285 million people are living with sight loss and visual impairments.

One in seven people have a neurodiverse condition such as Autism, ADHD or Dyslexia.

In the UK, the average reading age is just 9 years old.

Communicating inclusively to all these people means we need to make our content accessible. Sometime that means providing information in multiple ways, so people have a choice in how they take it in.

We have a legal duty to make our website and mobiles apps accessible.

Where we use digital images - on our website for example - we include alternative text. That way, someone who is visually impaired can still access the visual content.

We always include subtitles on our videos. And while that of course supports those who may be hearing impaired, we also know that 92% of video is viewed without sound. At times of consultation, we create British Sign Language videos too. We also offer accessible and alternative formats.

Contrast and colour use are vital to accessibility. All users must be able to perceive content on the page.

As a minimum, any design/ presentations/ artwork etc must have a colour contrast of AA.

The Service will always look to use a colour contrast of AAA where possible.

Social media accessibility

- Max 25 words per sentence and avoid large chunks of text
- Use readability testing tools (average reading age of 9 years)
- Use line breaks to create space – spreading out copy and making it clearer to read
- Avoid using bold, italicised or capitalised text in your posts – they make things more difficult to read
- Avoid using non-standard symbols (for example mathematical symbols) as substitutes for words and messages, as these can confuse screen reading software.
- Never use emojis to communicate a core message
- Limit emojis to 2 or 3 per post
- Do not repeat the same emoji more than once (for example multiple thumbs up one after another)
- Limit hashtags to 2 per post
- Feature hashtags at the end of the post so as not to disrupt the flow
- Use capital letters at the start of each word. For example #AccessibilityAwareness so screen readers can interpret them easily
- Use full links and avoid shortened versions (for example bit.ly links)
- Ensure calls to action are clear - 'Read guidance on applying for a driving licence + link'. Links that say 'click here' or 'read more' without any additional context are bad for screen reader users.
- Limit links to one per post as people who navigate via keyboard short cuts often find it frustrating to navigate to multiple links

Useful tools

https://consciousstyleguide.com
https://textio.com
https://colourcontrast.cc

Structure (heading styles)
Use heading styles in your document

Colour and contrast
The colours you use and the contrast between text and background

Use of images
Use of alternative (ALT) text for accessibility of images

Links
Describe links, avoid click here

Plain English
Use clear, uncomplicated language

Table structure
Use simple tables without merged or split cells

Internal Communication

Communicating internally with purpose

Internal communication can be many things, including producing and delivering "corporate" news and messages from ECFRS leaders, to encouraging Service-wide conversations and enabling easy two-way communication.

Over the years (and particularly since the pandemic), internal communication methods and channels have become increasingly digital. But the purpose of internal communications hasn't changed:

To ensure that employees are fully engaged and aware of our organisation strategy and priorities, and their role in carrying it out or delivering that.

We will place strong emphasis on our internal communications to support all ECFRS staff to play an active role in achieving our goals.

There are four enablers identified to better internal communications and employee engagement:

- Strategic leadership or narrative
- Engaging managers
- Employee voice
- Integrity

Strategic leadership or narrative

Visible leadership that provides a strong strategic narrative about the Service and where it's going.

Internal communications will seek out the opportunities to bring this to life and the Service vision. The narrative must:

- Feel actionable and achievable
- Paint a realistic picture of the future and the role of employees in that future
- Build confidence in the organisation and its leadership
- Be meaningful, timely and relevant

A strategic narrative is an ongoing story and can come in all shapes and sizes.

Engaging managers

Surveys show managers are the most important and preferred channel for employees. So, the single most important factor in delivering any internal communications strategy must be our managers.

Best practice internal communications reaches all employees. Those colleagues who do not have access to a regular flow of information or interaction can become disengaged.

Line managers and leaders are estimated to account for two-thirds of the impact on employees' attitudes and behaviour.

That means our leaders and managers need to continue taking the lead

and delivering face to face (albeit sometimes virtually) communications.

Employee voice
Our employees are seen as central to the solution, to be involved, listened to, and invited to contribute their experience, expertise and ideas. From our employee forums, to two way communication channels - we encourage our employees to speak up and have a voice.

Integrity
This is about bringing our Service values to life. It's talking the talk, and walking the walk.

Through regular access to engaging with our leaders and having open conversations, to encouraging colleagues to share information and their ideas and feeding back their views, integrity and trust is crucial to engaging our employees.

We have two-way channels for feedback and interaction
Effective internal communication offers a two-way exchange. This is particularly useful and relevant for our Service, where all colleagues across the county can have a voice.

We have an internal communication rhythm
A regular rhythm is important, rather than stop start communications, or long periods of silence. Statistics show that employees are most motivated when there is regular updates on organisation news.

We avoid communication overload and complexity
Out internal communications should look to support well-being and provide clarity, not increase stress or burnout through overload of information. Our messages are relevant, to the point, plain English and connects with our staff.

We measure effectiveness and engagement levels
Through metrics, workshops with our people, and surveys, we measure how well our internal communication plans and channels are doing against objectives and colleagues' expectations.

Internal communication is an action
It is a function that uses information and interaction to inform and motivate employees.

Employee engagement is a reaction
It is the outcome you get as a result of investing time, money and strategy into communicating with employees.

Internal Communication Focus

- To design and deliver a new intranet that meets the needs of our staff and provides a platform that is trusted

- To empower and equip our leaders and managers to communicate with their teams with intentional conversations, which are planned and proactive

- To develop an internal brand that has improved visual artwork and is accessible/ plain English

- To create an environment where colleagues understand and share our ECFRS vision and priorities

- To create opportunities for our people to share their ideas, and to have their views sought around change and transformation

- To build on existing internal communication channels that facilitate two-way communication

- To encourage and support colleagues to be part of the conversation and to share stories, ideas, successes and suggestions

- To provide clear, timely and accessible information

- To support the growth and development of our staff networks

- Position ECFRS as a positive workplace and an employer of equality and choice

Daily News
April 2021 - March end 2022

- 665 news stories – average of 1.82 a day!
- 48.737k views
- 1.95 pages viewed per session
- 01:45 average time on page
- 66.14% bounce rate (users who leave after viewing one page)

The largest number of views in one day was 796 (24 January). On this day we launched the Core Code of Ethics and announced several colleagues being promoted.

The Shout
The Shout weekly digital email newsletter continues to get good engagement open rates:

May 2022 - 85.37%
April 2022 - 82.88%
March 2022 - 81.81%
February 2022 - 77.01%

Workplace
Since formally launching Workplace on 25 January 2022, we've seen familiarity and take-up gradually increasing across our Service.

Usage levels - snapshot
- There are now 460 active users (defined as someone who uses the platform at least once a month) - which equates to roughly 34% of our Service.
- We're seeing an average of 112 posts per month – just under 4 posts per day.
- During that time, we've seen 719 comments – or around 5 a day – from 134 different colleagues.
- 42 different colleagues have asked questions on Ask Me Anything sessions.
- We've seen 37 different posts in total from SLT colleagues in the Talking Points group – generating 162 comments and 839 reactions.
- 43 posts in the Incidents group have prompted 25 comments and 347 reactions.
- 29 different colleagues have used the Pride in our People group to recognise a colleague or team. 179 comments and 1,829 reactions have also been made in this group.

External communication is an essential part of making sure the Service protects and enhances its reputation. Our external communications are often the first impression the majority of people have of our organisation.

External communications activities make sure that the messages and information are delivered to the right people, at the right time.

We will enhance trust and confidence in ECFRS and understanding of our vision and priorities through clearly identifying our target stakeholders and the means to reach them efficiently and effectively.

Media Relations

The media is a critical influence on people's opinions of public services. They are seen as independent and credible, and are a key influencer nationally and locally. For this reason, good strong relationships with, in particular, the local and regional media, are essential.

We have excellent working relationships with our local and national media which have been developed by the communications team over many years. By continuing to work closely with our media colleagues, we continue to promote ECFRS.

We will work with the media to explain all the work we do, keeping them informed of good news stories, and engaging with them during times of incidents.

By developing our media relations, we can also manage difficult stories more effectively. We will work with our staff to prepare proactively for any potential media stories.

We are responsive when the media seeks a statement, give access to our leaders, and always deal with enquiries in an open and honest manner in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (2000), and with regard to Data Protection principles.

Digital Media

Our digital and online communications continue to evolve and develop.

Information shared online and through mobile devices supports the responsive and timely reputation of our Service.

It enables us to communicate with a wide range of audiences through a mix of digital platforms.

We use our social media pages to provide important information about safety, including fire prevention, and the work we do as an organisation.

We work with our fire stations who have their own station Facebook pages. This is to enable closer community engagement and supports safety messages and local recruitment - particularly for on-call stations.

Guidance on using social media has been revised with a new social media policy.

Crisis Communications

Pre-empting and handling crises successfully and minimising risk to the organisation through negative media coverage is a key part of effective communications management.

We have a duty to communicate with the public during a crisis so that they are well informed and able to respond to an emergency situation. We have an experienced in-house team who can deliver communication support in an emergency situation when required.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act, Category 1 responders are required to make information available to the public and to maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency.

In emergencies, the key communication objective is to deliver accurate, clear and timely warnings, information and advice to people, so they feel confident, safe and well-informed.

Warnings, information and advice should:
• Be specific and clear
• Be timely and accurate
• Come from a credible source and be verifiable
• Convey the nature and extent of the danger

We also have 24/7 press officer on call arrangement for out of hours communications.

We are a key partner in the Essex Communications Group, and we have developed templates and guidelines for how we communicate across Essex.

Reputational risks will be pre-empted where possible and a clear line of communications established for handling crisis situations when they do occur.

Typical crisis communication focus:
• Maintain public confidence
• Partner engagement
• Clear instructions/ FAQs
• Proactive, not reactive
• Correct false information
• Internal communications
• Post incident/ return to normal

Public affairs

For ECFRS, public affairs includes any type of communication with key stakeholders, particularly those in the political or government space.

It can include public relations with the media, lobbying with the government, attending local authority and district council meetings.

ECFRS has been developing its public affairs approach, and has been actively building and maintaining relationships with Greater Essex leaders and Chief Executives, Essex MPs and the Home Office, as well as FRS sector leaders.

Our Messaging Strategy

Our messaging will provide the foundation of our communications activity.

At a corporate level we will develop a consistent and compelling narrative to ensure ECFRS is effectively and accurately positioned.

In support of specific ECFRS objectives and priorities, we will also make use of consistent messaging, ensuring our multiple communicators are doing so with one voice.

We will use the following principles in developing our messaging:

- Messaging aligned directly to individual stakeholders
- Better articulate the broader role of today's ECFRS
- Continue to maximise the strong public image held by our brand
- Better demonstrate the outcome of our work rather than technical delivery

- Messaging will always look forward and only draw on the past where beneficial to do so
- Adopt a stronger tone against those who seek to criticise the organisation or publish misinformation, go against our values
- Use more relevant supporting imagery that is inclusive and diverse
- Deliver messaging via different spokespeople throughout the organisation

External communication statistics

April 2021 - March end 2022

1,269,497 visits essex-fire.gov.uk

199,452 visits join.essex-fire.gov.uk

71,349 total social media followers

49.3m total social media reach

152,271 total social media clicks

724 press enquiries

121 press/ news releases issued

358 incidents published on website

2,089 subscribers to newsletter

External Communication Focus

- To design and deliver a new website that enhances our brand and meets all accessibility requirements

- To deliver a public and partner perception survey, and use the findings to inform future communications and campaigns

- To deliver a clear and consistent narrative articulating our vision, strategy and priorities

- To raise the profile of ECFRS, and positively promote the prevention, protection and response work

- To make sure that our stakeholders receive timely, relevant and accurate information about the Service

- To listen to our stakeholders, respond to their views and adapt our communication methods to suit their needs

- Provide communication expertise to support the delivery of ECFRS priorities

- To maintain good relations with the media

- To deliver on-going media training to colleagues, to ensure trained and confident staff are briefed and ready to do media work

- Position ECFRS as an employer of equality and choice

- To grow ECFRS social media audience, respond to their comments and engage positively in digital conversations with them.

- To manage and enhance the Service's image and online reputation

- To encourage and provide easy and accessible ways for our public, communities and other stakeholders to access our services and to provide us with feedback.

- To increase positive national exposure across traditional media, and trade magazines

Identity and Brand

Brand identity is the visible elements of a brand including colours, design, logotype and name. Together, these identify and distinguish a brand in the mind of its service users and stakeholders.

It is essential that our people, public and communities navigate their way easily through the services available to them. Whether that's through our website, booking a home safety visit, or applying to work with us.

As part of the partner and perception survey, we will conduct a branding review. We have also been working with internal and external focus groups, as part of the new website design and development.

ECFRS has an established brand identity. In 2015, the crest/logo was simplified to support accessibility/ eligibility requirements. It is recognised that regrettably many posters and documents still carry the incorrect logo

and this will require commitment from staff across ECFRS to correct, with leadership from the communication team.

Brand is generally recognised and defined as what people think of our Service, and our efforts to meet their expectations.

This can be based on people's direct experience and contact with the Service. It is also influenced by the mainstream media and by social media commentary and opinion.

When producing any material for publication, we will take account of the ECFRS branding and accessibility guidelines to make sure that all our information is accessible to a wide variety of audiences. This includes use of our website and any social media we may develop, and the need to produce our literature in a range of formats as required.

We are currently updating and producing an ECFRS Brand Style Guide to ensure that work produced by staff meets branding expectations.

How we know we have made a difference

Evaluation and review of this strategy will be on-going and in 'real time'. The effectiveness of channels and campaigns will be continuously monitored and measured.

Measuring campaign and communication outcomes will be done so using the OASIS framework (see Appendix A). To do this, clear objectives need to be set at planning stage. Measurement enables evaluation, which in turn becomes insight for future activity.

Public and partner perception survey
We are planning a public and partner perception audit/ survey in 2023. This will measure the progress and reputation of our Service, whether we are achieving our mission and priorities.

The survey results will be evaluated, and inform our communication focus.

Methods used to capture measurement and evaluation include:

- All media coverage and sentiment

- ECFRS website - unique visitors, number of visits, page hits, interaction and responses, downloads

- Social media - interactions, followers, mentions, likes, comments, shares

- Surveys - staff and external

- Focus groups and "A/ B testing"

- Internal channels - use, digital metrics, engagement and comments

- Event bookings and attendance (for example prevention and protection events and activities, station open days, museum events)

There are three key areas we need to measure and evaluate:

Behaviour change
The vast majority of our communication seeks to change behaviours in order to improve safety. The main types of behaviour change are start, stop and maintain.

Recruitment
Recruitment is a specific form of behaviour change where people are encouraged to start an activity. This is a major focus for ECFRS, with a particular focus on reaching under-represented groups.

Awareness
Some of our campaigns solely seek to raise awareness of an issue or to change people's attitudes and perception. The awareness metrics here are mainly suggested for campaigns that seek to change attitudes and perceptions but not immediately change behaviours.

Evaluation metrics

Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes
What we put in, our planning and content creation	*Content, events, digital reach etc*	*Awareness, engagement, response etc*	*Behaviour change, attitude/ perception change etc*
Positive action recruitment Attraction strategy Communication plan Content creation	Specific events Social media campaign Media rels and interviews Increased shares Targeted reach	Awareness of recruitment Myth busting/ awareness of perceived barriers Audience engagement	Increased applications from under represented groups Perception/ attitude change

Appendices

Collaboration Communication

We know that we are better able to achieve our aims and objectives across all areas of the Service by collaborating and working in partnership with others who have similar aims and goals – these include other emergency services and public sector organisations, charities, voluntary groups and other fire and rescue services.

ECFRS, Essex Police and East England Ambulance Service Trust have already worked together on a number of initiatives, and have been responding to incidents together for a long time.

Communication Principles
We will actively seek opportunities to speak about collaboration initiatives, projects, events and incidents to our people (internal communications) and to our public and other stakeholders (external communications).

We will inform those colleagues who may be affected first - Note: where matters relate to or have

implications for employee terms and conditions consultation with trade union representatives is the subject of separate, agreed, collective consultation arrangements.

Leaders and managers will be briefed before teams/ departments/ watches. This is to be factored into any communication plans.

Use of plain English across all corporate communications, and include calls to action/ behavioural change messages as relevant.

Change wording of collaboration to working together (plain English principle) in written/verbal corporate communications.

Messages and communication will be inclusive, and brand will be considered and applied appropriately. Messages meet the needs of our internal staff, communities and our target audiences.

Channel/s will be selected to reach the intended audiences, and outcomes and outtakes will be measured and evaluated.

All corporate communications are signed off by relevant communications leads for each emergency service before they are issued.

Guiding principles for collaborative campaigns include:
- Reaching agreements in a timely manner so that opportunities are not missed
- A clear understanding of each partner's intentions
- Sharing audience insight information
- A proportionate contribution of resources
- Clarity on roles and responsibilities
- An agreed communication plan
- Reputational risks are discussed and assessed
- Costs are agreed and shared appropriately

Communication Focus 2022-2024

Communication focus	Fire and Rescue Plan	ECFRS priorities
To design and deliver a new intranet that meets the needs of our staff and provides a platform that is trusted	✓	✓
To empower and equip our leaders and managers to communicate with their teams with intentional conversations, which are planned and proactive		✓
To develop an internal brand that has improved visual artwork and is accessible/ plain English		✓
To create an environment where colleagues understand and share our ECFRS vision and priorities		✓
To create opportunities for our people to share their ideas, and to have their views sought around change and transformation	✓	✓
To build on existing internal communication channels that facilitate two-way communication		✓
To encourage and support colleagues to be part of the conversation and to share stories, ideas, successes and suggestions	✓	
To provide clear, timely and accessible information	✓	✓
To support the growth and development of our staff networks	✓	✓
Position ECFRS as a positive workplace and an employer of equality and choice	✓	✓
To design and deliver a new website that enhances our brand and meets all accessibility requirements	✓	✓
To deliver a public and partner perception survey, and use the findings to inform future communications and campaigns	✓	
To deliver a clear and consistent narrative articulating our vision, strategy and priorities	✓	✓
To raise the profile of ECFRS, and positively promote prevention, protection and response work	✓	✓

To make sure that our stakeholders receive timely, relevant and accurate information about the Service	✓	
To listen to our stakeholders, respond to their views and adapt our communication methods to suit their needs	✓	
Provide communication expertise to support the delivery of ECFRS priorities	✓	✓
To maintain good relations with the media	✓	
To deliver on-going media training to colleagues, to ensure trained and confident staff are briefed and ready to do media work		✓
Position ECFRS as an employer of equality and choice	✓	✓
To grow ECFRS social media audience, respond to their comments and engage positively in digital conversations with them	✓	
To manage and enhance the Service's image and online reputation	✓	
To encourage and provide easy and accessible ways for our public, communities and other stakeholders to access our services and to provide us with feedback.	✓	
To increase positive national exposure across traditional media, and trade magazines		✓

Our 10 priorities are the things that we've committed to improving and want to excel at as a Service.

Equality
To be an inclusive employer, that delivers inclusive services and takes proactive steps to recruit a diverse workforce.

Technology
Improve our systems and hardware to enhance productivity and connectivity.

Fire Protection
Deliver our role as part of the Building Safety Regulations and embed the outcomes of the Building Risk Review into our Inspection Programme.

Leadership Development
Introduce a Servicewide programme for the leaders of today and the potential ones for the future, to support workforce planning.

Prevention
To reduce fire deaths to zero and contribute towards the Safer Essex Road Partnership vision zero.

Fire Standards
Implement national standards to ensure best practice, support cooperative working and provide greater efficiencies.

Operational Training
Provide quality training and facilities, to respond to the risks we face with assurance of competence.

Property and Facilities
Develop our property portfolio to meet and support the wellbeing needs of our workforce as well as our communities.

On-Call Firefighters
Increase our recruitment and retention; exploring flexible crewing models to improve response times.

Risk
Adopt a performance and data driven approach to best use our resources to respond to new and changing risks more appropriately.

OASIS framework

OASIS is a series of steps that can help bring order and clarity to planning campaigns. The aim is to help make the planning process rigorous and consistent.

Objectives

Outline the objectives - what is the communication activity trying to achieve? Keep the objectives C-SMART:

- Challenging
- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

Audience/Insight

Outline all the audiences you are trying to reach, and any insights you have on them. Add an audience user journey matrix, including what you want your audiences to think/ feel/ do/ how. Consider accessibility requirements here.

Strategy/Ideas

Use the insight to set out the approach to apply. Include messaging and channels. Add context, vision and aim, insight, overall approach.

Implementation

How you will deliver your communications, and the tactics you will use. Focus on CARE:

- Content
- Amplifying the message
- Reasons to share
- Emotional appeal

For behaviour change, use EAST:

- Easy
- Attractive
- Social
- Timely

Scoring/Evaluation

Use the GCS evaluation framework to set out how to evaluate the communications:

- Outputs
- Outtakes
- Outcomes

How we consult

Consultation is: "The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action."

ECFRS will seek views of stakeholders (external and internal) for any major changes to the Service.

Our consultation will include a range of methods to ensure we reach all stakeholders. Our communications will be inclusive and accessible.

Consultation has a clear beginning, middle and end. It might be part of an ongoing, continuous period of engagement, but it is a process. Its remit should be finite and the scope for stakeholder input should be clear. Any consultation needs a clear communication plan.

ECFRS follows the Gunning Principles. They dictate that consultation:

Proposals are still at a formative stage - A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers.

There is sufficient information to give 'intelligent consideration' - The information provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response

There is adequate time for consideration and response - There must be sufficient opportunity for consultees to participate in the consultation. There is no set time frame for consultation,1 despite the widely accepted twelve-week consultation period, as the length of time given for consultee to respond can vary depending on the subject and extent of impact of the consultation

Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account

While the Gunning Principles offer a legal precedent, there are broader guidelines for good consultation and engagement. We also use the Government Consultation Principles.

Government Consultation Principles 2018

Consultations should be clear and concise
Use plain English and avoid acronyms. Be clear what questions you are asking and limit the number of questions. Make them easy to understand and easy to answer.

Consultations should have a purpose
Do not consult for the sake of it. Take consultation responses into account

when taking policy forward. Do not ask questions about issues on which you already have a final view.

Consultations should be informative
Give enough information to ensure that those consulted understand the issues and can give informed responses.

Consultations are only part of a process of engagement
Consider whether informal iterative consultation is appropriate, using new digital tools and open, collaborative approaches. Consultation is not just about formal documents and responses. It is an on-going process.

Consultations should last for a proportionate amount of time
Consulting for too long will unnecessarily delay policy development. Consulting too quickly will not give enough time for consideration and will reduce the quality of responses.

Consultations should be targeted
Consider the full range of people, business and voluntary bodies affected by the policy, and whether representative groups exist. Consider targeting specific groups if appropriate. Ensure they are aware of the consultation and can access it. Consider how to tailor consultation to the needs and preferences of particular groups, such as older people, younger people or people with disabilities that may not respond to traditional consultation methods.

Consultations should take account of the groups being consulted
Consult stakeholders in a way that suits them. When the consultation spans all or part of a holiday period, consider how this may affect consultation.

Consultations should be agreed before publication
Seek collective agreement before publishing a written consultation.

Consultation should facilitate scrutiny
Publish any response on the same web page as the original consultation Explain the responses that have been received from consultees and how these have informed the policy. State how many responses have been received.

Responses to consultations should be published in a timely fashion Publish responses within 12 weeks of the consultation or provide an explanation why this is not possible. Closing the consultation and implementing policy or legislation.

Consultation exercises should not be launched during local or national election periods

From July to August 2022, the communication team conducted an internal communication audit.

52 conversations were had in total across the Service.

Engagement was across different stakeholder groups:
- Support colleagues – including Fleet Workshops
- Support line managers
- Station-based wholetime colleagues
- Station-based on-call colleagues
- Watch Managers
- Control
- Flexi officers – SMs / GMs / AMs
- SLT / ELT
- Employee Forum leads

Aims of the internal communication audit

- To understand colleagues' sentiment / consumption habits of our internal communications and engagement.
- To gain a broader knowledge of the 'touch points' colleagues have on a day-to-day basis, where there may be comms/engagement potential – both digital and offline.
- Form the basis of an evidence-based proposal for the internal communications / engagement elements of the upcoming Communications Strategy.

The full findings and evaluation of the audit will be published and added to this strategy w/c 12 September 2022.