Communications – 1000 Lives Campaign

Summary

The 1000 Lives Campaign was launched in April 2008 to improve patient safety and increase the quality of healthcare across Wales. It aimed to save an additional 1,000 lives and prevent up to 50,000 episodes of harm in Welsh healthcare by April 2010.

Every health board and trust in Wales took part by implementing a number of life-saving interventions to reduce avoidable risks and harm associated with healthcare.

The role of communications was considered central to the delivery of the Campaign and a comprehensive strategy aimed to:

- Engage all NHS Wales staff, through a variety of communication methods;
- Ensure key stakeholders were kept informed of progress and impact;
- Raise public awareness of the improvements being made.

The final figures, released in November 2010 reported that 1,199 additional lives were saved as a result of the Campaign, and over 50,000 episodes of harm were prevented.

Background

Every NHS organisation in Wales chose to take part in the Campaign and frontline staff were recruited to introduce a series of interventions, which were grouped into six major areas:

- Improving Leadership for Quality
- Reducing Healthcare Associated Infections
- Improving Critical Care
- Improving Medicines Management
- Reducing Surgical Complications
- Improving General Medical and Surgical Care

The ‘Transforming Care at the Bedside’ project was also piloted, focussing on reducing pressure ulcers and increasing the time staff spent with patients.

It was the first campaign of its kind in the world to incorporate primary care. The Welsh Ambulance Service was also an important partner, seeking to improve pre-hospital emergency care given to patients.
The communications strategy

The communications strategy focussed on the following areas:

- **Messaging** - formulated and tested key statements with stakeholders, which led to the adoption of: 'NHS staff save lives everyday. The 1000 Lives Campaign will help save even more.'
- **Branding** - the development and careful management of the Campaign's brand ensured effective recognition and understanding of its purpose;
- **Profile of the frontline** - placing staff at the forefront of the Campaign’s communication to create ownership and frontline focus;
- **Staying on message** - ensuring all staff, directors, key stakeholders, and fellow communication professionals based in health boards, trusts and other organisations delivered a consistent message;
- **Online communication** - an intranet, English and Welsh language websites and a You Tube page, along with a monthly e-newsletter provided regular communication channels;
- **Communications resources** – including briefings and FAQ documents, video interviews, presentations, poster campaigns, gave organisations the materials to promote their work within the wider context of the Campaign;
- **Support for NHS Wales Communication Officers** - through resources, conference calls and study days to maximise internal communication with staff, raise awareness and consolidate links with local media;
- **Pro-actively engaging the Welsh media** - through an action plan of targeted press releases, interviews with key spokespeople and case studies;
- **Engagement of influential organisations** - such as the Welsh branches of the British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing and the NHS Confederation.

The Campaign faced a number of significant communication challenges:

- **A potentially controversial message** - which may have raised negative reactions from staff and the media;
- **Scale** - there are 90,000 staff in NHS Wales, scattered across numerous sites. Many staff do not have email or internet access in work;
- **Emotional resonance** - the need to capture hearts and minds so that staff would embrace the Campaign and work to achieve its aims;
- **‘Target fatigue’** - positioning the Campaign so that it wasn’t seen as ‘yet another’ target;
- **Breadth of clinical involvement**, which included primary and secondary care, as well as the ambulance service;
- **Re-organisation of NHS Wales in the autumn of 2009.**

Internal implementation

A variety of methods were used to promote the Campaign internally amongst NHS Wales staff, including:

- Active support for NHS Communication Officers through a local communications action plan, which included:
- Contacting local press with stories of improvement;
- Arranging profile-raising events and photo-calls to promote local work taking place;
- Placing information and local news stories on health board and trust internet and intranet sites;
- Cascading the e-newsletter organisation’s internal mail and printing PDF versions for notice boards.

- Conferences attended by hundreds of NHS staff;
- Creation of intranet and internet websites and dedicated Campaign sections on health board and trust websites;
- A YouTube page carrying interviews with frontline staff;
- Branded merchandise distributed at events and through Communications Officers;
- Monthly e-Newsletters and ‘newspaper’ updates at key points of the Campaign;
- The ‘Count me in’ poster campaign to maintain momentum in its final six months.

The Campaign focussed primarily on affirming the work of frontline staff, without whom it would have been impossible to bring about change. Profiling and congratulating staff who were making a tangible difference inspired others to emulate their successes and build momentum and energy for the work.

Over sixty videos were produced and uploaded to the Campaign’s websites and YouTube. The video interviews showed NHS Wales staff as advocates for the Campaign, explaining its rationale and how it would improve the safety and quality of care.

‘Count me in!’ became the key theme for the final six months of the Campaign, and featured clinical staff holding a sign that declared their commitment to the Campaign and its aims. The idea had been developed by colleagues in Powys Teaching Health Board and it was rolled out nationally through a poster campaign and extensive use of the images. Paul Williams, NHS Wales Chief Executive championed the message at one of the Campaign’s major events.

**External communications**

Externally, the Campaign pro-actively built relationships with the media in Wales. One-to-one meetings were held with key media to outline the reasons for the Campaign and the key role it would play.

A monthly column was secured in the Western Mail’s health supplement, profiling the Campaign’s various interventions and significant achievements. High profile events at key milestones, such as the first anniversary generated extensive broadcast and press coverage. Local events planned by organisations also generated coverage – these included a balloon release at Velindre Cancer Centre and a climb up Snowdon by staff based in North Wales.

Producing template press releases for organisations during the restructure of NHS Wales, gave the general public reassurance of continuity, and helped to keep the messages of the Campaign alive during a time of transition.
Success

The communications work for the 1000 Lives Campaign played a major role in creating an awareness and understanding of the patient safety agenda and the need for improvement.

The Campaign achieved several measurable results:
- Over 689,000 online hits on its intranet and internet websites;
- Over 5,000 video views on its YouTube page;
- 214 articles in 61 different print and online media;
- 36 stories in broadcast media, which include top TV and Radio news items on both BBC and ITV Wales;
- Over 3,000 unique recipients of its e-newsletter, with 'open rates' and 'click-throughs' higher than industry standards.

Whilst it was clearly the clinical interventions which directly saved lives, the communications work has strengthened the case for healthcare improvement work. It has taken frontline staff on the journey and been part of spreading improvements across organisations to ensure they become embedded in the care given to patients.

First Minister, Carwyn Jones described the 1000 Lives Campaign as an example of "good practice" in the public sector and a "great national programme". Following publication of the final figures, he offered NHS staff "a thousand thank yous" at a session in the Senedd.

The communications work was shortlisted for two awards by the Association for Healthcare Communications and Marketing and its Communications Officer won their UK ‘Communicator of the Year’ award. The Campaign’s e-Newsletter won the CIPR Pride Cymru Gold Award for Best Newsletter and was commended in a further two other categories.

With 1,199 lives saved and over 50,000 incidents of harm avoided during the two years, the work now continues through 1000 Lives Plus, the five year national programme to improve patient safety and reduce avoidable harm, waste and variation across NHS Wales.

Cost-effectiveness

The Campaign saw significant results despite a very limited budget. Deaths and incidents of harm cost NHS Wales millions of pounds each year, so the clinical achievements offered a very high ROI figure.

The emphasis on improving quality and reducing costs has made it highly relevant for the broader Public Sector when faced with the reality of substantially reduced budgets and citizen’s request for improved services.

The power of partnership

The 1000 Lives Campaign was run as a collaborative, which involved the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare, National Patient Safety Agency, Public
Health Wales and the Clinical Governance Support and Development Unit. It also received support from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and The Health Foundation.

Further details

For further information, please contact:
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Helpful links

1000 Lives Plus website
www.1000livesplus.wales.nhs.uk

1000 Lives Campaign You Tube page
www.youtube.com/1000livescampaign

End of Campaign report
http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/Documents/781/TwoYearsToMakeADifference.pdf

1000 Lives Plus Communications resource page

Communications Case Study – Producing an email newsletter