

A complex network of grey dots connected by thin lines, forming a large, irregular shape on the left side of the cover.A large, solid pink circle that serves as a background for the main title text.A series of small, light grey circles arranged in a horizontal line above the title and a vertical line on the right side of the cover.A white, jagged, star-like shape with a scalloped edge, positioned at the bottom right of the pink circle.A solid yellow circle located at the bottom right of the cover, near the jagged white shape.

Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategy

2023-26

Working together for a safer Scotland

Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Our Ambition
- 3 Principles and Standards of Communications and Engagement
- 4 Roles and Responsibilities
- 5 Internal Communications and Engagement
- 6 External Communications and Engagement
- 7 Stakeholder Involvement and Partnership Working
- 8 Measurement and Evaluation
- 9 Key Priorities



Introduction

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is a national emergency service which is dedicated to improving the safety and wellbeing of the communities we serve.

Our mission statement is 'Working together, for a safer Scotland' and effective communications is a key element to ensuring we continue to achieve this mission.

SFRS is a trusted organisation within Scotland and, as we have set out in our long-term vision, we need to evolve to adapt to the new challenges we face.

The role of corporate communications is to protect and build on our reputation, ensuring the communities we serve understand our role and engage with our safety messaging.

Our ambition is to support staff, stakeholders and the people of Scotland to come together to influence the ongoing evolution of the Service through meaningful communications and engagement.

To ensure our corporate communications approach is successful we will embed a 2 way approach to communications across the Service. This means we will communicate clearly, openly and to consistently high standards to our audiences but we will also listen to what they say to us and respond to them in an appropriate way. We will use that insight to what our audience has to say to inform our thinking, planning and actions across the Service.

This strategy sets out our approach to corporate communications within SFRS, the principles and standards we will abide by and the key priorities for the communications and engagement team over the next three years.

It also makes clear the roles and responsibilities of all of those across the Service who will play a part in making our approach to communications a success.

2 Our Ambition

Effective communications and engagement will protect and enhance the reputation, identity and brand of the SFRS and support the successful outcomes outlined in both the **Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland (2022)** and the **SFRS Strategic Plan**. In doing this we will strengthen our intent to build an active and dynamic approach to communications. To meet these aims our communications will be anchored in the brand messages listed below.

<p>These are not mutually exclusive and no one message is more important than another.</p>		<p>Partnership actively listening and working together to help prevent community harm</p>	<p>Agile evolving to the changing needs of a 21st century Scotland as a service and as an employer</p>
<p>Innovative harnessing data and technology to work smarter</p>	<p>Evolving willing to adapt to keep communities safe from harm</p>	<p>Energy focused on building resilient and stronger communities</p>	<p>Targeted our resources will be in the right place at the right time</p>
<p>Bold ambitious to do so much more for communities</p>	<p>Connected driven by a deeper understanding of community need</p>	<p>Inclusive embracing difference and working in partnership</p>	<p>Dialogue embracing discussion to help shape our Future Long-term Vision</p>
<p>People centred invested in developing leaders for the future</p>	<p>Committed helping to deliver a sustainable future for Scotland</p>	<p>Flexible supporting staff to balance work with life</p>	

3 Principles and standards of communications and engagement



It is important that we understand why we communicate and how we want to deliver communications in SFRS – our purpose and principles.

Corporate communications is

“ a management function that offers a framework for effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favorable reputation with stakeholder groups upon which the organisation is dependent. ”

(Cornelissen, Joep:2008)

Our approach to corporate communications is built around the following:

INFORMING	LISTENING	ENGAGING	INFLUENCING
 <p>Providing our stakeholders with the information they need, either to perform their role, understand the organisation and its goals, share facts or report progress.</p>	 <p>We will enable the organisation to listen to stakeholders and respond to feedback.</p>	 <p>Encourage involvement and invite dialogue from stakeholders.</p>	 <p>Shaping good corporate decision-making and beneficial stakeholder positioning and participation.</p>

Our principles, which underline how we want to deliver communications both internally and externally, are that all communications planning, messaging and engagement will be:

Clear	Consistent	Inclusive	Targeted	Effective	Responsive
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The standards we expect to meet under each of these principles are:

Clear

- Our messaging will be honest, open and transparent
- We will communicate in plain English
- We will adhere to accessibility standards to ensure people can engage with our messaging
- We will always explain why - it's important that we provide a narrative and context in our messaging and explain why something is happening, not simply what's happening.



- **Digital First:** our default method of communication is digital first while recognising that alternative channels must be used for audiences who cannot participate online
- **Staff First:** colleagues should always hear about the big-ticket items that impact on the organisation and their jobs, directly from the organisation – not through hearsay or external media

Consistent

- All communications processes supporting change programmes will be informed by an Equalities Impact Assessment
- We will adhere to the National Standards for Community Engagement in developing communications plans to support public engagement
- All communications within SFERS will adhere to SFERS branding and style guides



Inclusive



- We will work with staff and stakeholders in partnership to develop our key messages
- We will ensure the tools and channels we use maximise accessibility for all our audiences
- We will maximise the opportunity for people and stakeholders to give feedback through our communications
- We will inform the Service of the feedback we receive to ensure decision-making reflects the needs of all stakeholders – public, partners and staff through our corporate communications channels

Targeted



- We will tailor our messaging to the audiences we need to reach
- We will use a diverse range of channels to maximise the reach of our messaging

Effective



- We will adopt a robust planning approach to communications and engagement in SFRS through the use of communications planning, using the OASIS model to identify our Objectives, Audience, Strategy, Insights and Scoring.
- We will monitor and evaluate the success of our communications on an ongoing basis and use this data to drive improvement within SFRS communications and engagement
- Our measurement will focus on outputs, out-takes and, most importantly, impacts and outcomes
- We will continually look to develop our processes and channels to reflect the best available practice and ensure the tools we use are fit for purpose



Responsive

- we will respond in an appropriate manner to our stakeholders
- we will respond in a timely manner to our stakeholders
- we will demonstrate how our stakeholders views inform our decisions

4 Roles and responsibilities

Communications is a leadership function and the communications team has a central role in delivering effective communications within SFRS and to our key external audiences and stakeholders.

Corporate communications also works alongside the public involvement and consultation team and our local senior officers to support the organisation in its involvement of communities and stakeholders in service development.

However, communication is the responsibility of all of us. Every member of staff is an ambassador and advocate for the Service and has a role in communicating our aims, ambitions and priorities. In ensuring that we act on the roles set out below we will strengthen our corporate communications culture in a co-ordinated fashion across the whole organisation.

4.1 The Communications Department

The role of the communications department is to lead, design and implement corporate communication and, by working with staff and stakeholders, ensuring the right messages are delivered in the right way to the right audiences.

We are responsible for:

- Internal corporate communications, ensuring it adheres to the principles and standards outlined above
- Protecting and enhancing our reputation both proactively and reactively

- Managing our online presence through both the SFRS website and social media
- Management of the SFRS brand
- Co-ordinating engagement with the Scottish Government
- Co-ordinating engagement with Members of the Scottish Parliament and locally elected members on corporate issues
- Supporting, enabling and empowering staff to communicate appropriately and effectively within their own roles.

4.2 Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)

SLT has a distinct role as communicators within SFRS and set the example for all managers to follow when engaging with their staff, stakeholders and communities.

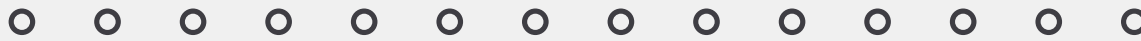
SLT members are responsible for:

- Setting the direction and tone of communications within the organisation
- Outlining the context and strategic narrative of the decisions they make
- Being visible and accessible to staff throughout the organisation
- Maximising the opportunities for staff to engage with them

4.3 Heads of function and managers

All heads of function and managers are responsible for ensuring:

- Corporate messaging is consistently cascaded to and shared with their teams



- Staff are given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the information they receive
- The communications department is involved in the communications planning around major projects, events or service developments from the earliest possible opportunity
- Information relating to their areas of responsibility on both the staff intranet and SFRS website are reviewed and updated regularly
- The communications department is made aware of good news stories that help to promote our Service values and commitment to public and firefighter safety
- The communications department is notified and briefed at the earliest opportunity of potential issues which may generate media interest
- All requests for media interviews are shared with the communications department for advice and to ensure these are captured in our media monitoring
- The communications department is notified of developments that may have strategic or significant importance to the Service

4.4 Local Senior Officers

Local senior officers are responsible for

- Engagement with their strategic partners, communities and local authorities within their delivery areas to support the development of SFRS services in support of their local communities.
- LSOs and their teams should ensure they seek feedback from communities, partners and stakeholders and share this knowledge across the Service and with the corporate communications department to inform future communications plans and strategies.

4.5 The Public Involvement and Consultation (PIC) Team

The PIC team are responsible for:

- developing good practice across SFRS to ensure public and stakeholder involvement in service development and change to meet our legal requirements for public consultation.

4.6 All staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to be well-informed and proactively seeking information which is available on our communication channels
- Informing the communications department of achievements and successes within their teams
- Ensuring all media requests are directed to the communications department
- Highlighting any issues which they feel may generate media or political interest
- Seeking advice and support from the communications department before undertaking any communications activities

5 Internal communications and engagement

Communicating and engaging effectively with our employees is extremely important to us.

We will operate on a 2 way basis whereby we will listen to colleagues as well as provide information to them.

Research consistently shows a strong correlation between high-performing organisations and effective employee communication and engagement.

Organisational benefits include improved motivation, increased productivity, more discretionary effort, greater innovation, reduced sickness absence and better recruitment and retention.

We will only be an employer of choice if our staff enjoy working with us and have a positive experience. This includes how we communicate and engage with each other.

As the Institute of Internal Communications states:



At the most basic level, you have to communicate well at the right time so employees know what is expected of them and what is happening in the organisation.

At a deeper level, for employees to feel engaged with their workplace and give their best, they have to see that their organisation cares about their views and understand how their role contributes towards overall business objectives.



Our employees are also our best ambassadors and it's important that we equip them with the knowledge and understanding to fulfil that role effectively.

5.1 Internal audiences

On a broad level our primary internal audience is all SFRS employees.

Within this wider audience group, it's important that we target messages wherever possible. Increasing relevancy reduces the risk of staff switching off and avoids information overload.

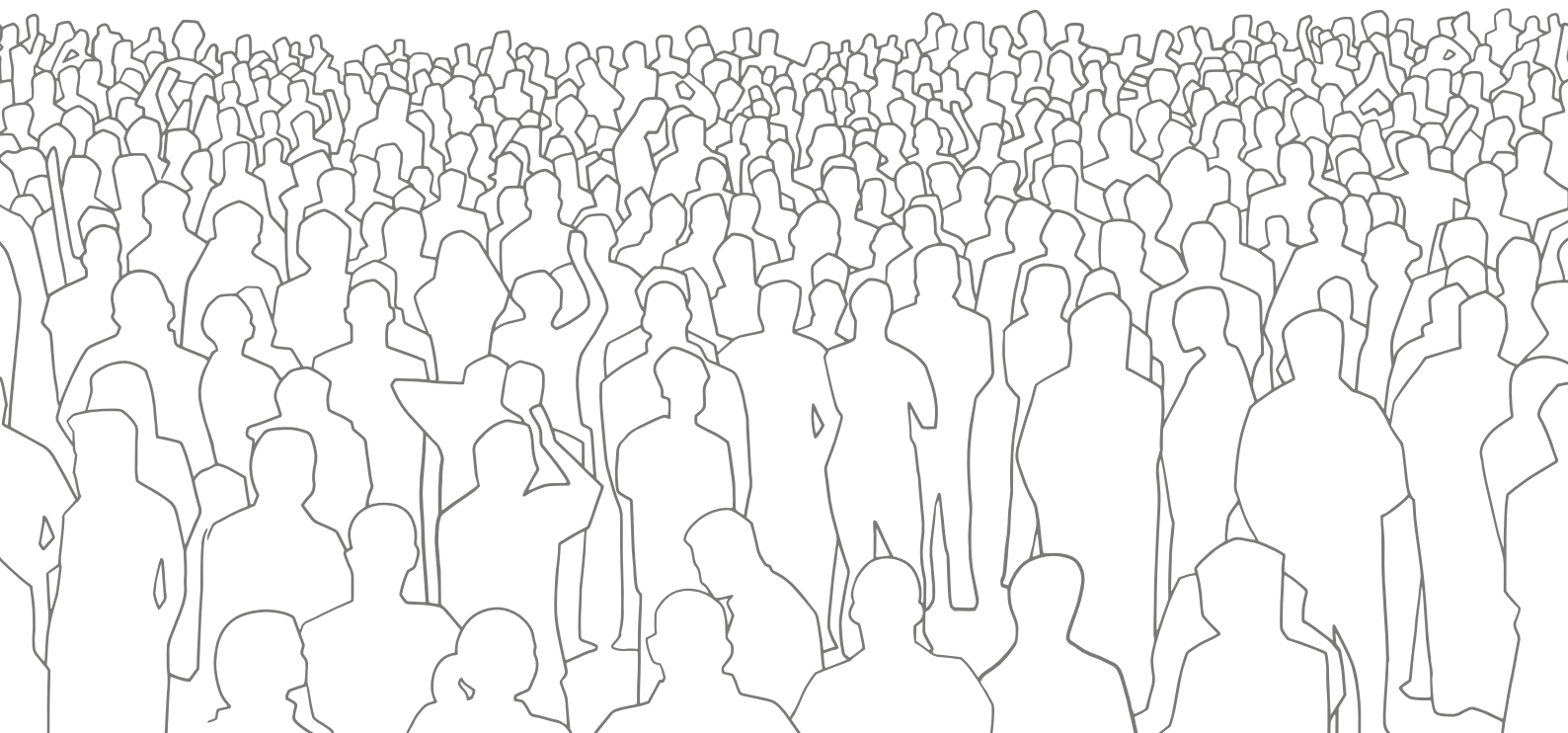
All employee communications should address the question **'what does this mean for me?'** from an employee perspective.

SFRS employees can be segmented into the following groups:

- Uniformed staff – wholetime, retained, day-duty, volunteer and operations control
- Support staff – office and non-office based
- Board Members of SFRS Board
- SFRS Managers

Regarding the latter group, we recognise that as well as being a target audience group, our managers play a pivotal role in the communication chain and we will support and equip them to fulfil it.

On key issues and campaigns, managers will be fully briefed ahead of wider communication to employees to ensure they have time to digest the information, contextualise it for their team and are able to answer basic questions.



5.2 Internal channels

Channel selection is important in terms of audience reach and access.

The key channels used for internal communications within the Service are outlined below. The communications department is responsible for the delivery of corporate staff communications and will determine which channels are most appropriate.

The fundamental building block of all internal communications is the staff intranet iHub. This is the single source of truth for all staff.

As well as meaning that staff can know and trust the information they access on iHub is up-to-date this also means staff can be made aware of news and issues affecting the wider organisation.

All other communications channels should be for reference only and should lead back or signpost to iHub.

Corporate communications

- **iHub**
- **Weekly staff brief**
- **SLT broadcasts**
- **The Shout**
- **Station visits**
- **Corporate e-mails when appropriate**
- **Messaging within our electronic systems**

Bespoke campaigns

To support projects, campaigns and service developments internal communications will use all of the above, plus:

- **Video**
- **Teams Live Events**
- **Managers briefing pack to enable a cascade of face-to-face information and discussion**
- **Staff Facebook page**
- **Printed workplace materials, such as posters, booklets and pull up banners**
- **Workshops and focus groups**
- **Staff surveys**

6 External communications and engagement

As a national emergency service our reputation with the people and communities of Scotland is paramount. It is essential people understand what we do and why we do it.

The role of the communications department is to proactively enhance the reputation of the Service sharing our achievements and successes across a diverse audience using a range of communications channels.

We will use engaging and innovative content to do this, with clear messaging aligned to the aims and objectives of the organisation.

In managing reactive communications, we will continue to build on our relationships with national politicians, the media and locally elected members to raise the profile of SFRS and will manage the concerns and issues they raise in an open and transparent manner.

Media handling is a 24/7 commitment and the communications and engagement department will provide an on-call service to meet this need.

Our external communications are also focused on building our relationships with key partners and stakeholders across the public, private and third sector ensuring they are involved in and informed of the work that we do.





6.1 External audiences

Audience insight is key to understanding what people want to know, how they want to receive information and how they want to provide feedback to the organisation.

Not all of our audiences will need or want to know everything we wish to communicate or will have a view on what we are doing. Therefore, it is important that we target our messaging appropriately.

The use of the OASIS planning tool builds audience research and insight into all communications and engagement plans and this means we can deliver communications to the right people, in the right way at the right time. The main audiences SFRS engages with on a regular basis are:

- Members of the public
- Media – print, broadcast, trade
- Social media
- Emergency Service Providers
- All elected members
- Search and Rescue Organisations
- Local authorities
- Duty holders
- Scottish Government
- Staff representative bodies
- Public agencies
- Members of the Scottish Parliament
- Members of Parliament
- Third Sector Interface bodies
- Community groups

6.2 External channels

Audiences are now finding their information from a diverse range of channels and social media is becoming increasingly tailored to individual interests.

We need to ensure our key public safety messaging can successfully reach our audiences in this evolving and fast-paced environment.

To do this we need to continually monitor and evaluate the channels we use and their impact to ensure our messaging reaches the audiences we want to connect with.

The main channels we currently use are:

- Social media (for example Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram)
- Media - print, broadcast and online
- SFRS website
- Partner channels
- Stakeholder channels
- Face-to-face meetings
- Online surveys
- Direct communications – mailshots, email
- Advertising and marketing

7 Stakeholder involvement and partnership working

Audiences become stakeholders through active participation and dialogue.

Our commitment is to maximise the opportunities for audiences to engage with us and provide feedback through our corporate communications channels after feedback.

We will promote two-way communications and engagement wherever possible and develop regular and consistent methods for key stakeholders to participate in shaping the future direction of SFRS.

We want to understand where we can add value to stakeholders and want our stakeholders to understand why they are important to us.

We will capture feedback from stakeholders but will also ensure this feedback is shared with the SFRS Strategic Leadership Team and Board to inform decision making.

We will also ensure stakeholders are kept informed as to how their feedback has been used.



8 Monitoring, evaluation and improvement

We will drive continuous improvement within SFRS corporate communications.

To do this we must measure all activity – evaluating outputs, outtakes, outcomes and customer satisfaction – to learn and understand where our communication is successful.

Evaluation is built into every project through our **OASIS planning tool**. Wherever possible research time will be built into communications planning to allow for robust benchmarking to be undertaken to effectively measure the impact of our campaigns.

We will also develop measures for our business-as-usual communications. An annual report will be produced for SFRS SLT and Board to monitor performance of the communications and engagement department, and the effectiveness of our corporate communications approach.

Continuous improvement does not just apply to the processes and work of the team but the people within it. We are committed to supporting the team to undertake their own professional development and encourage shared learning to enhance the skills of the department as a whole.

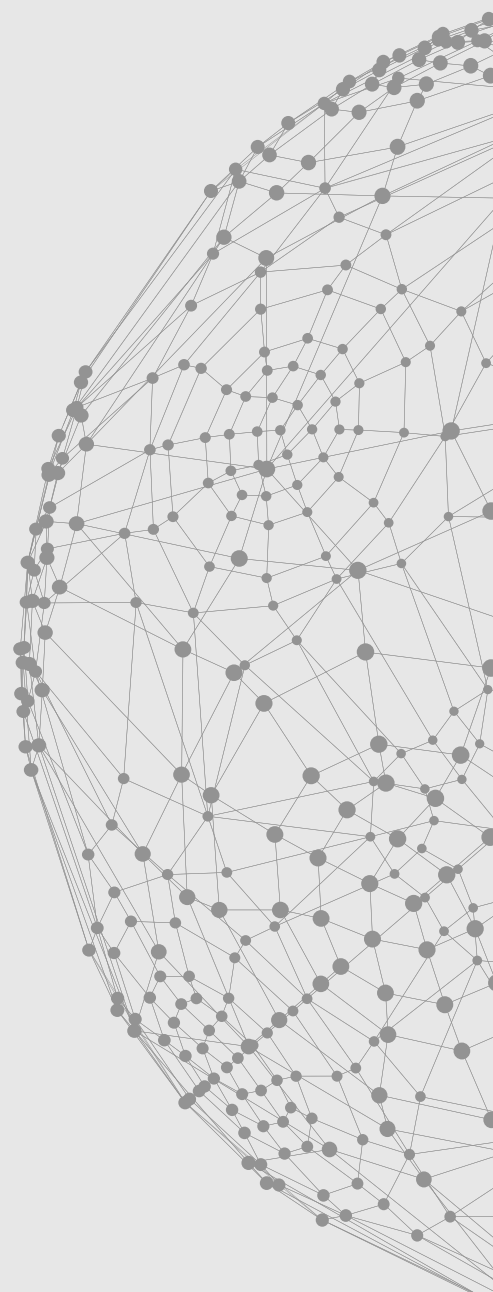


9 Implementing the Communications and Engagement Strategy – Key priorities

To support the strategy there are some key pieces of work which need to be developed and implemented. The key priorities for the three year's of this strategy are :

- Undertake audience research to understand what information our external stakeholders want and how they want to receive information and become involved in the ServiceDevelop and embed an internal communications matrix to outline which channels are appropriate to use and when
 - Develop and embed an SFRS style guide for internal and external communications
 - Engage LSOs and other managers to ensure they understand are confident in and sufficiently skilled to play their role in delivering our communications approach
 - Develop a social media strategy to align area accounts to the national corporate account to ensure national messages are cascaded more effectively whilst equipping staff through training provision to operate Service affiliated accounts more effectively
 - Develop KPIs for inclusion in communications planning and monitoring of performance of business as usual
- Develop a media strategy to support the Board and SLT to engage and build relationships with national media to secure prominent and informed coverage of SRS direction whilst equipping DACOs and LSOs to engage regionally
- Produce an annual report highlighting communications performance

A comprehensive action plan will developed to drive our priorities and ensure the successful implementation of the strategy. This will inform our annual communications report.



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