

Communications strategy

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1. Introduction

This strategy sets out the vision for the development of communications for Tyne & Wear Sport (TWS) for the next two years.

The communications lead at TWS was appointed with a brief to provide an expert internal and external communications function and raise the profile of the partnership and generate publicity for sport and active recreation in Tyne & Wear.

However, it is important to remember that communications is everyone's business. There are few aspects of TWS that do not have a communications element. What we do is of interest to all of our partners, and we are accountable to them. Additionally we have a responsibility to communicate effectively with other interested audiences and it is in our best interest to ensure this happens. It is therefore important that communication skills and techniques at our disposal are used to greatest effect.

"To meet our aims of encouraging and enabling more people to participate in high quality sport and active recreation it is essential that we communicate clearly and effectively. Good communication is essential for understanding the needs of partners and developing strategies to achieve our aims and objectives. Tyne & Wear Sport faces a wide range of challenges as it evolves from a relatively narrow focus to a multi faceted and dynamic partnership with a varied and complex programme of work. Effective internal and external communication will play a pivotal role in overcoming these challenges and unlocking an array of value adding opportunities that will enable partners to improve and expand their provision of sport and active recreation."

- Alison O'Neill, partnership chair, Tyne & Wear Sport

2. Background

Tyne & Wear Sport is one of 49 County Sports Partnerships located across England. We are funded and supported by Sport England and a wide range of sub regional partners to co-ordinate sports and activity programmes in Tyne & Wear.

Tyne and Wear comprises the cities of Newcastle and Sunderland and the boroughs of Gateshead, North Tyneside and South Tyneside. It contains 43% of the population of the North East and is the most densely populated area in the region.

In 2005/06 Sport England commissioned the Active People survey, which was a survey of the population in England aged 16 years and over, to provide data on participation in sport and active recreation. The survey results highlight a number of key areas that require focus in Tyne & Wear, for example:

1. Overall, the participation rate in sport by people in Tyne & Wear is lower than the national figure based on those participating in 30 minutes of activity at least three times per week (Tyne & Wear 19.9%, national 21.0%).
2. The survey shows that there is a marked difference between the number of women (15.4%) who participate in sport for 30 minutes at least three times a week, compared to the number of men (24.9%).
3. Whereas almost one-third of men in Tyne & Wear are members of a club, the number is less than one-fifth of women.
4. The national average number of people volunteering to support sport for at least one hour a week is 4.7%. However, the number for Tyne & Wear is just 3.4%.
5. In Tyne & Wear only 6.9% of those with a limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity participate in 30 minutes of sport or active recreation three times per week.

The Delivery System for Sport in England

The Delivery System for Sport in England provides a clear picture of the roles of those national, regional and sub-regional organisations involved in sport. The Delivery System makes it clear that county sports partnerships (CSPs) are committed to delivering both locally identified and nationally determined priorities. The role of CSPs is to provide strategic co-ordination and planning for sport. They also have key responsibility for performance measurement, collecting data relating to key performance indicators, and marketing and communications across a county, raising the profile of sport and active recreation and attracting inward investment for sustained delivery.

With the emergence of the Delivery System, it is an appropriate time to review our communications responsibilities, to ensure we are sending the right messages to the right audiences using appropriate mechanisms.

3. Objectives - Where do we want to get to?

3.1 Background to objectives

In order to gauge the level, type and effectiveness of communications currently taking place across the partnership, the information and communications lead for TWS has been meeting with a range of stakeholders to find out what their perceptions are of the organisation and its role. Some specific issues were raised:

- There is benefit in TWS acting as a portal for information. Partners have already begun to place information such as job vacancy advertisements, news items and other marketing information on the TWS website. However, in addition to providing information, TWS needs to add value to what is being communicated, so as not to be seen simply as a 'post box'.
- Communications across the partnership has a valuable role for partners of increasing knowledge, promoting good practice, building relationships, sharing documents, and publicising events, training opportunities and job vacancies.
- There are a range of resources that individual partners have access to that they would be willing to share. TWS could be the catalyst to enable this.
- Within the sub regional sporting community, TWS is well known, however, what is less clear, is the precise role of the organisation. There is a need to clarify the roles as defined by the Delivery System for Sport.
- Among the wider Tyne & Wear audiences, awareness of the TWS partnership is not strong and is an area that also requires focus.

3.2 Where do we want to get to?

Communications is not a stand alone function. It exists to support the organisation's objectives.

The overall purpose of the partnership is:

"To work together to increase the quality, range and fairness of opportunities for sport and physical activity."

The principle aims and objectives of TWS are to:

- Implement a partnership approach to sport and active recreation
- Develop, improve and extend the Delivery System for Sport
- Increase the profile and position of sport and active recreation in Tyne and Wear
- Increase the level of participation in sport and active recreation

3.3 Communications objectives

Communications objectives must support the organisation's objectives.

We have identified a number of key tasks to accomplish this goal:

- Raise the profile of sport and active recreation in Tyne & Wear
- Raise the profile of the partnership
- Promote the activities of the partnership
- Support good communication between TWS core team and the partners
- Promote improved communications between partners and across sectors
- Engender a common purpose between partners
- Promote/emphasise the Delivery System
- Gain media coverage to assist objectives
- Capitalise on key regional sporting activities
- Ensure our communications promote equal opportunities
- Capitalise on the momentum towards 2012
- Ensure use of the Active People data is maximised, using case studies and statistics as a baseline for success

There are a number of elements to achieving these tasks; the purpose of this strategy is to explain how each will play its part.

4. Who are our key audience?

It is vital that we know who we are communicating with and that we are clear about why we are communicating with them.

We need to communicate with anyone who has an interest in TWS and those who we want to influence.

In no particular order, our audiences include:

Media: The Journal, Evening Chronicle, Sunderland Echo, Northern Echo, Herald & Post, News Guardian, Shields Gazette, Star series, BBC Radio Newcastle, Century FM, Sun FM, Metro, Galaxy, BBC TV, Tyne Tees TV, Culture magazine	FE and HE partners: Gateshead College, Newcastle University, University of Northumbria, Sunderland University, South Tyneside College, Tyne Met College, Newcastle College, Sunderland City College	Local authority partners: Sunderland, Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside and South Tyneside
Clubs and associations	Sports coach UK	The public
English Federation of Disability Sport	Tyne & Wear school sports partnerships	Community Sports Networks
Youth Sport Trust	Sport England	NGBs of sport
North East Strategic Health Authority and Tyne & Wear primary care trusts	Women's Sport Foundation	Potential partners and sponsors: private and public sector
Coaches and volunteers	Council for Volunteer Services, other voluntary organisations	BECON, BME groups, NSPCC CPSU, other social inclusion groups
MPs	Other CSPs	

5. Key messages - What do we want our audiences to know?

Our key messages centre on the following:

- The benefits of the partnership approach to developing and delivering sport and active recreation
- The importance of equal opportunities
- The importance of sport and active recreation within society. For example, it's affect on the health economy, social inclusion and reduction of anti-social behaviour
- The importance of increasing participation
- The importance of club, coach and volunteer development
- The Delivery System: clarifying the system, who does what and emphasising the need for CSNs to be in place

The above are on-going themes. In addition, there will be specific or ad-hoc issues such as the Festival of Sport 07.

6. What mechanisms are we going to use to deliver our key messages?

There are a wide range of communication channels available to TWS which can be used to develop effective communications and maintain mutual trust and understanding with all our audiences. Some of these methods are already being employed very effectively and others require development. We will also draw on the resources of Sport England and other CSPs, such as image libraries and best practice experiences.

The type of communication method used will depend on the target audience and the message to be communicated.

Communications techniques to be adopted (listed with success and evaluation criteria) are detailed below. This is not a definitive list; it is an indication of the tools we are currently planning to use in the coming year. In addition, other tools, techniques and mechanisms are likely to be used that are activity specific.

6.1 Newsletter (e-shot)

Description: To be developed. A newsletter, likely to be electronic, managed by the TWS communications lead. Although managed and edited by the TWS communications lead, content will also be driven by partners so that the newsletter becomes a vehicle for sharing good practice and ideas that have worked well. It will also contain a mix of national and local news items. The frequency of the newsletter will be monthly or every two months.

Success criteria: Information will be accessible, helpful and accurate. It will promote the values of TWS and the Delivery System for Sport.

Measured by: Feedback from recipients through formal and informal surveys; evidence of improved information for organisations with links to TWS; feedback from operational network group.

6.2 Website

Description: The TWS website was created in summer 2006 to provide comprehensive information to partners, coaches, clubs, volunteers and to a lesser extent, the public. This is a very broad remit and the site currently represents a start in reaching the full objective. During 2007, the communications lead will head a concerted effort to further develop the website to meet the needs of these key audiences. This will commence with a series of consultation workshops involving partners to discuss website content and structure.

Success criteria: Anyone interested in the work of TWS can find out information via our website easily. Anyone interested in finding out more detail about coaching, clubs or volunteering will be able to use our website to access the information or at least receive direction to where full information can be found.

Measured by: Number of visits to the website; feedback to the communications lead via the website or from the operational network group; evidence of action taken to respond to suggestions for developing content.

6.3 Annual report/review

Description: A review of the activities and successes of the partnership for each financial year, to demonstrate the benefits of partnership working, highlight the added value of CSPs and the overall Delivery System. Likely to be produced as a printed document in limited numbers to be sent to key partners and made available electronically on the website. Written by TWS communications lead with creative and practical input from the core team and partners.

Success criteria: Anyone interested in gaining a summary of the work that the partnership is involved with would be able to do this by reading the annual review. Anyone requiring evidence that the Delivery System is working at a sub-regional level would find it within the annual review.

Measured by: Positive reaction to the publication from partners. Evidence of the content of the publication being used in other media by our partners to highlight good practice and success stories.

6.4 Media relations

Description: Using the media can be an effective way of disseminating messages about the activities and successes of the partnership as well as highlighting the overall benefits of sport and an active lifestyle. The TWS communications lead will build good relationships with the region's media in order to encourage the use of press releases produced by us and to become recognised as the sub-region's voice for sport.

Success criteria: Media coverage of the partnership increases and is positive. The partnership is described and explained.

Measured by: monitoring of media coverage; frequency of key messages reported; opportunities to add our opinion to related news stories not initiated by us.

6.5 Partnership publications

Description: As required, TWS will produce printed literature such as flyers, leaflets and manuals to provide information to partners and other relevant organisations and to promote the partnership. Generally, it is expected that this will be done with the input/collaboration of relevant partners. The resource of an electronic library of documents will be made available on the TWS website.

Success criteria: Information will be accessible, helpful to its readers and accurate. It will promote the values of TWS and the Delivery System for Sport.

Measured by: feedback from recipients through formal and informal surveys; evidence of improved information for partners and those involved with TWS; feedback from partners who we have worked with on the particular publication.

6.6 TWS branding

Description: To reflect the change of role for TWS we have chosen to develop a new, more appropriate branding. The first step is to commission the design of a new TWS logo, which will be done using our partnerships with local HE/FE colleges. This will help to reinforce our partnerships with the HE/FE sector and also keeps the costs to a minimum. Once the logo is finalised, branded promotional and marketing merchandise can be produced as necessary, such as corporate stationery, exhibition stands and promotional material.

Success criteria: Once established, the new TWS will be instantly recognisable among the Tyne and Wear sporting sector. It will be synonymous with a professional and effective partnership.

Measured by: Feedback and comments from partners and other audiences. Measurement of TWS website visits or telephone enquiries following distribution of any promotional material which publicises web address or telephone number.

6.7 Events, conferences and exhibitions

Events, conferences and exhibitions fall into two categories:

1. Those organised by TWS
2. Those attended by TWS

6.7.1 Organised by TWS

Description: At least one major event during the year to promote the work of TWS/the partnership among key partners. Other events or conferences as necessary – although this is not expected to be many.

Success criteria: Attendance levels reflect our objectives. Participants understand and retain the key messages that we have developed for the event. Longer term understanding of what we do and an improved relationship with our partners.

Measured by: Attendance lists; Formal evaluation from attendees; the smoothness of the relationship between TWS and our partners; evidence of information about the event being used in the media.

6.7.2 Attended by TWS

Description: There may be events, conferences and exhibitions throughout the year where TWS will be invited or will subscribe to have a presence with the objective of promoting the partnership.

Success criteria: Opportunities to attend events, conferences and exhibitions are recognised and taken.

Measured by: Visitors to TWS stand/representative. Enquiries made at event/exhibition. Follow up action and follow up received.

6.8 Case studies

Description: A powerful form of marketing is using real-life success stories that demonstrate where the partnership has had a significant effect on individuals, communities or organisations. The communications lead will collate a library of case studies to use in appropriate marketing literature and presentations.

Success criteria: Partners provide relevant case studies to the communications lead on request. Case studies add value to the literature/presentation in which they are used.

Measured by: Measurement will vary depending on the specific use of the case study.

6.9 Role models/sporting champions

Description: Use of role models and sporting champions to inspire and motivate. Booking role models and sporting champions to speak at events, representing sport and promoting key messages.

Success criteria: Generation of interest in whatever the particular activity the partnership is promoting at any given time.

Measured by: Formal and informal feedback. Engagement or further enquiries received. Media coverage received.

7. How will we measure our success?

Mechanisms need to be put into place to make sure we know whether we have achieved the intended outcomes of the strategy, or indeed, whether we are heading in the right direction. This means identifying what has worked and what has not.

Existing methods are available and will be used as much as possible, for example, Active People data, local performance indicators and reporting, website usage statistics and event attendance. In addition, methods for monitoring new activities will need to be introduced, such as recording the number of press releases issued and the use the media made of them.

8. The circle of communications

The communications strategy (and the action plan which will follow the strategy) will be continually assessed and updated. Our approach to communications will therefore be cyclical and not simply follow a linear path.

We will:

1. Identify all the organisations and individuals who are **involved** with or **interested** in TWS and our work. Those who are **involved** with TWS are our partners, sharing in the development of our policies and plans and directly influencing our actions. Those **interested** in TWS are those who wish to be kept informed of our work, able to raise issues with us and comment on our ideas and proposals. Organisations may move between these categories depending on their level of involvement with TWS. We will be responsible for making sure we communicate effectively and appropriately with each organisation and individual as their needs change.
2. Analyse our existing communications with the audiences identified in step one. This will include formal mechanisms already in place (such as established regular meetings and forums) and by regular contact, discussions and communications as part of our everyday relationship and activity (such as the TWS website).
3. Fill any gaps in effective communication identified through the analysis, by using existing communications mechanisms and developing new ones if necessary.
4. Plan and deliver communications programmes in line with our strategic objectives. We will work to make sure that the information we provide to all our audiences, at whatever level of involvement, is always accessible, accurate, timely and useful.
5. Evaluate the success of our communications by repeating the analysis at step two and make adjustments to our communications as appropriate.

The circle of communications

