



**The Walton Centre**  
NHS Foundation Trust

*Excellence in Neuroscience* 

# Communications and Marketing Substrategy 2022 - 2025





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# Foreword

The Walton Centre is the only specialist hospital trust in the UK providing comprehensive neurology, neurosurgery, spinal, pain management and rehabilitation services.

The three-year strategy, published in September 2022, set out how the Trust will continue to deliver excellent clinical outcomes and patient experience with the team of dedicated staff.

It set out how we will expand our services further and will continue to innovate, research and develop and highlighted what the key initiatives will be over the next three years, and how we will further develop our services across our regions, as well as developing national neuroscience services.

Through five strategic ambitions the key direction for The Walton Centre is outlined to ensure delivery of the very best patient-centred treatment and care. These five ambitions are supported by seven enabling strategies, one of which is Communications and Marketing.

As a specialist neuroscience hospital, there is a strong clinical focus in our specialties, excellent clinical outcomes and experiences for our patients and a positive working environment for staff. It is essential that The Walton Centre has a strong brand, to ensure maximum recognition locally, regionally and nationally for the benefit of patients, family and friends, staff and our stakeholders.

A strong brand supports research funding and investment, recruitment and retention and the work of The Walton Centre Charity, as well as providing reassurance to patients and the wider community about the Trust's status as the best place to receive treatment and care for neurological, neurosurgical, spinal, pain and rehabilitation services.

Through this Communications and Marketing Substrategy we will outline the approach to raising the profile of The Walton Centre as a local centre of excellence, a nationally leading trust, and as a trusted voice in neurosciences both regionally and nationally.

Internally, we will ensure that staff are engaged through effective and efficient communication and are able to participate in two-way communication and engagement, at all levels of the organisation.

We will work to ensure that all interactions with The Walton Centre, whether as a patient, family member, visitor, stakeholder or staff member are of the highest standard, through a focus on the different communication channels including printed staff and patient materials, the hospital environment, patient information, the recruitment process, fundraising, and digital, including the Trust website, social media and staff intranet.

Every contact with The Walton Centre should be professional, accessible, and engaging. We will work with teams across the Trust to improve processes and outputs where possible through communications – for example, the recruitment and retention journey, patient communications, and the in-hospital experience.

This substrategy will be supported by an internal delivery plan which will specify the detailed approach to achieving the objectives and goals identified within this document. As an internal document, the delivery plan will be reviewed on a biannual basis to ensure it remains current and aligned with the changing healthcare landscape and needs of the Trust. It will be measured against its objectives and qualitative and quantitative metrics.



# Current position

The Walton Centre has an excellent clinical reputation within the field of neuroscience, pain and rehabilitation, but it is a niche reputation, largely focused on those 'in the know', clinical colleagues, former patients and friends and family.

It is not as widely known as other specialist Trusts for example The Royal Marsden, Moorfields, and Great Ormond Street, despite being the only specialist neurosciences Trust in the country.

This is partly due to a lack of brand awareness which stems from historical 'modesty' and reticence by the Trust to promote its work widely and portray itself as a trusted voice in the field. Falling out of this culture is an introverted approach to communications, and some lack of engagement from different groups within the organisation with communications and understanding of their work.

While the Communications and Marketing Team is generally well known in the Trust and appreciated for the work done, which is of a high standard, there is a lack of knowledge of how the team can support the Trust and teams across the organisation with regards broader brand awareness. There is now a desire to provide a more holistic focus on brand positioning and professional support for broader communications, in particular national media, and healthcare communications and marketing.

There has also been a historic focus on low or no-cost solutions rather than appropriate solutions akin to our brand aspirations and expectation from patients and stakeholders – a specialist, leading Trust should portray itself as such.

The new approach and desire to increase the profile and awareness of the Trust, to benefit patients, family members, stakeholders, and staff, and our fundraising capability is being driven by senior leadership and is welcomed across the organisation. If buy-in from different teams and departments is secured on the back of this belief, it should result in a successful delivery of this substrategy.

**“ There is now a desire to provide a more holistic focus on brand positioning and professional support**

# Roles and responsibilities

Successful delivery of communications and marketing in any organisation relies on the support, involvement and buy-in of all parties; it is not the responsibility of the Communications and Marketing Team alone.

Whether this is the engagement of clinical teams in the promotion of new announcements and projects, or support with corporate teams on the delivery of a new approach to patient communication, communications and marketing are a delivery service, working with 'customers' across the organisation to provide expert, professional solutions to meet their needs and the objectives of the organisation.

As such, staff and teams across the Trust have responsibilities for communications and marketing, identified here:

**“ the delivery of a new approach to patient communication**

## Communications and Marketing team

Lead and drive the Communications and Marketing Substrategy, measure and report on its effectiveness against agreed metrics

Ensure that systems are in place to foster effective two-way communications and engagement

Develop and share corporate and professional messages and publications Digitally empowered patients

Provide an effective and efficient media relations service

Contribute to all relevant Trust projects to enhance communications and drive awareness through marketing of those projects

Drive improvements in digital communications both internally and externally

Provide support and advice on strategic and practical communications issues, across the Trust, and to senior leadership acting as trusted advisor on the subject matter

Manage the brand of the organisation, ensuring a consistent and professional approach across all internal and external communications and touchpoints

### All staff

Ensure they communicate responsibly and sensitively with patients and their families using an agreed tone of voice consistent with the brand

Take opportunities to engage with the wider organisation to ensure they are well-informed about Trust developments and priorities

Identify positive news stories for distribution either internally or externally to promote awareness of the work of the Trust

Refer all communications and marketing issues and enquiries to the Communications and Marketing Team

Engage with the Communications and Marketing Team to facilitate promotion of Trust news and developments and delivery of expert communications solutions for their projects

### Managers

Ensure they are cascading information to their team, particularly corporate and internal communication messaging, to ensure their team are informed and engaged with key information

Ensure brand and communications guidelines are followed when managing projects, liaising with the Communications and Marketing Team when required

Support the Communications and Marketing Team in their work across their department/division to ensure delivery of the Trust strategy and strategic ambitions

### Trust Board

Ensure that key messages are cascaded to staff in a timely, clear and relevant manner

Support the Communications and Marketing Team at both strategic and operational levels in the implementation of this substrategy

Listen to feedback from both internal and external sources and respond accordingly

Take opportunities to build on the Trust's reputation and profile with key stakeholders

Act as brand ambassadors across the organisation and to key stakeholders

# Aims and objectives

To be seen as trusted advisers and respected by our colleagues to produce high quality, accessible, innovative, and strategically aligned communications that are tailored for target audiences and fulfil clear objectives:

## The objectives of this substrategy are:

- To use communications and marketing to position The Walton Centre as a leader in its field, and within the wider NHS, transforming treatment and care across neuroscience, centring on the five strategic ambitions included in the Trust strategy
- **Education, training and learning**
- **Research and innovation**
- **Leadership**
- **Collaboration**
- **Social responsibility**
- To celebrate success and share learnings, for the benefit of patients, families, healthcare professionals and the wider healthcare and education communities
- Guide and support patients, carers, and families in accessing the care and services they need
- To improve and enhance staff engagement, ensuring knowledge is shared and there is pride within the organisation
- Promote The Walton Centre as an employee of choice within the region, and the NHS, encouraging our staff to learn and develop as they work
- Demonstrate the Trust as a leader in equality, diversity and inclusivity
- To promote consistency, engagement and understanding with the Trust brand

Our approach to communication should reflect our Trust vision and values and should seek to promote them at all times, whether the audience is within the Trust or outside it. The key principles underpinning all our communications are:

- **Openness and honesty**
- **Clarity**
- **Consistency**
- **Authenticity**
- **Accessibility**
- **Professionalism**

**// Accessible, innovative, and strategically aligned communications that are tailored for target audiences**



# Key areas of focus

We have identified nine key focus areas for communications and marketing at The Walton Centre which can be used in isolation, or conjunction with each other. In this section we identify the key objectives and details of each area, which are further underpinned by tactical information in the supporting delivery plan document, which will be regularly reviewed and updated in order to stay relevant and aligned to changing and evolving needs of the Trust.

## Brand

It is essential that The Walton Centre has a strong brand, to ensure maximum recognition locally, regionally and nationally for the benefit of patients, family and friends, staff and our stakeholders.

A strong brand supports research funding and investment, recruitment and retention and the work of The Walton Centre Charity, as well as providing reassurance to patients and the wider community about the Trust's status as the best place to receive treatment and care for neurological, neurosurgical, spinal, pain and rehabilitation services.

A brand is also a promise – the expectation and delivery of excellence across all touchpoints of an organisation, so expectation and reality match, or reality excels. It is not just a logo and a brand palette, but it is the core essence of who we are, and what we're here for – our positioning, what and who we want to be.

Work is ongoing to refresh and reinvigorate our brand and awareness, working with our Board and senior staff across the organisation, to provide us with a more distinctive and recognisable brand identity. With the award of university hospital status, the name of the Trust is also under review which will impact the brand identity and all branding throughout the hospital.

This will also impact awareness of the hospital and its work – the ability to recall the name of the Trust and its work, simply and easily by all that encounter it is vital.

This identity should then flow through every aspect of not only communications and marketing, but every element of the Trust's work and its environment.

As an outstanding, specialist Trust, every touchpoint for patients, families, stakeholders and staff should be of the highest standard – to match the outstanding treatment and care that is delivered every day.

### Key brand objectives

Completion of the brand identity refresh and communication and engage with staff on any changes and how they can support the rollout

Development of naming options in relation to the award of university status, engagement with staff, patients, and stakeholders, including NHS England, and scoping of impact of any change

Review of the Trust brand guidelines and toolbox, with refreshed roll-out to staff including onboarding and education sessions with key groups

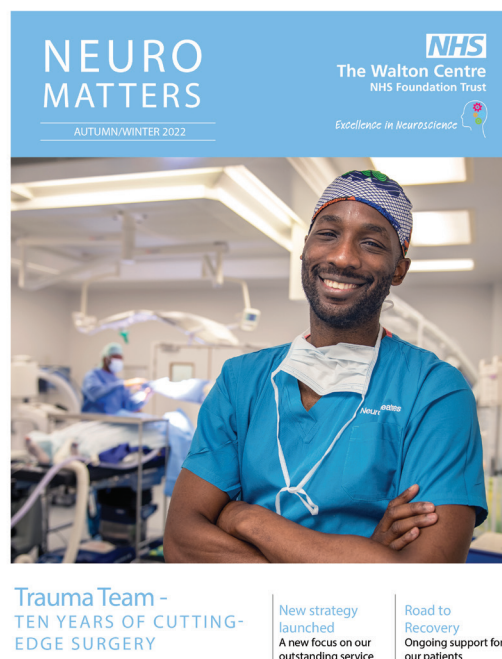
Creation of guidelines for Board and senior managers on the use of brand, and expectations around materials and messaging

Assessment of hospital wayfinding and signage for effectiveness and professionalism, and if necessary, development of a business case for replacement signage

# External communications

Effective external communications and media relations can increase brand awareness of the Trust with existing stakeholders and interested parties, but also new audiences. Building relationships with external media, particularly national or trade media, can take time but can bear long-term success as the Trust becomes known as a subject matter expert and one which can contribute to content on key issues.

However, key to effective external communications is content and commitment to telling our brand story – there is immense competition for media space, in any format or sector – and we must stand out from the crowd in subject, relevance, timeliness and accessibility. This requires increased buy-in from particularly clinical teams across the organisation and increased understanding of how the media works, and the objectives of the organisation to broaden its previous type of outreach, sometimes out of the 'comfort zone' of previous approaches.



## External communications objectives

Cement our positioning as a thought leader in our areas of expertise with clear Walton Centre USPs

Increase public understanding and awareness of the work and achievements of the Trust

Pursue a policy of active engagement with the media, in particular national titles and broadcast media, in order to raise awareness and further their understanding of the work undertaken by the Trust

Identify key opportunities within the five strategic ambitions of the Trust strategy to align communications and media outreach

Use of patient case studies to demonstrate the impact of the work of the Trust, and use of clinical spokespeople as expert voices

Use of staff case studies to support recruitment and retention and highlight The Walton Centre has a place to work and leader in its field

# Internal communications and staff engagement

Our focus on internal communications and staff engagement will ensure effective two-way dialogue with Trust staff, on-site partners, and volunteers to sustain an environment where staff feel informed, included, and valued. There is strong evidence (King's Fund 2015) to demonstrate that improvements in staff engagement directly impact on patient care. Trusts with more engaged staff tend to make better use of resources and have higher patient satisfaction.

Successfully engaging with our staff through timely, meaningful and impactful communications is fundamental to the success of the organisation. With around 1500 members of staff working within the Trust we need to adopt an approach which adapts and responds to their differing requirements and doesn't assume that one size fits all.

The continued roll-out of the new email marketing platform will improve the accessibility and engagement of internal emails, a key staff communication channel. Through this platform, we will be able to measure engagement from analytics and flex our objectives and metrics accordingly and also feed into the development of alternative staff communications techniques for those staff for whom digital is not a best practice channel, including traditional print channels but also screens in rest areas and a new, mobile accessible intranet.



**The Walton Centre**  
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A look at the week with our Chief Executive Jan Ross

## Internal communications objectives

To inform, educate and engage staff in corporate and Trust wide communications for action, information or interest

Meaningful awareness and engagement of events and campaigns, related to healthcare and beyond, to build staff morale and knowledge

Development of an internal communications toolkit to ensure all staff have access to internal communications in the way they wish to access them internally and outside of the Trust

Development of a new Trust intranet to meet the needs of our workforce and to foster better engagement with organisational strategy and key messages

Alongside HR and other teams, support the recruitment, retainment, and development of great people through engaging and professional processes, tactics and materials

Position the Trust as an inclusive, diverse and supportive employer through working with HR and the EDI Manager on the EDI agenda and relevant staff engagement

# Digital communications

Digital communication is an ever-growing and developing channel for patients, staff and stakeholders. The new Walton Centre website launched in September 2021 and has seen increased visitor numbers and accessibility ratings. We will continue to manage and enhance the website in line with the Trust's strategy and objectives, national and local initiatives, and best practice.



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Departments and Services

Your treatment and care

Visiting a patient

Get involved



Welcome to The Walton Centre



thewaltoncentre



188 likes

thewaltoncentre This @unesco #MotherLanguageDay we're celebrating the diversity of our staff and the wonderful ways they say 'Hello my name is' in their mother language - can you guess them all?

## Digital communications objectives

Accessibility- to ensure that all users of our digital platforms have an optimum user experience being able to find information quickly through a variety of devices (phone, laptop etc)

Management of the Trust's website, evaluating and updating content for appropriateness, and effectiveness dependent on audience, Trust objectives and user feedback

Maximise SEO to ensure The Walton Centre is high up in search rankings through appropriate use of keywords and meta tagging, new and regular content, to drive and optimise web traffic

Maintain the Trust's social media presence to develop and grow engagement and the audience with messaging, sharing content that is appropriate to the Trust's vision and values and has been shown to be interesting and engaging with our audience

Support the production of engaging online content including exploration of webinars and podcasts using our 'expert voices'

Explore emerging platforms, tools and technologies where applicable to ensure a positive and productive user experience

# Stakeholder engagement

The Trust has a national reputation for good clinical outcomes and patient care, and for the delivery of highly specialist services. The Trust needs to build on its relationships with opinion formers such as MPs, key NHS stakeholders, national organisations, healthcare influencers, and regional and national forums. It currently has good relationships, but it is acknowledged that more could be done to build the Trust's profile and impact of its work.

Stakeholder engagement can involve multiple staff and teams across an organisation and it is important that it is not seen as purely a communications and marketing responsibility.

Communications and marketing can provide tools and content through which senior staff can engage with stakeholders as part of planned and consistent programme of engagement. Bespoke work led by the Communications and Marketing Team should be seen as supplementary and complimentary to the ongoing work done as a matter of course or developed through networks held across the organisation.

This area is heavily linked with healthcare marketing and communication of our services, as it is recognised that more could be done to increase our presence and profile across the key stakeholders in the GP, DGH and commissioning markets to ensure referrals are received appropriately and pathways are followed to most benefit patients and fellow healthcare professionals.

## Stakeholder engagement objectives

Develop a dedicated stakeholder map and prioritise by degree of influence and importance to maximise knowledge and awareness of our work and key announcements across government, healthcare and the voluntary sector

Work with teams across the organisation, particularly those focused on education, research and social responsibility to ensure key stakeholders are being communicated and engaged with in a professional and timely way, and the teams have suitable materials and channels to maximise their work

Embed communications and marketing in project development across the Trust to support patient, staff and stakeholder engagement in key Trust wide projects

Facilitate a series of events and visits involving key stakeholders, dependent on key Trust objectives and announcements, to demonstrate and display areas of leadership and expertise

Engage with Trust Board and senior managers on their existing and potential networks, working with them to identify gaps and how Communications and Marketing can support their outreach and engagement work

# Healthcare communications and marketing

As a specialist Trust, and the only specialist neuroscience Trust in the country, The Walton Centre has a significant role to play within the NHS – it should be seen as a leader in its field and a trusted adviser for both patients and fellow healthcare professionals.

It is recognised that more could be done to increase our presence and profile across the key stakeholders in the GP, DGH and commissioning markets to ensure referrals are received appropriately and pathways are followed to benefit patients and fellow healthcare professionals.

There is great work being done and new innovations being rolled out at the Trust, together with unfulfilled opportunities. However, these are often under-utilised due to lack of awareness across the region and formal marketing and communication work.

However, this is an area which would require additional marketing resource to fully scope and implement due to lack of skillset within the current team in this area.



## Healthcare marketing objectives\*

Work with clinical and operational teams to identify opportunities to improve communication with Trusts across the region, and GP practices

Scope a GP education programme, including online or in-person training sessions, and a GP education e-newsletter, following research on existing activity across the Trust, to use education as a tool to drive greater awareness of services and more accurate referrals

Use communications and marketing to support the referral pathway process to ensure the right referrals at the right time through the right process

Market the Trust website to healthcare professionals across the region to facilitate greater engagement with the brand, organisation and services on offer with the objective of driving greater engagement to identify improvement areas, including new technology and content options

Market outpatient clinics in other Trusts, and work with the clinicians involved in those clinics, to identify further branding and/or marketing opportunities to increase knowledge of the Trust's presence, the services it offers and enhance regional outreach

\* These objectives are subject to additional resource in this area.

# Patient communications

The first interaction a patient has with The Walton Centre is often via letter, online or phone call. It is imperative that all patient communication channels with the Trust are of the highest quality, to match that of the treatment and care they receive.

The Trust has a key focus on Patient and Family Centred Care, and all six steps have communication at the heart to ensure patients and their families are supported throughout their time at The Walton Centre. Patient communication will also be a key area of focus for one of the transformation priorities.

This is an area which requires buy-in and collaboration from multiple departments, including the Patient Access Centre, Patient Experience and the clinical teams. It is recognised that there are some technological issues with, for example, patient letters, and lack of uniformity which may impact any roll-out of new approaches to some elements of communications.

The majority of patient leaflets have been transferred online where they are accessible and easy to update. There are some leaflets which remain hard copy and therefore potentially not brand compliant which is a key focus for this area of work.

This area is also linked to the work on hospital environment (below) as the look and feel of the hospital buildings, internal and external, contribute to patient communication and can be a vital channel for engagement and information.



211 likes

thewaltoncentre Ready for a fantastic #FridayFeeling? Some of our amazing Rehab patients made this beautiful mural during their one of their art therapy sessions with our Occupational Therapy team. Isn't it beautiful?

## Patient Communications objectives

Work with clinical and operational teams, and patient experience, on an analysis of main elements of communication throughout a patient journey, identifying gaps and areas for improvement

An assessment of the hospital wayfinding and signage for effectiveness and professionalism, and if necessary, development of a business case for replacement signage alongside Estates and Facilities teams

Review digital and traditional patient communication channels within the hospital to assess current effectiveness and future requirements, working with the outpatient transformation workstream

Best practice review of other Trusts materials, and collaboration with support groups and charities to ensure any changes to patient communication materials are suitable for our patient cohort

Standardisation of all patient information leaflets, both offline and online, including content and branding, and consideration of move to a full online patient information library to ensure access to the latest clinical information, working with the outpatient transformation workstream

# Hospital environment

First impressions matter; a poor hospital environment may not inspire trust or confidence in the service that a hospital provides. As with the overall brand focus, a hospital environment can go overlooked when done well but done badly can be very obviously at odds with the clinical promise of excellence.

Our patients' needs are our number one priority, a hospital which is confusing to navigate or understand can lead to increased concern about treatment and even delays in accessing care. It is vital that the look and feel of the hospital itself is professional and high-quality, as well as being of the very highest clinical and safety standards.

An environment which is welcoming and professional can inspire confidence in patients and their families, and visitors to the organisation. It can also increase staff wellbeing at work – a professional working environment can increase productivity and positivity, if you are proud of where you work it can inspire you in your role.

The hospital environment also serves a key purpose to educate, inform and engage our patients, visitors, and staff. Merely walking down a corridor or travelling in a lift should be an opportunity to communicate, inspire or advise – whether through effective way-finding, staff communications, or communicating positive feedback from patients.

It should not be seen as an after-thought, or simply bricks and mortar; the hospital environment is a essential communications and marketing channel which can be a missed opportunity if not maximised through working with teams across the organisation during change or developments.

## Hospital environment objectives

Working with Estates and Facilities to embed The Walton Centre brand when considering permanent or semi-permanent changes to the hospital

Reviewing and redeveloping the displays and communications on main hospital thoroughfares to ensure maximum effectiveness for patients, families, staff and visitors


An assessment of the hospital wayfinding and signage for effectiveness and professionalism, and if necessary, development of a business case for replacement signage alongside Estates and Facilities teams

Identifying opportunities for improvements to staff areas to standardise and improve the look and feel across the hospital, for example door signage



# Charity communications

The Walton Centre Charity supports the vital work of the Trust by investing charitable funds in areas and projects that enhance patient, family and staff experience, treatment, and care. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the Charity's positive impact is shared both internally and externally in order to encourage further involvement and support for future fundraising, particularly in the digital sphere to maximise the impact of the new Digital Fundraising Manager.

The image shows a website banner for 'Walk for Walton'. At the top left is the logo for 'The Walton Centre Charity' with the tagline 'Supporting Excellence in Neurosciences'. To the right is a 'Menu' button. The main banner features a photograph of a person's legs walking on a dirt path, with a colorful sneaker icon overlaid. The text 'Walk for Walton' is prominently displayed, with 'MAY 2023' in a pink box below it. A blue bar at the bottom of the banner contains the text: 'Walk for Walton this Spring! Walk for Walton is back! We're asking our amazing supporters to walk 100,000 steps across the month of May.'

## Charity Communications objectives

Working closely with the Fundraising Team, develop a plan to improve existing supporter journeys, as well as develop and implement new digital stewardship programmes

Embed a culture of 'thinkcharity' across the Trust, ensuring staff are our greatest ambassadors and aware of the impact and opportunities of The Walton Centre Charity

Increase the sharing and use of fundraiser case studies in social media and media communications to highlight the different opportunities for fundraising and the impact of the Charity on patients, families, and staff

Develop an internal campaign to promote the work of the Charity and fundraising opportunities for both patients, families, and staff, as well as opportunities for funding of projects and initiatives

Maximise the communications of existing events and fundraising projects, and work with the Fundraising Team to create and develop new fundraising opportunities

# Evaluation


Communications and marketing report monthly to Executives and quarterly to Board, including key metrics around external and internal communications, social media and digital as well as regular updates to BPC and HMG on specific projects.

It is recommended that these processes are continued, with additional evaluation metrics identified and reported on dependent on further work around key objectives and deliverables.





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