

**South Ayrshire Council
Equality Impact Assessment including Fairer Scotland Duty**

Section One: Policy Details

Name of Policy	HSCP Communications Strategy 2024-28
Lead Officer (Name/Position)	Rachael Graham, Planning and Performance Coordinator
Support Team (Names/Positions) including Critical Friend	Kirsty Pyper, Planning and Performance Officer (Communications) Courtney Buchanan, Information Governance Lead Officer (Critical Friend)

The term Policy is used throughout the assessment to embrace the full range of policies, procedures, strategies, projects, applications for funding or financial decisions.

What are the main aims of the policy?	<p>The key aims of the HSCP Communications Strategy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance Public Understanding: This aim focuses on using clear, simple language and multiple platforms to inform the public about our services, changes, and developments. - Foster Community Engagement: Our goal is to create interactive opportunities for the public to participate in decision-making processes, strengthening community ties and enriching our initiatives. - Ensure Accessible Information: We strive to make our communications accessible to everyone, regardless of age, language, or ability, by providing resources in multiple formats. - Build Trust and Transparency: Through open and honest communications, we aim to build a trusting relationship between our organisation and the public. - Optimise Crisis Communication: This new aim seeks to develop streamlined communication protocols for emergencies, ensuring swift, clear, and comprehensive updates to keep the public informed and safe.
What are the intended outcomes of the policy?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Informed Public: Citizens will have easy access to accurate, up-to-date information, making them more knowledgeable about services, initiatives, and changes affecting them. 2. High Public Engagement: Through multiple platforms and interactive opportunities, we aim for

	<p>an increase in public participation in surveys, town hall meetings, and other civic activities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Universal Accessibility: All segments of the population, regardless of their age, language proficiency, or physical ability, will find it easier to access and understand information related to our services. 4. Strengthened Public Trust: The strategy aims to increase trust levels, as measured through public opinion surveys, between the community and our organisation. 5. Streamlined Crisis Response: A more efficient communication flow during emergencies, leading to quicker public updates and, ultimately, safer communities.
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Section Two: What are the Likely Impacts of the Policy?

<p>Will the policy impact upon the whole population of South Ayrshire and/or particular groups within the population? (please specify)</p>	<p>The Communications Strategy is designed to impact the entire population of South Ayrshire, but specific attention will be given to groups that may have unique communication needs, such as older adults, children, and those with disabilities. By adopting a more inclusive and far-reaching approach, the strategy aims to reduce inequalities in information access across various demographic segments.</p> <p>In terms of Protected Characteristics, the policy aims to have a positive impact. For instance, more accessible communication methods can benefit people with disabilities, and translations of key resources can assist ethnic minorities and non-English speakers.</p> <p>In addressing socio-economic disadvantages, the strategy seeks to make information available in public spaces in a range of formats at places like libraries, community centres, and clinics, thereby aiding those who may not have easy access to digital platforms due to financial constraints. This is crucial for reducing the information gap and for ensuring that services reach those who are most vulnerable.</p>
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Considering the following Protected Characteristics and themes, what likely impacts or issues does the policy have for the group or community?

List any likely positive and/or negative impacts.

Protected Characteristics	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
<p>Age: Issues relating to different age groups e.g. older people or children and young people</p>	<p>Positive: A positive impact of the Communications Strategy on age could be that it includes multiple channels for communication, such as social media for younger audiences and print or community meetings for older adults.</p> <p>This ensures that people of all age groups have access to important information, thus facilitating intergenerational inclusion and reducing the likelihood of any age group being left uninformed or excluded.</p>
<p>Disability: Issues relating to disabled people</p>	<p>Positive: A positive impact on disability could be the incorporation of accessible formats and channels in the Communications Strategy. This can include closed-captioning for videos, Braille or large print materials, and easy-to-navigate digital platforms compatible with screen readers. This inclusivity ensures that individuals with various types of disabilities can effectively receive and process important information, thereby enhancing their participation in community affairs.</p> <p>Engagement and consultation of this Strategy will seek to consider the wider impacts of this protected characteristic. As part of engagement and consultation activity – information will be provided in alternative formats upon request.</p>
<p>Gender Reassignment – Trans/Transgender: Issues relating to people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change his or her sex</p>	<p>Positive: the Strategy aims to be inclusive to all irrespective of a person’s gender. It is anticipated that there will be potential for further positive impacts through tailored services if data indicates a need.</p> <p>Engagement and consultation of this Strategy will seek to consider the wider impacts of this protected characteristic.</p>
<p>Marriage and Civil Partnership: Issues relating to people who are married or are in a civil partnership</p>	<p>Positive: the Strategy aims to be inclusive to all irrespective of a person’s marital/civil partnership status.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity: Issues relating to woman who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave</p>	<p>Positive: by offering online resources for expecting mothers and those on maternity leave that are accessible at all times.</p>
<p>Race: Issues relating to people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities, including Gypsy/Travellers</p>	<p>Positive: the Strategy aims to apply equally to individuals of all racial groups.</p> <p>As part of engagement and consultation activity - information will be translated or provided in alternative formats where requested.</p>

Religion or Belief: Issues relating to a person's religion or belief (including non-belief)	<p>Positive: the Strategy aims to be fully inclusive to all religions and beliefs (including non-belief).</p> <p>Engagement and consultation of this Strategy will seek to consider the wider impacts of this protected characteristic.</p>
Sex: Gender identity: Issues specific to women and men/or girls and boys	<p>Positive: the Strategy aims to be of a positive impact to all.</p> <p>Engagement and consultation of this Strategy will seek to consider the wider impacts of this protected characteristic.</p>
Sexual Orientation: Issues relating to a person's sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, heterosexual/straight	<p>Positive: the Strategy aims to be fully inclusive to all irrespective of a person's sexual orientation.</p> <p>Engagement and consultation of this Strategy will seek to consider the wider impacts of this protected characteristic.</p>

Equality and Diversity Themes Relevant to South Ayrshire Council	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Health Issues and impacts affecting people's health	Positive: the Strategy will aim to ensure that residents will have better access information.
Human Rights: Issues and impacts affecting people's human rights such as being treated with dignity and respect, the right to education, the right to respect for private and family life, and the right to free elections.	<p>Positive: the Strategy will aim to ensure that everyone has the right to information.</p> <p>As part of the development of this Strategy we will seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> listen to the lived experience of our stakeholders (including, local people, our workforce and wider partners) to ensure this continues to inform our planning

Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Low Income/Income Poverty: Issues: cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food and clothing.	<p>Positive: A positive impact for those experiencing low income or income poverty could be the Communications Strategy's focus on affordability and accessibility. By offering free, easily accessible digital and printed resources, and using public spaces for information dissemination, the strategy could ensure that crucial information is reachable without financial barriers. This would make it easier for low-income families to stay informed, access services, and participate in community initiatives.</p> <p>Negative: A potential negative impact could be that the Communications Strategy might prioritise digital channels for disseminating information, which may inadvertently exclude low-income individuals who don't have reliable internet access or the necessary digital devices. This digital divide could result</p>

	in these individuals missing out on essential information, services, or opportunities, further exacerbating socio-economic disparities.
Low and/or no wealth: Issues: enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	Positive: The Communications Strategy may include affordable or free access to resources, information, and services, helping those with low or no wealth to navigate and access what they need without financial strain.
Material Deprivation: Issues: being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	Positive: By utilising multiple channels of communication, including cost-free options like social media and community bulletins, the Communications Strategy can make vital information and services accessible to those experiencing material deprivation. Negative: However, the strategy may inadvertently focus on digital platforms that are inaccessible for those who can't afford smartphones or internet service, deepening the divide between those with and without material resources.
Area Deprivation: Issues: where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	Positive: The Communications Strategy can specifically target underserved or deprived areas with tailored outreach programs and local community events, thereby making services and information more equitable across different regions. Negative: If the strategy relies heavily on online and digital communication, it could exclude communities in deprived areas where digital infrastructure is lacking or unreliable. This could widen the gap between well-served and underserved areas.

Section Three: Evidence Used in Developing the Policy

Involvement and Consultation In assessing the impact(s) set out above what evidence has been collected from involvement, engagement or consultation? Who did you involve, when and how ?	To date there has been engagement with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Leaders from the HSCP • Communications Team including Management at South Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire and Arran. • Engagement with staff across the HSCP via a specific staff survey • Engagement with communities via survey
Data and Research In assessing the impact set out above what evidence has been collected from research or other data. Please	1. Ofcom Communications Market Report - Provides an overview of communications services across the UK and highlights key trends in Scotland.

<p>specify what research was carried out or data collected, when and how this was done.</p>	<p>- Source: [Ofcom](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr)</p> <p>2. Digital Scotland - Offers insights into digital technology use in Scotland, including broadband connectivity. - Source: [Digital Scotland](https://www.mygov.scot/digital-scotland/)</p> <p>3. UK Government Communication Service (GCS) Annual Report - Outlines the activities and impact of government communications. - Source: [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-government-communications-service)</p> <p>What the Research is Showing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rise of Digital Platforms: A significant shift toward digital platforms for accessing information and services. 2. Regional Disparities: There are still pronounced differences in access to communications technologies between urban and rural areas. 3. Age Divide: Older age groups are less likely to be digitally engaged, impacting how they interact with services. <p>Gaps and Uncertainties:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Socio-Economic Factors: Limited data on how socio-economic factors influence the efficacy of communication strategies. 2. Accessibility: Unclear how different disabled communities interact with current communication tools. 3. Local Variability: Lack of research on how regional culture impacts the effectiveness of communication strategies.
<p>Partners data and research In assessing the impact(s) set out in Section 2 what evidence has been provided by partners? Please specify partners</p>	
<p>Gaps and Uncertainties Have you identified any gaps or uncertainties in your understanding of the issues or impacts that need to be explored further?</p>	<p>As with the development of any Strategy there will be a need, at this early stage in development, to identify gaps and uncertainties. We believe there is a need for more data on digital literacy rates among BME communities and rural areas.</p>

Section Four: Detailed Action Plan to address identified gaps in:

a) evidence and

b) to mitigate negative impacts

No.	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
1	Ensure a wide reach of engagement across all groups	Communications Officer	April 2024
2	Develop an accessible online platform for digital communication resources for HSCP staff.	Communications Officer	April 2024

Note: Please add more rows as required.

Section Five - Performance monitoring and reporting

Considering the policy as a whole, including its equality and diversity implications:

When is the policy intended to come into effect?	May 2024
When will the policy be reviewed?	May 2025
Which Panel will have oversight of the policy?	Strategic Planning Advisory Group (during strategy development) Performance and Audit Committee (ongoing monitoring and scrutiny of implementation plan) Integration Joint Board (final sign off)

Section 6

South Ayrshire Council

Appendix

Summary Equality Impact Assessment Implications & Mitigating Actions

Name of Policy: Communications Strategy 2024-27

This policy will assist or inhibit the Council’s ability to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations as follows:

<p>Eliminate discrimination</p> <p>The revised strategy builds on work already undertaken to grow our audience in terms of HSCP communications reach. This includes using a range of methods to reach all community groups including social media; digital; radio and TV advertising; posters, vinyls and graphics; public facing TVs and printed materials which is distributed across South Ayrshire to reach a non-digital audience.</p>
<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
<p>Foster good relations</p>
<p>Consider Socio-Economic Disadvantage (Fairer Scotland Duty)</p> <p>The strategy provides free, accessible communications about the work of the HSCP in a range of ways.</p>

Summary of Key Action to Mitigate Negative Impacts	
Actions	Timescale

Signed: Rachael Graham, Planning and Performance Coordinator

Date: 24/04/24