

1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of communication and engagement activity undertaken by Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care Partnership during the period from 20 May 2026 to 31 July 2026.

The reporting period has been characterised by a transition from the restrictions associated with the Scottish Parliament election period into a more active communications and engagement environment.

Alongside the delivery of public and staff communications, significant work has continued to support planning, stakeholder relationships, service development and engagement activity. This has included the development of communications plans, stakeholder engagement approaches, support for senior leaders and coordination with local, regional and national partners.

Throughout the reporting period, the partnership has continued to pursue an integrated approach to communications and engagement, recognising the importance of ensuring that staff, stakeholders, service users and communities are informed and involved in matters affecting health and social care services.

2. GOVERNANCE AND ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES

2.1 Consultation and Engagement Working Group

The Health and Social Care Partnership continues to maintain its established Consultation and Engagement Working Group, chaired by the Communication and Engagement Manager and comprising representatives from a range of professional and service areas.

The group has continued to meet regularly throughout the reporting period, providing advice and support on engagement activity and helping to ensure that participation, engagement and consultation work is undertaken in line with agreed frameworks and national guidance. Particular attention during the period has focused on supporting implementation planning arising from previous engagement exercises and considering approaches to emerging engagement requirements.

2.2 Participation and Engagement Network

The Participation and Engagement Network (PEN) continues to provide an important means of sharing information, engagement opportunities and consultation activity with community representatives, stakeholders and members of the public.

Membership of the PEN currently stands at 250, but it is hoped that recent engagement activity focused on services in Wigtownshire will help to increase that number further.

During the reporting period the network has been utilised to support engagement and to gather feedback on emerging policy and strategy documents. The network remains an established and valuable route through which the partnership can engage with a diverse range of interested individuals and organisations.

2.3 Participation and Engagement Strategy

Progress has continued on the development of a refreshed Participation and Engagement Strategy for the Health and Social Care Partnership.

During the reporting period, the draft strategy was circulated to external stakeholders, including members of the Participation and Engagement Network and representatives of third sector and seldom-heard groups.

Further feedback was received via the chair of the Community Planning Partnership's Participation and Engagement Working Group, and a version of the Draft Strategy will be taken to full membership at the start of September.

Feedback gathered through this engagement activity will inform the production of a final version of the strategy for consideration through partnership governance arrangements.

3. PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

3.1 General Medical Services Review

Activity relating to the General Medical Services (GMS) Review has continued during the reporting period as the programme has progressed from engagement into implementation.

Following the extensive engagement programme undertaken throughout 2025 and early 2026, work has focused on supporting implementation planning and ensuring

stakeholders remain informed regarding agreed next steps. An Access and Communications workstream has been established, with representation from the communications team, to consider both internal and external communications requirements as implementation progresses.

Initial discussions through the Access and Communications workstream have included consideration of how communications materials can best support practices as implementation progresses. This has included exploring the development of a dedicated area within the NHS Dumfries and Galloway website containing information and communications resources covering issues common to General Medical Services across the region. The intention is that individual practices will be able to draw upon these materials, or direct patients to them, helping to support consistent messaging and reduce duplication of effort where information is relevant to multiple practices.

3.2 Waverley Medical Centre and Galloway Community Hospital Engagement Programme

During the reporting period, significant engagement activity was initiated in relation to the potential to relocate General Medical Services currently delivered from Waverley Medical Centre to the adjacent Galloway Community Hospital.

This work has involved the development of an engagement programme designed to support consideration of the proposal and ensure that patients, communities, stakeholders and elected members are appropriately informed and able to contribute their views as the process progresses. Communications and engagement support has included the preparation of engagement materials, stakeholder communications, public information and arrangements for engagement activity.

A very high volume of responses has so far been gained in person from members of the public accessing the sites, and also from an online survey that was also promoted. This is being collected along with responses from staff.

Engagement activity is currently planned to continue up until a point of analysis and production of a report to help inform decision-making on the potential relocation, but also potentially beyond this point so that perspectives can continue to help inform what might follow. In preparation for the analysis stage of the programme, the partnership has also trialled the use of Artificial Intelligence to support thematic analysis of qualitative responses. The intention is that this approach will assist in identifying themes and issues emerging from engagement activity, while ensuring appropriate professional oversight and validation of findings before any formal reporting takes place.

3.3 Participation and Engagement Strategy

Work on the new Participation and Engagement Strategy has remained an important focus during the reporting period.

The draft strategy builds on learning from participation and engagement activity undertaken across recent years, incorporates current guidance including Planning with People, and reflects the partnership's commitment to inclusive and meaningful engagement. Particular emphasis has been placed on co-production, involvement of seldom-heard groups and ensuring engagement activity is proportionate and linked to decision-making.

Engagement with stakeholders on the draft strategy has continued throughout the reporting period and will inform further refinement of the document prior to formal consideration.

3.4 Value Based Health and Care / Realistic Medicine

Support has continued for engagement activity linked to Value Based Health and Care and Realistic Medicine programmes.

This has included ongoing promotion of shared decision-making approaches, including communications supporting patient understanding of the BRAN questions and wider engagement activity designed to improve awareness of treatment choices and conversations between patients and healthcare professionals.

Public-facing engagement activity has also continued around the chronic pain pathway, supported by digital communications, online resources and signposting information aimed at helping people access information and support.

3.5 Moffat Pharmacy Consultation

During the reporting period, NHS Dumfries and Galloway and Davidsons Pharmacy jointly undertook consultation activity relating to a proposal to establish a new pharmacy within Moffat.

The consultation was supported through public communications, social media activity and an online survey designed to gather local views on the proposal, including its

potential services and opening arrangements. The consultation concluded during July 2026, with responses subsequently collated and analysed.

4. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY

Public communications activity during the reporting period focused on supporting health advice and messaging and communicating developments relating to services.

A significant proportion of activity related to communicating service developments and organisational priorities. This included communications activity supporting implementation of agreed General Medical Services Review actions, communications around the engagement exploring the potential relocation of General Medical Services from Waverley Medical Centre to Galloway Community Hospital, strategic planning activity, financial sustainability work and wider programmes of service transformation. Communications support included the development of briefing materials, stakeholder communications, public information and media handling arrangements to support informed public discussion of these issues.

Public-facing communications activity continued across traditional media, digital platforms and social media channels. Activity included promotion of health improvement messages, support for consultation and engagement activity, service information updates and awareness campaigns designed to improve understanding of health and social care services. This included continued promotion of the DG DoMore campaign in support of delivery of the region's Physical Activity Strategy, encouraging increased participation in physical activity and promoting opportunities for people to become more active within their communities.

The communications team also continued to develop digital and video content to support public health and service communications. During the reporting period this included the production of a video promoting Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) screening featuring a participant from Dumfries and Galloway, helping to raise awareness of the screening programme and encourage uptake amongst eligible groups.

The period also included communications activity relating to changes to mortuary arrangements at Thomas Hope Hospital. This involved providing information to communities, stakeholders and the media regarding the changes, the reasons for them and the arrangements that would continue to be available for families. Given the sensitive nature of the subject, communications activity focused on ensuring information was clear, factual and responsive to public concern.

Alongside planned communications activity, the communications team continued to provide sustained media handling support, including responding to media enquiries, preparing statements and briefings, supporting interviews and coordinating organisational responses to issues attracting public interest. The team also continued to produce digital content, video materials and communications resources supporting public health campaigns, service awareness and organisational priorities.

Communications planning activity during the period included support for financial sustainability work, regional service planning, climate and sustainability initiatives, emerging sub-national planning arrangements and wider reform discussions. This work helped ensure that the partnership was prepared to communicate complex and potentially sensitive issues in a planned and coordinated manner.

5. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Routine internal communications activity continued throughout the reporting period.

The weekly Staff News newsletter remained a key mechanism for sharing organisational information with the workforce, alongside continued publication of OnTheGround, the health and social care partnership's online staff magazine. These channels were used to communicate organisational developments, service initiatives, workforce information, staff achievements and health and social care priorities.

Managers' briefing communications also continued following Board meetings, supporting managers in cascading information and ensuring awareness of significant decisions and developments across services. Internal communications channels were used to support understanding of major programmes of work and emerging organisational priorities. Consideration was also given to how future strategic developments could be communicated through Staff News, management briefings and other staff communication channels.

Internal communications activity additionally supported a range of organisational priorities during the reporting period, including service development, financial sustainability work, climate and sustainability initiatives, workforce developments and strategic planning programmes.

6. PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The reporting period has seen continued collaboration with national partners, neighbouring health boards and regional communications networks.

Partnership staff have continued to contribute to discussions on emerging sub-national planning and wider health and care reform activity. This has included consideration of a new sub-national plan for communications and attending a West Scotland Hackathon event which aimed to identify five key messages relating to unscheduled care and patient flow which could be agreed and adopted.

Engagement with communications colleagues across territorial boards has continued to support the sharing of learning, emerging practice and coordinated approaches where appropriate.

Overall, activity during the reporting period has reflected a continued commitment to ensuring that engagement and communications activity is proportionate, evidence-based and aligned with organisational priorities, while supporting effective communication with staff, stakeholders and the wider public.