

Helen Gray

helen@helengray.co.uk www.helengray.co.uk

I am a communications and engagement professional with over thirty-year's experience in communications, PR and marketing. With a specialism in public sector, I have worked in the NHS, Local Government, on national programmes for the Home Office and Public Health England, as well as in the arts and education. My skill-base includes the full communications and engagement mix, using necessary and appropriate tools and techniques to engage a wide range of different stakeholder groups including, staff/internal, private sector and third-sector partnerships and the wider general public/customer base.

I am also a specialist in accessible information including plain English and Easy Read. I have a CIPR Postgrad Diploma, CIPR Specialist Certificate in Internal Communications and CIPR Specialist Diploma in Digital Communications.

Key achievements

- Led communications and engagement strategy and delivery on one of NHS England's first 'Vanguard' New Care Model programmes (All Together Better Sunderland) designed to transform the way health and social care are delivered as a combined offer to local populations. The programme required internal staff and stakeholder engagement across a range of disciplines within a health; local authority; private sector and third sector partnership. At the same time service change needed to be consulted on and communicated to patients/clients, their carers and general public.
- Involved since inception and development with the Cancer Research UK/Public Health England national team, up to frontline delivery of campaigns, I led the Be Clear on Cancer (awareness and early diagnosis) public health campaigns for three Cancer Networks. Managing both clinical engagement and public awareness to increase symptom-awareness and early diagnosis of common cancers, I worked across the north of England and Thames Valley to demonstrate a measurable increase in diagnosed cancers.
- Led on regional stakeholder-communication for a major Home Office pilot to develop a single-non emergency number (101). This included management and delivery of all communication across a large and complex partnership comprising 12 local authorities, the police and police authority, each with their own agenda. Primary stakeholders included front line staff and the public.
- Development and management of BPR transformation and change communication at Newcastle City Council, within a Public Private Partnership (Fujitsu and KPMG). This involved a significant range of communication with both staff and elected members as well as customers.
- Management and delivery of major stakeholder engagement and communications 'reputation' campaign for Blyth Valley Borough Council's first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection and was instrumental in achieving 'excellent' status.
- Management and delivery of the one of the first postal-voting campaigns at Blyth Valley Borough Council resulting in a 75% take up (increase of 23%; target 15%).
- Launch and all associated initiation engagement and communication activity for the first Arm's Length Management [Housing] Organisation (ALMO) in England – Blyth Valley Housing, including tenant liaison, re-brand and transformation communications both internally and with customers.
- Rebranded Newcastle City Council in-house, including sole management of project and delivery of the Corporate Identity Protocol, with minimal cost (under £4K).
- Development and management of major, social marketing campaigns for NHS Berkshire West – including a highly visible and successful 'Choose Well' service choice campaign, achieving public recognition and understanding of key messages with the public [SHA research Dec 2010] and a two-year Dental campaign, significantly increasing awareness of availability of NHS dentists.
- Development and build of an online Accessible Information Toolkit to provide comprehensive support for Newcastle City Council staff on the production of information in relevant formats in line with new DDA requirements.

Career history - last 10 years

March 2010 – May 2023 **Communications and Engagement Manager** NHS

For over 13 years I worked on a range of communications and engagement projects across the NHS, on both full time contracts or as an interim, contracted through NECS NHS commissioning support talent pool. Roles, from the most recent first:

Stakeholder Engagement Manager – Health Education England

Leading stakeholder engagement (comms) across a range of programme withing the Innovation, Digital and Transformation Directorate specifically developing and delivering key campaigns to promote new training initiatives (e.g. Blended Learning), new products and services (NHS Knowledge and Library Services) and spread and adoption of key activities to support Workforce Redesign.

Transformation communications – NHS Digital

Provided communications support to NHS Digital's Data Security Centre refining product and service messaging for both customers and internal teams, nationally, around programme delivery and transformation.

'All Together Better Sunderland' (Vanguard new care model)

Communications manager contracted to deliver strategic project management of both staff/partners and public communications and engagement.

NHS North of England Commissioning Support Unit (NECS)

In-house communications project management on a range of projects for multiple the CSU and its clients. Project include a major public/patient engagement exercise (Sunderland CCG Breast-care services review and NHS England's GP online consultation programme); promotional campaign delivery for the regions Clinical Network; digital campaigns and website development and [comms] service improvement for both NECS' clients to the organisation itself.

NHS England

Delivered a range of strategic communications for the commissioning development arm the NHS England including cross-channel communications strategies for CCGs, area teams and direct/specialist commissioning in an account manager role.

NHS Thames Valley, North of England and the Yorkshire Cancer Networks

As Communications and Engagement Project Lead, I delivered a range of campaigns as part of the Department of Health's 'Be Clear on Cancer' programme, initially for the Thames Valley Cancer Network then moving to jointly support the North of England and the North Yorkshire Cancer Networks. In addition, I provided general communications and engagement advice and service delivery to all three organisations.

NHS Berkshire West PCT:

Led on the development and delivery of all major annual public health campaigns for the PCT.

Key activities:

- Communications strategy development and delivery.
- Development of local campaign and social marketing plans in response to research and national initiatives
- Delivery of public engagement exercises including a range of consultation; engagement and involvement activities (public meetings; focus groups; surveys; etc) market research and analysis
- Planning and delivery of launch campaigns for new products and services locally, regionally and nationally
- Planning and procurement of print, design and media in a range of channels including online, press, radio, cinema and outdoor, relevant to the target audience
- Production and promotion of a range of publications
- Management of campaign budgets, agencies and suppliers
- Planning and management of relevant distribution networks for campaign literature
- Internal and external stakeholder communications and PR
- Stakeholder engagement and event management – staff, public, clinicians and partners
- Overseeing the evaluation and reporting on campaigns
- Co-ordinating campaign-linked training courses and workshops

June 2008 to March 2010 **Senior Communications Adviser** [Temp, full time contract]
Newcastle City Council

Management of two major projects for the authority:

- Full rebrand of the council and print and design rationalisation as a cost-saving exercise
- Development and delivery of an accessible communications [online] toolkit [for staff] including a range of specific products (for example guidance manuals and support literature) in line with the council's new Accessible Information Policy.

January 2008 to June 2008 **Freelance Communications Consultant**

I took on a variety of freelance PR appointments with a range of clients including PR agencies, commercial clients and public sector organisations.

February 2006 - January 2008 **Communications Manager, Single non-emergency number (101) –**
Home Office national programme (secondment)

I was responsible for formulating and delivering the communications strategy for the Northumbria 101 Project – a Home Office pilot project delivering a single non-emergency number. Working with the Home Office Central Communications Team, I led all stakeholder communications activities across the 14-strong Northumbria 101 partnership, including for staff undergoing change [BPR], engaging with senior managers and politicians and providing information for the public.

Effective communication between the partners was vital to ensure that both internal and external audiences understood the new service and its objectives.

October 2003 – February 2006 **Communications Manager**, Newcastle City Council,
City Service Directorate

As Principal Officer for communications within City Service - a flagship division for transformation of key council services in a public/private partnership with Fujitsu and KPMG – I developed and delivered a clear communications strategy that supported the change management process of the highly visible and scrutinised change programme.

The project involved both new technology and business process re-engineering. Working to Prince 2 principles.

April 2001 – October 2003 **Communications Manager**, Blyth Valley Borough Council

I led communications reporting directly to the Chief Executive, taking responsibility for developing and delivering all communications protocols and processes for an organisation where none had existed previously. A strategy that was instrumental in the council achieving an "Excellent" Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating. The council prided itself in leading the way and I also managed communications for one of the first postal voting pilots and first ALMOs (Arms Length [housing] organisation) in the country. During my time at Blyth Valley.

Earlier career history

<i>January 2000 – April 2001</i>	Information for the Public Co-ordinator , Northumberland Health Authority
<i>January 1998 – January 2000</i>	Public Relations Manager , Martin Tait Redheads, Newcastle.
<i>July 1993 – January 1998</i>	Communications Manager , Tyne & Wear Museums
<i>September 1990 – July 1993</i>	Publicity and Graphics Officer , Gateshead College
<i>December 1989 - September 1990</i>	Newspapers in Education Co-ordinator , Gateshead Post Newspaper/Gateshead LEA

Education and Training

<i>Oct 20 – Oct 21</i>	CIPR Digital Communications Diploma
<i>Feb – July 2020</i>	CIPR Internal Communications Certificate
<i>Oct '14 – June '16</i>	CIPR Diploma
<i>June '09</i>	CIPR – Social Media Workshop
<i>February '04</i>	Plain English campaign training (Crystal Mark)
<i>October, '03</i>	Prince 2 foundation
<i>Jan '87 - July '89</i>	Film and video production – North East Media Training Centre
<i>Aug'81 - Aug'82</i>	Trainee - Sunderland Echo/Tyne Tees TV
<i>1976 and 1981</i>	Thornhill School and Monkwearmouth College GCE: English language, English literature, maths, biology, human biology, chemistry, art, geography

Referees on request
