NHS 24 Communications Team – Our Story

We are a small team of highly skilled and motivated communications and marketing professionals serving NHS 24 and its portfolio of services while supporting more than 1500 staff located in sites across Scotland. The output of the team ranges from traditional reputation management via media relations, internal communications and staff engagement, marketing, and digital content production. The ambitions of the team are far reaching and grounded in the development of sustainable services and improved patient experience.

How we use iMatter

The team is quite small (seven in total) and by its nature collaborative and creative in its approach and as such iMatter offered us the opportunity to review what we did that worked well and consider how we might build on and improve our excellent results. The iMatter score (across the whole report) was firmly in the ‘Strive and Celebrate’ so we set aside a team meeting to look at the results and celebrate. Cake was involved in this of course. We also took the ‘Strive’ literally and looked at where there was potential to improve. As a team we recognised that some of our challenges came from broader collaboration across the organisation so we considered how we might build relationships to further improve on our output. We then actively engaged with other parts of our organisation to see what we could do to build relationships and understand the shared objectives which would help us be successful.

We also strengthened our own processes. While we do a lot of planning work across the year, we are also a very agile team which is able to respond very quickly and effectively to new challenges. In fact we thrive on challenges. While it is brilliant that we have the ability to do this, it also has a downside in that the team can then come under intense pressure with very short deadlines, as we are seen to be a team that always delivers. The introduction of more defined processes, has helped us to better manage the workload and reduce stress within the team. What has also become even more apparent is that our team naturally aligns itself to those team members who are under pressure, so we are able to prioritise work according to the demands which might be on individuals at a particular time and support each other. We recognise that the people in our team are our greatest asset and making time to support each other with compassion and understand the stories that people bring to work with them each day, is also hugely beneficial. In our team people make change happen and we support each other to make sure that this is as much as possible a positive experience – learning from each other even when things might occasionally not go according to plan.

Leadership is also key, and while we have a traditional hierarchy as a team, everyone has an opportunity to lead within their own area and levels of autonomy are high, with members trusted to deliver their contribution, and to gather help if required.

The statement ‘I get the help and support I need from other teams and services within the organisation to do my job’ is really important for communications professionals who rely on the knowledge and expertise of colleagues. In 2018 the iMatter result was 76 but by investing time to clarify roles and responsibilities we were able to move this, our lowest score, to 81.

iMatter has proved a useful way for us as a team to think about what works well and to make sure we continue to develop ourselves, have those important conversations and strive to improve the services we offer our colleagues, both within NHS 24, across the broader national collaborative team and to the people of Scotland.