NSS Communications Strategy

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September 2021
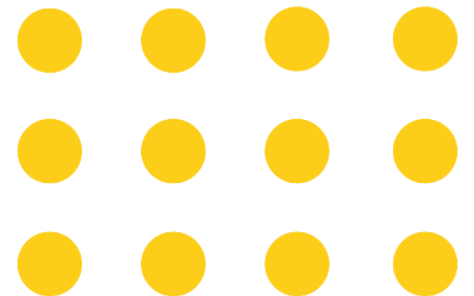
Why do we need a Communications Strategy?
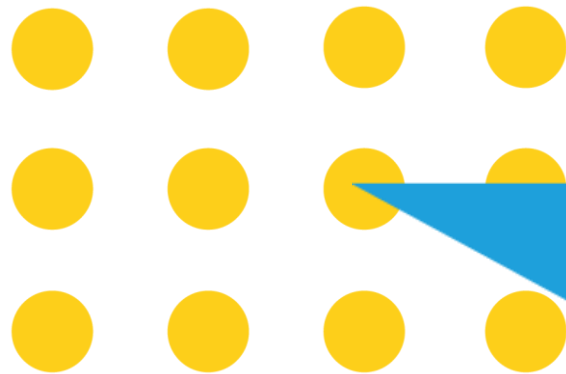
Our current position as a brand

NHS National Services Scotland

Vision: NSS is integral to a world-leading health and care service.

Current Situation

- NSS could be positioned more effectively
- Service brands sometimes seen as separate organisations
- Opportunity to promote One NSS and make the sum greater than the parts

Impact

- NSS as a whole not consistently understood or known about
- NSS not front of mind for stakeholders when they identify new opportunities

Our current ways of communicating

NHS National Services Scotland

We have:

- ✓ Great communications specialists
- ✓ Great stories
- ✓ Great subject matter experts
- ✓ Great connections
- ✓ A huge range of channels we could use

But we need strategically focused, joined up, tactical plans to:

- ➤ speak to our audience groups effectively
- ➤ best utilise our excellent content
- ➤ pull all the moving parts together from services to NSS
- ➤ deliver successful organisational communications

Our current comms service model

- More time and resource is spent on internal communications than external relations

- Our external relations focus tends to be on a small group of audiences, and is inconsistently managed individual to individual

- The majority of our reputation-building activity focuses on our services and "underpin" rather than NSS and "enable"

- All requests for comms support have been given the same weighting, regardless of their strategic significance for NSS

- General public has very low (<1%) awareness of NSS according to previous research

Creative projects completed per SBU

- SPST — 9
- PCF — 6
- SNBTS — 4
- DaS — 1
- HR — 3

Marcomms Deliverables

17
35

0   10   20   30   40
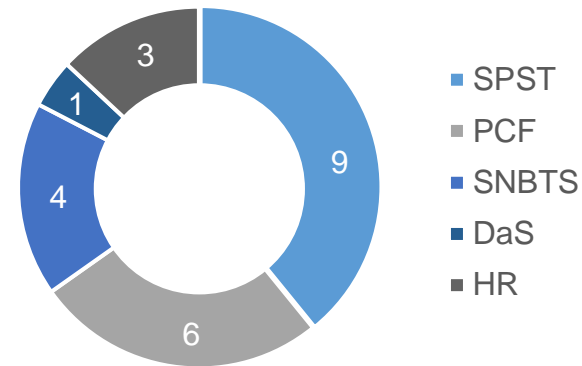
■ Requests delivered   ■ Requests in Aug
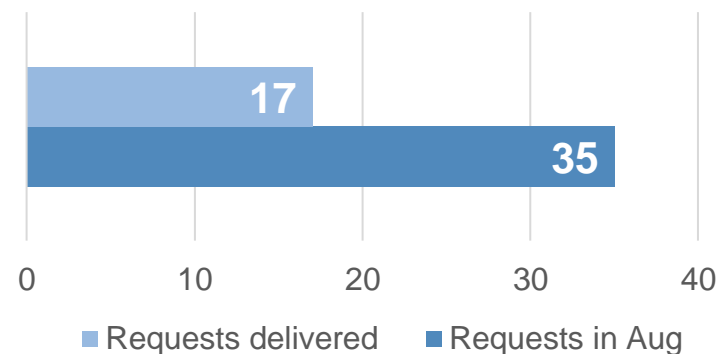
4 out of the 5 Priority 1 requests that came through in Aug were completed

2897 Stay Connected Views in August

Completion rate up 9% from July

What is the strategy going to achieve?
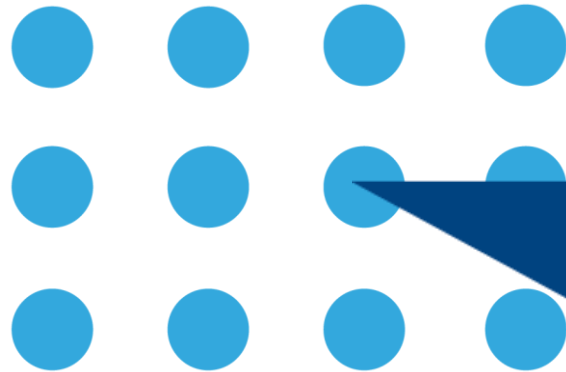
Strategy objectives
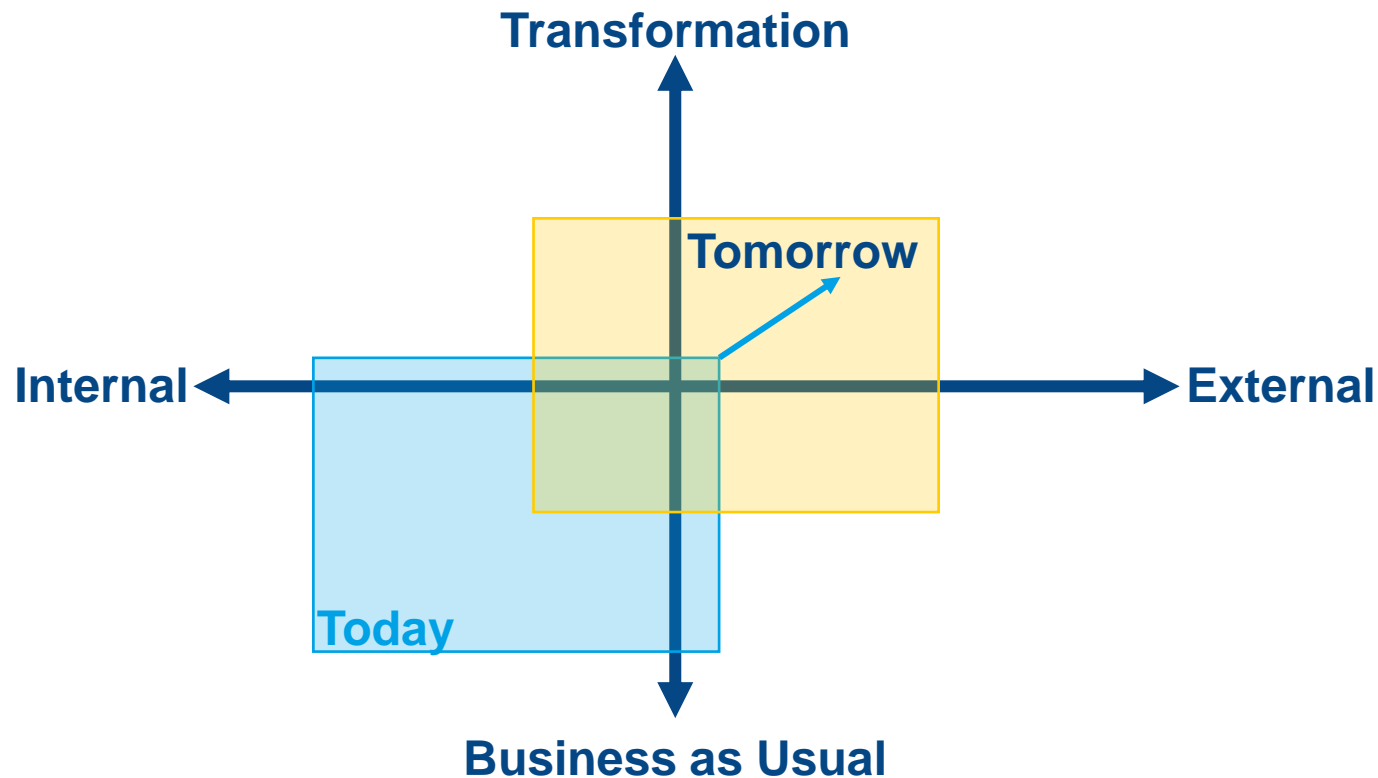
We have a timely opportunity to proactively enhance NSS's reputation by bringing together successes from across the organisation into coherent, targeted organisational messages.

This will help to position NSS more appropriately to take advantage of high-profile national opportunities on the horizon (such as the development of the National Care Service).

Strategy objectives
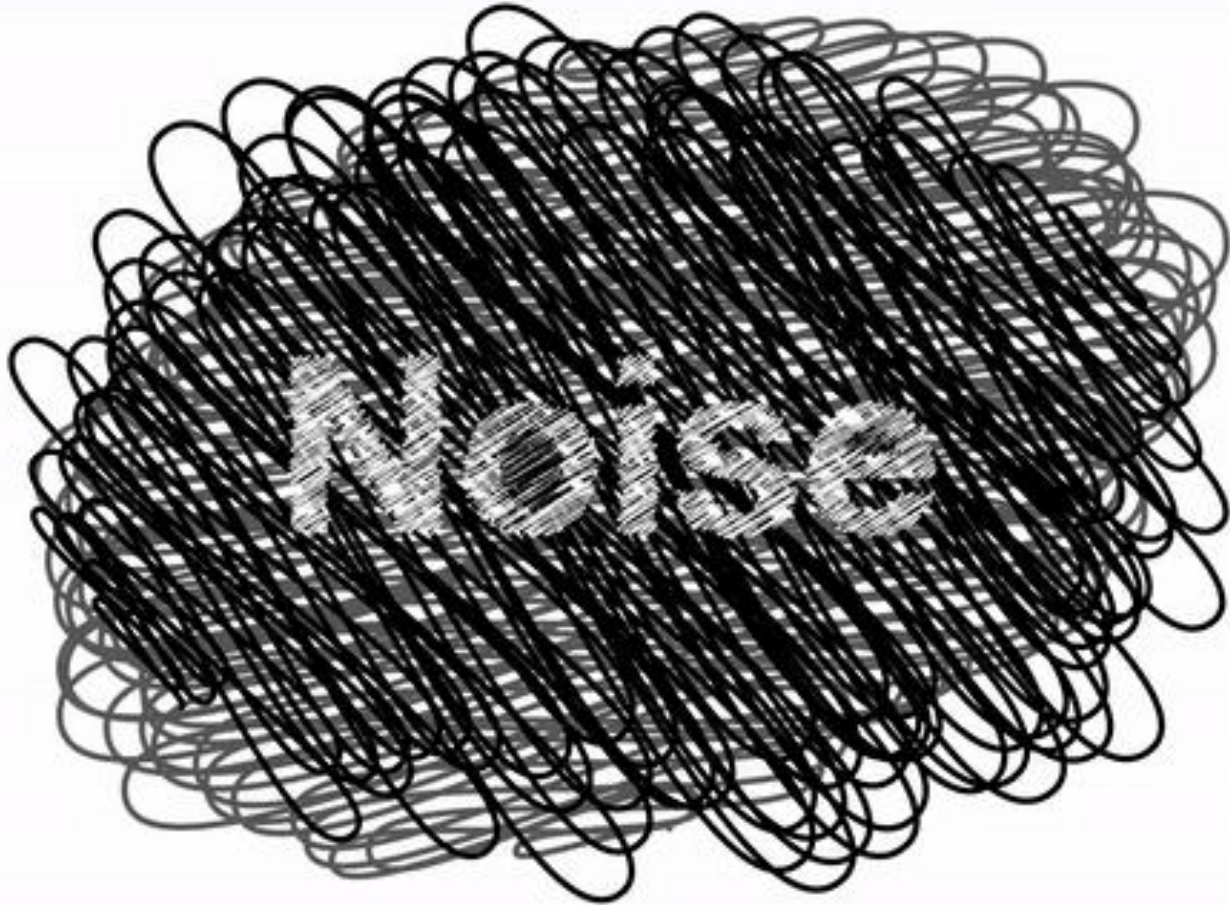
We need to make our communications as an organisation more effective; we need to create less 'noise' and instead create a bigger impact.

There are two key changes which will achieve this:

1. Prioritise our audiences and focus our campaigns on audiences in phases

2. Consolidate multiple stories from across the organisation into a consistent NSS campaign via content marketing approach

What are we actually going to do?

Strategy
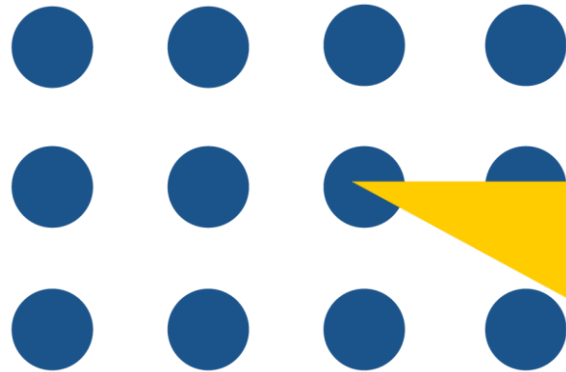
We need to deliver a long-term reputation-enhancing campaign for NSS.

- To do this we will:
  - Take a phased approach to targeting audiences
  - Consolidate multiple stories from across the organisation into a consistent NSS campaign with four 'Connected' campaign themes

- Alongside this we need to:
  - Support the delivery of SBU-level communications by
    - Aligning specialist support to the top three priorities of each SBU as identified in their RAMs
    - Enabling self-service for BAU activity
  - Continuing to drive up engagement on internal channels

Strategic approach 1: Prioritising our audiences

NHS National Services Scotland

We have a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- Scottish Government

- NHSScotland

- Other NHS Boards

- Local councils

- Other public sector organisations (eg Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland)

- Social care organisations

- Third sector

- Trade union/professional organisation colleagues

- Media (health sector/proactive)

- NSS staff

- To understand our starting point, and our goals, by audience, we have undertaken audience analysis (see appendix 1).

Strategic approach 1: Prioritising our audiences

NHS National Services Scotland

**We will need to target our audiences separately to most effectively drive reputational change.
We also need to be sensitive to the ongoing political and economic context when engaging
with these audiences.**

Phase 1

- Social media audience
- NSS ambassadors
- Media

Phase 2

- NSS staff*
- Other public sector orgs
- Scottish Government

Indirect benefit

- NHSS
- Other boards
- Public/patients

* Continue to serve BAU through phase 1
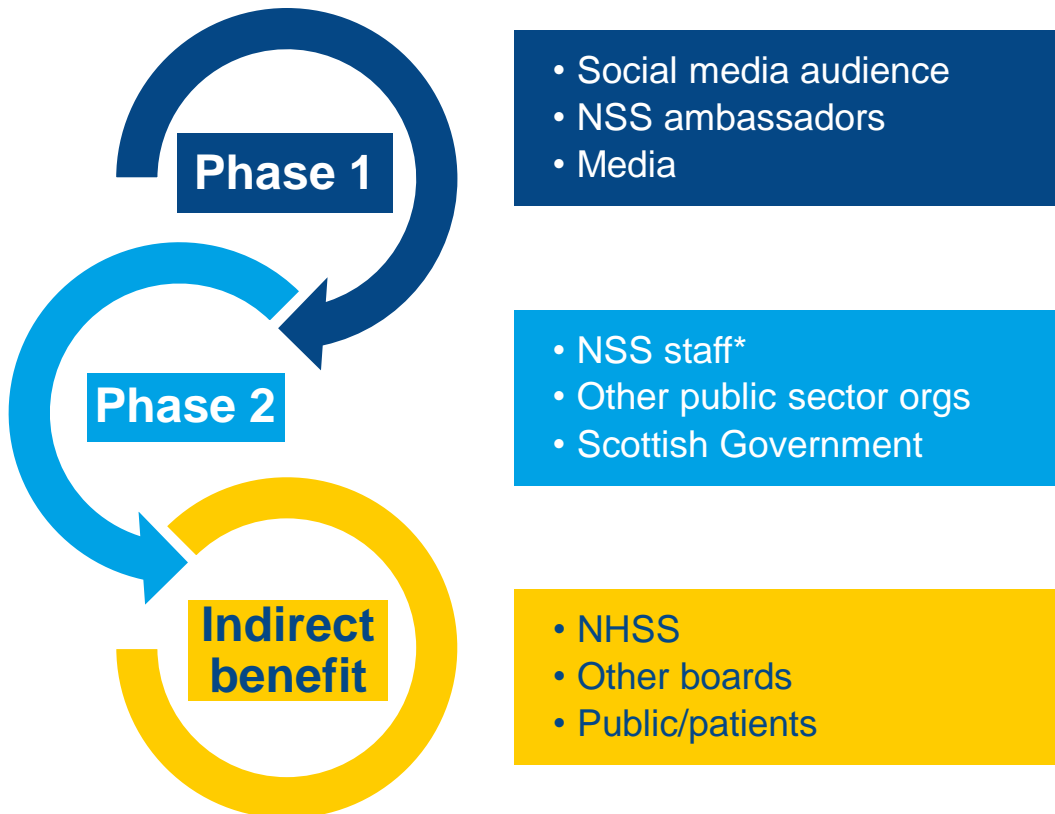
In phase 1 we will utilise our existing social media audiences, internal NSS ambassadors and media contacts.

These audiences have been chosen because a) we have an existing captive audience via these channels and are already engaged with them, b) they each have influence over the other audience groups identified above, and c) we have methods of measuring effectiveness with these groups.

Our social media audience is also varied enough for us to use these micro-communities to analyse how different groups engage, improving our success in future phases.

Strategic approach 2: Consolidating our stories

NHS National Services Scotland

We will bring together NSS success stories under four cross-organisational themes:

- **Connecting our NHS**
- **Connected to our communities**
- **Connected to our partners**
- **Connected to you**

Connecting our NHS.

"I lost my uncle and others who are dear to me to COVID-19. I feel privileged to be part of a wonderful team at Scotland's National Contact Centre, working together to beat the pandemic."

Giridhar Ravi, Contact Tracing Practitioner at NCC and Physiotherapist at Highland Hospice

Connected to you.

"There is genuinely no more important jigsaw piece to the COVID response than NHS National Services Scotland."

Professor Jason Leitch National Clinical Director

Join us at the **NHS Scotland event** and discover how NSS is supporting partners and helping to save lives.

Connecting our NHS.

We will ensure the promotion of the most important stories for NSS by using this approach.

We can create capacity by the efficiencies delivered through content marketing, and we will slot any additional BAU campaigns around these priority themes.

Strategic approach 2: Consolidating our stories – "systems thinking"

We fight fraud in the NHS, ensuring money goes to where it is really needed.
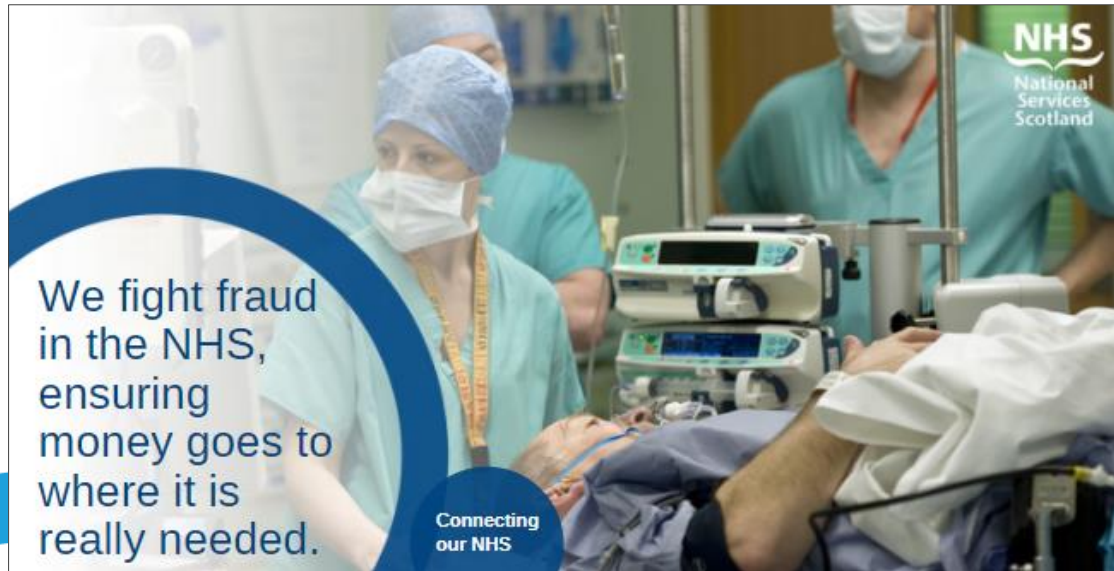
Connecting our NHS

Example Connecting our NHS campaign, focusing on how NSS helps counter fraud in the NHS. Rather than focus just on Counter Fraud Services, we will reference counter-fraud activity delivered by P&CFS, cyber security work by DaS, legal advice and action from CLO, and procurement assurance from PCF.

Strategy impact

Taking these two approaches (prioritising our audiences and consolidating our stories from across NSS) will positively impact NSS's reputation. Specifically this strategy will:

- An amplified voice for NSS
- Consistency in NSS's story
- Increased publicity for service success stories (under the NSS brand)
- Audiences are better educated on the criticality of our role in health and care in Scotland.

What does this mean for service brands?

Service brands can still be used where appropriate based on the guidelines below. Where a service brand is used the NSS brand should also feature.

When there is an existing public-facing brand, for example that developed for donor marketing for SNBTS, it may not be appropriate to utilise the NSS brand as well as the service brand. Careful consideration needs to be given to how the NSS brand can gain support from the existing SNBTS brand, but this should not be delivered by diluting the SNBTS brand.

NSS brand usage	Service brand usage
Aimed at a range of audiences	Aimed at one specific audience
Used on NSS channels	May be referenced on service-specific channel
Signposts to information on range of NSS services	Signposts to a specific service action (e.g. access this service on our website to fulfil a specific goal)

How will Marcomms implement this?
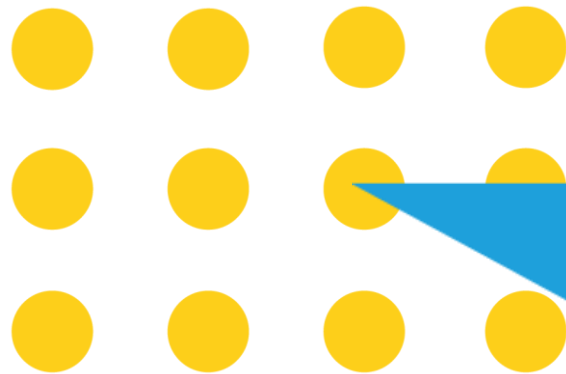
Marcomms Shared Service Model

Target % Resolution

<5%

10%

20%

70+%

Tier 3 - Communications input to achieving strategic aims - SMT involvement

- Strategic focus
- Supporting complex issues resolution

e.g. redeveloping internal communications, high profile/SG programme acrivity

Tier 2 - Collaboration and delivery - specialist advice from Business Partners

- New programmes or projects
- Comms planning and execution

e.g. OASIS planning, stakeholder mapping, creative development

Tier 1 - Advice and Guidance, BAU campaign delivery - triaged team support

- Advice on the best channels to use
- Small campaigns
- Advice on appropriate metrics

e.g. messages for all staff, simple behavior change campaigns

Tier 0 - Staff self-service of transactional requests – Service Now (digital shop window)

- Online self service portal
- Easy accessible knowledge base
- Templates and toolkits

e.g. standard report or poster template, icons library, web content best practice information, brand guidelines

Implementing a shared service model, with a high percentage of BAU requests being handled through self-serve, increases capacity for new organisation-level strategic campaigns.

To deliver this, Marcomms will...

NHS National Services Scotland

Rebalance communications focus to be weighted more on external reputation

Identify other areas of NSS with strong routes into our audiences and share content which can be promoted across organisational channels

Develop robust measurement mechanisms and provide regular reports on performance to EMT and SBU SMTs

Audit existing internal channels and explore new ones to allow increased effectiveness for reduced resource

Fully embed shared service model for communications service delivery

Risk 1: Finding a balance

There is a risk we will not strike the right balance initially in our campaigns.

The impact of this could be that target audiences don't engage with our communications, or perceive them negatively. Alternatively, our external audiences may be positive about these, but our approach is not supported by internal service users. Lastly, comms generated outside the central team may not be aligned with the NSS brand.

To mitigate this risk, we use the brand guidelines, tone of voice and style guides.

Wherever possible, campaigns are tested with pilot audiences prior to launch.

Risk 2: Focus not clear enough

There is a risk the RAM process will not clearly define three top communications priorities to allow these to be the Marketing and Communications team's focus.

The impact of this is that the Marketing and Communications team deals with SBU requests on a first-come, first-served basis, which may mean something important cannot be supported.

To mitigate for this we seek agreement in advance that RAM process identifies communications priorities. We also recommend ongoing engagement at a variety of levels with SBU SMTs, at planning, mid-point and evaluation stages of activity. Business Partners will engage with Directors specifically on a regular basis to ensure priorities continue to be met.
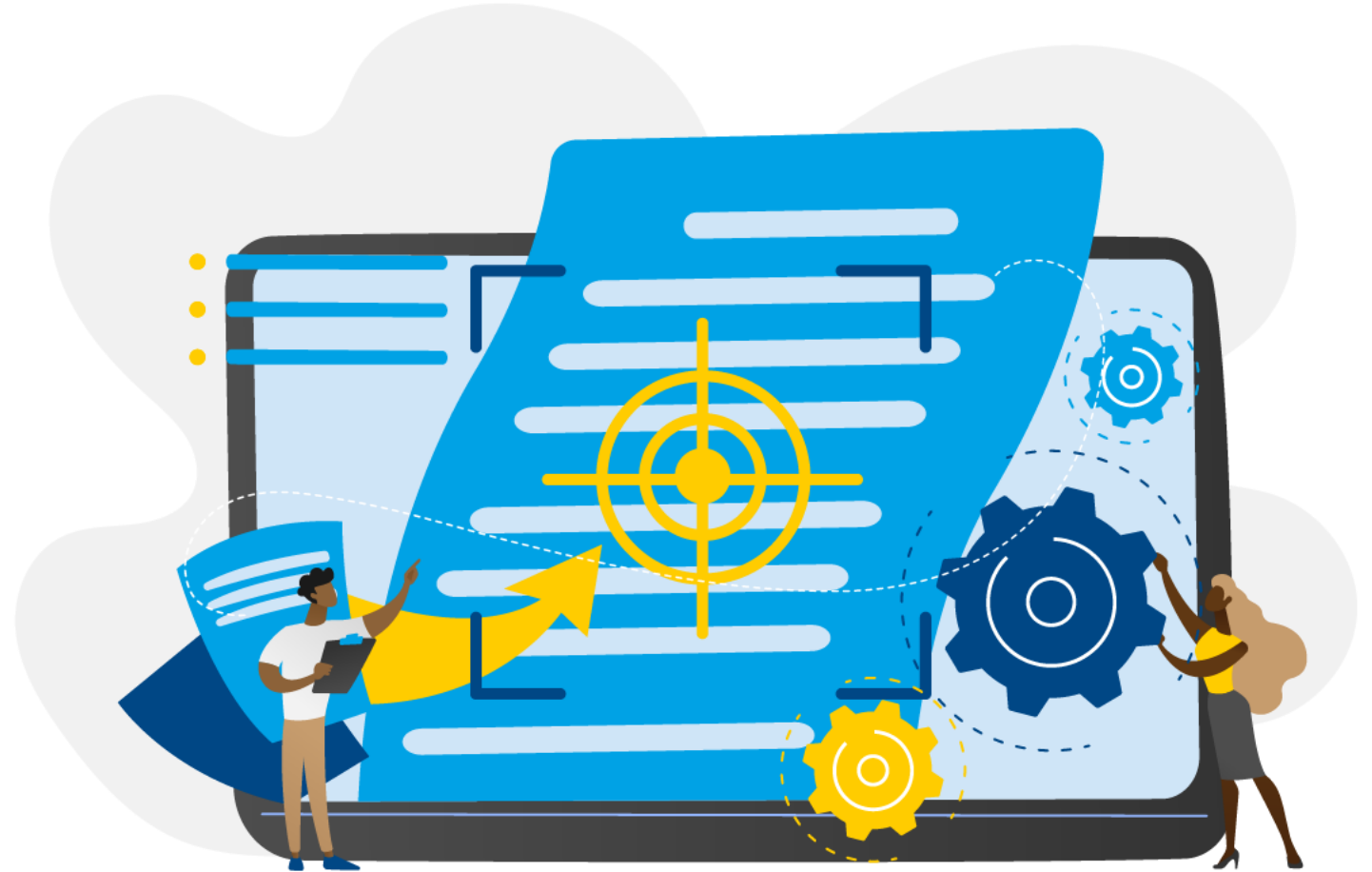
Risk 3: Self-service model not adopted

There is a risk that internal service users will not engage with the self-service model for communications support.

The impact of this might be that requests for BAU activities continue to come to the Marketing Communications team, leading to decreased capacity for actual campaign delivery. Alternatively,

SBUs could create their own materials rather than use tools and templates, which could negatively impact the NSS brand/reputation.

A programme of launch activity and service user engagement will preface the launch of self-service tools to mitigate this.

Risk 4: Marcomms service fails to deliver

There is a risk the redesign of the Marketing and Communications service will not deliver the results anticipated.

The impact of this could be that the objectives of the strategy are not fully realised.

To mitigate this, a project team has been established to recommend and monitor the delivery of actions against the insights generated from the service redesign process. Further, support from our HR and DaS Business Partners will allow for full scoping of options within the redesign to maximise the potential gain.

Risk 5: Strategy is not approved

There is a risk that this strategy is not approved due to concern about the impact of Marketing and Communications prioritising NSS-level outputs over SBU ones.

This would me the continuation of status quo in terms of Marketing Communications service delivery, and that NSS does not take full advantage of the opportunity to position itself effectively.

This risk cannot be fully mitigated if the strategy is not approved. However, audience analysis will be undertaken at fixed points to identify whether any organic change in reputation has resulted.

Enhanced reporting of existing activity will showcase what communications outputs are achieving.

How will we know the strategy is working?
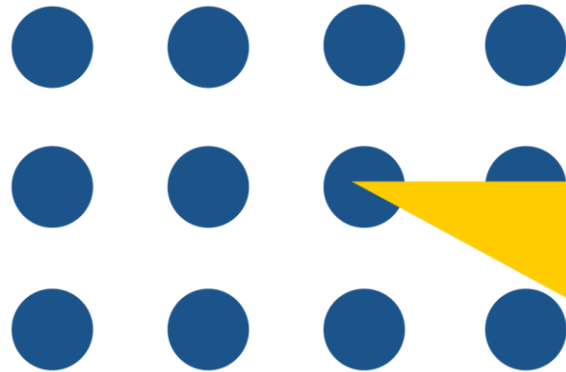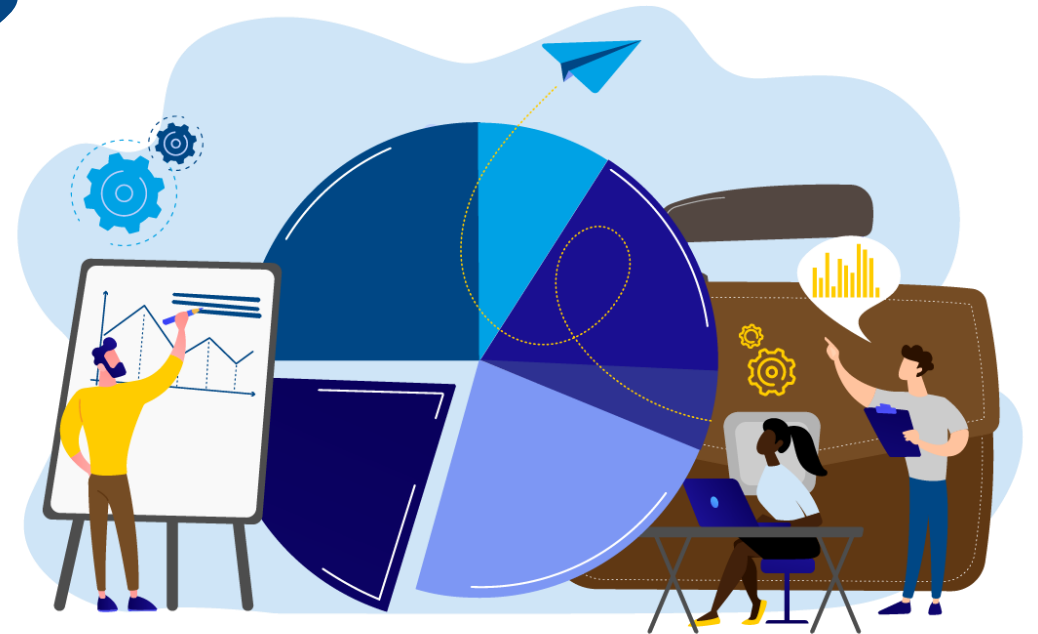
Success measures - what's changed?

Audience	Think – baseline vs now	Feel – baseline vs now	Do – baseline vs now
Scottish Government			
NHSScotland			
Local authorities			
Other public sector organisations			
Social care organisations			
Third sector			
Healthcare media			
General Scottish media			
NSS staff			
Trade union / professional organisations			

In order to ensure the tactics employed are delivering against objectives, we will rerun our 'think/feel/do' analysis with our target audiences at six months, one year and two year time points following the strategy launch.

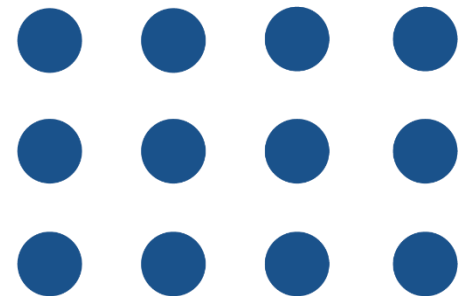Please see Appendix 1 for details of the baseline audience analysis.

Success measures - what's changed?

Measure	Baseline	Industry benchmarks	Improvement goal
Media engagement • Editorial mentions • Sentiment (net tonality score) • Reach			
Social media • Followers • Video views • Impressions • Engagements			
NSS website • Unique visits • Time on site • Bounce rate			
Internal emails • Frequency/weekly number • Open rate • Click through rate			
Podcast downloads			

As well as evaluating how the communications strategy has impacted our reputation with our audiences, we will also regularly monitor the performance of our tactics, and use the results to continuously improve.

Appendix 1: Audience Analysis

Audience analysis - think / feel / do

NHS National Services Scotland

Audience	Access route	Current awareness level (have you heard of NSS?)	Current perception/ sentiment (what does NSS do? What impact does it have?)	What perception do we want them to have about us as a result of this strategy?	What action do we want them to take as a result of this strategy?
Scottish Government	• Healthcare Policy Team • Economic Policy Team • Comms Team	MSPs have generally heard of NSS	MSPs are not clear on breadth of services or how it impacts their constituents	Clear about the breadth and depth of services, understanding of criticality of services for other boards and sector	Share success stories, advocate for new opportunities for NSS
NHSScotland	• Comms Team • Board Heads of Communications (through Strat Comms group)	Senior staff/execs teams usually have good level of awareness but this does not cascade through all staff	Those who are aware have a mixed level of understanding about the breadth of services or NSS USPs	Stronger level of awareness across all levels of the staffing body. More consistent detailed understanding of service portfolio at senior management level and above	Advocate for and identify new opportunities for NSS at a senior level. Respond positively to questions on awareness at other levels
Local authorities	• Heads of Comms • COSLA	Aware of the name but the name sits in the midst of a whole lot of NHS organisations – very mixed awareness across staff levels	Not really aware of what NSS actually does beyond perhaps knowing NSS has a role in procurement	Wider awareness of NSS as a provider of a range of services	Proactively consider NSS as a partner provider when identifying opportunities

Audience analysis - think / feel / do

| Audience	Access route	Current awareness level (have you heard of NSS?)	Current perception/ sentiment (what does NSS do? What impact does it have?)	What perception do we want them to have about us as a result of this strategy?	What action do we want them to take as a result of this strategy?
Other public sector organisations	• Police Scotland • Scottish Fire and Rescue Service • Scottish Prisons Service	All organisations aware and engaged with NSS at strategic and operational levels. NSS provides support to Police Care and Prisons Care Networks.	NSS seen as a collaboration partner bringing subject matter expertise and scale. NSS Strategy is aligned with other organisation's strategies specific to improving health outcomes.	NSS to be seen as a 'Collaboration Partner of Choice' Also a key co-ordinator, facilitator and delivery of services where there are opportunities for 'Once for Scotland' approaches.	To understand the totality of NSS skills, expertise and capabilities and advocate joint working initiatives which delivers on National Health and Social Care outcomes.
Social care organisations	• Scottish Care • Coalition of Care and support Providers in Scotland.	All organisations aware and engaged with NSS at strategic level.	NSS seen as a strong link into the Health domain and alignment with social care organisations priorities where NSS services are integral to supporting their local, regional and national objectives.	NSS to be seen as a 'Collaboration Partner of Choice' where there are mutual opportunities for 'Once for Scotland' approaches.	To understand the totality of NSS skills, expertise and capabilities and advocate joint working initiatives which delivers on National Health and Social Care outcomes.

Audience analysis - think / feel / do

NHS National Services Scotland

Audience	Access route	Current awareness level (have you heard of NSS?)	Current perception/ sentiment (what does NSS do? What impact does it have?)	What perception do we want them to have about us as a result of this strategy?	What action do we want them to take as a result of this strategy?
Third sector	• The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland • The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations • Voluntary Health Scotland	All organisations aware and engaged with NSS at strategic level.	NSS seen as a strong link into the Health and Social Care domain and alignment with Third Sector organisation's priorities where NSS services are integral to supporting their local, regional and national objectives.	NSS to be seen as a 'Collaboration Partner of Choice' where there are mutual opportunities for 'Once for Scotland' approaches.	To understand the totality of NSS skills, expertise and capabilities and advocate joint working initiatives which delivers on Third Sector and wider Health and Social Care outcomes.
NSS staff	Direct	Aware but may affiliate more with an SBU than a service or NSS		Understanding of NSS at organisational level, aware of criticality of all services to health sector	Be able to talk in detail about the range of services NSS provides and how these interact
Trade union / professional organisations	Via Ian Cant and Directors Forum	Aware, but focused on a couple of service areas	Tend to be aware of the services they have interacted with, eg CLO, or those with more public awareness eg PCF and SNBTS	NSS to be seen as a 'Collaboration Partner of Choice' where there are mutual opportunities for 'Once for Scotland' approaches.	To understand the totality of NSS skills, expertise and capabilities and advocate joint working initiatives across Boards

Audience analysis - think / feel / do

Audience	Access route	Current awareness level (have you heard of NSS?)	Current perception/ sentiment (what does NSS do? What impact does it have?)	What perception do we want them to have about us as a result of this strategy?	What action do we want them to take as a result of this strategy?
Healthcare media	Direct	Aware of NSS as part of NHS in Scotland.	Neutral or positive perception, but limited understanding of our services beyond supply of equipment. Curious to learn more.	Understanding of NSS at organisational level, deeper awareness of criticality of all services to health sector	Engage proactively with NSS, follow us on social, attend virtual events, provide platform for NSS thought leadership activity
General Scottish media	Direct	Some awareness	Generally neutral perception but capable of strong negatives on specific issues	Understanding of the range of services NSS provides, with more proactive appreciation of role in health and social care	Engage proactively directly with NSS, attend set-piece media opportunities, follow our activity on social media

Appendix 2: Marketing and Communications Service Analysis and Plans

Our current position as a brand
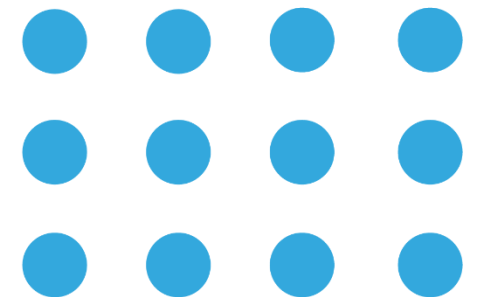
NHS National Services Scotland

Vision: To be an integral, trusted and strategic partner within NSS which demonstrably supports transformation and delivers communications and design excellence.

Gap Analysis

- Increasing shared skills at basic level

- Incoming requests prioritised at appropriate senior level

- Capability, capacity, productivity

- Clear shared understanding of services

- Eye on the horizon for opportunities

Current Situation

- Excellent core skills/expertise

- Increasing demand

- Inconsistent understanding and application of our services

- Service inefficiencies/duplication of effort

- Just getting through

Marcomms service plan

NHS National Services Scotland

3 Year Ambition - As trusted advisors we are the go-to source for both planning and implementation of strategically-valuable projects, and provides a proactive service to colleagues which is recognised and appreciated

Gain trust and advocates

State by end Q2 2022/23:
- Deliver against our commitments 95% of the time (measured by achievement of deadlines)
- More sophisticated reporting available
- Demonstrate confidence through end of project satisfaction surveys (measured against agreed objectives)
- Internal communications strategy complete

Visible and transparent service model

State by end Q4 2021/22:
- Service Now live for incoming requests
- Service Now live for project/capacity management with project sizing in place
- Full suite of self-service tools launched and in use
- Embed the Marcomms Service Promise

Own house in order

State by end Q2 2021/22:
- Established performance metrics and basic reporting capability
- Understand our own business so that we can appropriately commit and deliver on those commitments
- Pitch for investment in new tools and technology to step up digital abilities and self-service opportunities
- External relations strategy complete
- OASIS and project plans used as standard
- Align project communications with core marcomms activity to ensure these best support NSS
- Skills audit aligns expectations with Government Communications Service competency framework

The Marcomms Service Promise

The redesigned Marketing Communications service will be:

EFFECTIVE

EFFICIENT

ACCOUNTABLE

ACCESSIBLE

The Marcomms Service Promise

NHS National Services Scotland

EFFECTIVE

- Targeted, relevant content
- Delivered via measurable means
- Evidence-driven: we provide research for all campaign plans and test large campaign content prior to launch

EFFICIENT

- Content marketing approach
- Planned deliverables over a one year period
- Every piece of work has a project plan agreed by the client
- Fully embedded revised processes to minimise hand offs between staff
- Automate processes whenever possible
- Self-service as a primary route for SBU requests, freeing up capacity for engagement at a strategic level with SMTs

The Marcomms Service Promise

NHS National Services Scotland

ACCOUNTABLE

- Reported on monthly for transparency and visibility to our stakeholders
- Annual planning cycle
- Appropriate response times which are displayed for customers to see
- Clearly defined service catalogue and shared expectations of the role of the team and its members

ACCESSIBLE

- Best practice / templates / guidance available online
- Content developed in line with Plain English, accessibility and equality guidelines with the end user in mind

Draft Marcomms service success measures

Measure	Benchmark	Improvement
Number of service requests • Received • Accepted • Delivered		
Customer satisfaction		
Staff satisfaction/survey		
Sickness absence		
Staff turnover		
Number of corrections relating to brand guidelines		
Self-service engagement/take up		
Templates downloaded		