Communication indicators

1. Introduction

The guidance below starts by defining the scope of the communications function and goes on to identify the requirement of a modern, value for money communications function that the indicators are aiming to help organisations achieve.

The indicators are intended to be sufficiently generic to apply across the public sector; organisations should identify those parts of the scope which apply to them i.e. whether they have both operational and administration budgets, and programme budgets. For indicators 1, 2 and 3 organisations may not have both a central and embedded (see definition) communication function and will therefore only provide figures for the central function.

2. Scope

The criteria and activities listed below are defined as within the scope of communication.

The list should be used as a checklist when compiling the data to ensure all relevant staff and expenditure are captured. More detailed definitions of the criteria and activity for reporting costs are provided following the scope. The definitions are necessarily broad in order that all organisations can map their activity to the definitions.

- Total salary overhead
- Travel and expenses
- Training, learning and development
- HR and recruitment
- Supplies and miscellaneous
- Contractors and temporary staff
- Consultants
- Press office
- Public affairs
- Internal communication
- Corporate communication
- Strategic consultancy
- Branding
- Research and Evaluation
- PR campaigns
- Events/conferences/exhibitions
- Publications and printing
- Advertising media
- Advertising production
- Digital communication
- Direct and relationship marketing

- Sponsorship and partnership marketing
- Storage and fulfilment

Stakeholder engagement functions
Stakeholder engagement functions vary between organisations. Some stakeholder engagement functions sit within the central communication function, some sit within policy, and much embedded communication activity is stakeholder-related. Stakeholder-facing expenditure should be included when it is either undertaken by the central communication function and is part of a communication strategy or activity, or when it is undertaken by embedded communicators and is part of a communication strategy or communication activity. Stakeholder work that is not part of a communication strategy or activity and informs policy or organisational strategy, or is part of the daily business of the organisation, should be excluded (e.g. letter writing, policy workshops).

Shared resource
Organisations who contribute resource to cross-government units with shared ownership should include details of the resource their organisation provides to the pool as part of their data return.

The following activities are defined as within the scope of the communications function. A description is included detailing what is included within each activity or input.

Funding source: operational and administration budgets

Activity or input	Description
Total salary overhead	The total salary overhead should include benefits, pensions, and NI and cover the costs of providing the resource to deliver the outputs and activity outlined.
Travel and expenses	Total annual spend for communication staff attending meetings, events and generally delivering the service, when funded from a communication budget rather than a corporate budget.

Training, learning and development	Total annual budget for staff training and development. This should include:
	
	 a) Training and development for individuals – bespoke or in house
	
	      i. conferences, seminars, workshops
	
	      ii. executive coaching/mentoring
	
	 b) Training and development for teams
	
	      i. conferences, seminars, workshops
	
	 c) Contribution to departmental training courses
	
	 It excludes these costs when they are funded by a

	corporate HR or other budget.
	Please provide breakdown figures for these categories if possible.
HR and recruitment	This covers all HR and recruitment costs for the directorate, including:
	a) Advertising – all media
	b) Introduction fees - agencies / headhunters
	It excludes these costs when they are funded by a corporate HR budget.
	Please provide breakdown figures for these categories if possible.
Supplies and miscellaneous	Stationery, external facilities hire for meetings etc, when funded from a communication budget rather than a corporate budget.
Contractors and temporary staff	The total overhead which may include benefits, pensions and NI as well as salary. for fixed-term and temporary communicators
Consultants	The total overhead which may include benefits, pensions and NI as well as salary.
Press office	This covers all press office supplier costs including press cuttings, media evaluation, Newspaper Licensing Association fees, News Distribution Service etc.
	It excludes costs for running PR campaigns which should be accounted for under PR campaigns.
Public affairs	This covers all public affairs activity including the bought in services of external agencies. This area of activity is most relevant to NDPBs and agencies.
Internal communication	This covers internal communication within the organisation, including managing intranets and communicating with front-line/operational staff delivering the services of the organisation. Costs should include all activity and outputs that cover communications with staff such as online/offline publications and intranet maintenance, all staff events, employee engagement activity.
Corporate communication	This covers corporate costs such as maintenance of the organisations external corporate website and corporate branding.
Communications	Infrastructure supporting communications activity and

infrastructure	paid for by the central communications directorate or as part of communication expenditure by other parts of the organisation. May include photo libraries, graphic design.

The following activities are outside our definition for this function:

- PQs, correspondence and FOIs where the central communication function is providing this service for other parts of the organisation
- Speech writing carried out by private office and policy teams
- Customer contact services where they are operated by the central communication function on behalf of the organisation e.g. call centres, online services

Funding source: programme budgets

The following activities are defined as within the scope of the communications function.

Activity or output	Description
Communication strategy	Bought in services from marketing consultancy agencies on overarching communication strategy. Services can include communication strategy development or strategic consultancy.
Branding	Bought in services from brand consultancy or design agencies to inform programme or campaign branding. Services can include brand consultancy, brand management, corporate identity, brand architecture and guidelines. [Excludes corporate branding which is included under corporate communication.]
Research and evaluation	Market research to inform the development of communication activity and evaluation. Areas to include are: • Strategic development research (i.e. to inform the development of a communication strategy) • Customer insight research • Campaign development research (i.e. creative research to inform a new campaign) • Evaluation research including the organisation's 'brand health' checks (i.e. campaign benchmark tracking research or research to measure customer brands such as the NHS or Job CentrePlus). Evaluation costs

	would include measuring the outputs and outcomes of all the activities in this grid which are not included in the aforementioned criteria • Online/offline usability testing [Exclusions may include customer or market segmentation analysis which falls under policy research rather than communication research, econometric modelling or customer insight which covers service transformation rather than communication. Also exclude corporate rather than campaign research, and include this under corporate communication].
PR campaigns	This covers bought in services to create proactively generated media coverage and should include external PR consultancies, photography and creative services such as writing.
Events/ conferences/ exhibitions	All event costs should be included when the purpose of the event is communication programme. This could include corporate stakeholder events, corporate events at which the department has a presence and business education, advice and outreach and stakeholder events that form part of a communication programme. Costs may include event co-ordination, production and materials and bought in services from an event company or supplier. [Exclusions apply to stakeholder or corporate events which are funded by other departments such as policy, or business units which are not strictly communication related because they primarily inform policy or organisational strategy rather than communication (for example deliberative events, policy consultations etc].
Publications and printing	Strategy, content, design, production and printing for publications that form part of a communications programme, including leaflets, brochures and reports (online and offline). Costs could also include customer information and forms.
Advertising media	Total spend covering broadcast, print, outdoor and online display/search paid-for media. Includes recruitment campaigns (e.g. Armed Forces) but excludes the organisation's wider classified recruitment advertising for non communication roles.

Advertising media planning	Media planning services for broadcast, print, outdoor and online display/search paid-for media.
Advertising production	All production costs related to producing advertising materials such as TV and radio commercials, print, outdoor and online. Production costs should include transport and posting costs for outdoor and posters if they are not included in advertising media and where appropriate agency commission or fees
Digital communication	Communication strategy and activity across digital channels including departmental and corporate websites, social media and mobile. Excludes online advertising but includes search engine optimisation. Where appropriate costs should include agency commission or fees.
Direct and relationship marketing	Communicating and informing directly with citizens, customers, employers and businesses. Costs to include design, production, mailing and agency services and fees. Exclusions include customer contact centres if operated by [communication (e.g. call centres)].
Sponsorship and partnership marketing	Marketing activity in partnership with other organisations or through sponsorship of third party activity. Costs should include agency services and fees, sponsorship and promotional marketing fees (i.e. celebrity endorsement) and production.
Storage and fulfilment	This covers warehousing, storage and distribution costs of communication materials.

The following activities are outside the scope of the communications function.

- Customer or market segmentation analysis which falls under policy research rather than communication research.

- Econometric modelling or customer insight which covers service transformation rather than communication.
- Stakeholder or corporate events which are funded by other departments such as policy, service or delivery which are not strictly communication related (for example deliberative events, policy consultations etc).

Central communication function

The central communication function is the central team of communicators within an organisation with a direct reporting line into the most senior communications official in the organisation.

Communications staff and Communicators

"Communications staff" are people who work in a central communication function in communication and support roles, communication staff embedded in policy teams, and staff who support the work of communication staff embedded in policy teams. They spend 50% or more of their time working on communication activity or supporting people who work on communication activity.

"Communicators" are people who carry out communications roles in the central communication function or policy teams. Support staff are not communicators, because they are not carrying out communication activity directly.
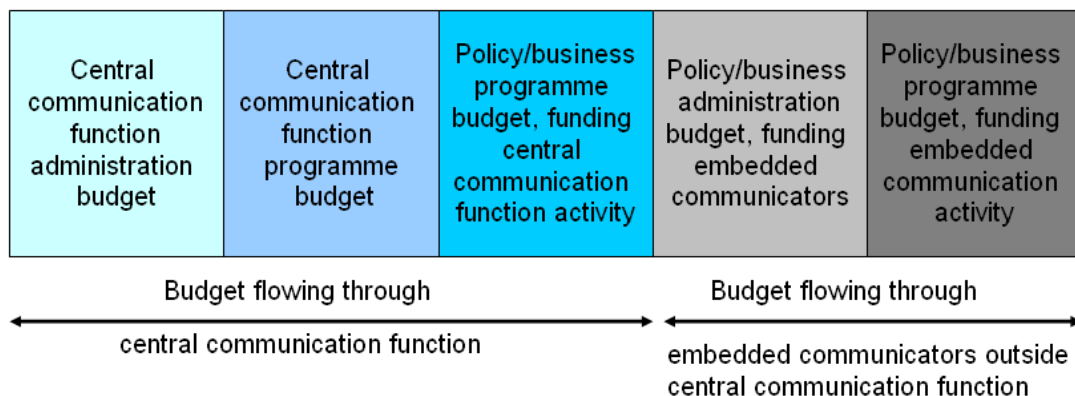
Embedded communicators

Embedded communicators are people who do communication activities (as defined by the scope of the benchmarking exercise) for 50% or more of their time, but do not sit within a central communication function. In central government, they may be part of a policy team.

Sources of funding
Funding for communications activities may be provided by communication, policy and business budgets. Resource for the activities may be provided by staff in the central communication function and by embedded communicators in other parts of the organisation. Some activities may be outsourced and full costs of this are to be included.

There are therefore 5 sources of funding for communication:

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3. Summary list of indicators

Indicator 1:	**Communication costs as a percentage of organisational running costs** a) Total cost of communications as a percentage of organisational running cost b) Cost of the central communication function as a percentage of organisational running cost c) Cost of embedded communication as a percentage of organisational running cost
Indicator 2:	**Communication staff as a percentage of total staff** a) Communication staff as a percentage of the total organisational staff b) Central communication function staff as a percentage of the total organisational staff c) Embedded communication staff as a percentage of the total organisational staff
Indicator 3:	**Professional communication staff as a percentage of communication staff** a) Professional communicators as a percentage of all communicators b) Professional communicators within the central communication function as a percentage of all communicators in the central communication function c) Professional embedded communicators as a percentage of total embedded communications staff

Indicator 4:	**Internal client and stakeholder satisfaction index - a composite indicator compiled from the responses to a set of statements by clients and stakeholders.** 1. The communication function delivers good quality, professional advice to develop communications activity in support of my business objectives. 2. The service I receive from the communication function meets my expectations. 3. The people I work with in communications explain or quantify the nature of the contribution that communications activity will make to the delivery of my business objectives 4. The people I work with in communications offer the expert skills that I expect. 5. The people I work with in communications actively look for efficient ways of achieving my objectives (as opposed to simply spending whatever funds are allocated). This survey is designed to look at the effectiveness of the communications function by assessing the perceptions of its clients and stakeholders. Over time, organisations should seek to increase the proportion of clients and stakeholders agreeing with the statements. For each statement clients and stakeholders should provide their perception using the following scoring system. 1 – Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree , 3 – Neither, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly agree
Indicator 5:	**Management practice indicator – the number of practices that have been adopted by the central communication function out of a possible total of 10** 1. Communication strategy and activity is explicitly linked to organisational business objectives (in central government, Public Service Agreements and Departmental Strategic Objectives) 2. Communication activity, for the most part, is underpinned by a recorded communications strategy. 3. Communication strategy and annual plan are signed off by the relevant board or equivalent governance group. 4. Communication strategy, plan and activity are based on customer/audience understanding and insight where

	appropriate
	5. External communication activity is integrated across channels and includes an appropriate mix of marketing, media, digital and stakeholder activity.
	6. Communication outputs and outcomes are evaluated through appropriate methods and the findings used to inform future activity.
	7. The most senior officer in the organisation with a dedicated communication role is a member of or has a direct report to the board or equivalent management group.
	8. Communicators regularly advise policy and business delivery colleagues in the development of strategy.
	9. The organisation offers continuing professional development for all our communication staff and all members of staff undertook this activity over the last year.
	10. The organisation has driven down the cost of acquiring procured communication products and services this year (i.e. procured services included in Indicator 1: Costs), based on a like-for-like comparison with the previous year.

4. Detailed definitions for indicators

Reference number	Indicator 1
Description	**Communication costs as a percentage of organisational running costs** a) Total cost of communications as a percentage of organisational running cost b) Cost of central communication function as a percentage of organisational running cost c) Cost of embedded communication as a percentage of organisational running cost
Rationale and expected impact on behaviour	The level of investment in communication activity should be a reflection of the communication challenge facing the organisation, not the size of the organisation. This is a standard and commonly used indicator that seeks to establish whether the costs of running the communications function is in proportion to the resources that are being managed. Measurement of the total cost of the communications function as a percentage of overall spend allows management to monitor closely the finance cost of their organisation and could be used to track trends across any given time-frame. Organisations may wish to benchmark themselves against organisations facing similar communication challenges and, if they are spending more than their peers, consider whether there is scope for efficiency savings taking their performance for other indicators into account. Organisations should consider how much expenditure on communications is running through the central communication function versus embedded communications. It may, for example, be that efficiencies can be driven by centralising expenditure.
Definition	The indicator should be based on figures for the most recent financial year. Part (a) is the sum of parts (b) and (c). Organisations that do not have embedded communications will leave part (c) blank. The breakdown of costs covers two broad areas – cost of having communication within the department to deliver the service (defined as operational and administration costs) and the overall costs of delivering communication activity (defined as programme costs). Costs should include communication activity for which

funding has come from outside the central communication function.

To determine the cost the communications function for (a), (b) and (c) as a percentage of organisational running costs (expenditure):

Refer to the cost categories in the scope and include the following:

- Employee costs including employers NI, pension and recruitment costs.

- IT costs i.e directly managed costs for the communications function.

- Accommodation costs.

- Outsourcing costs.

- Other costs (for example supplies and consumables)

For embedded communications staff in the organisation, include the total cost of those staff who spend more than 50 per cent of their time on communications activities.

Organisational running costs (expenditure) are the costs for delivering the primary responsibilities / remit of the organisation. Pension cost adjustments as required under FRS 17 should be excluded from organisational running costs – in-year service costs should be included.

It should also exclude transfer payments, capital programme spend, and programme spend grants, precepts and other funds which simply flow through to another body, for example grants made to voluntary organisations.

It should include payments made to any contractors for services which are within the main remit of the organisation (for example a refuse contract in a local authority.

Example A:

Total Cost of Communications = £865,000

Running costs (expenditure) = £200 million

£865,000/£200 million x 100 = 0.43 per cent

The same format applies for parts (b) and (c).

Reference number	Indicator 2

Description	**Communication staff as a percentage of total staff**
	
	   a) Communication staff as a percentage of the total organisational staff
	   b) Central communication function staff as a percentage of the total organisational staff
	   c) Embedded communication staff as a percentage of the total organisational staff

Rationale and expected impact on behaviour	Staff numbers normally reflect the flow and volume of work within the communication function such as the number and scale of campaigns over a particular financial year. This indicator is about the cost-effectiveness of the communications function which complements the previous indicator on total cost. Comparisons between organisations and their communications should be treated with caution but will be useful when compared and benchmarked with their peers, organisations should investigate the reasons for any significant differences.

Definition	The indicator should be based on figures for the most recent financial year.
	
	Part (a) is the sum of parts (b) and (c). Organisations that do not have embedded communications will leave part (c) blank.
	
	Total communication staff includes all communication posts, whether in the central communication function or embedded in the organisation. It excludes support staff such as administrators and business managers.
	
	Communication posts are defined as those where staff spend more than 50% of their time on the activity and outputs defined in the scope for this benchmarking exercise.
	
	The disciplines are defined as:
	
	1. Internal communications
	Staff whose roles primarily involve:
	   • Employee engagement
	   • Change management
	   • Internal channel management

2. Digital/social media

Staff whose roles primarily involve:

- Using electronic media to target audiences, both internal and external to the organisation
- Key channels include the internet and the intranet for an organisation and social media

3. Strategic communications

Staff whose roles primarily involve:

- Strategic communications advice, working alongside policy and communications teams
- Stakeholder engagement
- Customer insight

4. Corporate communications

Staff whose roles primarily involve:

- Brand management
- Corporate reputation management
- Corporate publications (e.g. annual reports)
- It may also involve digital communications, stakeholder engagement and internal communications

5. Marketing

Staff whose roles primarily involve:

- Campaign management (e.g. agency management, campaign evaluation, events)
- Sponsorship and partnership marketing
- Customer insight
- Research and evaluation
- Stakeholder engagement
- Publications, including print procurement, design and editorial/copywriting of printed, customer-facing communication materials

6. Media/press

Staff whose roles primarily involve:

- Media handling
- Media-focused ministerial events/visits
- Media planning (e.g. managing a grid)
- Public relations
- Speechwriting
- Public affairs (in arms-length bodies)

7. Senior management

Senior managers whose role is not tied to a discipline. Likely to be Directors, Directors General or Heads of Communication. (Senior management staff whose role is tied to a discipline, for example a Head of Marketing) should be reported under that

| | grouping at the appropriate grade.)

8. Support staff
Support staff are included when they spend over 50% of their time supporting the work of communicators. They may sit within the central communication function or support embedded communicators within a policy directorate.

Support staff may be administrators or staff in a broader business support function. For example, business manager, personal assistant to a senior manager, team support officer, diary secretary. |

Reference number	Indicator 3
Description	**Professional communication staff as a percentage of communication staff:** a) Professional communication staff as a percentage of total communication staff b) Professional communication staff within the central communication function as a percentage of total central communication function staff c) Professional embedded communication staff as a percentage of total embedded communication staff
Rationale and expected impact on behaviour	The indicator should be based on figures for the most recent financial year. Part (a) is the sum of parts (b) and (c). Organisations that do not have embedded communications will leave part (c) blank. This indicator shows the proportion of communicators that can be deemed professional. Communicators refer to communication staff performing a communications role. It excludes support staff because they are not performing communications roles. Communicators do not require a qualification to operate, however it would be expected that people undertaking communications activity for over 50% of their time have been assessed against communications competencies during recruitment, or hold a professional qualification. Organisations who have a large proportion of communicators who cannot be termed professional under these definitions may wish to consider how they can increase the professionalism of their communication staff, through learning and development and recruitment
Definition	This indicator refers to the people who occupied communication posts during the year 2009/10. It does not refer to the number of posts as in Indicator 2: Staff Numbers, which is expressed in FTEs. As such numbers of professional communicators should be reported as whole numbers. The total number of communicators reported under this indicator may differ slightly from the number of posts reported in Indicator 2, for example where 2 people are sharing one post as a job share,

or where posts are empty.

Communicators are defined as staff who spend more than 50% of their time on the activity and outputs defined in the scope for this benchmarking exercise.

Support staff are excluded because they are not performing communication roles, and as such their professionalism cannot be assessed against communication competencies. They are excluded from the group whose professionalism as communicators should be assessed, and the number of total communicators from which the percentage of professional staff should be calculated.

Professional communicators are defined as those who either:

a) Were recruited against professional communication competencies.

Professional communication competencies are defined as Government Communication Network Core Skills for Communicators or organisational equivalents. General competencies such as Professional Skills for Government are not professional communication competencies, even if they include a communication element.

Or:

b) Hold a professional communication qualification.

Professional communication qualifications are defined as qualifications offered by communication industry bodies or equivalents at all levels. Industry bodies include the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, the Chartered Institute of Marketing and equivalent bodies for other communication disciplines. Professional qualifications may also have been gained at undergraduate or post-graduate level e.g. BA Advertising and Marketing Communications, MA Public Relations.

Information is likely to be found about recruitment competencies in the recruitment policies for the central communication function and the wider organisation. Organisations will only need to look at qualifications where professional communication competences are not used as standard during recruitment. Skills audits may include a record of professional qualifications held by staff.

Worked example

Number of Professionally Qualified Communications employees = 15

	Total communications employees = 40 The percentage of professionally qualified communications employees is therefore (15/40) x 100 per cent = 37.5%

Reference number	**Indicator 4**
Description	**Internal client and stakeholder views of the central communication function** Results from a survey of internal stakeholders for the following questions: 1. The communication function delivers good quality, professional advice to develop communications activity in support of my business objectives 2. The service I receive from the communication function meets my expectations. 3. The people I work with in communications explain or quantify the nature of the contribution that communications activity will make to the delivery of my business objectives 4. The people I work with in communications offer the expert skills that I expect 5. The people I work with in communications actively look for efficient ways of achieving my objectives (as opposed to simply spending whatever funds are allocated)
Rationale and expected impact on behaviour	To examine the effectiveness of the central communication function by measuring the perceptions of its internal clients and stakeholders. Over time, organisations should seek to increase the proportion of staff, clients and stakeholders agreeing with the statements.
Definition	This survey is designed to look at the effectiveness of the Communications function by assessing the perceptions of its clients and stakeholders. Over time, organisations should seek to increase the proportion of clients and stakeholders agreeing with the statements. For each of the statements below, please provide your perception using the scoring system below: 1 – Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree , 3 – Neither, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly agree Results to be provided as a % of total results against each answer. Apply to permanent staff only. Staff on fixed term contracts and temporary staff that have been employed by the authority for over

	a year should be considered permanent.
	Measuring the level of quality and professional advice from the communications function when developing communications activity in support of business objectives defines the value of input from the communication function.
	Business understanding by the communication function is defined by the contribution that communications activity makes to the delivery of business objectives.

Reference number	**Indicator 5**
Description	**Management practice indicator – the number of practices that have been adopted by the central communication function out of a possible total of 10**
Rationale and expected impact on behaviour	The aim of this indicator is to assess the extent to which the central communication function achieves a set of key management practices which will provide an indication of whether it is a well-run, capable and mature function. It is not anticipated that most organisations will have adopted all of the practices listed when first measuring themselves against this indicator set. However organisations should expect that the number of practices that they have adopted would increase over time. The list of practices will be updated, if appropriate, in future revisions of the indicator set. If the indicator refers to plans, strategies or other documents, the documents should be available on request for audit purposes.
Definition	The category applies only to the central communication function. 1. Communication strategy and activity is explicitly linked to organisational business objectives (in central government, Public Service Agreements and Departmental Strategic Objectives) 2. Communication activity, for the most part, is underpinned by a recorded communications strategy. 3. Communication strategy and annual plan are signed off by the relevant board or equivalent governance group. 4. Communication strategy, plan and activity are based on customer/audience understanding and insight where appropriate 5. External communication activity is integrated across channels and includes an appropriate mix of marketing, media, digital and stakeholder activity. 6. Communication outputs and outcomes are evaluated through appropriate methods and the findings used to

	inform future activity.
	7. The most senior officer in the organisation with a dedicated communication role is a member of or has a direct report to the board or equivalent management group.
	8. Communicators regularly advise policy and business delivery colleagues in the development of strategy.
	9. The organisation offers continuing professional development for all our communication staff and all members of staff undertook this activity over the last year.
	10. The organisation has driven down the cost of acquiring procured communication products and services this year (i.e. procured services included in Indicator 1: Costs), based on a like-for-like comparison with the previous year.
	For each practice tick 'yes' if the organisation has fully implemented that practice. For each practice tick 'no' if the organisation: • Does not have that practice in place; • Has the intention to develop this practice but it is currently not in place; or • Is currently implementing this practice but it is not yet fully in place. The organisation should then count the number of questions where they answered 'yes' in order to calculate their score. The maximum score is 10.