



UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL MORECAMBE BAY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT USING SOCIAL MEDIA

## SUMMARY

The University Hospital Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust (UHMBT) faces a unique communication challenge due its large geographic area. For example, there are 47 miles between two of its main hospitals, with a travel time in excess of one hour between both sites. This makes it very difficult and time consuming for the Trust to communicate effectively with its three different constituencies of Lancaster, Kendal and Barrow.

In September 2010, the Trust started to look at emerging social media as a potential solution to the problem. With the organisation set to become a Foundation Trust on 1st October 2010 it became even more crucial that it was able to engage staff fully and to

communicate effectively with all stakeholders including its members and the public at large.

As well as using traditional forms of media such as a weekly newsletters, governance, GP and members newsletters, the Trust now utilises Twitter as a means of reaching people in a wider and more informal way, and with the emergence of smart phones such as blackberries and iphones this has made accessibility even higher. The Trust also has a media centre on its website where it posts news, and a Chief Executive's blog that has been well received amongst staff and the wider community.

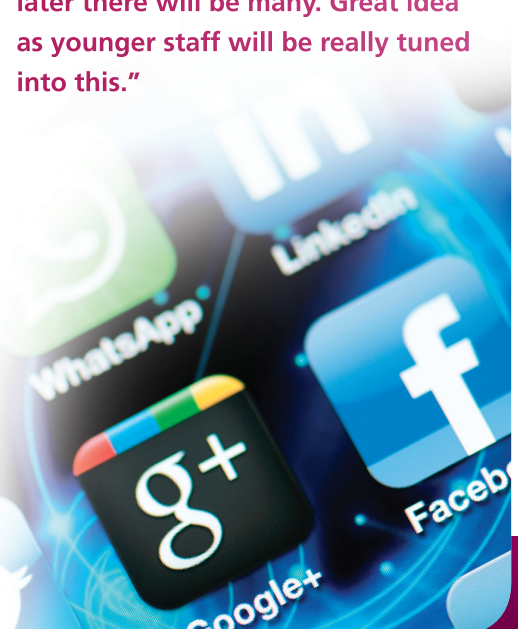
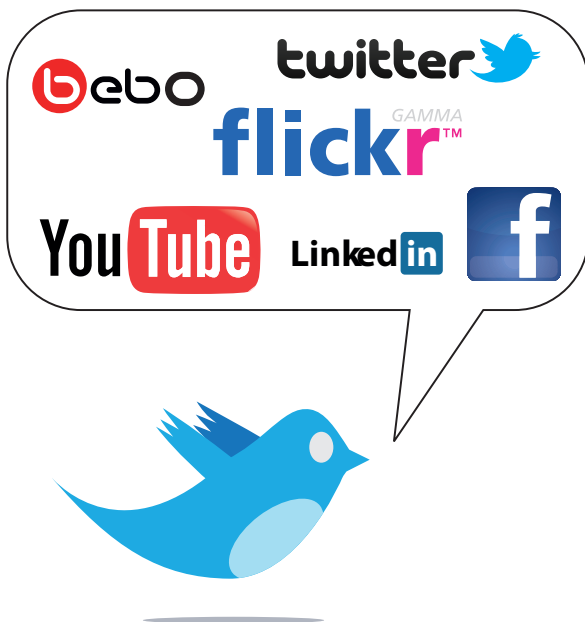
## SOME FEEDBACK FROM THE BLOG

**"Really enjoy reading this every week. It is good to see that you are willing to speak openly on the real issues that are facing the Trust and the NHS as a whole, rather than use your blog as some sort of attempted PR stunt that in essence tells us nothing!"**

**"Dear Tony. I think this is a great idea and will be appreciated by all staff. Hope you don't become overwhelmed with questions etc., though. A few at first I predict but later there will be many. Great idea as younger staff will be really tuned into this."**

## KEY OUTCOMES

- Since September 2010 UHMB has acquired an ever growing number of followers, with 322 followers at the time of writing, which is a solid base upon which to build at this early stage of social media development for the Trust.
- The Chief Executive's Blog has received positive feedback from both the public and staff who value its conversational style.





# GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

## BACKGROUND

UHMBT operates from three main hospital sites; Furness General Hospital in Barrow, the Royal Lancaster Infirmary and Westmorland General Hospital in Kendal and two centres - Queen Victoria Hospital in Morecambe and Ulverston Community Health Centre. This is a very wide geographic area for one Trust to cover.

The Trust was formed on 1 April 1998 following the merger of Lancaster Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, Westmorland Hospitals NHS Trust and Furness Hospital NHS Trust. At the beginning of 2006, it obtained University Hospital status as part of the introduction of a medical school and dental education centre to Cumbria and Lancashire. On 1 October 2010 the Trust was authorised by Monitor as a Foundation Trust.



## KEY AIMS

- The use of social media is part of a structured communication approach to keep stakeholder engagement as high as possible, particularly during this period of economic downturn
- It is also specifically targeted at staff to maintain engagement within the workforce and to retain motivation, by building pride in the Trust and rallying morale

- Social media minimises miscommunication and ensures consistency of message, as it communicates messages from the Trust directly, rather than through leaked press releases or rumour. This gives the corporate communication team a tighter control on the quality of communication released
- It also allows UHMBT to build trust through a consistent communication approach that is upfront and open, with no hidden surprises or agendas
- As a health care provider UHMBT has a wider role around improving public health in the region and social media also allows the Trust to reach the general public in a direct and immediate way.



## What is twitter?

Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging service that allows you to answer the question "what are you doing?" by sending short text messages 140 characters in length called "tweets" to "followers".

## HOW DOES TWITTER WORK FOR UHMBT?

The short format of the tweet allows informal collaboration and quick information sharing that provides relief from rising email and Instant Message (IM) fatigue. Twittering is also a less gated method of communication. The Trust can now share information with people it wouldn't normally exchange email or IM messages with, opening up its circle of contacts to an ever-growing community (Tweeternet, 2011)

Tweets are displayed on its profile page, on the home page of each of its followers, and in the Twitter public timeline. Other people/ organisations can also retweet what has been posted thus increasing the scope of communication (Tweeternet, 2011)

## WHAT DOES THE TRUST "TWEET"?

The Trust tweets a huge variety of messages ranging from public health information aimed at the general public to staff recognition tweets more pertinent to employees.

### News

New £1.2m Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) service to be launched at Westmorland General Hospital <http://t.co/D2u1Zig>

### Events

Only two and a half hours to go until our Pride of the Bay Awards! We'll be tweeting the winners and highly commended live from the ceremony

Highlights from the #UHMBT 2010 Pride of the Bay awards [#NHS](http://t.co/XYILnky)

### Chief Executive Blog

Our Chief Executive has just updated his weekly blog and wants your views, check it out... [#UHMBT #nhs](http://t.co/XWBSbPY)

### Public Health Info

For information on #NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme or if you are over 74 and want to take part, ring 0800 707 60 60 <http://ow.ly/4xohv>

Today is No Smoking Day. Smoking is responsible for one in every five deaths in adults aged over 35 in England!

[www.nosmokingday.org.uk](http://www.nosmokingday.org.uk)

### Staff Recognition

A fond farewell to Liz Johnson who retired from the Oncology Unit at FGH on 1 April after 36 years of NHS service! Best wishes Liz!

The winner of the Employee of the Year Award is... Maria Hughes! Congrats to Maria and the Swinton Hall Intermediate Care Unit Team! [#yourAGM](http://t.co/yourAGM)

### Patient Feedback

Have you been a patient or visitor in one of our hospitals? We want to know about your experiences [#uhmbt #nhs](http://t.co/gLoye4b)

Another great compliment from a patient, Ward 36 #Orthopaedics at the RLI. [#nhschoices #lancaster #nhs](http://tinyurl.com/37abfbt)



# GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

## RESOURCES

Social media is free and requires no membership fee so there are no costs associated with this form of communication; however it is important to have staff who are dedicated to keeping the feed up-to-date.

## KEY CHALLENGES

At the moment Facebook and Twitter are currently blocked within the Trust in order to prevent loss of productivity through excessive use. This presents the problem that staff can't follow Trust updates whilst at work. There is going to be a review of this policy, but in the meantime staff can receive Twitter feeds on their personal home computers/smartphones. Also, everything that is tweeted is also communicated to staff via internal communications.

## KEY LEARNING

- Communicate more as times get tough in order to maintain public confidence
- Adopt social media as part of a coordinated communication plan and part of a broader strategy with a clear vision, not in isolation. There is no point in just having Twitter for sake of it.

## NEXT STEPS

- A plan is being developed to open up access to social networking sites for staff during lunch times from 12-2pm.
- Twitter is going to be more widely publicised
- A wider communications strategy is being developed that will include more engagement with schools. This will allow the Trust to increase the number of 16 plus followers that it has and to help raise the profile of NHS Careers
- In a recent staff survey it was noted that employees felt that communication with senior managers could still be better. Therefore a Facebook account will also be set up as more people tend to use this.

## Marketing & communications Plan

A revised marketing and communications strategy is being developed, with the aim of this being presented to the Board for approval in September 2011. This strategy looks at engagement on many levels, using a pyramid system. Social media, whilst popular still lacks significant volumes of successful outcomes for marketers to prove a return on investment, particularly given the amount of time that people are devoting to what is often thought of as a free resource. According to Marketing Week, (28 July 2011, p.46) Twitter usage is yet to be significant as it excludes 90% of the UK population, however it does provide the Trust with a near real time ability to communicate with a section of the community who have now chosen to use this as a daily or regular form of communication.

The plan therefore is to use social media as part of an integrated approach, as it is seen as an important tool in the marketing and communication plan.

The Trust's strategy for Social Media is to engage with those people in the community, and stakeholders, who wish to use this as their preferred or alternative method of communication. Thus, it will complement rather than replace traditional methods. UHMBT's ambition is to grow an online community, in order to allow near real time feedback of ideas and proposals, as this offers a potential cost-effective and expedient method of doing so.

## SUPPORTING MATERIAL

The Trust's Marketing and Communication Plan will be shared as an appendix to this case study, if or when the Board approves it.

## LINKS

**UHMBT on Twitter:**  
<http://twitter.com/#!/UHMBT>

**Media Centre on UHMBT website:**  
<http://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/media-centre>

**Chief Executive blog:**  
<http://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/media-centre/blog/>

## REFERENCE

Tweeternet, (2011) What is Twitter [26 Apr 2011] [online] <http://tweeternet.com/>

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