



THE MORAY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Trading Standards Service

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

2009 – 2011

February 2010

The Moray Council - Trading Standards Communications Strategy 2009 – 2011

| CONTENTS | PAGE |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| 2. Background | 3 |
| 3. Relationship to other Strategies and Plans | 4 |
| 4. Principles, Aims and Objectives | 4 |
| 5. Key Areas of Communication | 5 |
| a) External | |
| b) Internal | |
| c) Media Relations | |
| d) Campaigns and Projects | |
| e) Partnerships | |
| f) Consultation & Involvement | |
| g) Emergencies | |
| 6. Equality | 9 |
| 7. Evaluation and Review | 9 |
| 8. Summary and Conclusion | 9 |
| 9. Contact Details | 10 |
| Appendix 1 – Communications Action Plan 2009/10 | 11 |

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Communications Strategy is to support The Moray Council's Trading Standards Service mission to work towards a fairer and safer Moray for its residents and businesses; to provide a free, high quality, independent Money Advice Service and to provide an effective and efficient Licensing Standards Service.

It is a strategy that reflects the communication activities and responsibilities of the Service and seeks to identify and implement the necessary framework and mechanisms to ensure this takes place consistently and effectively. Historically, the Service has always strongly utilised oral communications with clients through its advice activities. This strength needs to be built upon and expanded to all other forms of communication. Good communications are essential for successful organisations.

The strategy will support the Service by ensuring that all forms of communication involving the Service are clear, effective and inclusive. It also serves to ensure that the Service is better able to inform the public and all other stakeholders and partners of what it is doing and why, whilst continuing to listen and act on the messages it receives.

2. BACKGROUND

The Moray Council's Trading Standards Service undertakes work in three separate legislative areas, although there are significant benefits and mutual areas of interest which are derived from information sharing and joint issues identified whilst working together.

The traditional Trading Standards work involves the inspection and enforcement of business premises to ensure a fair and equitable trading environment for consumers and businesses. Rogue Traders and those that seek to cut corners or exploit vulnerable groups are specifically targeted. Main areas of work involve Fair Trading, Weights and Measures, Credit, Counterfeiting, Agriculture, Animal Feed and Product Safety. The Service also provides a free, independent Consumer Advice Service in Partnership with Consumer Direct.

The Service also provides a high quality, free and independent Money Advice Service which seeks to advise and assist those who are experiencing complex and multiple debt. Although available to all residents in Moray, the Service specifically targets their work to those defined as vulnerable. The Service works in Partnership with the local Consumer Advice Bureau and has a surgery facility at the CAB in Elgin.

The third service undertaken by Moray Council Trading Standards is that of the post of Licensing Standards Officer. The post is a statutory consequence of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and undertakes the role of advice and guidance to the licensed trade and community on the effects of the Act. The post involves close partnership working with Moray's Licensing Board, Moray Licensing Forum, Grampian Police, the licensed trade in Moray and a number of other Agencies.

A Communications Strategy has been recognised as being required to define who the Service communicates with and how this is done.

3. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER STRATEGIES AND PLANS

The Moray Council's Trading Standards Service does not communicate in isolation and therefore this strategy must be read in conjunction with several other strategies and plans.

The overall vision for communications within Moray Council can be found in the Authority's Media and Communication Strategies. These strategies provide the overall framework for communications throughout the Authority. The Trading Standards Communications Strategy has been developed to complement these documents but allows for a more focused and relevant document which identifies the links between the Service and its clients.

Other documents of relevance include:-

Moray Council Priorities 2008 – 2011

Moray Community Plan 2006 – 2010

Moray Single Outcome Agreement 2009 – 2010

Moray Council Environmental Services – Service Improvement Plan 2009 – 2010

Moray Council Trading Standards Business Plan 2009 – 2010

Moray Council Trading Standards Team Plan 2009 – 2010

Moray Council Consultation Pack

4. PRINCIPLES, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The key principles on which this Communications Strategy is based are:-

The right information

- To the right people
- In the right medium
- At the right time

These principles include a number of key commitments:

- Communication to be open, honest, meaningful, non-judgemental and appropriate to its audience
- Staff to fully understand their role in the communication process:-
 - Within the Service
 - Internally, within the Council
 - Externally
- Information, either spoken, written or electronic, must be clear, up to date, easily understood, relevant and in plain language.
- All communication channels must allow for a two way, free flow of information – both listening and informing
- Consideration must be given to the communication and information needs of people with physical and learning disabilities, sensory impairment, individuals with literacy problems, people from minority ethnic communities and individuals from hard to reach / vulnerable groups

This Communications Strategy is designed to enable the Moray Council Trading Standards Service, through informing, listening and engaging, to achieve the following key aims:

- A co-ordinated approach to the management and delivery of communications which support the strategic aims of the Service and the Authority
- Improved information and communication channels throughout the Service, creating a knowledgeable and well-informed workforce
- Increased public awareness of the priorities, procedures, services and achievements of the Trading Standards Service
- Effective and meaningful engagement and consultation with clients and partners on Service objectives and performance
- Communication tools which provide a range of opportunities for dialogue and feedback with customers and stakeholders
- Improved media relations to promote a positive public image and knowledge of the Service

Our objectives include:

- Raising awareness of the aims of the Trading Standards Service
- Providing accurate, timely and relevant information
- Communicating regularly, clearly and in an understandable way
- Involving employees and stakeholders in the delivery of our work
- Improving links with business and residents in Moray
- Building on existing partnerships and relationships
- Providing effective mechanisms for feedback from all stakeholders
- Responding to enquiries from the media and public in a timely and appropriate manner

5. KEY AREAS OF COMMUNICATION

a) External Communications

Effective communication with our external stakeholders is essential in enabling them to understand, access and have confidence in the services we provide.

The following are some of our external stakeholders:

- Residents and visitors to Moray
- Business within Moray
- Voluntary organisations – (e.g. CAB, Age Concern, Local Credit Unions)
- Statutory Organisations – (e.g. Grampian Police, Grampian Housing Association, Moray Licensing Forum)
- Scottish Government
- Consumer Focus Scotland
- Consumer Direct
- Office of Fair Trading
- Other Trading Standards & Money Advice Authorities
- Federation of Small Businesses

- Trade Mark Holders
- Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS)
- Audit Scotland
- Money Advice Scotland
- Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland
- Food Standards Agency Scotland
- MSPs, MPs and MEPs
- Community Councils

Communicating externally can be a complex issue, and the Service faces the challenge of working with many different stakeholders in many different specialist areas. Ensuring that our key messages reach these different service areas could be difficult if not managed appropriately.

Providing clear, concise and timely information and communicating consistently is therefore crucial. Information must have a strong and consistent image and must be clearly branded and recognisable as The Moray Council Trading Standards Service. This will ensure that a professional image is created and maintained.

b) Internal Communications

Internal communication is an essential process that ensures that individuals across the Service and the Authority as a whole are clear about the aims, vision and purposes of all Trading Standards Services. It is also essential for ensuring their contribution to the overall planning of the direction, priority and quality of services provided.

Examples of our internal clients are:

- Service staff
- Departmental Management
- Elected Members
- Other Services and Departments such as Building Standards and Welfare Benefits
- Community Planning partners

Staff have a vital role to play in any communication process and effective internal communication can assist in creating a knowledgeable and well-informed workforce. Their involvement influences the quality of the Services provided and impacts on the overall perception of the Service. As the Service's main asset, there is a clear need to support, encourage and equip staff to communicate in the most effective ways possible.

Clear, accessible and transparent systems for the flow and exchange of information are essential components for successful communication and management. Successful management within the Service, the wider Environmental Services Department and the Local Authority must include the communication of Corporate and Departmental aims and objectives, performance management, financial control and personnel management; whilst ensuring that all staff and levels of management are aware of and understand the roles and responsibilities of the Trading Standards Service.

Effective communication between Elected Members and the Service is very important. Good communication creates a relationship between those involved that allows for a clearer recognition and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each party.

c) Media Relations

The media performs an important role in our communications with our clients and our stakeholders as it informs and influences everyone from employees and elected members to service users and partners.

The local media can play a key role in influencing and informing the citizens of Moray. It is therefore important that we communicate effectively with them. Effort should be made to promote good practice, advice, warnings and successes as much as possible with the local media as this can both develop and sustain a good public profile. Key to this process and relationship is the effective and inclusive partnership with Moray Council's Communications and Public Relations Unit. Their experience and knowledge of local media as well as their contacts and relationships must be fully utilised when undertaking any communication activity.

To effectively manage the Media, the Service needs to:

- Provide accurate and appropriate answers to media enquiries
- Proactively communicate with local media to highlight local Trading Standards, Money Advice or Licensing Standards issues
- Effectively monitor and evaluate press coverage
- Work proactively with the Authority's Communications and Public Relations Unit

d) Campaigns and Projects

The Service regularly finds itself at the forefront of Local, Regional or National campaigns and projects which involve the transmission of important messages to target audiences. Sometimes, these messages are created directly by this Service, but equally often the message comes from partners and Stakeholders. The Service therefore needs to be able to directly influence the creation of these messages as well as feeding back on their success and any lessons learned. The Service will therefore look to plan its involvement in all such campaigns and projects so as to give each issue the appropriate resource and attention required, as well as ensuring that the messages are delivered appropriately to the local setting.

e) Partnerships

The service is involved in many local and regional partnerships such as Moray Money Advice Partnership, Moray's Safer Coordinating Group, Moray CSN and representation on a number of Pubwatch schemes within Moray. The Service will seek to be a proactive and active member of such groups and feed information into and outwith each Group on the Trading Standards contribution where relevant.

Care must be taken to ensure that a balance is achieved in such Partnerships between positive participation against maintaining the reputation, vision and values of the

Service. Where any Group to which the Service is a member wishes to communicate a message or campaign then it is important that the Service is fully consulted beforehand so that it can fully ensure its appropriate contribution.

f) Consultation & Involvement

Service consultation is a two way process. Often the Service will be asked to comment on and contribute to a debate on a Trading Standards Service related issue. Similarly, the Service often needs to consult with all or a discrete group of Service users on issues such as Service Priorities or User satisfaction.

When participating in consultation, the Service needs to plan, implement and evaluate the consultation process to ensure that its message has been understood by all concerned as well as being sensitive and understanding of the messages provided to it.

Appropriate tools and channels for participation in consultation must be identified and acted upon dependant on the reason for the consultation. The Service needs to be aware that different clients may favour different methods of participation in consultation. Examples could include questionnaires, face to face and telephone interviews, focus and user groups, citizen's panels, public meetings, seminars and workshops.

Where the Service anticipates conducting user consultation, it should have reference to the Moray Council's Consultation pack and liaise closely with corporate resources and expertise beforehand.

Whereas consultation is usually considered a passive participation under which key decisions may have already been taken, or a limited range of options are provided for their reaction or response; involvement refers to active participation in the consideration of some issue. Active involvement in the formation of plans, proposals or review gives ownership to the issue.

In both cases, the impact on people's perception of the Service is improved as individuals and groups feel valued, believe their consultation has been recognised and recognise that they have had more say in the development and running of the Service.

g) Emergencies

It is vital the Service is well prepared to respond effectively to any major incidents for which it may be involved in. Part of any response to such an incident is ensuring that there are robust systems in place for communicating messages related to the incident both internally and externally.

In the event of an incident, the Service must ensure that:

- Information is shared with the appropriate staff and management as soon as possible
- Clear responsibilities for communicating with various stakeholders and partners are established and understood
- Action plans are in place, are regularly reviewed and are communicated to staff, management and appropriate partners

- Systems are in place to enable the Service to communicate effectively with the any media reaction to an incident

6. EQUALITY

Communication methods and the way in which people “receive” communications play a vital role in the communication process. Information can be given or received in many ways and it is important to recognise that while the printed word is a fundamental and necessary means of communicating, it does have limitations.

The printed word may not be accessible to people with a visual impairment, learning disabilities or literacy problems. In addition, individuals whose first language is not English can experience difficulties when trying to communicate. It is also acknowledged that different approaches will also be required when communicating with children and young people.

People who are seeking information or would like to “communicate” something may want to talk to someone about their enquiry. However, individuals also need information that they can refer to in their own time. They build up their knowledge base incrementally and as they become more informed different questions arise and they look for more information.

Communication methods should therefore encompass a range of mediums. Examples could include appropriate formats such as large print, Braille, audio, DVD, video and other languages. The provision of information and communication in one or more of these mediums as appropriate should ensure that all clients are provided for.

7. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Each year, the Moray Council’s Trading Standards Management Team will review the Communications Action Plan as seen in Appendix 1 and amend and update where appropriate. The Communications Strategy will also be referred to when reviewing and reporting on the Service’s performance, when preparing the Trading Standards Team plan for the coming year, when planning training or when undertaking the Authority’s Employee Review and Development Process for individual Officers.

The Communication Action Plan found in Appendix 1 identifies those actions required to be carried out in the year ahead. For each action, the Plan identifies the target audience and target date or outcome.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is widely recognised that creating and sustaining effective two-way communication channels with a wide variety of individuals, groups and organisations is a major task.

However, as the need to communicate with stakeholders, both internal and external, is central to the development and implementation of our Services, implementation of this Strategy will contribute to creating an effective communication process within The Moray Council Trading Standards Service.

In conclusion, in order to successfully deliver its vision and aims, the Moray Council Trading Standards Service will:

- Engage and involve all its stakeholders, including its Officers
- Make best use of the media to communicate positive messages
- Deliver targeted Service campaigns and projects
- Maintain its good reputation, and
- Plan for effective communication in any emergency or crisis plan.

9. CONTACT DETAILS

The Moray Council Trading Standards Service
232 High Street
Elgin
Moray
IV30 1BA

Tel: 01343 554617
Fax: 01343 554622
Web: www.moray.gov.uk
Email: trading_standards@moray.gov.uk

Trading Standards Manager – David Owen
Tel: 01343 554610
Email: david.owen@moray.gov.uk

Public Relations Officer – Raymond Shewan
Tel: 01343 563466
Email: Raymond.shewan@moray.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Communications Action Plan 2009/10

| Objective | Audience | Who Responsible | Target |
|--|---|--|--|
| Objective 1 Continue to monitor client satisfaction rates for Consumer Advice, Business Satisfaction and Money Advice | Service Users Departmental Management TS service staff Elected Members External Agencies | Trading Standards Management Team (TSMT) | Ongoing – 6 month and yearly data reported to TSMT. Yearly data reported to Service Committee and outside bodies e.g. Audit Scotland |
| Objective 2 Weekly TSMT Diary meetings, Monthly TSMT Meetings, Monthly meeting of all TS staff and Monthly team meetings | TS service staff TSMT Departmental Management | Trading Standards Manager Trading Standards Management Team (TSMT) | Ongoing (Weekly & Monthly) – Minutes kept of all meetings in Shared Files |
| Objective 3 Corporate messages to be circulated to all staff by email, held on Shared Files and on Notice board for 3 months | TS service staff | The Moray Council Trading Standards Manager | Ongoing |
| Objective 4 Prepare a planned series of press releases for the coming year. Supplement with additional press releases as appropriate | Residents of Moray Businesses in Moray Local Media | All – All press releases to be authorised by Trading Standards Manager and sent to Public Relations Co-ordinator | Plan available on shared files – December 2009 1 Press release per month (minimum) |
| Objective 5 Establish client satisfaction protocols for Licensing Standards. Support with relevant performance reports to Management, Elected Members & TSMT | Licensing Standards Officer Service Users Senior management TSMT External Agencies Elected Members | Trading Standards Manager TSO (Research, Development & Quality) | Pilot January to March 2010 Full implementation 1 st April 2010 |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Objective 6 Ensure staff are aware of current Council & Departmental structures as well as all relevant policies and procedures</p> | <p>TS Officers</p> | <p>Trading Standards Management Team (TSMT)</p> | <p>Ongoing – review quarterly</p> |
| <p>Objective 7 Carry out consultation on Service Priorities for Trading Standards Enforcement & Advice</p> | <p>Residents of Moray Business in Moray Elected Members TS Officers TS Stakeholders</p> | <p>Trading Standards Manager TSO (Research, Development & Quality)</p> | <p>To be completed by end February 2010</p> |
| <p>Objective 8 Re-establish the Service’s Annual Report as a means of communicating Service Performance, activities and highlights for the previous year</p> | <p>Residents of Moray Business in Moray Elected Members TS Officers TS Stakeholders</p> | <p>Trading Standards Manager All</p> | <p>April / May 2010</p> |
| <p>Objective 9 Identify planned campaigns and projects which will require Media involvement & prepare appropriate actions</p> | <p>Residents of Moray Business in Moray Elected Members TS Officers TS Stakeholders</p> | <p>Trading Standards Management Team (TSMT)</p> | <p>Plan available by 1st April 2010 (derive from Team Plan 2010/11)</p> |
| <p>Objective 10 Review on a quarterly basis the content of the Service’s website and update / refresh where appropriate. Participate in any Corporate review of the web presence</p> | <p>Service Users</p> | <p>Trading Standards Management Team (TSMT)</p> | <p>Quarterly – beginning January 2010</p> |
| <p>Objective 11 Attendance / Representation at all relevant Regional and national</p> | <p>TS Officers</p> | <p>TS Officers</p> | <p>Ongoing – Minutes to be kept on shared files</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---------|--|
| specialist groups and cascade to relevant Officers | | | | |
| Objective 12 Establish and maintain communication channels with local Community & Business Groups & the Voluntary sector appropriate to each Service | Community Groups Business Groups Voluntary Sector Moray Pubwatch Moray Licensing Forum | Trading Standards Management Team (TSMT) | Ongoing | |
| Objective 13 Identify gaps in internal communication methods already in place and develop ways in which to address them | TS Officers The Moray Council Elected Members | Trading Standards Management Team (TSMT) | Ongoing | |