

Appendix L - Brent COVID 19 communications strategy

Brent Council

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Recovery Communications Plan

For internal use only

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Objectives
3. Audiences
4. Strategy
5. Key messages
6. Tactics
7. Lead spokespeople
8. Risks
9. Scoring / Evaluation
10. Appendices

1. Introduction:

The World Health Organisation confirmed that COVID-19 was a global pandemic on January 13, 2020. By March 26, the UK was officially locked down and life changed dramatically overnight. Brent Council's strategic response to ensure local residents and businesses were protected was supported by a detailed communications plan to inform our communities. This communications plan worked well, during the initial response period, but now needs to be evolved as the situation moves from response to recovery.

The Government strategy has now moved from a total countrywide lockdown to a looser, more targeted version of lockdown – which is based around a Track and Trace system to lock down individuals or groups of individuals when required rather than locking down all of society. This is a more complicated phase from a communications perspective as simple messaging such as 'stay at home' is not now appropriate.

It is also cannot be known how the "R" rate may change following the Government's loosening of the lockdown. Brent is one of the hardest hit places in the UK – currently 2nd only to Newham as the most affected borough in London. Now that more is known about the virus, it is believed that there is a link between higher death rates and a number of factors. These include: the diverse population of Brent (with evidence now showing some BAME people are 4 times more likely to die from Covid than other sections of the population); poverty and inequality (e.g. multi-generational households, HMOs, jobs where you need to be physically present and a greater reliance on public transport).

As the lockdown is loosened, Brent Council will need to ensure that local communities fully understand the health risks and how they can continue to protect themselves and others against the virus.

2. Objectives

Given that Brent is the most diverse borough in Europe and one of the poorest areas in London, our main communications objective is to inform people in Brent, who are some of the most at risk in the country, about the actions they can take to protect themselves and others and in doing so minimise the spread of Covid 19 as lockdown restrictions are loosened.

A secondary objective will be to support the relevant objectives of the broader London-wide and nation-wide communication strategies by sharing relevant information through our channels.

3. Audiences

The next phase of communication is relevant to everyone who lives or works in Brent but there are also some specific audiences who are more at risk for which the next phase of communications is particularly relevant. Therefore the key audiences we will try to reach in this phase are:

- People who are more at risk (see table below) including BAME residents
- Older people and people with underlying conditions
- People who are asked to self-isolate due to the new 'track and trace' system
- Younger people who may think the rules don't apply to them but could be spreaders in their homes or communities
- Council staff and Members (including staff who are working from home and others that need to come into the office)

The table below sets out a list of suggested audiences to target during this campaign to ensure messaging is clearly understood by all sectors of the community:

Audience	Ways to target	Responsibility
Somali	Engagement with Brent Somali Community Centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial letter/meeting of introduction Targeted communications in own language 	Sarah Whyte + Duval Akonor
Urdu	Engagement with Pakistan Community Centre (Pakistan Welfare Association): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial letter/meeting of introduction • Targeted communications in English & Urdu 	Sarah Whyte + Duval Akonor
Hindi	Engagement with Brent Indian Association – The Brent Carers Centre:	Sarah Whyte + Duval Akonor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial letter/meeting of introduction • Targeted communications in English & Hindi 	
Afro-Caribbean	ACPO, Brent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial letter/meeting of introduction • Targeted communications 	Sarah Whyte + Duval Akonor
Older people in general (particularly those on the Gov's shielded lists which we now have the data for)	General messaging about social distancing and health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Brent • Radio, Print, TV • On-line • Work with Age UK to target messaging 	Sarah Whyte + Duval Akonor
Young (16 – 35) & (35 plus)	General messaging about social distancing and spreading the virus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok) • Podcasts • Young Brent Foundation 	Chris Murray

4. Strategy

It is a fast-changing landscape and after several months of lockdown our messaging needs to be both impactful and tailored to our audiences in Brent if it is to be noticed and acted upon.

This communications plan is part of a three-pronged communications approach.

1 – National Government communications is mainly focused on promoting the Track and Trace initiative. We will compliment and support this messaging only where appropriate. We are not using 'stay alert' messaging.

2 – We will use harder hitting, clearer, action led language, statistics and information that is more carefully tailored to our diverse audiences in our borough wide communications.

3 – We will make use of community, faith and mutual aid groups to help spread more specific information to our various harder to reach and more at risk audiences including BAME residents.

The reason we are taking this three-pronged approach is that many of our audiences do not trust the government or official sources of information as much as they trust 'people like me'. There is a lot of evidence-based research, including from the annual Edelman Trust Survey and various MORI polls, that suggest that audiences have more trust in communications and messaging when it comes from people in their own community so utilising these secondary voices will be vital if we are to influence hard to reach groups.

5. Key messages:

- People are still dying, covid-19 hasn't gone away

- Keep your distance to protect yourself and others
- Self-isolate and book a test if you get any of the symptoms

In addition to the three main messages above, there may also be some more detailed messages around track and trace, including the hyper-local trial site in Harlesden, and also linked to Covid and warmer weather.

6. Tactics:

Corporate Communications

Channels	How we can use them
Traditional – digital boards, posters, signage	Increased use of social distancing signs in hotspots areas. Now that more people are out and about, we will target areas that are either known hotspots (e.g. Harlesden, Ealing Road or Kingsbury High Road) or which have specific ‘pinch points’ and are likely to have high footfall.
Social Media, including paid for promotion on: Facebook Tick Tok Instagram YouTube Twitter	For hard-to-reach consider paid-for campaigns Post in specific social media groups Use different languages and build a suite of social media assets
E-news	For all regulatory advice & guidance
Media	Press and Radio easy to target and could be used as a partner to create content for us. Also packaging up content for journalists (e.g. BBC London) Ask them if we can use their content for our campaigns such as the BBC Asian network piece

Community Engagement

Community Groups	Provide target audience with a suite of messaging they can then be shared within the community by trusted leaders. Find out what they need from us to deliver the message well and support them.
Multi-faith forum	Good for delivering messaging before important events, prayers etc. Embed the messages with community leaders. Understand through engagement how they influence their communities.
Celebrity & influencers – George the Poet for example/leader of the Council	

7. Lead spokespeople

- Cllr Muhammed Butt, Leader
- Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive
- Melanie Smith, Director of Public Health

8. Risks

- Working with community groups and using secondary voices can take time to set up
- Despite all our best efforts to work with secondary voices, people may still ignore our messages and do what they want
- Brent could experience a second wave of the virus and even a possible local lockdown.

9. Scoring / Evaluation

- Feedback from community groups
- Feedback on social media to our messaging both on and offline
- Understanding how the messages are landing
- Campaign engagement/take-up
- Social Media
- Web traffic
- On-street signage including highways
- Media engagement (stories, content, wraps)

10. Appendices

1 – Time To Talk, Talk Show on The Beat FM

Time To Talk is a long standing, monthly phone-in programme hosted on The Beat 103.6 FM. Brent Council have worked closely with The Beat 103.6 FM in the past to raise awareness of issues such as Youth Employment, Drugs and Male Mental Health.

The Beat 103.6 is a local radio station whose main target audience is African-Caribbean people aged 16-24.

A live two hour radio phone-in on Monday 15 June between 7-9pm will focus on the impact of Covid-19 on the Black (and minority ethnic community) in Brent and look at what actions need to be taken to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on communities going forward.

Clare Clotney will host the show. Suggested guest panellists could include Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader of Brent Council, Tebussum (Tebs) Rashid from Step Up Hub, John Licorish from the council's public health team, and at least one local young person nominated by the Young Brent Foundation.

The aim of the programme would be to encourage the local community to engage in a conversation about Covid-19 and to use that opportunity to get across key public health messages (re. social distancing, the risk of a second spike etc.) primarily to The Beat's main target audience, which is African-Caribbean people aged 16-24.

2 – Young Brent Foundation, 'The Listening Podcast'

Concept:

The Young Brent Foundation (YBF) is seeking to develop a bespoke 'conversation' with young people via a podcast to discuss COVID-19 and the impacts on communities, families and friendship groups.

They aim to develop a range of extensive podcasts to reach out to the BAME and hard to reach young communities in and across Brent.

YBF will work with Your Only Young Once (YOYO) who are experienced in audio documentary/ podcast making with a strong technical, facilitator and research skills. They have a track record of working with young people and session planning.