

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2023



Mansfield
District Council

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Foreword

Communication is one of the most important services a council delivers, and residents, businesses, stakeholders and council employees need to be able to communicate effectively.

How we communicate is changing rapidly, and over recent years we have increased our digital footprint and embraced advances in social media to ensure that our content is usable, shareable and relevant. Social media has enabled us to reach more people more efficiently. However, one of the downsides of this is misinformation.

In our communications, we aim to break down complex issues, and speak openly and honestly about the council, our strategies and our progress so that everyone can understand more about us, the district and what services are available. We want to provide effective two-way communications that are not dictating to our audience but are having a conversation with them.

We need to work strategically in our communications and our main goal is to deliver communications that promote the council's ambition, values and goals. It can no longer be said that one set of methods can work for a specific audience.

We have to work harder, using data and insight, to find ways of targeting our communications and increase impact and effectiveness.

Our communications and engagement strategy outlines how we will build closer relationships with colleagues, partners and communities. How we will work together to deliver a high standard of communications, consultation and engagement.

Purpose of the strategy

Our Communications and Engagement Strategy provides a roadmap for consistent, clear, and effective communication, contributing to reputation management, stakeholder engagement and community participation.

It is a critical document used to support, gain, maintain trust and promote transparency and inclusivity.

Residents and businesses need a strong and clear narrative from the council that is jargon-free and clear on how the way in which we communicate can support services and activities happening within the district.

The vision is to improve understanding of the council's ambitions, priorities and services and increase engagement and participation within our community and stakeholders.



Who we are and what we do

We are a multi-skilled marketing and communications team that delivers campaigns and activities to support the work of the council.

From parks and recycling campaigns to the promotion of corporate events, we are at the heart of the organisation and are very much part of the plan for delivering our corporate objectives.

We have a range of specialisms including, public relations, digital marketing, culture and events, and always strive to be better skilled, better informed and well-connected.



Campaigns and digital communications

Based on a clear methodology of; insight, objectives, strategy, tactics and evaluation.



Media relations

Build effective relationships to ensure that the council voice is heard and well represented.



Events and promotions

Deliver events that support our corporate priorities, encourage visitor footfall.



Culture and destination

Develop and promote the cultural assets and maximise the benefits of the visitor economy. We are leading the place marketing work of the organisation through the Destination Mansfield project which is a three-year Towns Fund project to reposition and rebrand Mansfield as a place to live, work, visit and invest.



Internal communications

Maintain effective channels of communication so that colleagues are well informed. Encourage interaction, listen to colleagues and support the delivery of the Organisational Development Plan.



Corporate and civic

Communicating the civic and statutory duties of the council and the democratic process.

Objectives



To support the delivery of the corporate plan through a strong narrative and positive promotion of the council's ambitions



To increase awareness and engagement of the local community with the council's services and initiatives and to celebrate success within our district



To build trust between the council and its stakeholders and audiences



To enhance engagement and support the work of the co-production strategy. Increase transparency by effectively communicating with residents, stakeholders, and the media



Deliver meaningful campaigns, impacting and provide real results



To enable effective two-way communications between the council and its stakeholders (including residents, businesses, councillors, employees and partner organisations) whilst also keeping them engaged with our work

Communication principles



Open and transparent

To build confidence and trust with our customers, we will be open and transparent and encourage others in the organisation to do the same.



Improve and support

We will strive to be upskilled and well-informed so that we can best serve the council and our customers. We will support a proactive approach to communications and flow of information from the council to customers.



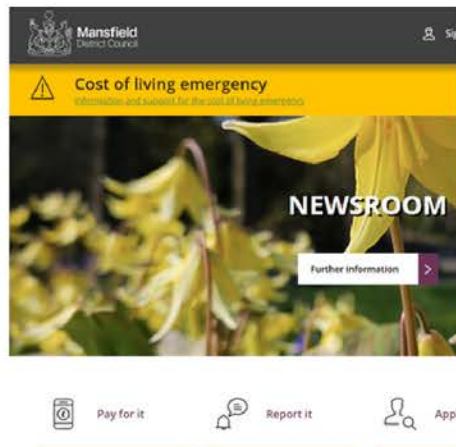
Strategic and informed

We will deliver campaigns based on insight to help deliver corporate priorities. We will listen to our audience and communicate in the way they need us to.

Communications audit

Most of our content is digital, so liking, following and sharing our content is the quickest and easiest way of finding out more on our services and initiatives.

We have a presence on social media, online through our website, and local media. Here is how we currently communicate with our stakeholders:



Mansfield Museum awarded restorations to its natural hi



Our communications footprint

On social media, we have more than 100,000 followers across multiple platforms and reach over 1.5 million people each year. Our corporate website has nearly 2 million page views annually, with an average of 40,000 unique users visiting each month.

These key performance indicators are monitored and measured as part of our corporate monitoring.



41,191
Combined Facebook followers



12,807
Combined Twitter followers



3,464
Combined Instagram followers



2,417
Total LinkedIn followers



My Mansfield
Residents newsletter: 1,704 subscribers
Business newsletter: 2,011 subscribers
Garden waste: 9,476 subscribers
Bin reminders: 7,556 sign ups, 6,190 valid accounts

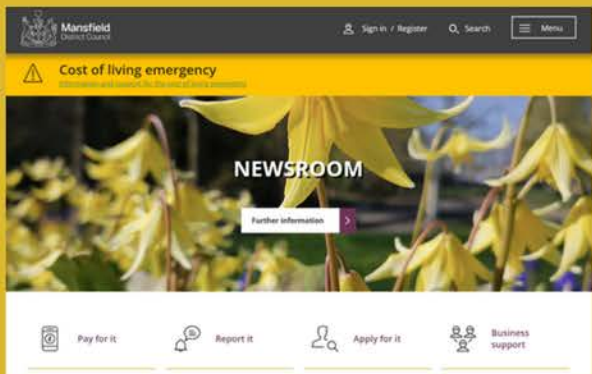
Mansfield Palace Theatre:
18,047 subscribers

Public Relations

Between January 2023 – May 2023:
We received and responded to **172 press enquiries**.
We issued **90 press releases**, all of which were used by at least one media outlet.



Mansfield District Council's website
1,920,688 page views, 1,409,129 unique page views - yearly
Top three web pages:
1. Homepage (258,561)
2. Bin day lookup (197,449)
3. Theatre homepage (82,435)
Average time spent on the site: 1min & 6s



Target audiences



Residents

We will foster positive relationships between the council and the community through open and honest two-way communication. We will engage and inform the community about initiatives, programmes of activity and services through a broad range of digital channels and provide targeted communications where they are needed.

In our communications, we will highlight the local authority's commitment to openness, accountability, and responsible governance. We will partner with community organisations that work with vulnerable people to help us to engage with harder-to-reach groups.

Stakeholders



We will build relationships with key stakeholders and support partnership-working with community organisations, educational institutions and businesses. We will support the work of the council to collaborate and achieve common goals and foster open and honest communication with partners.

Media



The communications team is the go-to place for local media regarding issues affecting the Mansfield district. We have built trusting and positive relationships with local media and offer a professional and timely media handling service.

We provide accurate and timely information to journalists and news outlets, offer interviews and expert opinions on relevant matters and champion our community on a regional and national scale. We will use our media channels to promote a vibrant and inclusive community and showcase the initiatives being delivered in our district.

Staff and elected members



Internal communications are as important to us as external communications. As a team, we will facilitate effective communication and engagement within the organisation, align employees with strategic objectives, communicate change, and reinforce the organisation's brand and culture.

Research



In February 2023, Mansfield District Council partnered with psychology students at Nottingham Trent University to better understand some of the challenges that older people in our community face regarding communications.

Students investigated the barriers to communicating with older people and made recommendations to help inform our approach.

In their findings, students quoted the OfCom 2018 study, which showed the attitudes of older age groups towards social media use. A summary is detailed below.

However, what should be considered is a more targeted approach to people who need extra support and help when accessing information and services.

Highlights

Of adults aged 55 to 64
use Facebook

65%

Of over 65's use the
platform as a preference

41%



Findings

Below are the full findings and analysis from the students.

These findings indicate that, on the whole, our digital-first approach and looking to grow our channels continually is a viable way forward.

Findings and Analysis

Evidence has shown that 87% social seniors aged over 65 have a Facebook account, but only 6% use Whatsapp, with Youtube having the lowest usage rate at 1%.



Hence, the Mansfield District Council Facebook page could make more efforts to direct information towards the elderly in terms of advertising community or face to face meetings for educating seniors on internet usage.

Generations of the western world can be very similarly viewed, especially in terms of the UK being as technologically advanced as the US in recent times.

Radio reaches 41.2 million monthly listeners ages 55-64, and US adults 65+ listened to around 12 hours of radio per week.

•Radio broadcasts have also begun to have webpages, entering the digital world – if the Council opened a radio broadcast, they may

more info about older generations and radio use at <https://creatingresults.com/blog/2018/08/21/radio-marketing-still-a-star/>

Research has found that 75% of 55–64-year-olds and 62% of 65–74-year-olds use the internet to send and receive emails

Age Group	Facebook	YouTube	Pinterest	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter
50-64 years	65%	68%	26%	21%	24%	19%
65+ years	41%	40%	16%	10%	9%	8%

NTU

www.ntu.ac.uk

Ofcom, Adults' Media Use and Attitudes – Report, 2018

The recommendations for targeted communications for people over the age of 65 include:

- ✓ Encouraging people to sign up to e-news so that they can receive information by email, a more trusted source with older residents.
- ✓ Partnering with community groups and organisations that support older people to ensure key messages are received. This could be pertinent to housing, revenues and benefits and waste and recycling.
- ✓ In person discussions about key topics and consultations to ensure the older population are informed about matters in the district.
- ✓ Using targeted printed material in areas that have an older population.



Website

We will use social media and our website to provide timely updates on council activities, news and events to keep residents and stakeholders informed and engaged.



Social media

The communications team will use multiple digital platforms to reach the community including, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn and develop tailored content accordingly. We will make the best use of social media to engage with residents and stakeholders to share information and updates. We offer engaging content across our channels to ensure that our content is accessible, shareable, and more appealing to our audiences.

The council will continue to use its social media platforms and local community groups to offer high levels of customer services to respond to queries, complaints and obtain feedback.

We recognise that there is no "one size fits all" approach, and we must adapt our channels and content to be the most effective and engaging it can be for our different audiences.

We will continue to provide alternative communication methods for those whom digital is not an option and continue to ensure our engagement with community leaders, influencers, and other stakeholders supports this work.



Newsletters

We will distribute a residents' magazine highlighting important news, events and achievements.



Media and media partners

We will issue press releases to provide journalists with timely and accurate information about significant developments and initiatives connected to our strategic plan and respond to enquiries from the media. We will utilise local and regional media outlets to broadcast important messages including, radio, television and digital advertising platforms.



Community outreach

We will have conversations with the community and our stakeholders, build relationships with organisations so that the community can be better represented in our decision making, strategy formulation and the delivery of services.

We will support consultations and engagement in neighbourhoods and communities and support the work of the co-production strategy. We will utilise social media platforms, forums and events such as focus groups to discuss important issues and gather feedback.



Events

We will work with partners and identify funding opportunities to develop a programme of events that unite our community and bring a sense of belonging and sense of pride in the Mansfield district.

Events will also provide an opportunity for civic engagement and community involvement and create spaces where the community can interact, socialise and build relationships with each other.



Internal communications

Our aim is to embed the mission and vision of the council into all officers within the authority, and empower them to be our spokespeople when out and about in the community.

We will do this by keeping employees up-to-date with news about the council on available channels including email, the intranet, digital screens and TeamTalk. We will be able to evaluate our effectiveness by asking staff for feedback, wherever possible.

We have a separate strategy for our internal communications for use by council officers.



Campaigns and marketing activity

Our campaign work is usually multi-channel and is based on the needs of services and the activities identified in the corporate plan and associated service plans. Our work is prioritised by strategic fit, SMART objectives and strong outcomes.



Corporate Leadership

The communications team has a place at the corporate leadership team and cabinet meetings and is proactive in setting regular meetings with heads of service and senior managers to keep up to date on council business.

We also regularly attend partnership meetings to ensure we are kept updated with information, so that we can plan our work accordingly.

To support the delivery of the corporate plan through a strong narrative and positive promotion of the council's ambitions.

- 1 Develop a set of key messages for our corporate priorities to ensure consistency and focus
- 2 Prioritise service-based multi-campaigns that meet our corporate objectives
- 3 Develop case studies and stories which can proactively promote the work of the council and its services
- 4 Continue to nurture relationships with media to improve media coverage so that a balanced picture can be given to the public
- 5 Look for ways to provide engaging and shareable content that reflects our corporate priorities
- 6 Consistent branding and use of our style guide and support for communicators across our council

To increase awareness and engagement of the council's services and to celebrate success within our district

- 1 Develop a Mansfield mouthpiece style brand, for example, Make Mansfield Together, to support our consultation work and the efforts of the co-production strategy
- 2 Support the development of forums, collaborations and partnerships so that residents can be represented and heard
- 3 Ensure that the views of residents are heard and considered when formulating strategy, designing services, campaigns and processes
- 4 Continue to look for ways in which we can bring our content to life
- 5 Consider how existing corporate events can be used as part of our corporate engagement approach
- 6 Work on insight from sources such as Local Government Inform and work with partners and community engagement groups to identify ways to target those who are hardest to reach
- 7 Create content and support the sharing of content that celebrates people and places

To build trust between the council and its stakeholders and audiences

- 1 Provide timely information for our audiences that is honest, transparent and easy to understand
- 2 Be responsive to media requests and proactive in our ambition to promote a positive and realistic image of the council
- 3 We will be responsive to the needs and concerns of our stakeholders and address concerns and enquiries with empathy, understanding and compassion.
- 4 We will be human in our response and take necessary action to escalate and resolve issues

To increase community engagement and participation in local government decisions and initiatives

- 1 We will listen actively to concerns, opinions, and feedback and provide clear, honest information about our goals, strategies and progress.
- 2 We will encourage all members of our community to engage in consultation and co-production
- 3 Use insight to support the targeted work of the organisation regarding hard-to-reach people
- 4 Be champions for the council's values and aims regarding cohesiveness, representation and co-production
- 5 Look to extend our range of channels with our available resources to provide information in places where our audiences can access and engage with them.

Deliver meaningful campaigns, impacting and provide real results

- 1 Deliver promotions on a campaign basis with clear strategic objectives, outcomes and purpose.
- 2 Complete a channel and audiences audit to identify what channels are suitable for our audience and produce and promote content accordingly
- 3 Adopt a digital-first approach in our communications and continue to provide alternative methods of communication for whom digital is not accessible to them
- 4 Provide regular corporate reporting on metrics, engagement, growth and reaction to our communications
- 5 Seek feedback from audiences and look to tailor content and improve communications

Considerations

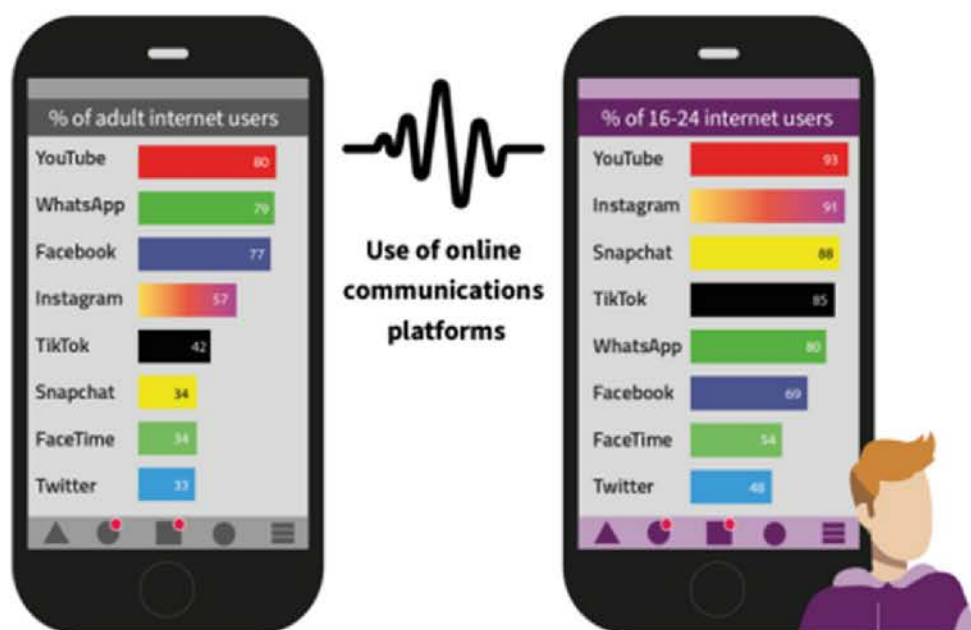
Method	Audience	Frequency	Considerations
My Mansfield Magazine	All residents	Twice per year	Digital version available on our website for accessibility.
			Consider including a translated digital version for people who do not speak English as a first language with a QR direct to the translated versions.
			We can also consider doing an easy read version for those with learning difficulties.
			Consider holding in person meetings twice per year in areas where older people live to distribute My Mansfield and talk together about projects and concerns. Large format print versions available.
			Ward councillors could also organise and attend these. Or magazines are made available at ward surgeries.
E-news: Residents, Business, Waste & Recycling, Culture	Subscribers to e-news via our sign up page	Monthly	To increase the number of sign ups for targeted messaging.
Events	Residents and stakeholders	Seasonal events programme	Opportunity for services to promote what they do and talk to customers about any issues.

Website	All audiences	Always on	Transactional to report, pay and find out information on services.
Intranet	Staff and Members	Always on	Go-to place for news, policies, procedures and documents.
Press releases	Media / Targeted Stakeholders / Targeted Media	Daily / weekly	Includes media packages of photo and videos where relevant.
Social media	Adult residents and stakeholders	Always on	Easily accessible content including photography, graphics and video that is shareable.

The OfCom 2023 report on Adult's Media Use and Attitude report shows that **YouTube** is the most popular channel for adult followed by **WhatsApp** and **Facebook**.

YouTube and **Instagram** are most popular with the under 24 year olds with **SnapChat** and **TikTok** close fourth and fifth choice.

With regards to the council's channel growth in the future, consideration will be taken on how we utilise the most popular and widely accessible channels to help communicate with our audiences.



Source: OfCom 2023

Evaluation

All of our work is evaluated on outcomes, not just outputs. While some metrics teach us about using of a particular technique or channel, it is ultimately whether we have achieved the objectives of a particular campaign or engagement exercise and the overall perceptions of the council that will show true value for our work.

We will use the following methods to evaluate success:

- Surveys (including staff surveys)
- Google Analytics
- Social media analytics
- Email analytics
- Key message penetration in media
- Resident surveys
- Media coverage reports
- Quarterly performance reviews

This strategy will be reviewed annually, and fully updated in 2027.



