

Section 4: Glossary

Audiences

The people, or groups of people, you need to engage in order for your findings to have an impact. A strategic approach to communications encourages the identification of 'target' or 'priority' audiences: those who have the greatest interest in, influence on or ability to deliver your objectives.

Communications objectives

What your communications must deliver to help you achieve your wider goals. Communications objectives should avoid focusing on the output (eg produce a blogging site) and concentrate on the desired impact (eg raise awareness of the findings that indicate X among health policymakers in Y, leading to amended practice in Z).

Communications plan

A communications plan is your action plan. If your strategy is the 'why', 'who' and 'what' of your communications, the plan is the 'when' and 'how'. It also identifies who is responsible for delivering what.

Communications strategy

A communications strategy summarises the key decisions that will direct your overall communications approach. A standard strategy includes what you need your communications to achieve (objectives), why it is important, who you need to engage as a priority (audiences), what they need to hear from you (key messages) and, broadly, how you will go about communicating to them (communications channels, main actions and over what time frame).

Messages

Key messages are the succinct pieces of information you think your audiences will remember and respond to above all else. They are clear and concise statements that provide focus for the content of your wider communications. They enable consistency of communication across teams and/or different communications channels.

Policymakers

Those responsible for the creation of policy. Government policy will be made under the direction of ministers but influenced by professional bodies, charities, foundations, think tanks and academics. Other bodies set policy for how they undertake their statutory role (eg the Care Quality Commission will set policy on how inspections take place). Both are legitimate target audiences for researchers, depending on the nature of the research and its findings.

Practice audiences

Those that work in a clinical or practice setting whose approach or behaviour can be informed by research findings.