

# Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 - 2030

This strategy sets out how Care Inspectorate Wales will maintain and improve the way we are visible, accessible, and engaged with the people and communities we serve, including those who use care services, their families, and the providers who deliver care across Wales.

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# Introduction

The communications landscape has undergone unprecedented transformation over the past five years, fundamentally reshaping how we engage with people.

This period has witnessed a dramatic acceleration in digital-first communication, the emergence of artificial intelligence as a powerful tool for content creation, and an increased emphasis on evidence-based, behavioural science-informed approaches to communication and engagement.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst for change, demonstrating both the critical importance of clear, accessible communication and the need for rapid adaptation to new channels and formats. For organisations like ours, this period highlighted the vital role that regulatory bodies play in maintaining public trust and providing assurance during times of crisis. People's expectations have evolved accordingly, with demands for more personalised and inclusive engagement becoming the norm rather than the exception.

The rise of misinformation has heightened the importance of trusted, authoritative communication from credible sources. This challenge has particular resonance for regulatory and oversight bodies, where establishing and maintaining trust is fundamental to effectiveness. People need to know not just that we exist, but what we do and how we can help them. This shift towards greater transparency and accountability aligns with growing public expectations that organisations should report openly on their findings, even when this means challenging established practices or systems.

Simultaneously, there has been a fundamental evolution in how public bodies approach stakeholder engagement. The traditional model of one-way communication has given way to genuine co-production approaches, where the voices and experiences of people using services informs and shapes organisational priorities. This transformation reflects a broader recognition that meaningful influence comes not from authority alone, but from demonstrating real understanding of the challenges faced by those we serve.

The increasing complexity of care systems and the growing recognition of partnership working as essential to improving outcomes has also transformed the communications landscape. Organisations can no longer operate in isolation; effective influence requires collaborative approaches that leverage collective knowledge and expertise to drive improvements.

Our new communication and engagement strategy responds to these fundamental shifts by positioning us as a trusted, visible, and influential voice in Wales' care landscape. It recognises our unique insight and expertise only creates positive change when it is effectively communicated to the right audiences at the right time, in ways that inspire action and build confidence in our role as champions for those receiving care.

## Strategic context

In April 2025 we launched our strategic plan which outlines our priorities for the next five years. One of the three key themes in our strategic plan is to:

**Influence** - Be well known and trusted, sharing our unique insight and expertise to make a positive difference. We will:

- Increase our visibility to ensure people know what we do and what we can help with.
- Ensure our work is informed by people accessing and working in care services.
- Report openly, and without favour on what we learn about care in Wales, not being afraid to challenge where we see opportunities to intervene on behalf of those receiving care.
- Work together across CIW and with our partners, sharing what we know to improve outcomes for people.

This communications and engagement strategy outlines in more detail how we will achieve these ambitions.

## Policy and regulatory environment

The care sector in Wales continues to face unprecedented pressures, from demographic changes and increasing complexity of need to ongoing workforce challenges. These pressures have intensified public and political focus on the quality, safety, and sustainability of care services, creating both opportunities and responsibilities for regulatory bodies to provide clear, evidence-based insight that can inform policy development and service improvement.

## Professional communications landscape

Government communications has undergone significant transformation, moving towards evidence-based, behavioural science-informed approaches that prioritise genuine engagement over traditional broadcast models. The Government Communication Service's emphasis on campaigns that 'make a difference' through the OASIS framework

(Objectives, Audience/insight, Strategy/Ideas, Implementation, Scoring/Evaluation) provides a robust foundation for developing communications that achieve measurable outcomes rather than simply generating awareness.

This shift towards outcome-focused communication aligns with our strategic priority to influence positive change in care services. By adopting behavioural science principles, particularly the COM-B model (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation, Behaviour), we can better understand and address the barriers that prevent different stakeholders from engaging effectively with our work or acting on our findings.

## **Technological and digital transformation**

The rapid advancement of digital communication tools, including the emergence of generative artificial intelligence, presents both opportunities and challenges for regulatory communications. These technologies offer new possibilities for creating accessible, personalised content and engaging with diverse audiences through their preferred channels.

The increased expectation for multi-channel, accessible communication means we must consider not only what we communicate, but how different audiences, including those with disabilities, those who use British Sign Language, and those with varying levels of digital literacy, can access and engage with our content.

## **Legal obligations for inclusive communication**

The Equality Act 2010 requires us to make reasonable adjustments ensuring equal access to information for all. We must consider the nine protected characteristics alongside socioeconomic and geographic factors that can create barriers to accessing information.

We must also ensure all our work meets Welsh language standards.

## **Where are we now?**

- Our social media followers are steadily increasing but engagement rates are decreasing
- A third of providers are engaging with the e-bulletin content
- CIW website users increased 20% between 2024 and 2025
- The average rating across all our provider events was 4.5 out of 5
- 1492 people gave us feedback during local authority inspections in 2024/25

## Theme 1: Build awareness and understanding

### What we want to achieve:

People in Wales understand what CIW does, how we can help them make informed care decisions, and how to share their experiences with us.

### Strategic objectives:

- Increase public understanding of how CIW ratings and the service directory support care decisions
- Ensure people know how to provide feedback on care services
- Proactively manage our reputation through strategic media engagement

## Theme 2: Enable meaningful engagement

### What we want to achieve:

People using services and care providers can easily engage with us, share their experiences, and see how their feedback shapes our work.

### Strategic objectives:

- Create accessible opportunities for service users to share experiences and influence improvement
- Close the feedback loop – showing how we use what people tell us and communicating outcomes back to participants
- Embed best practice engagement standards, including government communication principles and national engagement standards for Wales

## Theme 3: Strengthen digital and inclusive communication

### What we want to achieve:

Our communication channels are accessible, user-friendly, and effective, while ensuring we reach all communities through appropriate methods.

### Strategic objectives:

- Develop user-centred digital tools that meet the diverse needs of service users and providers
- Reach diverse audiences through both digital and non-digital channels, ensuring no

one is excluded

- Continuously audit and improve accessibility across all our communication channels
- Use technology, including AI where appropriate, to enhance (not replace) human engagement

## **Theme 4: Develop strategic partnerships and communication capability**

### **What we want to achieve:**

We engage systematically with key stakeholders and empower colleagues across CIW to plan and deliver effective communications.

### **Strategic objectives:**

- Build and maintain strategic stakeholder relationships through systematic planning and engagement
- Develop a central stakeholder database to ensure consistent, coordinated engagement
- Upskill colleagues across CIW in communication planning, reducing reliance on the central team and fostering proactive communication culture

## **Delivery plan**

### **2026 / 2027**

- Audit of current provider e-bulletins and improvements delivered
- Audit of current social media channels and improvements delivered
- Media training for relevant CIW colleagues
- Media handling toolkit developed and rolled out
- Website options appraisal completed
- Ratings campaign planning begins
- Project start - listening to people using services - RISCA services
- Update all style guides

### **2027 / 2028**

- Develop a 3 year event delivery plan
- Develop a communication planning toolkit
- Develop an engagement planning toolkit
- Start website improvement project

- Accessibility improvement programme begins
- Ratings campaign to go live
- Deliver outputs for listening to people using services
- Choosing care campaign planning begins
- Website improvement work begins
- Social media training for staff

## **2028 / 2029**

- Deliver 3 year event plan
- Embed engagement planning toolkit / staff training
- Website improvement project ends
- Accessibility improvement programme ends
- Continuation of ratings campaign
- Ongoing evaluation of 'listening' project
- Choosing care campaign to go live
- Website improvement work user testing

## **2029 / 2030**

- Deliver 3 year event plan
- Social media 3 year review
- Refresher media training and evaluate impact of toolkit
- Evaluate impact of 3 year event plan
- Evaluate impact of accessibility improvement programme
- Evaluation of ratings campaign
- Embed learning for other inspection teams
- Choosing care campaign evaluation
- Website improvement ends



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