

BEFRIENDERS HIGHLAND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Purpose

1. The purpose of the Communication Management Strategy (CMS) is to ensure that BHL communicates effectively with its stakeholders.

Objectives

2. The CMS has the following objectives:
- a. In line with the BHL Articles, raise public awareness of mental health issues across the Highlands.
 - b. Promote the benefits of mental health befriending services to friends, health professionals; other referral services, prospective volunteers, funders and donors.
 - c. Promote the benefits of distance befriending services for people with memory loss and carers, to friends, health professionals, prospective volunteers, funders and donors.
 - d. Influence key stakeholders, funders and donors to secure future resources and funding to continue to deliver BHL services.
 - e. Ensure that BHL friends, volunteers and staff are informed of BHL activities and events as well as changes in policies and procedures.
 - f. Assist in the recruitment of befriending volunteers.

Key Communication Methods

3. The main formal communication methods to be used by BHL are outlined below. A detailed communication matrix (the how, who, what, when and why) is at annex A.
- a. Face to Face Communication. BHL will primarily use Face to Face communication to engage with key stakeholders such as policy makers, health professionals, community planning partners, and key donors / funders. It is important that all Face to Face communications are planned (what do we want to achieve from the engagement) and any outcomes of the engagement are formally recorded with any follow up actions followed through.
 - b. Social Media. BHL is to use social media to inform 'followers' of BHL events and activities as well as commenting on mental health issues, memory loss and carers. Facebook and twitter are currently the primary social media platforms used by BHL and the use of other social media is to be encouraged as long as it can be monitored and updated regularly. The regular posting of events, activities and comments on social media will assist in increasing the 'profile' of the organisation and the benefits it provides. Wherever, possible social media 'posts' should refer to one or more of the key messages, link to the BHL Website and include the 'Just Text Giving' link.
 - c. Website. The BHL website is the primary information hub from which both internal and external stakeholders can gain information about the organisation and its objectives. Wherever possible all other forms of communication should have a link to the website. As the primary information hub it is imperative that the website is updated on a frequent basis to maintain interest and ensure that the information, such policies and procedures, are up to

date. To aid communication and demonstrate transparency the aim should be to publish as much information as possible on the website.

- d. BHL Blog. The BHL Blog is a means regularly of communicating to our friends, volunteers and a wide audience on what BHL is doing and also to promote wide mental health issues.
- e. BHL Newsletter. The BHL Newsletter is to be produced on a quarterly basis. Its contents should include articles of interest, future BHL activities and mental health events. Its main target audience is BHL friends and volunteers. The newsletter is to be produced in hardcopy, signposted on social media and posted onto the BHL website.
- f. Local News Releases. BHL is to endeavour to submit regular articles (monthly) to the local media organisations with the aim of: promoting the work of BHL; recognising the work of volunteers and staff; and to raise awareness of mental health issues. The main target audiences for local media engagement are the general public, prospective donors and volunteers.
- g. Annual Report. The aim of the Annual Report is to formally publish an overview of the services provided over the previous year as well as to publish the BHL accounts for scrutiny by the BHL Members.
- h. Public Engagement Events. Public Engagement Events are the means by which BHL can directly engage with members of the public on the services that BHL provide as well as raising the profile of the organisation as a whole. BHL should aim to conduct one public engagement event a year and where possible attend mental health forums and events.
- i. Funder / Donor Communication Requirements. BHL will have a responsibility to many funding organisation to provide reports on how the funds provided have been used to develop and deliver services. It is essential that BHL captures and meets these reporting requirements.

Roles and Responsibilities

4. BHL Board. The BHL Board Directors are responsible for:
 - a. Ensuring that BHL effectively identifies and engages with its stakeholders.
 - b. Reviewing the CMS, any communication targets and BHLs Key Messages on a 6-monthly basis and ensuring that they are aligned with BHLs strategic objectives.
 - c. Engaging with the identified key strategic stakeholders (see Annex A) to promote BHL activities and mental health issues.
5. BHL Executive Director (ED). The BHL ED is responsible for:
 - a. The organisation and delivery of the communication activities assigned to the ED and the BHL Staff within this CMS.
 - b. Recommending any changes / improvements to the CMS to the Board.
 - c. Engagement with identified key BHL funders and management level stakeholders.

- d. Maintaining a communication log (who / when) and database of communication activities (what was communicated).
 - e. Reporting to BHL Board meetings key communication activities that have taken place in the previous reporting period and planned communication activities for the next reporting period.
6. **BHL Staff**. BHL Staff are responsible for:
- a. Supporting the ED in the achieving the communication activities within the CMS.
 - b. Identifying communication opportunities to promote BHL services and wider mental health issues.
 - c. Engaging with BHL friends, volunteers and key operational level stakeholders.

Key Messages

- a. BHL services are proven to positively change the lives of our friends with mental health challenges and the volunteers who befriend them.
- b. The quality of life and personal outcomes of our friends are significantly improved by befriending.
- c. The quality of life and personal outcomes of our volunteers are significantly improved by befriending.
- d. BHL is an acknowledged provider of “Excellence in Befriending Services”¹ promoting safe and confidential friendships.
- e. BHL services have often reduced the burden primary health and social care professionals.
- f. Social isolation can be more damaging to health than smoking².
- g. There is a constant demand for BHL services.
- i. **Elevator Pitch** – BHL provides a recognised ‘Excellence in Befriending Service’ where volunteers provide safe and confidential friendships to members of the Highland community with mental health issues, memory loss and voluntary adult carers, in order to improve their quality of life and reduce loneliness, promote recovery and isolation.

¹ Excellence in Befriending Link

² NHS quote reference