

## **Communications Report 2023**

### *Background*

I would not have predicted readily last year that the peril facing the NHS would worsen, yet so it has proven. This on the one hand makes my role easier – it is apparent where the challenges now lie. But it also makes it even more important to use the resources we have to co-operate with others who share our aims.

Waiting times, training and staff shortfalls, budget insufficiencies, and increasing privatisation have become more of a problem in the past 12 months. Exacerbated by a mounting dissatisfaction in the workforce. Wider scale social and economic problems now overshadow and deepen the problems facing the NHS. It is not a time for the faint hearted.

The greatest hope is that this government's time has to be limited. With a general election coming, campaign groups have the chance to call politicians to account in a way that cannot be done when their seats are not up for re-election. Public attention on the NHS remains high and – so far – support for the NHS remains high. But waiting times are now lengthening to the point where avoidable harm is being inflicted on a scale not seen for many years, if ever. The public must remain committed to the principles of the NHS and not be sidetracked by attempts to blame NHS staff for its problems, which is likely. We and groups like us face that critical task. What we stand for has never been as important as now. And it has never been under so grave a threat.

### *What this means for Communications*

'More of the same but with more defined focus' is I believe what must be done now. Over the past year, we have worked with other groups on areas of concern, eg KONP and We Own It. We already have good links with like-minded organisations nationally. These must be developed over the coming year.

We continue to have a unique voice, founded on long years of clinical experience which other groups, the media, and the public recognise. That continues to be where we derive the authority and conviction of our messages from. As for last year, we need to choose where we are going to focus, and this year's AGM has as its main purpose finding suggestions about that.

### *Media and other channels*

DFNHS continues to receive regular enquiries from the national press. Over the last year we have been quoted in the *Guardian*, the *Sunday Post* in Scotland, and the *Morning Star*, as well as approached by the BBC. We have good national contacts through which to promote campaign messages. We continue to receive enquiries from journalists who are seeking advice.

The newsletter remains quarterly and has more articles from key authors outside the organisation. The website now has blogs posted twice a month, but members are invited to send in articles for posting or to talk to myself about doing so.

Our Twitter ('X') stream remains popular with over 2,100 followers. More volunteers would be very welcome, please, and I will gladly support anyone who offers their time.

Recruitment remains a concern. An objective remains to target doctors just reaching the end of their specialist training, aiming to recruit people just as early-career concerns are being surpassed. This has been hampered by the difficulty of obtaining personal details for individuals. If any members have suggestions, please let me know.

As for last year, we need to focus on what we should aim to do over the coming months, as the UK moves into one of the most important general elections for many years. We have a unique part to play but we must ensure we are part of the larger chorus, if the NHS is to stand any chance of being restored by any meaningful degree.

*Alan Taman*  
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