

Marketing and communication

The success of the travel plan depends on the goodwill and co-operation of staff. Communication is key to achieving this.



The travel plan will be asking staff to think about an activity which they will have undertaken routinely, perhaps for several years. For many, the thought of trying an alternative to their normal form of transport will be almost inconceivable. Some might find the possibility of change threatening whilst others may question why they should consider changing their travel habits. The success of the travel plan depends on the goodwill and co-operation of staff. Communication is key to achieving this.

The awareness raising and communications strategy should make people want to find out more about the travel plan, reassure them if they have any concerns and encourage their ongoing participation in its development. This can be achieved by providing information that is reliable and honest. An environment where the issues, positive and negative, are openly debated will attract goodwill and support. If information is incomplete, inaccurate or poorly disseminated it will engender dissatisfaction and distrust.

A well planned and managed awareness raising and communications strategy is crucial to the success of the travel plan. A poorly managed strategy can do considerable damage, which will then be much harder to rectify.

Section 6 in *A Travel Plan Resources Pack for Employers* provides a range of helpful ideas on awareness raising and marketing of a travel plan.

10.2 Steps towards successful awareness raising

The introduction of a travel plan can be treated in much the same way as the launch of a commercial product or service. This involves:

- **enlisting the help of the communications team**—ensure the communications team fully understand what a travel plan is and support it. The best way to achieve this is to include a member of the team on the Steering Group.
- **writing a communications strategy**—a sample Awareness Raising and Communications Strategy is included in Appendix 10A. It is recommended that a communications strategy is developed at the start of the travel plan process. This can be written with the communications team's assistance.

Steps involved in developing a communications strategy

There are four key steps when developing the communications strategy:

- Identify key messages.
- Identify the 'markets'.
- Identify the means of communication.
- Create a brand image.

Step 1: Identifying key messages


Staff need to understand why the plan is being developed and why it has senior management support. The key messages to be communicated need to be carefully thought through and should involve senior management input.

Positive messages

Being able to emphasise the positive is helpful. For example, if one reason for the travel plan is that the Trust is developing a new site, it is an opportunity to link it to the benefits the new build will bring to staff. Other messages are fundamental to the general concept of a travel plan:

- Organisations developing travel plans are **forward thinking** and **creative**.
- The Trust is providing **more flexibility and travel choice** for everyone in the Trust.
- **Improvements to travel choices** can help to bring about **cost savings** for staff and the Trust.
- The travel plan will **increase the efficiency of the Trust** through more effective travel to and from and in the course of work.
- The travel plan offers **health and fitness benefits** to staff in terms of encouraging walking and cycling.
- By offering choice, the Trust is **encouraging not forcing change**.
- The Trust is **improving site access** for everyone in the Trust and in the local community.
- The travel plan is realistic and aims for **achievable results**. For some it will just not be possible to change the way they commute or travel for their work.
- It is an example of the Trust's **concern for staff**.
- It demonstrates **the Trust's concern about the impact of its activity** on the local community and also on the wider environment.
- The plan is **about offering choice to staff** and **not** about banning the car. The Trust wants to make life easier not harder. Some may prefer not to use their car if only a realistic alternative exists.
- It is offering a **fairer** system. The provision of free parking to employees tends to discriminate against those who come by other modes. The travel plan helps those who, in the past, may not have had support.

The messages connected with the health benefits of an active lifestyle and the Trust's concern for staff well-being will be familiar ones to staff through their work and through the Improving Working Lives programme. Linking in with existing and complementary initiatives helps strengthen the message.

See Appendix 1A  of this Guide for health related facts which can also be used in the communications programme.

Negative messages

There will be aspects of the travel plan which may give cause for concern amongst some staff, or which may be interpreted negatively. Any concern which might affect a particular group should be addressed, even if it is not relevant to others. Honesty regarding any measures which might have an adverse effect will be respected. The negative aspects of the plan must be outweighed by the positive and the communications campaign must ensure that this message is understood.

Step 2: Identifying the ‘markets’—
 An objective of the communications strategy will be to reach every individual in the Trust so that they are properly informed about the travel plan and the measures being

implemented as part of it. In a Trust there are several ‘market segments’ or ‘audiences’ who will respond to different messages:



It is also useful to identify likely 'allies' in a Trust who could help to deliver the travel plan message, for instance, a keen cyclist, and to identify those that might most easily be 'converted' to travel by sustainable modes. For example, those within a four mile radius could be targeted for cycling, whilst those living close to a direct bus route to the site could benefit from information about the service.

Step 3: Identifying the means of communication

It is important to be aware of the different communications channels in existence in the Trust so that the most appropriate can be used at any given time. The communications team should be able to help with this. Experience has shown that organisations with an open and effective communication system are good candidates for successful travel plans.

Typically, information is disseminated internally through:

- Line management.
- HR department.
- Union representatives.
- Paper media, (newsletter, posters, leaflets, notices, letters attached to payslips).
- Internet/intranet and e-mail.
- Staff meetings/discussion forums/user groups, eg Bicycle User Groups.
- Display stands.
- Special events, eg Bike Week, walking day, car share day,

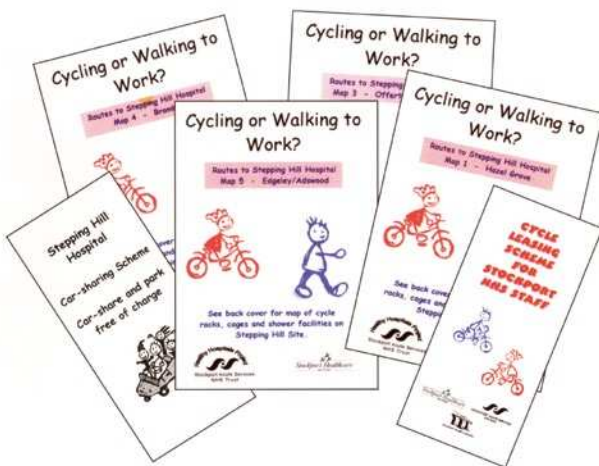
External communication networks will include:

- Local press.
- Local radio or television.
- National press.
- National radio or television.



Step 4. Creating a 'brand'

The creation of special branding for the travel plan or for particular measures is very helpful. It enables all travel and transport related activities that come under the plan's umbrella to be immediately identified. It also puts across a clear message that the travel plan is becoming part of the Trust's ethos and is not a passing phase. This need not require complex design work but could be an added logo or symbol on documents and posters or simply a slogan. The branding could be used not only on leaflets and notices but also on other material such as pens, place mats in the canteen, or on pool bicycles.




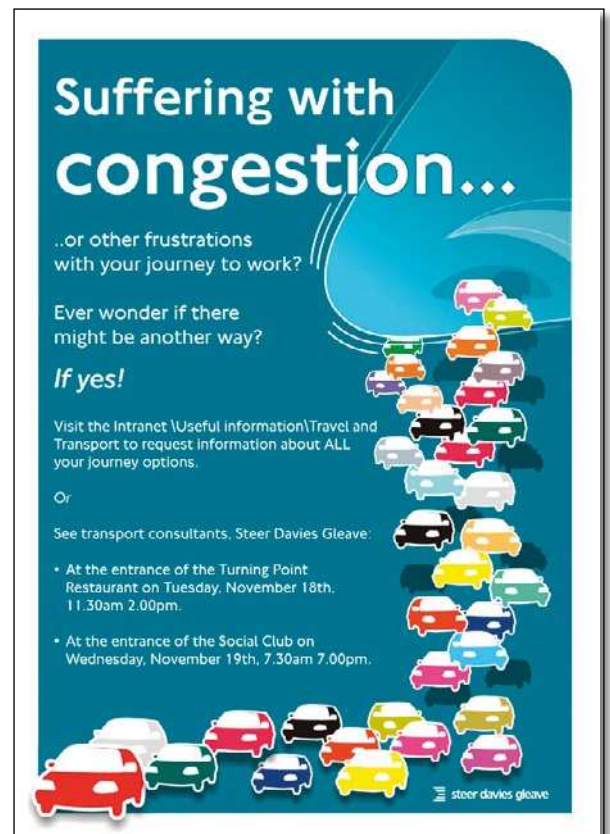
Stepping Hill Hospital produced literature with a common theme so that the 'family' of leaflets and other materials produced was instantly recognisable as associated with the travel plan.

For further information about maintaining interest in the travel plan see section 6.6 of *A Travel Plan Resources Pack for Employers*.

10.3 Developing an awareness raising and communications strategy

The awareness raising and communications strategy will promote, support and complement the travel plan. Developing the strategy should ideally start alongside the planning of the travel plan and, as the travel plan itself will be modified over time to accommodate changes in circumstances, so too the 'marketing' of the plan will evolve. It will need to be kept 'fresh', interesting and attractive.

In drawing up a strategy the key stages in the development of the plan must be identified so that appropriate awareness raising activities can be undertaken at each stage. At each stage it is necessary to consider what needs to be achieved and how this can best be done (See Appendix 10A ).






10.4 Awareness raising activities

The range of awareness raising activities is limited only by imagination and budget. Identifying those activities that will be most effective will rely on a good understanding of the individual Trust and its various groups of employees. Some suggestions are given below:

i) Easy to implement

- A dedicated travel plan section in the Trust newsletter, or a regular quarterly newsletter dedicated to the plan.
- Information on notice boards.
- Involvement in a national campaign.
- Promoting the health aspects of not using the car.
- Providing information about the travel plan to new recruits.
- Including reference to the Trust's travel plan on job advertisements.
- Publicising the costs of car ownership.
- Publicising the Trust's travel plan work via the local media.

A number of Trusts produce their own specific travel plan newsletters. For instance:

- Barking, Havering and Redbridge Hospitals NHS Trust—'TravelMatters' (see Appendix 10B )
- Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust—'On the Move' (see Appendix 10C )
- North Bristol NHS Trust—'A Better Way to Work' (see Appendix 10D )

ii) Activities requiring longer term effort

- Siting cycle racks near to the main entrance to make a statement to staff, patients and visitors that the Trust supports sustainable travel.
- Involving board members in a high profile event.
- Developing a BUG (Bicycle User Group) and if demand requires, do the same for public transport users or walkers.
- Putting the Trusts travel plan branding on Trust vehicles or even public buses that serve the site.
- Publicising the fact that reserved parking spaces have been abolished.

- Working with a neighbouring Trust on a joint promotion, for example, to launch a joint car-sharing scheme.

10.7 National campaigns

Dates of national awareness raising campaigns change annually and plenty of lead time should be allowed to prepare for these. Local authority travel plan officers should also be able to provide details of local events that Trusts could link into.

Details of national campaigns can be found in *A Travel Plan Resources Pack for Employers*, Appendix 6C.

10.8 Good practice

In many instances the key to a successful campaign is simply a question of paying attention to detail. If staff are interested but the information they require is difficult to obtain they will become easily discouraged. This can be avoided by ensuring:

- There is a central contact point (email address and internal telephone number) for all enquiries relating to the travel plan and that it is widely publicised;
- Enquiries receive responses as promptly as possible;
- Material such as timetables or maps are kept up to date and supplies are always well stocked;
- Notice boards are regularly tidied and information is up to date; and importantly

- Initiatives co-ordinate with other activities in the Trust.

10.9 Staff ownership

In large organisations such as NHS Trusts, it can be difficult to promote a sense of ownership to a new and potentially challenging initiative such as a travel plan. Communicating information is key but members of staff also need to be able to feed back their views. This can be done via the lines of information dissemination outlined in this section, such as through line management or Unions. Other mechanisms can also be used to engender staff ownership such as piloting an initiative and using focus groups.

For more information about running a focus group see Appendix 3C of *A Travel Plan Resources Pack for Employers*.

Summary: A good awareness raising and communications strategy:

- Starts the debate.
- Communicates key messages.
- Ensures all staff know about the issues.
- Communicates each stage of the process.
- Provides consistently reliable information.
- Feeds back successes and failures to staff.
- Continues to invigorate the travel plan once it is established.