

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2017 - 2020



CARE EDUCATION HEALTH & WELLBEING

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1. Introduction

1.1 Foreword

Oberstown Children Detention Campus provides safe and secure care and education to young people referred by the courts. At Oberstown, we recognise the value of effective communication both internally and externally. As a public body, we are committed to transparency and accountability in what we do and we consider it important that there is a shared public understanding of our work. Under our Strategic Plan 2017-2020 we made a commitment to develop a Communications and Engagement Strategy for the Oberstown Children Detention Campus. In setting out this plan, we aim to inform our staff and external stakeholders about our communication priorities over the next three years. The plan also demonstrates how Oberstown will communicate the purpose and function of the national facility with the public.

Effective communication is the corner stone of a successful organisation. In developing this strategy, we have recognised the need to set out our approach and ensure openness and transparency in the way we operate. At Oberstown, we recognise that we have a responsibility to promote effective and efficient communication internally and externally. We recognise that continuous improvements in the area of communication are necessary to ensure the operations of the Campus are enhanced, that all stakeholders understand the approach undertaken by the Campus – and that those working and living on the Campus are well informed and heard.

Oberstown is but one area of Ireland’s youth justice system and therefore it is vital that effective engagement takes place with stakeholders so that experiences are pooled and learnings are available to us all. On this basis, we are committed to sharing information that will help influence and shape policy development in the future. The views of young people through formal and informal participation will support our communication and engagement strategy for the next three years and to this end we have adopted a separate Strategy on the Participation of Young People in Decision-Making.

The legislative imperative to provide a safe and secure setting for young people sent to Oberstown by the courts also includes the expectation that what we do is communicated in an open and transparent way. This communications plan sets out the way forward for Oberstown over the coming years to ensure that communications, both internal and external, are a key priority for the organisation.

Pat Bergin, Oberstown Director



2. General

2.1 Overview

Oberstown Children Detention Campus provides young people referred by the courts with care and education in a safe and secure environment, helping them to address offending behaviour and prepare for a positive return to their families and communities.

In fulfilment of national law and policy, Oberstown accommodates all young people under 18 years of age on detention or remand orders.

The Campus is an amalgamation of three existing detention schools, based in a custom-built premises comprising new residential units, education, recreation, visiting, medical and other ancillary facilities. Oberstown is currently licensed to accommodate 48 boys and six girls.

There are currently 272 staff employed at the Campus comprising social care workers, night supervising officers, nursing staff, general operatives, domestic and administrative staff.

2.2 Organisational values and strategic objectives

The mission of Oberstown Children Detention Campus is to ensure that young people detained in Oberstown are supported to move away from offending behaviour to make a more positive contribution to society. Core values of the organisation, as set out in the Strategic Plan 2017-2020, include: Respect, Learning and reflection; Working Together; Honesty and Integrity and a commitment to quality care and support. These values are important to how we communicate and engage with our stakeholders and will inform the approach and tone of all our communication and engagement.

The five key objectives of the Strategic Plan 2017-2020 are to:

1. Provide the best possible care for young people;
2. Develop our people and our organisation;
3. Implement the policies, procedures and standards consistent with the best model of detention for young people;
4. Enhance communications aligned to our values and mission;
5. Deliver robust governance at all levels and drive effective accountability.

2.3 Principles of communication

Under this Communications and Engagement Strategy, Oberstown will ensure that there are effective, modern communication systems in place to create a more accessible and proactive communications culture. This will in part be achieved by being open, transparent and timely in all communications activities.

Internally, good communication is a reciprocal process, and while management is responsible for providing staff with the relevant information, staff are responsible for ensuring that they access it.

Management should:	Staff should:
Brief staff on appropriate developments and issues.	Seek information and share their views.
Encourage contribution from all.	Share relevant information and ideas.
Provide staff with constructive feedback.	Give constructive feedback.

Externally, Oberstown seeks to increase public understanding of the Oberstown model of care, creating awareness of the CEHOP model (care, education, health and well-being, offending behaviour and preparation for returning to families and community) and creating a shared understanding of the potential for positive outcomes for young people at Oberstown.

3. Communications Aims

3.1 Objectives

This Communications and Engagement Strategy builds on the Oberstown Strategic Plan 2017-2020 in order to address the need for more effective communication. The Strategy builds on a number of related initiatives that have been put into practice over the past year.

This Strategy has the following objectives:

1. Communicate more effectively with stakeholders, the media and the public to increase public awareness and understanding of the role and work of Oberstown.
2. Strengthen staff engagement by being more open, accountable and transparent.
3. Build a strong Oberstown reputation as an organisation that provides a valuable service for young people in conflict with the law and is a trusted source of information.
4. Identify new communications tools and opportunities to communicate Oberstown’s messages more engagingly and to a wider audience.

We will do this by:

- Being clear, understandable and straightforward in both internal and external communications.
- Being proactive with internal and external stakeholders.

3.2 Audiences

The internal and external audiences for Oberstown’s communications are illustrated here. Although the manner of our communication with these groups may vary, effective communication with all our stakeholders is important.



3.3 Internal communications

Internal stakeholders include, primarily, young people and staff. In this area, we aim to:

- Promote awareness of the Oberstown vision, mission and goals among all staff, including by incorporating them into all internal communications.
- Promote understanding of policy developments among staff to ensure effective policy implementation.
- Promote and share achievements of staff and young people.
- Inspire confidence and commitment among all internal stakeholders.
- Undertake assessment and identification of the most appropriate tools to deliver Oberstown internal communications.

We will do this by:

- Promoting awareness and understanding of the role of individual staff in providing the best possible care of young people.
- Ensuring that all information shared is accurate and of a consistent quality.
- Involving all internal stakeholders in Campus development.
- Implementing two-way communication and an ongoing system of feedback.

3.4 External communications

Externally, Oberstown aims to:

- Raise awareness and public understanding of the work being done at Oberstown and the challenges facing young people in detention.
- Influence and engage the wider youth justice sector.
- Maintain positive working relationships with media representatives and share accurate information that promotes greater understanding.
- Ensure Oberstown's share of voice across the news, policy and public agenda.
- Optimise internal resources to support communications.

We will do this by:

- Growing stakeholder relationships to increase sector presence and engage in joint efforts where appropriate.
- Undertaking assessment and identification of the most appropriate tools to deliver Oberstown's external communications.
- Engaging in effective reputation management for Oberstown.
- Managing issues and crisis communications effectively.
- Delivering consistent and transparent community engagement.

4. Communication structures

Under this Plan, Oberstown is committed to using and, as identified, further enhancing the following mechanisms to improve communication with staff and stakeholders.

4.1 Management meetings

Management meetings with unit and campus managers take place weekly and allow for a two-way communication process. In order to increase transparency, a report of these meetings will be published by the Campus Director on the Oberstown Intranet.

4.2 Unit team meetings

Unit managers hold weekly meetings to keep their staff informed of important issues concerning their unit. These briefings will continue to be used to communicate any significant developments to staff.

4.3 Line managers

Effective internal communications, both formal and informal, depends on the effective flow of relevant and accurate information between line managers, supervisors and staff. To enhance their communication role, unit managers and supervisors will be supported to develop their capacity to engage in good communication, including good listening, facilitating discussion and debate and dealing with disagreement

4.4 Town Halls

To enhance the sharing of information relating to operational and strategic matters, Oberstown will hold Town Hall sessions with staff and relevant stakeholders on a regular basis.

4.5 Sector engagement

Oberstown will grow stakeholder relationships to share information, experience and expertise among its sectoral colleagues and partner organisations. The Campus will seek to host information and exchange sessions for key communications contacts to meet and facilitate a discussion around the best ways in which to work together.

4.6 Conferences/seminars

Oberstown will seek to participate in relevant public events and seminars relating to young people in conflict with the law. During the period of this plan, we will host a national or international conference on youth detention.

4.7 Participation of young people

In line with national policy and international human rights standards, Oberstown has developed a Campus strategy on the participation of young people in decision-making. This also deals with all means of communication and engagement with young people.

4.8 Board of Management

The Oberstown Board of Management meets every month and a report of each meeting is distributed to staff, including via the public Oberstown website.

4.9 Community outreach

Ongoing two-way communication with the neighbouring community and its representatives takes place via the Board of Management, on which the community is formally represented, and via twice yearly, face-to-face meetings with Campus management. A communication protocol is kept under regular review.

5. Communication Tools

Oberstown uses a variety of tools to communicate with staff and stakeholders. The methods of communication the organisation uses are set out below.

5.1 Website

The Oberstown website, Oberstown.com is the window into Oberstown for the public and it will continue to be an accessible, searchable, reliable and flexible source of information about developments on Campus. The website amplifies Oberstown's strengths and expertise through content on policy developments, data on young people, ongoing research and practical factsheets concerning Oberstown and the youth justice sector. For internal stakeholders, the website is a tool for information and engagement.

5.2 Intranet

Oberstown is developing a new intranet system to act as information, knowledge and skills sharing resource. The Intranet will provide an internal platform for the sharing of information and developments about the Campus. It will allow staff to share information and experience.

5.3 Social media

Under this communications plan Oberstown will continue to explore the use of social media as an appropriate internal and external communications tool.

5.4 Oberstown internal newsletter

The Oberstown newsletter is now delivered digitally using MailChimp. The content highlights positive internal developments and shares good practice and achievements. It is also used to update staff on any on-going issues/projects around the Campus.

5.5 Electronic displays

Specific electronic programme notice boards have been installed throughout the Campus and are used to provide updates on developments and campus news and feature calls for staff engagement.

5.6 'Have your say' emails

Oberstown will establish a dedicated email for both internal and external stakeholders to 'have your say'. It will allow for valued opinions and feedback from staff and partner organisations to be shared and considered with a timely reply process.

5.7 Annual Report

The Annual Report, which is presented to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, is also available to internal and external stakeholders. The Report includes updates on the implementation of new strategies, policies and initiatives.

5.8 Themed reports

Oberstown will publish two themed reports annually, based on issues relevant to Oberstown and the delivery of youth justice services.

5.9 Pro-active media engagement

Oberstown will identify and develop a pro-active calendar of engagement for Oberstown. This will increase awareness and understanding around Oberstown and the work which staff engages in, so that reporting is not driven solely by negative developments.

5.10 Press office function

Oberstown will ensure accurate information reaches the public in a timely manner. A full press office function ensures all media queries and requests are attended to and that press releases and news reports accurately reflect the Oberstown position.

5.11 Crisis communications

While many aspects of crisis management can only be dealt with as encountered, there are some medium range planning measures which can be undertaken.

Oberstown has developed a structured framework for communications in a time of crisis, ensuring dissemination of the most up to date facts and adherence to an agreed media approach with the capacity to deliver the media message through the relevant channels.

5.12 Establishing Oberstown expertise

Oberstown will examine internal resources, information flow and capacity to produce Oberstown data and factsheets, branded reports, as well as research and statistical analysis for external audiences.



6. Conclusion

The Oberstown Communications and Engagement Strategy has been developed to support the delivery of the Oberstown Strategy 2017 – 2020. This plan will direct communications both internally and externally so that Oberstown is respectful, consistent and clear in its aims, target audiences and tools used for communications.

The activity and actions identified in this Strategy will be reviewed periodically by the Board, based on an annual implementation plan agreed by the Board.





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