



## SOP Form

### Health Service News

#### **Ethics**

How we communicate with staff is reflective of how we want people to communicate across the organisation.

The HSE Internal Communications (IC) team always aim to communicate with staff in accordance with the Institute of Internal Communication (IOIC) profession's ethical guide. This means that all communications we create are accessible, inclusive, and transparent to our audience.

The focus for Health Service News updates is clear, timely, consistent, professional messaging that is relevant to all staff.

The Internal Communications team are happy to work with you to help to create an effective message for staff. Please read our content rules before submitting content. These rules are covered in greater detail in the following sections.

#### **Content rules**

1. All content must meet Plain English requirements.
2. Jargon must be limited or removed.
3. Marketing language cannot be used.
4. The layout must comply with accessibility guidelines for users with screen readers.
5. The word count is 100 words maximum for content and 70 characters for headlines.
6. We speak directly to staff using 'you'.
7. We say 'we' rather than the HSE.
8. We use active language rather than the passive voice.



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#### **Accessibility legislation**

We are required to make our staff website and any mobile applications accessible under the European accessibility act. The Internal Communications team develops content in line with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 AA standard.

This means that:

- All our content must meet Plain English requirements.
- The layout must comply with accessibility guidelines for users with screen readers. We work closely with the digital accessibility officer in this regard.

[Read the healthservice.ie Accessibility Statement](#)

#### **Plain English**

We write using Plain English so that everyone can understand us. We simplify complex terms and remove jargon to make the messages clear for all readers. If staff cannot understand the message, they cannot take action.

- The HSE Digital team has developed useful guidelines around plain English. Please refer to them when drafting your content.
- Hemmingway App is a useful online tool for checking if your content could be simplified.
- Use the plain English A to Z for alternatives to complex terms.

The IC team will help you simplify your message into plain English.

#### **Layout**

- Link text needs to be descriptive in line with accessibility legislation  
Link text that is descriptive: Read the COVID-19 report  
Link text that is not descriptive: Read more or read here
- Images cannot contain text. Alt text will be added to all images by the Internal Communications team to tell screen-readers what the image contains.
- Bullet lists can be used to lay out information clearly, where applicable.
- Font should not be in bold as screenreaders can't parse that there should be an emphasis on bolded text.
- Flow: When compiling your message, put the main information at the start. Readers need know the Who, What, When, Where and Why.



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#### **Word count**

The word count is 100 words maximum. Headlines should be short – 70 characters maximum (including spaces) Headlines should give a clear description of what the update is about.

Staff are busy. All content must be short and to the point so it can be read and understood quickly. Link to core content on [healthservice.ie](http://healthservice.ie), where possible where staff can read more detailed content online.

Keep sentences to 15 to 20 words on average. Avoid wordy phrases.

\* If the message requires more detail talk to us about potentially developing a staff news article or core website content on the subject.

#### **Tone**

We do not use slogans or marketing language in staff communications. Information needs to be informational and factual.

All content must simply state the facts.

- Marketing language: We are delighted to announce that the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Learning Hub is now available. This is an exciting new development for the HSE.
- Factual language: The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Learning Hub is now available on HSeLanD

We tailor messages to staff with a focus on their specific needs. Use 'I', 'we' and 'you'. Avoid saying 'the HSE'.

Use the active voice instead of the passive voice in your writing.

- Active: The nurse can vaccinate your child
- Passive: Your child can be vaccinated

Owned:

Created:

For Review: