

MEMBER RELATIONS STRATEGY

This Member Relations Strategy underpins the Benenden Healthcare Society's mission statement, which is:

To observe and promote the principle of mutuality in the provision of healthcare services: complementing the NHS when necessary by providing current members and their nominees with a range of quality services in return for affordable and equitable contributions; safeguarding the future by conducting itself in an open, caring, responsive and business-like manner.

It sets out the Society's commitment to engage with its members, the encouragement of members' involvement in the democratic running of the Society, and the mechanisms which ensure that all members are able to have their say.

This strategy is the responsibility of (and is owned by) the Committee of Management, and is executed under the joint direction of the Society Secretary and Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the Society's High Level Authorities regarding Member Communication and Society Branches*.

Objectives

The prime objectives of our Member Relations Strategy are;

- To provide members, regularly and promptly, with all necessary information on the governance and future strategy of their Society.
- To ensure that all members have the opportunity and facility to express their views on appropriate and important matters which affect their membership by facilitating contact between members, their Branch committees, the Society Secretary and the Committee of Management.
- To encourage and help members to take an active interest and/or role in the governance of their Society in the most effective and cost efficient manner.
- To facilitate the work of the Society's Branch committees and encourage their active participation, particularly at the Annual Conference and AGM.
- To report on feedback from individual members so that the Committee better understands the needs and views of members both within and outside of the Branch structure.

Provision of Information to Members

Our aim is to provide members with timely and appropriate information about the governance of their Society. Because this is such an important issue, the Society has an internal set of guidelines (called the Communications Policy) on how information should be communicated by all Society stakeholders in order to ensure consistency and compliance with the law and our regulators.

Our main commitments are:

- To ensure that all members receive appropriate, relevant and consistent information about the services, operation and future strategy of the Society, particularly regarding any forthcoming significant changes.
- To ensure that all members receive at least one members' newsletter, *Together* magazine, each year.
- To ensure that all members living in the UK receive an annual invitation to the general meetings of their Branch, and to encourage members to attend and participate in order to make their views known.
- To ensure that all new members are informed of the Branch to which they belong and how they can get involved.
- To facilitate contact (where requested) between individual members, their Branch committee and/or the appropriate representative of the Society.
- To ensure that Branch Committee Members receive regular and appropriate information and training to facilitate the operation of their Branch and to encourage relevant input to the Society's Annual Conference and AGM.
- To provide timely information and relevant documentation to participating members and Branch Committees prior to the Society's Annual Conference and AGM.
- To facilitate the provision and maintenance of dedicated Branch areas on our website.
- To make the following information easily available to all members via the Society website and in hard copy:
 - Information about the rights and obligations of members
 - Information about the member relations strategy
 - Contact details for member relations issues
 - Information about Branch general meetings
 - Current Society Rulebook
 - Current Society Business Plan
 - Annual Report and Accounts
 - Details of the Committee of Management including biographies
 - Terms of Reference of statutory sub-committees
 - Details about the next Annual Conference and AGM
 - Results of voting at the previous Annual Conference and AGM
- To give all members living in the UK the opportunity to attend general information 'roadshow' meetings at least once every five years.
- To respond to general questions from members which concern governance and Branch membership issues.

Complaints

If a member wishes to make a complaint, the Society has a well-established Complaints Policy and further details are available from the Society's website or in hard copy on request.

The Committee of Management will keep abreast of members' concerns by:

- Reviewing at Committee of Management meetings details of the Society's complaints records and any regulatory breaches.
- Reviewing reports on internal audit or compliance reviews of the handling of regulatory breaches and complaints.
- Ensuring that all Society staff are trained in handling and reporting complaints positively and effectively.

Branch Meetings, Annual Conference and AGM

The Society holds a Conference and AGM in June each year in order to debate and agree changes to the rulebook, consider propositions (such as changes to the contribution rate or suggestions for new services), and to receive statutory reports. Every other year elections are held for the Committee of Management, Society Secretary and other positions listed below. The Society encourages attendance at its Conferences through its Branch delegation system. Members who wish to participate can do so as follows:

1. All members are encouraged to attend their Branch general meetings. At the first meeting of the year (usually the Branch's own AGM), a certain number of Branch members will be nominated to represent the Branch as delegates at the forthcoming Society Conference. A number of members may also be given the opportunity to attend Conference as observers. Anyone interested in attending in either of these capacities should speak to their Branch Secretary on arrival at their Branch general meeting.

Also during this meeting members will be asked for their views about the Society and, if agreed by the meeting, propositions can be formulated and submitted for the Conference agenda. At the same time, anyone who is interested in standing for the position of Society Secretary or a position on the Committee of Management, Standing Orders Committee or National Appeals Committee, may ask their Branch to agree to nominate them for election at Conference. Please contact the Society Secretary if you would like more details on these roles.

Any member who would like to give their views on the Society's performance or put forward suggestions for propositions, but who is unable to attend their Branch general meeting, is encouraged to contact either their Branch Secretary or the Society Secretary.

2. At the end of March, a list of propositions and details of the election nominees are distributed to all Branch Committee members, and to any member who has indicated an interest in attending Branch general meetings. Details are also posted on the Society's website.
3. Four weeks prior to Conference, a formal agenda is circulated to all Branch Committee members, nominated delegates and other Conference attendees, and is also posted onto the Society's website. The agenda includes:
 - A clear description of each proposition to be voted on together with a rationale to explain the reasoning behind the proposition
 - Biographical details of people who are standing for election to any of the Society Officer or other posts
 - A delegate seating plan and summary of voting strengths
 - Details of venue, timings, domestic and any social arrangements.

The pack of information which accompanies the agenda includes:

- Standing Orders Committee Report which sets out the running order of debate at Conference and gives details of voting procedure in accordance with the Society's rulebook
 - Annual Report and Accounts with a covering commentary
 - 'At a Glance' Review of the previous year
 - Formal reports of the Committee of Management, Chief Executive Officer, Society Secretary and Corporate Services Director
 - Rulebook.
4. After the agenda has been distributed and before Conference itself, each Branch will arrange a second general meeting (a mandating meeting) at which members are invited to give their views on each proposition and the nominations for elections. The delegates are then given the Branch's mandate to vote in a certain way on each issue.
- Any member who would like to give their views on the propositions or elections but who is unable to attend their Branch mandating meeting is encouraged to contact either their Branch Secretary or the Society Secretary, who will raise the issue on their behalf.
5. Conference itself is held in a venue whose facilities are fully accessible by all attendees. Assistance will be available for any attendee with special needs, either in terms of physical access, visual or audio enhancements, presentation of written materials or dietary requirements.
6. After Conference, a verbatim report of proceedings is made available to attendees, and this is also available to any member via the Society's website or in hard copy on request. A summary of proceedings is also posted on the website and is included in the annual member magazine.

Review and Reporting

The Society will look widely and draw on the experience of others in order to continue to learn and ensure that its governance arrangements are as good as possible. We will also ensure that members of the Society receive a proper account of the Society's work and are as fully involved in it as is possible.

Your Views

We welcome your views on the way in which your Society is governed. If you have any comments to make in this regard please e-mail us at:

thesecretary@benenden.org.uk

Or write to The Society Secretary, Benenden Healthcare Society Limited, Holgate Park Drive, York YO26 4GG

Or telephone 0845 052 5755 (44 1904 732054) and leave a message so we can return your call

** Please see the Society's Rulebook which defines the role of Branches. Because this role does not include service provision to members, they do not fall within the meaning of Branches under the Friendly Societies Act 1992.*