

Our Communications and Marketing Strategy

2023-2025



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Our Communications and Marketing strategy focuses on delivering strong and effective communication with our audiences to deliver a range of benefits, including strengthening relationships, generating support and participation and improving community awareness of our programs, activities and services.

It's a two-year plan which will be refreshed as part of the implementation of the Communications and Marketing service review to be implemented in 2025.

The council is not alone in this narrative; we deliver this as a place: Barnsley – the place of possibilities. Our audiences see Barnsley as a place that builds back better and looks to the future with excitement and optimism. We want to instil this enthusiasm and inspire everyone to be the best they can be because our borough is a place that fosters and grows ambition.

Our Narrative

In Barnsley, we want everyone to have a good life. This means everything from a quality place to call home to good physical and mental well-being and a sense of self-worth through diverse and secure employment opportunities. It's also about accessing the best possible local facilities in a community that values our people and place.

In Barnsley, we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn, develop new skills and, most importantly, achieve their potential.

Barnsley aims to be an ideal place to live and a great place to do business. We want to retain and attract new people and businesses to the area, creating an inclusive and diverse community enriched with skills, knowledge and experiences. We want to meet the needs of today without compromising the needs of the future and encourage people to connect to each other and our place.

This is why our vision for 2030 is: 'Barnsley - the place of possibilities'

It's time to believe in the possibilities of Barnsley, to look to the future with excitement and optimism. Our borough is a place that fosters and grows ambition, enabling everyone to be the best they can be.

Our role

The council is part of our communities. We're everywhere our community lives, works and plays every single day. We believe in Barnsley and want to share this passion and pride with our audiences.

We communicate and engage, so our audiences are well-informed. We establish trust and manage our reputation by helping our audiences to understand our business and our services, how we make decisions, and how we plan for the future.

We aim to give people the information they need to make the right choices for their lives and provide a platform for encouraging positive behaviour across the borough.

We recognise that strong and effective communication with our audiences can deliver various benefits, including strengthening relationships, generating support and participation and improving community awareness of our programs, activities and services.

Delivering information in line with our aims and principles, we build relationships with the borough's community channels to share successes and aid understanding about what we do, why we do it, and how we can work together to support our communities.

Our aims and objectives

- **We're inspiring Barnsley** - our activity supports everyone to benefit from and contribute to, making our borough a thriving place of possibilities.
- **We're part of our communities** - we celebrate good news and support people to achieve the things that most matter in our community.
- **We're building community capacity** – we engage Barnsley's local channels and groups and share information to make a real change in people's lives.
- **We're promoting Barnsley** – our marketing showcases all that Barnsley has to offer, attracting people into the borough.
- **We're innovative and forward-thinking** – harnessing the council's design principles to engage people and using best practices to influence our approach.
- **We're enabling our employees to be even better** – our employees are advocates and champions in their communities because they know about our projects, services, activities and decision-making and live the values and behaviours of the organisation.
- **We're building a strong brand and style** - we're identifiable to our communities with a brand and style that reflects our values.

Our principles

- We're a trusted organisation with a human voice.
- Our brand is reinforced by telling the story of our activities and the services we provide. We show how this supports Barnsley's future.
- We drive positive behaviour change across the council and our communities.
- We work with our place partners to maximise the opportunities and impact of our activity.
- Our activity is open, relevant, and timely, and we manage people's expectations.
- Our audiences understand how the council makes decisions and how they can get involved in decision-making. We explain our challenges so people can understand and trust what we tell them.
- Our activity is accessible - we use various channels and formats to make sure everyone can access and engage with us.
- We use insight and data to understand what's happening, which helps us target our activity and find the best approach.
- We promote a positive online experience and proactively challenge negativity.
- We dispel myths and correct misinformation, providing reassurance wherever possible and appropriate.

Our strategic approach

Local priorities

Our strategic approach is based on delivering local priorities in our [Council Plan 2021-2024](#) and [Barnsley 2030 strategy](#) while maximising the local benefit from national government initiatives.



Council Plan

Our communications and marketing strategy is a key enabler in delivering our Council Plan. Our narrative brings to life the priorities and enables people to see progress across the borough.

Barnsley 2030

We have an integral role in supporting Barnsley's future and our long-term ambitions by delivering Barnsley 2030. We have a lead role in supporting the communications and marketing activity of Barnsley 2030, including developing a place marketing approach.



Wider priorities

Working alongside our three-year Council Plan and our ten-year place plan, we'll track national and international developments and decisions and reflect on how they might change the direction of our strategy and approach. Key areas include:

- Budget settlements and funding streams
- Changes to national policies
- Publication of papers on social care services
- Levelling up agenda and plan for the North
- Impact of EU Transition
- World-wide political unrest and humanitarian aid
- Harnessing digital platforms and skills
- Transport and infrastructure investment
- Climate change and sustainability

Our core offer

We provide the council with a range of services:

- Internal communications and engagement activity
- Communications activity
- Social media engagement and monitoring
- Behaviour change campaigns
- Marketing and attraction campaigns
- Media Relations
- Brand and style guidance
- Advertising and sponsorship
- Reputation management activity
- Crisis and emergency comms

We are not responsible for the management and updating of our website, barnsley.gov.uk. This is supported by the Digital Team in Customer, Information and Digital Services. We do work closely with the team on creating and updating content and make sure that we have an effective customer journey.

We procure our graphic design, videography and animation services through a framework of suppliers.

Our key corporate channels

Digital:

- **Social media** - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.
- **Our website** – www.barnsley.gov.uk – we have specific pages for our news stories www.barnsley.gov.uk/news
- **Our daily news bulletin** for Barnsley Leadership Team, Elected Members and accredited media agencies.
- **Our weekly news email newsletter**
- **Our email newsletters** - you can sign up for our newsletters via our [website](#).
- **Schools email bulletin** sent weekly to all schools.

Traditional

- **Barnsley Spotlight magazine** - You can read our magazines on our website: <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/our-council/council-publications/>




Internal communications







- **Let's talk weekly email bulletins** for employees, managers and elected members
- **Intranet news updates**
- **All user emails**
- **Sarah's blog** – weekly blog from the Chief Executive
- **Let's talk** all staff and elected members face to face and virtual sessions



Communications and Marketing Priorities

Our Communications and Marketing delivery plan sets out our activity and enables us to prioritise work according to priority and impact. The plan includes activity from across the organisation and the borough and seeks to maximise opportunities for cross-promotion.

Our key priority areas of work over the next two years:

Area of work	Priority	How will we contribute to achieving objectives and priorities
Barnsley 2030		<p>Communicate the progress against the priorities, showcasing how we're all working to make Barnsley the place of possibilities, telling stories from across our sectors and communities.</p>
Enabling Barnsley programme		<p>Communicate how employees can get involved in helping us be a modern, inclusive, efficient, and high-performing council. We'll make sure their voice is heard, feel empowered to do a great job and communicate the support opportunities available so they can be the best they can be.</p> <p>Delivery activity aligned to the council's Enabling Barnsley programme covering our transformation activity, our vision, culture and values, our Medium Term Financial Strategy, our People Strategy and our Asset strategy.</p>
Investment and development projects across the borough		<p>Professional support to develop and deliver communications and marketing strategies for major investment projects supporting Barnsley's economy to thrive so we have better homes, jobs, services, and transport links.</p> <p>Projects include Market Gate Bridge, SEAM campus, Youth Zone and Barnsley Futures bid, principal towns and local centres, Goldthorpe Towns Fund, and continued delivery of investment sites across the borough.</p>

Area of work	Priority	How will we contribute to achieving objectives and priorities
Town centre and The Glass Works		Dedicated resource to develop and deliver a communications and marketing strategy that supports the development of the town centre, focusing on creating a town centre narrative and brand and marketing of The Glass Works.
Marketing Barnsley as a destination		Link with local, regional, and national stakeholders to position Barnsley as a place to live, work and visit. We are showcasing our location, assets, and attractions to encourage people and businesses into the borough.
Investment in Principal Town and Local Centres		Use storytelling techniques to tell the story of our investment into Principal Town and Local Centres. We are concentrating on evidencing our thriving high streets with pleasant and safe experiences where people are proud of and look after their local environment.
Children's development plan		Work with Children's Services to communicate the development plan's outputs and show how children's services are building on their strengths and transforming services in the borough.
Adult Social Care		Support adult social care services with a range of communications and marketing activities with a focus on supporting the Better Lives programme to change the perception of adult social care services and how we talk about accessing support to help people enjoy life in good physical and mental health. We will signpost people to information, awareness of services, promote independence, and recruitment into the sector under the proud to care campaign.
Zero carbon and sustainability		Work with services to create a strategic communications response to support the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045 and the council by 2040. This will include engaging people to consider positive behaviour changes while supporting the broader promotion of sustainable initiatives across the borough.

Area of work	Priority	How will we contribute to achieving objectives and priorities
Jobs and skills		<p>Develop and deliver a communications and marketing strategy to showcase ways to access support, promote success stories to help raise aspirations, and promote opportunities to encourage uptake and development of roles. We will lead the launch of a borough-wide jobs campaign to showcase the meaning behind having a job and career, the skills they use and the benefits that being employed bring to people and their families.</p>
Integrated Care Services		<p>Input into a partner-led work programme to deliver the Barnsley health and care plan. Support central communication and marketing resources to deliver activities relating to integrating care services, so people can get the right care and support they need at the right place for them.</p>
<p>This is supported by the internal plans within the communications and marketing service:</p>		
Internal communication and engagement strategy	<p>Our strategy sets the way forward for how we engage with our workforce. The strategy supports our people strategy and Enabling Barnsley priority and focuses on channel development and content creation to keep a positive culture across the organisation.</p>	
Social media engagement plan	<p>Our plan focuses on channel development and content creation to maximise engagement with our communities and stakeholders.</p>	
Social media guidance for employees and elected members	<p>The refreshed guidance will support employees and elected members in their work roles and how to approach social media in their personal lives. It will detail the support we provide to people and how we manage our social media channels.</p>	
Brand strategy and style guide	<p>We have a strong, recognised brand and we need to make sure we're using it to its full potential. Our refreshed brand and style guide will provide employees with more support and guidance on using this.</p>	

Our delivery

Planning our work

We balance the supply and demand for our communication and marketing resources, including people and dependencies, using the Council Plan to inform and prioritise our work. We'll work with our employees, partners and communities.

We have an agile annual work plan developed by communications and marketing specialists through the council's business planning process. All proactive and planned work is linked to our council plan ambitions and helps to deliver our priorities and critical success factors. We regularly review our work plan to check priorities and to accommodate strategic planning headspace and unplanned work.

Where we have resources to support work, there needs to be a tangible link to Barnsley and our borough in the proposed activity.

We prioritise work using the following criteria. Work under these seven areas will take precedence when allocating our resources.

- **Statutory** - Support the delivery of the council's statutory obligations or Government/official body protocols and guidance.
- **Transformation** – Directly linked to the effective delivery of the Enabling Barnsley Transformation programme, including the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, People Strategy and Asset Strategy.
- **Council Plan and Barnsley 2030 ambitions** - Directly linked to our Council Plan and Barnsley 2030 ambitions and helps to deliver our priorities and critical success factors. This includes council-wide publications and platforms.
- **Reputation** - Has a significant positive or negative reputational impact on the council.
- **Change to service** - Engagement on policy changes or services that impact a significant proportion of residents.
- **Significant harm to people** in Barnsley- People need the information to make an informed decision on issues that could severely affect their health, well-being and safety. This is supported by insight and data to show the risk in Barnsley.
- **Communications and Marketing service activity** – Enhancing the team's existing resources and offers.

If activity requests do not meet these criteria, we will work with services to see how they can do this themselves.

We will always support reactive work which impacts our reputation or where people are at risk of harm.

Strategic communication

We deliver activities for work areas that support the council and Barnsley 2030 priorities. We make the links across the council and the place. Our activity is insight-led, contributes towards delivering objectives, is cost-effective and delivered at the right time to the right audiences.

Our strategy is influenced by policies, procedures, and frameworks and informed by our principles and aims. We align with the [Government communications Service framework](#), and we're governed by the government's [recommended code of practice for local authority publicity](#).



We use the SOSTAC© planning framework to structure our approach to campaigns and communication plans.

Our strong brand and style

Our brand and style guide helps to develop and refresh the Barnsley Council brand. Our brand and the Coat of Arms are the essences of Barnsley, bringing people together and connecting them to services to help people be the best they can be. A strong identity raises awareness of our services and makes them identifiable as Barnsley Council. We engage with employees to support and champion the brand to create an image of strength, trust and quality.

Budgets

We don't have a core budget for communications and marketing activity. Our activity is funded via service budgets. Specific strategies such as the town centre, culture and visitor economy and The Glass Works have marketing budgets aligned to them.

We can do amazing things with little to no budget. We use a variety of channels and our professional knowledge and skills to create activities to reach our audiences across the borough.

Audience mapping

We engage with a large and diverse range of audiences, including our employees. They're all important in different ways, and at different times, to the perception and promotion of council services and to maximising the future benefits for Barnsley. Most of the time, we're not trying to communicate with everyone. We use insight and data to target activity and the channels we use, thinking about who we need to reach.

Managing reputation

We work with services to identify potential risks and develop strategies that help to mitigate these while managing our reputation. We use a range of platforms to monitor and protect our organisation's reputation.

Internal communications and engagement

Our internal communication and engagement strategy is the catalyst to let our employees and elected members know what's going on and where we're headed in ever-changing and challenging circumstances for the public sector. It focuses on providing regular opportunities for them to engage in what's happening across the council.

Through various internal communications channels and opportunities to improve engagement with employees and elected members, people will see the connection between their role and our vision, values, and priorities.

We are driven by the council's People Strategy, ensuring we develop the right supporting organisational culture and behaviours and a modern, agile, healthy, engaged, skilled and innovative workforce to support the delivery of our strategic ambitions, improvements and efficiencies.

Behaviour change

Our strategic communications planning aims to identify barriers to desired behaviours and create communications and marketing activity that encourages people to act. Using the [COM-B model](#), we can effectively look at the capability of our audience, the opportunities they have to engage in the desired behaviour and the motivation for them to act.

As communication activities can't directly overcome some barriers, our strategic planning helps us target where our support impacts and where we need to work with other services or partners to overcome barriers.

Supporting community voice

We harness the fantastic pride across our communities to tell positive stories about the borough. We seek champions that empower people to tell their stories, champion their place and influence others.

Collaborative implementation

We adopt collaborative approaches across our departments, place partners and the Barnsley 2030 Communications Group. We leverage capacity within communities to share and amplify messages, increasing engagement.

We develop cross-sector activity plans addressing shared objectives and collaborate with public and private sector partners in communications and marketing activities.

Marketing

Our marketing campaigns include researching people's behaviour, capturing insight and data and promoting or selling a service to our audiences. We use our marketing expertise to target marketing activity to both customers and businesses, using cross-channel activity to maximise budgets, influence behaviour change and drive engagement. We work with services across the council and partners to join resources to maximise exposure.

Digital engagement

Our digital engagement work enables us to drive forward our use of social media and ensure that the channels, skills, and two-way communication with our audiences are up to date with new technology developments and digital trends.

Our social media policy provides our employees and elected members with the information and guidance they need to improve community engagement.

Our strategy champions positive behaviour on digital channels across Barnsley, and we run campaigns to showcase the standard and harness support. We are proactive in our approach to challenging unacceptable behaviour on digital channels through the No Place for Hate campaign.

Media Relations

We work with our media partners to create public understanding, build trust and promote good news. We seek opportunities to work together to strengthen our reach and impact.

Communication in major and critical incidents

Our communications major or critical incident plan is robust, focusing on warning and informing people during and after a major or critical incident. This ranges from adverse weather to potential cyber threats and global health pandemics. Our close relationships with key responder agencies and the South Yorkshire Resilience Forum help to drive this forward.

Learning from experiences

We know that our work has an impact on our communities. We strive for continuous improvement, reviewing our communications and marketing approach to make sure we're on the right path and looking for future opportunities.

Each campaign and plan have evaluations against our aims and objectives and service and council-wide outcomes. We look at the activity's success, but we're a learning organisation looking at opportunities and how we can be even better.

We continuously look to the future and adapt our communications and marketing activity to reflect any opportunities or issues.