NSSW Phase 3 Communications Strategy – Summary, August 2021

Introduction

Next Steps South West (NSSW) is committed to ensuring that the Uni Connect project remit is delivered in line with Office for Students (OfS) requirements to supported targeted and strategic outreach:

a. acting as a point of contact for all state secondary schools and colleges, signposting to local outreach provision, where such provision exists and is available.
b. hosting a website providing contact information and details of our Uni Connect offer.
c. working with relevant stakeholders to ensure our signposting offer is coherent with other IAG and outreach offered in the local area for both young and adult learners

NSSW understands the challenges and importance of both internal and external communications, particularly in working with colleagues in 83 target schools/colleges and in 14 partner institutions.
A full description of the evaluation strategy, processes, targets, desired outcomes and risk is provided in the full NSSW Phase 3 Communications Strategy document, available on request. Logic chains, measures, indictors and HE barriers are specified for each type of activity.

Communications Provision

NSSW will continue to support a dedicated, multi-disciplined Communications Team, but with reduced FTE in Phase 3. The emphasis in Phase 3 will be on communications, rather than marketing, as reflected in the team name change. We will continue to use our website, newsletters and social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Recently developed material in Phase 2 campaigns includes a podcast series and the launch of Unibuddy, which will be further developed in Phase 3. Increased use of communications analytics will further inform digital provision, and the remit of the team will incorporate additional support for blended learning

Website

Improvements have been made to the NSSW website to ensure that it is fit for purpose for Phase 3. A search facility has been added, graphics updated and significant changes made to the site to ensure that all users have a positive experience and can maximise their use of the website.

Segmentation

Structural changes have been made to the website to ensure that all visitors can directly access relevant sections easily and quickly, by user type. The communications strategy for 2021-22 extends to Adult Learners as a new target audience. NSSW will continue to segment newsletters by school/college, student and parent/carer, and will include an additional version targeted towards Level 3 Adult Learners in FE Colleges

Digital/blended outreach

A key role of the Communications Team will be to support digital outreach resources, and Phase 3 will look to embed blended provision in such a way that tailored, targeted digital provision can be regarded as an extension of the NSSW outreach offer. Targeted communication contributes to our programme of sustained and progressive outreach, as detailed in the NSSW Progression Framework. (Link to PF)

Reporting

Communications reports will continue to be submitted to the NSSW governing Board. Monitoring Returns, including evidence of signposting and blended learning, are submitted biennially to the OfS. NSSW will publish an End of Phase 2 executive report in autumn 2021 and a dedicated area of the NSSW website is being developed in order to improve interim reporting to partners.