



Guidelines:

Engagement and communications activities during the pre-election period

It is vital that during the pre-election period the NHS Future Fit programme remains politically impartial. This has a number of implications for our engagement and communications activities during the period from 30 March 2015 to the General Election on 7 May 2015, and until a new Government is formed.

The following guidelines provide a framework for undertaking activities during this period:

Activities in public that will continue during the pre-election period	Activities in public that will NOT continue during the pre-election period
Surveys undertaken directly with identified individuals (e.g. telephone surveys) in a selected sample (balance of responses is pre-determined).	Open access public surveys and questionnaires (where the balance of responses could be influenced by political campaigning, and the questionnaire could be the subject to lobbying).
Small meetings in private to discuss NHS Future Fit plans and proposals, including focus groups with an invited audience (e.g. for integrated impact assessment).	Meetings in public to discuss NHS Future Fit plans and proposals.
Existing publicity materials can remain in place but additional print runs should not be undertaken.	New publicity materials, leaflets etc.
Display stands and roadshows in private venues (e.g. staff meetings).	Future Fit new display stands and roadshows in public places (nb. not existing leaflets being distributed by partners)
Letters and correspondence to all parliamentary candidates (including former MPs).	Letters and correspondence targeted solely at former MPs.
Factual response to inaccuracies in public comment by all parliamentary candidates including former MPs.	Factual response preferentially to former MPs. Opinion response to public comments by all parliamentary candidates including former MPs.
Fair treatment for all parliamentary candidates.	Preferential treatment for former MPs.
	Comment on the impact of individual manifestos on the NHS Future Fit proposals (NB this should not take place at any time, including the pre-election period).

General procedure:

- No clinicians or SROs to be involved in any public meeting /presentation from the end of February until government is formed. This does not exclude business as usual with private meetings etc.
- With a few known exceptions, all other business will conclude by Friday 13 March (allowing a two week pause prior to the election period).
- The exhibition stands (ie pop ups) will continue as planned to the last one (Ludlow), with the messaging to cover a wider spectrum of presenting more info on healthcare in the local area.

The below is a generic message to be used by the entire programme to reply to invitations during the pre-election period.

However for guidance on specific requests please contact the engagement and communication team.

“Thank you for your kind invitation to present to [\[meeting on date\]](#). It is vital that during the period leading up to a general election the NHS and its representatives remain politically impartial. We know that there is much more work to do as part of the NHS Future Fit programme, and also that any debate on the configuration of health services is likely to arouse strong local and political feelings. On this basis, we believe that the fairest approach for local communities and for NHS staff is that we decline invitations to participate in public debates about the NHS Future Fit programme between 1 April 2015 and 7 May 2015. We would therefore be very grateful for suggestions of alternative dates after 7 May 2015.”