**Inclusive communications strategy**.

1.           Play down the “disability” word.

Most (66%) of people who come within the Equality Act definition  don’t think of themselves as disabled.

Use terms such as “having a long-term health condition or disability” which can be more acceptable.

2.           Don’t rely on disability media outlets.

Most (66%) of disabled people  don’t have close links with disability organisations.

Use mainstream media as more likely to be used by the target audience but also by their families, friends, support networks etc.

3.           Don’t use long-winded official language.

Disabled people are more likely than others to have no or few formal qualifications.

Around half the population have a reading age of 14 and around a quarter have a reading age of 11.

Use simple words that are familiar in everyday conversation.  Keep sentences short.  Use bullet points.

4.           Don’t rely on websites.

The internet is often not accessible for some disabled people so they don’t use it as an information source.

Many deprived people lack IT equipment or access to broadband.

Use classic media outlets: print, radio, TV.

5.           Don’t rely on single media strands.

Use every communication channel possible: print, radio, TV, social media, blogs, podcasts, YouTube etc to promote the same messages.

6. Don’t rely on a blunderbuss approach.

There’s a mass of information and data about disabled people (Governmental, Departmental, Census, Indices of Multiple Deprivation and more).

Target communication by location/channel etc to achieve best impact.

7.           Don’t rely on your own credibility.

People can be sceptical or dismissive of information from “official” sources.

Use the outlets of other parts of the public, private and voluntary sectors as trusted intermediaries to endorse your message.

8.           Avoid being an anonymous “Big Brother”.

A familiar, friendly face/voice who shares the experiences of the target audience and who can express empathy and understanding is likely to be more persuasive.

Use a real disabled person with relevant experience of the challenges as the voice of the campaign.  Use that person to speak at meetings, conferences, exhibitions and events across the country in tandem with the other  media activities.

9.           Avoid one-way conversations.

Getting feedback, real-life experiences and useable quotes will identify problem areas and enliven future messages.

Third-party organisations can offer even more valuable inputs and help focus messages on areas of most concern.

Ask your target audience for their inputs.

10.           Avoid one-off messages.

Frequent, consistent multi-media messages over a prolonged period are more likely to be effective.

Timetable and draft messages/activities  for at least a year.

11.        Don’t try to communicate on the cheap.

None of this need be costly: one or two people could manage this communications strategy.

Set a realistic budget.

12.        Don’t rely on just feedback to measure the effectiveness of the communications.

Acknowledge that greater visibility can produce unfavourable response in the short term while expectations have to be managed.

Use multi-faceted   measurements: feedback, interactions, take-up of extra help, compliance, uptake , customer satisfaction, third-party inputs, complaints, disputes  etc over a long period.

13.        Don’t be afraid to take the lead.

Create a project plan that can be replicated elsewhere with supporting messaging resources,  contacts, evaluation and data frameworks.

Use the experience to inform the rest of your sector and further improve your initiatives in the future.

