

1. Introduction

The three elements of good communication are **the medium, the message, and the audience.**

Effective communication depends on matching **the right message** with **the right medium** for **the right audience.** No single channel serves every purpose — each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and the most effective communicators choose deliberately rather than just use what they are most familiar with or like.

By and large, the audience differences are determined by what software/medium each member of an audience uses.

The aim of this guidance is to help us all to understand how different mediums can be best used to match the message and the audience.

Currently, the two main internal communication channels in PACE are Email and WhatsApp; and, unfortunately, some people don't use WhatsApp, and some people don't use Email (or check them very often), so there are circumstances where both need to be used for the same communication.

NB Even if people do use WhatsApp, if they are not already on a Sub-group and hence part of the PACE WhatsApp Community, they can only be added if they agree to do so. It would be a big task to add all the supporters to WhatsApp but it may be good to include a question on the Membership application form.

2. Selecting the Medium

As a general rule, media can be categorised in the following ways:

- **Fast, informal media** (e.g. WhatsApp, text, or social media) are best for quick announcements, coordination, polls, and maintaining momentum.
- **Slower, more formal media** (e.g. email, letter, or website) are better for clarity, record-keeping, and reaching wider or external audiences.
- **Interactive media** (e.g. face-to-face, phone, or social media) are invaluable when trust, discussion, or negotiation are needed.
- **Public-facing media** (e.g. posters, social media, websites, QR codes) extend reach beyond the internal group and attract new supporters.

There is a table at [Appendix I](#) setting out the various media and their strengths and weakness, with a summary at [Appendix ii.](#)

3. Other Considerations

When choosing how to communicate, consider:

1. **Purpose** – What do we want to achieve? (Inform, consult, decide, thank, poll)
2. **Audience** – Who needs to receive this message, and how do **they** prefer to engage?
3. **Complexity** – Does the topic need discussion and nuance, or just a quick update?
4. **Record** – Is it important to have a written trail or formal record?
5. **Reach** – Should this go only to supporters, or also to the public?
6. **Urgency** – How quickly must people respond or act?

4. Getting it Right

A thoughtful mix of media usually works best. For example:

- A **WhatsApp message** can alert members to a new **email** containing full details.
- A **poster** or **social post** with a **QR code** can direct new audiences to the **website** for more information.

- A **face-to-face conversation** can resolve a sensitive issue, followed by an **email summary** to keep a record.

One of the biggest drawbacks of WhatsApp or texting is that the recipient cannot prioritise, group or organise messages to suit their own organisational systems; nor can any attachments be saved or filed unless they are using WhatsApp on their desktop.

By consciously selecting the medium that fits the message and audience, we will be able to communicate more clearly, reduce confusion, and strengthen engagement — both within the network and with the wider community.

The table below, suggests when best to use a specific medium and when best NOT to:

Medium	When to Use	When to Avoid	Notes / Best Practice
WhatsApp / Text	Urgent announcements, reminders, quick coordination, simple polls	Complex discussions, long explanations, sensitive issues	Keep messages brief; one topic per post; use links to documents or polls where needed.
Social Media (Facebook / Instagram)	Public engagement, awareness campaigns, celebrating success	Sensitive internal issues, complex detail	Use photos and clear calls to action; respond to comments where appropriate.
Face-to-Face Conversation	Resolving conflict, complex planning, personal or sensitive topics	Simple updates or information sharing	Ideal for understanding tone and building trust; follow up with notes if decisions are made.
Email	Detailed updates, formal communication, sharing attachments, complex issues, documentation	Urgent alerts, rapid back-and-forth discussions	Use clear subject lines; bullet points; attach relevant files; acknowledge receipt where appropriate.
Telephone	Quick clarification, time-sensitive issues, personal check-ins	Group communication, detailed information sharing	Use for one-to-one or small group contact; follow up in writing for record.
Letter	Formal thanks, appreciation, invitations, official correspondence	Time-sensitive or routine matters	Adds personal touch and credibility; use good-quality paper or printed logo.
Poster	Promoting events, reaching the public, visual awareness campaigns	Internal communication or frequent updates	Keep visually clean and concise; include QR codes or short URLs.
Website	Hosting reference material, policies, reports, events, and news	Quick updates or urgent calls to action	Keep up to date; easy navigation; link from all other media.
QR Codes	Connecting print to digital content; linking posters or flyers to online resources	Standalone use without clear explanation	Always test links; provide a short label (e.g. "Scan for event details").

The table below suggests which PACE specific messages should use which media for which audience.

Communication Type	Description / Purpose	Recommended Medium(s)	Primary Audience	Notes
Monthly Newsletter	Update supporters and members on recent activities, upcoming events, and progress	Email (main); Website / Social Media (for wider reach)	Supporters and general public	Use email for mailing list; post highlights on Facebook/Instagram
Minutes	Record of meeting decisions and discussions	Email (to members); Shared folder / Google Drive (for archive)	Core members, committee	Keep a single shared archive for continuity

Communication Type	Description / Purpose	Recommended Medium(s)	Primary Audience	Notes
Agendas	Outline of topics for upcoming meetings	Email (before meeting); WhatsApp (as reminder)	Members attending meetings	Send at least 2–3 days ahead
Promotion - external	Publicising events, campaigns, or initiatives	Social Media, Posters, Website	General public, potential supporters	Posters attract new audiences; use QR codes for sign-ups
Promotion - internal	Publicising events, campaigns, or initiatives	Email (before meeting); WhatsApp (as reminder)	Supporters	Both can provide links to the other medium
Monthly Supporters' Meetings	Regular discussions and planning with supporters	Face-to-face (preferred); Zoom / Telephone if remote	Active supporters	Use WhatsApp for reminders or last-minute updates
Finding a Date to Meet	Agreeing on a suitable date/time for meetings	WhatsApp / Poll link	Members	Use Doodle or WhatsApp reactions for quick consensus
Announcing a Meeting	Confirming meeting details once agreed	WhatsApp / Text (quick notice); Email (formal invite)	Members	Keep short; include date, time, venue, and agenda link/attachment
Thank-You Notes	Acknowledging volunteer efforts, donations, or help	Letter (for impact); Email / Card	Individuals, partners	A handwritten note or card has greater emotional value
Event Feedback Requests	Gathering views after events or activities	Online Form / Email link; WhatsApp reminder	Participants, volunteers	Keep short; summarize key results later
Press Releases	Sharing newsworthy updates with local media	Email (to press list); Website	Local journalists, wider public	Use clear headlines and quotes
Social Media Updates	Day-to-day engagement, awareness, sharing photos	Facebook / Instagram / X (Twitter)	General public, supporters	Keep tone consistent; reply to comments
Internal Updates	Operational reminders, task allocations, quick updates	WhatsApp Group / Email	Committee / volunteers	Keep short to avoid overload
Website Updates	Central information hub for the group	Website CMS / Admin team	Public, supporters	Include newsletters, photos, and links to events
Posters / Flyers	Reaching the wider community offline	Printed posters, digital posters	Local community	Display in high-traffic areas, eco-friendly printing preferred

5. Environmental Impact

- **Lowest impact:** WhatsApp, text, and digital posters.
- **Moderate impact:** Email and social media (mainly due to data centre energy use).
- **Highest impact:** Printed media (letters, posters, newsletters) — mitigated somewhat by using recycled materials and eco-printing.
- **Best sustainable mix:** Using **digital by default**, reserving **print** for outreach where tangible impact matters (e.g. posters in community spaces, thank-you cards).

Typical Media

There are many possible communication media, including:

1. WhatsApp / text
2. Social media (e.g., Facebook / Instagram)
3. Face-to-face conversation
4. Email
5. Telephone
6. Letter
7. Poster
8. Website
9. QR codes

Different mediums have different strengths and weaknesses as set out below:

1. WhatsApp / Text

Strengths

- Fast and convenient for short messages and reminders.
- Excellent for group coordination and quick updates.
- Messages are usually seen quickly (high open rate).
- Supports links (e.g. to polls, documents, or meeting info).

Weaknesses

- Easy for messages to get lost in busy group chats.
- Not suitable for complex or sensitive discussions.
- Limited formatting; hard to track longer conversations.
- Some members may not use or check WhatsApp regularly.

2. Social Media (e.g. Facebook / Instagram)

Strengths

- Can reach both internal members and the wider public.
- Enables visuals, stories, and quick updates.
- Encourages interaction (comments, likes, shares).
- Can raise awareness beyond the immediate group.

Weaknesses

- Algorithms can limit who actually sees your posts.
- Time-consuming to manage effectively.
- Risk of negative or off-topic public comments.
- Easy for important messages to get buried in feeds.

3. Face-to-Face Conversation

Strengths

- Best for resolving complex or sensitive issues.
- Allows tone, expression, and body language to aid understanding.

- Builds stronger relationships and trust.
- Enables immediate feedback and clarification.

Weaknesses

- Requires time and coordination to arrange.
- Can be less efficient for simple updates.
- Not always possible for dispersed teams or volunteers.
- No automatic written record unless notes are taken.

4. Email

Strengths

- Excellent for complex or detailed information.
- Allows attachments, links, and structured explanations.
- Easy to file, search, and prioritize messages.
- Provides a clear written record.

Weaknesses

- Can become overwhelming; important messages may be missed.
- Slower response times compared with messaging apps.
- Tone can be misinterpreted without non-verbal cues.
- Requires regular checking to be effective.

5. Telephone

Strengths

- Good middle ground between immediacy and accessibility.
- Allows for tone and nuance in communication.
- Useful for clarifying issues quickly when email or text causes confusion.

Weaknesses

- No automatic written record (unless followed up by email).
- Can interrupt or catch people at inconvenient times.
- Group calls can be hard to coordinate.

6. Letter

Strengths

- Tangible and personal — carries emotional weight and formality.
- Stands out because it is less common.
- Useful for thank-yous, recognition, or formal invitations.
- Can have symbolic or ceremonial value.

Weaknesses

- Slow to send and receive.
- Cost and effort (printing, posting).
- Difficult to distribute to large groups.
- Not interactive — no quick feedback.

7. Poster

Strengths

- Excellent for reaching people outside existing networks.

- Can attract attention visually and create public visibility.
- Useful for advertising events or campaigns in public spaces.
- QR codes or links can connect physical and digital engagement.

Weaknesses

- Limited space for information.
- Design and placement are critical — poor design reduces impact.
- Requires physical printing and distribution.
- No feedback mechanism unless paired with a digital link.

8. Website

Strengths

- Provides a central, reliable hub for all key information and resources.
- Accessible 24/7 to anyone with an internet connection.
- Offers control over design, tone, and content, ensuring consistency and credibility.
- Excellent for archiving documents, reports, and past communications.
- Can host links, downloads, event details, and multimedia.
- Builds public trust and legitimacy — an official “home” for the group.

Weaknesses

- Requires maintenance and updates to remain accurate and relevant.
- Can be static if not regularly refreshed or promoted.
- Needs some technical skill or support to manage.
- Engagement is one-way unless combined with interactive tools (forms, blogs, comment sections).
- Visitors must be motivated to seek it out — less spontaneous than social media.

9. QR Codes

Strengths

- Provides an instant bridge between printed materials (e.g. posters, flyers) and online resources.
- Quick and easy for users with smartphones — no need to type URLs.
- Can track engagement through link analytics.
- Versatile — can link to websites, surveys, event pages, donation forms, etc.
- Encourages environmentally friendly communication by reducing printed text.

Weaknesses

- Requires users to have a smartphone and data connection.
- If linked pages are outdated or broken, the QR code becomes useless.
- Offer no context on their own — users must scan to find out what’s behind them.
- Can be overlooked if poorly placed or not explained clearly.
- May not be trusted if design or source looks unfamiliar.

Communication Media Comparison

Medium	Speed	Formality	Interaction / Feedback	Record / Permanence	Best For
1. WhatsApp / Text	Very fast	Informal	Instant replies	Limited – chats scroll quickly	Announcements, reminders, quick coordination
2. Social Media (Facebook / Instagram)	Fast	Informal to semi-formal	Comments and shares	Partial – platform dependent	Engagement, awareness, outreach
3. Face-to-Face Conversation	Depends on availability	Varies (informal to formal)	Real-time, nuanced	None unless notes taken	Resolving complex or sensitive issues
4. Email	Moderate	Formal to semi-formal	Delayed responses	High – searchable and storable	Detailed communication, attachments, records
4. Telephone	Fast	Semi-formal	Direct conversation	None unless recorded	Clarifying points, resolving issues quickly
5. Letter	Slow	Highly formal	Delayed feedback	High – tangible and lasting	Personal recognition, formal thanks, invitations
6. Poster	Slow to prepare, passive delivery	Formal or promotional	One-way	Temporary (depends on placement)	Public promotion, event advertising
8. Website	Moderate (depends on updates)	Formal, reference-oriented	Indirect (via contact forms or analytics)	High – durable and centralized	Hosting key information, resources, archives
9. QR Codes	Instant (link-based)	Neutral	Depends on linked content	High – persistent if maintained	Linking posters, print, and digital content

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