

OP06

Media Relations Policy

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Attachments

[Attachment 1: Media Relations Procedures for Staff](#)

[Attachment 2: Media Relations protocol for out of hours calls](#)

[Attachment 3: Media Enquiry Record](#)

1.0 Policy Statement (Purpose / Objectives of the policy)

1.1 This policy outlines the procedures for handling the media and what staff must do if they are approached by the media or are involved in a situation that will attract media attention. It applies to all staff employed by the Trust, including students, volunteer workers, contractors, temporary staff and those seconded to the Trust.

1.2 The Trust welcomes media attention on its services and the work of its staff and is keen to improve its reputation by developing a positive relationship with the media, locally and nationally. Good news stories help to foster confidence and help to reassure patients using our services. It is also a valuable way of promoting the professional expertise and reputations of all staff and boosting their morale.

1.3 Occasionally, there will be negative attention from the media which will have a damaging effect on the Trust's reputation and reduce confidence in its services. It is vital, for this reason, that all media relations are well managed by an appropriate senior manager in accordance with this policy.

In adhering to this Policy, all applicable aspects of the Conflicts of Interest Policy must be considered and addressed. In the case of any inconsistency, the Conflict of Interest Policy is to be considered the primary and overriding Policy.

2.0 Definitions

Media Relations is defined as the relationship between the Trust and the media. This covers any contact with the media - whether local, regional, national or international and includes print, broadcast and online social media.

3.0 Accountabilities

During office hours, all contact with the media is the responsibility of the Communications Team.

Out of hours, the On-Call Communications support is responsible for initial contact with the media, in line with OP 06 Attachment 2 – Media Relations Protocol for out of hours calls.

All employees have a responsibility to help protect and promote the positive reputation of the Trust by redirecting all media enquiries to the Communications Team in accordance with OP 06 Attachment 1 - Media Relations Procedure for staff.

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and NHS Code of Confidentiality, all employees have a legal responsibility to ensure they maintain confidentiality of patient and staff information. Unauthorised disclosure of personal information about any patient, service user or colleague, will be regarded as a serious matter, which will always warrant disciplinary action.

All employees have a legal responsibility to ensure they meet the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when dealing with personal data,

including staff information.

4.0 Policy Detail

It is the policy of the Trust to:

- Ensure communication with the media is co-ordinated, timely, accurate, open and honest
- Ensure records are kept of all communication with the media for monitoring and reporting purposes ([attachment 3 Media Enquiry Record](#))
- Ensure all staff are aware of the correct procedure to follow if they are approached by the media
- Ensure all staff are aware of the correct procedure to follow for gaining publicity for Trust activities
- Improve relationships with local media and thereby develop a climate of trust and understanding of local Trust issues;
- Publicise the positive developments and activities of the Trust and improve the image and reputation of the organisation
- Ensure a duty of care and the protection of patients' right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality must come first on every occasion
- Ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Caldicott guidelines when giving information to the media
- Ensure that contact with the media does not detract from the primary purpose of care delivery and duty of care is not detrimentally affected by media activity
- Obtain consent from the patient or relative before releasing information to the media or before any patient is involved in any media activity
- Route all media inquiries through the Communications Team or the On-Call Communications support out of hours
- In the event of a Major Incident, the Major Incident Plan must be referred to for the media arrangements to be followed
- Monitor coverage and seek to correct any inaccuracies aired in coverage

5.0 Financial Risk Assessment*

1	Does the implementation of this policy require any additional Capital resources	No
2	Does the implementation revenue resources of this policy require additional	No
3	Does the implementation of this policy require additional manpower	No
4	Does the implementation of this policy release any manpower costs through a change in practice	No
5	Are there additional staff training costs associated with implementing this policy which cannot be delivered through current training programmes or allocated training times for staff	No
	Other comments	

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

The screening checklist has been completed. Reasonable efforts have been made to eliminate any possible Equality and Diversity discrimination occurring.

An equality analysis has been carried out and it indicates that:

Tick	Options
X	A. There is no impact in relation to Personal Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
	B. There is some likely impact as identified in the equality analysis. Examples of issues identified, and the proposed actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •

7.0 Maintenance

Adherence to this procedure will be monitored by the communications and marketing team.

8.0 Communication and Training

On-call Managers and On-Call Directors will be mentored and coached with media awareness training facilitated by the Group Director of Communications & Stakeholders Engagement if required.

Executive Directors will be given specific media training supplied by an outside trainer, including interview techniques, where applicable and where appropriate.

9.0 Audit Process

Criterion	Lead	Monitoring method	Frequency	Committee
Monitoring of media coverage	Communications Team	Analysis of information informing delivery of strategic goal	Quarterly	Trust Board
Monitoring of media coverage	Communications Team	Analysis of information informing impact on BAF risk	Monthly	Trust Board

10.0 References - Legal, professional or national guidelines

[CP18 Consent to medical photography OP12 \(ICT Security Policy\)](#)

[OP13 \(Information Governance Policy\) OP90 \(FOI Policy\)](#)

[OP109 - Conflicts of Interest Policy \(xrwh.nhs.uk\)](#)

[HR03 Disciplinary Policy \(xrwh.nhs.uk\)](#)

[GP02 Anti-Fraud and Anti-Bribery Policy \(xrwh.nhs.uk\)](#)

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Freedom of Information Act The Caldicott Report Trust Major Incident Action Plan

11.0 Failure to comply with the policy

Failure to declare conflicts of interests which could lead to negative media coverage at the Trust may be submitted to the Trust's Local Counter Fraud specialist for the purposes of the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of fraud. Knowingly providing false or failing to declare information may result in disciplinary action, criminal prosecution and/or civil recovery proceedings.

Part A - Document Control

Policy number and Policy version: OP06 V7.0	Policy Title Media Relations Policy	Status: Final		Author: Head of Communications Chief Officer Sponsor: Group Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagements
Version / Amendment History	Version	Date	Author	Reason
	7.0	Mar '24	Head of Communications	Reviewed by Group Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement
	6	Aug '20	Head of Communications	Review
	5.2	Apr '20	Head of Communications	Extension until July 2020
	5.1	May '19	Head of Strategy and Planning	Reviewed by Director of Workforce – extended to December 2019 pending full review
	5	Sept '14	Head of Strategy and Planning	Periodic Review
	4	June '11	Communications Manager	Review
	3	Sept '08	Communications Manager	Review
	2	Feb '06	Communications Manager	Review
1	March '95	Communications Department	Introduction	
Intended Recipients: All staff				
Consultation Group / Role Titles and Date: People Committee, 22nd March 2024 Staff Side – June 2024				
Name and date of Trust level group where reviewed		Trust Policy Group – June 2024		
Name and date of final approval committee		Trust Management Committee – June 2024		
Date of Policy issue		July 2024		
Review Date and Frequency (standard review frequency is 3 yearly unless otherwise indicated – see section 3.8.1 of Attachment 1)		Every 3 years, next review to take place June 2027		
Training and Dissemination: to all staff via cascade, intranet, induction				
To be read in conjunction with: VIP procedure				

Initial Equality Impact Assessment (all policies): Completed No Full Equality Impact assessment (as required): Completed NA If you require this document in an alternative format e.g., larger print please contact Policy Management Officer	
Monitoring arrangements and Committee	Annual review through the Group Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagements
Document summary/key issues covered. This policy outlines the procedures for handling the media and what staff must do if they are approached by the media or are involved in a situation that will attract media attention. It applies to all staff employed by the Trust, including students, volunteer workers, contractors, temporary staff and those seconded to the Trust.	
Key words for intranet searching purposes	Media Relations Policy Communications Major Incident Plan

OP06 Attachment 1

Media Relations Procedure for Staff

1.0 Handling Media Calls – During Office Hours

- 1.1 The Communications Team will handle all media activity and must be the first point of contact for media enquiries. Press releases and corporate social media messages must be issued via the Communications Team.
- 1.2 Any staff who receive media requests must direct these to the Communications Team by calling 01902 695884 between the hours of 9am-5pm Monday to Friday and via switchboard to the on call communications member of staff out of hours. Staff must not attempt to handle media inquiries related to the Trust, its patients or its staff unless authorised to do so by the Chief Executive.
- 1.3 All approaches for interviews, statements and/or filming and photography on Trust premises must come through the Communications Team. If a journalist contacts a staff member directly they must be redirected to the Communications team – this applies to phone, email or face to face contact.
- 1.4 No member of staff will speak to the media in their capacity as a Trust employee without speaking to the Head of Communications first who can find out more about the nature of the enquiry before contacting relevant staff and agree an appropriate response. He/she can also assess the likely level of follow-up interest from other media on the subject.
- 1.5 All requests for interviews with journalists, whether print, radio or television must be passed to the Communications Team or the On-Call Communications support if out of hours.
- 1.6 Staff must not be interviewed on Trust premises if they are commenting in a private capacity.
- 1.7 The Communications Team must be informed by staff who are speaking to the media on behalf of another organisation, such as a Royal College, a trade union or a charity, particularly if it is likely to attract high profile media attention.
- 1.8 Any filming or media requests on behalf of another organisation must also be directed to the Communications Team, as it will be necessary to liaise with the Press Office for that organisation.
- 1.9 The Security Department will ask film crews or photographers to leave the site if they have not had permission from the Communications Team, who can advise on any practical steps that need to be taken when dealing with a media request, e.g. informing security, arranging parking, liaising with film crews and obtaining consent.

If you see a film crew or photographer on site and they are not accompanied by Trust staff, please inform the Security Department immediately. Please remain vigilant at all times as the media must only be on Trust premises with the knowledge and approval of the Head of Communications, the Chief Executive or an appropriate Director.

2.0 Handling Media Calls – Out of Office Hours

- 2.1** The procedure for receiving enquiries and requests for interviews also applies out of office hours. In this instance the On-Call Communications Support will handle the issues
- 2.2** Any member of staff receiving a media enquiry outside office hours **must not** deal with it themselves but must refer the journalist to the On-Call Communications Support. Please refer to OP 06 [Attachment 2 – Media Relations Protocol for Out of hours calls](#).

3.0 Contacting the media directly

- 3.1** All contact with the media **must** be made via the Communications Team. Staff must not contact the media on any story connected to the Trust without the direct permission of the Chief Executive/Group Director of Communications & Stakeholders Engagement/Head of Communications
- 3.2** It is the Communication Team's responsibility to write and distribute press releases, organise filming and photography and to ensure all the correct procedures around patient confidentiality and consent have been followed in any media arrangements. Any staff with a news story they want to share must contact the Communications Team who will arrange publicity for them if appropriate.
- 3.3** All contact with the media is logged and recorded for monitoring and reporting purposes to ensure a consistent and regular flow of information is maintained and to ensure all information given to the media is timely and accurate.

4.0 Photography and filming

- 4.1** The Trust has its own photographers and filming capability through the Medical Illustration Department. Any member of staff wishing to use this facility to take photographs or footage to go out to the media must make the request via the Communications Team. All photography and filming must take place with reference to the CP 18 Clinical Photography, Video and Audio Recordings Policy.

5.0 High profile Patients or Visitors

- 5.1** Celebrities, VIPs or patients such as those under prison guard, can attract significant media attention. They are entitled to the same level of confidentiality as anyone else and consent is still paramount before information is released to the media about them. It is essential to inform the Communications Team as soon as it becomes apparent there may be a high profile patient or visitor in the hospital

who will attract media attention to ensure appropriate measures are in place. All VIP visits must be managed in accordance with the protocol for VIP Visitors.

OP06 Attachment 2

Media Relations Protocol for Out of Hours Calls

- Media enquiry is received by any staff member from a journalist.
- The enquiry **must** be passed to the On-Call Communications Support immediately, via switchboard. Staff **must not** attempt to answer enquiries themselves.

Is the enquiry from a national journalist?

If yes

- The On-Call Communications Support will inform the On-Call Director immediately and will draft a response for sign off by the On-Call Director.

Are there numerous enquiries coming in from a variety of journalists?

If yes

- The On-Call Communications Support/Head of Communications must alert the Chief Executive to the nature of the enquiries.
- Depending upon the nature of the enquiries, the Communications Support will inform NHSE/I.

Is the enquiry of a nature likely to be damaging to the Trust?

If yes

- The On-Call Communications Support/Head of Communications must alert the Chief Executive to the nature of the enquiries.
- Depending upon the nature of the enquiries, the Communications Support will inform NHSE/I.

NB: In the event of a Major Emergency being declared, there are separate media procedures in the Major Incident Plan and the Communications department would be called in to handle the media in accordance with the plan.

For any advice or guidance on any aspect of media relations, please contact the Communications Team on 01902 447297/442600 during office hours, or email: [rwh- tr.CommunicationDept@nhs.net](mailto:rwh-tr.CommunicationDept@nhs.net)

OP06 Attachment 3

Media Enquiry Record

Date and time enquiry was received:

Who received it:

Name of journalist:

**Contact details of
journalist (email and
phone):**

News organisation:

Nature of the Enquiry:

Deadline requested for a response:

Details of response given:

Name of responder:

Date and time response was given:

Response approved by:

Any follow up action required: