

Media Handling Procedure

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Media Handling Procedure

1 Introduction

- 1.1 It is essential for the Trust to develop and maintain good relationships with the media. The media can help us to promote a positive image of our activities, as well as to inform patients and the public of our services, market training and consultancy, and help us to be seen as a relevant and authoritative voice on mental health and social care issues. The Trust is well-known by the media both for its reputation for excellence and for the quality of the staff who work here, many of whom are leading experts in their field.
- 1.2 Engaging with the media is a key element in our communications strategy; it is an effective channel to gain the attention of our key stakeholders (patients, public, members, students and commissioners). The importance of the media's role in influencing stakeholders' perception of the Trust, both positively and negatively, should not be underestimated. We therefore ask that all media enquiries are dealt with by staff with caution and that all enquiries are directed to the communications team in the first instance.
- 1.3 The communications team plays a central role in helping the Trust to manage its reputation, ensuring that any media coverage we receive represents us accurately and is in-line with our Trust's key messages. Relevant directors are always informed of media enquiries and our intention to respond.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that media enquiries are dealt with appropriately and that those people who may be required to deal with media queries can refer to this procedure document for guidance.
- 2.2 Clear internal arrangements for media relations means the Trust is in the best possible position to convey our key messages to the right audiences. The Trust is a valued and in some areas unique source of information for the media owing to its expertise in a broad range of mental health and social care issues. This procedure

aims to protect staff when dealing with the media and offer clear media handling guidelines.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This procedure will apply to all Trust employees, Non-Executive Directors and Trust Governors. It also extends to contracted services, partner organisations and commissioners engaged in official business on behalf of the Trust.

4 Definitions

Not applicable.

5 Duties and responsibilities

5.1 All staff

All staff, Non-Executive Directors and Governors must adhere to this procedure. It is the responsibility of the individual to understand its contents and the responsibility of managers to draw attention to this procedure in their teams and departments.

5.2 Communications and Marketing Director

It is the duty and responsibility of the director to identify the best possible spokesperson to answer an enquiry.

5.3 The Press and Communications Officer

The officer

- logs and tracks all enquiries, actions, outcomes and coverage, maintaining accurate and up-to-date details on this activity
- liaises with the identified Trust media spokespeople to ensure that we are able to provide fast and accurate responses to enquiries.

5.4 Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager

The manager manages media work day-to-day and prioritises activity to best meet the Trust's duties and objectives.

5.5 The Director of the Department of Education and Training

The Director of DET has delegated responsibility from the Chief Executive for the media activity undertaken at the Trust.

6 Procedures

6.1 All media enquiries, requests for interviews, filming or photography on Trust premises should be referred to the [communications team](#).

6.2 Media Enquiries

When the communications team receive a media enquiry, it will assess the validity and relevance of the enquiry. It will then operate on a case-by-case basis to find an appropriate spokesperson. The Trust has a list of named media spokespeople with specific and more generic expertise – these staff will be approached in the first instance. Alternatively, specific recommendations will be provided by authorised senior management and clinical directors. The communications team will advise and assist staff in responding to the enquiry. This involves screening calls, arranging interview times, researching a journalist and/or publication to assess their credentials, negotiating accurate representation of the Trust name, description and that of our spokesperson.

NB: If there are clinical staff wishing to be included on the named spokespeople list, please contact the [communications team](#) (020 8938 2228).

6.2.2 The communications team, specifically the Press and Communications Officer, monitor the media environment and log all coverage relating to the Trust. All staff are asked to notify the Press and Communications Officer of any Trust related coverage that they are aware of. This includes print, broadcast, digital and content on social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook and internet sites such as Wikipedia. We have a media monitoring software package in place which picks up coverage published online.

6.2.3 Where staff undertake media work in a personal capacity or through a different organisation, the Press and Communications Officer should be informed. The communications team aims to maximise coverage that promotes the good work of the Trust and the people who work here.

6.2.4 As we have a number of named experts who regularly work with the media, journalists may contact staff directly for comment or interviews. Always notify the communications Press and Communications Officer. Never give information to a caller if you are uncertain who they are or how they intend to use the information you are sharing.

6.2.5 we also use blog pieces, which we publish on the news section of our website, as a way of educating and communicating with journalists about topical issues. Blog items are usually authored by experts, sent to the communications team for review and then published on the website. We promote blogs via social media and draw journalists' attention to our responses as another way of proactively engaging with the media.

6.3 Filming and Photography

6.3.1 Any filming or photography in or around the building must be discussed with the communications team, or the Press and Communications Officer, in the first instance. A member of the communications team must be present to coordinate filming or photography unless a special derogation or permission is in place. The communications team can support this work by seeking approval from Estates, booking a suitable room, liaising with security and ensuring minimal disruption to patients and staff.

6.4 Press releases

6.4.1 All staff are asked to alert the Press and Communications Officer about any possible news stories or subjects for articles as soon as possible. Not all news is 'newsworthy' but the communications team will support you to promote the work of the Trust in the media where possible. This may include notification of new services, launches and events, new research, clinical developments, public appearances at parliamentary committees, etc.

6.4.2 All press statements and releases are to remain consistent in style and can be edited as such by the communications team. All copy for press releases must be generated by the relevant department director, or delegated by the director to another relevant staff member. The Press and Communications Officer must receive copy in advance of any approaches to the media.

6.4.3 The Communications team is available to research targeted publications and subsequent copy deadlines and negotiate with journalists about placing articles on your behalf.

6.4.4 The Press and Communications Officer will liaise with partner communications teams, including commissioner organisations, to ensure a coordinated response when dealing with the media. This includes signing off joint

press releases and notifying key stakeholders about subsequent coverage. The clinical directors and heads of department should inform the communications team when these links exist.

- 6.4.5 All staff are responsible for alerting the Communications team to any possible negative stories, so they can prepare a press statement accordingly.

6.5 Crisis management

- 6.5.1 Staff must alert the Press and Communications Officer of events which may generate negative attention as soon as they are aware of them, so the team can crisis manage appropriately. The team must be alerted, even if the incident is only indirectly related, for example, if we are providing court reports for a high profile case.
- 6.5.2 Serious Untoward Incidents are to be reported to the Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager as soon as possible. We may be required to report to the commissioner(s) any serious untoward incident that occurs that is likely to involve press or media attention. This is done in the first instance by the Director of Corporate Governance and Facilities. It is the responsibility of the Director of Corporate Governance and Facilities to inform the Director of Communications and Marketing and Communications Manager of such incidents.

7 Training Requirements

- 7.1 The communications team will work to ensure that training on effective media handling is available to those who require it. Media training for staff is reviewed annually and all named Trust spokespeople have undertaken media training. Any staff requiring media training should contact the communications team on ext 2228.

8 Process for monitoring compliance with this procedure

- 8.1 This procedure will be reviewed by spot checks.

9 References

9.1 Not Applicable

10 Associated documents¹

Data Protection Procedure
Freedom of Information Procedure

¹ For the current version of Trust procedures, please refer to the intranet.

11 Equality Analysis

Completed by	Emma Heath
Position	Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager
Date	03.05.16

The following questions determine whether analysis is needed	Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community? The relevance of a policy to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the effect on them.	Yes	
Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?		No
Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how Trust services are delivered?	Yes	
Will the policy have a significant effect on how partner organisations operate in terms of equality?		No
Does the policy relate to functions that have been identified through engagement as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?		No
Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?		No
Does the policy relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the Trust?		No
Other?		

If the answer to *all* of these questions was no, then the assessment is complete.

If the answer to *any* of the questions was yes, then undertake the following analysis:

	Yes	No	Comment
Do policy outcomes and service take-up differ between people with different protected characteristics?		No	

What are the key findings of any engagement you have undertaken?			This is a pretty standard procedure for media handling, we regularly engage staff in the process and keep it under review and the policy reflects this
If there is a greater effect on one group, is that consistent with the policy aims?			n/a
If the policy has negative effects on people sharing particular characteristics, what steps can be taken to mitigate these effects?			n/a
Will the policy deliver practical benefits for certain groups?			n/a
Does the policy miss opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations?			n/a
Do other policies need to change to enable this policy to be effective?		No	
Additional comments			

If one or more answers are yes, then the policy may unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 –seek advice from Human Resources (for staff related policies) or the Trust’s Equalities Lead (for all other policies).