

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

NHS Southend Clinical Commissioning Group (hereafter referred to as “the CCG”) is committed to being accountable and responsive to the needs of patients and the local population, ensuring they are well informed about and involved with their local NHS.

The CCG aims to create a climate of openness and dialogue with all stakeholders and this policy supports that aim. The CCG is a publicly funded and publicly accountable service. The care and treatment commissioned is subject to public and democratic scrutiny and can attract significant media interest.

This policy and procedure outlines the function and role of media relations to provide a practical guide for CCG staff on their role in media interaction. It also seeks to promote positive media coverage to inform the local community how we are leading the local NHS. It is also there to protect staff and to ensure a coordinated approach to media handling.

This policy also ensures that the reputation of the CCG is protected and if possible enhanced and that the chances of misrepresentation by the media are reduced. NHS Southend CCG believes that clinical and non-clinical staff should have access to expert knowledge to assist and support them in media management and this policy sets out a framework to provide this support.

Clear internal arrangements for media relations ensure the CCG is conveying accurate information and the right messages in a timely manner to the right audiences. This Policy provides a mechanism through which NHS Southend CCG can be effective in media management. It is the responsibility of the CCG Communications Manager to ensure this policy is implemented across the CCG.

2. PURPOSE

Developing good relationships with the press and media is essential. This can help to promote a positive image of our services and can be a valuable source of communication for the communities that we serve. It is in the best interests of the CCG that all representatives of the press and broadcast media are treated in an open-handed, helpful manner.

In order that our relationships with the press and media are successful, it is vital that our communications are concise, clear and unambiguous. To this end staff will be required to comply with this policy at all times.

This policy does not apply to requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, to which a separate statutory and local policy applies.

3. DEFINITIONS

The Media: this refers to journalists, researchers, editors and others working for the press in all forms (including newspapers, radio, television and internet sites)

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 NHS Southend CCG Governing Body

The CCG Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the CCG has systems and processes in place for effective handling of media enquiries.

4.2 Chief Operating Officer

The Chief Operating Officer for NHS Southend CCG is the executive responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

4.3 Head of Corporate Governance

This postholder deputises for the Chief Operating Officer for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

4.4 The CCG's Communications Service

NHS Southend Clinical Commissioning Group has an in-house communications resource that acts as the Communications Manager for the CCG and directly manages media relations on a day-to-day basis.

5. POLICY PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Press and Media Enquiries

For the purposes of this policy, a media enquiry will be a request for information received from the following stakeholders;

- 5.1.1** Print or broadcast media
- 5.1.2** Citizen Journalists (bloggers)
- 5.1.3** MPs or local councillors

This may be in response to a story that the CCG has already published proactively, or an issue that has arisen (called a 'reactive enquiry').

In addition to a response sent directly to any of the above stakeholders, the following channels are also to be considered 'mass media' and are subject to these procedures:

- Southend Clinical Commissioning Group website
- Social media (e.g. Twitter)

Enquiries received from other stakeholders such as activist groups will usually be responded to under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, to which a different set of procedures apply.

During normal office hours all enquiries from the media are to be referred, in the first instance, to the CCG Communications Manager. If approached by the media, CCG staff should initially not answer any questions on behalf of the CCG and should instead confirm that the CCG Communications Manager will get back to them, as soon as possible. A brief summary of the enquiry along with contact details should be taken and given to the CCG Communications Manager.

The Communications Manager will identify a spokesperson on a case-by-case basis, agreeing this with senior staff within the CCG as necessary. Once agreed, the identified spokesperson will be the only authorised point of contact with the media. Any other contact with the media by other staff will be considered as unauthorised and will be treated as such by the CCG.

Staff giving interviews to the media should have received media training or otherwise will be fully briefed and supported by the Communications Manager.

All staff, Governing Body members and GP clinical leads should ensure they are available as a matter of urgency should information be required by the media. This includes staff who have not been media trained, as they may be required to give information for written press statements. The reputation of the CCG as an open and accountable organisation will be negatively affected if stories appear which state the CCG was unavailable for/had refused to comment.

All newspaper media enquiries should have a written response via email. This is particularly important when handling contentious issues, to ensure accurate records are kept for future reference.

The Communications Manager will oversee the sign-off procedure for all reactive press statements. Where possible, statements should always be attributed to a named representative of the CCG. Statements should also give a contact name for any further enquiries; this will normally be the Communications Manager.

A record will be kept of all NHS Southend CCG media enquiries, statements and releases by the Communications Manager.

No representative of the media will be allowed access to NHS Southend CCG without the permission of the CCG Communications Manager.

Media contact must not detract from the primary purpose of care delivery and the duty of care must not be detrimentally affected by media activity.

Authorised media representatives will be expected to produce proof of identify (i.e. a valid press card) when visiting NHS Southend CCG premises.

5.2 News Releases

Maximising the opportunities for media coverage of the work of the CCG requires every member of staff to be alert to possible stories and subjects for articles and to let the Communications Manager know about them as soon as possible.

All news releases will be drafted by the Communications Manager although other staff will need to assist to ensure they are accurate.

All news releases should be planned and coordinated. The Communications Manager will oversee the sign-off procedure for all proactive press statements and news releases.

All news releases that refer to partner organisations will not be issued until the approval of the content has been confirmed with their own communications department.

Where appropriate, NHS Southend CCG will work with corresponding communications teams to issue joint news releases when required. As an example, a public health campaign might require the CCG to undertake joint working with the relevant Local Authority.

No member of staff will make contact with the media without the approval of the CCG Communications Manager and more senior staff as appropriate.

The Communications Manager will maintain a press and media database and can advise on preferred editorial formats or house styles, and copy deadlines.

The Communications Manager will monitor press coverage and hold copies of newspaper cuttings for an agreed period of time, and provide advice and support for media briefings and interviews.

Staff are required to meet their obligations with regard to client confidentiality at all times, especially when dealing with media issues.

5.3 Serious Incidents

NHS Southend CCG is required to inform the NHS England (Essex) if any serious incident (SI) occurs within the organisation that is likely to involve press or media attention.

Every SI should be reported in accordance with the CCG's SI policy using a standard SI report form which should be completed by the relevant member of staff.

The CCG Communications Manager should be consulted in terms of the content of the media section of the reporting form.

In the event of an SI in provider services, the CCG's Communications team will liaise with the Provider Communications Team.

5.4 Social Media

Over the past few years, the use of social media by organisations to promote messages and news stories has become standard practice. It can be a useful way to communicate with different audiences – particularly younger members of the community – and engage them in two-way conversations.

NHS Southend Clinical Commissioning Group has a Twitter account managed by the Media Relations Policy

CCG Communications Manager. Tweets cover some or all of the following:

- alerts about new content on our digital channels (news, publications, videos on YouTube, publicity campaigns etc.)
- invitations to provide feedback on specific issues on which we are consulting
- occasional live coverage of events
- re-tweets of information from stakeholders such as NHS Choices, Ambulance Trust and other organisations as appropriate.

If someone follows Southend CCG on Twitter, the CCG will not automatically follow them in return. This is to discourage the use of direct messaging, avoid resource wasting spam handling and ensure staff can easily identify other key and relevant Twitter users.

Being 'followed by' NHS Southend CCG does not imply endorsement of any kind.

The Communications Manager will update and monitor the CCG's Twitter account during office hours (Monday to Friday). Occasionally the Twitter account will be updated out of hours, if it is being used to cover specific or major events.

Twitter may be unavailable and the CCG accepts no responsibility for lack of service due to Twitter downtime.

Feedback and ideas from all followers are welcomed and the CCG will endeavor to join conversations where possible and relevant. However it will not necessarily reply 'individually' to all the messages received, via Twitter.

The CCG will read all replies and direct messages to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to relevant staff within the CCG.

The CCG will not engage on issues of party politics.

The usual way of contacting the CCG for official correspondence will be detailed in the 'Contact us' section of the CCG website. The media will be encouraged not to use Twitter as a channel for news enquiries, but to contact the CCG Communications Manager directly by phone or email.

5.5 Whistleblowing

If staff have concerns about health care, probity or quality matters they are expected to adhere to the CCG's Whistleblowing Policy and should raise such concerns in accordance with that policy.

5.6 Major Incidents

The CCG Major Incident Plan will detail the role of communications in the event of a major incident and special arrangements for liaising with the media are detailed in the Plan.

5.7 Out of Hours Enquiries

Southend CCG does not provide an out of hours press office service. This means that staff are generally available to deal with press enquiries Monday to Friday; 0830 to 1730

(not including Bank Holidays).

Out of hours media enquiries will be routed to the on-call director who, if appropriate, will contact the Communications Manager.

On occasion it may be necessary for the Communications Manager to contact nominated staff out of hours if an urgent reaction to a significant media story is required.

5.8 Rights of staff side representatives of recognised Trade Unions or staff associations.

This policy does not restrict the right of elected staff side representatives of recognised trade unions or staff associations, to express their views through or to the media directly.

Elected staff side representatives of recognised trade unions or staff associates are fully entitled to make comments on behalf of their staff association or trade union. They are not able to make comments on behalf of or represent the views of Southend CCG.

5.9 Training

The CCG Communications Manager will ensure that training and/or coaching on effective media relations is available to all staff (when and if required), including Governing Body members and GP clinical leads.

6. MONITORING COMPLIANCE

The Quality, Finance and Performance Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

This policy will be implemented by CCG Communications Manager/nominated person.

The Policy will be circulated to all CCG staff and held electronically by the CCG (and if applicable, also held on the intranet and website for the CCG)

Monitoring of compliance of this policy will be undertaken as part of the routine monitoring undertaken by the CCG of all local media reports.

Any infringements of this policy identified via this route, will be dealt with in the first instance, by the CCG Communications Manager.

This Policy will be reviewed at least every year and will be amended should legislation or a change in national or local policy require this.

7. LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Name	Title	Comments received Y/N	Comments incorporated Y/N
Charles Cormack	Chair		
Dr Paul Husselbee	Accountable Officer		
Melanie Craig	Chief Operating Officer		
Angela Paradise	Head of Corporate Governance		
Linda Dowse	Chief Nurse	Y	Y

Emma Branch	Senior Commissioning Manager		
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8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

NHS Southend CCG is committed to carrying out a systematic review of all its existing and proposed policies to determine whether there are any equality implications.

This policy has been assessed using the CCG's Equality Impact Assessment framework and identified as having the following impact/s upon equality and diversity issues:

Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Pregnancy	Maternity	Sexuality	Religion	Marital Status	Human Rights	Total Points	Impact
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	NIL

The Media Relations Policy has no differential positive or negative impact on any groups of people with protected characteristics.

9. VERSION CONTROL SHEET

Version	Date Issued	Date of next review	Author Name and Title	Comment
001	October 2014	October 2016	Paul Ilett, Interim Communications Manager	