

NHS
Rotherham
Clinical Commissioning Group

Title:	Media Relations Policy
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Owner:	Head of Communications
Author	Gordon Laidlaw
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Ratified and approved by:	
Distribution:	All staff and GP members of the CCG.
Compliance:	Mandatory for all permanent and temporary employees of Rotherham CCG.
Equality & Diversity Statement:	In applying this policy, the Organisation will have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and provide for good relations between people of diverse groups, in particular on the grounds of the following characteristics protected by the Equality Act (2010); age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation, in addition to offending background, trade union membership, or any other personal characteristic.

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MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

Introduction

This media policy will ensure that NHS Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group (RCCG) can enhance and manage its reputation, ensuring public confidence as the budget holder and accountable organisation for health services in Rotherham. By following this policy RCCG members and staff will ensure that we proactively promote the work of the organisation and are able to respond to media enquiries in a timely and positive manner.

Effective media relations are essential to the success of any organisation that operates in the public eye. The media will increasingly look to GPs and other clinicians in Rotherham (not just RCCG leads) for answers on specific issues and services that impact on people's health in Rotherham. The most successful organisations use the media to build good relationships with their customers (patients), clients, local organisations and general public. They are also prepared and equipped to react to any approaches by the media.

The media and public have high levels of confidence and trust in clinicians, in particular doctors, when they are the source of health information through statements, quotes or interviews. By following the advice in this policy we will be able build upon this reputation for the good of clinical commissioning in Rotherham going forward.

It is important that issues of media interest – public interest – are handled in the appropriate way and are delivered by a spokesperson that is trained in conducting media interviews or, if not, are supported by someone who is i.e. Head of Communications.

RCCG wants to foster a relationship of openness and dialogue with its stakeholders. This policy supports this but also ensures that the reputation of the organisation is protected, and, where possible, enhanced. We believe that the RCCG governing body, GP members and staff should have access to expert knowledge to assist and support them promoting their commissioning work. The Head of Communications is also available to give advice and support on media issues relating to independent contractors as providers or relating to a GP practice.

Objective

To support RCCG and its members in dealing with the media in order to maximise positive coverage and minimise or negate any negative publicity relating to the organisation. This will enable the organisation to maintain public confidence whilst managing its reputation in Rotherham and further afield.

Scope

This policy applies to all directly employed staff and those working on behalf of NHS Rotherham CCG.

Accountability and Responsibility

The Head of Communications is responsible for media relations as part of their agreement with RCCG and works closely with our Governing Body, Strategic Clinical Executive and GP members Committee. This media relations policy is accountable to the Chief Officer.

Proactive media – news release procedure

There should be no proactive approach to the media with issues relating to the organisation and its work without the agreement of the Head of Communications, Chief Officer or Chair. Any internal disputes should be raised and addressed internally before any media is approached.

News releases are issued to present positive messages about RCCG and our work. They inform others about our aims and achievements and should be linked to the Commissioning Plan where possible. On occasions we may issue statements that explain or support our position on issues that may arise.

All news releases from RCCG will be planned, co-ordinated and released through the Head of communications. The content will be cleared with the appropriate clinical lead and executive member. In order to maximise proactive media opportunities the communications team should be given ten working days notice of any events, potential stories or planned media contact. This will then allow any media print or broadcast deadlines to be co-ordinated with the planned activity.

All news releases which refer to other NHS trusts, NHS England, other CCGs, local authority or other partners will not be issued until the approval of relevant content has been confirmed with their respective communications team.

All news releases and statements will be copied to the Chair, Accountable Officer and Health and Wellbeing Board Chair for information when they are issued to the media.

Who can speak to the media?

Only trained, nominated media spokespeople will undertake media interviews. Media spokespeople who can represent the organisation will be pre-determined by the Operational Executive team. The relevant spokesperson will then be

decided by the Chief Officer and Head of Communications, depending on the topic of the enquiry and availability. There may be cases for other staff to undertake proactive media interviews as a development opportunity. Any media related development work should be discussed with line managers and the Head of Communication.

What to do if the media approaches you

All staff and GP members should initially NOT answer any questions on behalf of RCCG, but confirm that the communications lead handles all media enquiries and that they or the appropriate person will aim to get back to the reporter within the hour. The details of the enquiry (with contact details) should then be passed to the communications lead either by telephone or email.

No formal comment should be given to the media without the agreement of the Head of Communications, Chief Officer, Chair or an appropriate deputy.

Do not speak to the media ‘off the record’ – it should be assumed that nothing is off the record.

Contact details for media enquiries:

Head of Communications

Tel: 01302 308989 or mobile: 07980 959137

gordon.laidlaw@rotherhamccg.nhs.uk

The communications team will record all media enquiries.

What we do with a media enquiry

The communications team will contact the relevant service leads and brief them about the media enquiry. Having agreed what the response should be a statement will be drafted and signed off by the GP lead, executive lead, Accountable Officer and/or Chair. If necessary, availability and appropriateness to talk to the journalist will be discussed, following which the communications lead will set up an interview. This will involve setting up an interview with radio, TV or newspaper over the phone, in a studio or at another location. Every effort should be made to meet deadlines and spokespeople should be prepared to make themselves available at short notice. All quotes given on behalf of RCCG will be attributable.

All national and specialist press media enquiries will be cleared and agreed with the appropriate commissioning lead if necessary.

Training

The Head of Communications will ensure that appropriate media training is available to people who have media contact or will act as spokespeople on behalf of RCGG.

Advice and support is available from communications lead to independent contractors for media issues relating to independent contractors as providers or relating to a GP practice.

Out of Hours enquiries

The communications team does not provide a formal Out of Hours press office service, though local media have been issued with mobile phone numbers for the communication lead and would be able to make contact if necessary. Generally, press enquiries are dealt with Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm (not including bank holidays).

On occasions it may be necessary for the communications lead to contact nominated spokespeople when they are in meetings or out-of-hours if an urgent reaction to a significant media story is required. This will be instigated by the Head of Communications.