NHS
Kernow
Clinical Commissioning Group

Media Handling Policy

Date approved: 18 December 2019

This policy was adopted by NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board (ICB) on 1 July 2022.

We are working to change the branding on our policies and to make sure they are accessible.

We intend to complete this work by 1 April 2023. While this work is underway, all references to NHS Kernow, the CCG and related structures should be taken to relate to the ICB.

This policy may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email ciosicb.corporategovernance@nhs.net. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

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Document control sheet

Title of document:	Media Handling Policy
Originating directorate:	Corporate
Originating team:	Communications and Engagement
Document type:	Policy
Subject category:	Information Governance
Author(s) name:	Head of Communications and Engagement
Date ratified:	18 December 2019
Ratified by:	EMT
Review frequency:	Three years
To be reviewed by date:	June 2022
Target audience:	All NHS Kernow staff
Can this policy be released under FOI?	Yes
	Give reasons for exemption if no:

Version control

Version No	**Revision date**	**Revision by**	**Nature of revisions**

Version	**Notes**
V1.0	Approved by EMT

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1. Introduction

The NHS is a publicly funded and publicly accountable service. Care and treatment can be lifesaving and life changing. Health services have a high profile in the media.

Effective communications are essential to the success of the organisation, and NHS Kernow aims to work with the media and online influencers to build good, open relationships with people who use services, partner organisations, local organisations and the public.

NHS Kernow works with the media on the basis of authority and knowledge to ensure information is reliable and trustworthy, and public confidence can be maintained. It works closely with the media in several ways: in responding to journalist's enquiries; publicising the work of the organisation and its services; in providing information about services to the public; in raising awareness of healthy lifestyles and public health issues.

1.1 Statement of Intent

1.1.1 In its dealings with the media, NHS Kernow will comply with Caldicott guidelines and existing policy and practice in ensuring that:

- The duty of care and protection of a person's right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality is paramount.
- Contact with the media never deflects staff from the primary purpose of carrying out their work.
- Media activity does not detrimentally affect the duty of care.
- Pressure is never put on people who use services or carers to participate in media activity.
- No inducement, financial or otherwise, to take part in media activity will be accepted or given.

1.1.2 In addition, NHS Kernow will:

- Be open and honest in its dealings with the media.
- Respond to enquiries promptly within required and appropriate deadlines.
- Defend the reputation of the NHS locally, and appropriately respond to criticism.
- Ensure those speaking on behalf of the organisation have relevant knowledge and competence (See section 3: media contact).
- Explain its policies, decisions and activities fully and clearly.
- Acknowledge mistakes promptly, confirming the lessons learned and actions taken.
- Recognise the commitment of health and care staff.
- Recognise achievements and those of the wider health and care community in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

1.1.3 Any comments made to the media or information distributed to them will reflect the NHS' policies on disability and equality.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that all media handling is done by those with the appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise.

1.2.2 This is to ensure that information put into the public domain is accurate and clear. This will reduce the risk of misinforming people or the public and protect the NHS' reputation.

2. Definitions

The media covers local and national newspapers, television, radio, press agencies and web-based media such as BBC online, Cornwall Live, internet blogs, social media and networking sites where the right of reply is not straightforward and engagement requires different responses.

3. Media contact

3.1 All approaches received from the news media must be referred to the communications and engagement team, which manages the organisation's reputation. The team is responsible for ensuring media responses are professional, prompt, accurate and clear. To manage the complex array of issues that arise, the team needs to be aware of, and co-ordinate, all messages being given out through the media.

3. 2 This also includes any online correspondence with media outlets on social platforms (ie Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram). Please alert the communications and engagement team at the earliest opportunity of any discussions with journalists and media outlets, and refer any questions to the team to respond to. Please refer to NHS Kernow's social media policy for details of personal responsibility when commenting online when representing the organisation.

3.3 The communications team will draft statements, news releases, social posts, and make arrangements for interviews. It will publicise events, services, developments and changes in healthcare, and advise on the appropriate media to approach for coverage.

3.4 No member of staff should make comment to the media unless specifically asked to do so by the communications team. No member of staff, except in certain circumstances the communications team, will speak to the media 'off the record'.

3.5 Broadcast interviews: the head of communications, or in their absence, the communications officer, will make the final decision on whether a member of staff can be interviewed by the broadcast media. Only a senior manager, or a suitably competent member of staff nominated by a senior manager and approved by the head of communications or their deputy, will be authorised to undertake a broadcast interview.

3.6 The communications team will offer professional support and advice to any member of staff on all aspects of media handling. It will also offer communications support to those attending inquests, public inquiries or public hearings and offer media training where required.

4. Requests to film/ photograph/interview people

4.1 Our first duty is to look after the needs, privacy and dignity of people in our care, and NHS Kernow will do all in its power to protect people who do not wish to be photographed or filmed. When someone agrees to be filmed, a permission form must be signed and stored in accordance with GDPR. Please ask either the communications and engagement team, or the corporate governance team for more information about the organisation's responsibilities under GDPR.

4.2 Wherever possible and appropriate, and without compromising care, NHS Kernow will help the media in filming and photography on its premises, or with its partners if working together.

5. Working with partners

5.1 Where a news release refers to other NHS trusts, local authority partners or local committees, NHS Kernow will share the content of that news release with their communications departments, and will not issue the news release until approval is given.

6. Out of hours enquiries

6.1 The communications and engagement team does not provide an out of hours service. All urgent enquiries are dealt with by the on-call director, as per the organisation's on-call rota.

6.2 In the event of emergency, the head of communications and engagement may be alerted under emergency planning provisions.

7. Media training

7.1 The communications team will audit individuals' training and experience with the media, and will provide media training where necessary. The team will provide feedback and additional support, if required, following any interview.

8. Media monitoring

8.1 All media enquiries are logged by the communications team and a record kept of responses. Media and online / social media coverage is monitored daily, and senior managers are alerted when appropriate. The communications and engagement team provides quarterly reports to NHS Kernow's workforce committee on the range of its activities.

9. Scope of this policy

9.1 The media policy will apply to all employees of NHS Kernow and its Governing Body, including lay representatives. It also covers any clinicians, member practice staff and members of practice participation groups and the Citizens Advisory Panel who are working on behalf of NHS Kernow.

9.2 This policy does not cover member practice staff who are working on behalf of their own surgery and independently of NHS Kernow.

9.3 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.

9.4 Elected staff side representatives of recognised trade unions or staff associations are fully entitled to make comment on behalf of their staff association or trade union. They are not able to make comment on behalf of or represent, NHS Kernow.

9.5 Individual staff members are free to contact the media in a private capacity, but if their employment is known they should make clear that they speak as an individual and not on behalf of NHS Kernow. They should not attract media coverage that brings the organisation into disrepute.