

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

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SCOPE

Services	Applicable	Comments
Trustwide	✓	

**The Director responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy is
The Executive Director of Corporate Governance & Strategy**

ESSEX PARTNERSHIP UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

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ESSEX PARTNERSHIP UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

Assurance Statement

Clear internal arrangements for media relations ensure that the right people are conveying an appropriate message, at the appropriate time, and to the appropriate audiences. This Policy provides a mechanism through which the Trust can be effective in media management. The Trust wants to create a climate of openness and dialogue with all stakeholders. This Policy supports a culture of openness and dialogue in the organisation, but also ensures that the reputation of EPUT is protected, and when possible enhanced, and that the chances of misrepresentation by the media are reduced. The Trust believes that staff, directors and governors should have access to expert knowledge to assist and support them in undertaking media work. The Policy sets out a framework to provide this support.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Developing good relationships with the press and media is essential to Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT). This can help us promote a positive image of our services, and be a valuable source of communication to the communities that we serve.
- 1.2 It is in the best interests of EPUT that all representatives of the press and broadcast media are treated in an open-handed, helpful manner.
- 1.3 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 are required to comply with this policy at all times.
- 1.4 The media policy draws upon the policies and practices in place in the predecessor organisations.
- 1.5 The policy, when referring to 'the media', is concerned with journalists, researchers, editors and others working for the press in all forms: print; radio, television, social and internet sites.

2.0 SCOPE

- 2.1 All EPUT staff, directors and governors

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 A responsibility of the Trust to the public and to the media is to provide information about matters to which they have a legitimate concern. However, the overriding principle is that the duty of care and protection of a patient's right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality must come first on every occasion.

- 3.2 It is the responsibility of senior managers to ensure that staff are fully aware of EPUT's policy on dealing with media enquiries.

4.0 PRESS AND MEDIA ENQUIRIES

- 4.1 During normal office hours, all enquiries from the press or media are to be referred in the first instance to EPUT's Communications Department. This arrangement is applicable to all actions by the Communications Department identified in this policy. The Contact Centre will relay any messages outside normal working hours to the on-call director/Associate Director of Communications.
- 4.2 If approached by the media, all staff should initially not answer any questions on behalf of EPUT but will confirm that a member of the Communications Department will get back to them as soon as possible. Contact details should be taken and given to the Communications Department immediately.
- 4.3 The Communications Department will identify a spokesperson for the Trust on a case-by-case basis. Where appropriate, staff will be briefed with respect to the Communications Framework. Other than an appropriate member of the Communications Department, the identified spokesperson will be the ONLY authorised point of contact with the media – any other contact with the media by other staff, is unauthorised and will be treated as such by EPUT.
- 4.4 No member of staff will speak to the media 'off the record'. The only exceptions to this are members of the Communications Department who, in certain circumstances, will be required to speak to the media 'off the record'.
- 4.5 Staff giving interviews to the press or media should be the most appropriate for the subject. EPUT's Communications Department will hold an up to date list of all staff including contact numbers who are appropriate media speakers or representatives for the Trust.
- 4.6 All staff should ensure they are available as a *matter of urgency* should information be required by the press or media.
- 4.7 All newspaper media enquiries should have a written response via email. This is particularly important when handling contentious issues.
- 4.8 All reactive press statements will be approved by the appropriate director, their nominee or, if appropriate, the Chief Executive. They will be issued from EPUT's Communications Department, giving a contact name for any further enquires. In most cases this will be a member of the Communications Department.
- 4.9 A record will be kept of all media enquiries in the Communications Department.

- 4.10 No representative of the media (newspaper or broadcasting) will be allowed access to EPUT premises without the permission of the appropriate director or Associate Director of Communications.
- 4.11 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.
- 4.12 Authorised media representatives will be expected to produce proof of identity (i.e. a valid press card) when visiting EPUT premises.

5.0 NEWS RELEASES

- 5.1 Maximising the opportunities for press coverage of EPUT's work requires every member of staff to be alert to possible stories and subjects for articles and to let the Communications Department know about them as soon as possible
- 5.2 To ensure consistency in our communications, all news releases should be drafted by the Communications Department in advance of any approaches to the press or media.
- 5.3 All news releases from the Trust will be planned, co-ordinated and released via Communications. The content will be approved by the relevant director or, if appropriate, Chief Executive, or Associate Director of Communications prior to release.
- 5.4 All news releases that refer to our partner organisations will not be issued until the approval of the content has been confirmed with their Communications Department.
- 5.5 No member of staff will make contact with the media without the approval of the Associate Director of Communications.
- 5.6 The Communications Department maintains a list of press and media and can advise on preferred editorial formats or house styles, and copy deadlines.
- 5.7 The Communications Department monitors press coverage and holds copies of newspaper cuttings, and can provide advice and support for media briefings and interviews.
- 5.8 Staff are required to meet their obligations with regard to client confidentiality at all times when dealing with media issues.

6.0 SERIOUS INCIDENTS

- 6.1 EPUT is required to inform NHS England, NHS Improvement and the CQC of any serious incident (SI) that occurs within the Trust that is likely to involve press or media attention.
- 6.2 Every SI should be reported in accordance with the Trust Policy using the standard SI Notification Form, which should be completed by the relevant

member of staff. The Associate Director of Communications should be consulted in terms of the content of the media section of the reporting form.

7.0 MAJOR INCIDENTS

- 7.1 The Major Incident Plan details the role of communications in the event of a major incident. Special arrangements for liaising with the media are detailed in the Plan.

8.0 CORPORATE SUPPORT FOR MEDIA RELATIONS

- 8.1 The Trust has a Communications Department which is responsible for media relations as part of its portfolio and is accountable directly to the Executive Director of Corporate Governance and Strategy. The department will:

- support the Trust in fostering a culture of openness and transparency and managing the reputation of the organisation;
- act as a source of expert knowledge and support for all staff on media relations;
- manage relations with local, regional and national media organisations. They will also support director and service level contacts with the media.

- 8.2 Any media enquiries in relation to fraud investigation cases must be directed to EPUT Associate Director of Communications who must liaise with Trust Counter Fraud Services, EPUT Executive Chief Finance & Resources Officer and, where appropriate, NHS Protect. A jointly agreed statement, only then, can be considered for release

9.0 OUT OF HOURS ENQUIRIES

- 9.1 EPUT does not provide a formal (24/7) out of hours press office service. This means that staff are generally available to deal with press enquiries Monday to Friday; 0800 to 1800 (not including Bank Holidays). Out of hours media enquiries will be routed to the on-call director who, if appropriate, will contact the Associate Director of Communications. On occasion it may be necessary for the Communications Department to contact nominated directors out of hours if an urgent reaction to a significant media story is required. The Associate Director of Communications will instigate this.

10.0 RIGHTS OF STAFF SIDE REPRESENTATIVES OF RECOGNISED TRADE UNION OR STAFF ASSOCIATIONS

- 10.1 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 comment on behalf of, or represent, the Trust

11.0 TRAINING

- 11.1 The Communications Department will ensure that training on effective media relations is available to staff as appropriate.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION

- 12.1 This policy will be implemented and monitored by the Associate Director of Communications.
- 12.2 The Policy will be circulated to all Policy holders and held on the Trust intranet and website. All staff will be notified of its approval via Trust Today.

13.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 13.1 The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Associate Director of Communications
- 13.2 This Policy will be reviewed periodically and be amended should legislation or a change in national or local policy require.

14.0 REFERENCES TO OTHER POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

EPUT Communications Framework
EPUT Major Incident Plan

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