



**South
Yorkshire
Police and Crime
Commissioner**
Your Voice

South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner

MEDIA PROTOCOL

2015-2016

South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Media Protocol

The media protocol is a tool for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the Chief Executive, the senior management team and other employees at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to provide clarity on the processes involved in dealing with the media on behalf of the PCC.

The Engagement and Communications Team provides the link between the OPCC and the media and should be the first point of contact for the media for any enquiries and for OPCC officers for any proactive media activity or campaign requests. This protocol outlines the procedure for dealing with proactive and reactive media as well as publicity for events. It is designed to make the processes clear in order to protect the reputation of the PCC and OPCC employees and to ensure that a corporate approach is taken for all OPCC media activity.

Any media enquiries received by employees outside the Engagement and Communications Team should be referred immediately to the Communications Officer or the Engagement and Communications Manager who will liaise directly with the media whilst remaining in contact with the relevant OPCC officers, the PCC and partners.

1. Proactive campaigns and media releases

Unless otherwise agreed, only one spokesperson from the OPCC should be quoted in media releases or campaign materials, in line with the appropriate responsibility/portfolio area linked to the topic, as agreed by the PCC.

- Unless agreed otherwise, by the PCC or the Chief Executive the public spokesperson for the OPCC should be the PCC. This is in the interest of public accountability and as such, quotes should be written in the first person.

Where proactive media activity is instigated in partnership with other agencies, each partner agency should be provided, in advance of release, a copy of any information being issued and be given the opportunity to comment and add a quote from their relevant spokesperson, if appropriate.

- The relevant spokesperson from partner organisations should be allowed opportunity to comment within the release if the campaign relates to a joint venture between the OPCC and its partners. The relevant spokesperson should be agreed with the partner agency's/agencies' communications representative/s.

Dual quotes from within the OPCC should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. This is to ensure clarity and impact from a public relations and accountability perspective and it also avoids mixed messages and reduces the scope for quotes to

be mixed up and taken out of context. It also ensures that the Engagement and Communications Team can function in the most practical way, ensuring that releases are issued in a timely manner and are not subject to unrealistic approval processes, particularly in the case of joint media releases developed with partners, in which partner organisations would also be quoted and allowed time to approve the material.

This approach ensures the most efficient, accountable and high impact media relations service possible. An example of where a dual quote would be acceptable is where the Chairman of a committee is quoted (e.g. the Independent Ethics Panel) and the nature of the media release calls for the PCC to be quoted alongside.

* Where the PCC wishes to issue a proactive media release not covered by agreed campaigns within the Engagement and Communications Strategy, this should also be dealt with by the OPCC's Engagement and Communications Team unless the release is of a political nature, due to their posts being of a politically restricted nature. Nor should the team work on media activity relating to historic or personal matters of the PCC (for example the PCC's work prior to this role or more recent links to political parties or trades unions etc), which do not directly relate to the work of the OPCC. Where it is more appropriate for direct liaison between the PCC and the media (in any of cases equivalent to those outlined above), the PCC should inform the Engagement and Communications Team of their liaison with the media so they are prepared to deal with any subsequent media enquiries or consequences of the likely coverage from that liaison. (This also applies to section two below where the PCC may be approached directly by the media to provide a reactive statement.)

Approvals – all media releases should be approved by the relevant spokesperson after the content has been checked and approved by the relevant OPCC officer, according to the nature of the release. (Approvals are also required by partner organisations, where relevant, and a record of the approvals should be kept for audit purposes.)

2. Reactive statements and responses

It is extremely important from a public relations and accountability perspective that the OPCC does not appear faceless. All media responses should be issued in the appropriate name in order that the OPCC appears (and is) transparent and accountable for its actions. Research shows that the public are more likely to believe something attributed to a real person rather than an anonymous spokesperson and therefore reputation is better managed by quoting real people. Many of the media enquiries received by the Engagement and Communications Team tend to be of an operational nature and can be potentially negative. However, the OPCC has a duty to be accountable to the public and all reactive responses should therefore be provided to the media in the name of the PCC.

- In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the Chief Executive to be quoted (for example if the enquiry relates to an investigation into the conduct of the PCC).

Approvals – all statements and responses should be approved by the relevant spokesperson after being checked by the relevant OPCC officer who can check the response for accuracy. Where an issue is high profile, the response should be copied to relevant others for information – including partners where appropriate. (A record of the approvals should be kept for audit purposes.)

3. Dealing with the media

It is appropriate for the sake of providing an effective media relations service, enabling a culture of continual improvement, transparency, accountability and for the sake of following the most recent guidance on dealing with the media (particularly following the Leveson Inquiry), that a log of contact with the media is kept. Any verbal, email, or face-to-face dealings with the media should be recorded and the following information included:

- Date and time
- Proactive (instigated by the OPCC) or reactive (instigated by the media or another party)
- Contact name and contact details (including media outlet)
- Nature of the enquiry
- Any supplementary information
- What we issued (proactive release) or how we responded (reactive statement)
- Details of approval of release or statement
- Date and time of response
- Outcome of coverage (positive, neutral or negative and extent of coverage of key messages – link to shared media monitoring with the force: currently Melt Water)

In the current absence of sophisticated media recording software, the above information is recorded on an Excel database. This is used to populate the internal weekly Media Briefing, which is provided to the Chief Executive, PCC and subsequently to all OPCC employees for their information.

Where sensitive information is being issued to the media, all internal OPCC employees should be informed in advance to avoid colleagues reading important stories about the PCC or the OPCC in the media instead of having been briefed directly.

The Leveson Inquiry made recommendations on how informal contact with journalists, previously known as ‘off-the-record’ discussions should no longer be used:

- ‘Off the record briefing’ – should be replaced with:
 - **‘Non-reportable briefing’** – for background information not to be published but to allow the journalist the opportunity to understand the wider context of the story; or
 - **‘Embargoed briefing’** – where the information is not for publication until a specified time or event

- In both of the above cases, it is essential that the OPCC officer and the journalist are both explicitly aware of which type of briefing applies to the discussion or exchange of information.

4. Events and Invitations

The OPCC and partners organise and manage events on a regular basis. The Engagement and Communications Team can organise and/or provide advice on events management. In addition, it may be possible, where needed, to seek extra resource and support on events from South Yorkshire Police's Corporate Communications Department. Officers requiring event support, or publicity support around events, should make the Engagement and Communications Team aware of the event within a reasonable timescale in order to ensure that appropriate publicity can be secured within the event timescales.

A key consideration from a communications perspective is to ensure that the relevant partners and special guests have been invited to events in a timely manner. It is important that the event organiser ensures that invitations are issued before any partner who may receive an invitation, is approached by the communications officer with a draft media release and proposed quote for approval. This avoids any confusion or embarrassment within the invitation process.

Media releases and photo opportunities will be issued regularly when the PCC is attending events, specifically when he is speaking or presenting. These will be promoted in line with the PCC's Strategic Priorities, as detailed in the Police and Crime Plan: Protecting vulnerable people; Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour and Enabling fair treatment.

5. Liaison with SYP Media Team

Though the Corporate Communications Team at SYP shares some resource with the OPCC Engagement and Communications Team, it is not appropriate to share media relations resources as this, in many cases, would create a conflict of interest as the OPCC's key purpose is to hold the force to account. However, where appropriate, the SYP Media Team should be informed of any announcements made by the OPCC in advance of sharing with the media. This will assist the SYP media team in preparing any potential response from their side.

Fiona Topliss
Engagement and Communications Manager
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