

## **Media Relations Protocols for Health Service Employees**

In any healthy democracy an active media is an essential component, publicising the achievements and results but also frequently questioning the policies and actions of those in authority.

The HSE recognises that working with the media requires an appropriate response as the media can influence public opinion about the services provided by the HSE and the staff providing those services.

The HSE is committed to being open and proactive about promoting its role within Irish society. The HSE is also dedicated to protecting the reputation of staff and the privacy of patients and accordingly, the National Press Office also acts as a counter to negative commentary and unbalanced reportage of HSE services in the Media.

Currently, the HSE and the wider Health Service family is undergoing one of the largest reform programmes in the State, as laid out in ***Future Health: A Strategic Framework for Reform of the Health Service 2012 – 2015***. The establishment of Hospital Groups and CHOs is an integral part of this reform, which will see public hospitals and community services reorganised into more efficient and accountable entities that will harness the benefits of increased independence and greater control at local level.

Along with this changing Governance structure at local level, comes the need for communicating this accountability to the Public and the Media.

Historically, local and regional issues were referred to Area Communications Offices and the National Press Office was tasked with any major news stories and National issues which affected the wider health service.

Under the current reform programme each Hospital Group and Community Health Organisation is now tasked with leading, developing and implementing a communications strategy to manage the reputation of the Group and along with communications implications of decisions, policies and plans. This transitional arrangement has been taking place over the last eight months and it is expected that the process will not be complete until the future legislative positions of both Hospital Groups and CHOs is known. In this respect some Hospital Groups have appointed in-house Communication Managers and some have chosen to use external Public Relations (PR) companies during this transition period.

The HSE National Press Office remains central to these transitioning arrangements, providing an advisory role to all new Communication managers, as well as responding to all Media on HSE issues, in addition to managing all public health information campaigns.

### ***What does the National Press Office do?***

They provide the wider health service with a professional service that comprises public relations, reputation management, crisis management and risk assessment. Their functions include:

- Promoting a positive profile of the HSE and publicising achievements and reforms.
- Promoting all public health information campaigns
- Ensuring that the CEO and HSE's vision is carried through the media

- Protecting the integrity, credibility and reputation of the HSE and staff within media coverage of the health services
- Supporting Hospital Groups and CHOs communications functions as required throughout the transition period
- Media relations – to ensure balanced coverage in the media of the work of the HSE and the Irish Health Services.
- Ensuring all media queries are answered promptly and accurately, reflecting policy, objectives, work and initiatives.
- Liaising on all media relations with the Department of Health and other Government Departments, State agencies and public representatives.
- Liaising with HSE staff on all media and communications matters.
- Providing a support/advisory service to relevant staff members on communications issues.
- Provision of out of hours service for media queries as required
- Arranging appropriate media interviews with staff and providing preparation and briefing support to interviewees.
- Ensuring up to date monitoring of media coverage
- Maximising media coverage of a wide range of public functions and launches.

### **When a Journalist Calls...**

For many staff it can be an unnerving experience to receive a call from a journalist or to find oneself being asked abruptly to answer a question for publication. Journalists are always obliged to identify themselves as such under the NUJ Code of Ethics and in almost all cases will do so.

Staff should refer the call to the local CHO/Hospital Group Communications Office in the first instance or the National Press Office if necessary. Communications staff are trained and experienced in dealing with all Media and are there to provide staff with guidance and support.

Staff should remember that anything they do say to a journalist can be used and quoted and the staff member can even be named. In order to protect staff, the reputation of the service and ensure patient confidentiality, the following protocols should provide some guidance;

- All media queries, including requests to take photographs or film, should be referred to the CHO/Hospital Group Communications Office in your area or to the National Press Office.
- All statements to be issued publicly should be cleared by a senior manager and the CHO/Hospital Group Communications office in your area.
- Any invitations to the media (or public events in the planning stage) should be issued by the CHO/Hospital Group Communications office in your area.
- Any knowledge of journalistic activity concerning a HSE matter should be notified to the CHO/Hospital Group Communications office in your area
- Any development which is certain to arouse significant media interest (positive or negative) should be notified firstly to the relevant senior manager and also to the National Press Office/ CHO/Hospital Group Communications office in your area.

### **When the Communications Office Calls...**

When dealing with a media query, the National Press Office or your local CHO/Hospital Group Communications office team may need to contact members of staff for the necessary details. A response will then be prepared in conjunction with the service manager concerned which is then cleared/signed off at National Director level.

We endeavour to be as co-operative and facilitating as possible with the media. This means that our management of interviews, articles and all information must ensure the following:

- Our patients and clients confidentiality is protected at all times
- All information is accurate and up to date
- Each query is dealt with promptly
- Responses are cleared by a senior manager/National Director

As the media can operate to quite tight deadlines, staff should be aware that requests for information from a Press Officer need to be dealt within such deadlines.

Media is now a 24/7 cycle and deadlines can vary from a couple of minutes for an online/social media to a couple of days. The Press Officer contacting you will specify the deadline he/she is working to.

Staff should inform the Press Officer if there is a difficulty meeting that deadline as soon as possible so the press office can manage the expectations of the journalist.

A prompt reply and assistance to the Press Office maximises the input the HSE/CHO/Hospital Group may have in any given story. No information or a late response may lead to a story reflecting unfairly on staff or services.

### **What to do if the media present on HSE premises seeking interviews or photographs?**

The Media are obliged not to conduct Interviews, filming or photography on HSE premises without the prior approval of the National Press Office/ CHO/Hospital Group Communications office in your area.

Any filming or recording of staff and patients requires strict adherence to signing Public Liability, Indemnity and Consent forms.

Where the media contact the Communications office to seek permission to film or take photographs of a HSE premises, the Communications office will consult with the relevant manager. If permission is granted the Communications office will make the appropriate arrangements. A member of the Communications team will be present on the day to facilitate and manage the Media.

If the media present on HSE premises seeking interviews/photographs, without prior approval, you should inform them that it is HSE policy that all media requests are referred to the CHO/Hospital Group Communications office in your area or to the National Press Office.

You should give them contact details for your Communications office and you should also contact your Communications office immediately to advise that the media are present at your premises/location.

### **Patient/Client Confidentiality**

The HSE places great emphasis on the need for strictest confidentiality in respect of our patients and clients. Every patient and client in the care of the HSE is entitled to the reassurance that the HSE will not comment on the particular circumstances of their case or engage in public debate on private matters or permit to them being photographed or other media intrusion while in our care without permission.

It is for these reasons of patient/client confidentiality that the HSE will not comment on the clinical nature of individual cases.

### **Protected Disclosure**

If a member of staff has concerns about wrongdoing to an individual or within a service they can also utilise the Protected Disclosure Act 2014, legislation which provides statutory protection for workers from penalisation as a result of making a Disclosure.

Staff may call the Raising a Concern in the Workplace Information Hotline (01-6626984) or write to PO Box 11571, Dublin 2 to report a concern using the HSE Protected Disclosure of Information policy. The complainant's details, those of the employer and the issue raised are recorded and this policy ensures legal protection is afforded to the complainant by the HSE. Concerns raised follow the process as outlined in the Protected Disclosure of information policy.

### **Good Faith Reporting**

Staff may call the Raising a Concern in the Workplace Information Hotline (01-6626984) to report a concern using the HSE the Good Faith Reporting (GFR) policy.

In addition to the HSE Protected Disclosure of Information policy, the Good Faith Reporting (GFR) policy allows people to voice concerns anonymously, about possible improprieties pertaining to financial, clinical or social services. Thus, issues raised are documented but names are not used if requested not to do so. Assurance will be sought from the National Director(s) that the concern has been investigated and is being managed

### **Media Interviews**

The giving of interviews, statements or any other information connected with the services provided by any health service should not be undertaken without the prior approval of the National Press Office or your local CHO/Hospital Group Communications office.

This is to ensure that only accurate and authorised information is issued, and to ensure that any comments that are made in such interviews cannot be attributed as the official HSE position.

A clear procedure for dealing with interviews is necessary for all health service staff. This protects members of staff from being forced to make immediate comment and also enables the most up to date factual and contextual information to be provided. It also enables consistent and clear approach to be adopted regarding the HSE/Hospital Group/CHO viewpoint.

At times, members of staff may speak with the media as representatives of their professional association or trade union. This is acceptable but staff speaking in such a capacity must always ensure that such interviews and their comments are being made in the context of their association and are not representative of the HSE/Hospital Group/CHO.

Such interviews should not breach patient or work confidentiality.

### **Checklist**

When responding to a press query please use the following checklist:

- Take the journalist's name and organisation
- Establish the deadline
- Establish exactly what information the journalist is seeking
- Contact the CHO Communications Office or the National Press Office
- Agree a response and arrange for the National Press Office or Communications Manager to issue

**Contact details – See Appendix 1**

## **Appendix 1**

### **HSE Communications Contacts**

The HSE Press Office is open during normal working hours Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 17.30. Outside of normal office hours there is an emergency on-call media service for urgent queries only. Out of hours media queries relating to serious incidents or major emergencies should be directed to 087 227 4605; this phone line cannot take text queries.

Please note that non urgent queries or queries that require data gathering from across the health system cannot be facilitated out of hours. These queries will be forwarded to the relevant communications staff during normal working hours.

The HSE Communications Division has been reconfigured in line with the recent HSE change programme. Many of the existing communications staff and offices have moved into the recently established Community Health Organisations (CHOs) and Hospital Groups. To help you access the most appropriate communications contact please select from the following:

#### **For HSE National and Corporate Press Queries please contact:**

Dr. Steevens' Hospital, Dublin 8  
Tel: + 353 1 6352840  
Fax: + 353 1 635 2670  
Email [press@hse.ie](mailto:press@hse.ie)

Paul Bailey, Head of National Press Office, email [paul.bailey@hse.ie](mailto:paul.bailey@hse.ie), Tel: 087 177 6983

Ann McLoone, Deputy Head of Press, email [ann.mcloone@hse.ie](mailto:ann.mcloone@hse.ie) Tel: 087 061 0848

JP Swaine, Press Officer, email [jswaine@hse.ie](mailto:jswaine@hse.ie), Tel: 087 279 1398

| Organisation Name                   | Service Area  | Office hours contact  | Out of Hours Contact  |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Ireland East Hospitals Group</b> | Mater Misericordiae University Hospital; Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar; St Luke's General Hospital, Kilkenny; Wexford General Hospital; National Maternity Hospital; Our Lady's Hospital, Navan; St Columcille's Hospital; Dun Laoghaire; Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital; Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital. | Caroline Kohn<br><a href="mailto:ckohn@iehg.ie">ckohn@iehg.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 329 7518  | PSG Communications<br>Cathy Madden<br><a href="mailto:cathy.madden@psgplus.ie">cathy.madden@psgplus.ie</a><br>Tel: 086 605 0209<br>Or<br>Cormac Coughlan<br><a href="mailto:cormac.coughlan@psgplus.ie">cormac.coughlan@psgplus.ie</a><br><br>Tel: 086 414 4329 |
|                                     | St Vincent's University Hospital, St Michael's Hospital   | <u>Primary Contact</u><br>MKC Communications<br>Laurie Mannix<br><a href="mailto:laurie@mkc.ie">laurie@mkc.ie</a><br>Tel: 086 814 3710  | <u>Primary Contact</u><br>MKC Communications<br>Laurie Mannix<br><a href="mailto:laurie@mkc.ie">laurie@mkc.ie</a><br>Tel: 086 814 3710  |
| <b>RCSI Hospitals Group</b>         | Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda; Connolly Hospital; Cavan General Hospital; Louth County Hospital; Monaghan Hospital.  | <u>Primary Contact</u><br>Q4 PR<br>Jackie Gallagher<br><a href="mailto:jackie@q4pr.ie">jackie@q4pr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 237 1838<br><br><u>Alternative Contact</u><br>Mairead Lyons<br><a href="mailto:communications@rcsi.ie">communications@rcsi.ie</a><br><a href="mailto:maireadlyons@rcsihospitals.ie">maireadlyons@rcsihospitals.ie</a><br>Tel: 086 0425783 | Q4 PR<br>Jackie Gallagher<br><a href="mailto:jackie@q4pr.ie">jackie@q4pr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 237 1838  |
|                                     | Rotunda Hospital  | Heneghan PR<br>Eoghan O Neachtain<br><a href="mailto:eoghan@hpr.ie">eoghan@hpr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 628 8030<br>Eve Noone<br><a href="mailto:eve@hpr.ie">eve@hpr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 914 4855  | Heneghan PR<br>Eoghan O Neachtain<br><a href="mailto:eoghan@hpr.ie">eoghan@hpr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 628 8030<br>Eve Noone<br><a href="mailto:eve@hpr.ie">eve@hpr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 914 4855  |

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|  | Beaumont Hospital   | DruryPN Communications<br>Gerry Naughton<br><a href="mailto:gerry.naughton@drurypn.ie">gerry.naughton@drurypn.ie</a><br>Tel: 086 803 2891<br><b><u>Copy the following on all queries for Beaumont</u></b><br>Anna Kavanagh<br><a href="mailto:Anna.kavanagh@drurypn.ie">Anna.kavanagh@drurypn.ie</a><br>Louise Walsh<br><a href="mailto:Louise.walsh@drurypn.ie">Louise.walsh@drurypn.ie</a> | DruryPN Communications<br>Gerry Naughton<br><a href="mailto:gerry.naughton@drurypn.ie">gerry.naughton@drurypn.ie</a><br>Tel: 086 803 2891<br><br>087 692 9458  |
| <b>Dublin<br/>Midlands<br/>Hospitals<br/>Group</b> | St. Luke's Radiation Oncology Network; Midlands Regional Hospital, Tullamore; Naas General Hospital; Midlands Regional Hospital Portlaoise. | PR 360<br>Amanda Glancy<br><a href="mailto:Amanda@pr360.ie">Amanda@pr360.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 227 3108<br>Or<br>Dan Pender<br><a href="mailto:Dan@pr360.ie">Dan@pr360.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 231 3415  | PR 360<br>Amanda Glancy<br><a href="mailto:Amanda@pr360.ie">Amanda@pr360.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 227 3108<br>Or<br>Dan Pender<br><a href="mailto:Dan@pr360.ie">Dan@pr360.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 231 3415  |
|  |   | <b><u>Internal Contact</u></b><br>Arlene Crean<br><a href="mailto:Arlene.crean@hse.ie">Arlene.crean@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 057-935 8069 or<br>086 796 8640   |  |
|  | Adelaide & Meath Hospital, Dublin (Tallaght Hospital)   | DruryPN Communications<br>Anna Kavanagh<br><a href="mailto:anna.kavanagh@drurypn.ie">anna.kavanagh@drurypn.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 692 9458<br>Or Iarla Mongey<br><a href="mailto:iarla.mongey@drurypn.ie">iarla.mongey@drurypn.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 235 6461   | DruryPN Communications<br>Anna Kavanagh<br><a href="mailto:anna.kavanagh@drurypn.ie">anna.kavanagh@drurypn.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 692 9458<br>Or Iarla Mongey<br><a href="mailto:iarla.mongey@drurypn.ie">iarla.mongey@drurypn.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 235 6461 |
|  | St James' Hospital  | Q4PR<br>Nicola Scott<br><a href="mailto:Nicola@q4pr.ie">Nicola@q4pr.ie</a><br>Tel: 086 881 7855<br>Or<br>Martin Mackin<br><a href="mailto:martin@q4pr.ie">martin@q4pr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 814 5030  | Q4PR<br>Nicola Scott<br><a href="mailto:Nicola@q4pr.ie">Nicola@q4pr.ie</a><br>Tel: 086 881 7855<br>Or<br>Martin Mackin<br><a href="mailto:martin@q4pr.ie">martin@q4pr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 814 5030  |



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|  | The Coombe Women & Infant University Hospital   | FTI Consulting<br>Jim Devlin<br><br>Tel: 087 263 1057  | FTI Consulting<br>Jim Devlin<br><br>Tel: 087 263 1057  |
| <b>University of Limerick Hospitals</b>    | University Hospital Limerick, University Maternity Hospital Limerick, Ennis Hospital, Nenagh Hospital, Croom Orthopaedic Hospital, St. John's Hospital.   | Elaine Connolly<br><a href="mailto:ulhgcommunications@hse.ie">ulhgcommunications@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 061 58 5844 or 087 646 0124  | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605  |
| <b>South/South West Hospitals Group</b>    | Cork University Hospital/CUMH; University Hospital Waterford; Kerry General Hospital; Mercy University Hospital; South Tipperary General Hospital; South Infirmity Victoria University Hospital; Bantry General Hospital; Mallow General Hospital, Lourdes Orthopaedic Hospital, Kilcreene. | Heneghan PR<br>Eoghan O Neachtain<br><a href="mailto:eoghan@hpr.ie">eoghan@hpr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 628 8030<br>Eve Noone<br><a href="mailto:eve@hpr.ie">eve@hpr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 914 4855 | Heneghan PR<br>Eoghan O Neachtain<br><a href="mailto:eoghan@hpr.ie">eoghan@hpr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 628 8030<br>Eve Noone<br><a href="mailto:eve@hpr.ie">eve@hpr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 914 4855 |
| <b>Saolta University Health Care Group</b> | University Hospital Galway and Merlin Park University Hospital; Sligo University Hospital; Letterkenny University Hospital; Mayo University Hospital; Portiuncula University Hospital; Roscommon University Hospital  | Caitriona Meehan<br><a href="mailto:media@saolta.ie">media@saolta.ie</a><br>Tel: 091-543410 or 091-775077<br>Or 086 606 9749   | Setanta Communications<br>Michael Moloney or Roisín O<br><a href="mailto:media@saolta.ie">media@saolta.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 258 7264   |
| <b>Children's Hospital Group</b>           | OLCH Crumlin, Temple Street Children's Hospital, Adelaide & Meath Hospital, Dublin  | Q4 PR<br>Angie Kinane<br><a href="mailto:angie@q4pr.ie">angie@q4pr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 812 6249<br>Or<br>Sinead McGovern<br><a href="mailto:sinead@q4pr.ie">sinead@q4pr.ie</a>              | Q4 PR<br>Angie Kinane<br><a href="mailto:angie@q4pr.ie">angie@q4pr.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 812 6249<br>Or<br>Sinead McGovern<br><a href="mailto:sinead@q4pr.ie">sinead@q4pr.ie</a>              |

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|              |  | Tel: 087-6411725  | Tel: 087-6411725                      |
| <b>CHO 1</b> | Donegal, Sligo Leitrim   | Amanda Murray<br><a href="mailto:amandam.murray@hse.ie">amandam.murray@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 071 983 4641 or<br>087 905 0777   | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |
|              | Cavan, monaghan  | John Hayes ( Chief Officer)<br><a href="mailto:john.hayes@hse.ie">john.hayes@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 071-9834000 (Catherine McCauley)  |                                       |
| <b>CHO 2</b> | Galway, Mayo and Roscommon   | Ross Cullen<br><br><a href="mailto:comms.cho2@hse.ie">comms.cho2@hse.ie</a><br><br>Tel: 091 775474 or<br><br>087 239 0695   | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |
| <b>CHO 3</b> | Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary                                      | Suzanne Moloney<br><a href="mailto:suzanneb.moloney@hse.ie">suzanneb.moloney@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 061 483223 or<br>087 6383702  | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |
| <b>CHO 4</b> | Kerry and Cork   | Ger Reaney (Chief Officer)<br><a href="mailto:ger.reaney@hse.ie">ger.reaney@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 028 40404 (Eamonn Morris)  | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |
| <b>CHO 5</b> | Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford                 | Fiachra Ó Céilleachair<br><a href="mailto:fiachra.OCeilleachair@hse.ie">fiachra.OCeilleachair@hse.i</a><br><a href="mailto:fiachra.OCeilleachair@hse.ie">e</a><br>Tel: (051) 84 8681 or<br>(087) 618 2083 | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |
| <b>CHO 6</b> | Dublin South, East Wicklow   | Siobhan Curran<br><a href="mailto:siobhan.curran5@hse.ie">siobhan.curran5@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 01 2680 428 / 087<br>6022508   | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |
| <b>CHO 7</b> | Kildare, West Wicklow, Dublin West, Dublin South City, Dublin South West | Nicola Gregg<br><a href="mailto:nicola.gregg@hse.ie">nicola.gregg@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 087 229 3031   | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |
| <b>CHO 8</b> | Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Louth, Meath                         | Dymphna Bracken<br><a href="mailto:dymphna.bracken@hse.ie">dymphna.bracken@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 057 935 9795 or   | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |

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|              |   | 086 815 7222  |                                       |
| <b>CHO 9</b> | Dublin North, Dublin North Central, Dublin North West | Rosaleen Harlin<br><a href="mailto:rosaleen.harlin@hse.ie">rosaleen.harlin@hse.ie</a><br>Tel: 046 925 1318 or<br>087 829 1416 | HSE Duty Officer<br>Tel: 087 227 4605 |