

CTCIC - Media Policy

Date approved by the Connected Together CIC Board	Ratified by CIC Board 26/09/2022
Author/Responsible Person	Michelle Wright
Next revision due	September 2025
Staff/volunteer training delivered	During Induction. Staff and volunteers will be advised of updates as appropriate
Date sent to staff	27/09/2022
Checked for rebranding	This policy covers Connected Together CIC and <i>all</i> its contracts and managed organisations, for example Healthwatch North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire (HWNW) and Healthwatch Rutland (HWR).
	Michelle Wright - 11/05/2022
Signed off by CEO	Kate Holt - 20/05/2022
Checked By	Catherine Maryon (CTCIC Director) - 25/08/2022

The **purpose** of this policy is to:

- ensure Connected Together CIC (CTCIC) and all its organisations/contracts, for example HWNW and HWR, have a clear process for managing media relations which staff, board members and volunteers all understand and comply with
- ensure that external stakeholders are aware of the policy and agree reciprocal arrangements for sharing press releases and statements in advance, wherever practical.

Process for handling media enquiries (see Appendix 1) - in order of action:

All media requests and contacts should come to the CTCIC Chief Executive Officer (CEO). If any members of CTCIC managed/advisory boards, their staff members or volunteers receive contact from the media making enquiries about a response to issues in local health and social care, or any other matter affecting CTCIC, they should refer the enquiry, without comment, to the CEO.

The CTCIC CEO will decide whether a press statement or release should be issued.

There may be occasions when CTCIC declines to issue a statement. This could include, although is not exhaustive, the following circumstances:

- there is either insufficient information about the subject matter
- insufficient time to research the subject matter
- CTCIC has agreed to respect a request that the matter is confidential

Matters related to staff or to individuals involved with CTCIC, and all its organisations/contracts, for example HWNW and HWR, should **never** be discussed outside the organisation.

If the decision is to issue a statement or press release, the CTCIC CEO will review and approve a draft press statement or release, which will also be approved by the relevant chair.

In the absence of the CEO, the chair of CTCIC, along with the relevant chair of the CIC managed contracts e.g. HWR and HWNW will draft or approve any press release.

Only written statements/releases should be released to the media. Comments should not be provided over the phone to print journalists.

Planned and proactive media releases should, ideally and where practical, be shared at least 1 working day in advance with external stakeholders who are referenced in the media release. Reactive statements should, ideally, be shared at least 2 working hours in advance with external stakeholders who are referenced in

the media release. These are likely to be health and social care commissioners and/or providers. The purpose of this is to give commissioners and providers advance notice of the release and statement, and an opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the release/statement. It does not give commissioners and providers the right to veto or block press releases.

All press releases/statements should be:

- issued in pdf format as this helps to prevent alteration
- you can load PDFs into word and edit them with their graphics etc
- double spaced
- be on headed paper with CTCIC and other appropriate logos at the top and with VIN and University of Northampton logos at the bottom of the press release.
- The release/statement will then be circulated by the CEO, or delegated media personnel such as the communications lead. General proactive planned releases will go to all local and regional media as routine. Press statements may go to specific media organisations depending on the circumstances.

Once the release/statement has been covered by the media, a copy will be placed on the CTCIC website or the websites of HWNW/HWR or the website of the relevant organisation being managed by CTCIC as agreed by the CEO/communications lead in the news section and on occasions may go on the slider on the home page as a main story.

Radio and TV Interviews

CTCIC/HWNW/HWR will agree authorised spokespeople who can be interviewed by broadcast (radio and TV). Usually that will be the CEO or Chair of CTCIC, HWNW, HWR, etc. It is important that the people who have the expertise on particular issues should be offered the opportunity to be interviewed. Media training will be provided and attached as Appendix 1 are a set of top tips. Ideally a written briefing with Q&A will be provided to authorised spokespeople before an interview, if not a verbal briefing will be provided by the CEO or delegated media officer.

Once the media interview has taken place and coverage secured, a debrief will be arranged to review.

Media stories, radio and TV interviews will be placed on the CTCIC website and the website(s) of its managed organisations, as relevant.

There may be situations when it is necessary to deal with the media about sensitive issues, and on occasions, prior to something becoming public. The media may need a detailed briefing on what has happened or is likely to happen. This should only be done by the CEO, or the CTCIC, HWNW, HWR Chair or the Chair of other managed organisations, as authorised by the CTCIC CEO.

Social media

Social media is increasing in use and is a good way to reach a wider audience, particularly audiences who may not access traditional media. All social media content should be up to date and accurate.

All material placed on the websites, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts will be checked for factual accuracy by the delegated communications lead. House style must be used.

The Facebook pages and Twitter accounts will be checked daily by the delegated communications lead. Any offensive or damaging content will be removed as well as content that is not accurate or contains profanity or inappropriately derogatory terms about an individual or organisation. Please also see our Online and Virtual Meetings Policy.

Related policy:

Online and Virtual Meetings Policy-035

Appendix 1

Commented [CM1]: Really good section

Top Tips for ensuring positive media contact

- From time to time, hot topics suddenly grab the media's attention, and they want an instant comment. Caution should be exercised - especially if we don't have full information about the topic, or it is an area completely outside our area of expertise. We can say no.
- Matters related to staff or to individuals involved with CTCIC or any of its managed organisations should **never** be discussed outside the organisation.
- Off the record? There is no such thing as an off the record or non-attributable conversation with a journalist. There are also dangers at social occasions when you may be less on guard. The conditions under which an interview or conversation is given should be clear to both sides from the outset! Remember the terms "off the record" and "non-attributable" can be misinterpreted.
- Always double check with a journalist that they are clear about your understanding of the terms before an interview takes place. It is absolutely your right to do this, and most journalists understand this.
- Prior to every radio or TV interview, all delegated spokespeople should prepare exactly what they want to say. Failure to prepare risks failure to be quoted on the points you wanted to convey, or that the journalist overlooks your comments entirely and quotes another source. This in turn means that they may not re-contact us on that issue and that CTCIC and/or its managed organisations lose valuable opportunities in the future.
- Be aware of journalists phoning you out of the blue and making casual comment. Don't respond.
- HWNW And HWR advisory board meetings are held in public, which the media can attend. Anything said at a meeting in public can be quoted by the media so please bear that in mind.
- Ideally you should have 3 key messages to convey which are simple, but compelling. Try not to over-complicate the story - a journalist needs to be clear about key points to pick up on. The messages should be backed up with pre-prepared arguments, statistics, and information where possible.

- Be clear and concise. Use plain phrases and *avoid jargon* but do use interesting language that catches the journalist’s imagination and makes it more likely they will quote you rather than others they speak to.
- Always consider who you are talking to/who you are addressing: Who reads the publication? What sort of articles do they write? How much does the journalist know in advance? The staff team or key volunteers may be able to help you with this information.
- There is no obligation to answer difficult, potentially embarrassing, or competitively sensitive questions. However, it is preferable to give a reason (never say “no comment”). For example, consider: “it would be premature to talk about that”, “we don’t have any information on that at this stage”, “that is a confidential matter”.
- If you don’t know the answer, either say you will come back to the question, suggest an alternative source or say it is not your area of expertise.
- If you wish to change the direction of questioning try using a phrase such as “that’s an interesting point, but what is key is ...”