# Media, Publicity and Events

# Westmorland and Furness Care Services

## Policy

To ensure all staff are aware of how to manage the media and our public relations events appropriately.

## Procedure

Media, publicity and event policy - a guide to managing the media and public relation events effectively.

### Why do we have a policy?

What is said about us and our services, and the way we present ourselves has an impact on our image to the public, councillors, our service users, customers and you, the employees. It is therefore critical that we ensure we get the best coverage of good news stories. To do this we need to manage the media and our public relations (PR) events appropriately. For this reason, we have developed this policy and the step-by-step guides.

### Good news stories

Good news stories are a key element in the development of a positive image for our services. They help us to build strong relationships with our service users, customers and partners, help develop an understanding of what we do to a wider audience and ensure we get recognition for the excellent services we provide everyday.

Good news can come from anywhere in the organisation and can relate to success in service delivery or achievements made by individuals. Sometimes, things considered unimportant by us can be of real interest to the media, for example, a personal achievement by one of our colleagues – whether it be climbing Mount Everest or being successful in an exam.

One of the keys to getting good news out to the media and others is making your supervisor or managers aware of events and achievements or telling the Communications Team. They can then pull together the information and make sure it is communicated to a wider audience – whether it is in the council’s internal publications such as a newsletter, the council’s website or local media for wider publication.

### Media Management

We can all come across concerns that may have an impact on the perception of the services we provide. Often having the right information to hand or being aware of a potential issue can prevent negative media coverage or make sure that a positive message is presented in the media.

Therefore, should you become aware of any issue that may result in negative or positive media coverage for Westmorland and Furness Council, Westmorland and Furness Care Services, or our partners, you must make your line manager or supervisor aware at the earliest opportunity. All issues must be communicated to the relevant senior manager.

### Request for information by county councillors

From time to time, county councillors make requests for information. Ordinarily they will go to the corporate director or relevant senior manager. However, there is the chance that they may come to you direct. Please do not respond immediately, instead any requests for information from county councillors should be reported to your Service Manager who will ensure a response is provided in a timely manner.

Enquiries should of course be dealt with promptly and in a helpful and constructive manner, as you would deal with any customer.

### News Releases, Statements and Public Relations (PR) Events

Below are details on how to deal with all these issues in an easy to use step-by-step guide.

The information contained within this policy reinforces past practice, aims to ensure a co-ordinated approach to handling the media and should be always adhered to.

### Who can speak to the media?

**Nominated individuals**

Only nominated individuals within Westmorland and Furness Care Services can speak directly with the media in relation to the council. They must do this in liaison with Westmorland and Furness Communications Team. Normally the Service manager or occasionally other managers will conduct officer-led interviews, although the normal procedure is for the appropriate Cabinet member to lead on interviews.

**Exceptional circumstances**

Where previously agreed with your Service manager, other employees will be able to speak to the media. This must be done in liaison with Westmorland and Furness Communications Team and a representative from the Leadership team.

**Quotes or statements**

Written quotes or statements on behalf of Westmorland and Furness Care services are issued by the Communications Team with prior approval from the relevant senior manager, director or councillor

**What should you do if approached by the media?**

If the media asks you a question about Westmorland and Furness care Services, the home you work in or any other work-related issues, you must politely explain that their enquiry should be directed to the communications team. All local media will be aware of the Communications Team’s contact details.

Don’t engage in conversation or talk ‘off the record’ - the local media know the protocols and won’t be offended that you refuse to talk to them. You may well be allowed to talk to them if appropriate once agreed by the Communications Team, but don’t do this without prior permission.

## Step-by-step guide

1. Media contact you for information.
2. Don’t panic and don’t provide an answer immediately. Find out what the journalist wants and take a message.
3. Inform your line manager or Service manager immediately of the request.
4. Service Manager to advise Communications Team and of request.
5. Communications Team to
6. provide response to media if required.

**Remember - don’t panic!**

If you are contacted by the media (newspapers, TV or radio) – be calm, you can take a message and let them know that someone will come back to them – follow the easy step by step guide.

## Media publicity and PR events

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| **Media publicity and PR events**  **Includes**  Events such as the re- openings of care home following refurbishments, promotional events, service users 100th birthdays or award ceremonies.  **Political protocols**  There are political protocols to consider when events are organised. This means that we may be required to invite portfolio holder (councillor who represents adult social care) and the local member to events. This is organised via a representative from the Leadership team.  **PR events**  **MUST** be planned in advance. The media release will normally be issued around five days before the event and the communications team ideally need a week between being notified of the event and the press release being written and approved by the relevant people.  **MUST NOT** be organised without prior agreement with the Leadership team. | **Step by step guide**  1. Agree PR event with the Leadership Team.  2. Advise communications team, who will advise whether you need to complete a media release request form.  3. The Leadership Team will advise on who should be involved from Westmorland and Furness Care Services as well as relevant political representatives.  4. Workforce Development team have access to display banners and promotional materials.  5. The media team will write and issue appropriate news release that requires approval from Leadership Team/ Director and cabinet member where appropriate  6. PR event takes place successfully!  7. Look in newspapers, listen to radio and watch TV to see coverage! |

**Check list for a successful PR event**

✓ Agree event with Leadership team. Agree key messages with your manager and media team – what do you want to say and why are you having the event.

✓ If appropriate after your discussions with the media team, complete the media release request form.

✓ Keep the day free in your diary – and make sure your team members are briefed.

✓ Make sure colleagues who need to be present at the event are aware of the day, time and other details and confirm their attendance.

✓ Get approval from your customer or service user for the media to talk to them or use their facilities.

✓ Make sure items are presented well – for example, cleaning rooms, checking meal presentation.

✓ Make sure people have the right uniform or are dressed smartly.

✓ Check health and safety requirements and make sure they are correct for the event.

**Media publicity and event policy - a guide to managing the media and public relation (PR) events effectively.**

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| **Media releases or statements**  **Includes**  Media releases issued on things such as achievements, somebody achieving a qualification or improvements to a home.  A news release can be issued without an actual PR event happening and may result in the media wishing to come and take a photo or film or follow up with an interview.  **Communications team**  All news releases must be written by the media team – this includes news releases involving partners.  **Approval**  News releases or statements must be :  - organised via the media team  - approved by the Leadership Team or a Corporate Director.  **Planning**  Where news releases are required as part of a communications strategy, please provide good notice of your requirements – a minimum of 10 days’ notice is welcomed. This will help the media team to ensure the best possible coverage on your behalf. | **Step by step guide**  1. Discuss media release with Leadership Team - (via your manager if need be).  2. Advise communications team who will advise whether you need to complete a media release request form.  3. The Leadership Team will advise on who should be involved e.g. Westmorland and Furness Care Services as well as relevant political representatives.  4. The communications team will write news release and liaise with Westmorland and Furness Care Services personnel as appropriate  5. News release approved by Leadership Team or relevant Cabinet member  6. News release issued  7 Look in newspapers, listen to radio and watch TV to see coverage!  Further information is available on the council’s intranet site. |

## Relevant contact details

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