



HSE Press and Media – Protocols for dealing with media



**MEDIA RELATIONS/
QUERIES**



PROACTIVE



**EVENT MANAGEMENT &
SUPPORT**



OUT OF HOURS

The HSE Press and Media team in the HSE National Press Office primarily focuses on news events happening daily in the health services and deal with queries and requests for spokespeople from the media.

The Press Office tells the HSE story about services and the work of our staff. In addition, the team carries out proactive public information campaigns to highlight services available to the public, broadcasts important public health messages and shares the inspiring work carried out by staff across the country every day.

We aim to enable and empower those who work within our health service to communicate clearly with the people who use our services with empathy, understanding and respect.

More information can be found [here](#):

What to do if: a journalist contacts you directly

It is important that the HSE Press Office, on behalf of the HSE, provides trusted and accurate information. All requests for official HSE should be directed to the Press Office.

Examples of media requests are:

- statements
- spokespeople / interviews
- comments / quotes / confirmation of details
- photography or filming permissions

Requests relating to local services can be directed to your local CHO or Hospital Group Communications Manager, contact details [here](#).

We ask that if a member of staff is contacted by a journalist for information or for an interview regarding a national matter or campaign, that you do not liaise directly with the journalist, but rather direct the journalist to the HSE Press Office first:

- via email to press@hse.ie, or
- the main national press office number: [01 921 3912](tel:019213912), or
- our Out of Hours phone number 087 2274605 which diverts to a press officer during daytime work hours also.

We will then engage with the journalist to progress their query with the relevant department personnel (even if this is you). We keep a record of all media queries received and ensure that the response is signed off at an appropriate level. All responses and statements are issued from press@hse.ie or your relevant communications office.

This process is also in place to safeguard our staff from being potentially imposed upon by the media. You may be busy with clinical work, or on leave, or it's inconvenient for you to speak to take a call or answer an email, and you haven't had time to prepare.

For many staff it can be an unnerving experience to receive a call from a journalist, but be assured that 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 remember that anything they do say to a journalist can be used and quoted. The above protocols should be adhered to in order to protect staff, the reputation of the HSE and patient confidentiality.

What to do if: the Press Office asks you to advise on a media response

When dealing with a media query the National Press Office, or your local CHO / HG Communications team, may need to contact members of staff for the necessary details.

If you are asked for information, please ensure the following:

- The information is accurate and up to date, easy to understand and free of jargon.
- It does not compromise patient confidentiality.
- It is signed off for issue by your relevant department/service manager/programme lead/National Director (where required).
- It has been reported operationally through line management and to the relevant National Director if appropriate.
- The information is provided within the journalist's deadline, which can be quite short due to the nature of the media. Where this is not possible, please let us know as soon as possible. A prompt reply and assistance to the press office maximises the input the HSE may have in any given story. No information or a late response may lead to a story reflecting unfairly on staff or services.
- Name and full work title of staff involved are supplied.

What to do if: a camera crew or photographer turns up to your place of work

Interviews, filming or photography should not be carried out by the media on HSE premises without the permission of the Communications Division. If permission is granted, the Press Office or CHO / HG Communications will make the appropriate arrangements.

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 Press Office / CHO / HG Communications and you should give them contact details. Please also flag with management as appropriate.

What to do if: you are planning an event or launch

Event planning and management logistics are a matter for the organisers. Your CHO / HG Communications office will provide you with an event management checklist, should you require it.

If your Division/Programme has a Communications [Client Director](#) please contact them for advice. If not, and if you require communications support or advice (Digital/Social Media, Internal Comms, Press Office, Programmes and Campaigns), please contact Communications Support by completing the [online form](#). Once submitted your request will be discussed within the communications division and supports agreed and allocated.

Any invitations to the media, government representatives, senior management, etc., should be officially issued by a HSE Communications office.

What to do if: you learn of something potentially of interest to media

Any development which is likely to produce significant media interest (positive or negative) should be notified firstly to the relevant senior manager operationally, and also to the HSE Communications office in your area. It will then be brought through the appropriate channels in the Communications Division for review and advancement.

Media Interviews and Media Training

HSE Spokespeople are selected based on their experience relative to the subject matter. They receive media training and they are briefed on key messages and speaking points. This is to ensure that only accurate and authorised information is communicated.

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 these interviews and their comments are being made in the context of their association or union and are not representative of the HSE. Such interviews cannot take place on HSE sites. They must also not breach patient or work confidentiality.

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

HSE staff are also responsible for ensuring that our patients and clients are not photographed, filmed or interviewed without their informed consent.