



Office of the Police and
Crime Commissioner
STAFFORDSHIRE



Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Staffordshire Police Media Communications Protocol

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to ensure a clear, coordinated and consistent approach to dealing with the media. It covers the following key areas:

- day-to-day operational media enquiries
- organisational media enquiries
- pre-planned major policy announcements
- pre-planned policing operations
- critical and major incidents.

The protocol recognises the distinct separation between the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and the force. It also recognises the operational independence of the Chief Constable which is enshrined in law.

2. General principles

1. The force and the OPCC will work in conjunction with one another to ensure that each is briefed and aware on the other's corporate communication plans. The main conduit for this activity will be the Corporate Communications Department.
2. To support the Chief Constable in delivering the Police and Crime Plan, the force will develop and deliver all **operationally focused** communications plans, messages and products. However, these will be shared with the OPCC for information as part of the pre-launch planning process.
3. The force will ensure, wherever possible, that the OPCC is provided with all of the necessary advance communications briefings and key messages relating to major incidents, trials and operations, particularly where there is likely to be significant media interest is anticipated.
4. The force will ensure that spontaneous incidents or ongoing issues that could have a significant impact upon public reassurance and generate

significant media interest are brought to the attention of the OPCC at the earliest opportunity.

3. Day-to-day operational media enquiries on crime and incidents

- Media enquiries relating to operational policing matters will be handled by the force as 'business as usual' either directly by local policing team commanders or by the HQ press office. These include all enquiries relating to the force's core operational priorities. This will be done in accordance with the force's media policy (see force policy database).
- As set out in principle 4 above, the Corporate Communications Department will brief the OPCC on any incident they're aware of which could impact upon public confidence or generate significant media interest.
- Any media inquiry relating to a matter which challenges the force's handling of specific incidents or issues, questioning the effectiveness and efficiency of the force, will be brought to the attention of the OPCC.

4. Organisational media enquires

- Media enquiries relating to wider organisational issues such as the way that the force is structured to deliver services to local people, how it uses its money, people and other resources will need to be discussed with both the OPCC and the Chief Constable's office to determine who is best placed to respond or whether a joint response is required.
- Where Staffordshire Police is cited in a national report relating to its performance in a specific area for example crime levels, public perceptions, complaints, use of resources etc, the approach set out in the bullet point above will be adopted.

5. Pre-planned major policy announcements

- Major policy announcements, based on manifesto / Police and Crime Plan priorities, will be led upon by the PCC.
- To ensure consistency and appropriate coordination, such announcements will be discussed in advance by the PCC and Chief Constable at one of their regular meetings and, ideally, the Head of Corporate Communication or his/her deputy should be involved wherever possible in these early discussions. Such communication strategies should be developed in advance of policy announcements to ensure the appropriate level of resource can be provided to get the maximum benefit.
- The Chief Constable may wish to set out the force's position on such announcements in preparation for responding to media enquiries.

6. Pre-planned major policing operations

- The force will lead on the communications planning and implementation for all major pre-planned operations
- However, following the general principles set out above, the force will ensure that the PCC is briefed on all major pre-planned operations and has the opportunity to be involved on the day to engage with those communities affected

7. The pre-election ‘purdah’ period

The OPCC and force will adhere to the relevant national guidance which sets out an obligation on it to maintain strict neutrality and impartiality during the pre-election period.

8. OPCC media spokespeople

- As the elected representative of the people of Staffordshire, the PCC will usually be the single media spokesperson on all matters relating to his/her role and responsibilities
- However, during exceptional absence (eg holiday abroad or when non-contactable for other reasons), the DPCC will deputise for the PCC
- The DPCC may also be asked to be the lead spokesperson on issues relating to specific projects as directed by the PCC. This will be discussed and agreed in advance so that there is clarity over who does what and when
- All media interview requests for the PCC and DPCC will be initially referred to the press office (wherever possible) or if not confirmed after the event to enable media monitoring / ongoing support with other media.
- All media enquiries relating to the OPCC – including media interview requests – should be recorded by a press officer on the Solcara Press Bureau system to ensure such media interactions are recorded and disclosable (if absolutely necessary) in the interests of wider openness and transparency).

9. Critical and major incidents

Definition

The nationally accepted definition of a critical incident is:

“any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.”

The definition should include those incidents likely to generate significant local or national press and/or community interest or serious internal incidents involving staff if not covered by the above definition.

Notification of a critical incident

When the on-call ACPO officer becomes aware of a critical incident, they will consider notifying the OPCC.

With prolonged incidents, regular updates will be provided to the Commissioner (or his representative) at agreed intervals. The Chief Executive will also consider whether the nature of the incident requires further oversight.

3. Gold Group

Where a Gold Group is formed to oversee a particular critical incident, the involvement of the Commissioner (or his representative) will be discussed. The role of the Commissioner will be to observe the Group's proceedings and gain an oversight of the incident, and satisfy themselves that the appropriate measures to maintain public confidence have been taken.

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