

Introduction

1. Being a charity and VCS (Voluntary Community Sector) organisation, it is vital that a good working relationship is established with the public, the media, and VCS related organisations based on mutual understanding, confidence and co-operation.
2. All staff have a significant part to play in establishing good working relationships with the public, the media, and VCS related organisations, both in terms of reacting to press enquiries, event invitations, and to maintaining a proactive stance in identifying positive media stories and opportunities.

Procedure

1. All media enquiries and event invitations must be referred to the CEO or Deputy CEO. Media includes newspapers, television, radio and internet.
2. The PRO (PRO – Person Representing the Organisation) will contact the appropriate section officers to comprehensively respond to media queries and invitations.
3. Media interviews will only be given by the Chief Executive Officer or a person designated by Chief Executive officer.
4. In case of doubt as to how to handle an issue or the interpretation of this policy, the CEO or Deputy CEO should be consulted for support.
5. Upon receipt of a Media enquiry, staff should answer courteously and inform the caller that it is our policy to route all media enquiries to the CEO or Deputy CEO
6. The public should be dealt with in the same way as the press. Staff should be aware that the Press might approach in the guise of the public.
7. The Press should only have access to the CEO or Deputy CEO to speak directly to the Press.

Press releases

1. All press releases will be planned coordinated and released through the CEO or Deputy CEO and will be distributed in the prevailing press release format.
2. All reactive press statements, should, as far as possible, be in writing to avoid any misinterpretation of the facts.

Media Coverage – Incoming

1. The CEO or Deputy CEO will monitor the media for coverage; however, all employees should make the CEO or Deputy CEO aware of radio, newspaper and television coverage relevant to the activities of Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Mind.

Media Coverage – Outgoing

1. A regular outflow of news releases on key activities and achievements will be maintained.

2. Regular face-to-face briefings with the media will be arranged.

3. A rapid response system will be maintained to counter within 24 hours any erroneous or exaggerated statements made by the media or by third parties in the media.

Public Relations

1. Employees should be aware that their comments in public gatherings could be reported to the press.

2. Senior level staff should be encouraged to establish working partnerships with VCS organisations promoting Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Mind.

3. Positive or negative stories on the organisation travel widely and quickly and affect public perception. This affects reputation, and thus creates hurdles in implementation of policies. Staff should avoid discussing any negative internal issue with the external public.

4. Staff members should aim to represent Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Mind in a positive light and should be mindful that anyone; members of the local community, family, or friends, may become or may already be linked with the organisation.

5. During meetings with external public, staff should avoid contradicting each other as cohesion is important.

6 All staff should familiarise themselves with Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Mind's marketing strategy.

External Communication and Publications

1. Designing and printing of publications for an external audience must be co-ordinated through the Deputy CEO and strictly adhere to branding guidelines. Publications include annual reports, strategy documents, leaflets, newsletters, and brochures.

PR Events/Activities

1. Making Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Mind accessible to the public and stakeholders is integral to the organisation. Thus, publicity events and materials should be inclusive.
2. Staff should participate in presentations and other activities designed to create awareness about the organisation's activities.

Information Sharing

1. All sections of Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Mind will inform the CEO or Deputy CEO about any proposed events or networking meetings well in time.