FSS Comms/Press Office Standard Operating Instructions

Content List

1. FSS Press Enquiry Checklist

If a member of the Comms team receives an enquiry from a journalist/other media contact, please follow the process below:

Step 1

- Take details from the person including which media they are representing
- Make a note of what the enquiry is - establish what angle the journalist is coming from. If relevant, ask if they have been in contact with any other organisation
- If it's a phone call, please ask the journalist to put any questions in an email
- What is the journalist's deadline? Please ensure we negotiate a reasonable time-frame and bear in mind whether leads for the subject area are available, and if there are any cross office meetings/annual leave that could cause delays in responding
- Once you have received the enquiry, please make all the Comms team and the Head of Communications and Marketing aware
- If this is a sensitive area you should discuss the enquiry with either or both of the Head of Communications and Marketing and the Senior Communications Manager
- If there are existing lines/information already in the public domain they can be used to draft lines which can be cleared with the Comms team and then branch leads/SMT. These can be found in PR Gloo.

Step 2

- Consider if you need to give the Comms teams in Scottish Government (SG) or any of our partners the heads up (i.e if the enquiry relates to their remit/they need to be aware)
- Decide on which team/ branch leads or SMT you need to contact for the information requested for the response. Sometimes this may cover more than one branch and on occasion the response may need to be shared across teams in FSS or joint with partners
- Once you've established who needs to respond (by asking verbally or on the phone etc. rather than by group email), you need to speak to them to outline the enquiry and information you need in order to draft a response
- If the lead for the subject is not available, you will need to speak to their line manager/branch head or a colleague who supports them in their work area

- Once they have confirmed they are happy to take the enquiry you can forward the journalist email to them (or you can draft one for the responder if you don't have an email from the journalist)
- This may sometimes be sent to more than one person if the question covers more than one remit. Please ensure you draft or change the subject heading of the email so it is clear what you are looking for and give the DEADLINE in the subject heading
- If there are any existing lines in PR Gloo, include these and say when they have been used and who approved, you may send these straight to the policy lead, branch head or SMT if you are sure that they are still relevant
- Ask the branch lead/ head or SMT whether they are happy to clear the statement or whether their branch head or SMT is required to give final approval
- Make sure it's clear in your email that once they have given you the background information for the response, you will draft lines or a response/quote which they should agree within their branch or ask that SMT approve.

Step 3

- Draft the response in **'plain English and the FSS tone of voice'** and send to the Senior Communications Manager/ Head of Communications and Marketing in order for them to proof read
- Once the statement is agreed within the Communications and Marketing branch, send back to the branch lead/ head or SMT and ask for any factual accuracy comments
- If it's getting near the deadline and you haven't received a response, you can approach the person dealing with it to follow-up, but please don't make several visits
- Once you have agreed the response with the branch lead/head, you should then give the Comms team and the Head of Communications and Marketing sight of the lines prior to issuing, and confirm approval with the branch lead/head or SMT dealing with the enquiry (or pass it on in accordance with who you have agreed should give final clearance)
- Please note that it is up to the branch lead/head to liaise with their colleagues in SG or partners. We should only contact the Communications contacts.

Step 4

- Once the response is approved to be sent to the journalist, you need to prepare an email to be sent to the journalist with details outlining it is a press enquiry, the name of the press organisation and what the enquiry relates to. The email should be blind copied (bcc'd) to Geoff, Elspeth, Ian, Garry, and the Head of Communications and Marketing (SMT), the Senior Communications Manager , all FSS Comms colleagues, the branch leads who provided the draft response, and key account contacts from our PR agency. If relevant also copy to the SG or partners
- Please save the response into PR Gloo, along with any other background notes and questions which the journalist has asked for (weekly Gloo reports to be saved in ERDM)
- If there are any supplementary questions that need a response please follow the same route outlined above, but ensure you make it clear in the email response subject header that this is a supplementary response for additional information.

2. On Call Press Enquiry Additional Information

Step 1

- When you receive a press enquiry out of normal office hours you should follow the steps above. The only difference is that it will be the designated member of the SMT who is on the rota that week who you should contact to assist in drafting your response and who will clear the text
- Please make sure you the Head of Communications and Marketing and the Senior Communications Manager are aware
- If the information is already in the public domain and you are sure that it is not dated, you do not need to get clearance from the on call SMT
- SMT/Comms out of hours numbers are included in the on call out of hours contact list allocated to each press officer
- There is one on call telephone number for the press team - 07776226856

Step 2

- As part of the on call monitoring you are required every morning (including weekend) to check the news headlines for any announcement/report relating to the FSS remit, and log onto the Kantar media monitoring platform to review the results for FSS
- You should ensure that you send an email each morning to SMT/branch leads with relevant FSS mentions from the day's news coverage, followed by a separate email on any food issues to Geoff and Elspeth, copying Katherine and the press team
- If there is a relevant announcement you must consider how FSS would want to respond to the announcement
- After consideration you need to decide whether FSS would want to respond and how
- If no response is required but you think SMT need to be aware, then please send the link of the announcement/report to SMT/Policy lead with your recommendation of no response and why
- If you do think FSS would want to respond then please draft an email for SMT/branch lead to include:
  - the announcement/report link, any associated links i.e. if picked up online on news sites.
  - a draft response/statement. SMT are aware this will be a rough draft for them to consider and respond/comment
  - include your recommendations e.g. place on social media, issue to media, interview opps, placed on FSS website, notify relevant 3rd parties.

3. New Announcements/Statements

Step 1

- Identify the key person(s) (no more than two) who need to help draft and comment at the outset - Comms/press team can suggest
- Draft line/statement to be developed by Comms/press team with the key contact(s) in the first instance (without everyone else being copied)

Step 2

- Amendments to be made by Comms/press team and the second draft version to be shared with a further representative from SMT for comment and sign-off i.e. one from Geoff/Elspeth/Ian/Garry/Katherine
- If further amends are to be made at this stage the Comms/press team will make those and recirculate a final draft to SMT for approval, making it clear in the subject line who we need approval from and by when.

4. Interviews and quotes

Step 1

- Once you've received a press enquiry and made the press team aware, assess whether you believe that the enquiry is suitable for one of our key spokespeople to conduct an interview
- **If yes –** you must talk to the spokesperson first before confirming with the journalist to see whether they can to do i.
- If the spokesperson is happy to be interviewed you must supply them with a media briefing (previous examples can be found on PR Gloo)
- Draft media briefing for clearance within the C&M team by the Senior Communications Manager or Head of Communications and Marketing
- Once cleared, send the briefing onto the spokesperson for any comments
- **If No -** assess whether we have any previously approved material which we can use (all previous lines can be found on PR Gloo)
- You may combine previously approved statements on a particular topic e.g. we have responded numerous times on obesity in Scotland and have a lot of material which can be drawn upon
- Produce a draft statement using the material and send for clearance to Communications Manager or Senior Communications Manager
- Once cleared, send to the key spokesperson for any final comments or amends and ask if they want it to go to SMT for further clearance
- Try to encourage the key spokesperson to attribute the statement to themselves first
- Send to the journalist (see step 4 of the press enquiry checklist).