

## GUIDELINES TO HELP YOU

## 1. Overview

Whilst our flow of information to the media will always be positive, with greater recognition comes greater scrutiny and the need for a strategy to handle criticism or negativity. It is important that any negative questions or comments are dealt with promptly and in an orderly way.

It is sometimes tempting to hope that a problem will go away or you may feel it is too small to raise. With the media this must never happen because a negative story can get out of hand in minutes and a reputation can be destroyed. This is particularly relevant in these days of social media. Re-building trust and confidence can take a long time.

Please, therefore, raise anything that you are not comfortable with as soon as possible, through your line manager or by contacting Nick Phillips, the Chief Executive of The Almshouse Association.

## 2. Designated media contact

At The Almshouse Association, the Chief Executive, Nick Phillips, has overall responsibility for media issues and will approve all internal material before it is sent to any media, or, he will designate an alternative manager at times of his absence. Similarly all media calls to your charity should be directed to the Chief Executive in the first instance, or a designated alternative manager, at times of the Chief Executive's absence.

**3. Your Chief Executive or designated member of staff:**

- will need to ensure that relevant trustees and employees are briefed on any media enquiry that might impact on them.
- will decide on the appropriate media position to take with a relevant trustee or an employee, volunteer or supported person in their care, to ensure the right communication is given to the press.
- may choose to liaise with the Chief Executive of The Almshouse Association to sign off any news releases, proactive and reactive media statements, comments or quotes, answers to media enquiries, social tweets or similar.
- will manage the media, together with the Chief Executive of The Almshouse Association, if applicable, in the event of an incident occurring.
- will approve any social and website media copy.
- will be in charge of issuing any holding statement (see overleaf).

#### 4. Procedure for handling media enquiries

Anyone receiving an enquiry from the media:

- will need to ask the journalist the nature of the enquiry and when she/he needs the information by.
- should, if applicable, explain that they are not the best person to deal with their request but they will refer the journalist to the Chief Executive or designated manager immediately.
- must make sure they take the name, number and/or email address of the caller.
- need to be friendly and helpful but remain polite and firm.
- should not feel pressured into a conversation they might regret.

## 5. 'Door-stepping'

In the event of an immediate breaking news story, journalists can 'door-step' a junior person who can be caught unaware. The words 'no comment' can be interpreted negatively so it is best for the junior member of staff to reassure the journalist that every effort will be made to ensure someone will contact them as soon as possible.

## 6. Social Media

Dealing with online media through platforms such as Twitter needs to be handled with special care because a negative comment can spiral out of control instantly. The Almshouse Association's Model Social Media Policy and Procedures can be found on our website, which clearly set out guidelines for responsible use.

## 7. Confidentialitu

All trustees and employees have a duty of confidentiality to their residents. Unauthorised disclosure of personal information about them, or about matters relating to them, could result in a complaint to the Charity Commission. Please be mindful of this.

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[#SupportAlmshouses](#)



## A holding statement helps control the message you are sending to the press and/or the public in a difficult situation.

Keep any statement you send to the journalist who made a negative comment, short, factual and consultative. Give nothing more.

If additional press, TV and radio stations pick up on the journalists comment, they will, more than likely, come to you for a response. Again, keep the response short, factual, consultative and as consistent as possible.

For social media do feel free to ask for a correction to inaccuracies as they can easily alter a statement online. A friendly approach often works best.

## An example of a holding statement

**To:** [name of journalist]

**Date:** [ ..... ]

**Title:** [In response to a report of missing items from the room of a resident]

**Content:** [name of almshouse charity] is aware of some missing items reported by one of our residents.

We take all issues like this extremely seriously and are investigating as a matter of urgency.

The appropriate authorities have been informed and we will keep you updated of any further developments.

-Ends-

**Further information:** [put your contact name and a phone number here]

### Notes to Editors:

1. **About:** [your charity name and details]

2. **About:** The Almshouse Association

*The Almshouse Association is a membership charity that represents a network of over 1600 independent almshouse charities across the UK. These charities own and manage over 30,000 almshouses, supporting approximately 36,000 residents, providing affordable, micro-community homes for local people in housing need.*

*Almshouse charities are uniquely placed to understand and be responsive to local needs. As an umbrella organisation, the Association assists trustees and clerks of these local charities to manage their resources effectively, support them to provide good quality, 'micro-community' housing for their beneficiaries, promote the welfare and independence of their residents and preserve the historic tradition of almshouses for future generations. Its heritage and expertise makes it possible for the Association to campaign on behalf of member charities and influence national policies.*

*The Association also provides loans, grants and funding advice to member charities for redevelopment and refurbishment of their almshouses, as well as crisis support.*

*The Almshouse Association has the expertise and national reach to help almshouse charities tackle the affordable housing crisis.*

**Contact:** Nick Phillips | CEO | The Almshouse Association | [nickphillips@almshouses.org](mailto:nickphillips@almshouses.org) | Tel: 07483 390054

## #SupportAlmshouses

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