**Media Handling Policy**

**Almshouse Association Model Policy**

**The need for a media handling policy**

The purpose of a Media Handling Policy is to ensure that your charity maintains and grows a positive public image and understanding of its services.

Everyone connected with your charity has a part to play in supporting its aims and its work, and to encourage positive public opinion. A major influence in this respect is the media.

There may, however, be occasions when adverse publicity appears in the media. In these scenarios, you need to decide promptly if and how your charity responds. Limiting any damage and restoring a reputation needs careful news management, particularly with the immediacy of social media. Your charity needs to have procedures in place that allows coordination and consistency of message. Though an independent charity, you form a part of the larger almshouse movement and are members of The Almshouse Association which represents over 1,600 independent almshouse charities with some 36,000 residents.

**Quick Reference Guide**

* **This policy sets out the processes for handling requests from media**
* **This policy applies to all staff/trustees employed by (your charity) or are volunteers for your charity**
* **Outlines the Procedure for Media Requests for Information about residents and operational services**

**Introduction and Purpose**

* You have a duty to respond appropriately to media enquiries, providing accurate information in a timely manner.
* You have a duty to protect the interests of residents and staff/volunteers as well as adhering to legal obligations regarding data protection and confidentiality.
* This policy will help to ensure that effective and appropriate processes are in place for anyone dealing with media enquiries.

**Scope**

This policy sets out procedures for handling media enquiries and provides guidance for staff/trustees/residents who may come into contact with the media.

In event of a major incident, please refer to the Major Incident Plan for guidance on media handling during an incident.

**Media Requests for Information about residents, policy or operational activities**

* You may receive requests from the media for information about residents, policy or operational activities within (your charity)
* All media requests relating to residents, policies or operational activities should be referred to the CEO/Chair of Trustees.
* No member of staff or volunteer should make any comment to the media without being asked to by the CEO/Chair of Trustees. If you are asked by a journalist for any comments, apologise and say you are not the right person to provide feedback, but assure them you will speak to the CEO/Chair of Trustees and ask them to contact the journalist directly. You should not feel pressured to make any comments to the press by journalists.
* If out of hours requests are made the journalist should be asked to contact the CEO/Chair of Trustees.
* In an emergency the Clerk or Manager should contact the CEO/Chair of Trustees directly.

**Staff/trustees with external positions**

It is recognised that you may have additional external positions outside of your work with (your charity). At times this may require you to make comment to the media in that capacity.

Where this relates to your employment or voluntary role at (your charity), you should share this information with the CEO/Chair of Trustees prior to making any comments. In your external position, you should make it very clear you are not representing (your charity) when making a comment to the press.

**Monitoring compliance and the effectiveness of this policy**

* This should be managed and maintained by the CEO/Chair of Trustee who are responsible for updating the Policy, the implementation of this Policy and the procedures.

**The case for media relations - summary**Good publicity can raise morale, spread best practice and encourage support and funding. Adverse media, however, can destroy a reputation quickly and can take time to rebuild and recover.

[Your charity name] has a unique story to tell, not least its long and rich history. It can also position itself as an attractive and affordable response to the current housing crisis, thus playing a role in one of today’s pressing national issues.

This means that (your charity name) can reach grassroots publicity through its local community presence and at the same time build a profile with The Almshouse Association through their role as a national support charity.

With greater recognition, however, comes greater scrutiny and the need for a strategy to handle a media crisis.

**Examples of possible negative publicity**

* Abuse/negligence concerning a resident, staff, a Trustee or volunteer
* Poor/unfit accommodation/living conditions/environment
* Eviction; security of tenure
* Diversity/equality
* Incorrect or poor advice provided
* Financial impropriety
* Breaking of regulations

**Damage limitation: the scope**

For the purpose of this policy document, ‘**the media’** covers the **press** (e.g. print such as newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, reports, books etc.); **broadcast** – radio and television; and **digital media** e.g. websites and social media sites (such as Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook).

**Breaches of policy and procedure**

If there is an instance where [your charity name] Media Handling Policy and Procedures appear to have been breached and the breach is brought to the attention of the CEO/your line manager, then the matter will be investigated.

The investigation should be carried out in line with the policy and procedures for disciplinary matters.

Where a breach of policy and procedure occurs unwittingly, the Media Handling Procedures need to be made clear for future reference and reinforced throughout the charity.

If an individual thinks they may have made an error of judgement in their handling of the media, they should inform their line manager as soon as possible.

**Related staff manual policies**e.g. Media Policy Procedures, Conflict of interest, Safeguarding, Confidentiality/ Data Protection, Privacy, Disciplinary, Social Media Policy.

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