

Guidance Notes for Media

We hope the following will clarify a few points on the way we work and what information we need in order to help you. Please disseminate to your colleagues where appropriate and any new staff.

It is **your** responsibility to keep your contact details updated with the Press Office, particularly emergency contact details, which we use out of office hours urgent incidents.

Press Office opening times:

Monday to Thursday – 7.00am to 7.00pm

Friday – 7.00am to 6.00pm

Saturday – 8.00am to 3.00pm

Please note the Press Office works a shift system so you may have difficulty getting through during the early mornings or after 4pm and on Saturdays when there is usually only one press officer on News Desk.

The on-call press officer is available out of office hours via the Force Communications Centre on 0121 626 4040. Please ask for the duty inspector. Please note: This facility is ONLY available for emergencies - it is not an extension of the office opening hours.

How we work:

Appeals/information/press releases released proactively by the Press Office are:

- emailed out to relevant media ie. if the story relates to Wolverhampton, it will usually be distributed to all Wolverhampton media
- Placed on the Medialine – 0121 626 5800 (enter code 35555)
- Put on website under Latest News www.west-midlands.police.uk

Please note, appeals will be read out in full on the Medialine but in the case of press releases only the first paragraph and notes to editors will be read. We are currently in talks to update Medialine – introducing a fast forward, rewind facility.

Our aim is not to spoil an exclusive story, so if you call for information or require a response to a particular story, this will not be given to any other reporter. If we receive a number of calls, for example re an ongoing incident, the information will be released proactively to all relevant media.

General queries:

- Please provide us with as much information as possible ie. time/date of incident, location – preferably street name, anyone involved – victim, officer etc
- Give us your deadline – please give us as much time as you can to respond
- Take a note of which press officer you spoke to, time and date query lodged
- How do you want information provided – phone, email, fax?
- Who else are you talking to?

Picture requests:

For every image released by WMP, we are required to complete a full risk assessment. This means getting relevant information from the officer in the case/SIO, which has to be signed off by an officer of chief inspector level or above and returned to the Press Office, where a decision is made about whether we can release the image.

The following link provides information on the ACPO guidelines for the release of images - <http://www.acpo.police.uk/asp/policies/Data/magguidelines.pdf>

When asking for photographs:

- Please give us as much notice as possible
- We need full name and date of birth of defendant
- Date of sentencing

If an image is not released, where possible we will try to provide a reason.

Interview requests:

Where possible, we will try to facilitate interview requests with appropriate officers. However, most of the requests we receive relate to a specific incident and therefore it is not always possible to put the senior investigating officer up if they are busy with the incident.

Where appropriate, press officers will try and voice a statement/answer questions, but again this is dependent on our commitments at the time. Clearly, this is a last resort option and we would only be able to talk about what had been released – the idea is to add a voice to words already given. This will be done by Chief Inspector Southern or Head of News in the first instance.

If you require interviews following court cases, please let us know as early as possible so we can provide the most appropriate officer at court following verdict/sentencing. Also, let us know if you require the interview to be on the court steps/over the phone/ISDN - we will try and fulfil these requests where possible.

Again where possible, and often in the case of proactive stories, we will try to use the audio facility on the internet to pre-record good quality audio which radio stations may be able to use. This facility can be found at: <http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/OnlinePress/audio.asp>

Information on statistics:

Please check the force website in the first instance - this may be a quicker option for getting what you want. Some local statistics can be found at <http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/about-us/performance.asp>. Alternatively, you may be able to find information on the link to the Chief Constable's Annual Report - <http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/publications/annual-reviews/index.asp>

The press office holds some statistics on a variety of issues usually compiled following recent media enquiries.

If the statistics are not readily available and involve a degree of searching, you will be asked to submit an FOI query via contactus@west-midlands.police.uk

Accompanying police officers:

We cannot facilitate reporters going on patrol with officers who perform an 'immediate response' duty due to the nature of the incidents they attend. This includes traffic officers, firearms officers, etc for health and safety reasons. If we agree any other form of accompaniment with officers this has to be risk assessed by yourselves for your own safety, you will also be required to complete and sign an indemnity form, available from the Press Office.

Filming requests/documentary makers:

Filming requests need to be completed on line (www.west-midlands.police.uk/OnlinePress/Documentary.asp) and emailed to

at the earliest opportunity with full details of your requirements. This will then be discussed and we will respond to you as soon as possible.