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**STRATHCLYDE
POLICE**

MEDIA

Standard Operating Procedures

OWNING DEPARTMENT – CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

For further information, please contact the Media Services Section

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MEDIA

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document outlines the practices and procedures of Strathclyde Police in relation to its dealings with the media. A separate annual Strathclyde Police Force Media Strategy document will also be produced outlining the strategic direction of the Media Services Section within Corporate Communications.
- 1.2 Since the formation of a press office, Strathclyde Police has seen a considerable improvement in its relationship with the media leading to more positive coverage.
- 1.3 We cannot, however, become complacent and much more work requires to be done. There are many good news stories that still do not reach the public in Strathclyde.
- 1.4 We therefore need to refresh our approach to working with the media by developing effective and positive relationships with journalists from the wide range of organisations that cover our work. This massive task is not simply a job for Media Services but for everybody who works for Strathclyde Police. It should not be aimed at just the national and local media, but minority ethnic and specialist media who cover the various aspects of our work.
- 1.5 It is recognised that some people are cautious about dealing with the media, however, an open approach tends to encourage confidence and respect. If we are to gain the goodwill, confidence and support of the public we serve then we need to engage with the media and seize every opportunity to be far more proactive.

2. AIM

- 2.1 The aim of the Force Media Policy is;
 - To reassure the public that Strathclyde Police is preventing, detecting and reducing crime.
 - To obtain fair and balanced media coverage.
 - To raise the positive profile of the Force and the good work it does locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
 - To provide professional and appropriate standards relating to the way in which police officers and police staff deal with the media.

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- To provide guidance on appropriate roles and levels of responsibility so that all staff is clear on what is expected of them in relation to the media.
- To provide information that enables people to deal appropriately with inquiries from the media, including information on how to obtain assistance in media matters.

3. AUDIENCE

- The international, national, regional, local and community media.
- Specialist industry media.
- All the communities served by Strathclyde Police.
- The general public outside the Force area.
- National and local elected members.
- Victims of crime.
- People with an unwarranted fear of crime.
- Strathclyde Police Officers and Police Staff.
- Other police forces and similar agencies around the world.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.
- Opinion formers and lobby groups.
- The criminal fraternity.

4. THE ROLE OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 The role of Corporate Communications is to maintain a positive image of Strathclyde Police and continually strive to enhance the Force's reputation by ensuring a consistent, proactive and high quality approach to Corporate Communications both internally and externally.

4.2 Corporate Communications is made up of three main sections:

- Media Services
- Publications, EMedia and Internal Communications
- Marketing

5. MEDIA SERVICES

- (a) Media Services deals almost exclusively with the news media, current affairs programmes and documentary teams. This section is on the frontline when it comes to handling inquiries from the Scottish national media and also frequently deals with the local media, English-based media, specialist press and, on occasion, the international press.
- (b) The Media Services Section has formerly been known as Force Information and Media and Information Services (MAIS). It is split into two sub-sections - Newsdesk and Forward Planning - and is overseen by the Manager (Media and Public Relations).

5.1 NEWSDESK

- (a) The Newsdesk is made up of one supervisor and four press officers. Its hours of operation are **8am to 8 pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm Saturdays and Sundays**. Out with these hours routine media enquiries are handled by the duty officer, force overview. In the case of an incident gathering a high level of media interest out with hours there is a duty media relations officer on call.
- (b) Newsdesk staff handle the live operational incidents and respond to press inquiries about crime, incidents and Force Policy. In cases of particular media interest, such as major incidents and murders, the role of Media Services is to take the strain from operational officers – particularly at the initial stages of the investigation – and deal with the onslaught of media inquiries. This is done in consultation with the senior investigating officer, who will agree how much information will be divulged to the media.
- (c) Newsdesk staff also set up press conferences for witness appeals, collate media requests for interviews with officers at a crime/incident scene, and keep the press updated of incident developments.
- (d) At the start of each morning Newsdesk staff will check on items of interest from the night before using the Chief Constable's Incidents of Note, the STORM Command and Control system and calls to each of the Force's eight divisions. A log of incidents for release to the media is then compiled after full consultation with the investigating officers.
- (e) Newsdesk staff also handle media inquiries on all aspects of Force policy. This response can take the form of a verbal or written statement from the media relations officer after consultation with the appropriate officer. In other cases staff may set up an interview with the appropriate officer with the journalist.

5.2 FORWARD PLANNING

- (a) The section comprises one media co-ordinator and four media relations officers and the hours of operation for Forward Planning are: **Monday to Friday from 8 am to 8 pm**.

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- (b) Staff at Forward Planning identify, research and publicise opportunities to promote the positive or proactive aspects of police work in line with the Force's five main strategic priorities. These include the launch of anti-crime initiatives or any public reassurance messages.
- (c) Forward Planning also instigates and arranges media facilitates for reporters, photographers and camera crews who wish to cover the Force's on-going campaigns or take a close look at how the Force works. Giving the media greater access and the public a better understanding of police work will allow for better co-operation and support with/of the Force.
- (d) **N.B. Legal contracts, indemnities and risk assessments are required prior to taking the media out on patrol or on filming opportunities. No division should facilitate media requests without first contacting Media Services or their divisional communications officer.**

5.3 GENERAL DUTIES OF FORCE MEDIA RELATIONS OFFICERS

The Force media relations officer is available to:

- Prepare and distribute news releases.
- Co-ordinate and authorise the release of information about victims, witnesses and suspects.
- Co-ordinate the release of authorised information concerning confidential Force investigations and operations.
- Liaise with the Procurator Fiscal in order to obtain the appropriate authority to use the media to trace an accused person or witness or publish a photograph of an accused person or criminal at large.
- Arrange for and assist at news conferences.
- Assist in crisis situations within the Force.
- Assist journalists in covering routine news stories and at the scenes of incidents.
- Assist news media on an on call basis.
- Maintain regular liaison with the media and local press with the aim of fostering good police/public relations.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 Every member of Strathclyde Police is empowered to speak to the media as long as they are the relevant person to speak on the matter.

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- 6.2 Each employee is an ambassador for Strathclyde Police and what they say to the media must reflect that. In particular, police or police staff who have particular knowledge or expertise is encouraged to speak to the media as long as they have the authority of their line manager. It should be noted, however, that Media Services is the official channel for the release of information to the national media.
- 6.3 From a divisional level, anything likely to make an impact on the national media must be passed in the first instance to the local divisional communications officer who will then contact Media Services. Any delay may cast doubt on the integrity of the Force and damage the credibility of the Force's efforts to offer a professional media relations service.
- 6.4 No police or police staff should speak directly to a member of the national media without informing Media Services. All direct approaches in such circumstances should be notified to as soon as possible after initial contact has been made. It must be stressed that this measure is not to control the free flow of information, which is positively encouraged, but to make sure Media Services is aware of all national media issues that could have an impact on the Force in general and the section in particular. Also, it provides protection for police officers and staff from being misquoted.

7. DIVISIONAL COMMUNICATION OFFICERS

- 7.1 (a) Each division has a divisional communications officer whose role it is to establish, encourage and maintain regular contact with their local press on matters of minor local crime, local campaigns and crime initiatives, open days, awards etc - topics which are purely of interest or applicable to the public at local community level. Divisions/sub-divisions are also expected to give information to their local media on the local angles about Force-wide campaigns and initiatives.

(b) Corporate Communications will continue to support divisions in respect of duties detailed below however, it is the responsibility of divisions to resource the divisional communication officer's position when annual leave, sick leave, flexi-time or TOIL days are taken.

- 7.2 In general, the areas of responsibility for contact with the media are:

<u>Media Services</u>	<u>Divisional Communication Officers</u>
Major incidents	Minor incidents
Serious crime	Minor crime
Force-wide campaigns & initiatives	Local campaigns & initiatives
National media facilities	Local media facilities

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Force policy issues	Local crime prevention & safety awareness
Discipline	Local policing issues

8. MAJOR INCIDENTS

- 8.1 With regard to major incidents e.g. terrorist, CBRN, air/rail/sea incidents or multiple fatalities, the first point of contact is Media Services.**
- 8.2 Under no circumstances should the divisional communications officer be tasked with being the first media officer at the scene of an incident.**
- 8.3 Divisional Communication officers may be required to assist with media enquiries at FHQ and will be directed by Media Services staff as required.**

9. SERIOUS INCIDENTS, SPECIAL PROJECTS OR INITIATIVES

- 9.1 Whilst contact is encouraged between divisional communication officers and reporters, it is absolutely essential that Media Services is informed as early as possible of any serious matters occurring within the division which is attracting, or will attract, media attention.
- 9.2 It is of paramount importance that a standard response is given to the media for serious issues, for example on murders, serious incidents, disciplinary cases and force-wide campaigns. A carelessly or ill thought-out statement may affect the investigation/initiative, and have legal repercussions for the Force or cause embarrassment to the Force.
- 9.3 A serious incident such as a suspicious death, rape, multiple fatality road crash or death in police custody must be reported to Media Services as soon as practicably possible. This allows for the early release of a holding statement and time to confer with the senior investigating officer about further releases and arrangements, where necessary, for a press conference.
- 9.4 In practice, media queries on serious issues tend to start off with one organisation contacting Media Services, followed quickly by a stream of similar inquiries once the news has got round the media. This can happen very quickly – i.e. when a freelancer feeds a story to each of his or her media customers or when a press release is sent electronically and simultaneously to the media.
- 9.5 Therefore, quick and accurate preparation of a response to the initial media call means that Media Services is able to respond efficiently and in a standard format to the subsequent inquiries.

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- 9.6 Be aware – the national media are rarely interested in local events unless there is a very strong ‘angle’ to the story. The launch of a summer drink-drive campaign for the Wishaw area would not appeal to the likes of the Daily Record – but a story of a Wishaw police officer being caught for drink-driving would be.

10. MEDIA IDENTIFICATION

- (a) There is no fool-proof way of identifying a bona fide journalist. However, since the beginning of 1992, a ‘national’ press card has been available through several news organisations and is becoming more used by journalists. Others may have union cards (NUJ, IOJ etc), organisation cards (BBC, STV etc) or Scottish Office cards issued for use on Royal or VIP visits.
- (b) Caution – If in doubt about anyone, check with the press office.

11. CONTACT NUMBERS FOR MEDIA SERVICES

Head of Corporate Communications:

David Wallace 0141 532 2333

Media Services:

Deputy Head/ Manager of Media and Public Relations:

Becky Hunter 0141 532 2485

Newsdesk Co-ordinator:

Christine Allison 0141 532 2658

Forward Planning Co-ordinator:

Ann Marie MacLennan 0141 532 2164

Media Relations Officers:

Newsdesk:

0141 532 2658 (loop system)

Forward Planning

0141 532 2164/2800/2812/6840/6841

12. CONTACT NUMBERS FOR DIVISIONAL COMMUNICATION OFFICERS

A Div – Tracey Walker	714 3108
B Div – Gary McCracken	710 4723
G Div – Lisa Forsyth	721 6787
K Div – Kirsten McColl	701 6026
L Div – Neil McFadyen	744 2068
N Div – John Beaton	703 3216
Q Div – Lisa Smith	785 3345
U Div – Kevin Turner	702 5028

13. CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS – DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

Head of Corporate Communications

Media and PR Manager/deputy head of Corporate Communications

Media Services

Newdesk - one media relations co-ordinator, four press officers and one seconded police officer.

Forward Planning – one media relations co-ordinator, four press officers.

Publications and EMedia Manager

Publications, web and internal communications - one publications officer, two publication and information assistants, two members of web team, one internal communications officer, one report collator/proof reader and one PR photographer.

Marketing Manager

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Marketing – one marketing assistant.

Total 24 posts

14. PUBLICATIONS, EMEDIA AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Publications is responsible for the in-house Force magazine Upbeat, the Annual Report, other bespoke publications as required by the Force.

It also oversees and manages the 4000 page Force website and now incorporates the Internal Communications function.

Contact:	Upbeat	700 2659/6843/2326
	Web	700 2203/2710
	Internal Comms	700 6914

15. MARKETING

The Marketing Section helps publicise important messages throughout the Force area, including advertising and promoting information about bogus callers, vehicle security and personal safety, as well as supporting major enquiries.

Contact: 700 2558/2652

16. COMMENTS

- (a) If a member of staff or the public wishes to challenge or comment on the Policy or Standard Operating Procedures, the Head of Corporate Communications will consider written representation and decide whether any changes should be adopted. Changes will be made when necessary.