

Message from Deputy Chief Constable Douglas Paxton

“The media have a big influence on how the force is viewed by the public, and so the way we work with them is crucial. All officers and staff are actively encouraged to promote good police work to their local community via the media. Although we have to be aware of contempt of court issues, there will be no sanction against anyone who speaks to the media in good faith. The media can be very useful in getting appeals out quickly to a lot of people in a very short space of time. It is important that we offer reassurance to our communities through the media, and tell them about the force’s achievements. Advice and support is available from the HQ media communications team for all officers and staff.”

Guidelines for police/press relations at incidents

A frequent problem experienced by reporters has been unnecessary obstruction by police officers at the scene of an incident. This can cause bad feeling and contribute to a poor impression of the force.

To help clarify the issue of what is acceptable practice at an incident, the following protocol has been drawn up by the force and local editors. It is the responsibility of an editor to censor what is published, not the force. Officers need to be familiar with the guidelines and should be aware that journalists are likely to carry copies of this agreement with them.

The following is a copy of the agreement.

The Guidelines

- 1/** Journalists may not resist, obstruct or oppose an officer in the lawful execution of a legal duty

- 2/** The presence of a photographer or reporter at an accident, crime, or disaster scene does not constitute unlawful interference

- 3/** Taking pictures or asking questions about an incident does not constitute unlawful interference, and should not be restricted

- 4/** A police officer should not restrict a journalist from taking pictures or asking questions of other parties, even though the officer may disagree with the nature of the pictures or questions. It is the editor's responsibility to determine which photographs or information will be used

- 5/** In the event of a distressed or bereaved individual making a specific request to an officer to ask the media to leave them in peace, that officer may - in the spirit of 'victim support' - pass that request on to journalists. This is *advice*, on which journalists and their editors must base their own decisions

- 6/** Journalists should carry press credentials and produce them if asked to do so by an officer

- 7/** Journalists have the right to photograph and report events that occur on public property

8/ The police may invite journalists on to private property where an event of public interest has occurred. Journalists will enter in a peaceful manner and not cause any physical damage, or attempt to alter any details on the premises for photographic purposes

9/ Denial of access to crime scenes is necessary because of evidence gathering and forensic examination. The reasons for denial of access should be explained to the journalist and access granted as soon as it is practical to do so

10/ Journalists apprehended for violating the law will be dealt with in the same manner as any other violator

11/ Journalists have a responsibility to collect information about an incident as quickly as possible. Some of this information may seem irrelevant, unimportant, or even improper, to an officer. As long as the journalist does not violate the law, or interfere with an investigation, the police officer should not impede the journalist

12/ It is reasonable for a police officer managing traffic flow and access at an incident to ask a journalist to move his or her vehicle - even when lawfully parked - if it is considered to be an obstruction, or potential obstruction, to the movement or parking of emergency vehicles.

Dealing with the media:

Corporate Communications Department

The Corporate Communications Department will help you with any media issues. The media communications team (press office) engages with local, regional and national media on behalf of Staffordshire Police. They can be contacted on ext. 4864 or you can contact the Communications Manager (PR) on ext. 2230. The Head of Corporate Communications can be contacted on ext. 2239. A 24-hour call-out rota is operated for major incidents and media communications officers can be contacted out of hours via ACR.

Press releases/appeals are a good way to reach a large audience in a short space of time. The team regularly writes press releases/appeals for officers about incidents or can assist them to draft their own. These can be sent to individual newspapers, radio stations or websites or circulated to media outlets across the region or country.

The team works closely with officers to prepare witness appeals and identify the most appropriate information to release, through the most appropriate media channels. In most cases information that is released via the media is also distributed using the department's other communication channels such as neighbourhood newsletters, social media, the force's website and internally to our staff through MySPI.

Crime appeals should be issued as soon as possible after an incident has happened so early contact with the media communications team is advised.

The communications team can also promote positive court results for investigators through press releases. Officers are encouraged to liaise with the team as early as possible before a case comes to court so maximum publicity can be achieved.

The popular Behind Bars website highlights positive results at Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent crown courts where offenders have received prison sentences. Officers are encouraged to inform us of any cases that can be publicised on 'Behind Bars'.

The Behind Bars website can be viewed by copying this link and pasting into an internet browser, http://www.staffordshire.police.uk/news/behind_bars/

The media communications office is open from 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday and offers 24/7 on-call media officer support to the force for major incidents. Out-of-hours contact can be made through the ACR.

General advice for dealing with the media

- If you are dealing with an incident which is likely to generate considerable media interest, or attract media attention outside your local area, it is a good idea to alert the media communications team on 4864 as they will inevitably receive calls about the issue
- If you cannot release information, explain why. For example, 'we cannot tell you exactly how many firearms officers are involved in the incident because that could give the suspect a tactical advantage.' The phrase 'no comment' is not acceptable
- Corporate issues and questions regarding force policy should be referred to the media communications team - unless you are an authority on the subject or nominated corporate spokesperson. You may, for example, be the author of a force-wide policy document and therefore be able to speak about the issue. But alert headquarters to the fact that questions are being asked, and what you intend to say in response
- There is no such thing as 'off the record'. Information given 'off the record' can still be used by reporters but just not attributed. A better way to ensure information is not used is to say it is strictly for **media guidance and not for publication/broadcast**
- Do not comment on issues outside your knowledge. Stick to the facts
- Do not give information which might prejudice the fair trial of any individual arrested or charged by Staffordshire Police
- Please do not offer exclusive stories to individual journalists. Showing favour to one particular news outlet is unfair and creates unnecessary friction and bad feeling against the force. No one is entitled to exclusive information about crime which is a matter of public interest. However, you can deal with journalists on a one-to-one basis if they come to you with a specific request for information. For effectiveness and efficiency we need to ensure that we target the most appropriate media outlets covering a specific area.
- Avoid police jargon. No one, in normal speech, talks about 'persons' or 'adult males'. Talk about men, women, and children. Talk about victims rather than 'IPs'. Abbreviations like MO, SOCO or PSD, mean nothing to the average person in the street
- If you are appealing for help or you have a newsworthy operation, the media may want to interview someone. Don't issue the details just before you go off duty for several days. You need to be available for interview. If this is not possible, ensure that you have briefed the media communications team thoroughly - before you go off duty! This will enable them to carry out interviews on your behalf
- Be concise, and don't talk too fast. Newspaper reporters - unlike TV and radio - have to write down everything you say.

A-Z of incidents and situations

Anti-social behaviour

Orders/Contracts - [click here](#)

Arrests and charges

Journalists have a legal responsibility not to publish or broadcast details which might prejudice a fair trial. Under the Contempt of Court Act 1981, they may be held to be in contempt if proceedings are active at the time of publication or broadcast. Criminal proceedings are deemed to be active if a person has been arrested, or a summons has been issued, or if the person has been charged.

Once a case is active, nothing should be released which would create a substantial risk of prejudice. However, the main facts of the case may be outlined.

Police officers should specify if someone has been arrested or has attended a police station voluntarily.

If you have asked the media for assistance in identifying a suspect, you must contact the same news outlets when an arrest has been made. Otherwise, they may continue to run appeals on your behalf. It is only courteous, if you have asked for their help, to update them when an arrest is made. It is also important from the point of view that journalists need to be aware that proceedings are now active and they must be careful not to prejudice any subsequent trial.

Do not name anyone arrested or put on police bail, pending further enquires. Instead say, for example: "A 23-year-old man was arrested at his home in Cannock on suspicion of murder."

Do not name anyone charged by the police until *after* they have appeared in court. They can be named if they have been charged, remanded and their appearance in court is imminent. The information is then a matter of public record. Until that time, it is sufficient to state if the person charged is a man or woman, together with their age, occupation, and the town they come from.

The force will also state whether they have been detained in custody or granted bail, which court they will be appearing at and the date of that court appearance. For example: "This afternoon, a 30-year-old man from Stoke-on-

Trent was charged with (full charge). He has been detained in custody and will appear before Stoke-on-Trent Magistrates tomorrow morning."

After someone has been charged, before their first court appearance, a person's surname can be given to the media for guidance to help reporters find the case at court. It must be emphasised that the surname is not for **publication or broadcast** before the court appearance. The surname should only be given for guidance on the day of, or afternoon before, the appearance.

Assaults on police officers

Details of assaults on police officers when on-duty may be given to the media. Officers will be identified by their rank, age and the station they are attached to. Consent of the individual, or in serious cases their next of kin, must be obtained before releasing the officer's name or photo. Home addresses should never be given.

Blackmail

Do not issue any information likely to lead to the identification of the complainant. See also 'Kidnapping' ref kidnap kit and protocol.

Bogus officials / Distraction burglaries

The public should be alerted quickly to bogus officials, rogue traders or conmen/women operating in their area. Speak directly to the media communications team on 4864 to issue a warning via the media. If out of hours, speak to the ACR duty officer. Name the streets where the suspects are believed to be operating. However, if the road name will clearly identify a vulnerable victim, use the name of the nearest main road instead to help identify the general area at risk. Issue relevant crime prevention advice.

Bomb hoaxes

Details of bomb hoaxes are not issued to the media. However, there will be times when the force is obliged to confirm that a hoax has occurred - a journalist, for example, may ask why a street or a shopping centre has been evacuated.

Editors recognise that widespread publicity can encourage further nuisance calls, and generally accept the police line not to publicise or to keep details to a bare minimum. If journalists do not accept the police stance on this issue, ask to speak to their editor or seek assistance from the media communications team on 4864.

Bravery

Stories of bravery help to create a positive profile of the police in the media. If officers, or members of the public, have been involved in acts of heroism, contact the media communications team on 4864, so that a press release can

be prepared. If you intend to release details of a brave or remarkable act by a member of the public, ask their permission before releasing personal details which will identify them. Do not issue names of 'attempted suicides' rescued by the police.

Cash-amounts stolen

The exact amount of cash stolen from banks, building societies, post offices and security vehicles should NOT be revealed, except in exceptional circumstances (at the discretion of the SIO).

Cautioning

Do not identify anyone cautioned for an offence. It is sufficient to state that a man or woman, aged X, from Y area, has been cautioned.

Child abduction/Child Rescue Alert

All forces have agreed to implement Child Rescue Alert (CRA) whereby communications officers contact local media and provide an alert message to be broadcast at short intervals. CRA is implemented in the event of a suspected child abduction if the child is apparently under 18, there is reasonable belief the child has been kidnapped/abducted, the child is thought to be in imminent danger or serious harm or death and there is sufficient information available to enable the public or assist police in locating the child. It can only be activated by an officer of superintendent level or above. For more details contact the media communications team on 4864.

Complaints against the police

Enquiries regarding complaints about the police should be referred to the media communications team on ext 4864. A formal statement will be prepared, in conjunction with the Professional Standards Department. See also 'IPCC'.

Contamination of food/extortion

Do not release any details without the consent of the SIO or the Head of Investigative Services who will liaise with the media communications team. Once a statement has been prepared, no additional details should be given or confirmed. All follow-up queries should be referred to the media communications team on 4864.

Crime victims

Under the Data Protection Act, the name of a crime victim and their house number should not be released without their consent. However, there is no reason not to state that a crime occurred in a particular street (avoiding house numbers), with details of the type of property stolen.

If there has been a spate of burglaries in a particular area, an officer may want to highlight this in the media as a crime prevention measure.

In the event of a street crime, where the victim does not want to be named, it is acceptable to use details which do not specifically identify, but help journalists to build up a picture of the incident, for example: "A 25-year-old mother, from Baswich, was the victim of a handbag snatch whilst shopping in Stafford high street with her two children, aged five and three."

The fact that a victim does not want their personal details issued does not prevent you from releasing details of the incident itself. Information can be given to the media without the victim's consent if it is considered helpful to the enquiry by officers.

When an injured person requests that their personal details be withheld, this fact should be made clear on all communications.

The name of a business that suffers crime would normally be given, unless there is a good reason not to. This is to focus witnesses' minds and prevent other companies in the area being mistaken for the business in question. A business can request that its identity is withheld, but this can be over-ridden by an officer if necessary.

Crimestoppers

When making a media appeal about a crime, consider including the Crimestoppers number, 0800 555 111, as well as the normal police contact numbers. The Crimestoppers number should only be used where you suspect a crime has been committed, ie not appeals regarding RTCs (unless it is a hit and run).

Cross-border incidents

Liaise with the other force to agree who should deal with the press and what will be said in response to media enquiries.

Ethnic minorities

A person's race or colour is only relevant if a description is a necessary part of the investigation - as when describing a suspect, a missing person or the victim of a racially-aggravated attack.

Specify the person's race or colour eg black, Asian, white, Pakistani or Eastern European. It is as relevant to say that a person is white as it is to state that they are black. It is NOT relevant that a casualty in a road accident is black or that the driver of one of the vehicles is Asian.

Avoid expressions such as half-caste or coloured as these are considered offensive. It is preferable to refer to black, mixed race, or Asian.

Do not assume that every black person is African-Caribbean, a common mistake.

When issuing descriptions of black offenders, refer to skin tone - was it light or dark? What about their complexion? Consider the shape of the face and the style of the hair.

Explosions

It is not up to the police to give the cause of non-criminal explosion. Media should be referred to the appropriate bodies, such as gas/electricity providers.

Firearms operations (also see Sieges)

Images of firearms officers in action make dramatic photographs and good television. Overt firearms operations inevitably attract media attention. The attendant publicity can attract onlookers. It can also cause alarm.

If an arrest is imminent, be careful not to prejudice future proceedings by giving too much information about the actions of the suspect/offender. However, talking to the media is a valuable opportunity to reassure the public and to give safety advice.

- Emphasise that the officers dealing with the incident are trained to deal with these situations
- Explain that the situation is contained
- Give details of any road closures
- Advise people nearby to stay away
- Any information you release must be cleared with the Firearms Incident Commander
- Alert the media communications team who can give agreed responses on your behalf.

Media at the scene may take risks to get the best images. Operations involving firearms are highly unpredictable and dangerous by nature, and safety zones are crucial to protect the public. The Firearms Incident Commander has responsibility for the safety of the public, including the media. It may be possible to negotiate a 'safe' vantage point where photographers can see the firearms officers but are not in any line of fire.

Do not name firearms officers or give the location of the firearms unit (Weston Road).

Juveniles

Do not issue details which will lead to the identification of a juvenile. Give age and gender only. Where wards of court are concerned, no information regarding the child can be revealed without the express permission of the Judge.

Journalists at incidents

See Guidelines for police/press relations at incidents. Editors are encouraged by the police to supply their staff, particularly photographers, with high visibility vests. Where safety on a public road is an issue, it is not unreasonable to ask journalists to wear high visibility clothing as police officers have a duty of care to the public. If photographers do not have such clothing, take the name of their newspaper and pass the details to the media communications team on 4864 so that a letter of advice can be sent to the editor.

Kidnapping

Kidnapping often involves danger to life, and the release of information is therefore tightly controlled.

Where life is at risk, the media may be asked to agree to a voluntary news blackout. There is a nationally-agreed pre-set procedure for this. A blackout can only be invoked by the Chief Constable or their designated deputy. The procedure will be implemented by the media communications team in liaison with the Chief Constable and the SIO.

Loss of dangerous drugs or poisons

The loss or theft of dangerous drugs or poisons poses a serious threat to public safety. If you are dealing with such a case, the media can help you publicise the dangers. Speak directly to the media communications team on 4864, to issue a statement to the relevant media. If out of hours, speak to the ACR duty officer. Name the poison or drug. Describe the possible consequences if taken by the wrong person. State the urgency of any need for medical help. State where the drugs were lost or stolen from, and say when this happened. Describe the drug and container, if possible. For example, "the tablets are round and blue, with a shiny coating, and marked with the letter D. About 25 of them were contained in a small, square, brown plastic bottle."

Major incidents

The media communications team should be informed immediately on 4864 of any major incident likely to attract large-scale media interest.

Media officers can take a lot of pressure off police officers at the scene of a major incident, be it a murder or a plane crash. The media officers operate a 24-hour rota and can be contacted out-of-hours by the Duty Officer in the ACR. The force has a contingency plan, the Media Emergency Procedures Guide, which sets out how to respond.

If there is a civil disaster/emergency, as defined under the Civil Contingencies Act (2005), the Staffordshire Integrated Emergency Plan includes a media plan which outlines how to respond, in close liaison with other agencies.

Military aircraft

Where an incident involves military aircraft, do not identify the service personnel. Requests for information, including the type of aircraft, should be referred to the Ministry of Defence.

Media photographers should not be prevented from filming or photographing wreckage. However, they should be asked to co-operate in protecting the security of any classified material that may be exposed to view at the scene of the accident. No items of wreckage should be disturbed or interfered with in any way.

Missing/found persons/and unidentified bodies

The media can provide valuable assistance in helping to locate vulnerable missing people. It is advisable to have the consent of the missing person's next-of-kin before notifying the media but, in extreme cases, the police may proceed without permission. Always be alert, however, to those cases where publicity would be inappropriate.

When normal methods of investigation fail to identify a body, an appeal for information through the media may be successful.

Details of people missing from mental institutions and special schools, including remand homes and approved schools, are not given unless it is in the public interest - if, for example, the person may have committed a crime, is likely to be a danger to the public, or is believed to be at risk. Liaison with Social Services may be appropriate before issuing these details.

Photo guidance regarding missing people will be posted here shortly.

Murder

The media communications team can take a lot of pressure off investigating officers by attending the scene of a murder or the incident room and dealing with press enquiries. The communications officers will agree an initial statement with the SIO, and can then deal with all media enquiries, updating the information as appropriate. Communications officers will also update the force newswire, issue appeals for witnesses and prepare statements and facilities for any subsequent press conferences. Communications officers operate a 24-hour call-out rota and can be contacted out of hours via the Duty Officer in ACR.

Victims' identities should only be released after next of kin have been informed and formal identification has taken place.

Newsline

As well as using email, the media communications team operates a 24-hour recorded newswire service - updated out of hours by the ACR. Newswire items might include bogus officials, witness appeals, road closures, road accidents, or details of forthcoming court cases or inquests. Urgent information can be disseminated across the county within minutes of contacting a communications officer on 4864.

Photographs

Regular release of photographs to the media and other communication channels is part of the normal day to day activity. Officers dealing with cases of missing people where media support is needed are urged to obtain a suitable photograph as soon as possible. Positive images taken by officers are encouraged and should be emailed to the press office inbox. For further guidance in relation to distribution of photographs please liaise with the media communications team on 4864.

Protest (also see Public Disorder)

Protests and demonstrations often attract publicity. Our personal views about protesters, or the cause they are fighting, are just that. Officers should not offer personal opinions about the issues involved. It is safe to tell the media that our job is to protect the right of the protesters to protest **within the law**. We also have a duty to ensure public safety, and (depending on type of protest) it is also our job to protect individuals and organisations going about their lawful business. Do not get involved in political arguments: if criticised for upholding an 'offensive' law, direct the issue of lobbying to Parliament where the laws are made.

Public disorder

Staffordshire Police has a history of high-profile public order situations involving environmental protests and animal rights demonstrations. Protesters

often use the tactic of attacking the police through the media, so it is advisable to involve the media communications team in any planning for public disorder operations. There are national guidelines on this issue.

Pursuits/follows

The media will often assume that a police vehicle following a suspect is automatically involved in a 'chase'. Be careful to clarify the difference between a police pursuit and a 'follow'. Correct any journalist who uses the wrong term. Inform the media communications team of any pursuit or 'follow' which has resulted in a collision, as it will inevitably attract considerable media attention. Refer any matters of force policy - such as driver training, pursuit tactics or police vehicle accident statistics - to the media communications team, who will liaise with the relevant ACPO officer to give a force response.

Rape and sexual offences

Only refer to 'a rape', 'an indecent assault' or 'a serious sexual assault'.

Do not provide details which could identify the victim, unless they choose to waive their right to anonymity.

Details surrounding the assault can be released, for example: "The 34-year-old woman, who is married with children, was grabbed from behind as she was walking down the alley near the supermarket, and subjected to a serious sexual assault".

Do not go into degrading or graphic descriptions of the sexual offence itself.

From a crime prevention point of view it is important to publicise the attack if the offender is still at large and believed to be a danger to the public. This should be accompanied by a description of the offender, appeals for witnesses, and any appropriate crime prevention advice. It is equally important to let the public know that someone has been arrested.

Road traffic collisions

Give details of:

- where the collision occurred
- vehicles involved, but avoid issuing details of highly distinctive vehicles if the accident involves very serious or fatal injuries - as this could alarm next of kin before the police have been able to make contact.
- road closures or diversions, and estimated time until re-opening
- the hospital where casualties have been taken

- the age, gender and general address area (not street name) of survivors.

Under the Data Protection Act, you must not issue personal details without the specific consent of the individual.

In the case of fatal RTCs, the deceased's name, age and street name can be released but not until the next-of-kin have been informed, and formal identification has been made. The incident log should clearly indicate that relatives have been informed and that formal identification has taken place.

Although it's preferable that next-of-kin are aware, you do not need permission from the family to issue details of the deceased to the media, as fatal accidents are subject to a Coroner's Court enquiry, which is a public court of law. Family liaison officers should be encouraged to explain this to families.

Do not speculate on how the collision occurred. Do not apportion blame. It is better to say that vehicles were "in collision" rather than "X car collided with Y car".

Royal visits/state security

If asked for information regarding Royal visits or other security-sensitive information, direct journalists to the media communications team on 4864. Communications officers will liaise with the Tactical Planning Unit or an ACPO officer to agree an appropriate response.

Serious crime

In the event of a serious crime, which will attract a lot of interest, liaise with the media communications team. Communications officers can take a lot of pressure off you by drafting press statements and putting information on the force newswire. They can also advise you about television and radio interviews.

In cases such as murder, nothing should be released without the consent of the SIO.

Sex offenders

Media enquiries about registered sex offenders living in the community should immediately be brought to the attention of the media communications team. The relevant public protection unit and risk assessor should also be alerted. The media communications team can give specific advice on how to respond

to such enquiries. As a rule, we neither confirm or deny the whereabouts of registered sex offenders.

Sieges (also see Firearms)

Sieges inevitably attract a lot of media interest. They are, by their nature, high profile, and journalists can arrive very quickly at the scene. Be aware that their broadcasts may be seen or heard by the offender, if there is a television or radio in the siege premises. Too much information, or the wrong images, could give the offender a tactical advantage, or advance warning of impending action. You may need to ask the media to delay broadcasting certain images and reports until the siege has been resolved. The media is under no obligation to comply, but if life is at risk, editors have a certain moral obligation. You must ensure that every effort is made to make them aware of that risk.

Inform the media communications team in the early stages so that the necessary responses can be prepared. You may require a communications officer at the scene to take the pressure off your officers. Journalists will try to get the best images and will try many different ways to get their pictures. A communications officer at the scene can liaise with the Firearms Incident Commander or officer in charge to try to find a vantage point where journalists can follow the proceedings from a safe distance. This will avoid the greater risk of photographers and camera crews trying to find their own vantage points and possibly interfering with operations, whilst putting themselves at risk. Many will claim that they are prepared to take that risk, but as a police service, we have a duty of care to the public.

Sudden deaths including suicides

Sudden deaths and details of suicides should not be offered to the media. However, a police presence at a residential property often alerts neighbours, and media, to a possible story. Rather than allow stories of suspicious deaths or murder to be perpetuated, it is better to confirm 'we are investigating a sudden death and, at this stage, there appear to be no suspicious circumstances'. After next of kin have been informed, and formal identification has been made, you can confirm the personal details - name, age, address - together with the date, time and place of the inquest opening, if known.

In Coroner's cases don't give a cause or suspected cause of death until the post mortem results have been made known to the Coroner.

Do not give details of any suicide note.

Terrorist incidents/bomb attacks

Information released following a terrorist/bomb attack is strictly controlled and, without specific clearance from the Special Operations branch at New Scotland Yard, information should be confined to the following:

- Confirm explosion/incident
- Give details of the area sealed off
- Confirm any evacuation and say where people have been evacuated to
- Give details of any traffic diversions
- Offer reassurance that the emergency services are dealing with the incident
- Confirm whether or not there are casualties - but NOT numbers or the seriousness
- Say which hospitals casualties have been taken to
- Give the telephone number of Casualty Bureau (once authorisation has been given by Casualty Bureau Manager)
- Refer all enquiries to the media communications team on 4864. Communications officers will liaise with the appropriate authority to formulate a response within the framework of the Anti-Terrorist Contingency Plan.

The media communications team will liaise with colleagues at the Special Operations desk at New Scotland Yard regarding the release of further details.

Interview tips for radio and television

Preparation

Before an interview, find out from the journalist or the media communications team:

- if the interview is live or pre-recorded
- likely questions/what the *first* question will be
- if anyone else is taking part and their viewpoint or allegation
- if it's an in-depth interview, or a sound-bite for a news bulletin.

If you know you can't answer a specific question, say so before the interview starts, to save awkwardness during the interview.

Before the interview, collect your thoughts and make *brief* notes of your key points. It is useful to think of three key positive messages you want to get across and then weave these in during the interview.

If you're appealing for information, have the relevant phone numbers handy, and make sure the phones are staged.

Be aware that the interview could be broadened to talk about related force policies, eg you may agree to be interviewed about an RTC involving a police vehicle, then also be asked about force policy on driver training.

For TV interviews on police premises, remove anything inappropriate or confidential from desks or notice boards. Put a sign on the door asking for quiet/not to be disturbed. Divert your phone.

During the interview

- If the interview is pre-recorded and you make a mistake, stop, and ask to start again. The journalist will understand. It's as much in their interest as yours to have a fluent interview
- Keep your answers short. If your answer is too lengthy, it may be edited. Most news bulletins will only use ten to 30 seconds
- During a TV interview, look directly at the interviewer. Don't look straight into the camera unless you're asked to
- Don't use police jargon, such as IP, ACR or RTC
- Use time references like 'today', 'yesterday' or 'lunchtime' rather than '1300 hours on the 13th of this month'

- Consider visual aids, such as the gun used during a crime, or an item of clothing similar to that worn by the missing person
- Don't fidget, sway or slouch
- Check your appearance – hair tidy? Tie straight? Food on your face?! Try to avoid wearing 'loud', checked or striped clothes on TV
- Treat all microphones as 'live'. Don't joke about sensitive issues either before or after an interview - the camera or sound recording could still be running

Further information can also be viewed on the ACPO press centre, please click on the link below:

<http://www.acpo.presscentre.com/imagelibrary/downloadMedia.ashx?MediaDetailsID=238>