

Crisis Communications

This note summarises the action to be taken in the event of an issue emerging that may have an adverse impact on NHS Shetland’s reputation or is likely to attract media interest. This is particularly important at a time of high public anxiety.

It sets out what to look out for, what to do next and how Corporate Communications will support you and your colleagues.

Please note that this process has been approved by EMT and must be followed.

Communications Hotline
8am-8pm, 7 days a week
0300 365 7167

If you are contacted by a journalist about an existing or potential issue please do not enter into discussion with the journalist. Simply take their details and notify your line management who will escalate as necessary to Corporate Comms.

<p>STAGE ONE</p> <p>Identify potential or emerging issue, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something happens that impacts on your activity or your ability to deliver expected service to a patient or service user • A potential mistake/accident/breach of best practice has taken place • An enquiry from a journalist or a local media story • Social media activity/online conversations • An unintended breach of patient confidentiality • Members of the local media trying to gain access to restricted areas 	<p>STAGE TWO</p> <p>Assess how serious the issue is and the impact it is likely to have.</p> <p>A minor issue – this is an isolated incident which only has very local relevance, e.g. a distressed patient/relative is unhappy with something and has threatened to go to the press but they have not yet done so. Note, a minor issue still needs to be managed – it may generate local media interest, grow into a bigger issue via social media, or involve other organisations that choose to speak out. Action to be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with your local line-manager as soon as possible, and within 24 hours • Your line manager will then assess the issue with you and decide if escalation to Corporate Communications is required. <p>A serious issue or major incident has the potential to have a major negative impact on NHS Shetland’s reputation which at the current time of high public anxiety is more critical than ever. An example of a serious issue may be an inability to follow agreed patient pathways, or a significant adverse event that leads to serious injury or the death of a patient. In these situations it is essential that we take action quickly, both by appropriate reporting of the incident on Datix and also so that Corporate Communications can respond in an appropriate and timely fashion to any external, related queries. Action to be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify your Manager or, out of hours, the Senior Manager on call, who will determine the best course of action and may ask you to contact Corporate Communications at the above number or do it themselves. 	<p>STAGE THREE</p> <p>Establish the facts - When discussing with either local or senior line management it would be very helpful if you could provide the following information, but please do not delay notification while you are waiting for these details, particularly if it is a serious incident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has happened and where? • When did the incident occur? • Who is involved? Please provide contact details as far as possible. • Who knows about it so far? Are any other organisations aware/involved? • What action has already been taken? • Is the media aware of the issue? Have there been any media enquiries about it? <p>STAGE FOUR</p> <p>Escalation – once all available facts and information are known, and depending on the severity of the issue, Corporate Communications will liaise with the appropriate director to decide whether stakeholders (such as local media, other NHS Staff, Non-executive Board members, partner organisations, or the Scottish Government) need to be informed, and Corporate Communications will get in touch with you if they need any more information.</p>
---	--	--

For less urgent help with public or staff messaging please email: shet.communications@nhs.scot