

MEDIA POLICY

1. Introduction

The media are an important way of communicating to the public and others. This policy aims to ensure a consistent approach to media relations and to protect the reputation of Healthwatch Brighton and Hove. The correct media handling procedure detailed in this policy must be adhered to by all Healthwatch Governing Body members, staff and volunteers when they act on behalf of Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.

2. Authorisation

- 2.1 Healthwatch Brighton and Hove is aware that coverage in the media can be subject to journalists' own interpretations, and misrepresentation of the facts. It is important that lines of communication to the media are well defined and clearly understood to avoid confusion and 'mixed messages'. Therefore all contact with the media must be initiated by, and enquiries from the media forwarded to, the Engagement and Communications Co-ordinator who will liaise with the Healthwatch Manager and/or Chair of the Governing Body.
- 2.2 Press and media releases or contact relating to matters of Healthwatch B&H policy or which are judged to be controversial or sensitive by the Healthwatch Manager must be approved by the Chair of the Governing Body.
- 2.3 Press and media releases or contact relating to matters of **fact** must be approved by the Engagement and Communications Co-ordinator but s/he may provide the relevant member of staff, or, where appropriate, a member of the Governing Body or a volunteer, as an appropriate point of contact.
- 2.4 Anyone contravening this policy will be deemed to be in breach of the Healthwatch Brighton and Hove Code of Conduct and this may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

3. Proactive media coverage

All proposals for media coverage initiated by the Engagement and Communications Co-ordinator must be discussed with and approved by the Healthwatch Manager or/ Chair of the Governing Body prior to the media being contacted.

4. Responding to media coverage

While it is important to initiate media coverage, it is also important for Healthwatch Brighton and Hove to respond quickly to health and social care stories that appear in the local papers and other media. This should usually be achieved via the letters page or direct contact with journalists.

5. Spokespersons

- 5.1 Notwithstanding section 2.1 above, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove can appoint spokespersons to communicate with the media (see section 2.3 above).
- 5.2 Spokespersons will be appointed by the Engagement and Communications Co-ordinator, in writing where time allows, after consultation with the Healthwatch Manager.
- 5.3 Spokespersons must be willing to give interviews to newspaper or radio journalists, and to be photographed if required.
- 5.4 Contact details of Healthwatch spokespersons will only be passed to the media with the spokesperson's express permission, and this permission must be clearly conveyed to the Engagement and Communications Co-ordinator.
- 5.5 Unless the Spokesperson is in receipt of written permission from a patient or service user to use their name all information passed to the media must be anonymised.

6. Absence of the Healthwatch Manager

In the absence of the Healthwatch Manager through holiday or sickness, the Chair of the Governing Body, or in his/her absence the Vice Chair, should be contacted on all matters normally identified within the policy as the responsibility of the Healthwatch Manager.