
Communications and Media Policy

Turas Training

Approval date:

Revision date:

1. Responsibility for approval of policy	Board of Directors/Trustees
2. Responsibility for implementation	Project Coordinator
3. Responsibility for ensuring review	Project Coordinator

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Turas is committed to promoting the work of the organisation; ensuring that service information in the public domain is accurate and that the organisation is prepared to take part in broader debates within the media where this is pertinent to our core objectives.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To clarify how the service will manage information pertaining to our organisation and / or our work that is in the public domain; this includes documents, websites and opinions of the service as outlined in press releases, interviews and editorial letters.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to staff, volunteers, locums and members of the management committee within Turas in relation to any dealings with the media and /or release of information into the public domain.
- 3.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Email, Internet and Fax Policy, The Data Protection Policy and Confidentiality Policy.

4. Principles

- 4.1. We will endeavour to promote a consistent and positive message in regard to our service, our work and the service's vision and values.
- 4.2. The service will strive to keep its information which is in the public domain relevant and up to date, especially in relation to the services website, brochures, twitter, Facebook, other literature.
- 4.3. The service will endeavour to develop positive relationships with the media; when possible and when it fits in with the core work of the organisation a relevant staff member will be made available to comment on current issues.
- 4.4. Staff will only be facilitated to engage with the media after appropriate training, briefing and support has been provided.
- 4.5. If, following an assessment, a media opportunity is considered appropriate, service users may be asked if they would like to engage with the interview / media piece. If an individual is interested in engaging with the media, they will be given significant supports: prior to, during and after the event and clearly informed of possible negative consequences of involvement.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1. The project coordinator has the following role and responsibilities:
 - 5.1.1. To undertake all media contact and approve all press releases, brochures and other public information regarding the service.
 - 5.1.2. To ensure that any other staff dealing with the media are sufficiently trained and supported.
- 5.2. Staff have a responsibility to direct all media requests to the project coordinator or spokesperson and to be careful when communicating with the media to ensure they do not inadvertently provide the journalist with a quote or with a 'no comment' (see point 6.4 below).

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6. Managing Requests for Media Interviews

- 6.1. Invitations to speak on behalf of the organisation may only be accepted with prior permission of the project coordinator or spokesperson. Additionally no staff member can give information to the media without the permission of the project coordinator or chairperson.
- 6.2. If staff have a request on the phone from a journalist they should ask the following questions and let the journalist know that someone from the organisation will get back to them:
 - 6.2.1. What publication / show is it for?
 - 6.2.2. What is the topic / specific input needed?
 - 6.2.3. When is the show / deadline for response.
 - 6.2.4. Who should be contacted?
- 6.3. Staff should be careful not to get drawn into dialogue with the journalist as they are trained to source quotes from general conversations and may not make this explicit in their conversation.

- 6.4. Staff should be aware of saying that they cannot comment, as this may be recorded as a 'no comment' from the organisation. This is particularly relevant where the conversation relates to a controversial interview and a 'no comment' response in the media would reflect badly on the organisation. The journalist should be told that someone senior within the organisation will get back to them in due course.
- 6.5. No staff member may permit a member of the media onto the organisation's premises or to take photos of staff, premises or service users without the permission of the project coordinator or spokesperson.
- 6.6. If the journalist states that it is urgent of the deadline for comment is that day, then the media spokesperson should be contacted by a senior member of staff if they are out of the building.

7. Establishing a Media Strategy

- 7.1. A media strategy will be developed by TURAS management This will highlight the following:
 - 7.1.1. What events will be publicised through press releases and interviews
 - 7.1.2. Which staff will be trained in media
 - 7.1.3. What events and content will be included in the website and other social media
 - 7.1.4. What issues, in general, the service will consider responding to in the media.

8. Maintaining Service Information on the Internet

- 8.1. The process for updating the services website is:
 - 8.1.1. Staff should contact the project coordinator or the communications officer with any information that needs to be updated on the website.
 - 8.1.2. The communications officer will update the website at least monthly. Prior to work being undertaken, a reminder email will sent to name staff roles / all staff asking for any information to be included in updates.
 - 8.1.3. The following content will be maintained and updated on the organisation's website:
 - 8.1.3.1. general info about services, hours referral processes, contacts etc
 - 8.1.3.2. details of upcoming projects
 - 8.1.3.3. articles in other media etc.
 - 8.1.3.4. relevant research
 - 8.1.3.5. policies and handbooks
 - 8.1.3.6. annual reports and strategic plans
- 8.2. When there is a significant change in service provision, opening hours, location or services offered, the manager/director will contact the following information sites/providers to ensure information is updated:
 - 8.2.1. www.drugs.ie (email: info@drugs.ie)
 - 8.2.2. HSE drugs helpline (call: 1800 459 459)
 - 8.2.3. www.casemanagementguidebook.ie (email: homelessagency@dublincity.ie)

9. Use of Social Media

- 9.1. The communications & media officer will be responsible for updating / monitoring the content of the following sites:
 - 9.1.1. Facebook
 - 9.1.2. Twitter
 - 9.1.3. website
- 9.2. Only named staff can input into the sites.
- 9.3. the following content will be maintained on these sites:
 - 9.3.1. details of upcoming projects
 - 9.3.2. general information, who's who in TURAS
 - 9.3.3. vacancies, award ceremonies, open days, annual outcomes and outputs and relevant reports
- 9.4. In relation to use of staff members' own personal sites and how these should be managed in relation to service users please refer to the internet and email policy. In short staff should not accept invites to be 'friends' from service users and should let them know in person in an appropriately supportive manner that the service has a policy on this which they need to follow.

10. Writing Press Releases

- 10.1. Press releases are the main form of communication from the service to national and local media.
- 10.2. Prior to release, all press releases will be approved by the project coordinator.
- 10.3. If a press release pertains to a launch by a minister of state, due care must be taken to advise the Minister's office and the relevant department officials well in advance of the deadline for its release to the media.
- 10.4. The project coordinator will decide whether the release will be embargoed. An embargo means that the media in receipt of the press release can not use the information until the time stated on the release. In this case, the statement used at the top of the release will read 'this press release is embargoed until _____date and time'.
- 10.5. The following guidelines may be of use in constructing a press release - also refer to the basic press release template in appendix I:
 - 10.5.1. Embargoes should be shown clearly at the top of the press release.
 - 10.5.2. Write the headline, it should be brief, clear and to the point: an ultra-compact version of the press release's key point. Headlines are written in bold and are typically larger than the press release text.
 - 10.5.3. One way of writing a headline is to write a sentence describing the main point and then try to take as many of the words out as possible and still have it make sense. You are better to be factual than sensational, journalists will write their own headlines for stories, the press release is to provide them with the information. Think about the following for themes for your release:
 - 10.5.3.1. Can you highlight something new or innovative / if it's a launch include this fact.
 - 10.5.3.2. Are there any inspiring human stories?
 - 10.5.3.3. Is there something people would be concerned about?
 - 10.5.4. Write the body - The lead, or first sentence, should grab the reader and say concisely what is happening. The next 1-2 sentences then expand upon the lead. In a fast-paced world, neither journalists nor other readers would read the entire press release if the start of the article didn't generate interest.
 - 10.5.4.1. Avoid using very long sentences and paragraphs. Avoid repetition and over use of fancy language, cliché and jargon.
 - 10.5.4.2. Communicate the 5 Ws and the H. Who, what, when, where, why, and how. Put the most important first and elaborate in subsequent paragraphs.
 - 10.5.4.3. If you want to talk up an issue or service, allow quotes to do the work for you. Quotes should be from relevant people and stakeholders, using italics or quotation marks and stating whose quote it is and their relationship to the story/service.
 - 10.5.4.4. Don't use superlatives exaggerating the claims of what your event or service can do or has done.
 - 10.5.4.5. Check you have not left any important information out: you won't get a follow-up call if you leave out basic contact information.
 - 10.5.4.6. Also include a one line brief explanation of who you are – don't assume anyone knows what your service does or who you are.
 - 10.5.5. Provide contact information (name, role, email, phone, and times available for contact) should the journalist want to arrange an interview or seek further information, you may also state the people that are available for interview and provide a small blurb on their role and relationship to the event or service.
- 10.6. Press releases will be sent to the press list, which will be kept by the management team.
- 10.7. The press release will also be submitted to <http://www.irishpressreleases.ie/>, this organisation will make the release available to a broad cross section of media on behalf of the organisation.
- 10.8. Press releases will always be sent in the early morning or the afternoon before, and embargoed until 8.00am the next morning.
- 10.9. Where it is considered beneficial follow up calls will be made to journalists on the day of the press release, calls will be made by the manager/director.

11. Guidelines for Interviews (newspaper, radio and television)

11.1. General

- 11.1.1. If you have sent a press release you should ensure that someone is available for the next few days on the contact number given in the press release and that any people named as available for interview are also available at short notice.
 - 11.1.2. Prior to the service agreeing to an interview the following information should be sought:
 - 11.1.2.1. What publication / show is it for / where will the interview take place?
 - 11.1.2.2. What is the topic / specific input needed?
 - 11.1.2.3. When is the show / deadline for response?
 - 11.1.2.4. What is show or papers target market, who is the typical viewer/reader/listener?
 - 11.1.2.5. In the case of radio and television interviews, what will the first few questions be?
 - 11.1.2.6. In the case of radio and television interviews, will there be other interviewees?
 - 11.1.3. Prior to the service agreeing to provide someone for interview the following should be analysed:
 - 1) what could the service gain from the interview: raised profile; better relationship with journalist for future work; important for comments to be made on topical issue, against
 - 2) what negatives could arise: other stakeholders/ funders unhappy with view taken; words taken out of context; service misrepresented; questions asked that will be difficult to answer.
 - 11.1.4. On occasion journalists will put you under pressure to agree to an interview, it is always better to tell them you will call back in ten minutes and take this time to analyse whether the opportunity is a good one for your service.
 - 11.1.5. If it is agreed by the project coordinator that the potential benefits outweigh the risks, then the journalist should be contacted and the interview arranged. It is useful to find out what will be asked or get the first question confirmed to assist in planning responses.
 - 11.1.6. If a journalist asks for information off the record for background research, the staff member will generally avoid this unless there is a good relationship with the journalist and it is made clear by the staff member that the issue is off the record and not to be used.
 - 11.1.7. Prior to interview the person being interviewed should be well prepared and should write down a list of questions they are likely to be asked. As a rule the interviewee should have three main points, with substantiation or evidence where relevant. Think also of possible sound bites, which are short statements that concisely state the argument and provide an interesting angle; an effective sound bite is short and memorable. Consideration should be given to these interest groups that points will hold for the specific target group. Ideally a mock interview should be practiced with a staff member or individual with experience of the media prior to the real interview.
 - 11.1.8. Guidelines for being interviewed in radio and television:
 - 11.1.8.1. Be honest, if there are things you cannot answer or do not want to discuss then consider not doing the interview. Avoidance of difficult issues or dishonesty will often not come across well to listeners.
 - 11.1.8.2. Consider the show's target market and adapt your message to this group.
 - 11.1.8.3. Have a very clear idea of your three main points and try to answer the questions with a relevant reference or bridge to these points.
 - 11.1.8.4. The interviewee should in general only discuss the views of the service, rather than their personal views on the topic. Within this journalists are often looking for human interest angles and preparation for interview should consider how this element can be effectively provided, common options include:
 - 11.1.8.4.1. having a service user talk to the media (see point 12 below)
 - 11.1.8.4.2. case studies / stories
 - 11.1.8.4.3. quotes / letters from service users that can be read out.
- ### 11.2. Following the interview
- 11.2.1. It can be useful to review the performance so that learning can be taken for the next interview. Working in the media is a specific skill that can take years to build, with this in mind the interviewee should highlight the points that they effectively got across.
 - 11.2.2. The interview or article should be achieved for future reference of linked on the services website.

12. Involving Service Users in the Media

- 12.1. In relation to involving service users in media opportunities or making linkages between journalist's requests and service users, Turas acknowledges a duty of care to the users of the service. Turas will generally operate on the side of caution in relation to the involvement of service users in media requests.
- 12.2. It should be noted that if the experience is a negative one this may affect the relationship between the service user and service, even when the service played a small role in the connecting journalist and service user.
- 12.3. If, following an assessment, a media opportunity is considered appropriate, service users may be asked if they would like to engage with the interview / media piece. An assessment will involve the same factors as covered in 11.1.1 and 11.1.2 as well as the following:
 - 12.3.1. Whether the service user has done media before, and if it was a positive experience.
 - 12.3.2. Whether they have well developed communication skills.
 - 12.3.3. Whether the service user is in positive position to make a decision, i.e. not compromised by drug or alcohol use, able to provide informed consent and also in a strong position personally: i.e. the stress of an interview is not likely to endanger their own recovery.
 - 12.3.4. Whether the service user understands the potential consequences of working with the media, such as:
 - 12.3.4.1. being able to be recognised by friends or family (when voice alteration or black outs are used),
 - 12.3.4.2. negative backlash from family or community,
 - 12.3.4.3. being misquoted or asked personal questions they do not want to answer,
 - 12.3.4.4. that once something is in the media it can not be retracted later.
- 12.4. If, following these steps, an individual is interested in engaging with the media, they will be given the following supports and information:
 - 12.4.1. Prior to the interview: a member of staff will help to prepare them by working through:
 - 12.4.1.1. whether they will request identify protection, i.e. face being blacked out, voice being changed etc. If the individual is keen to protect identity then the method offered by the journalist should be considered, i.e. some people have distinctive voices or profiles.
 - 12.4.1.2. what points they are keen to get across,
 - 12.4.1.3. what it is that they don't want to say,
 - 12.4.1.4. how they will manage difficult questions,
 - 12.4.1.5. how they will decline to talk about something or answer a question they don't want to answer
 - 12.4.1.6. if it is pre-recorded that they can ask to repeat an answer if they wish.
 - 12.4.2. At the interview: this can be attended by the staff member in a supporting role.
 - 12.4.3. After the interview: the service should have a debrief immediately after the interview and also a follow up a week later to check in that there was no negative repercussions following the interview.

13. Staff are asked in a Personal Capacity to Participate in a Media Interview.

- 13.1. If staff are asked to participate in any media in a personal capacity which has the potential to state their place of work, they should make this known to the project coordinator.
- 13.2. When the topic or theme is likely to bring the organisation into disrepute, the staff member may be asked not to participate, although it should be noted that in general a staff members ability to engage in projects outside of work will be respected, and if possible a plan for managing difficult questions around their relationship to the organisation will be made.

14. Email Bulletins

- 14.1. All staff have permission to send relevant emails to services in which they are in contact with / services on the email list, in accordance with email policies.

15. Brochures and Posters

- 15.1. All posters and brochure will be checked by the project coordinator, prior to being printed.
15.2. Prior to being printed a distribution plan will also be approved by the manager/director.

Appendix 1 - Press Release Standard Format

Embargo (if you are using one).

PRESS RELEASE

The Headline Should Ideally be Just One or Two Lines Long and Get To The Point. Capitalise Just the First Letter of Each Word.

The sub heading/summary should give a summary of what the release is announcing in the form of a normal

sentence. This should highlight the facts and also what will make the release interesting to those reading the paper or listening to the radio. The opening sentence should grab the reader's interest by giving them the most important information right off the bat. It should be able to stand on its own, regardless of whether or not the recipient has read the headline.

The next few paragraphs should answer the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How of your announcement. It should be clear, concise and devoid of clichés.

Sentences should be relatively short and free of jargon, exaggerations or unsubstantiated claims. Paragraphs should be only a few sentences long to make them more readable. Quotes can be used to give colour to a press release, but avoid bland statements from company principals.

Be sure to include all relevant information. Don't leave out key information in the hope that a journalist will call you back for it – they're more likely to throw your work aside.

You should have a paragraph explaining what your company/organisation does and how it is successful or important - what makes it different from other organisations.

The least pressing information should be at the end because most recipients probably won't get beyond the first paragraph.

Make sure that the journalist has a number of options to get in touch with you if they wish.

Contact Name
Organisation name
Street Address
fax
Phone landline
Phone mobile

If there are specific times that someone can be made available for comment, include details.

(Based on: www.irishpressreleases.ie)