

New standards for police communications published

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New guidance available to help forces communicate more effectively with the public and media

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Police forces now operate in a fast-moving information environment where online content can spread faster than traditional responses allow. A single social media post can reach millions within minutes, while misinformation can undermine investigations and erode public trust before forces have time to respond.

At the same time, the relationship between the police and accredited media has weakened. The rise of social media and 24-hour news has created new pressures, and recent high-profile cases have exposed gaps in how forces manage public communications.

The College has published updated media and communications (previously titled media relations) authorised professional practice (APP) to address these challenges, setting clearer standards for professional, ethical and transparent communication.

What's changed

Main changes include:

- strengthened requirements for faster, more transparent public communication, so communities receive accurate and trustworthy information quickly
- clearer guidance on releasing suspect information, including ethnicity and nationality
- new frameworks for social media use and countering misinformation, disinformation and malinformation
- requirements for faster, clearer engagement with accredited media

- minimum standards for corporate communications teams, including capability requirements and decision-making
- additional support for victims and families in the public eye
- major incident communications planning for all forces

Who the guidance is for

The APP supports:

- corporate communications teams
- chief officers
- gold commanders
- senior investigating officers
- family liaison officers

Accredited journalists can also use it as a reference point to understand what information they can expect to receive and when.

The guidance provides clearer frameworks for police communications professionals, including training requirements for media law and expectations for involving communications advisors early in investigations.

For accredited media, the guidance recognises the vital role of professional journalists in informing communities and supporting public accountability. It sets out clearer expectations for information sharing, faster engagement during investigations, and a commitment from forces to build constructive relationships.

[Go to the media and communications APP](#)

Developed collaboratively

The guidance was developed with police communications professionals and media representatives. Our [public consultation](#) received 265 responses from across policing, media, professional bodies,

civil society organisations and the public.

The updated standards form part of a coordinated effort to rebuild trust, aligning with the [Crown Prosecution Service media protocol](#) and a new national Media Charter developed with the Society of Editors, Crime Reporters Association and Media Lawyers Association.

Chief Constable Sir Andy Marsh, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the College of Policing, said:

We now live in a world where mis- and disinformation can spread like wildfire, doing untold harm to communities and undermining public trust in the police if not countered quickly. It is therefore crucial that police provide prompt, trustworthy information, on a nationally consistent basis.

This guidance sets out the level of information the public and accredited media will receive from police forces, meaning people can expect clear, timely updates, especially at times of uncertainty and during high-profile incidents.

We have listened to feedback from the public, journalists, and police professionals to make this guidance fit for today's challenges and news landscape."

Dawn Alford, Chief Executive of the Society of Editors said:

The publication of today's guidance forms part of a wider commitment between policing bodies and the media to promote an effective and positive working relationship between officers and journalists for the benefit of the public.

We are pleased that the guidance now recognises the reality of today's fast-paced media landscape as well as the challenges posed by mis- and disinformation online and the need for forces to challenge false narratives in a timely manner. We look forward to continuing to work with policing bodies to strengthen this important relationship."

Tags

APP Engagement and communication