



MEDIA POLICY, PROCEDURES AND STRATEGY

Introduction

A number of statements contained within the NSF (Scotland)'s Mission Statement are of particular relevance to NSF (Scotland)'s media policy and strategy: 'people affected by schizophrenia have a specialised knowledge and expertise, which will be reflected in all that we do': and the first two elements in our Statement of Purpose:

- a) '...to promote greater public understanding of schizophrenia, and thereby break down the barriers of ignorance, prejudice and isolation'; and
- b) '...to advocate on behalf of groups and individuals to promote the best possible treatment and care'.

In general, NSF (Scotland)'s relationship with the media may be either reactive (e.g. responding to press coverage of a particular event/issue), or proactive (e.g. actively developing and promoting a relationship with the media, and bringing particular issues to the attention of the media). Ideally it would seek to achieve both.

Additionally, there may be occasions when NSF (Scotland) itself receives adverse publicity, and will need to respond appropriately.

There are two particular ways in which NSF (Scotland) can further its interests with the media:

- a) by speaking out as an organisation (i.e. the NSF (Scotland) view onis.....); and
- b) by enabling individuals to communicate their personal experience and viewpoint.

Giving 'the NSF(Scotland) view'

It is important there is clarity about who within NSF (Scotland) is authorised to speak on behalf of the Fellowship, and in what circumstances. Having a clear organisational standpoint on particular issues is essential, so that individuals

representing the views of NSF (Scotland) to the media can do so with clarity and authority.

Given the speed of response which is often required by the media, it is not always possible to consult on every matter, but a sound understanding on our values and our purpose will allow for an informed response, and discussion with/authorisation from the Chairman, Chief Executive and/or (where appropriate) Line Manager can also give the opportunity to 'rehearse' an appropriate response. This additionally prevents the confusion which can arise when someone speaks with "an NSF (Scotland) hat on", but expresses a personal point of view.

The issuing of press releases and statements to the press should be done in consultation with the Information Officer at National Office.

Guidance to Relevant Groups/Individuals.

Chairman, Chief Executive and Information Officer

It is integral to the function of the Chairman, Chief Executive and Information Officer that they can represent the NSF (Scotland) to the media when required. They are listed in the Journalist's Handbook for Scotland as NSF (Scotland)'s national media contacts.

NSF (Scotland) Board Members

Members of NSF (Scotland) Board of Management can use their own judgement regarding representing the NSF(Scotland) position on a particular matter. It may be that they have particular knowledge or expertise in a specific area, and would therefore be well placed to give an organisational comment. The Chairman or Chief Executive should be contacted unless this is not possible.

NSF (Scotland) Groups and Contacts

Where NSF (Scotland)'s Groups and Contacts are invited to give an NSF (Scotland) view on a particular matter, or where they wish to contact the media, discussion should in the first instance, take place with the Information Officer, who will be pleased to offer advice and assistance.

Members of NSF(Scotland)

If individual members of the Fellowship are approached by the media for an NSF (Scotland) view, they should contact National Office and discuss this with the Information Officer, who will advise as to an appropriate response. Where the Information Officer is unavailable, they should contact the Chairman or Chief Executive.

NSF(Scotland) Staff

NSF (Scotland)'s Information Officer is given as a media contact along with the Chairman and Chief Executive. Outwith this arrangement, the following statement applies: 'No worker shall write any article for the press or other publication (including the World Wide Web), grant an interview with the media on any matter connected to the business or operations of the Fellowship, or any issues of direct concern to the Fellowship, without first obtaining the approval of the Line Manager.

Adverse Publicity about NSF (Scotland)

Predictable

It is sometimes possible to identify situations where NSF (Scotland) itself could be exposed to adverse publicity. In such circumstances, an appropriate strategy for dealing with this should be discussed initially with line management (if project related) and then with the Chairman or Chief Executive.

Unexpected

Immediate contact should be made with the Chairman or Chief Executive at National Office. There should be no contact with/response to the media until this has been done. Following discussion with either of the above, appropriate course of action will be decided.

Giving an Individual View

Very often, the media are most interested in covering the 'human interest' angle of an issue or situation, and NSF (Scotland)'s ability to afford access to individual carers/families and/or service users is particularly sought by the media. It is important that people agreeing to speak to the media in this way know that they are not being asked, or expected, to carry the responsibility of talking for the NSF (Scotland) as an organisation, and to feel able and equipped to communicate their own views and experience to the media as comfortably as possible.

The above document will be subject to regular review. Comments on its contents are welcome and should be directed in the first instance to the Information Officer at National Office.

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