Government Communication Service

Modern Media Operation

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**Foreword by Alex Aiken,** Executive Director of Government Communications

Media relations is at the heart of government communication. Our teams work every day to explain the policies and services of government departments and agencies. The range and scope of this activity is unique, from the daily parliamentary ‘Lobby’, through to the work of DWP and HM Revenue and Customs explaining our welfare and tax policies, to the activity

of our Foreign and Commonwealth Office communications staff all around the world.

The media is our vital partner to create public understanding of the aims of government and build the trust that the public place in our

services. This partnership requires highly skilled media officers who can understand the purpose, components and rules guiding our work.

The media has a duty to hold government to account and our media teams should promote, explain and justify the policies of the government accurately. They should also do so creatively and must be prepared to speak with honesty and on the basis of professional expertise and evidence to advise ministers and officials on the best approach to meet the needs of the media and achieve the objectives of the government.

Media relations professionals across government deal with issues of the highest importance, whether that be national security, hospitals, schools, prisons, the economy or international affairs. They are at the forefront of communicating policy and responding to events across all of these issues, delivering a vital role in informing the public and supporting the delivery of every aspect of policy and service provision.

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Our media teams are acknowledged as talented, capable, motivated and high-performing. Yet until now there has been no attempt to set out, in one place, the activities an efficient media relations team should be doing in line with both the Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM) and the individual behaviours outlined in the GCS Competency Framework.

This new guide is about recognising and capturing, for the first time, the best practice that exists across GCS, to ensure our media teams remain the best anywhere in the world at what they do, while also continuing to work effectively with colleagues in communications disciplines such as strategy, campaigns and digital. This guide and the commitments Heads of News have made in it, will help ensure our media teams keep up with the ever-changing media landscape evolving around us.

There is nothing here that the vast majority of teams are not already doing – and doing very well – but the audit on which this work is based showed a need to keep improving. We need

to work at pace, become expert in generating content, routinely evaluate and understand how technology will carry on changing the media industry. But the most important set of skills that media relations teams need to have is that aimed at building trustful relationships

– with ministers, with policy and operational colleagues in the Civil Service and, of course, with journalists and commentators.

To continue to enjoy their rightful and traditional place at the heart of government and public sector communications, media relations professionals throughout GCS must be alert to the future as well as the present, and be confident and influential in managing relationships and expectations with ministers and senior colleagues.

I am certain that my current and future GCS media professional colleagues will rise to this challenge, and I endorse this guide as a key resource from which to build capability, share best practice and reach towards even higher standards.

We know the importance that officials and ministers across government place on the skills that we and our teams offer. That is why Heads of News have worked together to compile

**Introduction from Heads of News**

this guide and are committed to sharing and encouraging the best practice it highlights with their teams. We commend this guide to media officers and communications professionals across the GCS and will use it to build professional skills and pride in our service.

This year marks 100 years of government communications. ‘Press relations’ was the first element of the Ministry of Information when government communication came into being in 1917. Its continuing importance to government today illustrates the central role it has played, and will play, in maintaining trust between government and the public through reporting, analysis and discussion in the national, regional, international and online media.

1. The GCS Improvement Programme identified the need for a guide in modern media operations, to provide all Whitehall departments and relevant arm’s length bodies (ALBs) – i.e. those with larger media operations – with

**Introduction**

a core baseline of services to which all are committed and which can be evaluated consistently. A detailed audit of existing practice was undertaken by Heads of News in late 2016 to inform this work and create this document.

### The purpose of this guide is to:

* identify a benchmark for the corporate capability that a successful media relations team is able to provide to its parent organisation and to ministers
* provide awareness to key stakeholders

(e.g. permanent secretaries, special advisers, policy/operational colleagues) of the services provided, and value added, by a modern media team

* outline in clear terms the key functional elements of modern media operations and thus promote inward recruitment
* inform preparation for, and assessment at, the regular Capability Reviews which the GCS conducts
* encourage the sharing of best practice between media relations and GCS teams across departments and ALBs.
1. The Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM), published by GCS in the autumn of 2015, laid down the key principles of how public sector media teams should operate. The essential premise is that each department/ALB requires a media operation which will set the external agenda rather than simply follow it. The model then lists practical ways to achieve this, including:
* delivering long-term government messages as outlined in the latest Government Communications Plan
* horizon scanning and planning to assess potential coverage in advance
* creating and seeding stories strategically to showcase policy strategy and operational delivery
* highly-responsive reactive handling capability to explain policy and spike inaccuracy before publication
* evaluation of output based on sentiment rather than volume of coverage as the most basic measure of success.
1. Media relations has come a long way since the publication of MCOM. Across GCS, media offices, news teams and media centres are working proactively with

campaigns and digital colleagues, evaluating their work, planning future communications strategically and dealing with reactive issues and events. In doing so, media teams

have remained at the forefront of the GCS profession. Invariably the first port of call for ministers, media teams operate at a frenetic pace under the spotlight of a truly 24/7/365 breaking news cycle, fuelled by the rise of social and digital media consumption.

1. As a body of professional communicators, the GCS uses a range of media to reach audiences with the right mix of communications. We reach people directly through stakeholders, paid-for media or marketing and direct communications to people through digital and social channels. However, the reality is that established media outlets – print, online and broadcast – remain powerful actors in shaping society and how

the public thinks and feels about government policy, and what people do as a result.

1. For example, the BBC’s most recent audience figures suggest that the corporation reaches 96.5% of the UK adult population via TV, radio or online. The most recent data produced by the National Readership Survey showed that 95% of UK adults over 15 regularly consume an established ‘newsbrand’ in either print or digital format.
2. The GCS has collated figures for the reach and consumption of the following types of media:
	* National
	* National media supplements
	* Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)
	* National multi-platform readership
	* Digital: desktop and mobile
	* Regional
	* Nations (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland)
3. The reach of established news platforms is still there, as is the potential impact. The capacity of government departments and agencies to deliver their mandates still depends to a large extent on their reputation in the media, whether national, regional or international. Ministers, chief executives, senior policy makers and

operational colleagues understand this very clearly – which is why they invariably have extremely high expectations of the media relations teams in their departments.

Running an efficient operation in their departments is a key factor in winning and maintaining their confidence. Indeed, a first-class media operation creates the

space and freedom of manoeuvre for other communications disciplines.

1. The increasing use of social and digital channels by departments and ALBs has undoubtedly increased their ability to speak directly to the public through channels

like LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Many departments can now point to hundreds of thousands of followers on their Twitter and Facebook accounts with impressive reach and engagement rates for key announcements and communications campaigns. Social and digital channels are increasingly used in this context to communicate with key journalists and stakeholders as well as the public through initiatives like news and media blogs on GOV.UK and promoted through Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

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**Media consumption**

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| --- |
| National media |
| **Daily press titles\*** | **Circulation** | **TV programmes** | **Audience** | **Radio station** | **Breakfast audience** | **Total reach\*\*\*** |
| The Sun | 1,672,000 | BBC 1: News at Six | 4,600,000 | BBC Radio 2 | 9,742,000 | 15,144,000 |
| Daily Mail | 1,510,000 | BBC 1: News at Ten | 4,400,000 | BBC Radio 4 | 7,384,000 | 11,227,000 |
| Metro | 1,480,000 | ITV: ITV Evening News | 2,700,000 | BBC Radio 1 | 5,433,000 | 9,873,000 |
| London EveningStandard | 899,000 | BBC1: Panorama | 2,300,000 | BBC Radio 5 Live | 2,398,000 | 5,502,000 |
| Daily Mirror | 756,000 | BBC1: The AndrewMarr Show | 1,600,000 | BBC Radio 3 | 751,000 | 1,997,000 |
| Daily Star | 462,000 | BBC2: Horizon | 1,300,000 | % of all who use radio for breakfast news |
| The Daily Telegraph | 457,000 | Channel 4: Dispatches | 850,000 | BBC Radio 4 | 26% |
| The Times | 437,000 | BBC1: Newsnight | 544,000 | BBC Radio 2 | 25% |
| Daily Express | 397,000 | ITV: Peston on Sunday | 170,000 | BBC Radio 1 | 14% |
| i | 279,000 |  |  | Heart FM | 10% |
| Financial Times | 194,000 |  |  | Capital | 8% |
| The Guardian | 157,000 |  |  | Other local commercial | 5% |
| Sunday press titles\* |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sun on Sunday | 1,437,000 |  |  |  |  |
| Sunday Times | 781,000 |  |  |  |  |
| Sunday Mirror | 680,000 |  |  |  |  |

Source: \*Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) – 28.11.16, [www.newsworks.org.uk](http://www.newsworks.org.uk/)

\*\*Gorkana, December 2016 \*\*\*[www.rajar.co.uk](http://www.rajar.co.uk/) – September 2016

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| National media supplements\* |
| **Supplement title** | **Annual readership** | **Supplement title** | **Annual readership** |
| Weekend (Daily Mail on Saturdays) | 3,755,000 | The Times Magazine (The Times on Saturdays) | 975,000 |
| You (The Mail On Sunday) | 2,782,000 | Saturday Review (The Times on Saturdays) | 950,000 |
| Event (The Mail on Sunday) | 2,529,000 | Your Money (Daily Telegraph on Saturdays) | 920,000 |
| Fabulous (The Sun on Sunday) | 2,220,000 | Weekend (The Guardian on Saturdays) | 869,000 |
| The Sunday Times Magazine (The Sunday Times) | 1,578,000 | The Guide (The Guardian on Saturdays) | 803,000 |
| Culture (The Sunday Times) | 1,469,000 | Saturday (Daily Express on Saturdays) | 724,000 |
| Style (The Sunday Times) | 1,256,000 | ES Magazine (London Evening Standard) | 680,000 |
| Telegraph Magazine (Daily Telegraph on Saturdays) | 1,188,000 | Stella (The Sunday Telegraph) | 653,000 |
| Notebook (Sunday Mirror) | 1,164,000 | Observer Food Monthly (The Observer) | 644,000 |
| Business (The Sunday Times) | 1,104,000 | Business (The Sunday Telegraph) | 629,000 |
| Money (The Sunday Times) | 1,082,000 | Money (The Sunday Telegraph) | 618,000 |
|  |  | ‘S’ Magazine (Sunday Express) | 602,000 |
|  |  | The Observer Magazine (The Observer) | 602,000 |
| \*Source: National Readership Survey (NRS), July 2015 - June 2016 |

NB: This product is intended as a guide only, and some media outlets may have been excluded. Please note that data is subject to change

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## National multi-platform readership

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Monthly Print & PC & Mobile\*** | **Monthly\*** |
|  |  | Mobile | Smartphone |
| Daily Mail | 30,631,000 | 19,529,851 | 16,510,272 |
| The Guardian | 27,617,000 | 17,735,673 | 15,131,815 |
| The Daily Telegraph | 26,819,000 | 14,409,112 | 11,858,446 |
| Daily Mirror | 25,127,000 | 18,664,372 | 16,486,771 |
| Metro | 18,621,000 | 9,869,630 | 8,928,990 |
| Daily Express | 14,702,000 | N/A | N/A |
| London EveningStandard | 11,959,000 | 6,105,631 | 5,468,292 |
| Sunday Mirror | 10,548,000 | N/A | N/A |
| Daily Star | 7,182,000 | N/A | N/A |
| Sunday Times | 6,613,000 | N/A | N/A |
| The Times | 5,185,000 | 1,638,146 | 1,276,428 |
| Sun on Sunday | 1,329,700 | N/A | N/A |
| The Sun | N/A | 17,379,449 | 15,393,952 |
| i | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Financial Times | N/A | N/A | N/A |

Source: \*ABC – 28.11.16, [www.newsworks.org.uk](http://www.newsworks.org.uk/)

## Digital: desktop and mobile

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Page views \* (000,000)** | **Desktop\*****(%)** | **Mobile\*****(%)** |
| [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) | 18,626 | 43% | 57% |
| [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com/) | 5,644 | 74% | 26% |
| [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/) | 3,676 | 39% | 61% |
| [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com/) | 2,121 | 54% | 46% |
| [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/) | 1,932 | 57% | 43% |
| [www.wp.pl](http://www.wp.pl/) (Polish) | 1,566 | 41% | 59% |
| [www.onet.pl](http://www.onet.pl/) (Polish) | 1,361 | 43% | 57% |
| [www.skysport.com](http://www.skysport.com/) | 1,320 | 32% | 68% |
| [www.newsnow.co.uk](http://www.newsnow.co.uk/) | 1,293 | 49% | 51% |
| [www.mirror.co.uk](http://www.mirror.co.uk/) | 1,028 | 27% | 73% |
| [www.buzzfeed.com](http://www.buzzfeed.com/) | 955 | 34% | 66% |
| [www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk/) | 735 | 56% | 44% |
| [www.ibtimes.co.uk](http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/) | 491 | 83% | 17% |
| [www.news.yahoo.com](http://www.news.yahoo.com/) | 469 | 75% | 25% |
| [www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com/) | 448 | 69% | 31% |

\*Source: SimilarWeb 2015 data, published February 2016

## BAME media\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pan South Asian media** | **Indian media** | **Bangladeshi media** |
| Broadcast – TV and radio audience | Print title | Circulation | Print title | Circulation |
| Al Jazeera English TV | 1,200,000 | The Asian Express | 250,000 | The Weekly Surma | 15,500 |
| BBC Asian Nerk | 450,000 | Garavi Gujarat | 35,000 | The Bangla Mirror | 15,000 |
| Sunrise Radio Group | 360,000 | Asian Voice | 33,000 | Pakistani media |
| Turkish media | Asian Lite | 31,000 | Print title | Circulation |
| Print title | Circulation | Eastern Eye | 22,000 | Nawa-i-jang | 42,000 |
| Olay Gazette | 30,000 | Broadcast/digital | Audience | Jewish media |
| Londra Gazette | 25,000 | Zee TV | 350,000 | Print title | Circulation |
|  |  | NDTV | 350,000 | Jerusalem Post | 42,000 |
| Muslim media | African/Caribbean media | The Jewish News | 25,402 |
| Print title | Circulation | Print title | Circulation | The Jewish Chronicle | 20,317 |
| The Muslim News | 100,000 | Keep The Faith | 50,000 | Jewish Telegraph | 16,000 |
| The Muslim Weekly | 50,000 | The Voice | 30,000 | Greek media |
| Chinese media | The Trumpet | 25,000 | Print title | Circulation |
| Print title | Circulation | Broadcast – TV and radio audience | Parikiaki | 7,000 |
| China Daily | 800,000 | Capital Extra | 1,100,000 | Arabic media |
| Sing Tao Daily UK | 80,000 | Premier Radio | 200,000 | Broadcast – TV and radio audience |
| Nouvelles d’Europe | 35,000 | Spectrum Radio | 200,000 | Al Jazeera English TV | 1,200,000 |
| The Epoch Times | 30,000 | BEN TV | 150,000 | Print title | Circulation |
| Punjabi media |  | Colourful Radio | 75,000 | Al Hayat | 300,000 |
| Print title | Circulation |  |  |  |  |
| Des Pardes Weekly | 34,000 |  |  |  |  |

\*Source: Gorkana, December 2016 or publication records. For more detail, please contact Nisar Hussain, Cabinet Office Communications Directorate nhussain@no10.x.gsi.gov.uk

1. GCS media teams are generally acknowledged as talented, capable, motivated and high-performing. Yet until now there has been no attempt to set out, in one place, the activities an efficient media relations team should be doing in line with both MCOM and the individual behaviours

**Why have a guide?**

outlined in the GCS Competency Framework.

1. The guidance set out in this document emerges from a review by GCS Heads of News looking at the activities of a range of media relations teams across government to identify these key functions. This is intended as a ‘live document’ which Heads of News will review, maintain and update as the media context continues to change and evolve at an unprecedented rate over the coming years.
2. The operational detail of how these functions are carried out will vary across different departments and ALBs depending on departmental priorities, resources and personal judgment (from ministers, special advisers, Heads of News and Directors of Communication). This guidance, however, sets out the key principles of structure

and practice which are essential to demonstrating the baseline capability of the media relations function.

1. There is no mandated one-size-fits-all structure. Each organisation has team structures which are designed to meet their own needs. The key is to ensure that, whatever the organisation’s chart may look like, there is an emphasis on the

**Structure**

inter-connectedness required to:

* + enable effective media relations work
	+ ensure appropriate integration with other communications functions
	+ position the function for strong relationship management with key stakeholders
	+ develop and nurture talent through effective and clear leadership.
1. In carrying out these functions, and across all aspects of their work, GCS members (central government departments, agencies and ALBs) must follow the Civil Service Code which sets out the Civil Service values of:

**Propriety and conduct**

* + Integrity – putting the obligations of public service above personal interests
	+ Honesty – being truthful and open
	+ Objectivity – basing advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence
	+ Impartiality – serving governments of different political parties equally well.
1. GCS members will also work at all times within the framework of propriety set

for government communications which mandates that government communication must be:

* relevant to government responsibilities
* objective and explanatory
* undertaken in an economic and appropriate way
* must not be (or liable to be construed as) party political.

The framework also mandates that GCS members may not:

* justify or defend policies in political terms
* advance any policy as belonging to a particular party
* directly attack the policies and opinions of opposition parties and groups
* oversell policies, re-announce achievements or investments, or otherwise mislead the public.
1. Further reading and details are included in the ‘Codes of conduct’ section of the [GCS Member Handbook](https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/6.3172_CO_SB_GCS-Handbook_v8-proofed_web.pdf).
2. Listed below are the 5 core functional aspects for which, across a media relations team, practitioners are required to operate with confidence and appropriate expertise.

**Core functional requirements –**

the 5 aspects

1. Directors/Heads of Communication, in consultation with the Head of News, should seek to ensure that their media relations teams have the requisite capability in these aspects in order to deliver effective day-

to-day operations. They should also plan

and enable the necessary professional development action to ensure that capability is optimised across the team, and that the team is equipped to cope resiliently when individuals leave and new colleagues join.

1. For each of the 5 aspects, the following tables itemise the key specific requirements for optimal and best practice.

**Proactive media handling**

Making announcements I Nations and regions I Consumer media I BAME I International

**Reactive media handling**

Media monitoring I Call handling/rebuttal I Crisis communications

**Relationship management**

Policy shaping and corporate I Integration with other comms I Ministerial and special adviser engagement I Winning and retaining journalists’ trust

**Digital/content creation**

Digital I Content creation

**Insight and evaluation**

Insight I Evaluation


# Proactive media handling

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| **(a) Making announcements** |
| i. Place stories in a strategic way to achieve coverage, aligned to departmental business objectives and ministerial priorities |
| ii. Ensure work aligns and integrates with strategic communications priorities and narratives and, where possible, campaigns work |
| iii. Media announcements should support long-term government messages as included in the latest Government Communications Plan |
| iv. Use tools like OASIS (Objectives, Audience Insight, Strategy/idea, Implementation, Scoring/evaluation) to plan and properly target proactive work |
| v. Produce high-quality handling plans that include press notices, potential risks, core scripts/ briefing and Q&A |
| vi. Consider the use of comment pieces, op eds, blogs and shareable social media content |
| vii. Engage early with broadcast planning desks and correspondents to discuss how your announcement can work on TV |
| viii. Work with broadcasters to identify filming opportunities, locations and backdrops which are authentic and illustrate your announcement |
| ix. Speak regularly to key correspondents and build knowledge on their areas of expertise and interest |
| x. Make sure agreed press notices and media products are adopted as core narratives to inform the work of other communications teams where appropriate |
| xi. Work with stakeholders through communications or policy colleagues to build third party advocacy and support (in print, online, on broadcast) for announcements |
| xii. Consider the use of trailing and embargoes to maximise impact and coverage and/or to de-conflict with other expected news |

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| **(b) Nations and regions** |
| i. Find regional and devolved nations angles for UK-wide announcements |
| ii. Adapt stories to the area, recognising the different political situations and what powers are devolved. Ensure people know that a release is from the UK government |
| iii. Set up media rounds for ministerial visits that include broadcast and key print for area visited |
| iv. Adapt stories for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, acknowledging the difference between national and regional media – know when to use terms like region, country and nation |
| v. Understand the BBC’s General News Service (GNS) regional service and use where it applies |
| vi. Be aware that broadcast media is increasingly tailored to specific regional and national audiences, including new and bespoke news programmes for Scotland and other areas of the UK |
| **(c) Consumer media** |
| i. Use non-news media, including broadcast, to showcase and explain government policies –e.g. documentary film-makers, TV magazine programmes |
| ii. Work closely with campaigns specialists to support priorities through consumer and specialist and trade channels |
| iii. Plan long-term consumer campaigns that will stand up against the rigours of an ever- changing news agenda and central government priorities |
| **(d) Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)** |
| i. Identify ways to reach black, Asian and minority ethnic audiences for national policy announcements |
| ii. Provide explanation of all aspects of policy – lines to take and briefing for contentious and difficult issues |
| iii. Maintain a database of key titles for communities across the UK and feed into centrally- held lists of publications |
| iv. Regular discussions with BAME media contacts and titles to build an understanding of how best to reach specific audiences through the correct channels |

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| **(e) International** |
| i. Understand the international role of the UK government, specifically in security, prosperity and development and how this relates to domestic policies (e.g. exports, jobs) |
| ii. Assess, advise and include in-country media when ministers travel overseas |
| iii. Maintain an up-to-date database of key international media contacts |
| iv. Arrange ministerial and senior official briefings for international media |
| v. Engage London-based international media and build relationships with key correspondents– invite media to briefings and send them press notices |
| vi. Use social media channels to target BAME audiences with tailored messages |
| vii. Engage with the FCO and other international departments for advice on international announcements |

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# Reactive media handling

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| **(a) Media monitoring** |
| i. Provide 24/7 real time monitoring of relevant coverage – news as a priority, but specialist channels as resources allow |
| ii. Evaluate news coverage to understand and pre-empt the direction of stories – evaluation should be turned into insight and learning over time and shared across teams |
| iii. Identify and flag important individual coverage including comment from stakeholders and parliamentarians |
| iv. Develop a real-time monitoring system that is focused and concise, ensuring that ministers, special advisers, senior officials and departments hear about relevant ‘breaking news’ swiftly – ideally from the in-house communications team first |
| v. Add professional expertise to coverage summaries by forecasting upcoming stories |
| vi. Monitor parliamentary business (Prime Minister’s Questions, Urgent Questions, Oral Questions, select committees and hearings) |

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| **(b) Call handling/rebuttal** |
| i. Anticipate possible criticism and risk and prepare responses beforehand |
| ii. Deal with journalists confidently and helpfully – judge how stories will be presented and their prominence (Is it a front page story or a page lead? Is it a bulletin item or leading the news?) |
| iii. Engage with journalists verbally to shape and contextualise stories and prevent and/or correct inaccurate coverage |
| iv. Work at pace with policy teams to get relevant information to draft effective responses in the context of wider departmental and government priorities |
| v. Use digital and other channels for rebuttal (media blog, social media etc.) |
| vi. Give ministers and special advisers the confidence that the department is rebutting negative media through regular updates, including out of hours |

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|  | **(c) Crisis communications** |  |
|  | i. Establish the facts as quickly as possible and identify contact points for key areas (policy/ operational lead, ministerial liaison, communications lead etc.) |  |
|  | ii. Initiate immediate and close media monitoring, including social media and digital online |  |
|  | iii. Produce initial ‘holding statements’ and key Q&As to clarify facts |  |
|  | iv. Engage and share responses with No.10 and other departments as appropriate |  |
|  | v. Consider the rebuttal of inaccurate commentary and proactively issuing agreed statements |  |
|  | vi. Produce handling and contingency plans for potential crises, covering likely scenarios, responses, possible triggers for media bids, stakeholder engagement and cross- government conference calls when appropriate |  |
|  | vii. Prepare content when possible and appropriate before crises in line with risk and likelihood |  |
|  | viii. Work with other communications colleagues to address potential longer-term and reputation-recovery campaigns |  |

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# Relationship management

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| **(a) Policy shaping and corporate** |
| i. Build productive working relationships with policy and service delivery teams to understand their priorities, structures and policies |
| ii. Get involved in policy and service development from an early stage – not just in the few days before an announcement – to ensure communications objectives align to policy objectives |
| iii. Build the authority to engage with internal and external stakeholders on how the media might react to a policy announcement or proposal – and how to best communicate policy |
| iv. Use knowledge of ministerial priorities to aid policy development |
| v. Observe the principles laid down for best practice in co-operation between No.10 and departments; share responses with No.10 promptly before Lobby; make sure regular and routine meetings with No.10 colleagues take place |
| vi. Act as an advocate for the department in dealings with ministers, explaining the overall communication goals and advising on a course of action. |
| **(b) Integration with other communications** |
| i. Work in partnership with communications colleagues from all disciplines to ensure consistent, creative, strategic external communications across channels and audiences |
| ii. Media activity should support long term campaigns not just short term emerging issues |

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| **(c) Ministerial and special adviser engagement** |
| i. Build strong relationships with private office to build trust and ensure access to decision makers |
| ii. Maintain productive relationships with ministers through regular engagement and informed advice |
| iii. Identify ministerial priorities and use them to shape media output and policy development |
| iv. Build productive working relationships with special advisers, including acting as advocates for the department |
| v. Provide media training and coaching to ministers and senior officials to improve the presentation of policy |
| vi. Understand ministerial requirements and provide regular media briefings to ministers and special advisers |
| vii. Accompany ministers to media interviews and regional visits |

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| **(d) Winning and retaining journalists’ trust** |
| i. Adhere at all times to the Civil Service Code |
| ii. Build professional relationships with journalists based on honesty, authority and credibility |
| iii. Identify the most influential journalists on particular topics and maintain ongoing relationships |
| iv. Stay up to date on media trends and understand the approach and style of different journalists |

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# Digital/content creation

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| **(a) Digital** |
| i. Be digital by default, using the advice provided by the GCS and Government Digital Service to use online tools to reach specific audiences, engage with people and assess the impact of your work |
| ii. Embed digital channels in all media handling |
| iii. Build your knowledge of the differences between channels and create content according to what works for the platform and its audience |
| iv. Use online communication tools to maximise all campaign, event and media work |
| v. Work with internal or external digital communications specialists to consider digital from the outset of campaign planning |
| vi. Use digital and social media channels for both proactive announcements and reactive media handling |
| vii. Have a set process for digital use in crisis communications that is practised and understood |
| viii. Use digital evaluation to inform and improve digital activity |
| ix. Use digital channels for rebuttal and immediate reaction |
| x. Use audience-led research to inform digital planning |
| xi. Define successful practice and use this as a benchmark for quality |
| xii. Use insights gained from the GCS Digital Maturity Model survey to fills skills gaps and boost capability, competence and confidence where it is needed |
| xiii. Manage or advise on social media accounts for ministers and senior staff |
| xiv. Identify and work with key influencers on social media |
| xv. Collaborate across other government departments to amplify digital messaging |
| xvi. Share lessons learned and best practice with colleagues across GCS |

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|  | **(b) Content creation** |  |
|  | i. Build a culture of experimentation and continuous improvement to ensure content remains engaging and fresh |  |
|  | ii. Encourage access to all communicators so they can produce or effectively commission products such as video and images for social media e.g. infographics |  |
|  | iii. Produce high quality content in-house for use by media outlets, or commission DESIGN102 or external agencies to deliver this content |  |
|  | iv. Repurpose content for different digital channels and audiences to ensure it is as effective as possible, based on detailed research |  |
|  | v. Have the capability in place to ensure content can be produced quickly during a fast- moving news event |  |
|  | vi. Plan and produce (or commission) relevant, engaging and shareable content appropriate to channels and government messaging |  |
|  | vii. Provide practical services including filming, editing and producing new content, or brief DESIGN102 or external agencies to deliver this work |  |
|  | viii. Provide staff with content production software and hardware where appropriate and cost effective |  |
|  | ix. Follow GCS guidance on accessibility |  |
|  | x. Monitor emerging trends to research and utilise emerging channels |  |
|  | xi. Build strong relationships with digital and picture desks in news organisations |  |
|  | xii. Understand data protection, consent, copyright and intellectual property law around featuring case studies and use of third party content |  |

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# Insight and evaluation

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| **(a) Insight** |
| i. Use insight to identify and secure different audiences |
| ii. Use audience measurement tools such as National Readership Survey (NRS), the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), the Broadcasters’ Audience Research Board (BARB) and comScore across print, broadcast and digital and at national and regional levels |
| iii. Consider how audience characteristics such as age, gender, social class and education level inform media consumption habits to better target your work |
| **(b) Evaluation** |
| i. Identify clear and SMART communications objectives around outputs, outtakes and outcomes, including deciding ‘success’ measurements and how data will be collected |
| ii. Use a dashboard (or similar tool) to monitor and record activity as it is delivered in line with the GCS Evaluation Framework |
| iii. Identify ‘lessons learnt’ from each media project and sharing learning with the rest of the team |
| iv. Produce an evaluation pack which highlights reach/coverage, assesses content (positive, negative, neutral) and identifies message penetration |
| v. Find innovative ways to evaluate rebuttal, briefing and story shaping |
| vi. Track sentiment over longer periods to identify shifts in the tone of coverage and provide early warning of emerging issues and trends |
| vii. Identify media outlets which don’t carry ministerial lines or run stories without checking properly and work with them to improve relationships |
| viii. Integrate different media – print, digital, broadcast – into evaluation to provide a comprehensive picture |

1. Below are a number of case studies illustrating current strong organisational practice across a range of themes. These resonate with the key specific requirements outlined above as per the 5 core aspects.

**Case studies**

1. As well as providing a useful resource for media teams across GCS, these case studies should inform exchanges and secondments between departments to ensure best practice is recognised and shared. Teams should always be proactive in sharing best practice and contacting teams in other departments to seek advice and support.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Theme** | **Department** |
| 1 | [Audience reach](#_bookmark0) | Department of Health |
| 2 | [Role of Head of News/Deputy Head of News](#_bookmark1) | Home Office |
| 3 | [Proactive media relations](#_bookmark2) | Ministry of Justice Department of Health |
| 4 | [Consumer media](#_bookmark3) | Department for Education |
| 5 | [Explaining policy on TV](#_bookmark4) | Department for International DevelopmentBEIS |
| 6 | [Rebuttal](#_bookmark5) | Department for Education |
| 7 | [Crisis communications](#_bookmark6) | Department of Health Department for TransportForeign and Commonwealth Office |
| 8 | [Media evaluation](#_bookmark7) | DCMS |
| 9 | [Exporting GCS excellence overseas](#_bookmark8) | GCS |
| 10 | [Regional engagement](#_bookmark9) | Department for Work and Pensions |

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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Theme** | **Department** |
| 11 | [BAME](#_bookmark10) | Cabinet Office |
| 12 | [Digital media](#_bookmark11) | Ministry of Defence Department for Transport National Cyber Security Centre Wales Office |
| 13 | [Digital rebuttal](#_bookmark12) | Ministry of Defence |
| 14 | [Working with non-news media](#_bookmark13) | HMRC |
| 15 | [Working with UK government in devolved nations](#_bookmark14) | Ministry of Defence Cabinet Office/No.10 Scotland Office |

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**Case study 1 –** Audience reach

### Department of Health

The government’s ambition is to make the NHS one of the safest places in the world to give birth, with a focus on halving the rate of stillbirth, neonatal death and brain injury and maternal death and injury by 2030.

Women under 20 and women from BAME groups are nearly twice as at risk of stillbirth, neonatal death or injury than others, in many cases because of poor lifestyle choices or a failure to get medical attention when experiencing unusual symptoms. The Department of Health commissioned a 12- week campaign – Our Chance – run by 2 childbirth charities, Best Beginnings and Sands, to highlight lifestyle changes women in high-risk groups can make to improve their likelihood of a safe pregnancy and encourage more to attend antenatal appointments.

Based on market research conducted with our target audience, the campaign centred on powerful, first-hand experiences of real mums to maximise social media engagement and ensure the content connected with the realities many young mothers experienced. To reach the under-20 audience, the team used existing social media channels run by Best Beginnings and Sands and collaborated with professional bodies to ensure these messages were amplified to NHS staff.

A series of 25 short films were developed, supplemented by community events, targeted content shared through a ‘Baby Buddy’ app, celebrity endorsement from Abbey Clancy and tailored content for Facebook and Twitter. The campaign is reaching our target audiences: the videos have achieved over 10,000 views via YouTube, the Our Chance website and the Baby Buddy app, as well as an average of 220 Facebook engagements every week. The team also delivered 7 community events with young mums and pregnant women and 3 staff engagement events. 20 stakeholders have posted or shared campaign content and over 50 pieces of traditional media coverage have been achieved including launch.

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**Case study 2 –** Role of Head of News/ Deputy Head of News

### Home Office

In the Home Office, the Head of News is an experienced former journalist with wide personal contacts across the media, while the Deputy Head of News has a strong track record in police and government communications. While media officers at every grade are encouraged to build confident relationships with journalists, ministers and advisers, leadership in this important area is shared by both the Head of News and the Deputy Head of News, providing direct advice and guidance on critical issues but also supporting the rest of the team across the whole range of communications activity.

For the partnership to work, it’s important that the Head of News doesn’t monopolise all the interesting and prestigious work and that the Deputy is prepared to step up and take on additional responsibilities. So while the Head of News will typically look after the Home Secretary’s media engagements, other important projects and events are regularly led by the Deputy, freeing up the Head of News to focus on wider strategic planning and liaison with other government departments.

Line management of the senior team is with the Deputy, but both share the work of motivating and leading a large office, encouraging a transparent and open structure that rewards initiative.

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**Case study 3 –** Proactive media relations

### Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) external communications team used the introduction of the Prisons and Courts Bill to showcase departmental strategy and key policy objectives. Working closely with the Secretary of State, the lead chief media officer drafted an overarching narrative and key messages drawing heavily from strategic themes and announcements endorsed by ministers.

The media office worked closely with the digital team to brainstorm and implement creative ideas around how to use social channels to highlight the Bill’s key measures, at all times linking back to key policy objectives. The team created a visual brand for the Bill, an enduring ‘hub’ page on Gov.uk and trackable hashtags #CourtReform and #PrisonReform covering 2 of MoJ’s key strategic objectives.

By taking an integrated approach, media office and digital teams – working with policy leads – created highly targeted digital communications to complement wider media activity across broadcast and print. This included using a traditional media facility to produce in-house images and footage for use on MoJ’s digital channels and innovative products like a virtual tour of a courtroom.

Results included widespread national broadcast and print coverage and across social and digital channels – close to 300,000 impressions which was one of MoJ’s highest levels of social reach over the last year.

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### Department of Health

Driven by the Chief Medical Officer, the government has been at the forefront of global efforts to communicate the threat posed by antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and to encourage more responsible use of antibiotics in health and agriculture.

The challenge was to ensure the broadest audience – from consumers to policy advisers around the world – understood the potential scale of the threat posed by AMR and recognised their own individual role in stopping it.

Drawing on evidence from partner organisations, the Department of Health team also worked on changing the language around AMR, recognising that many people were confused by the term antibiotic resistance, and instead talking about ‘drug resistant infections’.

The team dramatised the potential impact by describing what would happen if first-line antibiotics started to fail, using influential voices, including the Prime Minister, to illustrate a scenario of medicine being ‘cast back to the dark ages’ as common clinical procedures became impossible.

The Department of Health also used a range of PR and digital content to engage the public and GPs on the scale of the issue, and what they should do in response.

This is an ongoing programme of work, with a major behaviour change campaign planned this year. However, already the engagement activity has had an impact.

The challenge of AMR is now firmly established as a WHO priority, and last September, following successive lobbying by our CMO and others, all 193 United Nations countries signed a declaration committing to action.

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**Case study 4 –** Consumer media

### Department for Education

When the Department for Education (DfE) media office took on the equalities brief as part of Machinery of Government changes, it took on a responsibility to explain what the gender pay gap is and to raise awareness of gender pay reporting requirements and their benefits to women.

The team identified external dates that could be used as hooks to promote proactive messaging far enough in advance to work for the long-lead times of consumer print outlets. An example was ‘Equal Pay Day’, a day owned by one of DfE’s key stakeholders around which the media office targeted long-lead consumer outlets using explainer graphics originally developed for social media that could feature in print and online. Short myth-busters and factsheets on the gender pay gap were also prepared to ensure accurate reporting alongside extended ministerial quotes that consumer outlets could run as Q&A-style interviews.

As a result, positive and accurate coverage was achieved in Stylist, Grazia, the Huffington Post and the Debrief, with all articles containing at least 3 key messages which promoting reporting requirements that help to deliver policy.

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**Case study 5 –** Explaining policy on TV

### Department for International Development

The Department for International Development (DFID) wanted to bring its economic development strategy to life and show people what it was all about, rather than just tell them. A striking broadcast opportunity and a persuasive digital moment were essential. So the media office took ITV News to Ethiopia to meet people working and businesses booming, thanks to UK aid. The team collected insight to show ITV News would help reach key audiences (people open to the idea of aid, but not

yet convinced by it) and that the journalist in question would be seen as a credible, independent voice. DFID also had research to show the message about aid helping the world’s poorest while serving Britain’s interest would resonate. To provide a credible expert voice, the media office persuaded DFID’s charismatic chief economist – an expert in explaining complex global economics in strikingly simple ways – to record a podcast which was listened to by more than 1,000 people in the first

24 hours.

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### Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Every few months the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) National Minimum Wage policy team publishes a list of employers who have underpaid their staff. One recent round had a well-known retailer as the top offender, which made the announcement very newsworthy

– and an opportunity for the department’s Media and Campaigns (M&C) team to reinforce the government’s commitment to creating an economy that works for everyone.

The story was a key element of the PR strategy in support of a new BEIS £1.75 million advertising campaign to increase awareness of planned increases in the National Living Wage (NLW) and National Minimum Wage (NMW). The campaign’s website – [www.gov.uk/checkyourpay](http://www.gov.uk/checkyourpay) – was launched as an asset for the PR push.

Because of early campaign research which identified the key demographics of people on low pay, the M&C team needed an appropriate consumer outlet to reach this audience. The team identified the BBC’s One Show (audience approx. 5 million) and worked exclusively with the programme’s editorial team to secure an 8-minute package on the minimum wage which included a ministerial interview for broadcast.

The team also developed a breakdown of the employer data – meaning it was able to deliver around a dozen regional news releases as well as releases targeting the devolved administrations to secure follow-up coverage across the board. Engaging stakeholders early on – including the TUC and other workers’ groups, ensured a positive reaction to the announcement.

The messages in the story were reinforced across social media collateral, which also contained all the campaign’s visual identifiers – colour scheme, lock-up, call to action – and pushed the key advertising message to ‘check your pay’. In addition, part of the campaign budget was used to fund promoted Tweets for the duration of the One Show, to encourage people to visit the campaign website.

The combination of PR, in-house social media and promoted Twitter tweets generated more than 5,000 visits to the campaign website. In addition, the media team generated more than 100 pieces of coverage with a real focus on publications read by people on low-pay – for instance BAME and

regional publications. Our focus on broadcast led to a large amount of syndicated broadcast coverage.

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**Case study 6 –** Rebuttal

### Department for Education

The Department for Education media office took quick and effective action in the face of widespread incorrect reporting around a national consultation on school funding. While national reporting was broadly balanced, many regional news outlets had written up information provided by critical stakeholders while only around a third had approached the department for comment.

Recognising that balanced and accurate regional reporting was key to the proposed reforms,

the media office surged a team of 2 information officers from across the media team to work on a rebuttal project. The team worked closely with policy colleagues to pull together the facts for each affected region and prepared other rebuttal products including scripts for in-depth verbal briefing, accurate regional figures and tailored ministerial statements and/or letters for publication.

Using a digital monitoring tool, which provides real-time alerts to online coverage, the media office focused communications where it would make a difference. At the time of writing, more than 50 regional titles have been approached with copy amended or updated and a number of corrections having been published. In some cases online copy has been removed altogether. As part of the process the media office has identified a number of supportive voices including some third-party advocates.

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**Case study 7 –** Crisis communications

### Department of Health

Ebola was the defining global health story of 2015, and it required a fast and nimble response across government to maintain public confidence in the UK’s response.

When it was established on a Bank Holiday weekend that a volunteer nurse had contracted the virus in Sierra Leone and would be flown in to the UK for treatment by the RAF, the Department of Health immediately convened an integrated team of communications leads from the NHS, Public Health England, Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Defence to co-ordinate the response.

With news of the nurse’s arrival likely to emerge within hours, the team recognised that a key risk in the early stages was poor co-ordination across the different organisations leading to mixed messages and an alarmist response across mainstream and social media, in turn creating confusion and panic among the general public.

It was therefore essential that the government set the agenda and spoke with one voice. By agreeing shared messages, and carefully co-ordinating statements from the Health Secretary, the Chief Medical Officer and the NHS hospital treating the patient, we ensured early coverage of the UK’s first Ebola case was measured in tone and carried consistent government messages.

This then provided the foundations for a long term, carefully planned communications programme to explain how the government was responding to the crisis and reassure the public of the extremely low risk of Ebola spreading across the general population.

As a result, while countries like the US and Spain suffered reputational damage as a result of their handling of the crisis, the UK government and the NHS maintained a high level of public confidence throughout the response.

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### Department for Transport

The Department for Transport (DfT) is one of the very few Whitehall departments to have a designated crisis communications manager, leading on preparedness, contingency planning and reactive handling for major incidents.

The role serves as a linchpin during an incident or imminent crisis which can involve multiple individual organisations, each with their own approach to managing any incident.

The role not only provides a focal point for DfT but drives co-operation, co-ordination and consistency of communications across other Whitehall departments and delivery organisations DfT deals with on a day-to-day basis, including rail companies, airlines, airports and maritime companies.

This was most evident during a recent potential crisis that had international consequences and required major contingency planning involving eight government departments plus a number of domestic and international external organisations. The role is relevant and crucial in a wide range of other scenarios, including transport security, industrial action, disease control measures for transport, responding to international events that could have an impact on the UK, cross-Channel ferry dispute, severe weather events and winter resilience.

The role of crisis communications manager coordinates the media office with external relations, incident management and also has responsibility for continuous business improvement in crisis handling. It helps ensure the department, and wider government and industry, is well prepared to respond to the situation should it have come to pass.

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### Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The ability to deliver clear and effective messages is rarely tested more than during international crises when the need to reassure and inform British people at home and abroad is critical.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Media Office has extensive crisis communication expertise, tested in recent years by earthquakes in Nepal and Japan, hooligan violence at Euro 2016 in France, and tragic terror attacks in Tunisia, Paris, Istanbul, Nice and Berlin.

But meeting the crisis challenge is not only about saying the right things and saying them quickly; it is overwhelmingly about preparing an organisation to react well when the unexpected happens.

That is why much of the FCO Media Office’s crisis work takes place when the state-of-the-art FCO Crisis Centre and the Government’s COBR facilities sit empty and silent.

FCO media officers take part in specialist training to enable them both to lead crisis response in London and to deploy at short notice to provide media support in the field anywhere in the world, including in hostile environments. Fieldwork often involves helping UK journalists get to the scene of the story and to understand unfolding events in order to report them to audiences back home.

Crucially, FCO media officers run and participate in ‘as live’ crisis exercises with our overseas posts, spreading knowledge, skills and confidence around Britain’s diplomatic network. They also train UK ambassadors who may need to act as UK spokespeople on the ground as well as the consular staff who will be deployed when crises hit.

So while it may be impossible to plan for every conceivable eventuality it doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try.

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**Case study 8 –** Media evaluation

### Department for Culture, Media and Sport

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) First World War centenary activity demonstrates the impact of an integrated, strategic campaign approach. While the First World War commemorations were always likely to attract widespread national attention, our aim was to ensure that key government messaging around understanding, recognition and remembrance were central to media coverage and the tone of our social media campaign.

The campaign’s target audiences include young people – which met our objective by creating a lasting legacy for younger generations and local communities, including BAME groups. Insights show that creative content providing emotional resonance through human stories is key. This shaped the team’s approach in planning for major events including the Battle of the Somme centenary, and evaluation highlights the positive outcomes achieved for government communications.

Press and broadcast coverage of the Somme event reached 80% of UK adults, 60% of BAME communities and over half of 16 to 19 year olds, with over 90% of coverage carrying government messages. In the lead up to the event, the strength of messaging and reach was demonstrated with a proactive media push and digital campaign driving the take-up of the DCMS-run public ballot for attendance at the Thiepval ceremony to 18,000 applications – treble the initial 6,000 target.

DCMS evaluation for this ongoing campaign – co-ordinated with MOD and other organisations –was conducted in accordance with the GCS Evaluation Framework, and was recognised with a Silver Award at the 2016 AMEC awards for bringing together a host of evaluation metrics across press, broadcast and social media.

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**Case study 9 –** Exporting GCS excellence overseas

### GCS

Following a scoping visit, a team of GCS communications professionals across 3 departments spent 3 weeks in Amman, Jordan in early 2017 supporting and sharing best practice with communications professionals in the Royal Hashemite Court (RHC), the Prime Ministry and ministries across the Jordanian government.

During the secondment, the team worked with 28 ministries to develop, agree and implement a weekly communications grid, which was divided into agreed key themes, and is now being run by the Jordanian prime minister’s communications team. They ran workshops with civil servants from all ministries on how to operate an effective grid and why it is a vital tool in establishing political clarity and consistency.

The team also carried out a capability review of the Jordanian prime minister’s communications team, reviewing the structure and capability of the team and examining the flow of information between the Prime Ministry, other ministries, agencies and news outlets, including social media channels. In the final week, a representative from the Department for Work and Pensions joined the team to work on digital capability and training.

In the next stage, key communications professionals from the Jordan government will visit the UK to see best practice in media office, campaigns and evaluation. A GCS team will then return to Amman to ensure the grid is fully embedded, support work on an overall communications strategy and show how campaigns can support government priorities.

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**Case study 10 –** Regional engagement

### Department for Work and Pensions

Each month, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) responds on behalf of the government to the ONS’s labour market statistics. The objective of our reactive and proactive media activity

is to contextualise the figures, rebut inaccurate or misleading interpretation and reinforce key government messages around increasing employment opportunities and creating an economy which works for everyone.

At a national level, the DWP response includes a full interview round with the Secretary of State or Minister for Employment and a range of digital activity including infographics demonstrating both the latest figures and longer-term trends.

To amplify these messages and reach a much wider range of channels than could be achieved by ministers alone, DWP has trained a growing network of more than 100 Jobcentre Plus managers to engage with local and regional media. These individuals are particularly effective advocates as they come from and understand their communities and can talk about the specific impact on the ground in local Jobcentres. They are also able to echo any secondary messages relevant to the month in question

– a recent example being efforts to promote a money advice service for Universal Credit claimants.

Since the DWP began this approach in June 2014, we have achieved an average of 400 local media interviews a month, and in our best ever month to date, November 2016, over 500 separate local media interviews were conducted. This approach allows us to reach a wider audience than we can through the traditional ministerial regional media round, with the additional benefit of providing more relevant messages to people, from more trusted local spokespeople.

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**Case study 11 –** BAME

### Cabinet Office

As part of the drive to improve the awareness of the honours nomination process among individuals from different BAME communities, the Cabinet Office hosted a number of networking events for recipients to share their stories and experiences with targeted BAME media.

The New Year Honours 2017 were the most diverse ever, with 9.3% of the successful candidates coming from a BAME background – up from 6.1% at the New Year Honours 2015.

More needs to be done to ensure recipients reflect the diversity of the UK population which is why the Cabinet Office hosted the first ‘meet the media’ event in February 2017, focusing on the British Indian community – including 6 honours recipients, 5 media outlets, and honours officials in attendance.

The event proved to be useful for developing relationships with the media and putting forward BAME case studies. BBC Asian Network had a positive package, and we had high levels of engagement on social media with activity and reach well above average for Cabinet Office channels.

The Cabinet Office now provides BAME information in the honours press pack, including supporting facts and case studies, as standard.

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**Case study 12 –** Digital media

### Ministry of Defence

In January 2017 Russian ships were escorted by Royal Air Force Typhoons and a Royal Navy Warship as they passed through the North Sea. As planned, pictures and video were captured by the military personnel and thanks to the speed of the teams involved this was distributed from fast jet to the MoD Media Team within a few hours. This was widely reported in the press, all using MoD photos and video. A quote from the Defence Secretary was also included. The image ran on the front page of The Times, including strong national security messaging.

Simultaneously, the video and images were shared on digital channels, including [MoD social media channels.](https://www.facebook.com/ukarmedforces/posts/10154972372409393)

The video (screen shot below) shows the Royal Navy shadowing the Russian ships and also carries positive messaging from military personnel. The content was some of the most popular posted

on MoD channels, especially on Instagram where the department has the largest audience in Whitehall. Thanks to effective insight and evaluation, the team knew the audience engagement was overwhelmingly positive and echoed MoD communications priorities.

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### Department for Transport

An announcement around tougher penalties for those caught driving while using a handheld mobile phone used innovative platforms to widespread success.

The THINK! campaign team worked with media office and digital teams and a creative agency to generate a mix of advertising assets and bespoke content to educate the public on the new legislation.

The first Tweet was the single most successful piece of DfT content in terms of organic reach. It reached more than one million people and achieved over 10,000 engagements. As a result, DfT was highlighted as a Twitter moment and the campaign hashtag #BePhoneSmart trended.

A case study film about the fatal consequences of using your phone behind the wheel reached over 667,000 people on social media, received 163,000 views and was embedded on news websites.

The communications team created a suite of educational assets for social media to clarify areas of the legislation such as whether using a phone as a sat nav or hands free is ok.

DfT also worked with UNILAD, the leading online media platform, to develop a quiz to help educate our younger audience. More than 30,000 people engaged in the first week alone. The team also developed a social media toolkit for police forces to help amplify the police enforcement week.

Greater Manchester Police put out a message about legislation, tying it in to football. The post received over 4,700 retweets and was picked up by SportsBible which has 1.2 million followers. Mumsnet and Netmums were also engaged, while Sky News posted on Snapchat which reaches around 1.5 million people.

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### National Cyber Security Centre

An agile and integrated digital communications strategy for the opening of the government’s new National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) by HM The Queen was a vital to the success of the overall communications strategy aimed at establishing the NCSC as the UK’s authoritative voice on cyber security. The objective was to engage with and respond to multiple audiences through creative digital content. A NCSC blog about passwords kicked off proceedings. A series of Tweets and engagement with responders saw the blog go viral in advance of Sunday newspaper coverage that focused on the importance of cyber security. Articles were Tweeted, images uploaded and infographics published to deliver the desired impact. The multimedia content featured on NCSC channels on the day of

the official opening complemented traditional media activity. Live Tweeting the CEO’s comments during the morning round of broadcast interviews was supported with imagery taken during the engagements. While the presence of HM The Queen guaranteed broadcast coverage, the timetabled digital activity drove traffic to the NCSC channels. This was enhanced with the help of our public

and private sector stakeholders who used the pre-agreed NCSC hashtags. The result was a day of positive coverage that delivered our messages to multiple audiences.

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### Wales Office

#WalesWeek / #WythnosCymru was a Wales Office campaign to show how the UK government is relevant to people in Wales and to promote Wales to the world. A strong example of a cross-

government campaign with a particular emphasis on digital channels, it had no budget and used the week leading up to and including St David’s Day as a platform to promote and celebrate Wales and the work of the UK government in Wales.

Working with a range of partners including the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the communications team at the Wales Office used digital engagement to drive forward traditional media facilities including a reception at No.10 on St David’s Day itself on March 1.

By creating and sharing high quality and engaging content between departments, like messages from servicemen and women posted overseas, the Wales Office achieved impressive results including a million combined Twitter and Facebook impressions alongside more than 100,000 video views across Wales Office, MOD and FCO channels. This activity complemented traditional media coverage including on BBC and ITV Wales.

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**Case study 13 –** Digital rebuttal

### Ministry of Defence

The day before the Defence Secretary’s high-profile NATO Defence Ministerial Meeting, the International Institute for Strategic Studies published a report claiming the UK failed to spend 2% of GDP on defence in 2016. This was contrary to the UK’s much-publicised commitment and claim to be one of 5 NATO countries meeting the target: a key element of the Global Britain message. This threatened to undermine the UK’s position at NATO where the Defence Secretary would meet the US Secretary of State and Defense for the first time, and join him in urging allies to raise defence spending and meet the 2% target.

Social media monitoring detected the 2% claim as soon as it was made in the IISS press conference. MOD ensured its position was reflected in initial reporting by rapidly distributing a clear and robust rebuttal through our digital channels and directly to journalists. This was made possible by clear contingency planning with officials prior to the report’s publication and a rapid clearance process.

Within an hour of the story breaking the MOD statement appeared in our daily Defence Media Blog, which appears online and is sent to defence correspondents, social media audiences, and

government colleagues. The blog is published and distributed every day across MOD digital channels and carries statements and rebuttals in response to that day’s defence stories.

By ensuring the MOD position was carried immediately across all channels, we ensured the Defence Secretary was in a strong position to call for increased spending alongside our US allies and advance the Global Britain message. This was bolstered by NATO tweeting to officially confirm the UK’s 2% spend, which we retweeted and sent directly to key correspondents. This effectively countered domestic political and defence reporting and shifted emphasis to the IISS to justify their claim. Video content produced in house was published throughout the day explaining the UK’s role in NATO to strengthen the rebuttal. The UK in NATO video performed well above the MOD quarterly average across all channels (+405% Twitter reach) and was shared by NATO to further boost messaging.

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**Case study 14 –** Working with non-news media

### HM Revenue and Customs

Producers of Britain on the Fiddle – a BBC2 programme – contacted HMRC with a view to including an item in the first series of the programme, about a case we had investigated. We offered them a couple of the more colourful cases we were working on and they opted for one involving tobacco smuggling.

It centred around an individual who was forging airline boarding passes and, along with accomplices, using them to get through airport security checks to purchase huge amounts of duty-free cigarettes, which they would then bring back out of the airport. In conjunction with the media office, HMRC’s investigative officers worked with the producers on the filming, explaining to reporters how they originally cracked the case. The producers also spoke to the smuggler once the case and trial

had concluded.

For reasons unrelated to HMRC, the segment could not be used in the original broadcast, however the producers got back in touch recently to ask us if they could use the footage in the second series of Britain on the Fiddle. We agreed, then worked with them to ensure the details of the case were reported accurately and there were no problems with the footage they were hoping to use. The producers actioned the changes we’d requested and the piece was broadcast a few days later, to three million viewers.

It was a particularly effective segment as it demonstrated that HMRC will not only track down and punish smugglers by sending them to prison but will also confiscate possessions they have obtained as a result of their criminality. Furthermore, the smuggler was very open on camera and even went as far as to warn others not to ‘mess’ with HMRC.

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**Case study 15 –** Working with UK government in devolved nations

### Ministry of Defence, Cabinet Office and Scotland Office

Media access to the UK’s nuclear deterrent and submariners doesn’t happen very often. Ahead of a parliamentary vote in 2016 it was decided to offer a once-in-a-generation opportunity for media to gather content that would raise awareness and understanding of the role played by the Vanguard class nuclear submarine and her crew at the Royal Navy base on the Clyde.

Getting a large group of national and local media on to a nuclear submarine requires a lot of planning, a lot of co-operation and a lot of permissions. MOD communicators in Whitehall and Scotland worked with colleagues in Cabinet Office, No.10 and the Scotland Office to navigate issues on security, embargoes, logistics and politics in order to achieve a positive outcome.

Media from across the UK made their way to Argyll to film and photograph the missile control compartment, what the trigger looks like and how it is pulled. Crew members were interviewed in the control room where the submarine is driven and fought from. Real submariners explained what it was really like to spend months at a time underwater maintaining the UK’s ultimate deterrent. The next day the Defence Secretary arrived on board to outline government policy on our nuclear deterrent.

Once the media embargoes were lifted, blanket national coverage followed. Message delivery was strong, explaining why the UK has a deterrent, how it works and how professional the Royal Navy’s Submarine Service is.

1. To develop full capability in all the aspects described, a media relations practitioner will require:

**Building capability**

* + significant experience
	+ exposure to the relevant work opportunities
	+ support to build their capability through training, coaching, and self-managed learning.
1. The [GCS Competency Framework](https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/gcs.civilservice...competency-Framework-Feb-16-1.pdf) sets out the competencies required at different levels (AIO/IO; SIO; G7/G6), using the four competency headings of Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact. The content on Press and Media work, considered alongside this guide, is helpful in terms of setting out requirements for specific grades and planning exposure to further work opportunities.
2. There are many different ways to build capability. Traditional course-based learning provision continues to be available via the [Aspire curriculum](https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/professional-development/aspire-curriculum/) including courses such as:

**Professional development**

* + Online Crisis Response and Media Relations
	+ Writing Professionally
	+ Creative Content
	+ Influencing Skills
	+ Behaviour Change
	+ Working with the modern media
1. A powerful learning option is the opportunity to learn from peers, through coaching or organised attachments/work shadowing to media teams in other departments and ALBs. As part of endorsing this document, Heads of News across departments and ALBs have agreed to take a proactive approach to opening up their teams to work shadowing and secondment opportunities. They will consider requests as a standing agenda item at their regular meetings. This group will commission further reference materials including templates and core media lists.
2. Heads of News and deputies are also required to train others as part of building capability across the wider GCS which will schedule the training, publicise the events and provide materials in advance. GCS will also support a ‘train the trainer’ session on the media modules for media officers and communicators who would like a refresher in presentations and training, plus consistency in how the training modules should be delivered.
3. Personal research is of course a vitally important element of building capability. Media relations teams should be expected to keep up to date with industry developments through key trade media such as Press Gazette, MediaGuardian and PR Week.
4. Learning and development leads inside departments should encourage informal learning opportunities, such as senior journalists or content producers as guest speakers.

This guide was compiled by James Cox (DfE) on behalf of the Head of News Network, with research and analysis from Gabriel Milland (GCS).

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