

Public Relations and Publications Policy

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Purpose and scope

This policy is designed to ensure that the Learning Community Trust (LCT) and all its academies, makes the most of its public relations and publications activities to help protect and boost its reputation. This guidance also recognises that the public has a right to accurate information about how public money is being spent, through the media.

All Trust employees are asked to adhere to this policy which has been drawn up to support staff and ensure there is consistency in dealing with the media. It should also minimise the possibility of errors and ensure prompt responses to the media, in the interest of damage limitation.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure a positive image of the organisation is portrayed wherever possible.
- Raise local, national and international awareness of the Learning Community Trust.
- Be open, honest and as flexible as possible in responses to the media, avoiding appearing as if there is something to hide.
- Foster good relationships with the local, regional, national and specialist media.
- Ensure staff respond quickly and accurately to the communications team so they can meet media deadlines, whenever possible.
- To be recognised as an organisation that values its staff and the role they play.
- Raise awareness amongst all employees of the importance of gaining good publicity and dealing with the media effectively and responsibly.

Definition of media

For the purposes of this document, 'media' is considered as the main means of mass communications including broadcasting (TV & radio) publishing (newspapers, newsletters, magazines or books) and the internet (podcasts, blogs or videos).

Duties and Responsibilities

- **All staff:** No member of the Learning Community Trust (LCT) including all academy staff should enter into discussions with journalists without prior contact with the Project and Communications Lead or LCT Executive office. The Academy Principal should also be informed.
- **The LCT Project and Communications Lead:** is responsible for handling all reactive media enquiries, proactive media, and media monitoring.
- **Principals:** The LCT Project and Communications Lead is our main point of contact for media and communications over routine matters. They liaise with a PR specialist, who the Trust retains for media and press work. All Principals are encouraged to keep the PR specialist's contact details (detailed in the Principals' handbook) so that they can contact them directly if the matter is urgent, which should simultaneously be reported to the Phase Education Director.

Principals should not respond to press enquiries which could result in negative publicity without informing the Project and Communications Lead and taking further advice from the Director or PR specialist. **If there is any risk of reputational damage to the academy or LCT, this must be escalated to the Executive Team following the Escalations process.**

This policy is particularly applicable to colleagues with marketing and/or communications responsibilities within their remit.

Communications and Executive Office contact details		
Project and Communication Lead: Rachael Wilson	Rachael.wilson@lct.education	01952 951328
EA to COO: Laura Deakin	Laura.deakin@lct.education	01952 951400
EA to the ICEO: Kerriann Hughes	Kerriann.Hughes@lct.education	01952 951326

Relevant additional polices, law and guidance

This policy should be used in conjunction with the following additional documents:

- Use of Social Media policy
- [Marketing and advertising: the law: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marketing-and-advertising-the-law-overview)
- Principles' Handbook 'Press' section
- IT security policy
- IT acceptable use agreement
- Online safety policy
- Staff code of conduct
- Complaints policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Escalation Process
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy

Public Relations

Procedure

No member of LCT staff should enter into discussions with journalists without prior contact with the Communications lead at LCT. This applies to contact received by telephone, email, through social media, or in person on academy premises and to approaches made at events or meetings.

All media enquiries should be directed to the Communications Lead in the first instance by telephone or email. This will ensure messages given out are consistent, corporate and can be logged centrally.

As set out in the LCT Use of Social Media policy, all staff are responsible for ensuring that they do not post social media content, whether in a personal account or a Trust account, that may reflect adversely on their own professionalism or on the Trust. If approached on social media by a journalist, the procedure highlighted below applies.

Taking calls from the media

Should journalists approach staff directly on any issue that relates to the Trust, its academies, staff, pupils, stakeholders of community or to ask for an opinion or comment from an expert on an educational issue, staff should always explain that all media enquiries are dealt with by the Project and Communications Lead at LCT. They should either transfer the journalist's enquiry to the Project and Communications Lead or take the journalist's contact details and forward them immediately by telephone to one of the numbers above.

The Project and Communications Lead will then deal with the media enquiry, by liaising with key Trust and academy staff (where appropriate) to prepare and get sign off for the response within the specified journalist's deadline.

Media Interviews

All media interviews are carried out with support and guidance from the Project and Communications Lead, ensuring staff are aware of any corporate sensitivities and general controversial issues.

Please note: Media interviews will only be delivered by members of staff who have been media trained.

Staff identified for media training will be determined by the Executive team and all interviewees should ensure that they:

- Arrive at the interview location on time
- Abide by safeguarding procedures and policies
- Conduct themselves in an appropriate manner
- Respect and put forward the views of LCT

Preparing media statements

All employees should provide information as quickly as possible to enable the Project and Communications lead/PR specialist to prepare an accurate statement to meet reasonable demands of journalists. As a guideline, journalists on a daily publication would normally need a response that day. Staff should inform the Project and Communications lead quickly of any issues relating to providing the information.

Press statements responding to media enquiries should always be prepared with, and issued through, the Project and Communication Lead who will clear them through a member of the Executive Team. Prepared articles will be shared with relevant parties as required prior to release. All reactive statements must be consistent with the Trust's expertise and competence.

Alerting to risks of negative publicity

Employees should alert the Principal of the Academy to any sensitive or controversial issues that are likely to attract negative media attention as soon as possible – even if it relates to something that could happen in the future. The Principal of the Academy should then follow the Escalation Process.

The Principal is responsible for informing the Escalation Team of any contentious, sensitive or major issue/initiative which is likely to attract positive or negative media across LCT.

The Project and Communications Lead will provide contextual briefing of sensitive matters to the Board and Governors proactively, as required.

Planned media management

The Project and Communications Lead/PR Specialist will give advice on how best to attract positive media coverage for good news, events and projects – employees are advised not to contact the media directly. Instead, they should contact the academy Principal/communication lead or Project and Communications Lead for advice, giving as much notice as possible.

Press releases promoting project/good news should be issued through the Project and Communications Lead. Opportunities should be highlighted to the Project and Communications Lead/PR Specialist as soon as possible to ensure media opportunities are maximised.

All media releases must be consistent with the Trust's strategic direction and values and communicated, in advance of release, internally to relevant parties (Trustees, ELT, Governors, Directors, Principals)

Monitoring media coverage

The Project and Communications Lead will respond to any inaccurate or negative media coverage about the Trust, except where responding would exacerbate the situation. This will often be with the support of the PR Specialist and could be done by writing a letter to the editor, asking for a correction or putting forward more positive stories to readdress the balance. Principals must inform the Executive team of any inaccurate or negative media coverage they become aware of as soon as possible.

Media coverage is monitored by the Communications and Engagement Team and PR Specialist; a review of coverage is provided to the Executive Team in regular update.

Working in partnership

Employees involved in publishing joint projects with other agencies (for example a council) should let the Academy Principal and the Project and Communications Lead know. Even if the other agency is leading on publicity, so that the Project and Communications Lead can liaise with their communications counterpart to ensure a corporate balance and accuracy in the information provided to the media.

Speaking at events

The Executive Team, and Headteachers of its academies, supported by the Trust's Project and Communications Lead, are responsible for managing the reputation of the Trust, which includes delivering presentations to external organisations or speaking at events. If you are planning at speaking at an event, you must contact the Headteacher of your Academy Project and the Trust's Communications Lead and inform them of the event, key messages and materials to be presented, you must also inform your line manager. The team can support you with your key messages and ensure that all your resources include the Trust's most up to date branding

Use of photography or video

Photographs or video should not be used in publicity material without consent from staff or members of the public. Any member of the public who is videoed or has their photograph taken to be used in publicity material for the Trust or to promote its services needs to sign a 'Photo Consent' form. Parental consent should be given for any students under 16 years of age. If a photographer turns up at a Trust/Academy event, members of staff should make sure that the photographer is aware of anyone who does not want/does not have consent to be filmed/photographed.

It is the academy's responsibility to ensure no photos/video should be used of any child who does not have consent.

Any filming, radio interviews or press photography must be cleared with the Project and Communications Lead beforehand.

Major incidents

In the event of a major incident, the Project and Communication Lead would be part of the Trust's Escalation response and would follow the protocol outlined in the Trust's Escalation Process.

VIP visits and donations to the Trust

The Project and Communication Lead is responsible for supporting the Executive and Education teams with VIP visits to the Trust. Staff involved in such visits should contact the Project and Communications lead in the first instance so that the necessary guidance can be adhered to.

Similarly, when donations, gifts or sponsorships are made to the Trust please contact the Project and Communications Lead to ensure the event is logged and where appropriate, a member of the Trust team will attend to take photographs and produce follow up publicity materials.

Any gifts or donations must adhere to the gifts and hospitality policy.

Procuring media/marketing services

The procurement of media and marketing services including media training, graphic design, photography and video or audio production should take place in conjunction with the Trust; this will support cost effective services and economies of scale.

Training and awareness

Media interviews will only be delivered by members of staff who have been media trained.

Staff identified for media training will be determined by the Executive team. If your role requires you to be media trained and you have not had training please contact the Project and Communications Lead.

As per the LCT Use of Social Media policy:

Staff with responsibility for/have access to social channels should be trained in-line with the trusts expectations, which includes:

- Regular training in social media management/online reputation training
- Internal training about policy, expectations and language

Social media awareness for all other groups, will fall in line with local/trust policies and strategies.

Publications

Publication

Marketing activities include: brand identity and corporate guidelines, marketing campaigns and plans, advertising, print materials, promotional and corporate events – on and off campus, market research, working with external services suppliers, staff and student communications – internally and externally, stakeholder engagement, digital marketing, production of digital assets, campaigns social media activity, websites.

Please note that there is a separate Use of Social Media Policy which sets out the Trust's approach to activities in this area.

Brand identity

The Learning Community Trust's brand, and the brands of each of its academies, is a valuable asset and is integral to the Trusts and academies' image and reputation. It articulates the Trust's and academies' mission and values, strategic vision, culture and purpose.

Staff within the LCT and academies must comply with the following principles in relation to using the academy's and/or LCT brand. All LCT and academy branded marketing and communications materials for external audiences, and wherever possible internal audiences, must be produced as outlined in this Policy. The use of the LCT and academies logo and brand packs are the main visual identifier for LCT and its academies and its use on any communications implies a level of endorsement by LCT/Academy of that message to the intended audience. As such, usage of the LCT/Academies logos and brand packs must be strictly adhered to, in accordance with the Brand Guidelines.

In addition to the Brand Guidelines, any branded templates published (PPTs/letterheads for example) must also be used in all circumstances. Further advice on using brand on print, digital and web-based material can be obtained by contacting either the Project and Communications Lead or Digital Innovator and Technical Lead. The development of variations to brand packs will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances, and requests need to be sent to Project and Communication lead. Any unauthorised usage of brands, for LCT or its academies, is reportable to the Project and Communications Lead.

Marketing Campaigns and plans

All central Trust marketing campaigns and plans for the Trust and its academies will be produced by the Project and Communications Lead, in conjunction with academies where appropriate. Examples of Central Trust marketing campaigns and plans include open events for academies, whole Trust website developments, Trust prospectus, community consultations, Trust wide surveys, new academy openings.

Internal marketing/communications by academies must adhere to the branding guidelines above and must be approved by the Principal or designated marketing/communication leads. All marketing/communication materials must be proofread and contain accurate information. All materials must reflect the high expectations of the Trust and its academies as an educational establishment.

Requests for support with marketing/communication materials can be made to the Project and communications lead.

Advertising campaigns

Advertising campaigns must comply with the law relating to advertising standards. This includes digital, print and out of home advertising in the UK. The placement of any advertisement (excluding standard recruitment advertising) on behalf of the LCT requires the prior approval of the Project and Communications Lead to ensure brand consistency and value for money.

Print materials

Print materials (including campus signage and merchandise) This Policy applies to the production of all print, merchandise, campus branding and signage. The content in all print materials must be accurate and maintained and must be published strictly in accordance with this policy.

Campus signage changes/updates must be approved by the COO for LCT.

Contributions

All staff: LCT welcomes, and encourage, good news stories, achievements, project updates into the trust to be shared in the termly CEO newsletter. If you have news you would like to share, please contact the Project and Communications Lead.

Principals: LCT encourages contributions from all its academies, sharing good news stories across the trust. Therefore, there is an expectation that Principals ensure good news stories are shared regularly and timely with LCT.

All staff updates

LCT will issue regular all staff updates, through a variety of methods, including email, newsletters, and video. We expect all staff to access these updates, and Principals to ensure staff have access to, and have read, the updates. LCT want all staff to be aware of the latest information coming from the central trust office.

Monitoring and review

The trust's Project and Communications lead will monitor the implementation of this policy, including making sure that it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the trust and the academies.