

LOCAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA

From 1 February 2016, following a restructure of the Directorate of Media and Communication local cluster press offices which engaged with the local media on behalf of boroughs ceased to exist.

From that date it fell to boroughs to conduct their local communications via the borough social media accounts, predominantly twitter.

Twitter is a fantastic way to interact directly with the public, especially on a local level. Providing an insight and updates on what local policing teams are doing and having positive conversations with residents, businesses and other stakeholders on relevant, local issues is a key confidence driver for the Met.

The ability to provide real-time updates on incidents is a crucial capability and offers a unique opportunity for the Met to provide accurate, unfiltered content directly to Londoners.

Supporting investigations and appeals via social media has achieved great results, some of which simply could not have happened through 'traditional' communication channels.

Boroughs can inform residents and local journalists with information about local incidents including:

- Missing people
- Road traffic collisions
- Appeals
- Wanted people
- Local operations
- Arrests
- Court cases
- Convictions and sentencing
- Crime prevention advice

All of these topics are the mainstay of local newspapers should therefore be the focus of local twitter accounts. Where possible and relevant, photos should be included to enhance tweets.

Local journalists are encouraged to Direct Message (DM) borough twitter accounts if they require additional information about a particular tweet.

Regular briefings and face to face engagement between officers and the local media is recommended to support this.

Anything that has the potential to be of interest wider than the local media – be it an operation, unique case or court case for a matter which has either previously attracted media attention or the suspects are facing substantial custodial sentences - should be brought to the attention of DMC. This should be done as early as possible in order to give DMC the opportunity to prepare a supporting media package.

Please note that DMC will not release details of a court case if more than a week has passed since sentencing, as at that point the story is no longer contemporaneous nor newsworthy.

Roles & Responsibilities

Borough social media SPOC ('Super-users')

- Maintain the borough Twitter and Facebook accounts, providing live updates, news and appeals
- Monitor the borough social media feeds, ensuring all sensible enquiries & questions are appropriately responded to
- Respond to Direct Messages from the media regarding local news, appeals or incidents
- Provide advice, guidance & best practice to officers using ward level social media accounts
- Provide training to individuals wishing to use local social media accounts

DMC Borough Support team

- Liaise with borough Senior Leadership Teams around local media engagement and social media use on the borough
- Provide advice and assistance to social media SPOCs around media engagement issues
- Provide advice, guidance and best practice to officers around media and social media engagement
- Distribute key messages
- Assist delivering larger local media activity which is likely to result in pan-London media coverage
- Provide media awareness training to officers, either individually or on staff training days
- Provide social media training to groups wishing to use local social media accounts, or individuals if the local SPOC is unavailable

DMC Social Media Team

- Provide social media training to Specialist Units wishing to use social media for pan London messaging
- Distribute key messages about upcoming campaigns
- Provide advice, guidance and best practice for using social media effectively.

- Provide advice and guidance for to officers who may experience technical issues when using social media
- Update SPOCs on new, upcoming developments for existing social media platforms.

DMC 24-hour Press Bureau

- Provide advice, guidance, and support in respect of incidents that are breaking any time of day or night
- Major or critical incidents
- Stories or issues that are likely to be of interest beyond local papers - for example the Evening Standard, BBC London, national newspapers, LBC etc

The RAG Traffic Light System

The RAG Traffic Light System gives advice on information suitable for tweeting locally, illustrating what subjects can be tweeted by (B)OCUs, and what subjects require approval or should not be tweeted out by boroughs.

The RAG (Red, Amber, Green) system for digital communications	
Go for it!	<p>Local Good News, Burglary, Assault, Car Crime, Criminal Damage, Anti-Social Behaviour, Non KSI RTCs, Crime Prevention, Street and Community Meetings, Road traffic collision</p> <p>Retweeting (RT): @metpolicevents or @metpoliceuk tweets or local council/community groups tweets, Links to content on MPS website or partners</p>
Ask DMC before posting	<p>Only if already in the public domain - Met wide operations e.g raids, BigWings, engagement activities and campaigns, Court results, Local joint initiatives, KSI RTCs, ASBOs, Evacuation/Other Emergency, Speeding/Crackdown, Wanted suspects, Missing people, Charge details and local and pan-London appeals</p>
Do not post, contact DMC	<p>Any of the amber fields above if not in the public domain.</p> <p>SCO Investigations, Budgetary/Financial, Political/Government, Staff/Officer disciplinary, Force SOP, Force Reputation, Major/Critical Incident, Escaped Prisoners, any discussion of Terror Threat level, responding to complaints.</p>

Guidance and Authority Levels for the Release of Photographs and Images

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) supports the existing National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Guidance on the Releasing of Images of Suspects and Defendants. The guidance states that images are released for legitimate purposes, and the release should be necessary and proportionate.

Releasing images can help to build public confidence in the MPS. It also helps to detect and deter crime and supports the transparency agenda.

Further information can be found in the 'Guidance and Authority Levels for the Release of Photographs and Images' document.

Media Law

It is essential that any communication that is going to be published - from press releases to intranet stories - is legally watertight.

The DMC hold regular media law workshops and will advertise them well in advance.

Staff in the 24 hour press bureau are always on hand to discuss any issues and offer advice. Police officers should call 763300 or email Press Bureau.

The DMC has put together a short factsheet of frequently-asked legal questions from communicators. Further information can be found in the 'Legal – Media law resource guide' document.