



## CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

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## Purpose, intention and definition

This Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Plan is intended to provide a step-by-step guide to key communications that need to be made in the event of a crisis or emergency. The plan sets out a rigid process that must be followed to ensure all key audiences associated with Cadet Vocational College are kept apprised and know what the charity's stance and actions on the crisis will be.

Cadet Vocational College must be able to respond promptly, accurately and confidently during a crisis in the hours and days that follow. Many different audiences must be reached with information specific to their interests and needs. The charity's image could be positively or negatively impacted by outside perceptions of our handling of the incident.

## What is a crisis?

A crisis is defined as any incident that could have a detrimental impact on Cadet Vocational College and its reputation.

With that said, handled correctly, a crisis can present an opportunity.

Example categorisations include:

- Safeguarding
- Data protection breach
- Personal / organisational reputation
- Government regulatory/approvals (e.g. Ofsted)
- Journalist or analyst opinions
- Media coverage
- Financial irregularity
- Staff morale and productivity

## What kind of crisis is likely?

- Financial irregularities
- Technological (inc. security breaches)
- Personnel: Unethical behaviour
- Executive/management misconduct
- Regulatory issues
- Confrontation/protests
- Malice

(Source: PRCA and Indeed)

## Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications best practice guidelines

The following is a list of 10 guidelines Cadet Vocational College will abide by in the event of a crisis:

1. The Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Team lead all crisis communications activities, headed-up by the Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Team Lead.
2. The Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Team will share appropriate and relevant information with all key stakeholders in a timely manner once it establishes the nature and severity of the crisis.
3. If additional time is needed, holding statements may be issued, as appropriate.
4. The Cadet Vocational College Chief Executive is the sole spokesperson authorised to provide external comment
5. Cadet Vocational College will always give the full story quickly and truthfully.
6. Cadet Vocational College's people, learners and supporters come first.
7. Cadet Vocational College will stick to the facts and avoid speculation or obfuscation.
8. If the issue is already in the public domain, Cadet Vocational College will, when appropriate comment, control and provide regular updates.
9. Pause and think: Consider if the organisation will need specialist advice from outside parties (e.g. legal or financial)
10. Cadet Vocational College will always use the appropriate tone when addressing supporters and learners

## Stakeholder identification and communication methods

This section identifies the various stakeholders that will need to be communicated with in the event of a crisis at Cadet Vocational College, the information they are likely to require and who is best to communicate with them.

It covers audiences such as (but not exclusively):

- Cadet Vocational College learners and CFAVs
- Cadet Vocational College staff and their families
- Those directly impacted by the crisis
- Cadet Vocational College management and trustees
- Cadet Vocational College government (MOD) and education contacts
- Suppliers
- The media and influencers

An addendum database is available that sets out who the primary stakeholders are, in which order they should be communicated with, by who and how.

## Stakeholder contact information

For the Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Plan to be effective, it requires up to date contact information for all of the audiences listed in the preceding section. This should be accessible by the Executive Team and Marketing & Communications Department. It should also include information and credentials for all Cadet Vocational College communications channels – e.g. social media, databases, email marketing software etc.

There is a requirement to have as much information for each contact as possible (e.g. company name, contact name, mobile number and email address).

These lists should be updated regularly and controlled centrally by the Cadet Vocational College Marketing & Department. They should be secured to protect confidential information and be GDPR compliant. Electronic lists will be stored in a dedicated SharePoint folder accessible only by the Crisis Communications Team. Hard copies of lists will also be available in the Marketing & Communications Department.

## Basic communication guidelines

As a general rule:

- **Who** will act as the spokesperson for Cadet Vocational College in the event of a crisis?  
**The Cadet Vocational College spokesperson is Guy Horridge, Cadet Vocational College Chief Executive – supported by the crisis team.**  
**In the event of incapacity or unavailability, the nominated second spokesperson is: Michelle Parry, Deputy Chief Executive**
- **What** will they say?  
*A guideline list of spokesperson responses is provided in this guide*
- **When** and how often will they speak and to who?  
*The spokesperson will speak in person if appropriate, on all online and social media channels (via pre-agreed statements)*

These will all be addressed fully at various points in this document.

## Spokesperson guidelines and sample statement

Appointed Cadet Vocational College spokespeople should always feel prepared for a potential media incursion, which is why if the steps identified in the preceding two sections are followed, a transparent, two-way communication process can be established.

The media will nearly always find their story and other agencies (stakeholders) may formulate their understanding from speculation or unconfirmed sources, so having accurate information to hand quickly will establish trust and reassure them that Cadet Vocational College has nothing to hide.

A selection of generic statement guidelines are provided below:

- **Key rule: ‘recognise, regret, resolve’**
- **It is not acceptable to say nothing**
- **Be genuine and do not use clichés**

### GOOD PRACTICE

- “We” is always better than “I”. If need be, say: *“My colleagues and I at Cadet Vocational College”* But it’s better to say: *“All of us here at Cadet Vocational College”* or *“Everyone at Cadet Vocational College.”*
- Our words must express our feeling. If we can get this right we have a chance of retaining goodwill. If we sound hollow or insincere, they will mistrust and dislike the organisation
- “Our thoughts are with...” is often over-used, but it is acceptable
- Some experienced speakers can successfully use everyday language. *“Everyone here at Cadet Vocational College is shattered about this...”* But only if it is their natural form of expression
- It’s better to talk about what we are doing to help. Action versus mere phrases. For example: *“We at Cadet Vocational College are all shocked by what has happened. It is difficult to put it into words; but what I can tell you that many people from Cadet Vocational College have been offering to see what they can do to help”.*
- *“We are doing our best to understand how X is feeling and how this has affected them. We are doing everything in our power to address the situation and put things right. Cadet Vocational College staff are working hard to gather information so we can respond appropriately. We don’t know yet what the cause is but our priority is to see what we can do to help.”*
- There is an understandable tendency sometimes to use formal language when individuals are under stress or in the spotlight. When reported in a crisis, this can make them seem distant and insincere. As a guide they ought to try to imagine what they would say to a

friend when talking about how they felt. While facts are important it can be feelings which help people to like and trust CEOs in a crisis.

- *“A key consideration for us at Cadet Vocational College right now is doing whatever we can to look after the people affected. We have experienced staff on site who have the authority to help those affected and they’ll be there for as long as it takes.”*

#### **BAD PRACTICE**

- Never say: *“On behalf of”* or *“The board of Cadet Vocational College”* This distances the speaker from what he or she is saying, which is the exact opposite of what we want to achieve
- Avoid referring to an ‘incident’. If people have been hurt more appropriate language might be: it’s a tragedy, a disaster, an awful event, a calamity, an emergency, a shock. The speaker must try to see what has happened through the eyes of the people affected and their families... for them, it’s traumatic.

#### **SAMPLE STATEMENT (pre-approved)**

No one crisis is the same as another, so each needs a specific and appropriate response as the incident unfolds. It may be necessary to have a ‘holding statement’ for immediate use – longer and more specific statements will be created by the crisis team lead at the time. These are time and situation critical. For example:

- *“We are aware of the situation and will be posting more information on our website and social media channels as soon as it becomes available.”*

Remember: If in doubt, take the name of the person enquiring, a contact number and specific details of the enquiry, then escalate this to the Crisis Communications Team.

No additional information or comment should be provided by anyone until authorised by the Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Team.

## Establishing the crisis

The first stage is to identify the crisis and its potential impact. This can be achieved via the following process:

- **What is the crisis?**

Succinctly be able to describe what the crisis is in a paragraph. This will help everyone focus on the key issues at hand and not get side-tracked.

- **Who is involved?**

Using the stakeholder list, identify who the main protagonists are and what their role in the crisis is.

- **How did it happen?**

Establish what caused the crisis to happen. This is necessary in order to be able to communicate the facts. Create a timeline of events that tracks key communications, reactions and incidents to stay on top of the facts.

- **Where did it happen?**

Identify the source of the crisis and who should be dispatched to each location if appropriate.

- **Why did it happen?**

Establish the cause, not only for internal purposes but, possibly to be able to explain to stakeholders what is going on.

- **When did it happen?**

Document a timeline of events that lead to this point – and also to identify what future actions should be and when they should take place.



## Responding and ‘the golden hour’

The golden hour simply identifies the actions that, in an ideal situation, should be taken in the first hour following the crisis. An explanation of these steps follows:

- **1-5 mins:** call emergency services, if required
- **1-15 mins:** establish the facts and call Crisis Communications Team meeting
- **15-30 mins:** draft holding statement and brief stakeholders (e.g. directors, trustees, staff)
- **15-30 mins:** if required, establish media timetable and next statement
- **15-60 mins:** monitor social media for key words, pertinent information and hashtags
- **30-45 mins:** check draft statement and update if necessary
- **45-60 mins:** collect and log media (photos, videos) that could be helpful
- **50-60 mins:** organise Cadet Vocational College team meeting and decide who does what next

### Longer term:

- Pull together facts and intelligence as much as possible and prepare holding statements, briefing etc. – within two hours if possible/practical.
- Pull together communications to Executive Team, Trustees and Cadet Vocational College supporters plus other external and internal communications as relevant.
- Pull together full response including communication as appropriate to ministers, policy briefing, forward plan, etc. – within 24 hours, or as soon as possible/practical.

*These basic steps are provided as an illustrative guide as to what should happen in the first hour and day following the crisis.*

## Communication methods

In the event of a crisis:

- Pre-agreed statements will be issued to the Cadet Vocational College website and social media channels. These will be issued by the Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communication Team
- Staff will be communicated with via appropriate channels (e.g.: text, telephone call, email) to advise them of the issue. Text messages are put in place in case of an out-of-office-hours incident and will be distributed by the HR Manager or designated CCT member. It may be necessary to use the Cadet Vocational College SMS facility to ensure timely delivery of such messages.

## The Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Team

This section will identify who the Cadet Vocational College crisis communications team is and what their responsibilities are.

**Primary spokesperson:**

*Guy Horridge, Chief Executive*

07776 233 266

[gh@cvcollege.org](mailto:gh@cvcollege.org)

**Secondary spokesperson:**

*Michele Parry, Deputy Chief Executive*

07872 508 147

[mep@cvcollege.org](mailto:mep@cvcollege.org)

**Crisis Communications Team Lead:**

*Steve Taylor, Director of Marketing & Communications*

07940 454919

[steve.taylor@cvcollege.org](mailto:steve.taylor@cvcollege.org)

**Designated Safeguarding Lead:**

*Tracey Sanders, Head of Stakeholder Relations*

07970 697802

[tracey.sanders@cvcollege.org](mailto:tracey.sanders@cvcollege.org)

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:**

*Andrew Webster, Senior Business Development Manager (North & Central)*

07786 323375

[andrew.webster@cvcollege.org](mailto:andrew.webster@cvcollege.org)

**HR Manager:**

*Tanya Winter*

01276 459 067

[tanya.winter@cvcollege.org](mailto:tanya.winter@cvcollege.org)

**Data Protection Officer:**

*Jonathan Challis*

07976 172918

[jonathan.challis@absbiz.co.uk](mailto:jonathan.challis@absbiz.co.uk)

## Guidelines for Cadet Vocational College staff

- **Step 1:**

If you become aware of an issue that could affect Cadet Vocational College in some way (e.g. financial, reputational, news-based), contact the Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communication Team Lead, Steve Taylor, or the Cadet Vocational College Chief Executive Guy Horridge, and explain the situation; have as many facts and timescales to hand as possible.

**Additional:**

If the issue relates to a **data protection breach**, follow the **Data Protection Policy** and the Data Protection Officer (DPO) will notify the Crisis Communications Team.

If the issue relates to a **safeguarding** concern, follow the **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures** and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Designated Senior Officer (DSO) will notify the Crisis Communications Team.

- **Step 2:**

Any information you may have received is **not** for public consumption and if asked by the media or any other stakeholder, your response should be that you are aware of the situation and that Cadet Vocational College will be making a statement shortly on its website and social media channels.

- **Step 3:**

**No other comment is to be made until you are authorised to do so.** The Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communication Team will brief the organisation with a summary of the issue and acceptable courses of action.

- **Step 4:**

If you receive any other updates in the meantime, please contact a member of the Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communication Team immediately.

## Guidelines for Cadet Vocational College Trustees

- The Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Team and/or Chief Executive will be in touch promptly to advise of any incidents and of any external (esp. media) interest and will provide guidance on how to respond to enquiries.
- If approached for comment directly about an incident that the Cadet Vocational College Crisis Communications Team has not been in touch about, then:
  1. Explain succinctly that you are not yet aware of the incident;
  2. Request details from the person making the enquiry: Name, organisation, contact number and nature of the enquiry (as much details as possible). Advise that someone will respond as soon as possible. If it is a media enquiry, ask for a deadline for response.
  3. It may be appropriate to explain that Cadet Vocational College has policies and procedures in place to tackle potential incidents (e.g. safeguarding and data protection) and will be following them as a matter of best practice, but this depends on the timing of the enquiry.
  4. Explain that you will immediately be liaising directly with Cadet Vocational College staff who will provide more information when it is appropriate to do so.
  5. **Remember: “No comment” is not an option.**

## Social media passwords and communications tools

The main Cadet Vocational College Corporate Communications IT tools and social media account details and log-in information, including credentials for the Marketing & Communications Team's computers and other programmes such as GroupMail, social media, website etc. will be stored in a dedicated SharePoint folder accessible only by the Crisis Communications Team. Hard copies of information will also be held securely in the Marketing & Communications Department and with the Chief Executive.

## Cadet Vocational College 'fast facts'

### Cadet Vocational College Values

- We are **learner-focused**, developing vocational qualifications that directly meet the needs of young people and adult volunteers
- We are **responsive and flexible**, constantly adapting to the education landscape and what our learners need to succeed
- With a core set of beliefs, ethics and standards, we are **professional**
- We are **caring and supportive**, helping our learners on every step of their journey
- When it comes to our learners, supporters and staff we always **go the extra mile**

### About Cadet Vocational College

Cadet Vocational College is a government-funded education charity, based in Camberley, Surrey. We offer a diverse range of vocational qualifications to members of UK youth groups and their adult volunteer instructors, as well as within schools.

The majority of our learners come from the MOD cadet forces (e.g. Army Cadet Force, Sea Cadet Corps and RAF Air Cadets), however we also work closely with many other uniformed youth groups such as St John Ambulance, Volunteer Police Cadets and Fire Cadets.

Our nationally-recognised qualifications are accredited by Pearson BTEC, ILM and City & Guilds and allow us to translate key skills like team working, leadership, citizenship and communication into something tangible that employers can relate to.

### Cadet Vocational College contact details

Telephone: 01276 601 701

Website: [www.cvcollege.org](http://www.cvcollege.org)

Social media channels: (search "Cadet Vocational College")

## Timetable to prepare for and follow in the event of a crisis

Action	Actioned by	Completed (please date)
<b>Actions prior to a crisis</b>		
Template media statements prepared for possible crisis communications situations	E.g. communications team, with crisis response team sign off	
Embed an emergency sign-off procedure, so communicators know how to quickly seek authorisation for any written material		
Set up media and social media monitoring systems		
A Crisis Communication Team (CCT) appointed and briefed		
Out of hours contact details for Crisis Communication Team recorded		
Media spokespeople agreed and out of hours contact details recorded		
Crisis Communication Team meet regularly (twice per year) to consider potential risks, review the risk register, and discuss how they can be mitigated, managed and monitored		
Provide copies of crisis communication plan and other relevant protocols and policies to all members of the Crisis Communication Team and ensure they are familiar with contents		
Develop a social media policy, outlining how Cadet Vocational College will respond to crisis		

situations using your key social channels		
Create a checklist of every stakeholder group who must receive agreed communications messages in a crisis. Establish text, email and social media distribution lists and distribution systems for these groups, with details of who is responsible for contacting these stakeholders		
Media spokespeople trained in how to deal with the media and crisis situations		
Media train a pool of service users and volunteers, who can speak to the media if need be		
Staff representatives to be present at charity activities and events		
Next of kin contact details recorded for event participants (e.g. fundraising event)		
Provide fundraising event participants with contact details for key staff members and ask them to pass onto next of kin		
Key staff Crisis Communication Team to be made aware in advance of any charity activities or events that have a risk attached to them		
If an event is taking place, such as a fundraising event, ensure contact details for all staff and volunteers involved are passed onto Crisis Communication Team		
Event participants to be tracked during fundraising events such as the London Marathon		

All staff briefed to let their managers and communications team know immediately of any potential crisis situations		
All staff and volunteers to be briefed not to talk to media but to refer to a member of the Crisis Communication Team		
<b>Immediate actions once a crisis has taken place</b>		
The first person to discover an incident will alert Crisis Communication Team (and any other people who have key roles to play)		
Crisis Communication Team to meet within [ <i>one hour</i> ] of story breaking or coming to attention, to determine current known facts, position and key messages ( <i>use crisis template below</i> )		
Prepare and issue holding statement to media within [ <i>time frame i.e. two hours</i> ] and agree social media responses/approach		
Communicate with key external and internal stakeholders, using distribution systems		
Put together full response within [timeframe e.g. 24 hours]		
Inform Trustees		
Notify next of kin, if appropriate		
Liaise with third parties e.g. event organiser, police, emergency services, hospital, and report back to senior management team and communications team		



Provide flow of information for the media through further statements and interviewees		
Create an action log: Begin detailed recording of actions in response to crisis		
Monitor media output (inc. Google Alerts) and respond promptly to misinformation as appropriate		
Organise shift system/rota for staff involved in managing crisis i.e. Crisis Communication Team if required		
Welfare: Ensure adequate breaks and refreshments for staff managing crisis		
When appropriate, explain to media limitations to information that can be provided		
In necessary arrange media briefings and notify media of times/venues		
Brief and rehearse with media spokespeople (Chief Exec, Deputy Chief Exec) before interviews/briefings, agreeing information to be released and feeding in expected media questions and angles		
If appropriate, make arrangements with local radio to broadcast public information		
Anticipate media demands/requirements. E.g. access to families		
<b>Internal communication</b>		
Ensure staff are briefed on what is happening, how it is being handled		

and Cadet Vocational College's position, and let them know to refer any media interest to communications team – keep them continually updated		
Provide briefing information for staff manning telephones so they know what information is in the public domain		
<b>Third parties</b>		
Establish links with communications personnel at key agencies involved in the crisis (e.g. MOD, Cadet Services health, police, fire, event organiser)		
Ensure they have immediate copies of anything Cadet Vocational College releases publically, and vice versa		
Share names of Cadet Vocational College's key spokespeople		
Provide office space and communications equipment as appropriate – review if incident is on another, third party owned site or not a Cadet Vocational College location		
<b>Media monitoring</b>		
Ensure access to internet, TV and radio to record coverage		
Create a media log: Take notes of main points made in broadcast coverage and record online coverage including social media		
Arrange copies of all relevant media for Crisis Communication Team		

Encourage staff to feed media intelligence (i.e. how the crisis is being covered locally/regionally) to Crisis Communication Team		
Prepare daily media update		
<b>Record keeping</b>		
Keep chronological record of information released to media and date/time of release		
Keep log of key decisions made and reasons for them		
Log all media questions and answers provided		
If required, log media attending Crisis Communication Team Cadet Vocational Colleges office and any off-site media briefings		
Keep up-to-date file of media coverage		
Keep log of staff hours		
<b>Actions after the event</b>		
Obtain feedback from other parties for subsequent review of handling of crisis		
Evaluation meeting to review the event and lessons learnt, and evaluate the crisis communications plan as well as relevant policies such as the social media policy		
Plan ahead regarding future dates related to the incident (e.g. inquests, inquiries, anniversaries)		

Thank all who have assisted/cooperated, either publicly or privately as appropriate, including possibly the media		
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## Crisis template

*In the event of a crisis, complete the following information:*

Incident:

Date

Headline facts

Unconfirmed information

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Stakeholders: [e.g. next of kin, media, police, staff]

Likely questions	
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<p>(include difficult questions)</p>	
<p>Possible answers</p>	
<p>Who to contact</p> <p>(named person whose responsibility it is to contact the stakeholder)</p>	
<p>Method of contact</p> <p>(for example, phone, email, face-to-face)</p>	
<p>Comment</p>	

(stakeholder specific remarks that are essential)	
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