

# Communications/public relations staff

Communications and public relations (PR) staff help NHS organisations engage with patients, their local communities, staff and other interested groups including the media.

## Working life

Working in communications could be

- internal - making sure that staff are consulted and engaged on what is happening at the organisation
- external - communicating with and consulting the local and national media, politicians, other organisations and the public

Press interview

You'll use many different types of communication including

- print - newsletters, leaflets and posters
- digital - websites, social media, intranets and online video
- the media - TV and radio interviews, local and national press releases
- events - conferences, meetings, exhibitions and speeches
- ad campaigns - in newspapers, on local radio, social media and in the community, such as on public transport

## The role

Your role in communications and PR can include

- managing the reputation of the organisation
- developing, implementing and evaluating communications strategies
- media handling, such as placing good news stories, handling bad publicity and dealing with enquiries
- developing links with local organisations
- updating the website, intranet and social media

- briefing other health organisations on developments, plans and incidents
- producing information for patients
- writing speeches for senior managers
- managing the NHS corporate identity and taking local responsibility for the NHS brand
- including patients and local communities in changes to health services
- advising senior colleagues on strategic communications
- health promotion campaigns.

Jobs may have different titles. Some reflect the seniority of the post, for example

Apprenticeships logo

- communications and engagement officer
- communications lead
- communications and marketing officer
- communications and engagement assistant
- deputy head of communications
- communications specialist
- communications manager
- head of communications and engagement

## Who will I work with?

Depending on the size of the organisation, communications staff may work alone or as part of a team. In a large organisation, there may be a communications department, with a communications director who may be a senior manager. In some organisations, communications staff may have other related roles, such as patient and public involvement or corporate affairs.

[Find out more about managerial roles in communications and corporate affairs](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

Some communications and PR staff work for PR companies which provide services or run campaigns for the NHS.

## Entry requirements

Although there is no set entry route, communications and PR staff often have a relevant qualification. This could be in PR, marketing, journalism or communications, often at degree level.

Employers may expect experience, which could be paid or voluntary. It may be possible to gain experience in an admin job in a communications department.

Communicating with and consulting the local and national media, politicians, other organisations and members of the public

## Skills and personal characteristics needed

Communications and PR staff need to be

- creative
- able to communicate messages clearly
- willing to work under pressure
- accurate, with an eye for detail
- able to deal with sensitive situations

They also need

- excellent writing skills
- excellent speaking and presentation skills
- good networking skills
- research skills
- social media skills

## Training and development

When you start the job, you will be given the training you need including an introduction to the department and its systems and procedures. You will be expected to keep your knowledge and skills up to date. Your employer may offer you the chance to go on short courses on particular topics such as social media, web development, etc.

You may also have the opportunity to get a qualification by doing an apprenticeship. And you could take further qualifications such as those offered by

- [Association for Healthcare Communications and Marketing](#) <sup>[2]</sup>
- [Chartered Institute of Public Relations](#) <sup>[3]</sup>
- [Public Relations Consultants Association](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

Communications and PR staff can become members of a professional association such as the [Association for Healthcare Communications and Marketing](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, the [Chartered Institute of Public Relations](#) <sup>[3]</sup> or the [Public Relations Consultants Association](#) <sup>[4]</sup>. Each organisation offers conferences, seminars and meetings where staff can update their skills and knowledge and network with others in the same field.

## • Pay and conditions

Communications and PR staff working in the NHS are paid on the [Agenda for Change \(AfC\)](#) <sup>[5]</sup> pay system. You will typically start in a position on AfC <sup>[6]</sup> band 2 or 3. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions at bands 4 and 5. Senior managers will be paid more.

Communications and PR staff in the NHS work standard hours of around 37.5 a week. They may have to attend meetings or events in the evenings or at weekends. Some may be part of an on-call rota for media enquiries.

Terms and conditions will usually be different for clinical support staff working outside of the NHS.

- **Where the role can lead**

With experience, communications and PR staff can progress to become managers of a department or area. With further experience they could become a director of communications, responsible for all communications and PR in an organisation.

There may also be opportunities to work outside the NHS.

- **Job market and vacancies**

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work. [Find out more about NHS values.](#) <sup>[7]</sup>

Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on [NHS Jobs](#) <sup>[8]</sup>. Some of the current vacancies are below.

## Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

Show results within

Search

- **Further information**

- [Chartered Institute of Public Relations](#) <sup>[9]</sup>
- [Public Relations Consultants Association](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

## Other roles that may interest you

- [Communications and corporate affairs](#) <sup>[11]</sup>
- [Knowledge and library services](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

- Experienced paramedic <sup>[13]</sup>
- Emergency care assistant <sup>[14]</sup>

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### Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/general-management/communications-and-corporate-affairs> [2] <http://www.ahcm.org.uk/> [3] <http://www.cipr.co.uk/> [4] <http://www.prca.org.uk/> [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates> [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC> [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution> [8] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/> [9] <http://www.cipr.co.uk/> [10] <http://www.prca.org.uk/> [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/management/roles-management/general-management/communications-and-corporate-affairs> [12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/health-informatics/roles-health-informatics/knowledge-and-library-services> [13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ambulance-service-team/roles-ambulance-service/experienced-paramedic> [14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ambulance-service-team/roles-ambulance-service/emergency-care-assistant>