

CANDIDATE BRIEF

Media Lead, National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)



Salary: University of Leeds Grade 8 (£41,526 - £49,533 p.a.) plus London weighting and a generous benefits package

Reference: MHNCC1188

Closing date: 9 October 2019

Interview date: 17 October 2019

London-based role, fixed-term until 31/03/22

Media Lead

National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)

Are you a highly collaborative media relations professional looking for a new challenge? Do you have a keen interest in health and care research and an appreciation for the difference it can make to the lives of patients and the public? An exciting opportunity has arisen to raise the profile of the NIHR, its people, programmes and centres of research excellence in traditional and social media.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH RESEARCH

The National Institute for Health Research is funded through the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research. The NIHR is a large, multi-faceted and nationally distributed organisation and the vast majority of its people work for or through one of its coordinating centres. Together, NIHR people, facilities and systems represent the most integrated clinical research system in the world, driving research from bench to bedside for the benefit of patients and the economy.

Since its establishment, the NIHR has transformed research in the NHS and social care. It has increased the volume of applied health and care research for the benefit of patients and the public, driven faster translation of basic science discoveries into tangible benefits for patients and the economy, and developed and supported the people who conduct and contribute to applied health research.

Further information on the National Institute for Health Research can be found at: www.nihr.ac.uk

You will be part of a small NIHR corporate communications team that works closely with coordinating centre communications teams, achieving change through influencing skills rather than through a traditional hierarchical structure. You will lead the cross-centre Press Office team, supported by a senior communications officer with strong media skills, and also provide strategic input into NIHR social media channels. This is a hands-on role requiring energy, tenacity and emotional intelligence.



You will be a member of the NIHR Communications Programme Board (CPB), which provides strategic oversight for NIHR communications.

Your organisational base will be the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN) Coordinating Centre (which is provided jointly by the University of Leeds and Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Foundation Trust) and your direct report will be to the NIHR Director of Communications. Your employer will be the University of Leeds and you will be based in London. In the first instance, this post is offered on a fixed-term basis to 31 March 2022 to align with NIHR contracts.

What does the role entail?

As NIHR Media Lead, your main duties will include:

- Lead the NIHR Press Office, ensuring that efficient processes are in place and that there is a culture of proactivity and creative thinking;
- Build and maintain relationships with key national and trade reporters and coach the Press Office team to do likewise;
- Pitch stories to print and broadcast media and coach the Press Office team to do likewise;
- Build and maintain a network of internal relationships, enabling you to stay abreast of key developments and build a pipeline of stories that create awareness and understanding of the NIHR, its priorities and impacts;
- Build and maintain a network of internal relationships across NIHR and within DHSC, enabling you to stay abreast of key developments and build a pipeline of stories that create awareness and understanding of the NIHR, its priorities and impacts;
- Liaise with relevant media and policy teams at DHSC to ensure that media plans are aligned, that potential sensitivities are flagged and managed, and that Ministers are engaged where appropriate;
- Develop and promote NIHR spokespeople (including Prof Chris Whitty who co-leads the NIHR at DHSC and will soon be the nation's Chief Medical Officer), ensuring that they have the support they need in terms of training, information, messaging and Q&A;



- Build and maintain relationships with communications teams in Universities, NHS Trusts and NIHR partner organisations, identifying opportunities for collaboration;
- Ensure that media stories are amplified through engaging digital and social media content, working with socially-active partners and colleagues to extend reach;
- Develop and deliver a pipeline of blogs and op-eds, working in collaboration with spokespeople, NIHR-funded researchers and partner organisations;
- Represent NIHR in the planning and delivery of the annual MRC-NIHR-Wellcome Press and Communication Officers' Conference;
- Brief CPB and coordinating centre directors on media opportunities and issues and advise on handling strategies;
- Work with the Press Office team, CPB and relevant DHSC teams to ensure that issues management processes are fit for purpose;
- Evaluate media results in a way that aids future planning and is meaningful to senior executives'.

These duties provide a framework for the role and should not be regarded as a definitive list. Other reasonable duties may be required consistent with the grade of the post.

What will you bring to the role?

As NIHR Media Lead, you will have:

- Extensive and significant experience working in journalism, for a public relations agency and/or as part of a press office team;
- Substantial knowledge of health research in the industry or non-commercial sectors, in the NHS, academic or clinical research setting;
- Excellent and well-evidenced ability to build relationships with journalists, identify, shape and 'sell' stories, and successfully generate print/ broadcast coverage;
- A keen interest in the health and care environment, with a network of relevant contacts and an understanding of how to leverage the news and health policy agenda;
- Excellent writing, editing and verbal communications skills, with the ability to make complex information engaging and accessible and good attention to detail;



- Experience of initiating and/or embedding change;
- Evidence of having worked successfully with corporate and expert spokespeople, including development of authored blogs and op-eds;
- Experience of developing engaging digital communications to increase the reach and impact of news stories;
- Experience of anticipating and managing media issues, to include exercising good judgement under pressure;
- Strong interpersonal skills, with the ability to engage with and command the respect of colleagues and stakeholders at all levels;
- The ability to handle ambiguity and exercise influence without authority;
- Resilient, motivated and deadline-driven, able to work alone or as part of a team, willing to demonstrate flexibility within working patterns to include regular travel in England and participation in an out-of-hours Press Office rota;
- Bachelor's degree level qualification or equivalent experience;
- Competent skills in Google and Microsoft Office applications.

You may also have:

- Experience of building/ leading a press office operation;
- Experience of working in a large, complex and distributed organisation;
- Experience of working with or for a government department;
- A degree in science;
- A relevant professional qualification and/or membership of a professional body such as the CIPR or Stempra.

How to apply

You can apply for this role online; more guidance can be found on our [How to Apply](#) information page. Applications should be submitted by **23.59** (UK time) on the advertised closing date.



Contact information

To explore the post further or for any queries you may have, please contact:

Frances Beves, NIHR Director of Communications

Tel: +44 (0)20 3328 6741

Email: frances.beves@nihr.ac.uk

Additional information

Working for the University of Leeds

Find out more about the benefits of working for the University of Leeds on our [Working at Leeds](#) information page.

Candidates with disabilities

Information for candidates with disabilities, impairments or health conditions, including requesting alternative formats, can be found on our [Accessibility](#) information page or by getting in touch with us at disclosure@leeds.ac.uk.

Criminal record information

A criminal record check is not required for this position. However, all applicants will be required to declare if they have any 'unspent' criminal offences, including those pending.

You can find out more about required checks and declarations in our [Criminal Records](#) information page.

