Responding to a Crisis

Crisis communications is the process by which an organisation manages communications regarding a major incident, allegation or perception that can seriously threaten its reputation and has the potential to negatively influence its stakeholders.

It is important to anticipate and identify potential crises at an early stage. Adherence to relevant policies, such as safeguarding, and good planning with appropriate risk assessments are designed to minimise the likelihood of unexpected events.

The main aim of any crisis communications plan is damage limitation. Undertaking the process of crisis planning can also help staff to identify any knowledge or skills gaps within the organisation prior to any crisis incident and take action to address these early on.

Actions to be Taken

In the event of a major incident, crisis or allegation, only those identified as part of the crisis management team are authorised to speak to the media or publish information on behalf of Hertfordshire Golf.

A major incident, crisis or allegation must be reported immediately to the County Secretary who will liaise with appropriate Board Members and will identify media spokespeople and manage media enquiries.

In the event of an incident the following procedure will be followed:

- Establish a crisis management team
- Identify media spokespeople
- Agree a protocol for managing media enquiries and working with the media
- Gather all the facts and prepare a holding statement
- Consider any legal support needs
- Agree what, how and when to brief staff
- Agree which other key stakeholders need to be informed
- Deliver the information
- Monitor the situation
- Review and evaluate how well the plan worked

A media statement checklist is included as Appendix A.

Responsible Person: Director of Club Engagement
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Appendix A

Media Statements: Points to Check

State the facts
Make sure you have all the facts and that these are confirmed before issuing anything publicly. Do not include anything uncertain or unconfirmed. If in doubt, leave it out.

Show you care
Express concern for the people affected and their families.

Avoid casting blame or saying "no comment"
Both of these risks making your organisation appear negative or defensive.

Keep it short and clear
Three to four sentences will normally suffice.
Avoid any ambiguous phrases that could be misinterpreted.

Be consistent
Anything you issue in a holding statement must be in line with statements issued later that day or further down the line.

Acknowledge any wrongdoing/public concern if appropriate
Be honest, acknowledge any wrongdoing – if appropriate and you have checked that this will not cause any legal issues - but do also acknowledge public concern (you can acknowledge concern without admitting fault).

Demonstrate commitment
Highlight any positive action your organisation is taking to resolve the issue.

Sound human
Focus on your concern for the people affected, not the processes involved.
Avoid jargon or anything that sounds bureaucratic or makes you appear like a faceless or uncaring organisation.

Communicate regularly
Keep your stakeholders and the wider public informed on key developments/latest updates during a crisis incident. Avoiding creating a wall of silence.