

## Media tips

Any outbreak of COVID-19 is likely to attract media interest. In some cases, the media will play an important role in getting messages to the public, including reassurance or public health information.

It is useful to have a plan in place for how you will deal with this and who in your organisation might lead any media response.

### Be prepared:

- Identify the best person in your organisation to speak to the media. This should be someone who is comfortable speaking to the media and will be able to offer reassurance and confidence.
- Plan your message – think about what is likely to be the most important message for your organisation and for the wider public.
- Remind staff of any media policies and check your sign off procedures – this will help to prevent any delays.
- Be aware of the latest public health messaging (available elsewhere in toolkit), as it will be important to reinforce these messages where you can.
- Be alert to possible calls from journalists. Check the credentials of those asking for information and if you are not sure take their number, check and call them back.

### If you get a call from the media:

- Don't assume you know why they are calling or that they know about the outbreak.
- Find out where they are calling from, who else they have spoken to and what deadline they are working to.
- Take their name, number and email address and tell them someone will get back to them.
- If you have a communication team or press office, contact them for support.

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## How to respond:

- Always be honest and polite.
- Avoid denials or no comment answers – they won't help your reputation.
- If you can, highlight the positive actions you have taken.
- Liaise with your public health or environmental health contacts, who will be able to give you advice on any health messages.
- Always remember to communicate with your staff before you communicate with the media.

## Suggested statement:

What you will want or need to say will depend on the circumstances of the outbreak.

An example statement could be similar to this:

"We have had a (small) number of staff / children / pupils / students displaying symptoms of COVID-19 and they are currently isolating while awaiting the results of a test.

"The safety of our school / college community and the wider public is really important to us and we are working with public health authorities to make sure we are following all of the correct procedures.

"This is an isolated incident and we are doing everything we can to prevent the spread of the virus." (You could then give details of some of the measures taken in your premises to support social distancing etc and any specific actions you are taking).

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