

# Senior External Affairs Manager

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Reports to: Assistant Director of Communications

Location: London, with some remote working

Role type and grade: 18-month fixed-term contract; full-time; grade B.

## About NHS Confederation

The NHS Confederation is the membership organisation that brings together, supports, and speaks for the whole healthcare system in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The members we represent employ 1.5 million staff, care for more than 1 million patients a day and control £150 billion of public expenditure. We promote collaboration and partnership working as the key to improving population health, delivering high-quality care, and reducing health inequalities.

## About the Role

The Senior External Affairs Manager is responsible for setting the NHS Confederation's strategy for how it engages with central government, parliamentarians, political parties and national stakeholders so that the organisation can effectively influence on behalf of its members. In addition, the postholder will oversee communications for distinct policy programmes and campaigns.

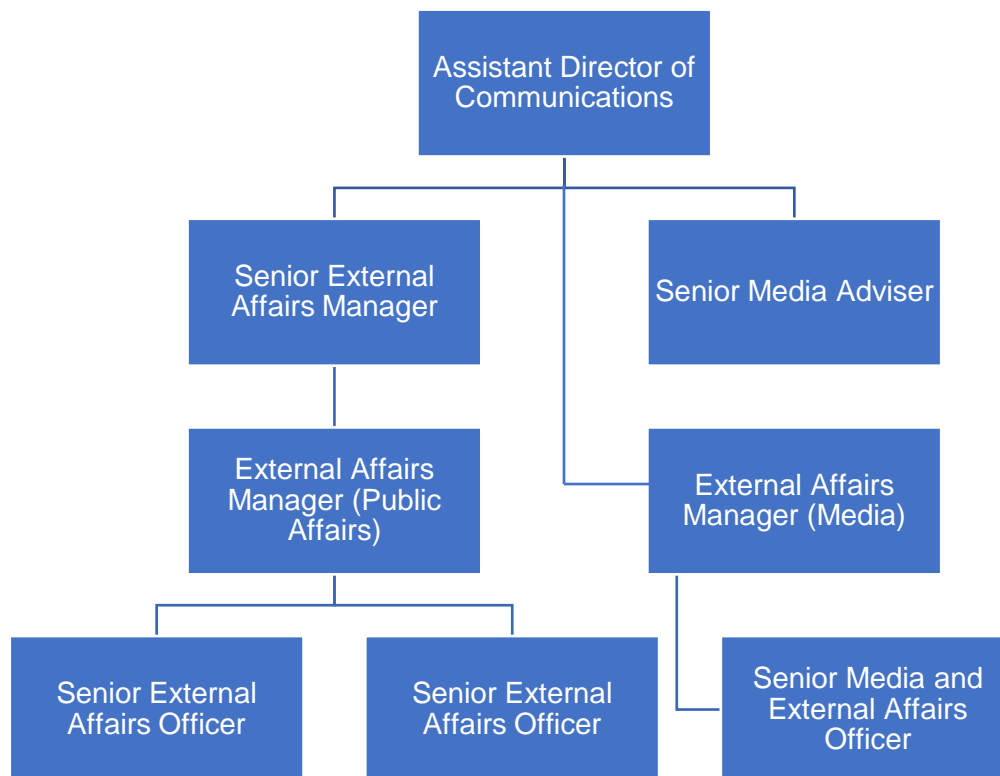
This post will support the expansion of the organisation's political and cross-Whitehall connections and its public affairs ambitions following the 2024 UK General Election. The NHS is a major priority for the new government and we will be increasing our political engagement on behalf of our members – both nationally and regionally as we respond to the government's devolution agenda.

## Structure

The communications department is made up of the following units: external affairs; content (digital, editorial, and audio visual); membership communications; and our team that leads the delivery of NHS Employers communications activities.

The senior external affairs manager is part of the external affairs unit. This team is at the heart of the organisation's external influencing. By integrating its functions across public affairs and press office, it has responsibility for managing the NHS Confederation's public profile and strategic relationships, supporting the organisation to influence on behalf of its members across NHS trusts, integrated care systems and primary care. The unit spans media relations, national stakeholder engagement, parliamentary and Government relations, strategic planning and elements of social media delivery.

The post reports into the Assistant Director of Communications.



# Responsibilities

- Lead and oversee the NHS Confederation's strategy for how it communicates and engages with MPs, peers, government officials and their influencers, corporately and across its English networks. This includes leading on a bespoke plan to widen the NHS Confederation's government and parliamentary engagement beyond the traditional (i.e. health and care focused) departments and national bodies, as well as the organisation's strategy for engaging the new government.
- Lead the strategy for how the NHS Confederation can communicate effectively on behalf of its members with elected mayors and other parts of local government given the government's devolution agenda.
- Work with the director of communications and assistant director of communications to deliver external affairs consultancy support to our members and partners.
- Play a central role in advising internal colleagues (including the chief executive, chair, directors and the strategic policy team) on opportunities to influence, and on what constitutes effective political, government and stakeholder engagement. For staff this includes ensuring relevant policies and strategies are communicated and adhered to.
- Ensure the organisation critically reviews the quality, depth and range of its relationships with stakeholders, including corporately, via coalitions, and at the most senior levels. This includes with government departments and the main political parties, national bodies, Royal Colleges, professional representative bodies, think tanks, and patient charities.
- Alongside the assistant director of communications, serve as the main public affairs adviser to the chief executive and chair, including giving counsel on potential issues and opportunities.
- Support members to deliver effective public affairs activity of their own via workshops / webinars, resources and templates, and providing general guidance, as appropriate.
- Work with the external affairs manager (public affairs) and team to deliver the organisation's engagement across the political party conferences, including participation and planning of any 'fringe' events, networking opportunities for the chief executive / leading director, as well as events on the parliamentary estate, ensuring budgets are adhered to.
- Deputise for the assistant director of communications, including attending key internal and external meetings, providing communications evaluation and analysis, and approving plans and copy from the team when needed.
- Participate in the press office on-call rota so that the organisation can provide a 24/7 service to the media, members and senior colleagues. An on-call allowance is provided for this responsibility.
- Participate in cross-organisational teams to implement specific policy influencing, project delivery, income generation and/or communications projects/campaigns, via the communication department's account management system.
- Lead the public affairs component of the external affairs team including line management of the external affairs manager (external affairs) who line manages two senior officers, ensuring that objectives are set, appraisals are undertaken, and professional development is actively supported and managed.
- Ensure clear objectives and evaluation metrics are embedded in all the organisation's public affairs work.

The senior external affairs manager position is primarily a proactive-orientated and strategic role, aimed at ensuring the NHS Confederation has strong relationships and is engaging in the most effective ways across Whitehall so that we can influence positive changes in policy, as well as perceptions about the NHS to benefit our members. The external affairs manager (public affairs), whom the senior external affairs manager line manages, is responsible for the day-to-day management and delivery of the organisation's public affairs and stakeholder engagement activity, such as briefings for parliamentarians, meetings with stakeholders, official correspondence, evidence submissions to parliamentary committees, coalition management, and political monitoring; however, there will be occasions when the postholder will need to provide support and supervision of this activity.

# Person Specification

## Essential criteria

1. Significant demonstrable experience in public affairs, either in-house, for an agency, or having worked in government or Parliament, including lobbying parliamentarians, central Government and national bodies for change.
2. Considerable experience of developing and delivering successful public affairs strategies and campaigns that meet organisational objectives.
3. Effective networker with established contacts across Whitehall and the political parties and strong experience of building and maintaining relationships with external stakeholders.
4. Strong experience of providing public affairs counsel to senior colleagues, including the ability to deliver this advice autonomously and at short notice.
5. Very strong writing skills, with specific experience in producing engaging copy for political and government audiences.
6. Ability to consistently horizon scan, model best practice and learn from success and failure to drive continuous improvement and innovation across communications activities. This includes a good understanding of strategic planning and how to evaluate public affairs activity.
7. Excellent organisational and project management skills, with the tenacity to drive forward projects from inception to completion.
8. Strong public speaking skills, including delivering presentations, providing verbal updates and advice, and running workshops.
9. Experience in line management and developing team performance.

## Desirable criteria

1. Experience of working within healthcare communications and/or for a membership body.
2. Detailed knowledge of the health and care environment including policy-influencing processes and politics.
3. Experience of providing paid-for external affairs consultancy support, e.g. as a freelancer or via a consultancy.
4. Experience of managing external events, ideally including within political party conferences and alongside stakeholders.
5. Experience of communications disciplines other than public affairs, including account management, social media and mainstream media relations.