

Senior External Affairs Officer

Reports to: External Affairs Manager (Public Affairs)

Location: London, with some remote working

Grade: D

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

We are looking for a public affairs professional to join our fast-paced, supportive and hard-working team at the NHS Confederation and help to place the views of health leaders at the forefront of government and national policy making in this time of opportunity.

As a senior external Affairs officer, you will be responsible for delivering and supporting a range of activities, including:

- helping us maintain strong links with officials across Whitehall, arm's length bodies, and other representative bodies
- acting as a key liaison point for our engagement with MPs and Lords
- drafting official correspondence and supporting briefings for our senior leaders ahead of important external engagements
- overseeing our contributions to parliamentary inquiries and consultations
- laying a key role in our external monitoring and horizon scanning
- managing a number of communications accounts on key issues for the organisation.

Responsibilities

Government and Parliamentary engagement

- Support our monitoring of key developments in parliament and from government, working with colleagues to ensure that updates and briefings are shared internally and with our members in a timely manner and to a high standard. This includes liaising with external monitoring agencies, when needed.
- Support our communications with MPs, Peers and government officials. This includes facilitating meetings, drafting correspondence, and coordinating content for briefings so that issues and developments affecting our members can be progressed and accurately relayed, and that we are making their voice heard in Whitehall and beyond.
- Support our involvement in the political party conferences and other key engagements opportunities with MPs and political contacts.
- Maintain up to date knowledge and contact lists of our key contacts across government, including the Department of Health and Social Care, as well as with MPs and Peers.
- Support the organisation's formal responses to relevant parliamentary inquiries and other influencing opportunities, in conjunction with colleagues across the business. This includes coordinating briefings for spokespeople with a wide variety of colleagues and liaising with parliamentary clerks and government communications colleagues.

Stakeholder relations

- Work with the External Affairs Manager (Public Affairs) to support the organisation to build and maintain effective relationships with a broad range of stakeholders, both corporately and at the most senior levels. This includes with the Royal Colleges, professional representative bodies, think tanks, civil service departments, Arm's Length Bodies, and patient charities.
- Support the delivery of communications activities across the stakeholder coalitions that the NHS Confederation hosts and is a member of, in conjunction with the External Affairs Manager (Public Affairs) and the Assistant Director of Communications.
- Monitor key developments across our most important stakeholders, including consultations and other engagement opportunities, ensuring that updates and briefings are shared with colleagues and our members in a timely manner and to a high standard, so that opportunities to influence policy developments are identified and explored fully.
- Support the drafting of communications intended for our corporate stakeholders, alongside other members of the external affairs team. This includes supporting our corporate publications and other announcements, so that our strategic partners are aware of our work and we can exert influence.
- Contribute, and when required, manage elements of engagement plans. This could include plans to support the work of the stakeholder coalitions that the NHS Confederation hosts and our cross-membership projects, such as campaigns.
- Manage a number of communications accounts on key issues relevant to the work of the organisation, working closely with networks, the policy and the commercial team to devise and deliver communications plans.
- Alongside the External Affairs Manager (Public Affairs) and the Assistant Director of Communications, advise the chief executive, chair, and directors on their direct engagement with key stakeholders, including in helping them to prepare for key meetings and events, and helping to support the organisation's commitment to diversity.

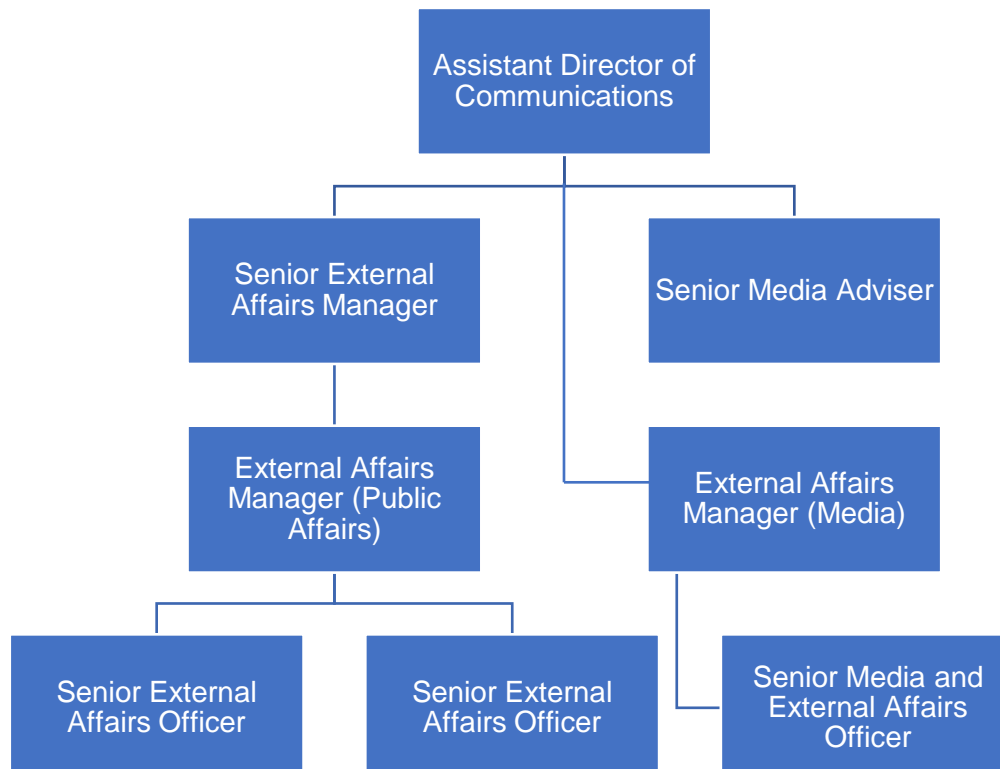
- Work with External Affairs Manager (Public Affairs) to deliver processes that allow us to monitor and evaluate the impact of our public affairs work.
- Organise and support high quality events to engage, obtain insight and enable discussion between members, stakeholders, and other decision-makers. This could range from seeking speaker suggestions for events, to facilitating parliamentary / stakeholder receptions, conference events or policy-orientated roundtables.
- Plan and co-host quarterly stakeholder meetings for counterparts working across health and care.

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 officer 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 External Affairs Manager (Public Affairs).



Person Specification

Essential criteria

1. At least three years' experience of having worked in a public affairs role, within central or local government, or in a political environment.
2. Experience in contributing to communications or influencing plans that meet organisational objectives, alongside a broad range of colleagues and stakeholders.
3. Experience of providing advice to senior spokespeople.
4. Experience of political and stakeholder monitoring.
5. Experience of producing written communications to a high standard and within deadlines, including official correspondence and drafting briefings on policy developments.
6. Good understanding of government and parliamentary processes.
7. Good knowledge of MPs, Peers government, and senior stakeholder contacts in health and care.
8. Knowledge of and interest in the health and social care environment, the current political context, and current affairs more broadly.

Desirable criteria

1. Experience of or knowledge of working with the media.
2. Experience of working within healthcare communications and/or for a membership body.
3. Experience of working in a complex policy environment, with multiple stakeholder relationships to support.
4. Experience of working in an account management setup.
5. Experience in communicating through social media channels in a professional context.