Communications Framework

for

College of Psychiatrists of Ireland

External Affairs & Policy Department

2023

(Review in 2026)

Introduction

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is the professional body for psychiatrists in the Republic of Ireland. It is the sole body recognised by the HSE and the Medical Council for the training of doctors to become specialists in psychiatry, and for the continuing assurance of the career long competence of specialists in psychiatry.

The College advocates for best practice in psychiatry and fit for purpose mental health services, for the benefit of the public.

College Mission Statement

The Mission of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is to promote excellence in the practice of psychiatry.

The College fulfils its mission through the following actions:

1. Education and Training of psychiatrists
2. Provision of lifelong learning for psychiatrists
3. Advocacy for resources to support best practice in the delivery of mental health services.
4. Promoting best practice in education, training and research in psychiatry.
5. Public education in issues related to psychiatric illness, psychiatric services and mental health promotion.

Background

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland (CPsychI) is constituted under 4 departments:

- Professional Competence
- Postgraduate Training
- External Affairs and Policy (responsible for communications & public education)
- Corporate Affairs

Objectives of College Communication Framework

The overriding goal of the Framework is to ensure that all communications and activities support the mission of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland (the College / CPsychI).

The College will communicate with its members and stakeholders effectively through a variety of tools and formats so that greater awareness of the key issues relating to the College, mental health, mental distress, mental illness and best practice in psychiatry is created.

The College will seek to educate and advocate for all levels of mental health, mental distress and mental illness but will focus particularly on serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, severe depression and eating disorders or other conditions where intervention from specialist psychiatry is needed. The College will promote understanding of what is best practice in psychiatry through proactive media and stakeholder interaction, public education and reaction to public debate on psychiatry.

Guiding Principles for internal and external communication

The CPsychI communication Framework has been formulated on the following principles:

- Communications on key issues will be considered and relevant.
- Communication will be open and transparent.
- Communication will be made in a reasonable and appropriate fashion relevant to the seriousness of the issue. (See categories below).
- Most relevant information and issues for dissemination or discussion will be widely available on our website, in e-newsletters and in published reports.
- College communication will aim to be accessible, easy to understand, relevant, reliable and robust.
- Key communications decisions must be considered and approved by the Director of Communication and Public Education in consultation with the President, Chief Executive and Management Committee and be in line with the College mission, byelaws and processes in line with categories below before being acted on.

Stakeholders

Key stakeholders include:

- CPsychI members, faculties, SIGs and other committees
- Registered Trainees (on BST and HST Training schemes)
- HSE National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP)
- Forum of Post Graduate Training Bodies
- Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP)
- Health Service Executive
- Mental Health Commission
- The Medical Council of Ireland
- Health & Social Care professionals and groups that represent them
- Service users, carers and groups that represent them including the College REFOCUS
- Department of Health (and other government departments when relevant)
- Independent Mental Health Service providers
- Advocacy Groups such as Mental Health Reform and Mental Health Ireland
- Other health agencies such as HIQA, Tusla

Audiences

Key audience groups include:

- CPsychI members
- Health and Social Care professionals and groups that represent them
- Service users, carers and groups that represent them
- Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP)
- Members of the Oireachtas and the Department of Health
- Health Service Executive
- Mental Health Commission
- The Medical Council of Ireland
- Independent Mental Health Service providers
- Advocacy Groups
- General Public
- Media – traditional and digital
- Other national and international professional groups
- Other health agencies

Key Strategic Aims

1. The College, as the representative body for psychiatry, will conduct all communications in accordance with its overall aims and objectives as laid down in the constitution and by-laws of the College.
2. All communications will give due regard to national legislation and other guidelines from relevant Irish bodies such as the Mental Health Commission, Irish Medical Council, Health Services Executive and the Irish Health Products Regulatory Authority.
3. All communications will give due regard to the policies and recommendations of international sister professional bodies and relevant international bodies such as the World Psychiatric Association, the World Health Organisation and the European Psychiatric Association. Overall communications will be designed to provide clarity, understanding and greater awareness of best practice in psychiatry and in the delivery of mental health services.
4. The College will also endeavour to bring consistency to public discussion and debate on key issues in psychiatric practice, mental health service delivery and other mental health issues to minimise the risk that lack of clarity and consistency could create confusion and concern among key audience groups. It will aim to achieve this through advocacy and education on all levels of mental health, mental distress and mental illness, focussing particularly on persons with schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, severe depression and eating disorders, or other conditions where intervention from specialist psychiatry is required and beneficial.

Who speaks on behalf of the College?

1. Any communication by College spokespersons must be congruent with the College mission, constitution and by-laws, EAP Department SOP, Media and Reputation Risk process and any relevant College policy documents and position papers.

2. Any major and/or significant communications from the College should come from the President or the Director of Communication and Public Education unless they have delegated communication on a particular issue to another member.

3. If possible, communication on major issues that the College does not have an agreed position on should not occur without consultation with members of the College Management Committee and the relevant faculty or committee chair. If appropriate and warranted the wider membership will also be consulted.

4. Members can only speak on behalf of the College if they have received approval from the Director of Communication and Public Education and/or the EAP Manager and, if required, the Management Committee.

5. The College, as a professional body, respects the autonomy of its members, and recognises there will be issues on which members differ. Despite the resultant difficulty in achieving consensus on every issue the College may comment on issues related to psychiatry if

    a. the Management Committee and/or the relevant chair(s) of faculties/committees and/or when required for an issue of significance (see category table) that a majority of the College Council supports CPsychI making comment on a particular issue and

    b. the Director of Communications and Public Education, and when required the President and/or Management Committee, has taken all possible steps to fulfil the requirements of the motions on this issue agreed at the 2013 EGM of the College (vide infra in Government Submissions).

6. Members who speak publicly on matters in their own right are: -

    a. asked to make it clear to the audience that they are doing so in their own right (and not on behalf of the College) and provide a title to that effect.

    b. requested, if possible, to let the EAP Department know when planning to speak on a major issue, as media queries may result and advance warning facilitates CPsychI preparation for such queries.

    c. as a member, entitled and encouraged to seek advice and help on their delivery from the EAP Department prior to speaking publicly.

7. The College does not comment publicly on or advocate for individual services, industrial relations issues or current, pending and past cases either in services or the courts. The College, from time to time, will comment on situations relevant to the mission of the College, in a broad sense with reference to the relevant recognised and recommended best practices and to national and international policy procedures and documents.

Management of Crisis, College Reputation and Media Risk

The Communications strategy will prioritise disseminating and developing positions and statements on matters that the College considers relevant to the public interest, policy makers and other medical, health and social care professionals. When the College is requested to address matters in the public arena, it will respond with due cognisance of the level of risk and potential harm associated with the particular issue to stakeholders and those vulnerable in society. Any such response will keep in mind the importance of ensuring communication further promotes the aims and objectives of the College by providing clear positions and views. Where this will not be the case, the request for communication should be declined.

The EAP department has a SOP on College media interaction outlining and summarising the process for media issues of varying level. See appendix 8.

To assist in dealing with such matters the following hierarchy of issues has been agreed:

Category 1 – areas of high risk
Category 2 - areas of medium risk
Category 3 - areas of low risk.

(See next page for description and appendices for graphic version of process)

Category 1: A National Issue and/or potential direct harm to the reputation of the College. The response will be managed by the Director of Communication and Public Education and the External Affairs and Policy Department. All relevant personnel of the College, officers/ directors and staff, will be involved in constructing a response on issues that the College does not have an agreed position on. Any public response will be approved by the Director of Communication and Public Education in consultation with the President of the College (or the Vice President if the President is not available).

Category 2: A Priority Issue, of particular specialist relevance and importance, but not a National Issue. Such issues will be managed by the Director of Communication and Public Education and the External Affairs and Policy Department in consultation with the chair of the relevant CPsychI faculty or committee where appropriate. Chairs will consult their faculty members on issues where an agreed position is not in existence.

The President, Vice-President and CEO will be informed of any such public communication.

Category 3: Administrative and lower level pro-active and specialist issues. These will be managed by the External Affairs and Policy Department and in consultation with the Director of Communication and Public Education and the chair(s) of the relevant faculties and committees if needed. E.g., Statements on conferences, debates, specialist matters etc. Chairs will consult their faculty members on issues where an agreed position is not in existence.

The President, Vice-President and CEO will be informed of any such public communication.

Internal Communication

The College operations, business and strategy implementation and tasks are managed by the Management Committee (consisting of elected officers who also sit on Council) and supported by the senior managers on the CPsychI staff team.

Communication with members, both routine and other, will be achieved through the website, emails, letters, eFlyers and eNewsletters, conferences, workshops and faculty/SIG/committee and other meetings.

Communications queries from College members will be managed in a structured and timely fashion. Additional administrative queries will be dealt with by the appropriate team member who will consult with their manager, other staff members and/or the relevant Faculty Head/Department Lead/the Chief Executive as required.

Where an issue/problem of significance is raised by an individual member, a decision will be taken by the President, CEO & Director of Communication and Public Education and/or Manager EAP who will manage the specific issue within the College structure. The timeliness of processing this decision is of critical importance. All communications will receive acknowledgment and a preliminary response within 3 to 5 working days. If further contact is needed, a timeframe for this will be clearly stated in the preliminary communication.

Any member wishing to pursue a query related to communication, policy or public education should contact the External Affairs and Policy Department (EAP) by telephone or email. Faculty and committee chairs wishing to discuss a public education or communication issue may contact the Director of Communication and Public Education directly or through the EAP Department.

External Channels of Communications

The College will communicate externally through a range of communication means - website, social media, emails, e-newsletters, documents, press statements, media interviews, publications, videos and so on. All communication for external media must be cleared by the Manager of the External Affairs and Policy Department (EAP) and/or the Director of Communication and Public Education unless this is officially delegated to a specific person or group within the College.

The protocol and management of CPsychI communication externally utilising social media platforms are outlined in appendix 7 and 8. 'A Social and Digital Media Policy' for CPsychI team members forms part of the College Handbook for staff.

Queries and complaints from the general public will be dealt with following the CPsychI protocol outlined in appendix 4.

College Website

The CPsychI website **www.irishpsychiatry.ie** is the main communication tool for external audiences (public, media, allied professionals, government bodies, NGOs and so forth) and internal affairs (members & trainees), as well CPD accredited courses, CPsychI courses & events and information on membership and being a member. It provides information under several sections, some of which will have restricted access (i.e. for members and/or trainees only).

It comprises a route into the VLE (virtual learning environment) for training modules run using Moodle and software and online CPD for members - CPD diary and Hot Topics online.

The CPsychI website content and monitoring are co-ordinated and managed by the EAP Manager in conjunction with the EAP team and College office team managers.

The VLE is co-ordinated and managed by the CPsychI PGT e-learning team, the Head of Courses and E Learning and a team of psychiatrists.

The Director of Communication and Public Education is responsible for editorial oversight of content that is not day to day information.
Content should be planned in a timely fashion following the College protocol for presenting and seeking approval of papers or the Blog /News Protocol or other relevant protocols. (Appendix 4).

Content and communication on the website will be as up to date as possible, informative and in line with the CPsychI communication strategy objectives and overall goals of the College and its specialist areas and workgroups.

Publications

Newsletters

The College, through each department, publishes regular and ad hoc ebulletins to all members, and to segments of members (for example trainees, PCS only members). The content of these ebulletins/newsletters will focus on CPsychI activities, updates to members, publications & research within CPsychI faculties and other relevant College notices/news. E-bulletins can also provide a forum for discussion of issues of relevance to members. The manager and/or director of each area will approve newsletters of relevance from their department and, when necessary, will seek the approval of the Chief Executive and/or the President and/or the Management Committee. Design and College corporate branding is guided and overseen by the EAP department.

Process for development of College Papers

Proposals for College papers can be made through the relevant faculty or committee. Once accepted by the relevant faculty/committee, the proposal must be provided to the Management committee via EAP Director/Manager using a proforma proposal form. If the proposal is accepted, then it will be developed to final draft form in line with the guidelines in the appendices of this document and submitted to the Director of Communication and Public Education and the Management Committee for approval. Once accepted by both, the final draft will be sent to the Council of the College for final approval and, if Council agrees, it will be published by CPsychI in the relevant format and distributed to relevant stakeholders.

Paper Categories:

- Positions
- Policy
- Perspectives
- College Statements
- Government Submissions
- Other submission of relevance to psychiatry and mental health services

Positions

The College will develop and hold written positions on a range of formally agreed, relevant issues, which will be made available to members and other stakeholders.

Policy

The College will enunciate policy positions on relevant subjects from time to time which will guide the Council and Faculties of the College in their work in developing the role and activities of the College.

Perspectives

The College will publish papers referred to as Perspectives. The aim of Perspectives will be to stimulate productive debate on issues in Psychiatry that may be such as to militate against CPsychI having an agreed Policy or Position on them but are of such professional and/or public interest that attention and debate needs to occur. A Perspective may be submitted to Council for approval by any Faculty or Committee of the College.

A Perspective could form the basis of / may have potential for further development into a CPsychI Policy or Position paper.

CPsychI Statements

All statements must be communicational externally via the EAP Department. The EAP department, and with the Director of Communication & Public Education, and with or by a partner communications agency, and in consultation with a faculty chair or other faculty member nominated when required, will proactively and reactively endeavour to prepare statements on issues pertaining to psychiatry and the College mission. Council of CPsychI and/or any Faculty/SIG/Committee, and/or on the advice of the Management Committee or Department Head, may and can prepare and issue statements through and with the support of the EAP Department, on issues relevant to the public and national interest in relation to Psychiatry.

Each Faculty will endeavour to have outline statements prepared on issues anticipated to be relevant to the interests of CPsychI and the public interest.

Government Submissions

The College will make submissions to Government or Statutory Bodies either in response to calls for such or on issues where the Council or Management or a faculty deem such necessary for the College to fulfil its mission. Where possible the membership or relevant groups of members will be consulted before the submission is made. If time does not allow for this then any submission must be made with reference to previous College discussions, if any, on the issue.

Each faculty could at the end of each faculty Meeting, prepare a list of up to three topics/areas for external highlight – for example, for advocacy, of concern and/to raise awareness of positive developments of interest to the public and policy makers. The EAP department in consultation with a faculty chair or other faculty member nominated, will endeavour to prepare appropriate communication such as short information sheets or submissions or media releases.

The President and Council must consult and ascertain the views of the membership of the College prior to submissions being made on major legislative and policy–matters affecting psychiatry to Government (Motion passed at the Extraordinary General Meeting of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland held on Thursday 12th September 2013 at 2.00 pm in the Davenport Hotel, Dublin 2.).

The view of REFOCUS is also ascertained prior to submissions being finalised.

The methodology for drafting, sign off and amendment of each of these documents are outlined in appendices 1,2 & 3 of this document.

Process for amending the Communications framework

Any member of the College can raise a proposed amendment to the College communication framework.

Any such proposal should be made to the Director of Communication and Public Education. The suggested amendment will be considered by Director of Communication and Public Education and in consultation with the Management Committee. If the Management Committee accept the proposal, it will send it to Council for final approval and inclusion in the framework.

The decision made in regard to the proposed amendment will be communicated to the proposer.

Appendices

Appendix 1.



Position Statements

Definition: A statement of a point of view or attitude on a certain question and /or topic that is accepted as an official view of the College and in line with the mission of the College to promote best practice and highest possible standards in psychiatry.

Protocol for Writing a Position Paper:

1. Any member of the College can propose that the College should take a position on a certain issue.
2. If a member of CPsychI wishes to propose a Position Statement they should initially make the proposal to/ via their faculty or Committee/SIG. CPsychI committees that have members who are not members of the College may also propose Position Statements for the College.
3. Proposals for position statements should include the following: Rationale for writing the paper; Issues which need to be addressed; Methodology and reasons for inclusions and exclusions; Names of contributors to the statement.
4. Proposals should be sent to the Director of Communication and Public Education for approval.
5. The Director of Communication and Public Education will recommend that a proposal should be developed into a Position Statement if the proposed Position Statement is congruent with the aims of the College.
6. Once the statement is completed it should be sent to the Director of Communication and Public Education for consideration.
7. The Director of Communication and Public Education may return the paper for editing or may refer it to the Management Committee with a recommendation for acceptance subject to distribution to faculties and committees for review and feedback including REFOCUS.
8. The Management Committee may return the paper for editing or may refer it to Council with a recommendation for acceptance.
9. Council may return for editing or accept it as a College Position paper.
10. This process will continue until Council is satisfied that the Position Paper represents appropriately the position of the majority of members and is congruent with the aims of the College.
11. The President following discussion with Management must consult and ascertain the views of the membership of the College and then seek Council approval of the final submission, prior to submissions being made to Government on major legislative and policy matters that affect psychiatry. (Motion passed at the Extraordinary General Meeting of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland held on Thursday 12th September 2013 at 2.00 pm in the Davenport Hotel, Dublin 2.).

Timescales:

In accepting a proposal for a Position Paper to be written the Management committee or Director of Policy and/ or Communication and Public Education should recommend a clear timeframe for completion and publication.

Appendix 2

Policies

A Policy is a plan or course of action intended to influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters, and in line with the mission of the College, to promote best practice and highest possible standards in psychiatry.

Protocol for writing Policies:

1. Any member of CPsychI can propose that the College should have a Policy on a certain issue.
2. If a member of CPsychI wishes to propose a Policy, they should initially make the proposal to/ via their faculty or committee/SIG. CPsychI committees that have members who are not members of the College may also propose Policy for the College.
3. Proposals for Policies should include the following: Rationale for the policy and the issues which need to be addressed, methodology and who it is intended for.
4. If accepted by the relevant faculty or committee/SIG proposals should be sent to Management Committee via the Director of Policy and/or the Director of Communication and Public Education.
5. The Director of Policy will recommend that a proposal should be developed into a Policy if the proposed Policy is congruent with the aims of the College.
6. The Director of Policy will delegate its development and distribute drafts for review by College faculties and committees including REFOCUS.
7. The final policy document must contain a systematic plan for enacting the policy.
8. Any final policy document must outline a process for review of the effect of the policy.
9. The Director of Policy will then send it to the Management Committee via the Director of Communication and Public Education with a recommendation for acceptance.
10. The Management Committee may return the policy for editing or may refer it to Council with a recommendation for acceptance.
11. Council may return the policy for editing or accept it as a College Policy.
12. This process will continue until Council is satisfied that the Policy represents appropriately the position of the majority of members and is congruent with the aims of the College.

Appendix 3

Perspectives

Perspectives are viewpoints on issues in Psychiatry that are of such a nature as to militate against the College having an agreed Policy or Position on them but are of such professional and/or public interest that attention and debate needs to occur. Perspectives will be developed to promote informed debate within the College and outside to help the College to develop policies or positions on complex issues related to the practice of psychiatry.

Protocol for writing Perspectives:

1. A perspective should address an issue relevant to psychiatry bringing together expert opinion and/ or data that will illuminate opinions and facts about the issue in a critical way. This can then lead to the formulation of conclusions that will be enunciated in the document to prompt further discussion within the membership of College and in the General Public once the perspective is published.

2. Perspectives do not represent College policy or an agreed position of the College.

3. Members of any College Faculty or Committee/ SIG may propose to their faculty or committee that an issue needs informed debate formalised as a perspective. Proposals for perspectives should be submitted, with the following information: Reasons for the perspective, broad theme/title, time scale for completion.

4. Before work commences on this perspective, the proposal should be sent by email to the Director of Communication and Public Education for approval. If agreement is forthcoming, then the proposer will be asked to develop the proposal into a Perspective.

5. Once the Perspective is written it will be sent to the Director of Communication and Public Education for review. This may result in requests for changes or clarifications. Once the Director of Communication and Public Education approves the final document, it will be sent to the Management Committee.

6. The Management Committee may return the final Perspective for editing or may refer it to Council with a recommendation for acceptance.

7. Council may return the document for editing or accept it and send it for publication by the College as Perspective.

Appendix 4

Procedure & Protocol for dealing with queries from the General Public.

1. Calls from members of the General Public requesting to speak to the President, Officers or Directors of the College.
    - State clearly that they do not work from these premises and that queries/requests can be made to them in writing (by letter or email). Provide the College mailing address and/or relevant college email address for the written query /request.
    - Do not offer to speak to any of the above on a caller's behalf.
    - Never allow direct telephone contact with the psychiatrist in question or provide their personal or work contact details.

2. Calls asking how to make a complaint about a psychiatrist.
    - State that the College is a professional membership organisation with an educational remit and is not a disciplinary body.
    - Callers should be directed to make a complaint to the psychiatrist's employer in the first instance.
    - Callers should also be directed to the Medical Council Ireland (information on their website www.medicalcouncil.ie) and explain they are the regulatory body for all doctors in Ireland.

3. Calls from people wishing to see a psychiatrist, either for themselves or a family member, friend and so on.
    - Advise them to go to a family doctor / GP for a referral.
    - Explain that psychiatrists work in catchment areas in the public health system and are accessed via referrals (from GPs) so it is not possible to 'choose' a psychiatrist within the public system.
    - Advise them that the College does not have lists of psychiatrists for this purpose.
    - Advise them that further information that may help is available on the CPsychI website.

4. Calls from people looking for details of private psychiatrists.
    - Suggest contacting private/independent service providers in their area or preferred location and explain that they exist in small numbers, but we cannot recommend or give lists.
    - Advise them to go to a family doctor/GP for a referral
    - Direct them to the information if relevant, on the CPsychI website and to the Medical Council to ensure the psychiatrists are registered.

5. Calls from solicitors.
    - It is College policy not to provide lists of those who give court reports to solicitors. They can access this information from the Law Society of Ireland.
    - If a solicitor names a psychiatrist (who may or may not have carried out work for them previously) ask that they email their specific request to you. Then contact the psychiatrist by telephone or email and let them decide if they wish to engage with the solicitor or not. If they wish to engage, they should contact the solicitor directly.

6. Calls asking to check or confirm if a psychiatrist is a member of the College and/or asking for their contact details.
    - Due to data protection regulation (currently GDPR) we do not provide:
        i. confirmation of whether a psychiatrist or trainee is a member or not
        ii. confirmation of whether a psychiatrist or trainee is currently or was previously on the College database
        iii. any contact details for a member without their consent. This includes from member to member – consent must be obtained first from the member whose contact details are required.

7. Calls not covered above such as information or advice or signposting requests
    - The CPsychI website provides good information and lists of relevant other organisations and callers can be directed to the right page or team members can read out themselves to the caller.
    - Calls of this nature and particularly those with distressing details should be logged on the relevant file in the z drive.
    - If further support is required, then it should be discussed with the team member's department head or ANO as designated.

Appendix 5

College Website - Protocol for Content & Design

1. **Updating & uploading new content** is carried out for each section of the website by the relevant CPsychI office team member. The CEO, EAP Manager, other EAP department team members and e-learning team member(s) have overall editorial access to the website *content management system (CMS)* and are named *administrators* on the CMS. Others have editorial access to specific areas only and are named *site editors* on the CMS. New content should not be published on any section of the website without prior approval of the relevant department/section manager & director.

   Updating content should be carried out on a regular basis to maintain a 'live' feeling to the site, as well as ensuring that information relevant to members, such as meeting time and dates, is changed in a timely fashion.

2. **SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) manual:** an e-manual is available which provides editors of the CMS details on uploading and editing content to maintain where appropriate a standard look and so forth. In addition, an independent website agency is available to help with queries around CMS, design developments and so forth.

3. **Member only sign in areas**

   Only current members of the College can access member only areas. This requires login with a username (email address as supplied to the College) and password (membership number).

Appendix 6

Protocol for College Blog and News section of website

CPsychI News/Blog:

The **CPsychI** External Affairs and Policy (EAP) Department maintains and moderates the blog on a day-to-day basis.

Function:

CPsychI hosts a blog/news section (hereafter referred to as Blog Posts) to highlight aspects of psychiatry, publish news of activity, events and updates of the College and CPsychI press statements. Blog posts will be written for all of the CPsychI target audiences - psychiatrists, mental health professionals, service users and carers and members of the public with an interest in mental health media, policy makers and so forth. Blog posts are personal or news items or professional perspectives to stimulate productive debate on issues in Psychiatry that are of particular relevance to Psychiatrists, Mental Health Professionals, Service Users and/or Carers. They are also aimed at the General Public and media as part of the public education remit.

Blog posts are not formal positions or policies of the CPsychI.

The advantages of having a blog are to generate sharable information; establishing the College as an information resource for members and the General Public; engaging with others on social media; building rapport with outside organisations and interested stakeholders; engaging with and educating members.

By posting regular, relevant content, the College will give its audience, both new and existing, an enticement to visit the website.

Blog Authors:

The Blog will be managed and drafted by the EAP team and will be authored by Members of the College, members of REFOCUS and others by invitation of the EAP Manager and/or Director of Communications and Public Education. Posts do not necessarily reflect the views of the College but should be congruent with the mission of CPsychI. The College will not publish content that does not reflect the College's aims and objectives. The College will not publish content that is harmful or offensive.

Posts meant for the College blog must be first sent for review and a final decision on posting by the EAP Manager and/or other EAP department team members and/or Director of Communications and Public Education depending on the content and topic.

Blog posts are welcome from Psychiatrists, Trainees, Mental Health Professionals, Service Users and Carers and other interested stakeholders. Posts will be published at the discretion of the EAP Manager and/or Director of Communications and Public Education or a person/group delegated to make this decision by the Director of Communications and Public Education.

Managing the Blog and News Section:

Comment functionality should allow the author and the Director of Communications and Public Education to disable responses as is appropriate for each Blog Post.

Blog responses are monitored by CPsychI staff working within the EAP Pillar and referred to the Director of Communications and Public Education if anything contentious is published online. Inappropriate or offensive comments will not be published.

Analytics will be used by CPsychI EAP team to monitor interaction with and visits to blog.

Appendix 7

Protocol for College Social Media Accounts

College Social Media:

As of 2023, the College uses one main form of Social Media:

Twitter: Micro Blogging service that enables users to send and read posts of up to 280 characters. (Tweeting). The college twitter handle is @irishpsychiatry.

Why the College uses Social Media:

Social Media is now equally if not more effective at reaching large audiences with messages the College wishes to convey and is particularly useful for disseminating press statements. Social media has the ability to bring greater attention and awareness to the work of the College, improve its reputation and allow fast communication with like-minded people.

Management of Social Media:

Social media is managed by the EAP team within the College under supervision of the EAP Manager and /or the Director of Communications and Public Education.

Content Shared on Social Media:

Any content posted by the College through Social Media channels reflects the official 'voice' of the College. Therefore, to compensate for the informal environment, a professional but natural and friendly tone is advised.

As much as is possible, links shared on social media should be directed back to the College website.

If the link is not directed back to the College website, the content of the webpage should not contradict the mission statement or positions that the College holds. Similar to the College blog & REFOCUS papers (see Appendix 6) tweets and articles shared through social media can serve as perspectives to stimulate productive debate on issues in psychiatry that are of particular relevance to Psychiatrists, Mental Health Professionals, Service Users and/or Carers.

Level of engagement:

Social media accounts must be updated regularly and consistently. Accounts should also be monitored regularly to ensure that comments/queries addressed to the College are responded to and that any inappropriate posts or interactions are dealt with promptly.

Negative Sentiment:

With increased posting frequency and higher levels of engagement, negative, inappropriate or aggressive sentiment from other users occurs.

Negative sentiment should be immediately reported to the EAP Manager and/or Director of Communications and Public Education. Depending on the level of engagement the negative post is garnering, it is best practice to acknowledge the tweet with a neutral reply. Most social media grievances can be nullified by helpful information.

If this does not solve the grievance, the conversation should be taken offline. Without agreeing or disagreeing with their statements, a direct message reply and/or with contact detail(s) for a member of EAP team that they can discuss the issue further with.

Legal considerations:

Social media is still a developing area in legal terms. While the medium may be different, many of the legal considerations associated with print and broadcast need to be borne in mind (such as libel or defamation).

Appendix 8

Standard Operating Procedure

College Media Interaction

Below is an easy reference to the process of dealing with media activity and queries and when they occur.

Media refers to all media platforms - national, regional and local broadcast and print media and social media (Twitter, Blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn and so on).

All queries by the media or about issues in the media must be directed to the EAP Department.

- The query must go to the manager first by phone and /or email**.**
- If the manager is unavailable, then the query should be directed to other team members within EAP.
- The Director of Communications & Public Education must be informed by the EAP department at some point. The timing of such contact will depend on the nature of the issue involved (See below).

Major issue

The Director of Communications, the President, the Vice-President, the Chief Executive and the Manager of EAP must be contacted by phone by the EAP Department and informed if:

- an issue arises in media that is of College members' concern, of national significance, of grave concern, of public safety and /or affects service users/patients, carers and the profession of psychiatry including trainees.
- the reputation of the College is at stake or incorrectly depicted in media.
- there is a risk of litigation involving College interest.
- urgent correction is required.

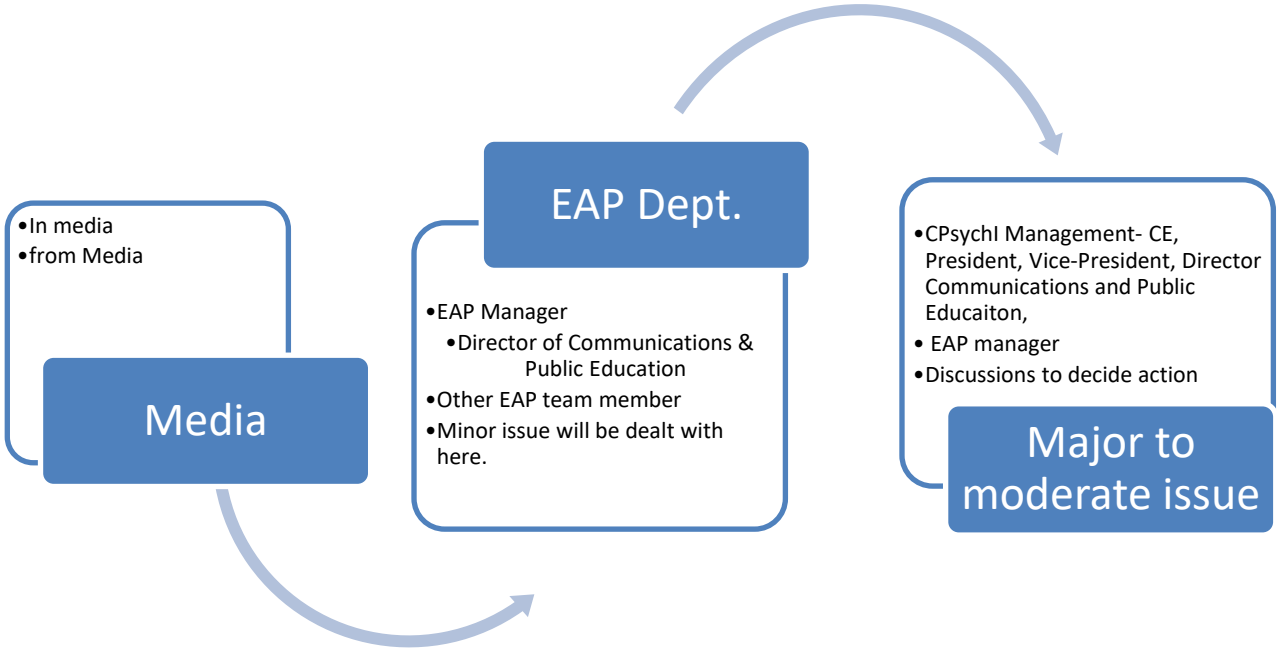
The Director of Communications and Public Education and/or the EAP Manager must be informed first of any major issue. Any response to a major Issue must come from the Director of Communication and Public Education and the Manager of EAP who will consult with the President, the Chief Executive and relevant officers of the College depending on the issue in question.

Medium issue

Contact and inform the Director of Communications and Public Education, the EAP Manager and the Chief Executive before responding. Refer to category document.

Minor issue

The EAP department will decide if the query should be followed up on or not and will inform the Director of Communications and Public Education re the query and action/answer taken if any. Usually, an email to inform the Manager and the Director is sufficient. If the minor query involves asking a member psychiatrist to be involved, the Manager and/or Director will advise but both must be informed of the decision.



CPSYCHI
COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS OF IRELAND

Dealing with Media Activity and Queries

Standard Operating Procedure

1

Media

Media queries, or media content relevant to the College or its stated objectives. These can come from any media platform, including national, regional and local broadcast, print and social media.



All queries from the media or issues related to media must be directed to to the EAP Department.

2

EAP Department

EAP Manager, Director of Communications and EAP team members. Minor issues will be dealt with on this level.



Escalation only in the event of moderate or major areas of risk.

3

Major to Moderate Risk

President and/or Vice-President and/or College management. Discussions to decide action.

Appendix 9.

CPSYCHI
COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS OF IRELAND

Management of Crisis, Reputation and Media Risk

In line with College mission and objectives

Category 3: Low Risk

Issue	Responsibility	Public Response
Pro-active and specialist issues. Administrative and lower level, e.g. statements on conferences, debates, specialist matters, etc.	**Main:** EAP Department, potentially in consultation with Director of Communication and Public Education. **Additional**: When required, relevant faculty or committee. Chairs can consult members on issues that require an agreed position.	EAP Department Manager. President, Vice-President and CEO are informed.

Category 2: Moderate Risk

Issue	Responsibility	Public Response
Priority issue of particular specialist relevant and importance. Not a national issue.	**Main:** EAP Department, Director of Communication and Public Education. Chair of relevant faculty or committee where relevant. **Additional**: When required, relevant faculty or committee. Chairs can consult members on issues that require an agreed position.	EAP Department Manager. President, Vice-President and CEO are informed.

Category 1: Major Risk

Issue	Responsibility	Public Response
National issue and/or potential direct reputational damage.	**Main:** Director of Communications & Public Education, EAP Department Manager, President and/or Vice President, CE and if relevant, Faculty Chair(s). **Additional:** All relevant College officers/directors/faculty & committee chairs and personnel to construct a response when no exisining position.	Director of Communication and Public Education, in consultation with the President of the College or Vice-President where the President is not available.

Appendix 10

CPsychI Staff Social Media Policy

This Policy document provides guidance and direction to College staff when utilising all types of online social media sites and networks. This policy applies to all College employees either participating personally, or communicating on behalf of the College, while online.

This guidance document should not be considered in isolation but needs to be read in conjunction with the College Handbook, including your employment contract.

Misuse or abuse of social and digital media can cause significant injury to third parties and can also impact negatively on the credibility of the College. This is particularly relevant in the context of safeguarding personal information. The College is potentially vicariously liable for injury caused by misuse or abuse of social and digital media channels by its employees. Consequently, the College takes any misuse or abuse of social and digital media by College employees very seriously and can lead to significant disciplinary and legal actions. Like all employee policies, there is significant personal responsibility placed on each employee.

Information Security Policy

Each user is, at all times, responsible for respecting and protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the information they process.

Electronic Communications Policy

Confidential information regarding College business practices and procedures or personal information about any College members or employees must not be posted or discussed on internet social networking websites, internet video hosting/sharing websites, internet discussion forums, message boards or internet chat rooms.

The College reserves the right to take such action as it deems appropriate against users who breach the conditions of these policies or GDPR (Data Protection regulations). College employees who breach these policies may be denied access to the organisation's information technology resources, and may be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and dismissal as provided for in the College disciplinary procedure.

Code of Standards and Behaviour

There is an implied term of mutual trust and confidence between employer and employee in all employment contracts. A very negative, defamatory or damaging posting or communication by an employee may entitle the College to proceed with the Disciplinary Process, including investigation, and discipline up to dismissal if warranted. If defamatory material is posted on a social networking site, defamation claims may arise against the employee.

Employees must not improperly disclose, during or following termination of employment, information gained in the course of their work.

Social Media Policy

1. Representing the College

The same rules that apply to our communications in traditional media, like newspapers, television and radio, also apply in online news or social media sites or networks. The External Affairs and Policy Department has a Communications Framework which is available on our website. If in doubt please contact the EAP Department.

Official comment from the College to be broadcast online should be in line with the College Communications Policy.

2. Personal Social Media Profiles

Everyone is entitled to explore and engage in social media communities in a personal capacity, at a level at which they feel comfortable.

Regarding online communities and forums, if you choose to identify yourself as a College employee on social media profiles, or in your commentary on personal topics within social media sites, it is important to use common sense and be aware of the nature of your comments and their possible consequences.

It is important that all employees are aware of the implications of engaging in forms of social media and online conversations that reference the College or your association with the College. Data Protection requirements and defamation law all still apply in comments that are made while off-duty and online. If an employee comments online in a personal capacity while identified as a College employee, these comments can be attributed or perceived as the official position of the College.

Personal blogs created by College employees, particularly if referencing College activity or positions and policy, including microblogs like Twitter accounts, should have a clear disclaimer that the views

expressed by the author in the blog are the author's alone and do not represent the views of the employer. Authors should write clearly and in the first person, to clarify that the views or comments are personal.

Social media activities should not interfere with your College work commitments.

Remember, when using social media in personal time:

1. Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures; how you conduct yourself in the online social media space not only reflects on you – it is a direct reflection on your professionalism and your employer.

2. You may come across negative posts about the College or psychiatry but should avoid responding yourself. The post in question should be forwarded to the EAP Department.

3. Be conscious when mixing your business and personal lives. Online, your personal and business profiles are likely to intersect. The College respects the privacy of all employees, but you must remember that Members and colleagues may have access to the online content you post. Keep this in mind when publishing information online that can be seen by more than friends and family and know that information originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on very easily.

4. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you "remove/delete" it later or attempt to make it anonymous.

Data Ownership

Any database or online connections used and built up on social medical platforms (e.g. and not limited to Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook) in the course of a College employee's role are the property of the College.

If an employee chooses voluntarily to utilise their existing or pre-employment online database and connections to carry out a function for the College, the database and connections and pertinent information therein are the property of the College and cannot be retained or used upon exiting employment with the College.

Appendix 11

Guide for Completing a College Position Paper



Revisions based on Board of Trustees feedback can be returned directly to the Board, unless otherwise instructed. Feedback from faculties/committees and revised drafts may go between the Board and the author(s) several times before a final draft is approved for publication.