

Public relations officers

Public relations officers or communicators take a leading role in how the organisation interacts with the community, making information about their organisation accessible to patients, staff and the public and helping ensure that the service is accountable. There are over 1,000 communicators in the NHS alone and PR professionals are also found in commercial companies such as pharmaceuticals, private health care groups and science and medical charities.

Responsibilities include

- Managing the reputation of the organisation
- Taking the lead on media handling, proactively placing good news stories, dealing with enquiries and producing media releases
- Developing links with stakeholders such as local councils
- Taking editorial responsibility for the organisations website, and other corporate communications tools and commissioning printing / advertising / surveys and information for patients
- Managing the NHS corporate identity and taking local responsibility for the NHS brand
- Advising senior colleagues on strategic communications and related issues
- Engaging in health promotion campaigns.

The following skills would be necessary for a communications role:

- Negotiating and influencing skills
- Ability to write, speak and brief others clearly
- Well motivated to work on your own but also a good team player
- Ability to remain calm under pressure

Entry and training

Management roles in communication, corporate affairs and public relations are relatively new in the NHS. There is no particular career pathway into this role and entry requirements will vary depending upon the post, although specialist communications experience, and increasingly professional qualifications eg from CAM are very advantageous.

Graduates could progress into management level and those joining a PR department with level 3 qualifications could gain valuable experience first before enhancing their progression opportunities with a professional qualification such as the one shown below:

The Advanced Certificate Modules from CAM - Each Advanced Certificate is the equivalent of at least one A level. All candidates must be at least 18, preferably with a degree, but as a minimum must have five GCSE passes at Grade C or above, including English and Mathematics, or equivalent qualifications to be eligible for entry. Centres include Universities, and FE Colleges and courses are offered on a full-time, part-time, intensive or distance-learning basis.

Applicants with significant communications industry experience, but without formal qualifications, can apply for special consideration.



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Further Information
**Association of Healthcare
Communicators (AHC)**
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5XB
Web:
www.assohealth.org.uk

**Communications Advertising
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Foundation Ltd. (CAM)**
Moor Hall, Cookham,
Berkshire, SL6 9QH.
Website:
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