



Criminal Cases Review Commission

External Affairs Strategy for Communications and Applicant Outreach (2023-2026)

March 2023

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Introduction

The External Affairs strategy follows the CCRC's strategic priorities of:

- People: being an employer of choice
- Communication: Enhanced engagement with applicants and stakeholders
- Excellence: Continuously improving how we work

External Affairs comprises both the Communications and Applicant Outreach teams, and this strategy enables them to work closely together to ensure a consistency of messaging, objectives and campaigns.

Working processes and operational documents will support the delivery of the External Affairs strategy and will be overseen by the Applicant Outreach and Communications Teams. This will include a separate internal communications process, outlining ways to enhance communications within the organisation.

The Head of External Affairs is responsible for delivery through the Communications and Applicant Outreach teams, as well as through key members of the CCRC such as the Chairman and members of casework.

Key objectives

The following objectives flow from an extensive internal and external consultation process.

Educate potential applicants: Create pro-active campaigns to help people understand what makes an eligible application and to understand better the real possibility test. This will help reduce ineligible applications and help potentially meritorious applications to reach us.

Improve internal communications: All aspect of future External Affairs will be shared with staff to ensure alignment with the CCRC's mission, vision and organisational objectives.

Increase brand awareness: Low awareness of the CCRC could affect applications and negatively affect our function. The CCRC's sustained impact over 25 years is currently not meaningfully told, leaving criticism of perceived failings to dominate our public narrative.

Thought leadership: The CCRC should do more to establish itself as the independent experts on miscarriages of justice. In doing this, CCRC can use its existing knowledge to inform the public, the legal sector and the media on changes to the law and precedents to improve brand awareness and have a positive impact on applications.

Stakeholder management: It is important that our applicant outreach and brand awareness is scaled to a national level, which can be achieved through improving relationships with influential people in the criminal justice system, the media and influencers (such as MPs, prison staff or organisations that offer advice to the public).

Strategic approach

External Affairs will focus its campaigns on five pillars to be known as the ‘ALERT’ method:

<u>A</u>pplications	<u>L</u>asting impact	<u>E</u>mployees	<u>R</u>espond	<u>T</u>hought Leadership
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This approach will help to focus our activities in a strategic manner, improve our ability to evaluate how our communications are supporting organisational objectives, and support the team to be more bold in their approach to campaigns that fall within the ALERT pillars.

A	1. Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach potential applicants & educate them about our services Improve understanding of the application process Scalability - train ambassadors to widely share with accuracy
L	2. Lasting impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of historic referrals made by the CCRC Show 25+ years of real world impact the CCRC has made Help prospective applicants see examples of referred cases
E	3. Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the CCRC as a destination for high quality staff Use digital channels to promote vacancies Strong internal communications to help with retention of existing staff and nurturing organisational culture
R	4. Respond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24/7 reactive media function carried out by the newsdesk Keep audience abreast with latest CCRC news, including referrals Update on court decisions to overturn CCRC referred cases
T	5. Thought leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support justice system by promoting CCRC stimulated research Establishing ourselves away from just referrals Organise briefings and teach-ins about new precedents/laws

Improved stakeholder mapping will be central to delivering on all five pillars at an operational level, and work will be done to identify and engage with partners who can support our aims.

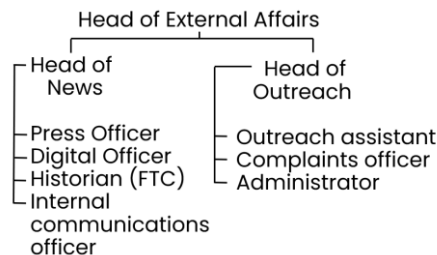
Evaluation

The Head of External Affairs will implement the following Operational Performance Indicators for each of the five pillars:

- Applications: track campaigns’ impact on application quality/demographics/themes
- Lasting impact: track website hits and stories on anniversary/contextual case studies
- Employees: staff polling on retention, number of candidates applying via LinkedIn
- Respond: tracking web hits for referral press notices, social media engagement
- Thought leadership: Web ‘Research’ section targets; reach targets for bi-annual briefings

Resourcing

The strategy will be delivered by the following newly configured team which is being phased-in during 2023. For a national organisation with aspirations held by both internal and external stakeholders to raise its profile and increase its reach, this is a small team but one which CCRC considers will be able to deliver our objectives.



Risk mitigation

Increased public engagement could be criticised by some as an improper allocation of resources away from our core function of finding, investigation and reviewing miscarriages of justice.

However, it is important that communications is seen as the operational lever it is; raising the profile of CCRC activity and research as a means to educate potential applicants and the profession is about confidence in the criminal justice system.

It is also important to note that as part of this strategy, we will also avoid unnecessary spending on promotional materials. While our material must look professional and trustworthy, we will produce materials in-house and not through creative agencies.

Further information about the Commission can be obtained from our website. We are very happy to receive comments about this plan or any other aspect of our work.

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