

Northumberland County Council  
**JOB DESCRIPTION**

<b>Post Title:</b> Communications Assistant		<b>Director/Service/Sector</b> Corporate Resources, Communications Team		<b>Office Use</b> JE ref: 2953 HRMS ref:
<b>Grade:</b> Band 5		<b>Workplace:</b> Communications team		
<b>Responsible to:</b> Communications Business Partner		<b>Date:</b> September 2014	<b>Manager Lever:</b> 8	
<b>Job Purpose:</b> This post is responsible to a Communication Business Partner and, ultimately the Communications Manager as well as providing support to the Engagement Manager. It has a wide range of duties associated with supporting the provision of corporate communications. This will involve assisting with media management; direct communications, marketing or social marketing campaigns; development of the Council's website and intranet; managing the corporate brand and effective internal communications.				
<b>Resources</b>	Staff	Supervision, performance management and appraisal of the Communications Support Assistant and Communications Apprentice		
	Finance	Accountability for campaign budgets and providing budget and financial guidance on communications expenditure to internal customers		
	Physical	Media Data and equipment.		
	Clients	General day-to-day involvement with the local, regional and national media and a variety of internal and external clients and partner organisations. This could include senior staff like the chief executive and council leader		
<b>Duties and key result areas:</b>  Supporting the delivery of an excellent communication service by:  1. Undertaking research contributing to the development of communication campaigns  2. Coordinating research to enable a deeper understanding of different audiences' perception of the council and of the council  3. High responsibility for assessing and analysing sensitive and confidential data and information, including ensuring security of information  4. Writing copy for a variety of internal and external media, taking complex information and presenting in a format and style with high public impact  5. Taking the leadership, as agreed, of an area of work and being the lead officer  6. Undertaking continuous professional development to enable progression either within the council or elsewhere  7. Undertaking media relations work as required, including handling media enquiries which can carry significant corporate reputational risk and have a high impact on the wellbeing of the public				

8. Offering advice on communication and reputation matters in accordance with agreed service standards and when appropriate training has taken place
9. To take responsibility for an agreed client relationship ensuring that needs are understood and agreed solutions are developed
10. Supervision, mentoring, support and appraisal of the Communications Support Assistant and the Communications Apprentice, including providing advice and instruction and checking work.
11. To undertake emergency cover as required
10. To assist with communications audits and surveys, to assess the effectiveness of communication techniques
11. To assist with the production of the Council's corporate publications – including copywriting, editing, proof reading; liaising with graphic designers and printers
12. To be present at external events in which there is council involvement or interests to identify and capture stories and images which may be used in council publications, websites and other communications
13. To build a network of community contacts to enable the fulfilment of 12.
14. To develop positive stories that address issues identified through the council's regular community pulse surveys.
15. To comply with health and safety policy and systems, report any incidents/accidents/hazards and take pro-active approach to health and safety matters in order to protect both yourself and others
16. Implement and operate under the terms of the Local Government communications code of conduct and the Civil Contingencies Act.

The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. Post holders are expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the nature, level and extent of the post and the grade has been established on this basis.

#### **Work Arrangements**

Transport requirements:  
Working patterns:  
Working conditions:

Predominately office based with little need to travel outside of County Hall. However, if necessary, must be able to meet the transport requirements of the post.  
37 hours per week, flexible.

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**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

<b>Post Title:</b> Communications Assistant	<b>Director/Service/Sector:</b> Corporate Services. Communications Team	Ref: 2953
<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Assess by</b>
<b>Knowledge and Qualifications</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NVQ Level 3 or equivalent</li> <li>• Good general education to 'A' Level standard</li> <li>• Knowledge of professional Public Relations, communications, design and print methods and tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of how local government works and the challenges facing it.</li> <li>• Degree standard of education</li> </ul>	
<b>Experience</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical experience in PR, journalism or marketing.</li> <li>• An understanding of developing and delivering social marketing campaigns</li> <li>• An understanding of dealing with media enquiries</li> <li>• Developing and implementing communication plans.</li> <li>• Experience of brand management</li> <li>• Experience of event management</li> <li>• Budgetary experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in a public sector PR environment</li> <li>• Commissioning services from other creative companies.</li> </ul>	
<b>Skills and competencies</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good judgment and unimpeachable integrity</li> <li>• Emotionally resilient and able to cope with the demands of handling sensitive and confidential information carrying significant reputational corporate risk</li> <li>• Ability to maintain confidences at all times</li> <li>• Understanding of how the media operate and the ability to use sound judgement when communicating with the media</li> <li>• Able to demonstrate appropriate behaviours at all time ensuring that the council's reputation may not be damaged by his or her actions</li> <li>• Understanding of local government and the emerging challenges it faces</li> <li>• Ability to communicate both orally and in writing to a wide range of audiences, including the ability to write for the media.</li> <li>• The ability to convert complex issues into clear, media friendly copy.</li> <li>• The ability to write in plain English to a high standard.</li> <li>• IT Literate, capable of using MS Word / Excel and office packages</li> <li>• Ability to use tact and diplomacy when dealing with a wide range of people</li> <li>• Able to work under pressure, to establish priorities and meet deadlines</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to deal confidently with a wide range of people</li> <li>• Ability to produce original and creative ideas</li> <li>• Ability to present information clearly and concisely</li> <li>• Ability to work under pressure and to tight deadlines whilst working on numerous projects</li> <li>• Ability to be efficient and professional</li> <li>• Able to deal with sensitive and confidential issues</li> <li>• Self-motivated</li> <li>• Demonstrable ability to use initiative and to work as part of a team.</li> <li>• Working in high pressure situations in the full glare of the media, public and senior staff.</li> </ul>		
<b>Physical, mental and emotional demands</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High demand for accuracy, precision and speed of responses</li> <li>• Using sound judgement on a daily basis, for example identifying when a media issue presents a reputational risk and which issues should be escalated to the attention of the Lead Executive Director.</li> <li>• Ability to work under pressure whilst managing competing demands</li> <li>• Commitment and stamina to cope with the challenge of the workload.</li> <li>• Ability to meet daily and weekly deadlines</li> <li>• The post holder may be exposed to sensitive or distressing issues if they are required to assist a colleague with such a piece of work.</li> <li>• The role will require that the post holder is, when appropriate, able to challenge constructively existing ideas and practices</li> <li>• The post requires the use of discretion and initiative across all areas of work</li> </ul>		
<b>Other</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to meet the transport requirements of the post.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A car driver is desirable as contact with partners, members and colleagues county-wide may be necessary.</li> </ul>	

Key to assessment methods; (a) application form, (i) interview, (r) references, (t) ability tests (q) personality questionnaire (g) assessed group work, (p) presentation, (o) others e.g. case studies/visits