Welcome to the October edition of the Alder newsletter

Over the coming editions, we will work through the **A-Z of reputation, risk and change managemen**t. We start with **A for Arrests.** The blog below outlines **essential talking points** for organisations when dealing with an employee arrest.

We are also pleased to share a guest piece from **Dr Nicola Lester of Crisis ReAction**, an organisation specialising in the people-focused response to a crisis.

Our **Stat of the Month** looks at a phrase that appeared more than 1,800 times in the UK press in a single month and can create unique communications challenges.

In other news, Alder has recently become a member of the **Association of British Health Tech Industries (ABHI)**, reflecting the increasing amount of work we are doing within the MedTech and life sciences sectors.

We hope you find this newsletter interesting. As always, please feel free to contact us if you would welcome a confidential discussion about any reputational issues or concerns.

THE A-Z OF REPUTATION, RISK AND CHANGE

A is for Arrests

[Note: what follows is a general discussion of some key principles and should not be relied on as advice.]

According to the Home Office, around **2,000 people are arrested in England and Wales every day,** with 739,703 arrests in the year to March 2026. Unfortunately, dealing with an employee arrest is more commonplace than one may think and it is important that organisations know how to navigate this complex incident.

Key consideration

An arrest is often the start of a long process, and what can be reported can change at each stage. Recent developments in civil law have provided far greater protections to people under arrest, and great care needs to be taken in how you communicate at such times. Each stage of criminal proceedings – arrest, charge, trial etc. – carries its own complexities and requires its own strategy.

Where it goes wrong

Trying to explain too much, too soon once an arrest has been made. As a general rule, information should be kept on a strict need-to-know basis. Confirming the arrest or discussing the allegation more widely than necessary can create legal, employment and reputational problems.

What good looks like

- Prepare a neutral reactive line explaining the employee's absence without revealing confidential information. There should also be a clear internal process for escalating media enquiries, stakeholder questions or online speculation.
- Monitor social and digital media for any mentions related to the matter. Communications, legal and HR advisers should work together from the outset. The decisions made at the beginning may shape how effectively the organisation manages the issue over the months or years that follow.
- Maintain good police relations where possible.

What it costs to get wrong

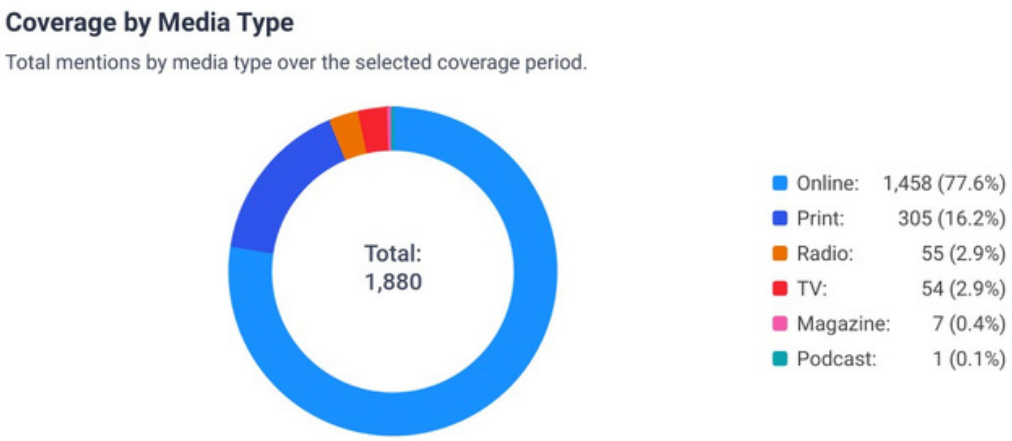
Picture an organisation that communicates to its employees that a named individual has been arrested. Weeks later, the police take no further action. The organisation now faces serious legal and reputational consequences (and potential costs), as well as a complex people management situation with the individual in question, its staff and wider stakeholders.

One thing to do this week

Ask your team whether there is a relevant plan and scenario advice in your crisis communications plan.

STAT OF THE MONTH

'who cannot be named for legal reasons'



Over the course of just one month (26 August - 25 September 2026), the phrase ‘who cannot be named for legal reasons’ was used **more than 1,800 times in the UK press***. One example was a BBC article that reported a health and safety incident at an Aberdeen nursery where the phrase was used to refer to a 10-month-old child harmed in the incident. Age is one of the best-known reasons for anonymity, but the stage of a criminal investigation, the nature of an offence or the vulnerability of those involved can all mean the media cannot identify someone.

If your organisation is at the heart of a story but has not been formally identified due to reporting restrictions, communicating with stakeholders and managing speculation can be incredibly difficult. Upholding legal obligations while maintaining stakeholder confidence is a difficult balance, and one we regularly help organisations strike alongside their legal teams.

**Source: Cision media monitoring.*

GUEST PIECE

What people need after a sudden incident

Dr Nicola Lester, Crisis ReAction

In the immediate aftermath of a sudden incident, most organisations focus on managing the risk to themselves, their reputation, productivity, and recovery. The more conscientious go further, commissioning immediate psychological support from an external specialist for those directly affected. Although well-intentioned, but this is where organisations get it wrong: they outsource the acknowledgement of impact instead of offering it themselves.

What's consistently misjudged is the extent to which those who have been harmed need the organisation itself to show up, not delegate that responsibility to an expert. Commissioning support is easy. Engaging with someone directly, asking what they need, is far more difficult, yet far more powerful. Outsourcing this shifts responsibility onto the individual, and communicates something other than care, however well-meant. If there is a need to commission anything, it is someone to support you to respond, not someone to take over.

In the first hours and days, people don't need therapy. They need acknowledgement. The question isn't simply ‘who has been harmed and what do they need,’ but more precisely, ‘what do they need from us’, asked immediately, not once silence has already done its damage.

If an organisation could get one thing right in the first week, it is this: the courage to ask that question, and the commitment to act on the answer, whatever it turns out to be. It is acknowledgement that builds trust, and trust cannot be outsourced, only earned by the organisation, through its own action.
Crisis ReAction helps organisations lead a people-focused response in the aftermath of a crisis. www.crisisreaction.com

ONE THING WORTH READING

Communications lessons from the Thirlwall Inquiry

Influence, CIPR

Read the article

Lady Justice Thirlwall's report into events at the Countess of Chester Hospital was published on 15 September. Writing for Influence, our **Managing Director Tim Toulmin** looks at Chapter 15 and what it means for anyone communicating through a crisis.

Bereaved parents learned from local media that the neonatal unit was being downgraded and reviewed, after the trust contacted only a handful of families beforehand. At the same time, the trust was treating damage to its reputation as a greater risk than rising mortality on the unit. Tim argues that reputation is shaped by how an organisation treats people, and that focusing on it at the expense of those affected tends to cause the very damage leaders are trying to avoid. The lessons apply well beyond the NHS.

Is your organisation crisis ready?

Our team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including public holidays and weekends.

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