

# Vicky Burman Communications Limited

## My policies

I have company policies (summarised below) that affect how I work and my relationship with clients. Full policy documents can be provided on request.

### Security and confidentiality

My business is run from a secure residential property that is rarely left unoccupied and is in an area with a low crime rate. Calls to and from my home office cannot be overheard. Meetings are generally held at the client's site. This supports my commitment to data protection, confidentiality, and general information security. I can be trusted to use a client's own IT equipment and systems if required. I will follow relevant procedures and undertake any in-house training in using these securely.

### Privacy and data protection

I take my responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) seriously, including how data is collected, handled and stored. For the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the GDPR, Vicky Burman Communications Limited acts as both a data processor and data collector. The company is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. Its data protection registration reference is ZA430217.

I will also follow any specific directions to manage personal information in line with clients' own data protection processes, if required.

I do not collect personal information for any purpose other than to:

- contact existing and previous clients
- produce written content on behalf of clients, such as personal stories and profiles to illustrate guidance and reports or to feature on websites
- review existing written content (for various internal and external uses) provided by a client for editing or proofreading.

The nature of information collected on the client's behalf (and with the individual's consent) will depend on the nature of the project. I do not collect personal data for marketing or for general communication such as newsletters or surveys. My business does not provide services directly to members of the public, collect financial details (other than to pay suppliers) or take payment other than by invoicing clients.

The Vicky Burman Communications Limited website is intended to provide existing and potential clients with information about my services, and therefore it does not collect IP addresses to collate information on pages viewed or any other analysis. I do not sell data to third parties or supply it for commercial purposes, or buy data for direct marketing or similar activities.

How people use public services is often a personal matter. When I carry out interviews with service users or members of the public, or take part in focus groups and discussions, I'm

always mindful of my responsibility to respect individuals' privacy and handle any confidential information they disclose with care.

I'm used to dealing with highly sensitive and confidential material generally, and have shown I can be trusted to access and handle information such as financial accounts, research, data and politically sensitive information as well as draft versions of documents that may change substantially before being shared more widely, or are only meant for a select circulation.

I am willing to sign confidentiality agreements with clients, and undergo verification checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service or equivalent (e.g. Disclosure Scotland).

#### Data security

Unless otherwise requested by a client, all my writing and editing work is carried out on my personal computer, which is protected from viruses, malware and other threats by ESET Security. Electronic content (including emails) is regularly backed up to secure off-site servers.

Paper copies of draft/final content and other related information such as contact details are kept in lockable filing cabinets in case of future queries, or shredded. Electronic records and emails on my personal computer are periodically reviewed and deleted if no longer needed or up to date.

Some of my suppliers (such as my IT support service and accountant) may have limited and occasional access to personal data held on clients and other individuals. These suppliers are expected to be GDPR compliant and have their own privacy policies.

#### Health and safety

All business should be carried out in compliance with current statutory provisions relating to the Health and Safety at Work Act and other relevant workplace legislation. I have access to appropriate guidance to support compliance, including through membership of bodies such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed.

I carry out regular health and safety risk assessments of my home office, including checks on hygiene and comfort. All reasonably practicable measures will be taken to avoid risk to visitors to the premises.

I aim to provide an environment in which display screens can be operated without risk to health, and I plan work activities to enable periodic breaks from display screen equipment.

#### **Equality and diversity**

I am committed to promoting and valuing diversity in every aspect of my work, treating all individuals fairly, with dignity and respect, and creating a working environment based on inclusiveness and merit in any collaboration with associates, partners and clients.

I am opposed to all forms of discrimination, including in relation to:

- race
- age
- gender
- sexual orientation
- marital status
- HIV status
- disability
- religion or belief.

I am opposed to the imposition of any conditions or requirements that do not accord with the principles of fairness and natural justice.

This policy applies to all those who carry out work on my behalf, whether directly employed or otherwise.

In producing communication materials for clients, it is my policy to check whether the language and images used in them reflect the diversity of the organisation's employees and service users, and to make appropriate suggestions to ensure this is the case. I will also recommend making reasonable adjustments where necessary to ensure communication materials accommodate the specific needs of people with disabilities and other mental and physical health issues.

### **Quality assurance**

I am directly responsible for the quality of all projects. Quality is important to my business because I value my clients. I strive to provide them with services that meet and even exceed their expectations. I'm used to managing workloads to meet agreed deadlines, particularly on ad hoc projects, and will be upfront about my availability – I will not accept a project if I can't be sure I can complete it in time and to a high standard.

As a member of relevant professional bodies, including the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading, Patient Information Forum and National Union of Journalists (PR and Communications branch), I can access guidance, resources and development opportunities to maintain and improve my skills and knowledge. I also follow these organisations' codes of practice and conduct.

I work closely with clients and welcome regular communication, especially by phone and email, to ensure I'm following their brief correctly. I will happily provide progress reports as often as the client wishes, and in their preferred format, including face-to-face meetings and conference calls. I'll get in touch promptly if problems arise (such as IT or health issues) that could affect a project.

I apply appropriate quality standards to my writing and editorial services. Depending on the activity and its purpose (including work on materials that need to withstand scrutiny), these are likely to include:

- remaining professional and impartial
- challenging assumptions
- highlighting unintentional bias, sensitivities and contentious issues

- recognising the importance of transparency, consistency and sustainability
- double checking work, raising queries with fellow professionals and using relevant editorial tools and guidance. I particularly draw on authoritative sources such as the *New Oxford dictionary for writers and editors*, *Butcher's copy-editing* and *New Hart's rules: The handbook of style for writers and editors*.

I am committed to continuous improvement. I aim to capture feedback on individual pieces of work, whether this is:

- specific remarks and concerns raised while the project is ongoing
- more general comments on overall processes
- feedback on the final product from its users (whether the intended audience or not).

This may inform future projects for the same client, such as creating or adding to a house style guide. It may also enhance my knowledge of the client's specific sector and the wider context of their activities, and increase my understanding of the client's service users and their needs (for accessible information, for example).

I will review how a project has gone and evaluate the finished work if possible – for example, comparing a published report against a version I edited. I will refer to this evaluation should I be asked to carry out a similar piece of work for the same client on another occasion, such as updating a policy or producing their annual report the following year.

Fortunately, I rarely receive complaints from clients, although I have a complaint resolution policy available on request. I aim to identify and address any problems or potential issues as soon as possible and as a matter of priority, generally without the need for a formal process.

### **Sub-contracting**

I am the business's only employee and I do not normally sub-contract work, unless in extraordinary circumstances (like serious illness during a project) and then only with the client's express agreement.

Should I lack the capacity to carry out work for a client, or I feel their project (or an important part of it) requires specific skills outside my capabilities (such as design suggestions or producing and managing social media content), I may refer them to other freelance communicators, writers and editors with more appropriate expertise, based on my previous experience of their reliability and professionalism.

### **Environmental sustainability**

I am committed to environmental sustainability, reduction of the business's carbon footprint and prevention of pollution. I aim to ensure the business's activities comply with relevant environmental legislation and that it continuously improves its environmental performance.

I try to:

- actively reduce all waste

- maximise efficient use of natural resources
- ensure office supplies are sourced from recycled material if possible
- reuse and recycle materials such as paper and ink cartridges
- reduce the amount of energy consumed during working hours
- encourage my clients and suppliers to manage their own environmental impacts effectively.

My preference for remote working, with the majority of contact by email, phone or online, minimises the need for travel. If I need to travel, I will consider public transport whenever possible.