

# ENGAGING LOCAL MEDIA



## STEP 1 CREATE A PLAN

Being in the media can help you spread the word about your issue or campaign, get people on board, unlock funding, and change people's minds.

It is a good idea to have clear objectives on why you want media coverage and how it will help your campaign. For example, do you want people to come to an event or sign a petition? Or do you just want to raise awareness about the issue?

### Audience – who do you want to reach?

Think about the people you are trying to reach and the type of media they are most likely to read or watch. If your campaign is a local issue, you can contact your local paper, radio, regional TV and online community forums.

### Key message – what do they need to know?

Think about the main message you need to get across and try breaking it down to one sentence. The **Advocacy Toolkit** has more advice for coming up with a key message.

## STEP 2 RESEARCH

Look at what other campaigns have done and research your journalists. Who is interested in your issue? What kind of stories are they covering? To find journalists interested in your issue:

- Do an online search for your local news outlets and then make a note of key individuals/journalists/presenters
- Use Twitter – look at what they're tweeting about and who they are tagging
- Make a list of all the journalists and news outlets you want to contact

## STEP 3 MAKING THE NEWS

In order to get media coverage for your campaign you will need a 'hook', something that helps it stand out as new, interesting, surprising or of public interest. To find your hook, think about whether your story does at least one of the following:

- Presents new research or statistics
- Links to a key date or current trend
- Shows support from a celebrity or politician
- Covers a creative public stunt

## STEP 4 PRESS RELEASES

Write a press release and send it to journalists to tell them about your story. You will email this to individual journalists, news agencies, and the 'news desks' and 'forward planning desks' of papers, TV stations and radio. Find contact details online or by calling the outlet's main switchboard.

### When to send a press release:

- If you just want to share general information about your campaign or highlight the work you are doing, you can share your news story with your media list anytime.
- If you are sharing information that you would like media to cover at a later date (such as about an event), you can share your press release 'under embargo' about one week before the event and then again two days before. These timings can be different so plan ahead and check with the media outlet or newspaper.

To share a release with an embargo, you should include a sentence above the headline that says "Embargoed until \_\_\_\_\_" with the date and time that you want it to be released.

*eg. Embargoed until 2:00 pm 08 December 2019*



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A press release should look something like this:

## Headline: Attention grabbing – short and catchy

### First paragraph detailing:

What? Where? When? Who? Why?

You need the most relevant and 'news' part of your story at the very beginning. Make it easy for the journalist to cut and paste the story to fit the space they have. Information in press releases should always be provided in decreasing importance.

### Always add a quote:

"A quote from a representative of your group."

### ENDS

**Notes to editor:** Key details about your group, your story, and any references



You can also check out this [template press release letter](#) for groups who campaigned for clean air through OutRight.

## STEP 5 PITCH

Many journalists prefer to be contacted by email. However, to give your story the best chance of getting coverage, you can also pick up the phone and 'pitch'. Here are some tips:

- Be confident: practice before you make the call
- Be clear and concise – get to the point quickly
- Keep a record of your calls – who you contacted, when, and the outcome
- Try not to feel disappointed if you don't get a response by phone – journalists can be very busy

## STEP 6 INTERVIEW

Once the media outlet or newspaper agree to share your story, they may want to interview you. It is good to ask questions so you can work with the journalist to make your story the best it can be. Here are some examples:

- Will it be live or pre-recorded?
- Where will the interview take place and how long will it last?
- What sort of questions will be asked? You can even ask for a list of suggested questions
- Who will be conducting the interview? Maybe you can research your interviewer!

## Preparing for Interviews

Having the answers to these questions will help you feel more confident about the interview. To prepare for the interview, you can:

- Go back to your key messages – the most important things you want the audience to know
- Prepare some responses to their questions
- Get comfortable saying your key messages and responses out loud – practice makes perfect

## The Interview

- Be clear – use language that anyone will be able to understand
- Use statistics, examples and stories
- Have key messages and details (dates/venues/times) written down to refer to
- Don't say anything you wouldn't want to see in print – nothing is off the record
- Try to relax and enjoy the experience!

## Follow-up and say thanks

After an interview or piece of coverage, always email your contact to check if they need any more information and thank them for the coverage.

