

Top tips to using the local media

- Using the media is vital to any campaign. You can use the media to raise awareness of an issue, put pressure on decision-makers and to attract support for the campaign. Working with the media is not difficult, but you do need to understand what journalists are looking for, how to approach them and how to 'sell your story'. Ensure your story has a local angle, local statistics on child poverty can be found on our website.
- **Find out which newspapers and radio stations cover your area.** You will probably already be aware of some of these, but try to contact as many as possible. You should be able to find out which newspapers and free newspapers cover your area at your local library. Try searching on the internet for your local radio stations or put your postcode into the BBC online website to find your local BBC radio station.
- **Find out the right person to speak to.** Call and ask who to send your press release to. You may want to fax or send a press release first and follow this up with a phone call.
- **Building a relationship** with local journalists will increase chances of success.
- **Find out deadline dates.** Find out the day of print and ring the news desk for copy deadlines and deadlines for letters, articles and press releases, so you can work around them. **Give as much notice as possible.**
- **Be prepared.** When you speak to an editor, producer or journalist, it's important that you are able to convey the essence of your campaign in a few sentences. If you're not experienced in speaking with journalists or editors, write down what you plan to say. **Identify 'hooks' – the reason why a particular issue should be covered at a particular time – that might make the story more interesting for journalists.** For example: In October if you have a group of local people coming to the Keep the Promise event, it would be a good time to present local facts and figures and human interest stories. Try to answer the question the journalist will be thinking – “Why now?”
- **Practice with a friend** until you're confident, and try to anticipate some of the subsequent questions. It's important to keep things short and concise and to stress how the campaign concerns an issue that is important that people need to know about. You will likely only have a minute or two of their time, so make the most of it.

Coverage by local radio and television stations has similar advantages to coverage in local papers and the approach is the same.

- Listen to your local broadcasters to get a feel for the sort of stories they cover.
- Decide who your story might be of interest to, then contact someone on the news desk.
- When preparing to appear on air, go equipped with a short list of key points you want to make in your interview. Practice what you are going to say beforehand so you are more relaxed during the interview.

Letters to the Editors

The letters page is one of the most widely-read pages of a newspaper, so it's a great place to raise awareness of the Campaign to End Child Poverty and child poverty issues.

Editors like controversial discussion on their letters pages. You can initiate or respond to letters. Make your letter short and snappy – maximum of 150 words.

If you are contacting the media with a news story of your own you'll need to write a press release.

Press release contents

A good checklist for your first paragraph is if you have answered these questions - who, what, where, when, why and how.

A press release's purpose is to get key information across. You can list notes for at the end of the release to include more general information if you think it's necessary. Don't fill the body of your release with piles of useless information. Four to five paragraphs totalling about 400 words maximum will do the trick.

To be most effective a press release should be in a certain format.

- **Write 'Press Release' at the top** and who it is for the attention of.
- **Give contact details:** the name of the person dealing with the media and a mobile number that will be working on the day.
- **If you want photographers or camera crews to attend**, mark it 'Photo Opportunity - Crews welcome'.
- **Date it and give it a snappy title.** Make sure the title makes it clear what the story is.
- **Use the first paragraph to outline the whole story in brief.** This should explain the headline and the *who, what, when, where, how and why*. Expand in the second (and maybe a third) paragraph, with extra layers of information in decreasing order of importance.
 - Be concise, punchy, quotable and factually correct.
 - Set out your story clearly and grab attention in as few words as possible, and without jargon.
- **Use a quote** The print press will often use this in their story, so make it count. This can make the story more heartfelt and personal. Try to keep it short and punchy.
- **Case studies** - If you have people prepared to talk about their experiences then tell the journalist.
- **Mark the Release 'ENDS'** so they know it's over (sounds obvious, but do it anyway!)
- **Notes for the editor.** This is background information to the issue and any details, facts and figures that are too technical to be included in the body of the press release.

Sending the release.

Always send press releases in the body of an e-mail (not as an attachment) and include a clear, concise description of what the release is about in the subject box. There is often no need to include an introduction above the press release. If the release is well written, it should speak for itself.

See examples of previous end child poverty press releases on our news pages
<http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/news/press-releases>