

A decorative graphic consisting of a large blue circle on the left and three smaller circles (purple, green, and dark blue) arranged in a vertical line to its right.

# Access Panel Network

## Training Guides

A guide to building a Media Toolkit

Getting your message out there and letting people know what you have been up to is really important. Knowing what media is available and knowing how to use it effectively is key to your success.



# Dealing with the Media

## What is news?

Before approaching your local newspaper or journalist, one of the most important issues to consider is whether your story is newsworthy. In order for a story to be news, it must have at least one of the following:



- Be about people - everyone's story has an issue, but issues themselves can be boring unless they are translated into something that is interesting to lots of people. In other words the story is of human interest. News stories are all about how people are affected.
- Have an angle - your local journalist is always looking for an angle to a news story. Their aim is to be first, better or different. That should be your aim too.

Remember these three points to make a good news story:

### 1. **New / novel / different / extreme**

By definition news is something that happened today that didn't happen yesterday. Stories need to be new and unusual.

### 2. **Community**

An interesting activity and/or achievement by a group or individual from the community, this is an essential news value for local newspapers.

### 3. **Events**

Special awards, celebrity attendance (including locally known people, e.g. mayor or head of fire department), large numbers, interesting locations.

When deciding what to write about, it is also worth considering what you want coverage for. For example, if you want to publicise an event in order to get people to attend, you should issue a pre-event press release one to two weeks before the event. Make sure you include all the details people will need to know such as contact numbers, location, times, etc.

You could then issue a post-event release with photos after the event to celebrate your success. If you are holding a private event, a post-event press release will be more relevant.

# What are the different types of media?

## Newspapers

Regional press is the second largest advertising medium in the UK after television. Getting your story in your local newspaper can be an invaluable and cost-effective way to gain publicity for your organisation or an event.

## Radio and television

Local stations and programmes which might be interested in the work of your panel should be approached. You could ask to be invited to give an interview, or a journalist may even want to attend an event you are holding on the day.

## Magazines and other publications specific to disability and equality

You can also consider specialist publications which relate to disability and equality – these could be magazines such as Able Magazine, Sense Scotland, The Big Issue or TFN. These kinds of publications usually prepare the content several weeks, even months, in advance so you need to make contact with them early.

## Social networking

Social networking or social media allows us to communicate in a wide range of ways:

- Internet forums
- Message boards
- Blogs
- Podcasts
- video

It is important to remember that social media is just a vehicle for our messages and not the message itself. The use of Facebook and Twitter should always be integrated with our other communication channels – your website, your e-newsletter and your quarterly newsletter.

See the Guide on Social Media for further information about Facebook and Twitter.

## Working with the media

Here we will look at how to make better use of the media to make your case and build support for your work.

- Think about who you represent and who you want to know about your work. Who helps you? Who can you lobby? How best can you use your resources?
- What are you going to say in your campaign? Know your message. What's your call to action? What can people do to help?
- What impact do you want and what outcomes do you want to achieve. Let the public and funders understand what opportunities will be missed if your organisation is not around. Be frank and truthful about your financial situation and

what will happen to your members/volunteers if your organisation can't continue.

- Tell your stories in digital and social media, not just print. A short, simple video of a member passionately explaining the impact your organisation had on them can get your message across better and faster than a 1,000 word article.
- Key to survival is not just getting an article published, but how you can organise and motivate your supporters through print, web and social media.

## Generating local media coverage

The media always want good local stories, or a local perspective on a national story, especially with a human interest. If you have a good story follow some basic guidelines and you will find the media more useful than you ever thought.

### What kind of story do I have?

There are different types of 'local story', not everything is suitable for the news desk itself. The main categories are news, features and listings.

### News

Make sure that it is news in the media sense. Ask yourself 'so what?'. Does your story make a difference or talk about something that will impact on others? Remember, what is of interest to you about your organisation may not be news.

### Features

A 'human interest' feature is a personal story of one family's experience, a triumph over tragedy, anything that is centred on a person or group who have experiences to which readers can relate. An analytical feature could be an opinion, a survey based on in-depth research, or a look at the background to current statistics.

### Events listings/diary

When you want to promote a forthcoming event try to make sure it is mentioned in the 'forthcoming events' sections of all local papers. Contact local radio as they will often cover an event if they know about it in advance and can send a reporter to the event itself.

### Be creative

If your organisation has relatively little exposure in the local media, try thinking up an interesting story to get their interest. Work with your Panel to think hard, do any of the following apply?

- Is there a local person associated with your organisation doing something unusual or interesting?
- Has something you've come across while working for your organisation moved or intrigued you? If so, then it's likely that other local people will be interested too.
- Are there ways in which your organisation can connect local activity to a national issue?

- Another useful method of hatching ideas for stories is to identify those anecdotes which you yourself would use to describe what is lively and interesting about your organisation. These stories will probably work well for the local media.
- Identify whether your story is exclusive as this may affect the type of coverage it receives. Bear in mind, however, that giving an exclusive to a reporter may mean that other journalists and publications may not cover it so it may not be a risk worth taking.
- It is important to remember that once you have created a story you need to keep the momentum going. Editors always appreciate a regular and reliable source of ideas or information and they will not hesitate to approach you when they need a story.

## Which media should I approach?

You or someone in your team should become familiar with the local media: the main newspapers and magazines, the free press, the local radio and TV programmes. However ensure that you are ready to deal with the attention you may receive after media coverage.

You need to identify all possible outlets for your story, from local papers, to the trade and free press, and all public and independent radio and TV stations. Remember, no outlet is too small. Often the free sheets circulated in residential areas are more widely read than national daily newspapers.

## Key messages

Agree on the key messages, or most important things, you want to communicate through the media. This will inform your media output. Choose a maximum of three messages. The key to news coverage is to think of the story first - what the journalist needs - and then find a way to get a key message in there. Remember, it is not often that your organisation itself will be the story.

## When do I want this to go out?

Newspaper deadlines are extremely tight - ring up your local newspapers and ask what the deadline for print is. Television local news requires a fast turnover so make sure you are ready with the right people to be filmed that day before you approach them. It is important to get the timing of stories right, anything too old, even a great story, just won't get used. Editors want to know as soon as something has happened, not a few days (or weeks) later.

## Getting to know the media

Get to know your local newspaper journalists; they depend on you for their news and stories about the local community. Identify the contact name of the right person for your type of story. This is not difficult: just looking through your local paper you will see stories about similar themes to yours - make a note of the section and the writer, and try to place a similar story in the same section yourself.

If you are making contact with a newspaper or local radio and you haven't made an appointment, ask for the name of the most relevant person to your story: for example, the News editor, Features editor, Environment Correspondent, Picture Editor for photos.

Make sure you read, listen or watch the publication or programme, and are sure that their target audience matches the one you want. Look at the type of stories they cover and most importantly, where they stand on certain issues. You may find one newspaper more open to your organisation if they have previously run campaigns on the same subject you deal with.

## Getting in touch

Start with a phone call to the newspaper or broadcast outlet to find out which department or journalist deals with your type of story.

The first time you call, introduce yourself and ask whether it is a good time, or if it would be better for you to call another time. Once you have them listening, ask about their deadlines: when do they go to press, when do they have a news meeting, when would they like to be contacted. Ask what kind of stories they are interested in. It is important you listen to their response and note the important dates. Make sure you get their direct phone line if they have one and their email address. Be ready to email them immediately with your press release or another clear, snappy document.

Keep a note of the journalist's responses and details - it might be worth making a file. Then, each time you call them make a note of when it was and what was discussed. When you call again, remind the journalist what you discussed before. This helps build the relationship. Invite them to any event your organisation might have - once you meet face-to-face they are more likely to remember you. If you know a journalist personally, do call them first and offer your story or ask their advice about placing it.

## Do I have photos?

Are there good quality photos available, or a photo opportunity for the press? Photographs can make all the difference, especially in local newspapers, a story is much more likely to be printed with a good photo. Even just a photo with a caption is a good way to get coverage. Get to know a local photographer with news experience, and build up a bank of good pictures. Good visuals are central to successful television coverage too, so think about a good visual if you're targeting television.

## Be accessible

It is important when you have a story to run in the local media that you are accessible. When contacting the media, always give your contact numbers including your home or mobile phone. Being accessible out of office hours may prove the difference between a story being run or pulled.

## Be persistent

If your story gets dropped from the broadcast, or gets bounced from the front page to a half column in the paper, don't despair. It doesn't necessarily mean your story is not newsworthy. News stories and priorities change all the time. Editors have a range of pressures to juggle and stories often get overtaken by events and dropped. Therefore if your story does not succeed at first, and can stand the test of time, get in contact with newspaper or broadcaster to try and find it a new angle or slot.

## Establish your expertise

This is a more long-term approach. You can establish yourself with local media as the first port of call, the expert on your issue, who journalists will want to consult again and again.

If a big story breaks (nationally or locally) in your organisation's area, the most knowledgeable member of your team should call the media to offer a quote or an interview immediately.

If you have done some new research on a local issue, let the media know. Always give full contact numbers (including home and mobile telephone) for easy access to the relevant expert.

## Keep up the effort!

Don't forget - you are not going to get every story you suggest to the publication or programme covered – don't take it personally!

## Check list

- Identify who will deal with the media.
- Identify your best spokesperson - make sure they are comfortable in front of a camera.
- Find an articulate, friendly, well-informed and easily reachable person you can nominate to the press for interview. This will not necessarily be your Manager or Convenor. Always give their home or mobile number for easy access (they will only be called at home if a story is likely to go ahead, so it's worth it).
- Be ready - have back up photos, case studies and people prepared for interview. Identify your story and your media outlet? Who, where, when, what are you doing? Do you have photos to go with the text? Which media should you send it to?
- Be creative - find a way to link up local events with the 'buzz' of a national issue. Organise events with local people or in a local venue if you possibly can, but if not; focus on some appealing aspect of what you do and the people you work with.
- Write a press release and follow it up.

- Be persistent - when you are rejected, keep working down the list of possible outlets. It is more satisfying to get a nice story in a small local freesheet than nothing at all in the City News.

## Talking to the media – hints and tips

**Don't be scared** – journalists are there to do a job and they need you as much as you need them.

**Always appear friendly and helpful** – remember you are representing your access panel.

**Speak with conviction to get your points across** – be proud that you know the subject much better than they do.

**If you receive a call directly from the media** but feel unable to deal with their enquiry, be polite but refer them to the person delegated as Press Officer.

**It is perfectly acceptable to say** that you / a colleague will call a journalist back if you need time to think. It is rare but occasionally a journalist will have a hidden agenda, so letting the Press Officer deal with them first means you can be more prepared.

**If you do promise to call someone back, make sure you do** - or ask your Press Officer to do so.

**Respect journalist's deadlines** and respond to queries in a timely fashion.

**Never lose your cool** – even if you feel you are being provoked. Again it's quite reasonable to say you will call them back. This gives you thinking space and a chance to discuss it with the members of your committee.

**The secret of success is preparation.** Decide in advance what your key messages are and stick to them. Ideally, you should have no more than three.

**Never, ever, ever go off the record.** You should only ever say something that you wouldn't mind seeing on the front page of a national newspaper with your name on it.

**Stay calm, clear and collected and keep smiling** – it will come across, even on radio.

**Practice, practice, practice!** Read newspapers and magazines, listen to broadcast interviews and learn from good and bad spokespeople.

**Ask questions!** You are allowed to ask a journalist exactly what they are after from you, what the context of the story is, when it is appearing, who else they are talking to etc.

## Top Tips for press releases

A press release is the standard and most commonly used form of written communication when dealing with the media.

A release follows a structured format which allows you to convey the necessary details about your news story in a style which is easily recognised by journalists. Most journalists receive many press releases every day so it's really important to make yours stand out and to make the information contained within it easily consumed. Anything too fussy or over-complicated is only likely to find its way into the recycling bin!

Listed below are some tips for writing your press release and a sample can be found in Appendix 1.

### Tips

1. All press releases must start with 'for immediate release: day/ date/ month/ year'.
2. The headline should be short and informative. When a journalist goes through the numerous press releases they receive, a catchy headline will grab their attention.
3. The five 'W's and the 'H' - Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? This is the crux of all news. Any good news story provides answers to each of these questions.
4. The first paragraph must be short and summarise the whole story. It must contain the 'five W's and the H' in a nutshell. You can provide further details later on. A journalist will glance at this one paragraph and make a decision on this as to whether they will read on, making it the most important part of your release.
5. The next two or three paragraphs should repeat the story explaining in more detail.
6. Try to keep press releases to one side of A4 paper. If it is longer than one page, use two separate numbered pages and write 'More follows...' at the bottom of page one.
7. Quote people: include a short lively quote. Do not use "I" and "me" when you are quoting someone.

8. Keep sentences and paragraphs short and simple. Don't use flowery language and fancy words.
9. Good photos accompanying a press release can make all the difference to the impact of the story (refer to the next section for photographic tips and advice).
10. Make sure that your release is being sent to the right person, at the right address, at the right time. Give the publication a call to find out who it would be best to send it to.

## Layout

The layout of the press release is just as important as the content - it allows a journalist to gain the crux of the story and your contact details at a glance. Please refer to the sample press release at the back of this pack and use it as a template for structuring your own releases.

## Photography and filming advice

### The legalities

When using photos and video for promotional purposes, it is essential to obtain the necessary documentation to protect you legally.

There are two key documents to be completed:

- Copyright assignment
- Consent forms

Both of these documents should, ideally, be completed in advance of your event. You can obtain these forms by email from the SDEF Information and Communications Officer.

### Copyright assignment

A copyright assignment should be completed by the photographer so that your access panel can retain the rights to images. This means partners can reproduce the pictures as needed.

### Consent forms

Consent forms are vital to protect vulnerable children and adults.

Not all individuals will be suitable for publicity shoots, take for example someone whose identity needs to be protected because they have been put into care.

It is also important that anyone taking part in publicity has also agreed to their image being used in a variety of ways. The consent form in Appendix 2 covers you legally and prevents disputes further down the line.

# Appendix 1 - Sample Press Release

## Theft of blue parking badges is unacceptable!

We believe that the current situation whereby many disabled people are prevented from carrying out day-to-day activities as a result of the theft or fraudulent use of blue parking badges is entirely unacceptable.

Accessible parking is essential to enable disabled people to lead autonomous and independent lives. It allows disabled people to perform tasks such as getting to work, shopping or attending a medical appointment, which many of us take for granted.

Preventing the theft and misuse of blue badges is clearly integral to ensuring accessible parking is available to those who need it the most.

SDEF has already taken action to ensure that accessible parking is available to people with disabilities by advising on and providing support for the Disabled Persons' Parking Places (Scotland) Bill, as proposed by Jackie Baillie, Labour MSP for Dumbarton. If passed by the Scottish Parliament, the Bill will make all disabled persons parking bays enforceable. At present, most disabled parking bays are courtesy only and therefore anyone can park in them without the risk of being penalised.

## Notes to Editors

For more information contact **[staff name]** at **[panel name]** on **[telephone number]** or e-mail **[email]**

The Scottish Disability Equality Forum (SDEF) works for social inclusion in Scotland through the removal of barriers and the promotion of equal access for people affected by disability.

It is a membership organisation, representing individuals with any type of impairment, disability organisations and groups who share our values. It aims to ensure the voices of people affected by disability are heard and heeded.

# Appendix 2 - Photography Consent Form

To be completed by individual(s) (parents/guardians if subject is less than 18 years of age) before photographs are taken.

## Project name and Contact name

.....

Signature..... Date .....

I have fully discussed the content of this form with the person(s) mentioned below.

## Person(s) in photograph

I hereby grant \_\_\_\_\_ Access Panel the right to use the photograph(s) resulting from the photo shoot, and any reproductions or adaptations of the photograph(s) for all general purposes in relation to \_\_\_\_\_ Access Panels work including, without limitation, the right to use them in any publicity materials, website, books, newspapers and magazine articles whenever the panel chooses to do so.

Name (please print) .....

Address .....

.....

Signature.....Date.....

## Name and address of parent/guardian if person to be photographed is less than 18 years of age

Name (please print).....

Address .....

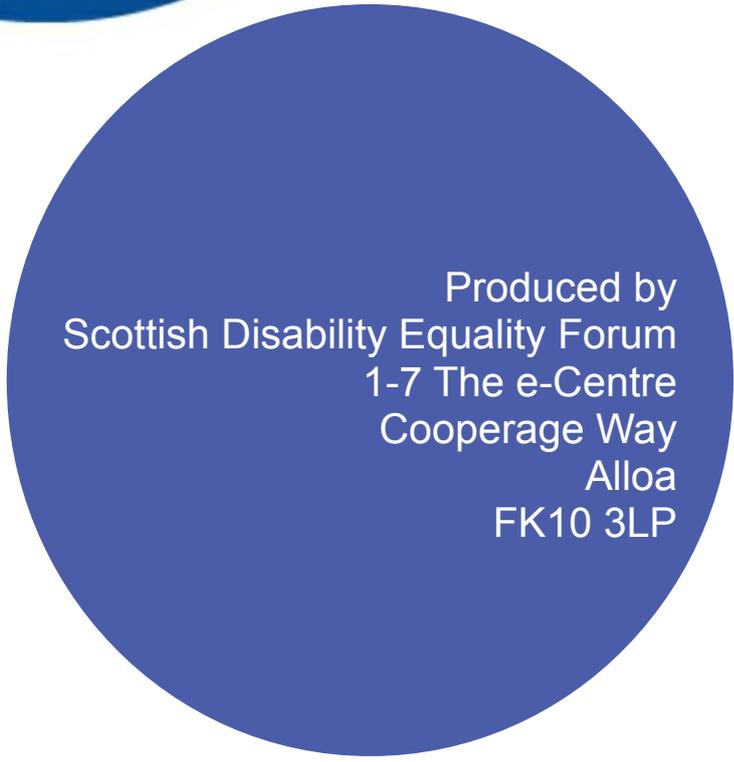
.....

Signature.....Date.....





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