

Connecting Communities



COMMUNITY  
DIALOGUE  
**MANUAL**  
S E R I E S

# Media Engagement



DIALOGUE  
SOCIETY



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## To readers of this manual:

This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's Community Dialogue Manual Series. The PDF version of this and the other manuals in the series can be downloaded from [www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications)

If you have any comments on this, or any of the other manuals in the series, we would be very glad to have your feedback. Please email your comments to [manual@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:manual@dialoguesociety.org)

We would like to showcase the valuable work and effort of groups that use the Community Dialogue Manuals to help inspire other groups to take part also. Please get in touch and let us know how this manual helped you and your group with any photographs and testimonials. Please email these to [manual@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:manual@dialoguesociety.org)

If you represent a local stakeholder or public body and are interested in Dialogue Society consultancy please email [consultancy@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:consultancy@dialoguesociety.org)



The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nationwide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

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**DIALOGUE  
SOCIETY**

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## Media Engagement

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# Overview

01

## Preface

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences. It has done this through a wide range of events including community celebrations, interfaith sharing circles, and open cultural festivals as well as a broad variety of dialogue meetings and seminars.

The manual you hold in your hand is part of a series of ten Community Dialogue Manuals developed by the Dialogue Society to encourage interaction between members of different communities. Through these manuals we want to help communities to come together through a number of events that have worked well in our experience. We have always found that the most successful events have been those with clear objectives and where attention has been paid to detail. Therefore the manuals are full of advice, tips and checklists to help everything go smoothly as you plan, organise and host your own events.

This manual is intended to complement the events-based manuals within the Community Dialogue Manual Series, by helping you to communicate the work you are doing in an effective way. It will help you engage and convey your messages to the media in a targeted and coherent manner, following the procedures expected by journalists and used by experienced press officers. It will provide you with useful and tactful engagement tips and examples of ways to communicate your ideas in a media friendly style.

Please get in touch with us to let us know if and how the manual was helpful, to give any feedback and comments about the manual's content, style and structure and with any other enquiries. Please see inside cover for contact details.

We hope that this manual will assist you in raising the profile of the good work of your organisation or group. Perhaps it will help you to effectively promote some of the events covered in the other Community Dialogue Manuals.

## The Dialogue Society

## Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to empower and encourage individuals and community groups to effectively engage with the mass media. The priority of small community groups and charities will inevitably be the specific, often localised work they do for their service users. But media engagement can help them to do this more successfully.

The media has a great impact on social opinion and can sway the thoughts of the public through the stories that are covered. Positive media engagement can raise an organisation's profile and help it to take worthwhile projects to a much wider audience.

Unfortunately the stories we read in the papers are not always objective and can give people a misleading impression of communities, organisations and groups - especially faith-based ones. To avoid misrepresentation or reduce it at least, positive, proactive media engagement is very important.

*“Does what you see and hear make you happy? Annoy you? Make you think in a certain way? Does it make you buy something?... If you think that messages don't have an effect on you, why do so many people spend so much money on advertising in the media?”*

Maria Way

This manual will assist you in achieving this positive, proactive media engagement. It is designed to help you convey and communicate all of the exciting work you have been doing in ways which will encourage helpful press coverage.

A key concern of the manual is to equip readers with the understanding of the media world which is absolutely essential to successful media engagement. Fail to understand the pressures and driving concerns of media outlets and your organisation will probably be heading for disappointment and distrust in its dealings with the press. As well as giving a practically oriented introduction to key forms of UK media, this manual offers insight into the needs and priorities of journalists to help you interact with them considerately and therefore effectively.

Having equipped you with this understanding, the manual will provide guidance on every aspect of constructing an effective media strategy by identifying a compelling message and by using a range of tools and channels to get this message across. It will give advice on which media outlets and journalists to target and explain how to properly pitch your story to media professionals. It will give tips on key resources for media engagement and on writing a winning press release. It will advise on how to exploit the potential of social media, and on how to boost attendance at your events by publicising through a range of channels. It will also guide you safely through the tricky terrain of media interviews.

This fairly long manual is not intended to be read from cover to cover. The intention is that reading the overview will give you a clearer idea of what advice the manual has to offer, and that you will then refer to relevant sections as and when they may be of use.

Much of the advice contained in this manual comes from the insights of a diverse group of media experts involved in delivering the Dialogue Society's ten week Media School. The aim of the School was to empower representatives of small to medium sized charities and community groups to engage with the media in a positive and confident manner, allowing them to attract helpful publicity for their work and to avoid any damaging misrepresentation. Media professionals with a wealth of experience in TV, radio and newspaper journalism, public relations and academia engaged with diverse participants, sharing invaluable understanding and practical know-how. This manual collates key advice from the Media School as well as drawing on the experience and additional research of Dialogue Society staff.

### *Our heartfelt thanks go to all our Media School contributors:*

Anna Averkiou, Media Consultant

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Maria Way, Senior Lecturer in Media Theory, University of Westminster



## Aims and Objectives of This Manual

1. To encourage and support individuals and groups to engage in dialogue with the media
2. To inform organisations and communities about the need for good public relations (PR)
3. To encourage media friendly messaging
4. To assist with media planning and strategising
5. To initiate media engagement through a range of media channels
6. To help readers target relevant stories to appropriate media channels and journalists
7. To provide guidance on press timelines and effective planning
8. To help enhance press coverage through targeted pitching skills and interview techniques

*“If you’re complaining about something [media coverage] and you’re not happy about something, ask yourself what you did about it. And then ask yourself what you can do about it now.”*

Nigel Dudley

## Who is This Manual For?

- Small to medium sized charities
- Faith groups
- Community groups
- Press officers working for charities and community/faith organisations
- Welfare/social groups
- Small to medium sized business enterprises
- University/college students and others interested in practical media engagement

## The Need for Media Engagement

The world at large is saturated with multiple media messages planned strategically to sway our opinions towards a specific perspective. Whether consumed consciously through advertisements or unconsciously through new and more subtle media techniques, these messages are becoming the shapers of society, moulding the thoughts of the public.

*“Media use tends to feed into our sense of identity. What do we choose to look at? Does this reflect what you think you are? Does it reflect what you think you ought to be? Or does it change what you are?”*

Maria Way

Media professionals and public relations agencies are responsible for moulding and defining an organisation's reputation. Some organisations prefer to employ somebody to work in-house within the organisation, where as others recruit public relations agencies externally. Both are recruited to plan strategies and creative campaigns to bring the brand that they work for to the forefront of the mainstream media. With so many PR professionals racing to win some media attention, producing worthwhile content that journalists might cover is becoming increasingly difficult. For this reason media engagement is absolutely essential for those organisations that would like to be recognised for their work. Nobody will know about the great work you are doing if you do not tell them.

It can sometimes be difficult to demonstrate the benefits of media engagement and public relations as it is not a tangible aspect of running a business or community group. However, many organisations rely on their media departments to think of creative media ideas to get their name into the press as publicity can increase sales for commercial businesses, boost funds for charities and raise awareness and supporters for community groups.

More importantly, if you do not plan a media outreach strategy your organisation may become more inclined to receive negative publicity. You need to be able to advocate your work to the press in a positive way if you want to receive positive publicity.

*“A reputation is like fine china – easily chipped and difficult to repair.”*

Chinese Proverb quoted by Anna Averkiou

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# Setting the Scene

02

## Introducing Public Relations (PR) and Media Relations

Public relations (more commonly known through its abbreviation, “PR”) is a field which deals with building and maintaining a public image. Collins English Dictionary defines public relations as “the practice of creating, promoting or maintaining goodwill and a favourable image among the public towards an institution, public body etc.”

Media relations or press relations are the activities within public relations which deal with publicising your organisation through media outlets to target audiences.

Many organisations, charities, celebrities and politicians have designated PR professionals, teams or agencies dedicated to building a public reputation for the organisation they work for. It can be a cost effective way of communicating your key messages to your target audience. This can be done using numerous tools and techniques as part of a PR campaign such as writing press releases, planning a launch or press event, pitching stories to newspaper journalists, social media engagement and working with TV and radio. There are also PR techniques which aren’t necessarily related to the media yet can be just as effective, such as speaking at conferences and (for those with sufficient funds) sponsorship.<sup>1</sup> Speakers become advocates for the brand when speaking at conferences and sponsorship can introduce your organisation’s name to public spaces. It is important to remember that PR strategies need not only be short term for launches or special announcements but can also be long term to enhance brand awareness.

*“Make sure you have a clear identity and brand.”*

Will Straw

Brand awareness is the extent to which potential customers, supporters or service users can recognise an organisation. The more people that know of your existence, the more customers and supporters you will have. Familiarity is also a way customers and service users can feel comfortable with the values and quality of the services you have to offer. You will not have to keep on proving the standards of your organisation once people are thoroughly familiar with them.

There are several ways to increase brand awareness. Some coincide with the tools needed to improve public relations as both terms refer to the spreading of a particular message, that message in this context being the message of your organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> While few charities and community groups will have the funds to promote their work by sponsoring other organisations/events, speaking at conferences is an accessible way for you to increase awareness of your work. Through networking at events or online you may come across other organisations which organise conferences, seminars or panel discussions. Accept invitations to speak. You could also offer to speak at any event relevant to your work. In your presentation make sure you speak about your organisation, introducing your whole audience to who you are and what you do.

Overall, it is important to remember that PR is only a part of the marketing mix involved in effectively promoting an organisation. It is best to combine PR with a well navigated website, frequent newsletters, service user testimonials, advertising and direct mail campaigns.

## Why do 'PR'?

There are numerous reasons why it is beneficial to do PR. One of the most important things to remember is that people like to talk, and they will talk about your brand/organisation whether you decide to get involved or not. If you choose not to get involved you will have no control over what is said about your organisation. However, if you do choose to communicate with your audiences you will have an active input into what is being said about you.

What's more, public relations, and specifically media relations, can be an economical way of promoting your organisation. Whilst most forms of promotional activity, such as advertising, are paid for, editorial is free. If a journalist includes positive comments about your organisation in an opinion piece there is no charge for this excellent publicity. Readers are also a lot more receptive to reviews and published articles than to paid advertorials. These features can also be used repeatedly in your marketing materials (such as leaflets and brochures) and can be shared on your website and social media channels broadening outreach and visibility (see "Social Media" section below, page 40).

*"It's a matter of how you get people to write positively about you or how you minimise when they are writing hostile things about you; so you want to minimise damage and maximise opportunities."*

Nigel Dudley

## Media in the UK

The British media is a large and multi-faceted industry operating in one of the most competitive markets in the world. It includes a dozen or so national newspapers and thousands of local media outlets, not to forget a variety of national TV and radio stations. With the growing interest in online media, websites, blogs and social media sites, the number of new media platforms are multiplying by the second.

### National Newspapers

In the UK we currently have approximately twelve national newspapers comprising tabloids and broadsheets. The tabloid newspapers are more commonly regarded as the 'less serious' kind as they are more inclined to cover celebrity and human interest stories as opposed to the broadsheets which tend to cover more political stories and international news.

Most of these newspapers also have weekend editions as well as a website. The news featured in the newspapers is not always replicated online, therefore when contacting the paper you would need to contact the online reporter separately.

## Local Newspapers

Most towns and cities in the UK have at least one local newspaper which covers more localised news stories about the community. Although these papers tend to have a significantly smaller circulation in comparison to the national press, they feature more focused and targeted stories which appeal to the citizens of that specific area. Local newspapers do not work in the same way as national press in that you will not find the same stories splashed across the front covers of different publications as you would with the more widely popular national newspapers.

## The Newsroom Hierarchy

The newsroom hierarchy is very much dependent upon the size of the media outlet. Whilst some small local newspapers may consist of a two tier hierarchy consisting of reporters and editor, a larger organisation may have several layers of journalists, news editors, sub-editors and editors.

The editor stands at the top tier of the organisational structure, be it a large or small organisation. This person determines whether a story is newsworthy or not and oversees all content before it goes to press. Editors are the ‘gatekeepers’ and have the final say. With larger organisations it can be extremely difficult to meet and form a relationship with the editor due to their lack of free time and heavy work load. However if you manage to schedule an appointment with an editor plan your pitch well as editors and reporters are the key contacts you will need to make to increase your visibility.

Reporters are generally slightly easier to contact than editors. They are assigned to find interesting and compelling stories, researching them, interviewing people and writing up articles in an enticing way. In larger organisations reporters are assigned to reporting on specialist areas such as health, politics or sport, while in smaller news outlets reporters can cover multiple areas.

Reporters are always on the lookout for new and topical ideas and stories to cover and are open to hearing from people who have these to share. News outlets are always competing for news and would therefore leap at the chance of an exclusive story or interview if newsworthy.

*“You’ve got to remember... that newsrooms are short-staffed, and usually the agenda is set by the news editor, so if the journalist is told a story... he’s got to sell the story to the editor... The editor will have their own world view and their own view of how this story fits into their newspaper’s world view... So very often you get the phrase among journalists, “This is my story, give me a quote!” And very often their story isn’t anything to do with what you want to say!... There’s a master narrative going on that we’re not party to. All we can do is influence it really.”*

John Carter



## National Radio

Mainstream national radio remains dominated by the BBC.

Obtaining national radio coverage for community groups and charities is not easy, but may be achieved on occasion. It is certainly worth taking any opportunities to network with national radio journalists. It is possible that making such an effort could inspire positive coverage of your work, or correct misconceptions about your organisation.

Look out for programmes which broadcast features on themes related to your work. For instance, a faith-based group engaging in topical and original projects might consider contacting programmes such as Radio 4's "Sunday" or Radio 2's "Aled Jones with Good Morning Sunday."

It is also worth thinking about contributing to phone-ins on issues relevant to your work. If you work in interfaith relations or education, and Radio 4's "Any Answers" is discussing faith schools, why not call in with a perspective from your work and give your organisation a mention on national radio?

## Local Radio

Local radio stations are worth considering in your efforts to raise the profile of your work and of particular events within a particular locality. They will often advertise local not-for-profit/charity events free of charge and may reach a large local audience of potential supporters. (See "Publicising Your Events", below, page 49.) If you are doing something genuinely newsworthy it may be worth contacting local radio stations to see if they would be interested in featuring the story more prominently than in a list of community adverts.

Further, think about contributing to local radio phone-ins on relevant issues. If you are London-based you may like to consider joining in with "London's Biggest Conversation" (97.3FM), which invites public participation in discussion of current affairs.

## Television

A huge array of television channels are now available to the British public. As the number of channels have multiplied public preferences have diversified, with channels other than BBC1 and 2, ITV1, C4 and Five taking an increasingly large share of public viewing.<sup>2</sup> However, those five individual channels remain the most popular.

As with national radio, obtaining coverage of a community group or charity on television is quite a challenge. However this is not to say that it is not worth making an effort to engage with carefully chosen programmes. Local news programmes, such as those which follow the main news on the BBC and on ITV provide channels for comments and stories from viewers, whether via email or telephone (BBC) or via social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook (ITV). Their websites give

<sup>2</sup> Between 1991 and 2010 the percentage grew from 4.0% to 43.7%. Source: Broadcasters Audience Research Board website: [http://www.barb.co.uk/facts/annualShareOfViewing?\\_s=4](http://www.barb.co.uk/facts/annualShareOfViewing?_s=4)

details of how to comment. Some particular TV shows invite viewer participation in televised debates, for example, BBC1's "The Big Questions" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007zpll>).

Further, it is worth taking any opportunities to network with television journalists. It is possible that making such an effort could inspire positive coverage of your work, or correct misconceptions of your organisation that could lead to negative coverage.

## Social Media

Social media, consisting of a range of interactive online communication platforms, has become a highly important element of the media landscape. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube provide easily accessible and dynamic tools for engaging with existing and potential supporters. This element of the UK media is treated in more detail in the "Social Media" section below, page 40.

*"Anyone who has access to an internet cafe let alone to their own computer is given a free pass to communicate... not just to their friends and family but, thanks to the development of the internet, potentially to the world."*

Jonathan Fryer

## What's Newsworthy?

*"You still have to deal with them [journalists] however unpleasant they may be, and this means identifying what journalists want and what they don't want, and it doesn't mean identifying what you think journalists should want."*

Nigel Dudley

Every organisation would love to have all of the fantastic work they have been doing splashed across national headlines and broadcasted during primetime TV hours. However, unfortunately PR isn't as easy as simply handing over your event schedule or launch programme to a journalist. You will need to make your activities sound as attractive and topical as possible in order for your story to conjure interest. It will need to be newsworthy. Remember that stories that attract media attention are frequently about 'ordinary people doing extraordinary things or extraordinary people doing ordinary things.'

A few pointers you may wish to consider when brainstorming ideas are:

## Innovation

Putting the 'new' into 'newsworthy' takes you half way to a successful story. Readers like to be up to date with the latest and therefore journalists like the news first, whilst it's still fresh. Is your story a first? Does it matter whether it is a first and if not how is it different to what has been covered before? Will it set a new trend?

## Topical

Is your event or announcement topical, having relevance to significant issues currently in the news? If so, it is more likely to be covered. Try to present your story in a way which relates it to a topical subject. For example, if you are holding an event to encourage new volunteers to get involved in community projects and the media is currently giving a lot of attention to volunteering in the “Big Society”, connect your announcement to the “Big Society” theme.

*“There needs to be a news peg. That means that you need to look at what’s in the news agenda, look at what’s filling the newspaper or the airwaves... and work out how your information feeds into that.”*

Neil Barnett

## Statistics and Research

Journalists always like to be presented with evidence backed work. Have you done a survey or poll or invited a focus group to give you feedback about your project? Have you compared your statistics with earlier/other relevant research and can see a clear distinction? Make sure that you do your research well and present journalists with figures.

## Human Interest

The press like people, not institutions. Try to move away from talking about your organisation to talking about people involved in your organisation or assisted by it. Have there been any personal achievements, triumphant successes or unfortunate sufferers? Did somebody overcome a difficult obstacle?

## Tragedy, Controversy

Think of different news hooks for your story. A shocking or surprising story would have more leverage with the press than a simply informative one. Are there any controversial issues in the press which you can comment on? What would make your comment different?

## Celebrity

Celebrities, official figures and people who are current on the news agenda will increase coverage potential. If the public are interested in them the press will cover almost anything and everything which has an association with them. Does your organisation have any well known fans, ambassadors or patrons? This broadens interest and increases credibility.

## Putting Yourself in the Journalist's Shoes

To effectively engage with the press you must understand the demands and pressure that are placed on journalists. They work in a very fast paced environment with strict deadlines and time constraints. They are assigned duties to research and find stories and cover them in a very short span of time and may not be able to give you the amount of attention you would like. If you would like a news reporter to cover your story, it is also important to remember that they are inundated with material on a daily basis.

### Tight Deadlines

*"You've got to remember that newsrooms are short-staffed... Journalists are ruled by deadlines."*

John Carter

People working in the media industry know the importance of time-management. News is no longer 'new' if not shared on time. For this reason reporters are put under great pressure to finish stories in minimal time. TV and radio news reporters can be assigned stories in the morning and be expected to have them ready to be broadcasted later on the very same day. Considering that they would need to carry out research, contact relevant people, interview and write their stories in this short period, you can imagine how frustrating it could be to receive a continuous flow of phone calls from PR agencies trying to sell their stories and a never ending avalanche of press releases sent for their attention.

News desks are always busy and should only ever be contacted with time sensitive, relevant stories. If you call about a story, skip small talk, state your name and organisation and get straight to the point.

If you are contacted by a news reporter for comment, they will want a response as soon as possible. Many organisations do not realise the urgency of their inquiry and often lose out on the opportunity to participate. For this reason you may like to have some 'sound bites' (short statements conveying key information) at the ready to help you prepare quickly and easily if contacted for comment.

You will find that features departments have more time to plan a story as this kind of report requires more in-depth research and longer interviews which may take some more time. Features editors assign stories to team members who are given days, weeks or months to plan, research, write, edit and submit stories. Most media outlets have forward feature lists outlining which areas they plan to cover at certain times throughout the year. Of course these lists are not guaranteed and can change depending on what is newsworthy at the time. However, it is still worth requesting these so that you can plan your campaigns and pitches around them.

Nevertheless, journalists generally welcome any significant feature ideas which are appealing to their audiences and relate to current issues whilst offering a unique angle. Do try to form relationships with journalists and editors to share these ideas.

# How to Master Media Engagement

03

## Developing Your Media Strategy

*“The way forward: do make contact; visit newsrooms and develop working relationships; let journalists know well in advance when something is happening; think pictures; take opportunities for further training in interviewing...; put the media on your organisation’s agenda; and try and develop media friendly events into your programme of activities; don’t expect quick results, but do expect to change attitudes towards the organisation, making people more positive and more aware of your existence, that’s the important thing.”*

John Carter

Many small charities, community groups and organisations like yours work at the grassroots level, planning events and projects for service users, local people and stake holders. Media attention and publicity tends to be far off the radar as most of the energy output of your work is geared towards helping localised communities and not attempting to influence wider audiences. Whilst community work is at the heart of what you do and should always remain a priority, media planning should not be disregarded.

The media can support or undermine your good work. Therefore, however big or small your organisation, it is important to consider media engagement and what your message is. Media engagement can be a positive way to proactively tell people about all of the great local projects you have been doing. It can also be important in avoiding or dealing with any negative media attention. A scary yet very important thing you need to know about the press is that bad news sells and journalists are, more often than not, on the lookout for outrage and gossip. It is therefore crucial that you prepare for such crises to avoid public media meltdown.

This is not to say that the media will never cover positive and inspirational stories; they just tend to be more difficult to ‘sell in’ to the press.

Whether you are engaging with the media to manage the aftermath of a negative story or to draw attention to the high quality, positive work you have been doing, it is well worth preparing by considering a series of questions. The answers you give to these questions will form your “media strategy” - an organisation-specific approach to getting your message across to the press, and through the press to the public.

Developing a media strategy can be divided into two parts. Firstly you must clearly define your vision and message. Then, secondly, you must work out how best to get this message across to the media.

### I. Vision and Message

#### Defining Your Vision

Before moving ahead with any practical plans for media engagement, you need to

clarify what it is that you want to communicate to the media and the public. You may think you know what your organisation is all about - you know it well enough to want to work for it, after all. But do you know it well enough to communicate its identity and goals to the media and the public in a clear, succinct and compelling way?

To make sure that the answer to this question is “Yes”, try setting down on paper your organisation’s mission, vision and values. Think very carefully about what these are as all of your work will boil down to attempting to meet the aims and objectives contained in this statement. You will need to answer the following questions:

- What is your organisation all about? What is the key message?
- What are its values?
- What are its key aims and objectives?
- Where is it coming from? (What values and experiences fed into its creation? What has it achieved so far?)
- Where does it want to go? (What are its big ambitions? How does it hope to develop in the future?)

Try setting down your answers to these questions on a page. The founders/leaders of your organisation will need to work on this as they are probably best placed to talk about the organisation’s overall vision. (See Appendix 1 for a sample vision statement.)

### Identifying Your Message

Having clarified your vision, you need to extract from it and finalise a much shorter essential message to focus on when explaining your organisation to the press. Your message should be brief and to the point, no longer than three sentences. Your message must be:

- Original - to differentiate it from other groups/organisations
- Purposeful - highlighting a focused, specific service

*“The essential thing to remember these days is that you need to be interesting. Especially in the age of information overload, where everyone is competing for attention, you need to stand out.”*

Mayah Riaz

Some examples of brand messages are:

**Liberty** - Liberty is also known as the National Council for Civil Liberties. Founded in 1934, we are a cross party, non-party membership organisation at the heart of the movement for fundamental rights and freedoms in England and Wales.

We promote the values of individual human dignity, equal treatment and fairness as the foundations of a democratic society.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/about/index.php>

**Save the Children** - Save the Children works in more than 120 countries. We save children's lives. We fight for their rights. We help them fulfil their potential.<sup>4</sup>

**Amnesty International** - We are ordinary people from around the world standing up for humanity and human rights. Our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.<sup>5</sup>

**Crisis** - Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. We are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change.<sup>6</sup>

Make sure you communicate your vision and message and discuss them with your team. Make sure that everybody knows and agrees with your organisation's key goals. Doing this will ensure that your whole organisation presents a consistent, cohesive message to outsiders. It will also strengthen your team's sense of purpose and identity.

*"What you are doing is selling your message.... focusing on how what you are conveying looks...This may seem ridiculous in some contexts. But all people have is the impression."*

Julia Rooke

## 2. Media Engagement Plan - Getting the Message Across

### Media Engagement Goals

You will need to map out what you would like to achieve by engaging with the media. Will you proactively seek coverage or have a reactionary plan to respond only to media requests? What are the key messages that you would like to communicate to the media?

### Focusing on Your Audience and Identifying Media Contacts

When you start thinking about the practicalities of getting your message across it is very important to keep your target audience in mind. Who do you want to reach through your media engagement? Who are your current supporters and service users, and where would you like to find more? The answers to these questions will affect which media outlets you approach in any proactive media engagement, as well affecting the content of your message. For further guidance on tailoring your media engagement to your audience see "Identifying Your Audience", "Personalising Your Approach" and "Who to Contact and When" below, pages 24-27.

### Unique Selling Points

What is different about your organisation? You will need to identify key unique selling points which differentiate you from the crowd. Why should a journalist talk about you

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/16055.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/about-us.html>



and not any other organisation? What can you offer that others cannot? Perhaps you can ask your volunteers, your advisors, supporters or stakeholders to suggest why they were attracted to your organisation, why the work you do is so important and what significance it has for your audience.

### Positioning your Media Profile

As well as defining your own unique message and identifying your selling points, be aware of how your organisation fits into the bigger picture of other organisations, cultural groups and faith groups. Would you like to be associated with a certain body, political party, religion or community? If so, how will you include this in your messaging?

### Identifying Weaknesses

*“Journalists are trained to find a story in anything.”*

Anna Averkiou

The reality about the media is that bad news sells fast. Every organisation is prone to hiccups. Where do your weaknesses lie? If you can predetermine your organisation's vulnerabilities, this can help avoid or minimise their exploitation. Weak points could come in the form of poor service, a failed inspection, a staff issue, flood, security or impromptu comments from staff or volunteers. Be prepared to avoid any foreseeable crises which will harm your organisation's public image.

### Following Good Examples

Monitor other charities and community organisations and how they have successfully engaged with the media in the past. Assess which stories have made it into the press and in what capacity. This may guide you on which route to take with your story.

### Human Resources

Do you have staff dedicated to liaising with the press? If not delegate this role to one or two members of your team. The selected person, your press officer, should be the point of contact when journalists contact you. If they do not have prior experience dealing with the press it may be worth investing in some media training.

Your press officer would need to understand the way the media works, monitor the news and seek opportunities to increase the organisation's media profile. His/her tasks would include writing press releases, liaising with journalists, creating, updating and monitoring social media sites and generally keeping on top of all media opportunities. (See also “Tools for Media Engagement”, below, page 33.)

### Budget

Although public relations tends to be one of the cheapest ways to promote an organisation, a little budget helps with printing costs for marketing materials such

as leaflets and flyers for an event, or invitations for journalists. Go through your organisation's budgets with whoever looks after your finances and find out whether you have, or could have, a budget for media. If so, you can afford to be slightly more ambitious and creative with your media campaign.

### Case Studies and Testimonials

Every organisation would speak positively about the work/service/product they produce. Journalists would much rather hear from people who have experienced working with you or your stakeholders rather than somebody from within your team. Do you have any successful examples of your work to share with the press? Perhaps you can produce case studies of people who have had a positive outcome as a result of your work? Did one of your events enlighten an attendee and would they like to talk about it? Journalists love testimonials and quotes, so speak to people who may like to share some of the positive experiences they have had with your organisation.

### A Picture Speaks a Thousand Words

Why do you think newspapers have enticing photographs on the front covers? Imagine how boring it would be reading a newspaper with no images. How likely would you be to read a story if it didn't have a photograph? A press release accompanied by a photograph would appeal a lot more to a reporter; make sure that you take good quality photographs of all of your events and anything you would like to create some publicity and hype around. You can send these to journalists, post them on your website and share with followers through social media.

## Identifying Your Audience

In order for your PR outreach to be successful it is important to identify your audience. These are the people who support and encourage your work as well as those who subscribe to your newsletters, follow your activities and attend your events. Whilst these people are already your loyal supporters there are also people who should be amongst the connected yet have not made the step as yet. Whilst it is extremely important to communicate with your loyal audiences and to make them feel appreciated and a part of your work, you must explore which avenues to take to attract new ones.

When asked about target audience most organisations respond with 'the public', but the public is far too vast and needs to be subcategorised. Indeed you may have a message you would like the world to hear - which organisation doesn't? - but you really need to think of the public in segments. For example if you are a charity trying to raise awareness about the effects of lung cancer you may want to spread your message to the general public to stop them from damaging their lungs, but it will be most effective to target smokers. Given your objectives, will it be most helpful to target a particular geographical area, a particular interest group, one or more faith or cultural groups, a specific age group, or some combination of these?

When considering which media to use in reaching your target audience, you may wish to search through the following subcategories:

### By Medium:

- Press
- Radio
- Broadcast (TV)
- Internet

### By Geography:

- Local
- Regional
- National
- International

### By Specialism:

- Gender
- Job
- Age-range
- Faith

Why not create a poll or survey (see Appendix 2) on your website to find out which magazines, newspapers, TV and radio stations your audience turn to?<sup>7</sup> This can also be done over the phone or via email with a group of people who already know you and who are within your target audience.

The results of such a survey will determine which media you contact to reach out to more people who may be similarly interested in your work. The survey results can provide you with valuable tips which can take you a step closer to using the correct methods to reach your key audiences. To encourage people to participate keep the survey short. If you possibly can, offer a prize to a randomly picked participant; a book token, theatre ticket, restaurant voucher or similar would be sufficient.

Of course, if you particularly wish to reach specific groups that you have not yet been able to attract to your projects, you may have to take a different approach; the media habits of those specific groups may be different to those of your current supporters. Try talking to a contact at another organisation that works with a specific group you wish to attract. Your contact may be able to advise you on how best to reach out to that group.

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<sup>7</sup>There are various online tools that can help you to do this and a number of them allow you to create basic surveys free of charge, for example [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and [www.KwikSurveys.com](http://www.KwikSurveys.com)

## Who to Contact and When

Having identified your key audience and considered which media they turn to, the next stage would be to establish who your key media contacts should be. Try to turn your attention away from quantity and towards quality and relevance. The most popular and widely circulated newspapers such as The Times or The Guardian may not be read by your target audience, in which case it would be a waste of your time to pitch your story to them.

Within the media outlets popular among your target audience you will need to focus on particular journalists who cover areas relevant to you. Remember that a single news outlet may have political correspondents, foreign affairs correspondents, health correspondents, sports correspondents, social correspondents, religious affairs correspondents and others. Note that in smaller publications such as local papers there will be fewer correspondents covering several areas each.

Once you start to make new contacts it is advisable to make a media contacts list with all of your new found information logging notes about when you spoke to them and what they said. This should help you stay afloat of all media correspondence and moves within the industry. It will take some time to build your list but do not worry; this list is an ongoing project which can never be completed.

### To create a media list you will need to:

- Research the media your audiences read and note the journalists who cover your area. You will probably need to familiarise yourself with publications, looking at relevant articles and noting their authors; often it is difficult to find a list of journalists and their job titles.
- Search the online version of the printed press and other sites which cover your area for further relevant journalists.
- Listen to radio shows popular with your audience and watch the relevant TV shows that they watch, looking out for relevant reporters. Radio/television outlet websites may give further information on their journalists.
- Use social media sites such as Twitter and monitor all tweets which include #journorequest. This is a tag journalists use to find certain pieces of information. You never know when they may be looking for what you have to offer.
- If you have a budget, you may wish to invest in a media directory such as Gorkana (<http://www.gorkana.com/uk>), or journalist directory ([www.journalistdirectory.com](http://www.journalistdirectory.com)).

If you do not have budget for a media database you will need to contact the advertising department of the selected media outlet and request a media pack (in case you want to advertise in the publication) a sample copy of the publication and a forward features list. These materials will help you familiarise yourself with the sections the publication includes, tone, audience and planned forthcoming features.

## When to Call the Media

One of the most annoying things for a journalist is to receive calls from PR officers when they're on a deadline. It is worth a little care and planning to avoid causing journalists additional stress at such pressurised times.

### Dailies

It is a bad idea to call daily papers after 5pm when the publication is being finalised, or during or just before editorial conferences. If you can, find out when daily conferences take place and avoid them. As a very general rule it is better to call in the morning (after 10am) rather than in the afternoon.

### Weeklies

For weekly/monthly publications make sure you know when your targeted media is going to press (the day before it goes on sale) and avoid contacting them on this day. For national papers at least you should also avoid contacting journalists on the day before press day when they will be starting to finalise the publication.

Note that the approach of media outlets does vary: some local papers which are less flooded with potential stories may be willing to accept new stories on the day before press day or even on the day itself.

For weekly publications the best day to call is the day after press day.

As well as press day, it is best to avoid calling on Friday; if you have to call on Friday, try calling in the early afternoon.

### “Is This a Good Time?”

It is impossible to provide a reliable guide to media outlets' daily and weekly timetables as there is too much variation. As you get to know a particular news outlet you will be able to familiarise yourself with good and bad times to call. But to start off with a key principle is this: when you call give your name and organisation and then ask straight away whether this is a good time for the journalist. If it is not, ask when would be a convenient time for you to call back. Remember that, essentially, successful media engagement simply requires you to be considerate towards the journalists with whom you interact, recognising their needs and catering for them as best you can.

With this in mind, don't waste a journalist's time by calling just after sending a press release to check that it has been received and read. The journalist will most likely have received it and will use it if it is relevant.

## Personalising Your Approach

*“...the best way to [influence the way a journalist writes about you] is to get to know a journalist at a point when you don’t actually need to talk to them. If you ring up and say “Help, I’ve got a crisis and I want to talk to you...” and the guy’s never met you he’s not going to be as sympathetic as if he’s known you before.”*

Nigel Dudley

Once you have a clear idea of who you are aiming to reach, which media they consume and which journalists within those media are most relevant, you can start thinking about targeting your approach. As mentioned previously, the media industry is extremely fast paced and has no time for time-wasters, so plan your approach carefully and personalise your pitch to appeal to each individual contact. Some areas you may need to consider are:

- Your audience should be at the core of everything. In order to understand what a journalist would want, you need to first understand what your audience would want.
- Focus on your aims and objectives. What messages would you like to highlight? Make sure that you communicate them in a way that will appeal to your target audience.
- Plan how you will approach journalists. Will you call, email or meet them in person? The best approach will depend on the kind of media outlet and the nature of your story. If you have a particularly exciting, current and newsworthy story a journalist might be glad to receive your phone call. If your story concerns a less immediate event or is less obviously newsworthy it is better to send an email initially. If you have no immediate story but want to inform a journalist about your work and build a positive media relationship, see if you can meet in person at an event and follow up with an email invitation to a further meeting over lunch (see Appendix 4).
- Remember to be sensitive to the needs of the journalists you are contacting. For example, do not telephone them at a time when they are likely to be struggling to finish articles before their paper goes to press.
- When pitching your story give a short but persuasive explanation of its relevance to the journalist’s area of interest (see Appendix 3). You may even wish to underline your story’s relevance by referring to specific recent articles that the journalist has written on related topics.
- Will you offer your story as an exclusive to one media outlet or will you offer it to multiple outlets? Sometimes news sources will only be interested if the story is an exclusive. Therefore, you should contact the media you would most like to cover your story first.

## Think Local

For community groups and charities focusing on work in the local area, engagement with the local media can be very valuable for raising the profile of your work and connecting you with a larger local audience. Local media outlets are much more likely to feature stories relating to your work than national press. They may also be more popular among your target audience. It is well worth engaging with local journalists in a positive and proactive way.

Remember that you can place adverts for events in local papers without spending much money, and that local radio stations will often mention charitable events for free (see “Publicising Your Events”, below, page 49).

## How to Contact Local Media

- Use contact details given in the paper to send in stories, or search the website for further contacts. Some papers’ websites give specific instructions or help for sending in stories. The Islington Gazette, for example, has a special “send us a story” form to fill in. See: <http://www.islingtongazette.co.uk/contact-us>
- Contact local papers two weeks in advance and then follow up with an email or call closer to the time.

## Hints and Tips

- Try to meet members of the local press at networking events and get to know them. They may be more interested in the work of someone they have met, and have a more positive attitude towards it. They will also be more likely to listen to any concerns or complaints about anything they print. (See “Networking” section, below, page 30.)
- Use local papers and radio stations to advertise your events (see “Publicising Your Events”, below, page 49).

## When Sending in a Story:

- Contact media outlets at the right time, when you are involved with something genuinely newsworthy that they might want to cover.
- Only contact journalists about a story by telephone if you have a timely and significant story. If the story is about an ongoing project contact media outlets by email.
- Try to make sure you are sending the story to the right person. The person who receives it may not take the time to pass it on to the colleague who deals with that kind of story. By reading the publication and networking with its staff you can find out who are the best people to target.
- The subject line is key; it may make the difference between the email being opened or being ignored. Try to make it short, to the point and eye-catching. Putting the journalist’s name in the subject line may encourage them to pay

more attention to it (for example, “TO: [Title Name Surname]; RE: [Title of Story]”).

- Avoid sending emails with attachments. In your initial email give a brief, clear explanation of the story. Use the press release in the body of the email if it is very brief. If it is not very brief it is better to summarise the story in one paragraph (see Appendix 3); the journalist will contact you if he/she is interested and you can then send a press release.
- If possible, personalise the email, showing the relevance of your story to the individual you are emailing.
- Your first paragraph should include the “Five W’s”: What, where, who, why and when.
- Be very concise.
- Give full contact details at the bottom of your email.

*“Remember, research what the journalist does... Research them on the internet, see what their previous articles have been about, and target it in that way.”*

Mayah Riaz

## Networking

Networking is an important skill in media engagement. Journalists are more likely to take notice of your suggestions and stories if they already know you and know that you are engaged in interesting work. They will have a better grasp of your organisation, its values and its work if they know you and have had the benefit of discussing your organisation with you in person. Further, if a news outlet does publish anything unfair about your organisation, or your community, they will be more likely to take your complaint seriously and make sure the mistake is corrected if relevant journalists know you in person.

*“It’s a plain truth that most journalists are human, and they find it harder to be critical of people they have relationship with just like everyone else does.... If the reporter knows you he’s much more likely to trust you or do you a favour- it’s human nature. And it also means that when I want a quote for an article I’m writing I’m more likely to go to someone I know...”*

Nigel Dudley

## Getting Started

- You will often meet journalists at seminars and at charity fundraising events. If you are invited to events with guest lists sent out in advance, make sure you familiarise yourself with the photos and biographies of any relevant journalists so that you can recognise and meet with them.



- By gradually expanding your circle of professional connections through attending other organisations' events you will find new ways of connecting with the media. Getting to know more stakeholders and charities will lead to invitations to more events where you can meet with new potential partners and helpful contacts, including media contacts. So it is a good policy to attend events and make new connections whenever you can.
- Your local support and development organisation will help you to keep in touch with events being run by voluntary organisations. They may have a members' mailing list for local events (e.g. <http://www.vai.org.uk/join-us/benefits-of-membership/>).<sup>8</sup>
- Use social media to connect with journalists and their activities. Twitter (<http://twitter.com/>), Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), and LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) can be useful resources. You may be able to find out which events a particular journalist is attending and meet him/her there.
- You could also do some online networking - reply to a journalist's "tweets" and start an online conversation. You can then introduce your work and suggest a meeting.
- Once you have made contact and introduced yourself, in person or online, suggest a meeting to discuss your work (see Appendix 4). Journalists often appreciate being offered lunch!

## Tips for Networking

This is by no means an exhaustive list.<sup>9</sup> Here are just some general pointers to get you started:

- Arrive early. It will help calm your nerves. If you are late or only just in time you will be less relaxed. It may also be more difficult to find people to talk to as most will already be engaged in conversations.
- Take business cards or equivalent so that you can give out your contact details quickly and easily.
- Put your own business cards in one pocket and those given to you by others in another. This will avoid confusion and mistakes and make you less inclined to fiddle.

<sup>8</sup> Find your local organisation through <http://www.navca.org.uk/membersdirectory> (England)/ [http://www.voluntaryactionsotland.org.uk/third\\_sector\\_interfaces.html](http://www.voluntaryactionsotland.org.uk/third_sector_interfaces.html) (Scotland)/

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/grants/voluntary/contact/?lang=en> (Wales)

Local support and development organisations are organisations that provide support to voluntary organisations and volunteers in a particular borough, district or city. They provide a range of valuable resources, from free or affordable training to networking and funding opportunities.

<sup>9</sup> There are a number of books that provide detailed information and techniques on successful networking. One we have found helpful is *The Networking Survival Guide* by Diane Darling, McGraw-Hill, 2002.

- Ask others for their contact details; if you have these you don't have to rely on them remembering to contact you.
- Take the initiative to be friendly and start conversations. People will usually be glad to chat to someone who makes an effort.
- Wear something appropriate but a little distinctive; it will be easier for people to recognise you during the event and they will be more likely to remember you afterwards.
- Wear a clear name badge with large writing. Even if badges are given out at the event the writing may be small and difficult to read from a distance. It is worth bringing your own.
- It is not how many people you meet that counts, it is whether you meet the people you want to meet. Make sure you identify and focus on people most relevant to your work.
- Don't try to explain everything about your organisation all at once. You only need to give enough information to get a new contact interested and secure a second meeting with him/her.
- If you want to meet the speaker at an event try to do this before their presentation. Many people will be trying to speak to them afterwards and it will be crowded and difficult.
- Try to say something memorable. People are less likely to forget who you are if, for example, you compliment them on something they published recently or even something they are wearing.
- Don't go to the event on an empty stomach; if you are not too hungry it will be easier to focus on meeting people rather than on refreshments.
- Be your natural self.
- Act confident. If you act confident you will feel confident.
- Look up the personal interests of key people you want to meet to help you engage with them.
- Be a 'key person' for the person you're meeting: try to help them in some way, by offering contacts or opportunities. You may want to follow up on the initial meeting by emailing them regarding something mentioned during your conversation or something that you know will interest them on the basis of your knowledge of them. Pass on helpful contacts or relevant information or suggest opportunities.
- Use a firm handshake.
- Smile.

## Tools for Media Engagement

*“This is how they view my lot, the Church- they see us as self-important, distant, defensive, devious, out-of-date, hypocritical, and if that’s not enough, we’re unhelpful to journalists as well...And our response... has been to promote communications right across the Church... right across the country we have 57 spokespeople.”*

John Carter

### Press Officer

A press officer is simply someone responsible for dealing with journalists and promoting a positive understanding of your organisation in the media.<sup>10</sup> A designated press officer will be able to respond to media requests in good time. They will be aware of topical news stories in the press that your organisation may want to comment on or feature in. They will monitor all publicity on your organisation, reviewing customer comments and feedback on websites, blogs and social media.

The press officer’s role is to understand the core values of your organisation and create a media strategy which will communicate these values in a media friendly, positive light. This member of the team will carry out media outreach and liaison which may include regular journalist meetings and interview opportunities.

### Spokesperson

The selected media spokesperson does not necessarily have to be the press officer but it could be more practical if one person combined both roles as both would need media training. Your company spokesperson should know the most about your company’s values and the services that you have offered in the past and offer now. This person will need to be confident, well-spoken and well-presented. They will need to be knowledgeable about your organisation and about key areas of interest which relate to what you do. The selected spokesperson would participate in all media interviews.

### Press Pack

When speaking to a journalist it is almost impossible to have enough time to tell them everything you would like to about your organisation including background information, your core values and all of the interesting and exciting work you have been doing. Therefore press officers normally prepare a ‘press pack’, a holy grail for positive press coverage.

<sup>10</sup> The term “media officer” has the same meaning. The role of a “public relations (PR) officer” encompasses the same responsibilities but may also extend to promoting an organisation through speaking at conferences and through sponsorship.

A 'Press Pack' is a collection of hardcopy or digital information about your company given to targeted journalists to read. It is best given to a journalist in person when meeting for the first time. After forming your first contact with a journalist, be it over the phone or via email, it is a good idea to propose a meeting, possibly over some lunch or tea (food is always a good icebreaker), to expand upon the discussion and speak more about what you do. Most of the time journalists will accept this invitation if the work you are doing is relevant to the issues they report on. Journalists are always open for new ideas so prepare your press pack and what you will say to them in advance. During your meeting you can refer to the material included in your press pack.

The press pack should be presented in a neat folder if handed over as a hard copy or should be compressed into a low resolution document if sent digitally. A press pack should include all of the information a journalist would want to know about your organisation. It typically comprises:

- A short summary about who you are, what you do, where you are located, and when you started. This shouldn't be any longer than half a page (see Appendix 5).
- Recent press releases you would like covered in the press (more about this is given later).
- Testimonials from people who have participated in your activities before and have great, positive things to say about you. If you have any well-known public figures that support/advocate your work, you should most definitely include their testimonials too.
- Photographs – remember 'a picture speaks a thousand words.' If you are a community organisation include some images of events you have held. Also, it may be a good idea to include a headshot of the founder of your organisation for profile opportunities. Make sure that all images are high resolution and not pixelated. The general size journalists request is 300dpi.

## PRESS RELEASES

### What is a Press Release?

A press release is a written piece of communication sent to journalists to inform them about an event or announcement. It is written in a particular way to spark interest and enhance the likelihood of the information being covered in the press.

Although a well written press release can put a story in a journalist's lap, keep in mind that journalists are not relying on your press release to make their headlines. They receive thousands of emails daily and unfortunately the vast majority are discarded. Just sending journalists information about your news is not enough; to give your press release any chance of success you must make sure that the information is presented clearly, succinctly and in an eye-catching way.

Before you start to write your press release, define your key goal in presenting this story. Identify your target audience from the very beginning and put them first as this will allow you to create content which will attract them.

When writing your press release, try to:

- Sell the story – think about what the real news is in your story and focus on it. Think of yourself as the reader and ask yourself what you would want to be informed about.
- Tie the story into themes and stories that are currently prominent in the media. For example, if there is a major national news story about educational reforms and you are involved in a new educational project of some kind, connect the two in your press release.
- Give the journalist the core facts, not every fact – you may have a lot to say but don't try to cram it all in. Extract the most newsworthy information and present this.
- Include a quote – journalists absolutely love quotes so make sure you include one from a relevant spokesperson and/or an external supporter.
- Avoid jargon, colloquial language or clichés. Journalists do not like these.
- Keep it short. Aim for one side of A4.
- Include your contact details – make sure you include a contact name, email address and telephone number at the end of your press release. Failing to do so can mean a lost interview/press opportunity.
- Check all facts –always double check all of the facts included in your press release. An error can result in incorrect statistics being published.
- Make it entertaining. Your press release should be enjoyable to read. If you find it dull most probably so will the journalist.
- Get your news across straight away. Put the most important part of your press release first.
- Find someone, such as a colleague, to proofread it before you send it off.

*“What interests them [editors] at the risk of stating the obvious is news. But it's surprising how many press releases contain absolutely no news content whatsoever...”*

Neil Barnett

## Formatting

### Headline

It is up to the headline to attract potential readers to your press release. Make sure that it is both eye-catching and informative – one without the other reduces the chances of success. Do not use CAPITALS as it is difficult to read and may be detected as spam on some filters.

Think of ways you can use language to inject some zest into your headline. Play on words and the use of alliteration are always winners.

### First Paragraph/Summary/Lead

Imagine that the journalist will not read past this first paragraph. You would want to tell the entire story as quickly as possible, or at least the most important parts. In reality many journalists will not read beyond the first paragraph if they are not presented with enough compelling content to entice them to read on. The quality of your lead statement will determine this. Therefore the first few lines should include all of the main points that you would like to make.

Try to limit the paragraph to 50 – 100 words, including the **5W's**: WHO you are, WHAT is being announced, WHY it is taking place WHERE the event/announcement/change is happening and WHEN the event/change will take place.

If you cannot summarise the key message of your press release in a single paragraph - the first paragraph - it is highly likely that you are trying to communicate too much. A press release should essentially present one clear, concise idea.

### The Middle/Body

You can expand upon the story here but try to keep it simple. Focus on factual information using an objective tone and speaking in the third person. Include a quote from an important spokesperson or supporter to bring some colour and personality to your story. The quote is your organisation's opportunity to do some bragging. In a quote, where someone is giving their own opinion, superlative terms can be used (for example, they can say that your organisation's work is "amazing", "exceptional" etc). However, make sure that what is said is still truthful.

### The End

The end of your press release should include the least important information. The top priority news should be at the very beginning of your press release, with the content decreasing in importance as it continues. Your readers should have enough information to understand what is happening if you remove the final paragraph.

You can follow the ‘inverted pyramid’ rule below when prioritising content for your press release.

**THE ESSENTIALS - THE FIVE W’S: What is happening? Where is it happening?**

**Who is involved? When is it happening? Why is it happening?**

**ADDITIONAL HELPFUL INFORMATION**

**Expand upon your lead paragraph here**

**‘How’ is this happening?**

**NICE TO HAVE INFORMATION**

**This should be the  
least important  
section**

### Notes to Editors

At the end of your press release include a short section under the heading, “Notes to editors”. Include your contact details in case an interview or further information is required. Give contact details for an individual, not an “info@” address. Make sure the individual is someone who is well-informed and able to talk eloquently and calmly to journalists. Don’t forget to include a URL to your company’s website.

In your “Notes to editors” you will also need to include a boiler plate (a short profile) about your organisation and brief background information about any other organisations or individuals mentioned or quoted in your press release.

### Things to Avoid

*“The most common problem or failing of press releases is that they are egocentric, or solipsistic, in other words, they focus on the concerns and interests of the people who issue them rather than the interests of the newspaper or the journalist or editor.”*

**Neil Barnett**

- A press release is not an advertisement so make sure it doesn’t read like one. Some make the mistake of being too enthusiastic in their choice of words and the use of exclamation marks, making it sound as though they’re trying to sell something. Even though a press release is a form of promotion, try to be moderate in your tone and selection of words.
- Using CAPITAL LETTERS CAN BE HARSH ON THE EYES AND DIFFICULT TO READ. Do not try to use all caps to draw attention to a phrase or keywords.
- Do not directly address your reader with terms like ‘you’ and ‘your’. Instead use terms that define your intended audience for example ‘community’, ‘society’ or ‘local people’.

## Press Release Distribution Sites and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Why not upload your press release onto a press release distribution site to enhance outreach to prospective audiences and press? There are many free online distribution sites that allow you to submit press releases free of charge. Press releases may then be picked up and circulated on websites and through social media. The more people that see your press release the more clicks you will be receiving to your website too. (Remember to include a link to your website at the end of the press release.)

Free press release distribution sites include the following:

<http://www.clickpress.com/releases/index.shtml>

<http://express-press-release.net/>

<http://www.free-press-release.com/>

<http://www.free-press-release-center.info/>

<http://freepressindex.com/>

<http://www.i-newswire.com/>

<http://www.pressexposure.com/>

It is also worth making a little effort to “search engine optimise” your press release. Search engine optimisation (SEO) means the process of increasing a website or webpage’s visibility on search engines - getting your website/webpage higher up the list of search results when someone searches for a relevant word/phrase.

*“Very few people click through to the second page on Google. They go with what they see in those first hits...”*

**Will Straw**

A simple SEO method is to insert keywords into your press release. Keywords are the words and phrases people would use to search for your organisation or services supplied by it. Make sure you get some keywords into your title and one or two more in the first paragraph. For example if the word ‘dialogue’ is a keyword used to look for the Dialogue Society via search engines such as Google, it would be wise to refer to the word ‘dialogue’ as often as possible in the press release too, including it in the title and first paragraph if at all possible. This simple step can increase your press release’s online visibility and attract more visitors to your website via the link(s) in the press release. It is a good idea to link some keywords to particular relevant and interesting pages on your site as well as giving the site’s homepage in your “Notes to editors.”

Uploading your press releases onto your website can also increase online visibility, especially if you have included plenty of keywords in the press release.



Another way to increase your website's online visibility is by opening up social media accounts and linking them to your website (see "Social Media" section below, page 40).

## Hints and Tips

- Use keywords in the text, particularly in the title and first paragraph, to enhance search engine optimisation (SEO).
- Copy and paste the press release into the body of your email rather than sending it as an attachment - this will avoid filters rejecting it as spam and will also increase the possibility of your email being looked at. Some journalists do not open emails with attachments from unknown senders.
- If you include an introductory message before the press release itself keep this brief and to the point.
- Always check, check and check again for spelling and grammar mistakes.
- Have some quality photographs at the ready in case they are requested. Do not attempt to embed them into the body of your email or send them as an attachment. Instead note in your email that you have images available should a journalist want to see them.
- Avoid blanket emails (impersonal emails sent indiscriminately to a long list of people) - journalists can spot them a mile off. Make sure that they are personalised to target specific journalists and media. This may be slightly more time-consuming but it will be worth it in the long run. Put the journalist's name in the subject line so that they can see immediately that this is a personalised email (e.g. "TO: [Title Name Surname]; RE: [Press Release Title]").
- Once you have sent your email do not call to check whether it was received or will be used. These kinds of calls are time-consuming and annoying for journalists. If the story is of interest it will be used.
- Your press release will stand a better chance of being read and used if the journalist receiving it knows you. Build relationships with journalists. If you are sending a press release to someone you know you may want to give them a quick call to say that you're sending it.
- Remember to think about what interests the journalist to whom you are sending a story. A successful press release is one which is able to combine a journalist's interests and your organisation's interests, appealing to the journalist through a compelling news hook.
- There is no harm in suggesting ideas for features to journalists when speaking to them about your press release. In fact, some journalists appreciate this and may even like your ideas.
- Be aware that a press release can act as a starting point for a story, but may not be covered in the way you anticipated. Think about the journalist's

interests and outlook and about how he/she might use your information.

- If you know one person at a news outlet but the press release is not so relevant to their area, ask them for a contact in another department. When calling/emailing that contact you can mention that their colleague told you to get in touch with them.
- For a sample press release see Appendix 6.

## Social Media

Social media is now one of the most influential means of free communication. It consists of a range of interactive online communication platforms through which users can engage and interact with each other, sharing information and resources. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube are only a few of the multiple social media sites through which you can potentially reach thousands of people. They can make your organisation more engaging by providing online interactivity and allowing you to communicate a personality.

Use social media to keep in touch with fans, local stakeholders, organisations and individuals and update them with your activities. Journalists and media professionals are also using these platforms to research contacts. Having a social media presence will not only help communicate your message to current and potential supporters but will also increase your online visibility to the press.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube can all be very useful resources.

*“Engage your audience. See who’s replying to your tweets, who’s replying on facebook, and go and respond to them. If you disagree with somebody have an argument with them. You can be civil but still putting across a different point of view. If people are retweeting you and reinforcing what you’re saying, thank them, so they know that their contribution has been appreciated.”*

Will Straw

### Twitter (<http://twitter.com/>)

Twitter is a social networking website enabling its users to send and read messages called tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user’s profile page.

While the information that can be directly communicated through a tweet is limited, Twitter is a powerful tool for online communications. It acts as a channel guiding audiences to other places online, such as an organisation’s website, a relevant news article or a Facebook event. A tweet, by giving a short, timely message and a link can provoke interest and guide readers to further information. This process can considerably increase your website traffic and raise your profile online.

Twitter is a fast paced medium that allows you to communicate with other users in real time and to interact with actual and potential service users, supporters and critics in an immediate and personal way.

*“Followers come like moths to the flame to someone who is either famous or else gets a reputation as tweeting amusingly.”*

Jonathan Fryer

### Using Twitter

- You can open a Twitter account free of charge and create a profile for your organisation.
- Get into the habit of “tweeting” regularly. Announce your events, direct people to new material on your website, comment on relevant news and tell the world what you are doing. Try to tweet every day, or more often, to keep supporters engaged and to engage others.
- As well as using Twitter to tweet to the general public, you can send messages to particular individuals/organisations by beginning your tweet with “@” and their profile name.
- Sign up to “follow” other interesting users, such as local MPs, councillors and councils, other charities and community groups and relevant journalists. Respond to their tweets and enter into discussions. You can then inform them about your work.
- <http://www.tweethall.com/> helps you to find and follow local councillors on Twitter.
- Monitor what is being said about you online using Twitter’s search function or using TweetDeck, a personal browser which can be downloaded for free. You can also monitor what is being said on a particular given topic.

*“Use Twitter to engage with people who you think might be interested in your argument. For example if you follow journalists and politicians you can tweet them when you think you have something that might be of interest to them. Hopefully they’ll respond to you.”*

Will Straw

### Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com))

Facebook is a social networking website allowing users to create profiles, add other users as friends and communicate with each other through text, photographs, videos and other means. It allows you to share much more content than you can communicate with Twitter. On Facebook you can share photos and videos as well as much more text. It is a great forum for communicating with current and potential supporters/service users in an informal, interactive way.

## Using Facebook

- You can open a Facebook account for free, as an individual or as an organisation.
- Creating a fan page is a good way for an organisation or community group to gather supporters, share information, photos and videos and start discussions (to which fans can contribute on the “wall” of the fan page). Currently, you can “Create a Page” via the option at the bottom of any Facebook webpage.
- Creating events on Facebook allows you to share details with friends and fans in an informal, friendly way. It is also a way of keeping track of who is able to attend as they can RSVP on the event page.
- Facebook also provides various advertising options, including adverts targeting particular groups. These advertising options are not free but can be good value in some cases.

## LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com))

LinkedIn is a social media platform for professional networking. A presence on LinkedIn allows other organisations to find yours and suggest collaboration and partnership. It also allows you to connect with relevant organisations and professionals.

## Using LinkedIn

- Create your own profile free of charge. (“Business” or “Executive” accounts, which are paid for, have added benefits, but the free “Basic” account can still be a very worthwhile networking tool.)
- Make a group for your organisation for colleagues, volunteers, supporters and any individuals to join. This gives your organisation its own presence on LinkedIn and provides a space for announcements and discussions among members.
- Invite existing contacts to become connections on LinkedIn and gradually build your network.
- Join relevant groups to engage in discussion of areas of interest and make new contacts in relevant fields.

## YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com))

YouTube is a video-sharing site. It allows you to share footage of events, discussions and interviews, communicating ideas and activities to your audience in a more vivid, memorable, eye-catching way than can be achieved through words or even through still images.

## Using YouTube

- Create a free YouTube account for your organisation and start uploading your videos.

- Draw people's attention to videos through links on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and your website. You should gradually gather more followers (other users who opt to be kept informed of new material that you upload), reaching a wider audience with your videos.

## “Hyperlocal” Media

As noted by the Young Foundation in a 2010 report on “Hyperlocal media”<sup>11</sup>, the potential of the internet, and particularly of interactive social media, is being used by some to enhance connections between people in a very specific location, sometimes as small an area as a particular neighbourhood. Popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are sometimes used for these purposes, for example by councillors communicating with constituents through Twitter and councils using Facebook pages for discussions. In addition, ordinary local residents as well as stakeholders have created social media websites specially designed to promote communication between people in their particular area. For example, <http://www.harringayonline.com/> provides a forum for people in the small neighbourhood of Harringay (not the London Borough of Haringey) to discuss all kinds of local issues, announce local events or request help with voluntary projects.

## Using Hyperlocal Media

- Be aware both of the use of popular social media to connect local communities and of the existence of neighbourhood social media websites. “Hyperlocal” media may be a very helpful means by which to connect with potential supporters and service users.
- Try typing the name of your neighbourhood or local area into a search engine such as Google, or searching Facebook and Twitter for it to see if there are any sites, profiles or pages for your particular local area.

<sup>11</sup> “Joining the Conversation: an introduction to hyperlocal media”, by Mandeep Hothi and Saffron Woodcraft, 2010. See <http://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/publications>

## Media Interviews

*“You need to be genuine. Trust requires openness and transparency. Be human.”*

Anna Averkiou

Be alert to which stories are being covered in the media as you may be contacted by the press to comment on a relevant issue. National or regional TV/radio outlets may like to include your perspective on air and if contacted it is highly probable that journalists will want to speak to you urgently to make the tight deadline set by their editors. In such circumstances remain calm and try to find out the main thrust of the interview. Do not feel pressured into answering any questions you have not prepared for. Before agreeing to any form of participation, make sure you ask the reporter the following questions:

- What is the name/position of the caller?
- Which broadcaster is calling?
- What kind of programme will it be for?
- Will it be live or pre-recorded?
- What are the main subjects to be covered in the interview?
- Which other organisations/individuals will be featured?
- How long will the interview last?
- Will the recording be used for anything else?

Always try to give interviews unless there is an important and unavoidable reason why you cannot. The more willing you are to speak to the media, whether to discuss your own organisation or to comment on topical issues, the more likely you will be to obtain positive coverage for your organisation and avoid or limit negative coverage. If you are not able to give an interview give the journalist a holding statement instead of refusing to speak.

*“All of us will face crises, when we’re on the back foot, when the journalist will come to us and ask us questions.”*

John Carter

A holding statement is a brief statement given to all press enquiries in the event of a major incident. It basically feeds information to the press and the public about the latest developments without the spokesperson commenting in person.<sup>12</sup> This is a much

<sup>12</sup> For example, in the event of an accident on an organisation’s premises the organisation might give a statement of this sort: “As the Director of [Organisation] I can confirm that there has been an accident on our premises involving [a staff member/a service user/several members of the public]. The emergency services are taking care of those involved and we are doing everything we can to assist and to ascertain the causes of this incident. We have no further information to give at this stage but will comment further when we have a fuller understanding of the situation.”

better alternative to not responding at all as declining to speak can often be interpreted as indicating that you have something to hide. No matter what the circumstances always be ready to provide the public with some form of acknowledgement even if your organisation is in the wrong. It is best to put your hands up and admit to your failures and reassure people that you are doing your very best to solve the issue in hand.

Holding statements may be helpful in the event of a media crisis. However, when you are able to speak more fully about the proposed issue it is best to do so.

## Advice for All Interviews

### Call Back

*“Don’t be bamboozled into giving an interview with no time to prepare.”*

Julia Rooke

If you are called out of the blue and asked for an interview or comment, ask the journalist to call you back in 30 minutes or take their telephone number and say that you will call back. Use this time to gather your thoughts and plan the interview.

### Do Your Homework

Remember to find out what the thrust of the interview will be about. If you have time, do your research about the topic and about your interviewer’s previous interviews. Homework is absolutely vital.

Know the counter arguments to your message and think about responses to them. Try to give analogies and examples as listeners and therefore reporters love stories.

### What is YOUR Message?

Write down three main points that you would like to cover during your interview and stick to these. You will not be able to get across more information than this in a short interview. Always return to these points if the journalist asks you a difficult question. Talk around these points and do not read them word for word as you do not want to sound like you are reading.

Highlight areas that are the most important to you and relevant to the topic discussed.

### Bitesize

Practice concise (12-30 second) sound bites (short statements conveying key information). This will help you to avoid waffling and talking for too long. Instead you will be able to present your answers in a clear and concise manner.

### You Are the Expert

Remember that you are the expert in your field and not the journalist. Do not feel pressured to answer a question that you do not know the answer to, instead revert back to your main points.

## Confidence

A way to combat nervousness is to think about your posture when you sit down. Think about your breathing and keep your back straight. You can prepare for interviews by learning to associate this posture with a moment in your life when you felt really happy and confident. Practise adopting this posture and visualising this happy moment. At the interview, when you sit in the same way it should evoke some of the same feelings of happiness and confidence.

Focus on what you are trying to achieve and pretend to be confident even if you are not - if you act confident you will often start to feel more confident. Remember to smile as this will help you to feel and appear more positive and confident.

Memorise some sound bites and possible introductory sentences to revert to if the nerves kick in.

Be organised. Give yourself time to get comfortable and get ready. Make sure you have some water.

If you can, chat with your interviewer and get to know him/her a little before the interview starts. This will help you to feel more comfortable and relaxed.

## Getting the Tone and Level Right

A good mind trick for getting the tone and level of your interview right is to imagine that you are speaking to an intelligent 12-year-old. How would you present your information if you were talking to this person? You would not assume much prior knowledge of the topic. You would speak clearly, in short sentences. But you would not be patronising, because the person you are talking to may lack knowledge, but does not lack intelligence. This trick can help you find a clear, considerate interview style that your interviewer and, more importantly, your audience will find engaging.

*“You can feel a bit aggressed if someone asks an unexpected or difficult question... But imagine your intelligent twelve-year-old, who is now being a bit cheeky! Your job would be to educate them. You wouldn’t get rattled.”*

Julia Rooke

## Challenging Questions

Challenging questions are great opportunities to redress prejudice and fear. Try to welcome a challenging question as an opportunity rather than fearing it as an attack. Be prepared for such questions and respond with phrases such as “Well, I’m glad you asked me that...”, “That’s a very interesting point...” This will give you a confident persona and stance.

Make sure you have researched vulnerable areas thoroughly beforehand and be ready to question doubts about your organisation in a calm and rational manner.



## Radio Interviews

*“People can hear a smile on the radio.”*

Julia Rooke

Radio interviews are generally very short, so you have limited time to make an impact. If a radio journalist would like to feature what you have to say, make sure you really know what you are talking about as it is unlikely that you will have the time to recover from a mistake.

### Do Not Rush a Radio Interview

Time restrictions put people under pressure and encourage nerves to build but there are some simple things you can concentrate on to avoid falling into common traps.

Give brief answers and try to speak clearly and coherently. Some make the terrible mistake of speaking too fast to get in as much information as possible. This will only make you seem nervous. Hesitations are also emphasised on air and can make you appear anxious and restless. Stay focused on the point you are trying to get across, speak slowly and concentrate on one thought per sentence.

Sit comfortably and try to relax. If you are invited to an interview with some warning make sure that you wear something that you feel comfortable and confident in.

## Television Interviews

*“How we speak and sound and look is as important as what we say, it’s about energy, it’s about excitement about your event.”*

John Carter

Television interviews are all about selling yourself - not only through what you have to say but also through your confidence and your appearance. All of these elements are key players in the overall package.

Make sure that you prepare well and do your research as the onus is on you to give the desired impression. Before your interview, try to focus on three main points about your organisation and think of ways that you could raise them during your interview.

Smiling connotes confidence and encourages people to warm to you. Use open body language and wear something which makes you feel relaxed and comfortable. Try not to wear white during a television interview as the camera normally presents a clean white shirt as a dirty grey colour. The best colour to wear on screen is a strong deep blue.

### Key Points to Ask a Journalist When Discussing Giving an Interview:

- What is the format/style of the show?
- What does the interviewer want from the interview?
- Is the interview
  - live
  - pre-recorded
  - a debate?
- What is the opening question?
- Please include my name/organisation's name/web address

### Newspaper Interviews

Treat a newspaper interview as you would a TV or radio interview. Reporters may not provide you with interview questions but if you ask them in advance they will provide you with pointers or subject areas to be covered. One of the advantages of newspaper interviews are that you won't be as nervous as your voice and appearance won't be shared with the audience of the media outlet. However, this does not mean that you shouldn't be just as conscious about what you are saying. Newspaper interviews are commonly conducted over the phone which can lead to misunderstandings, both through issues with the line and through the journalist's shorthand which can be a potential pitfall. If unsure ask the journalist to read you their notes so that you can check that mistakes have not been made.

### Hints and Tips

*"You'll make three points in an interview, not more."*

Julia Rooke

- Whenever you speak to a journalist always treat it as an interview and never make off the record comments that you wouldn't want to be shared with the public.
- Use clear and confident language. Avoid jargon and any acronyms.
- Remember your core message.
- Do get in the name of your organisation.
- Be enthusiastic and animated.
- Answer the question you're asked, not the one you most fear.
- Be honest with your answers and do not lie.
- Do not pretend you know something that you do not.
- Don't try to say too much.
- Don't get aggressive.
- Don't worry.

## Correcting Stories and Withdrawing Interviews

It is every organisation's worst nightmare to be misquoted or misrepresented in the press. Some think that what is in the news is in the news and there is nothing to do about it. Whilst this thinking is correct in that it is already in the public domain, you can, nevertheless, correct an incorrect story.

Every organisation has the right and responsibility to ensure a true portrayal of their organisation in the press. Write a letter to the reporter or programme producer with your complaint. Do not use an aggressive tone, instead list your complaints and correct the mistakes in a moderate tone. Keep your comments concise, factual and professional. Make sure that you respond in good time while the story is still topical and in the consciousness of the public. If your response is too late your letter may not be acknowledged in the press.

Follow up your letter with a phone call or email to confirm whether your letter was received.

If they have made genuine mistakes media outlets will sometimes print/broadcast corrections, so it is worth promptly expressing your complaint.

If you are very unhappy with an interview some media outlets will, out of courtesy, allow you to withdraw it if you call and request this.

## Publicising Your Events

### Local Papers

- Contact details for putting an advertisement in the classified advertisement section towards the back of a local publication should be given in this section of the paper. Doing this should not be very expensive.
- If you are making a serious publicity effort for a larger scale event you might want to contact the publication and ask to speak to the advertising department. Contact details of some kind should be listed in the publication. You can find out about placing larger advertisements further towards the front of the paper (display advertisements) by talking to the advertising department and asking for a media pack.
- It is also worth asking about editorial - perhaps the editors would be willing to mention your work in the editorial, particularly if you are already paying for a display advertisement.

### Local Radio

- Local radio stations often advertise local not-for-profit/charity events at no charge. Local radio station websites often have a local events/local info section where you can enter details of your event, or of a charity appeal for volunteers or funds.

- For example, see <http://www.radiojackie.com/> (South West London) and <http://www.midwestradio.co.uk/calendar> (Somerset and Dorset).

## “What’s On” Guides

- Use a local “What’s On” guide to advertise forthcoming events. Your area may have a website and/or a magazine listing local events. They will usually list events free of charge.
- If you are not aware of a local guide try searching for “what’s on” and the name of your county, town or city using a search engine such as Google.
- Some areas will have weekly publications (such as TimeOut in London, Manchester, Edinburgh and Dublin). Others may publish less frequently; for example, What’s On Somerset (<http://www.whatonsomerset.com/>) is published quarterly.
- For weekly publications try to submit your event information two weeks in advance. Of course, for less frequent publications you will need to submit information further in advance. You can usually submit an event via the guide’s website.
- [www.wherecanwego.com](http://www.wherecanwego.com) is an online events guide with sections covering every UK county and major city. It covers a wide range of events including charity and community events.

## Social Media

- Create a Facebook event and invite friends and fans and/or send messages inviting them to the event (with a link to information about the event on your website).
- Tweet about the event, giving a link to further information on your website or on Facebook.
- Invite relevant professionals by posting an open invitation on the discussion forums of relevant LinkedIn groups.
- Invite local people through posts on any “hyperlocal” social media websites (see “Social Media” section, above, page 40).

*“Making people more positive and more aware of your existence, that’s the important thing.”*

John Carter



COMMUNITY  
DIALOGUE  
**MANUAL**  
S E R I E S

# Appendices

You can copy materials from appendices via:

[www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications)

# 04

## Sample Vision Statement

### The London Tuition Society (fictional)

#### What is your organisation all about? What is the key message?

Founded in Islington in 2004, the London Tuition Society is a registered charity which exists to provide free one-to-one tuition for children with additional challenges to overcome in their education, particularly those whose first language is not English. Volunteer tutors from London universities help children to tackle individual difficulties so that they can fulfill their academic potential, grow in confidence and participate to the full in school life.

#### What are its values?

We believe in:

- Equality in education
- The importance of being able to express oneself effectively
- The value of one-to-one attention for progress in education
- The value of cultural diversity
- The potential of partnership between charities, stakeholders and enthusiastic volunteers

#### What are its key aims and objectives?

- To help children overcome particular challenges in education, grow in confidence and fulfill their potential
- To support London schools
- To offer a quality service free of charge on the basis of need alone
- To offer volunteers an enjoyable and rewarding experience of possible value in their future careers
- To encourage intercultural interaction between volunteers, children and their families

#### Where is it coming from? (What values and experiences fed into its creation? What has it achieved so far?)

The London Tuition Society was founded by Aisha Barnes, who began to develop the idea while a student at the University of South London. At the time she regularly helped her neighbour's children, whose first language was not English, with their homework and together with two university friends she decided to recruit more students to do the same. On graduating she founded the charity to continue and develop this work. There are now 300 students at four universities taking part in

the scheme. Since its foundation it has provided regular one-to-one tuition to over 900 children to help them fulfill their potential.

### Where does it want to go? (What are its big ambitions? How does it hope to develop in the future?)

The London Tuition Society aspires to continue its work on an ever larger scale in order to bring free one-to-one support to more children. In the next academic year it hopes to recruit students from four further universities. It also aims to further develop its initial volunteer training through partnership with experienced teachers and to create its own teaching resources. Finally, it intends to review its pupil selection process to ensure that it reaches those who could most benefit from its services, whatever the nature of their educational challenges.

## Sample Media Survey

The survey below could be run among your current supporters to give a general picture of the mainstream media consumed by those who take part.<sup>13</sup> This picture can help you to identify the most promising forms of media through which to reach out to more potential supporters.

It is best to avoid making the survey too long; people are more likely to participate if you can truthfully say that it will take no more than 3-5 minutes of their time.

If you want to collect more information than can be covered in a survey of up to sixteen simple questions it would be best to split your questions into two surveys and send out the second a few months after the first. You could, for example, do a mainstream media survey like the one below on one occasion and then later do another short survey asking people what kinds of social media they use, and how.

1. Which local radio station do you listen to the most?
2. Which national radio station do you listen to the most?
3. Please list all of the other radio stations you listen to at least once a week
4. At what times of day do you often listen to the radio (please select all the relevant times)?

5am-7am <input type="checkbox"/>	7am-9am <input type="checkbox"/>	9am-12pm <input type="checkbox"/>	12pm-2pm <input type="checkbox"/>
2pm-4pm <input type="checkbox"/>	4pm-6pm <input type="checkbox"/>	6pm-9pm <input type="checkbox"/>	9pm-1am <input type="checkbox"/>

5. Do you listen to any of the following programmes?

[List programmes relevant to your organisation's interests which your organisation could potentially feature in, for example public discussion programmes or programmes featuring religious/voluntary projects. See "The UK Media" section above for ideas.]

6. Which TV channel do you watch most often?
7. Which other TV channels do you watch at least once a week?

<sup>13</sup> Post the survey on your website using an online tool (see, for example [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and [www.KwikSurveys.com](http://www.KwikSurveys.com)), send it to your supporters via email or ask them the questions over the phone.



8. At what times of day do you usually watch TV (please select all the relevant times)?

5am-7am <input type="checkbox"/>	7am-9am <input type="checkbox"/>	9am-12pm <input type="checkbox"/>	12pm-2pm <input type="checkbox"/>
2pm-4pm <input type="checkbox"/>	4pm-6pm <input type="checkbox"/>	6pm-9pm <input type="checkbox"/>	9pm-1am <input type="checkbox"/>

9. Do you watch any of the following programmes?

[List programmes relevant to your organisation’s interests which your organisation could potentially feature in, for example public discussion programmes or programmes featuring religious/voluntary projects. See “The UK Media” section above for ideas.]

10. Which local newspaper do you read the most?

11. When (please tick all applicable)?

Weekdays <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturdays <input type="checkbox"/>	Sundays <input type="checkbox"/>
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12. Which national newspaper do you read the most?

13. When (please tick all applicable)?

Weekdays <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturdays <input type="checkbox"/>	Sundays <input type="checkbox"/>
-----------------------------------	------------------------------------	----------------------------------

14. Do you read any other papers (national or local)? Which ones?

15. If you read magazines, what do you read?

16. Please fill in your name, date of birth and email address below.

Name:

Date of Birth:

Email Address:

## Sample Email Pitching a Story to a Local Journalist

**Subject line:** Egg-cellent treats for local children's charities

Dear [Title Surname/First Name (depending on whether you know each other on first name terms)],

[Refer to a previous meeting and/or introduce the relevance of your story. For example: It was a pleasure to meet you at Islington Council's voluntary sector Christmas party. Given your professional interest in local charitable activities in this era of the "Big Society", I thought you might be interested in a local initiative to collect hundreds of Easter eggs for local children's projects.]

[Explain the event, including the "5 W's" (see above, page 37): Over 20 local Islington businesses and charities including the Dialogue Society and London Metropolitan University have donated over 300 Easter eggs to put a smile on a child's face this Easter.

The Easter Egg Appeal, led by Reed specialist recruitment, will distribute the Easter eggs to four children's charities and schools: The Bridge School, The Variety Club Children's Charity, National Children's Bureau and Palace for All.]

If this is of interest please contact me and I will send the full press release. I would also be glad to arrange interviews with organisers and contributors if this would be helpful.

Best wishes,

[Name] [Surname (if not on first name terms)]

[Position]

[Organisation]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

[Website]

## Sample Email Inviting a Journalist to Lunch

*(NB. If your invitation is accepted remember to check the dietary requirements of your guest)*

**Subject line:** TO: [Mr/Mrs/Ms Name Surname], FROM: [For example: Dialogue Society – Request to host you for lunch]

Dear [Title Surname/First Name (depending on whether you know each other on first name terms)],

[Refer to a previous meeting; suggest explaining your work further over lunch, with reference to any projects of particular interest to the journalist; suggest days and times. For example: It was a pleasure to meet you briefly at Islington Council's voluntary sector Christmas party. We would like to invite you to lunch at the Dialogue Society, where we would be able to have a slightly longer conversation. It would be good to have the opportunity to tell you a bit more about our new "Media School", targeting small to medium sized charities and community groups in the area. Are you free next Tuesday or Friday at around 1pm? If not perhaps we can find another day that your diary permits within the next month.]

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

[Name] [Surname (if not on first name terms)]

[Position]

[Organisation]

[Address]

[Telephone]

[Email]

[Website]

## Sample Organisation Summaries That Could be Used for a Press Pack

### The Disasters Emergency Committee

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) was formed in 1963. We are an umbrella organisation for 13 humanitarian aid agencies.

At times of overseas emergency, the DEC brings together a unique alliance of the UK's aid, corporate, public and broadcasting sectors to rally the nation's compassion, and ensure that funds raised go to DEC agencies best placed to deliver effective and timely relief to people most in need.

The DEC's remit is to unite agency efforts in times of disaster - such as flood, earthquake or famine - wherever it happens in the world. The way we at DEC approach our work is to maximise funds raised and ensure they are spent in an effective and fully accountable way.<sup>14</sup>

### The Big Issue

The Big Issue is one of the UK's leading social businesses, which twenty years since its inception continues to offer homeless and vulnerably housed people the opportunity to earn a legitimate income.

The organisation is made up of two parts; a limited company which produces and distributes a magazine to a network of street vendors, and a registered charity which exists to help those vendors gain control of their lives by addressing the issues which have contributed to their homelessness.

The Big Issue Company publishes a weekly entertainment and current affairs magazine, which Big Issue sellers (or vendors) buy for £1 and sell for £2, thereby earning £1 per copy. Any post investment profit generated through the sale of the magazine or the sale of advertising is passed on to our charity, The Big Issue Foundation. The Foundation is also reliant upon donations from the public to fund its crucial work with vendors.

The organisation currently supports over 2,900 homeless and vulnerably housed people across the country. The magazine is read by over 670,000 people every week throughout the UK\*.<sup>15</sup>

\*NRS Jan-Dec 08

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.dec.org.uk>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.bigissue.com/About\\_Us\\_2.php](http://www.bigissue.com/About_Us_2.php)

## Sample Press Release

### PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Egg-cellent treats for local children's charities**

(Islington, 20th April 2011) Over 20 local Islington businesses and charities including the Dialogue Society and London Metropolitan University have donated over 300 Easter eggs to put a smile on a child's face this Easter.

The Easter Egg Appeal, led by Reed Specialist Recruitment, will distribute the Easter eggs to four children's charities and schools: The Bridge School, The Variety Club Children's Charity, National Children's Bureau and Palace for All.

Frances Sleaf, Project Coordinator at the Dialogue Society, said, "Everyone at the Dialogue Society is delighted to be able to support Reed's appeal and donate Easter eggs for local children's charities. We think it's really important for different local organisations to support each other's good ideas. And a project giving a little treat to children who have been having a challenging time is just an unquestionably good idea. We're really happy to help spread a bit of happiness among Islington children this Easter and we hope they enjoy their eggs."

Reed supports a number of charities across the UK and its Islington branch has been running the Easter Egg Appeal for the last five years. Its founder, Sir Alec Reed, set up the Reed Foundation in 1986 to ensure sustained and dedicated support for worthwhile causes. He has established several charities and his most recent project is the Big Give, the website that matches donors with charities in need of funding.

#Ends#

#### **Notes to editors**

1. For all press enquiries please email Havva Murat [hmurat@dialoguesociety.org](mailto:hmurat@dialoguesociety.org) or call 0207 619 0361

#### **2. About the Dialogue Society**

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums and teaching programmes it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

For more information see [www.dialoguesociety.org](http://www.dialoguesociety.org)

#### **3. About Reed Specialist Recruitment**

Reed Specialist Recruitment is part of Reed Global, which also includes Europe's biggest jobsite - [reed.co.uk](http://reed.co.uk); one of the world's leading Welfare to Work providers - Reed in Partnership; and the UK's learning provider of the year - Reed Learning.

For more information see [www.reedpressoffice.co.uk/about/](http://www.reedpressoffice.co.uk/about/)

## Glossary

**Advertorials** - a form of paid advertising in the style of an editorial.

**Blanket email** - impersonal email sent indiscriminately to a long list of people.

**Blog** - a web log, a regularly updated online journal for general public consumption.

**Blogger** - the author of a blog.

**Blogosphere** - the world of weblogs and all their interconnections.

**Broadcast** - the transmission of messages (generally through a radio or television programme) to public audiences.

**Buying in** - taking notice of and approving a message (for example, a brand).

**Brand** - the essential and distinctive characteristics of a company, organisation or product symbolised by its name, logo, symbol, colour combination or slogan, or by a combination of these.

**Brand awareness** - the public's knowledge of a brand's existence.

**Communication** - the sharing or exchange of information or news.

**Copy** - all of the reading matter in a publication.

**Crisis management** - the process in which an organisation works to prevent or reduce the damage a crisis can inflict on it and on its stakeholders.

**Display advertisement** - an advertisement placed in the main body of a newspaper or magazine. Such an advertisement is larger, more prominent and more expensive than a small advertisement in the classified advertisement section of the publication.

**Editorial** - an 'opinion piece' written by senior editorial staff of a magazine or a newspaper.

**Facebook** - a social networking website allowing users to create profiles, add other users as friends and communicate with each other through text, photographs, videos and other means ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)).

**Feature article** - a prominent piece of writing in a magazine or newspaper.

**Holding statement** - a brief statement given to all press enquiries in the event of a major incident, giving information about the latest developments without the spokesperson commenting in person.

**Hyperlocal media** - internet and mobile services that connect people with the neighbourhoods they live and work in.<sup>16</sup>

**Keyword** - one of the words or phrases that people would use to search online for your organisation or services supplied by it. These are important in search engine optimisation.

**LinkedIn** - a social media platform for professional networking ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)).

**Media crisis** - negative media coverage of an incident or situation which potentially has a negative impact on an organisation, its staff, its stakeholders, its service users or its local community.

**Media monitoring** - the process of monitoring the press for mentions and coverage of a specific organisation.

**Media relations** - relationship and engagement with those directly involved in the mass media industry.

**Message** - the core object of communication.

**Online visibility** - the extent to which your brand is seen by internet users.

**Pitch** - a direct form of communication with a media professional to try and convince them to cover your story.

**Press pack** - a combination of documents compiled for the attention of a journalist. It generally includes press releases, photographs, testimonials and background information on an organisation.

**Press office** - the department of an organisation responsible for dealing with journalists.

**Press officer** - a person responsible for dealing with journalists and promoting a positive understanding of an organisation in the media. (Also known as a “media officer”.)

**Press relations** - the practice of promoting a positive understanding of an organisation in the media.

**Press release** - a written or recorded piece of communication targeted at the media to inform them of a newsworthy story.

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<sup>16</sup> Definition from “Joining the Conversation: and introduction to hyperlocal media”, by Mandeep Hothi and Saffron Woodcraft, 2010. See <http://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/publications>

**Promote** - to provide publicity for an event, product or organisation with the intention of increasing public awareness.

**Public relations** - the practice of building and maintaining a positive public image for an organisation.

**Public relations (PR) officer** - a person responsible for building and maintaining a positive public image for an organisation.

**Selling in** - communicating favourable messages and ideas about a product, organisation or event to journalists.

**SEO** - Search Engine Optimisation- the process of increasing a website or webpage's visibility on search engines through 'natural' or 'organic' search results (i.e. without paid-for advertising).

**Social media** - the various interactive online communication platforms through which users can engage and interact with each other, sharing information and resources.

**Sound bite** - a short statement or phrase, often taken out of a speech or interview for media use.

**Tweet** - a text-based post of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page on the social networking website Twitter.

**Twitter** - a social networking website enabling its users to send and read messages called tweets. (<http://twitter.com/>).

**Webinar** - web-based seminar - a seminar, talk or workshop in which people participate via the internet.

**YouTube** - a video-sharing site ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)).



## Media Directory - The UK's Main National Media:

### BBC

**Tel:** 0870 010 0222

**Email:** See: [http://faq.external.bbc.co.uk/questions/contact/contact\\_bbc](http://faq.external.bbc.co.uk/questions/contact/contact_bbc)

**Website:** [www.BBC.co.uk](http://www.BBC.co.uk)

### Channel 4

**Tel:** 0845 076 0191

**Email:** [news@channel4.com](mailto:news@channel4.com)  
(Newsroom)

**See also:** <http://www.channel4.com/4viewers/contact-us>

**Website:** [www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com)

**Address:** ITN 200 Gray's Inn Road  
London, WC1X 8XZ

### Daily Express

**Tel:** 020 7928 8000

**Email:** [news.desk@express.co.uk](mailto:news.desk@express.co.uk)  
(News Desk)

[expressletters@express.co.uk](mailto:expressletters@express.co.uk) (Letters Page)

**Website:** [www.express.co.uk](http://www.express.co.uk)

### Daily Mail

**Tel:** 020 7938 6000

**Email:** [letters@dailymail.co.uk](mailto:letters@dailymail.co.uk)  
(Letters Page)

**Website:** [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk)

**Address:** Associated Newspapers Limited, Northcliffe House,  
2 Derry Street,  
London, W8 5TT

### Daily Mirror

**Tel:** 020 7293 3000

**Email:** [mirrornews@mirror.co.uk](mailto:mirrornews@mirror.co.uk)  
(News Desk)

[mailbox@mirror.co.uk](mailto:mailbox@mirror.co.uk) (Letters Page)

**Website:** [www.mirror.co.uk](http://www.mirror.co.uk)

### Daily Telegraph

**Tel:** 020 7538 5000

**Email:** [dtletters@telegraph.co.uk](mailto:dtletters@telegraph.co.uk)  
(Letters Page)

**Website:** [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)

### Guardian

**Tel:** 020 7005 2000

**Email:** To contact any member of staff use:

[Firstname.lastname@guardian.co.uk](mailto:Firstname.lastname@guardian.co.uk)

**Address:** The Guardian Kings Place  
90 York Way, London, N1 9GU

**Website:** [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

### ITV

**Tel:** 08448814150

**Email:** [viewerservices@itv.com](mailto:viewerservices@itv.com)

**Website:** [www.itv.com](http://www.itv.com)

**Address:** ITV plc, The London Television Centre, Upper Ground  
London, SE1 9LT

### Metro

**Tel:** 020 7651 5200

**Email:** [mail@ukmetro.co.uk](mailto:mail@ukmetro.co.uk)  
(Letters Page)

To contact any member of staff use:  
Firstname.surname@ukmetro.co.uk  
**Website:** www.metro.co.uk

### SKY

**Tel:** 08442 411 653  
**Email:** viewer@bskyb.com  
**Website:** www.sky.com

### The Herald

**Tel:** 0141 302 7000  
**Email:** news@theherald.co.uk (News Desk)  
letters@theherald.co.uk (Letters Page)  
**Website:** www.heraldsotland.com  
**Address:** Newsquest (Herald and Times) Ltd, 200 Renfield Street, Glasgow, G2 3QB

### The Independent

**Tel:** 020 7005 2000  
**Email:** newseditor@independent.co.uk (News Desk)  
letters@independent.co.uk (Letters Page)  
**Website:** www.independent.co.uk  
**Address:** Independent Print Limited  
2 Derry Street,  
London, W8 5HF

### The Times

**Tel:** 020 005 2000  
**Email:** letters@thetimes.co.uk (Letters Page)  
**Website:** www.thetimes.co.uk

**Address:** Customer Services  
1 Virginia Street,  
London, E98 1RL

### The Scotsman

**Tel:** 0131 620 8620  
**Email:**  
letters@scotsman.com (Letters Page)  
**Website:** www.scotsman.com  
**Address:** The Scotsman Publications Ltd, Barclay House, 108 Holyrood Road Edinburgh, EH8 8AS

### The Sun

**Tel:** 020 7782 4000  
**Email:** talkback@the-sun.co.uk (to send a story )  
letters@the-sun.co.uk (Letters Page)  
**Website:** www.thesun.co.uk  
**Address:**  
The Sun  
3 Thomas More Square  
London, E98 1XY



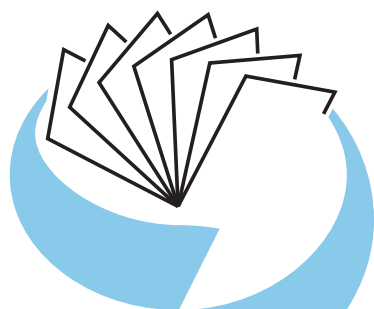
COMMUNITY  
DIALOGUE  
MANUAL  
S E R I E S

This manual is part of the Dialogue Society's  
Community Dialogue Manual Series:

1. Building Partnerships
2. Noah's Pudding
3. Celebrating Festivals
4. Community Fairs
5. Community Engagement Dinners
6. Community Centres Branching Out
7. Speed Dialogue
8. Open Mosque Day
9. Fasting Breaking Dinners
10. Media Engagement

The PDF version of this and the other  
manuals in the series can be downloaded  
from the Publications page of our website at  
[www.dialoguesociety.org/publications](http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications)





# COMMUNITY DIALOGUE MANUAL S E R I E S

## Connecting Communities

