

HAVERING HEALTHWATCH

MEDIA GUIDANCE

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Media is one of the most effective methods of communicating with the public. Controversial news makes headlines but the majority of editors, reporters and radio stations are interested in health news – good or bad. Both favour “human” stories especially those that impact on people’s lives as these reach out and touch their readers and listeners. If you have a strong story with a good visual content then it is always worth getting in touch with the media

2 COMMUNICATION

In order to maintain an effective and co-operative relationship with the media, Healthwatch Havering has designated media spokesperson/s accordance with the structure of Healthwatch Havering defined within the Terms of Reference.

Working with the media is a two-way relationship, they need to fill their pages and air space as much as you need the publicity. Local media need local stories. As long as you have the necessary information at your fingertips, are concise and can provide a local angle, then the media will be pleased to receive your information.

3 GUIDANCE TO MEDIA SPOKESPERSON

Good Practice

- Develop and maintain relationships with local and national newspapers and radio stations;
- Many local newspapers allocate a designated reporter to a specific project or appeal, find out who they are and get to know them;
- Involve reporters, photographers and radio presenters by inviting them to events you have organised;
- Provide a steady stream of interesting stories and arrange photo call opportunities;
- Be clear, concise and accurate with the information you provide.

Planning and Preparation

To execute a successful media campaign, planning is a must. The key to getting your story heard is all in the preparation:

- Source and research all sources of media i.e. newspaper, free papers, radio, magazines for 'society events', community publications and hospital radio;
- Be clear about your message and what you want to achieve from your press release;
- Compose concise Press Releases and stories which are to the point;
- Be prepared to talk 'off the cuff' at radio interviews but make sure you deliver your message clearly;
- Find a 'unique' angle, something that will make you stand out.

Understanding the needs of the Media

Building a beneficial relationship with the media is as much about understanding their needs as the need to publicise your cause.

Be creative when producing Press Releases and stories and source unusual venues for photographs, making sure your photo tells a story is important; Be prepared by taking your own digital camera so that you can submit photographs;

Give them clear instructions regarding locations for interviews, photo calls and events;

Many newspapers do not supply reporters and photographers for weekend or evening events;

Meet their deadlines and adhere to their time restrictions;

Don't be afraid of placing an embargo on a news story to suit your requirements.

Some Golden Rules

Some golden rules are:

- Never lie – the media will eventually find out and you will lose their trust and respect;
- Never say “no comment”, even in difficult situations there will be something you can say;
- Nothing is ever “off the record”. Do not say anything to a researcher or presenter outside the studio that you wouldn’t be happy saying in a live interview.

Evaluating Media Coverage

Evaluating your media coverage is vital to measure the success of your campaign, in order to build successful future media-strategies.

- The first step is to monitor and record all media activity relating to your campaign. This is usually achieved by either monitoring all media to which you issued your press release, or asking the journalist when they expect your story to appear.
- By keeping a record of media coverage, details of publication, reader/viewer numbers, length of coverage and the original press release, you can identify patterns about why some campaigns worked better than others.

Handling a Media Enquiry

If a story arises in the area, on which the media feel you may be able to comment they may contact you for more information or to request an interview. In responding to such contacts, the following should be taken into account:

- Always respond promptly to the request as this will build your good relationship with the media;
 - Ensure you note all the relevant details including:
 - The journalist’s name
 - Which publication/TV radio station they are from
 - Their contact details
 - The nature of the information they are requesting
 - Their deadline date/time
- This information can then be passed to the relevant colleague;
- **REMEMBER**: If you are speaking on behalf of Healthwatch Havering, the views you express should not be personal ones, but the opinions of those you represent.

4 CONCLUSION

Creating successful media campaigns is based on building relationships with your local media contacts. By fully planning each media strategy, taking into account the needs of the media as well as your own, you should execute a successful media campaign that can be evaluated and analysed to help improve future campaigns.