

How to get into local and regional media



Getting coverage in local and regional media is a great way to raise your profile in your community. It can also encourage local people to get involved in your work, for example: by making a donation, attending an event or using your services.

Local and regional media will cover local issues in greater depth than the national media and can champion local causes. Working with your local and regional media is a relatively cheap and easy way to get your message out to large numbers of people in your area.

Local and regional media overview

Local and regional newspapers, radio and TV have been around for a long time but there are many more new forms of media you can secure coverage in such as community Facebook groups, local blogs, council magazines, community digital radio stations and free lifestyle magazines.

Whether you are posting on a local Facebook page or contacting your BBC radio station, the media's audience will want to know how your work or issue affects their community and "real-life" stories of local people are vital.



Local vs regional media

Local media

- Cover a small area such as a village, town or parish
- Are interested in local stories
- Local media, newspapers and radio stations often have an older demographic
- Prefer stories with a nostalgic content (looking back at days gone by) or with community links

Regional media

- Covers a larger regional area, such as East Anglia or Greater Manchester
- Are interested in regional stories or national issues from a regional perspective
- Cover a larger area and variety of stories, so it can be more challenging to secure coverage
- Prefer stories that are relevant to the whole region

How could local and regional media cover your story?

Think about the kind of article or content your story lends itself to. The journalist will decide if your story is for them and how they want to cover it, but looking closely at the media you are targeting will help you to offer content that will appeal. Here is an overview of different types of media content:

- **News story** – a report on something new that presents the key facts including brief comments from relevant spokespeople – news stories could cover anything new that is happening such as an event, the launch of a new project or service, a campaign or fundraising target, or recent research findings.
- **Interview** – in print this could be written up as a profile of the individual, on-air/online it's likely to be a short clip of the interviewee talking about a topical issue – think about what issues your organisation can speak about and who has a good story to share about your work, such as a local person you have helped
- **Feature** – a longer article looking at the issues in greater depth, usually about something current in the news
- **Calendar/ what's on/ listings** – an option if you are promoting an event
- **Opinion piece or blog** – your opinion or point of view on a topical issue, online these are called blogs or video versions are called vlogs
- **Regular column** – look out for regular columns which might fit your stories such as MP columns in local papers – or you could pitch for your own column!
- **Letter/ response to a media story** – most publications have a letters section, online you can often add comments at the bottom of a story, on-air there may be the opportunity to ring in to phone-in shows or you can send audio/video recorded on your smartphone

Ideas for making your story more newsworthy

The media has no responsibility to cover your story and even at a local and regional level there could be stiff competition for space. Your story must be “newsworthy” - relevant and interesting to the media’s audience - otherwise, editors won’t be able to run it. Think carefully about your story and whether you would be interested if you were the journalist you are trying to target. You can use the ideas below to bring out the most newsworthy elements of your story.

• Is your story relevant?

Media have a clear brief for the type of stories they cover and regional/ local media will have a specific geographical area they will stick to. Make it clear that your story fits that brief - and if it doesn’t don’t waste their time by getting in touch. Also think about the media’s audience - what is relevant to them and what might they need that you can provide? For example, parents might want ideas for school holiday activities.

• Is your story timely?

Why is NOW the right time to cover your story? Link your story to a calendar date (e.g. Carers’ Week) or time of the year or relate it to current news stories. Organising an event gives the media something to peg your story on - it could be a launch party, an exhibition, a stunt or flash mob, a visit to a local school etc. Give the media plenty of warning of events where they can film or take photos - be prepared to take and send your own pictures if they can’t send a photographer.

• Is your story significant?

Explain why your story matters. What hard-hitting facts and figures can you use? Can you relate your story to a big issue in the news? Can you explain how it will have a big impact on lots of people in the area? Is there a celebrity or someone high-profile involved? It doesn’t have to be a pop star - think about VIPs in your area - footballers, MPs, newsreaders, business leaders, headteachers.

• Is your story interesting?

Think about what would capture people’s attention. Is there anything controversial or surprising about your story? Are there colourful photos that bring it to life? Perhaps you have developed an innovative solution such as a community-owned village store. Maybe you are bringing together two very different groups of people such as teenagers and the elderly. Or perhaps your story is counter to expectations such as a successful community business being led by people with learning disabilities.

• Does your story have human interest?

Putting a human face to your story will help you to secure media coverage and to capture the audience’s attention at a deeper level. Explain how your story will impact on people and use real-life examples or case studies of people affected by your work. Who could talk passionately about their personal experience? What filming opportunities could you offer a TV crew?



Which local and regional media should you target?

If you have limited resources it’s a good idea to prioritise the media you will target. You also don’t want to get a reputation for wasting journalists’ time by sending them irrelevant stories. Think carefully about the audience you want to reach and what media they read, watch or listen to. Take time to get to know the media in your area and the types of stories they might cover.



Template for pitching your story

Phoning a journalist can be the only way to get your story covered but it can be daunting. Use the example below to prepare your pitch.

Introduce yourself

Hi, my name is Sarah, I’m calling from Doncaster’s Furniture for All project, we collect and repair unwanted furniture and give it away to very low income families.

Explain why you are calling - give them the “news hook” or reason to cover your story

I’m calling because this month we are launching the Big Doncaster Give Away campaign calling for donations of furniture to help us reach a total of 1000 donations.

Give them your main message - usually a brief explanation of your organisation

If furniture is a bit old or damaged people assume they need to take it to the tip, but we can repair furniture and give it to the people who desperately need it.

Sum up your story

Our Big Doncaster Give Away campaign needs just 50 new donations of furniture to help us reach a total of 1000 items of furniture given away since we started 2 years ago.

Offer supporting content

Perhaps I could send you some images of our workshop and store room. I can offer an interview with our chief executive or with a family that has furnished their flat with our furniture.

Ask for feedback

Is this something you would be able to cover?

Give the journalist a chance to ask questions and make sure you have all the relevant information to hand. If the journalist isn’t interested in your story, ask what sorts of stories they will be more likely to cover in the future.

How to get in touch with the media

Prepare a short write-up of your story or a press release. Get in touch with the media by:

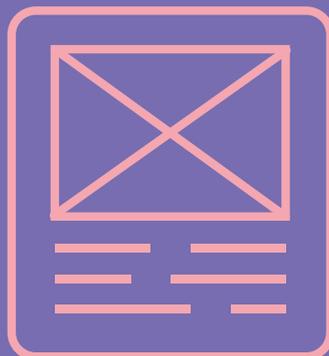
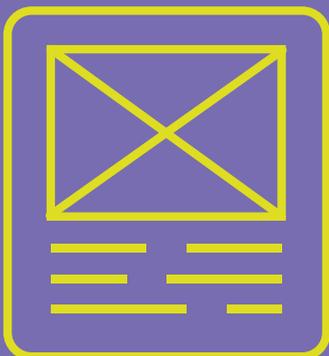
- **Emailing or phoning them** - look at their publication/ website for contact details
- **Tagging a journalist or media on Twitter or Facebook** or sending a message (you’ll need to be followed by them on Twitter to send a message)
- **Being easy to find online** - if there is lots of relevant content on your website and on social media, journalists are more likely to find you. Make sure you have contact details and respond quickly to any requests.

5 things a journalist needs

Many local and regional journalists are under lots of pressure. They need to meet deadlines, often with limited resources. If you can make their life easier they are more likely to cover your story and come back to you for more in the future. Here are five things a journalist needs:

1. **Content they can use** - facts and statistics, photos, comments, written/video/audio content they can publish - many smaller media will be operating with scarce staff and resources so ready-to-use press releases and other content can make it more likely your story will be covered. Many local and regional media will run audio and video content you have recorded yourself and you can easily do this on a smartphone.
2. **Access to interviewees** - official spokespeople and case studies ("real-life" stories of people who have been affected by your work). TV and radio programmes need people who can talk on air: spokespeople who understand the issues or individuals affected in the local area.
3. **Help to meet their deadline** - when stories need to go to print/ on-air there are no excuses so they need you to work to their deadlines.
4. **The edge over their competitors** - breaking news or "exclusive" stories (stories published first by them) - anything that will make them look better to their editor.
5. **Anything their audience needs** - whether it's to entertain or inform, journalists want whatever their readers/listeners/viewers want. They need stories that will sell papers or stop the audience changing the channel. Nowadays some journalists are paid by the number of times people click on their online story or share their social media posts. There are certain sure-fire stories that will always be picked up in local and regional media - for example anything to do with the biggest football team in the area will usually get attention.

See Media Trust's 'Writing a press release and pitching it to the media guide' for a press release template



Media Trust

Ugll Campus
56 Wood Lane
London W12 7SB

Keep in touch

Email: info@mediatrust.org
Twitter: @Media_Trust
Facebook: www.facebook.com/MediaTrustCharity
Tel: +44 207871 5600

Media Trust is a registered charity: 1042733
Company Number: 2895790