



MEDIA TOOLKIT

Using the Media to Amplify your Campaign

October 2013

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INTRODUCTION

What and who this Media Toolkit is for

This toolkit is written with the following kinds of campaigners in mind: local volunteer campaigners trying to raise awareness or lobby local council/company/other; online activist communities trying to achieve change; small charities/organisations whose main business might be providing a service but who also want to campaign for change, but perhaps do not have dedicated staff time/expertise to do this.

As such this toolkit aims to be a one-stop mini guide to the basics on the media, the 'news cycle', messages, audiences and then a set of fairly precise 'how to' guidelines and templates for actually getting media work done. As such it goes to some length explaining exactly what to do and what to say when you call a newspaper for example, but is lighter on press release specifics or giving interviews because these are the areas that are well covered in free media advice already available via Google! No one ever tells you how to locate the right person or what to say when you get through to a journalist though...

About the author

This toolkit is written by Sarah Green, Campaigns Manager at the End Violence Against Women Coalition. Sarah has around 15 years experience in media and campaigning work in the voluntary sector, and has worked on high profile (and successful!) national campaigns and local level grassroots campaigns. A version of this toolkit was originally written for member organisations of the End Violence Against Women Coalition as Sarah realised that many of these were already engaged in campaigning work, in addition to their day to day provision of essential services, but that when they attempted to approach the media there was no succinct practical guide available on targeting and approaching the media.

Sarah can be found at @sarahthegreen and is available for freelance and pro bono media/campaigning work.

This guide remains the intellectual property of Sarah Green who reserves the right to rewrite it ad infinitum for those who need it!

ABOUT THE MEDIA

This section is a wonder through the UK media with a few reflections thrown in. If you want to get straight to practical advice for putting a story out skim it or skip it!

National newspapers

There are about 10 national newspapers in the UK, often referred to as the red-top tabloids (Sun, Mirror, Star, Daily Record), middle market (Mail, Express, Metro) and broadsheets (Times, Telegraph, Guardian, Independent, FT). They have well known political biases (clue: they're all on the right except Mirror/Guardian/Indy and Metro is kind of centrist) and, unlike broadcasters, they are not obliged to be balanced or impartial. This makes many campaigners weary of approaching some of these outlets, but - it's helpful to remember that –

1. **journalists and editors are always looking for 'new' stories and for powerful 'human interest' stories** and both of these can trump perceived political messages
2. **the issues that are of interest to each of the papers are not entirely predictable along left/right lines**, and for example all kinds of health, environmental and social injustice stories have received widespread coverage across different newspapers in recent years. Sometimes it's the way you 'frame' a story (more below).

Journalists and editors always have their readers in mind (and perhaps some prejudices about who they think their readers are) when investigating and writing a story. This is the habit campaigners should have too – always thinking about how what we are saying will sound to the people we want to hear it. When you contact a journalist it's good to be open about this and say confidently, 'I believe this report/statistic/event will be of interest to your readers because...'

The media is changing very, very fast due to the technological revolution we're in the middle of. One consequence of these changes has been real long-term cuts to news and staff budgets across the papers. Put simply – less journalists are writing more stories with a very important consequence – they are much less likely to leave their desks and to get out there and investigate stories and make new contacts than perhaps they used to be. We can bemoan this or just add it into our planning which means that – we need to take ourselves and take our stories to them.

Conclusion – somehow, despite the decline in hard copy sales, despite newsroom budget cuts, and despite the fact that a printing press must be the slowest way of delivering 'new news' compared to Twitter or a news channel – the national newspapers still carry enormous prestige in terms of setting the news agenda and breaking new stories. As such they are a critical campaign target.

Regional newspapers

Local papers are suffering the decline in sales even more severely than the nationals. At time of writing there are about 80 daily 'paid for' titles across the UK (eg Manchester Evening News, Glasgow's Evening Times, Yorkshire Post) covering most urban centres and regions. These still have circulations of up to 50,000 and are influential locally and even nationally. All politicians read their local dailies.

There are a few hundred smaller, more localised weekly newspapers, some of which are free and some have a small cover price. Readers are loyal to these papers too, and they carry political influence locally. It can be difficult to tell from online media directories however which ones are important in a given area so it's best to do your research and ask around locally to make sure you are targeting the right paper ("..no, we don't cover Southend, we're North Essex only...").

Useful tools

All the national and local papers are very usefully listed here, with comprehensive circulation information too if you like that kind of thing!:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK_newspapers

Media UK: free database of UK print & broadcast media, just search for your town

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

Journalisted, a very useful index of who has written what recently, helps you look up who is interested in your subject

<http://journalisted.com/>

TV and radio

Broadcast news is of course constant. News channels cover breaking stories as they happen. Midday, early evening and late evening bulletins round up the day's events for viewers. Many prominent shows include analysis and debate – segments that campaigners are often called on to fill.

Interesting media facts (in early 2013!)

- BBC News at 10 is the UK's most watched news, averages 4.8million viewers at time of writing (ITN News at Ten is 2.2m)
- Newsnight reaches an average of 700,000 viewers – but these are 'high value', 'opinion-forming' influential individuals (though you wouldn't know it from the accompanying Twitter-chitchat!)
- More than 90% of the population listen to the radio at some point during the week – yes, that means it's technically the medium with the biggest reach.

Every part of the UK is covered by BBC local radio and these stations are frankly not difficult to get on if your approach is clear and relevant. Here is a list of all of them with links: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/stations> . Have a look through the weekly schedule which will be on the station website and work out which show might suit you – the afternoon phone-in, weekend breakfast, drivetime debate, late night discussion. You could start by calling in and aim to be a studio guest later on.

Around two thirds of local radio is commercial, which is mostly music but its news bulletins, on the hour, reach millions. Some of these are made locally in the bigger local radio station's newsrooms, but many subscribe to a news supplier like Sky News Radio: <http://news.sky.com/info/radio> An interview with them is worth its weight in gold!

Media UK at <http://www.mediauk.com/> also lists local radio and TV.

Online news

The UK newspapers' websites have an enormous national and even international reach. In addition to them, the BBC and Sky have comprehensive news websites, smartphone/tablet apps and are always working on new platforms. If you're successful in approaching print and broadcast media your messages should appear in this online copy too. Think about what extras this might involve, eg links to videos and your campaign site etc.

Key online only publications to target also include Huffington Post, the New Statesman, the Spectator (latter two are still in print actually) in particular for their comment sections if you're trying to influence opinion. Have a good read first, get a feel for their style and interests.

Social media – where news is 'shared'

Facebook has more than 33 million users in the UK - commentators have long been wondering when it will reach saturation point!

Twitter had 10 million UK users by mid 2012. Twitter is a key way of delivering news not least because almost all high profile journalists are using it – both to gather news as well as disseminating it.

Long gone are the days when you approached the big traditional media outlets listed above and then did a little bit of add-on tweeting at the end. When you comment on someone else's news (eg responding to a new government report) or put your own news out, you must be fully prepared to tweet comprehensively and engage in twitter discussion, and you must have your Facebook page fully prepared and then be online to push it to others.

Bloggers - take time to become familiar with key influential and well read bloggers on your subject. Twitter will be a good guide to this as they will be tweeting links to their blogs, and others with an interest in your subject will be sharing them on. Keep a list, and email or 'direct message' them. Treat them like press and let them know about your upcoming story in advance but of course ask them to respect the embargo.

About UK media – some thoughts

Think about the 'experience' of consuming media. Why do people buy a particular paper? (it's not straightforward politics, for some it's because sport or arts or jobs are better in one than another) What do people do with their paper – turn to back pages first, skim news headlines, read picture captions? What are people doing when listening to the radio – getting dressed, getting little people ready for school, cooking, DIY - their attention is divided isn't it? And television – latest surveys show the majority of viewers have some other device such as a smartphone, tablet or laptop on at the same time as TV and are usually either tweeting their thoughts about the TV or doing something else entirely like chatting with friends online.

Who is reading and watching what? Ask everyone you know what they read, what they watch, how often, you'll be surprised at their habits!

'Opinion formers' – who are these people who consume more than average amounts of news and then share it on? (sociologists and economists love them!) Do people talk with each other about and share on the kind of story you want to publicise after they read it? What might those conversations be?

Social media – has a new and uniquely attractive empowering feeling about it. People feel they are expressing support/disapproval/some kind of opinion as they share on news stories. It feels less passive than other media. People feel like they're more tuned in to people with like minds in the people they choose to follow on Twitter or Like on Facebook. What are the implications of this for your campaign? You could be siloed in with the 'usual suspects' and like minds, or you could achieve some genuine new commitment and loyalty because the interaction with you feels authentic.

THE NEWS AGENDA AND THE NEWS CYCLE

What is news? Put simply – it's 'new' stuff! We can all fall into the trap of believing that the issue we work on should be covered in depth by the media every day of the week, but the sad fact is the media isn't trying to give people a comprehensive analysis of the state of the world, it's just writing "the first draft of history" and that means what's new today that wasn't around yesterday.

Generating news – your issue will of course be ongoing, so you might need to come up with ways of 'creating' news stories. These could be:

- publishing a short report or survey (at local level a few activists can grab 100 people to fill in a quick clipboard survey outside a supermarket on a Saturday morning)
- staging an event
- publishing your annual report with a strident foreword/opinion piece at the front ('local charity says past year has seen highest ever number of X seeking support for...')
- looking up local crime/health statistics and presenting them alongside costs or policy ('..X people convicted for careless or dangerous driving in X last year; local campaigners ask why local police force deprioritise traffic policing...')

(many campaigners have successfully used Freedom of Information requests to find out new or shocking information)

- a prominent birthday/anniversary/service user ('Bolton Samaritans takes 10,000th call...'); always keep a track of your own anniversary/numbers
- petition launch with a catchy ask and a catchy target, made easy by sites like www.change.org
- case study based story – talk to media, perhaps one 'exclusive' outlet, about a striking individual case you have worked on (case study issues are discussed at length later on)
- endorsement of your campaign from a high profile individual, or by XXX number of new supporters ('...1000 sign the petition/pledge for X in less than a month...')

Framing your story – you will likely have an analysis of your issue which is holistic but for news it might help to look at how the media categorises issues into crime/health/social/politics/finance etc. If you find it difficult to attract attention to what you are doing, could your issue be 'framed' a bit differently for one time only? Eg the health consequences of local homelessness / long-term crime prevention / what are the costs/financial associations with your issue / what are its politics?

Hooks, pegs, legs – has there been a recent national or local story related to what you are doing? If so, slip this into the second line perhaps of your press release and mention it on phone to press. Eg when energy prices have just been a national story it's a good time to talk about free insulation or free help with family budgeting. Responding to other people's stories can attract as much attention as spending a lot of time developing your own story; eg if a celebrity comments on weight loss/literacy/parenting/domestic violence, get a comment to press and get it up online and in social media.

Timing is everything – the news cycle

The media is a cannibalistic beast – constantly consuming and spitting out its colleagues. So in a TV/radio newsroom all the day's newspapers are lying around and they will heavily set the morning news agenda. At the same time, newspaper newsrooms have the main TV news channels on constantly watching out for 'new news' developments and are of course monitoring the news wires and agencies for new stories.

The Press Association – is the single key UK news agency and as such the very hub of UK news. A news agency is a private commercial news gathering service which media outlets subscribe to and receive a constant supply of news from, including advance notice of stories (such as government announcements, new reports, official statistics), breaking stories, court reports, entertainment 'news', and, critically, response to ongoing stories – this is where campaigners can get in. For example there might be an ongoing story related to new crime stats which show falls in some kinds of crime and rise in others; you might want to get a comment about what the rise/fall in your specialist area means and what should be done about it to PA. PA will add it to copy which is being constantly updated and accessed by newspaper/broadcast journalists. It is impossible to overstate how important PA is. If

you are quoted here you can end up in several national newspapers, a big pile of regional dailies and on BBC/Sky. It is at the top of any 'ring round list'!

Comment follows news ever so closely now, so editors will be commissioning comment pieces as stories are still developing (new education policy announcement at midday, columnist asked to write about why grammar schools were the best thing ever that afternoon for tomorrow's paper to run alongside the news report). There are of course acres of online comment which is turned around very quickly. Many campaigners feature regularly on the Guardian Comment is Free site, Telegraph blogs, Huffington Post blogs and more. When you've written one good piece they will often look at an offer from you again. Read them and get familiar with their tone and style. Start offering!

Letters pages, are a well read and popular part of any paper, "the original social media" (and check the SMS and @tweet sections of the tabloids). They follow news stories a day to two days later. See letters guideline below.

In the medium term the news cycle is heavily based around the Parliamentary calendar, because politics produces so much news. So the busy middle days Tues-Thurs are the most full with political/policy stories, Sunday is sometimes used to trail new political announcements. When Parliament is in recess there is apparently this extra space for looking at other areas of life, and we all know about the 'silly season' summer months when politicians take a break and more than the usual quota of animal stories emerge. When planning be mindful of this – if you want political reaction to your story go for political high season. If what you're talking about is a broader social issue perhaps you could take advantage of slightly quieter Mondays, Fridays, weekends and holidays.

SETTING YOUR MEDIA OBJECTIVES: KEY MESSAGES AND TARGET AUDIENCES

****as you read this section look also at the Template Media Plan later in the toolkit****

Using the media to expand the reach of your campaign is like plugging in a massive amplifier. If you get your message into newspapers, on TV/radio and across social media you can reach people in all walks of life who you could never practically get to face to face. And, critically, when politicians see that a campaign is reaching the public/voters they are more likely to respond to it.

But – the worst approach, as in so many other things, is scattergun and without planning. Resist the temptation to approach only the media you think will most likely give you a hearing (you might be wrong anyway). And resist the temptation to talk in terms and language that assume a lot of knowledge to start with. Discuss and plan a little – as you would for an event or for fundraising, set some media objectives and targets.

The fundamentals: Audience & Message

We are trying to achieve change – to do that we need to reach particular groups of people whose behaviour we want to change, or whose opinion we want to inform as part of a political campaign. Be as clear as you can - what change do you want? In whose power is that change? Is it a mass attitude/behaviour change? Is it political/policy change? If politicians or other decision makers are the prime 'campaign target', whose opinion do they care for – ie which segments of the voting public etc, eg local residents, readers of particular papers? What media will help you reach those people? (it's like thinking backwards)

It can be helpful to enumerate your priority audiences, and then the media that will get you to these people – see immediately below for a couple of worked examples and then the template media plan towards the back of this toolkit.

For your message, similarly, avoid the temptation to say what those in your organisation or campaign group would like to hear. You are the 'converted', and you already have a lot of knowledge about the matter. Think carefully instead – what do those people I want to reach already know or not know about this issue, and what do they need to hear? What terms should we use to help them understand it? Try to use succinct, humanising, image-based, easy to understand language. Use comparisons. Use metaphors and figures of speech – lines people will quote. Include stats. Don't avoid obvious questions. Don't use jargon unless you can succinctly define it the first time you introduce it.

Examples

Issue: campaign to save and redevelop a much loved local cycling facility (eg a historic velodrome!)

Target audience: local council & MP, local residents, local young people, local schools, local/regional/national sports bodies (local cyclists are presumed to be the campaigners!)

Target media: local newspapers, local radio/TV, social media, specialist sport/cycling trade publications

Key message: Bolton Velodrome could produce our next Olympic winner, and give all local kids a great start with a lifelong healthy habit

News story idea: especially given that residents living immediately near the velodrome are known to be hostile to redevelopment, plan a clipboard survey of the wider borough community, aiming to survey say 200 people over 2 weekends, asking their views on the impact of the Olympics, young people and sport, their views on the development of healthy habits among the young, their views on different ways of spending local sport, health and education budgets etc; write this up into a mini report and launch one morning perhaps even at a special event at the velodrome with key people invited

Media plan: get photos of a few of you doing the survey (for press later); approach local press and TV/radio early and discuss different ways they could look at the survey – the paper might like to use survey and velodrome photos, local TV/radio

might want to get a variety of 'vox pops' interviews with locals on the day of launch to accompany report on the survey; give it to local bloggers and tweeters early so they can be ready on launch day

Issue: forced marriage, more proactive intervention needed by schools-police-services

Target audience: national government, local government, education leaders, police leaders, social services, community leaders, ethnic minority communities, young people, other broad sections of the public (in order to motivate politicians/leaders)

Target media: national newspapers, national radio/TV, online media and social media, opinion as well as news, local newspapers/TV/radio, specialist teacher/police/socialwork press, ethnic minority press, young people relevant media (eg including channel 4 news, radio 1, commercial radio news bulletins, social media)

Key message: Girls and boys at risk of forced marriage this summer are unlikely to walk into a police station and report it, the rest of the community should learn to recognise the signs and intervene

News story idea: short video published on YouTube in Spring term, telling fictionalised story of how school teachers failed to act despite warning signs before a young British girl was forced into a marriage

Media plan: approach national newspapers early and offer interviews with experts and stills from film; approach prominent TV news show and offer them exclusive first terrestrial broadcast of the video; offer experts to national radio news and audio from the film; organise 'twitterbomb' with set hashtag on day of video launch; send comment proposal to key blog/comment sites; approach BME press and Radio 1 early to discuss the story and different possible angles they could take for their audience.

If you didn't go through this thinking and planning process you might just plough in and approach the media without a real story or with unrealistic expectations of what audiences you would reach or no proper target.

Being ready to respond, being on demand...

Charities and small campaign groups often put a lot of thought, planning and resource into generating very creative media stories and events. But it's important, if possible, to have the mindset that in principle media is something you're constantly engaged in. Think of media as a long-term, constant part of your campaign – it's not just one or two stories you proactively put out there in a given period, it's also regular monitoring of other people's news and announcements, responding to those, and being available for comment when the media are reporting on these. You can generate as much if not more media coverage by responding to government/other stories and events as by generating your own. In fact the two feed each other –

when you have created interesting news and established yourself as a local/national expert or group with an interest in an issue, the media will return to you for comment in the future. 24-hour media can be demanding and intrusive, but if you do respond when you can you will find it reaps long-term rewards.

Top tips

- **Be findable:** even if you don't have a specially designed website build a simple free one-page website (can set one up for free on Tumblr or Wordpress) and have a phone number/email address/tweet username on there. Include easy to find contacts in any and all communication you ever have with media.
- If a story breaks which is relevant to you, and you don't have a lot of time to plough in, think about some minimal action you could take – draft a short 1-2 sentence comment, put it online and tweet/facebook it, email it direct to any journalists you know individually, send a short letter to a newspaper.

A final thought – you do media work as part of a campaign when reaching certain people with a certain message will help achieve your overall objective. In most campaigns media work is very important. But - it's not *always* necessary. Your main objective might be to influence a key decision maker whom you can reach directly, and present them with evidence for your case. Sometimes media visibility might add no value to this. Or it may even be that the possibility of you going to the media later if you don't get what you want is just there hanging in the room.... So – do it when it's useful, don't when it's not, always for a purpose, never for its own sake.

GUIDELINE: Responding to a breaking media story

****there is a Template Response at the end of this section on p14****

1. **Agree clear line** that answers the question and if possible adds value. It can be very short – even just a quote top and tailed with a header and your contact details.

“The statistics on sexual offences published today expose how widespread these crimes are in our society and how few perpetrators are brought to justice...”

“The government must act immediately to... improve police response, sort out courts, but also to prevent crimes in first place. This has to be include preventative work with young people...”

2. **Prepare key messages & any other facts** you want to have to hand when you are briefing press on the phone or giving interviews
3. **Send by email soon as you can** to PA; to print & broadcast newsdesks; to your regular media contacts
4. **Get it on your website and Tweet/Facebook it**; email or ‘direct message’ (twitter) key contacts and ask them to retweet etc. Check what twitter hashtags are already being used for that story and use them too...
5. **THE RING ROUND!** Call PA, main newsdesks, any other key contacts you think might be interested. It can feel like cold-calling / being a nuisance but it isn’t – you are simply drawing busy people’s attention to fact you’ve put something out. It can be done quickly and politely. And even if they don’t use it there and then it reminds them that you’re there and available to comment now/later. **Top tip** - it can be useful to have a little script to hand.

Locating right person and what to say:

PA and newspapers – call and ask for named correspondent if you have one; if not call switchboard and ask for newsdesk.

****regarding contacts** – Google is a fantastic directory for locating the name of different media outlets’ specialist correspondents. Eg if it’s a legal story, and you don’t know the names of the legal correspondents but would like to try to get through to them just google “Guardian legal correspondent”, “BBC social affairs correspondent” and so on. At least then you have a name to ask for when you call.

“Hi, is that the newsdesk? I’m calling from XX/Rights of Women, a group of expert lawyers, about the XX/legal aid cuts story. Can I talk to the person writing that up for you? [they may pass you on or give you another number; or they may try to brush you off basically – in which case reduce it to:] Can I send you our comment? What address shall I send it to? [And chip in anything else you have:] We also have a legal briefing/cases/experts available...”

If you get through to someone working on the story be ready to chat a bit. Give them your line. Offer any extras. Tell them why you are commenting, ie why you think this story is important, the urgency etc..

Broadcasters – again go to a contact if you can, but they tend to be less subject specialised so it's a bit more of a case of who gets told to do what story. Go for newsdesk and similar to above, be brief, but ask if they are covering the story and think about the story visually, ie they need pictures of something. This is not really your problem, it is fine to be simply offering a talking head comment or even just feeding your comment into their script, but it helps to be thinking the way they will be thinking. You don't have to do the work, but if you know the subject you might have good suggestions about what they could film (eg a local service, institution, memorial, site of public interest)

“Hi, is that the newsdesk? I'm calling from Rights of Women, a group of expert lawyers, about the legal aid cuts story. Are you covering this today / tonight? Can I talk to someone who's working on it? [they may pass you on or give you a number; or they may try to brush you off basically – in which case reduce it to:] Can I send you our comment? What address shall I send it to? [And chip in anything else you have:] We also have a legal briefing/cases/experts available...”

News channels – remember they are covering all their top stories every hour or so, and might be planning to do your story at 1.20, 2.20, 3.20... Ask for newsdesk: “are you covering the legal aid story? we are available for interview and are making strong criticism of the new proposals.. We can come to a studio. Our interviewee would be X who is an experienced lawyer / expert on...”

Speed matters – fast as you can... Government and people with other points of view will already be on the phone...

Later: Offer Comment; Send Letter to Editor for next day's paper. See separate Guideline on Letters to Editors.

End Violence Against Women Coalition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: DATE

[HEADER: REFER CLEARLY TO THE ONGOING STORY]

KEN CLARKE RAPE COMMENTS: WOMEN'S GROUPS RESPOND

Responding to reports that... End Violence Against Women Coalition spokesperson Sarah Green said:

“The Justice Secretary's comments...2-3 sentences...”

ENDS

Media information, interviews, briefings:

Sarah Green: PHONE, WEBSITE, TWITTER

GUIDELINE: Planning and putting out an original/proactive news story, eg launching a new report / event / campaign / website / petition etc

1. PREPARATION

If it is an important product/event/report you might want to draft a media plan – see template media plan later in this toolkit. This will make you set out audiences and messages and targets, as well as the activities and media approaches needed.

This is obvious but – it's best if you already worked out the key messages and target audiences at the planning stages of the product itself. So, when you decide what report/campaign/event to invest in, you should already be as specific as possible about messages and audiences.

With your media plan in hand, you can start preparing the **tools**:

- Diary notice – template below
- Embargoed press release – template below
- 'Media briefing' – this is just facts/stats, a bit more context, and couple choice quotes in bullet form. Journos like this, makes them feel special!
- Key messages document (internal use only!); this shd be super short (aim for less than one page) and include key facts/stats so you have them to hand for briefing on the phone or giving interviews. Or you could also draft something longer like a Q&A and some 'rebuttals' if you anticipate your story will be at all difficult to communicate or that it might be challenged by others. Simple – write out the nastiest questions journalists/others could ask you, that you'd rather not answer, and then come up with answers!

*****when it is a story that is critical of government or a company they will be asked to respond to it - think about what they might say and then how you would counter that; also – when you send out your press release under embargo it will often be given to government/company press office by the journalist asking for response in advance – ie this is the point when they will find out about your story if you haven't already told them. Plan this carefully. It has been known for the powerful targets of campaigns to take steps to minimise or 'rubbish' the claims of a charity campaign, for example to try and 'kill the story', knowing that the charity's credibility will be questioned and the media are less likely to come back to the story after the release date. If you need to you can ask press not to show it to others or to keep circulation very limited. But – 'embargo' only really means 'may not publish until', it does not mean 'completely secret document until'. With very precious material that you'd rather the target did not see until the last minute, you could perhaps just talk key press through it on the phone and not circulate the press release until later the day before. Get a second opinion, this needs judgement.**

- List of spokespeople and their expertise/relevance
- Survivor case study interviewee(s) – if you have someone who wants to tell their story, and it's the strategic thing to do, it's the right thing to do, you've risk assessed it etc– do some prep with them now and involve them in the whole process. Show them your media materials if appropriate, explain who you're approaching and why. Discuss possible scenarios. Rehearse with them if they'd like to. See longer section on case studies below.
- Assemble photos/video in easy to use formats if you have them
- If you are pitching for comment pieces, and you know you will have little time to turn them around on the day, start drafting now. You'll always be able to use it somewhere if Guardian commentisfree doesn't take it! Get the proposal to Guardian / Huffington Post / other a couple of days before your news story, saying perhaps, 'To coincide with launch of a new report revealing X on Tues 29th, XX CEO of XX to write 800 words arguing that grammar schools are not the way forward...'
- Social media plan and 'tools' – this works best when you knit it in from the beginning. Think about what content (video, links) you could add to online discussion of your story. Have a list of target opinion forming bloggers / tweeters. Plan to contact them in advance and ask them to blog/tweet/share. Be ready to get report, press release and any extras up on your website at midnight so they can be linked to, tweeted, shared etc. Tweet your story on existing hashtags and any new one you have come up with for the launch. You and your new story must be easy to find.

2. DISSEMINATION

Let key contacts know well in advance (they expect it!) – eg if you're on good talking/chatting terms with broadsheet/BBC/Today/other, tell them weeks and months in advance that you're working on X and desired headline is something like X. This is not an embargo break. It enables them to plan it in and come back and ask you about it. It could sew the seeds of an exclusive.

Exclusives. If you have a strong story a journalist might ask you if they can have it exclusively. This can be a very tricky decision to take so it's worth getting a second opinion. It's basically a trade off – you put all your eggs in one basket, but you (should) have a stronger guarantee of getting the story covered and of it securing good space in an outlet that reaches your target audience (do not consider it if it does not). Beware – many journalists can't really guarantee 100% that the story will go in their paper / on their TV show on the given day – that decision is made by their editor on the day / day before. You can ask of course – 'has your editor seen it? Do they like it? Are they committed too?' And, if the journalist does a lot of footwork researching and writing up the story or recording interviews there is every chance it will run. Also – usually, media are only competing with their own sector, ie newspapers with other newspapers, TV with TV, so you need not give the whole

thing away – you agree a ‘print exclusive’ or a ‘broadcast exclusive’ which simply means they have it first for their sector, you set an embargo time to suit them (see below) and then you can still for example set up radio interviews if your exclusive is with one newspaper. If the story is strong and has ‘legs’ others in the same sector might copy it from them anyway and out it on their websites.

Embargoes – Midnight is best, gives you the whole day’s run, breakfast to evening. You’d set it differently if you were eg coinciding it with an event like a press conference (rare these days) or similar.

in the case of an **exclusive, you might set it to suit your media partner, so if you have an exclusive with a Sunday newspaper you’d set it for 6am that Sunday which is too late for other papers but allows broadcasters to pick it up from breakfast time. If it’s a broadcast exclusive (rarer) you’d likely set it at the time of broadcast.

Timing – choose your day carefully. Try to choose an appropriate related day in the external calendar as this builds up a stronger ‘peg’ for you – an anniversary (50 yrs of refugee convention; 10 yrs since beginning of war in Afghanistan; mother’s day). Also some week days are marginally better than others – Monday is a good day for having it all sewn up in advance because less press work on Sunday and you get a good ‘start of the new working week’ feel (you’d need to be approaching press in good time the week before, Thurs latest, and you’d need to check in on it Sunday and possibly call round outlets that day). Friday is traditionally a bit thinner as it’s the end of parliamentary week and MPs are in their constituencies so there is usually less national political news. Tues-Wed-Thurs are key business days, but go with them if you want to be right in thick of it. Don’t overlook Sunday – great day for debate-discussion-analysis and often feeds into Monday press.

Getting the story out:

Taking example of story coming out Friday 1 February 2013 –

Time estimate: couple of hours a day Mon-Tues; bit more Wed; big chunk of Thurs; all of Friday if it’s a good story and you get interview requests etc

- **Send diary notice out by email Fri 25 Jan or Mon 28 Jan;** a half day later, ring round PA and main newspaper and broadcast newsdesks to check they got it and have it ‘in the diary’. This is a nudge, a good way of making contact before the rush starts. Eg ‘can I have Guardian newsdesk please?... Hello, I’m calling from Imkaan, a leading black women’s organisation, b/c we have a big new report on X out this Friday. I sent a diary notice earlier and just wanted to check you’ve got it in your diary?’ Sometimes there’s a junior person looking after the diary whom you might be passed to; sometimes it’s just an online system they can all check.
- If it’s an event, or your story might produce a strong image in any way, be it a photo opp or hand in for example, call the picture desk too (just ask for them at switchboard) and check it’s in their diary / offer to send diary notice. Picture desks interestingly operate a bit separately from news, they have their own priorities for what kinds of images they want in order to produce a striking paper, and these images often do not simply serve/illustrate the leading news

stories (eg notice how often the biggest photo on the front page is 'just' a picture story explained only by its caption and is not a photo related to a news story on the front page. Later pages often do this too. This tells us that a strong image is an excellent way of getting high profile coverage in a newspaper even without lots of column inches).

- **Mon/Tues – if you haven't already, call good personal contacts** and tell them about it, one by one. Tell them the topline. Tell them why you're doing this report/event. Offer extras – briefing, interviews, photos. If you can't get them on the phone leave voicemail and send email. Don't be hesitant at all! And be very clear about the date eg 'I'm calling with a possible story for Friday...' This is actually the most important thing to them. If they can't do it ask them if they'd recommend a colleague who might.
- **Mon/Tues – is also a good time to call or email the comment desk** and offer them a piece. Tell them it's connected to a Friday news story. Draft and send a 2-sentence outline. Offer 6-800 words by an interesting author. If there is interest – as the week goes on, keep comment and news reporter aware that you are talking to both. Don't expect them to be talking to each other!
- ******Record media outlets/names/what you discussed in a table – when you call loads you'll start mixing them up!! See media plan below******
- **Wed 30 Jan, early - Send embargoed press release by email** to PA, to print & broadcast newsdesks, and to all your media contacts
- **THE RING ROUND!** Call PA and then each outlet to tell them about the story. Again – it can feel like cold-calling / being a nuisance but it isn't – you are simply drawing busy people's attention to fact you're put something interesting out. If you didn't tell some of them and they missed it they'd be annoyed afterwards. It can be done very quickly and politely. And even if they don't take it up you've introduced yourself and they know you're there. Top tip - it can be useful to have a little script to hand. There is also a trick in locating the right person. You go down a list something like this:

Call named contact with aim of talking them thru it; if you can't get them leave voicemail and email saying date and gist of story succinctly as you can. There is no guarantee they will be working on Thursday (writing Friday's paper) so you'll have to try others if you don't get them

Look up online the name of someone else on that paper / station who covers crime/education/legal/X or has written similar stories before. The big broadcast shows have websites which name correspondents as well as newspapers. Call switchboard and ask for them and try as above. Leave voicemail and you can prob guess their email too:
firstname.lastname@theguardian.com

Failing that, call switchboard, ask for newsdesk, tell person who answers you're calling with a crime/education/legal/X story for Friday about X and who do they recommend you talk to about it. They might

transfer you; or might just ask you to email the PR. Broadcasters have less specific roles and are always working mostly on next day or today's show so it's still quite early for them. You can say 'it's a strong story and it may need interviews recording in advance etc' to emphasise that you know it'd be good to talk to someone today and not be put off to tomorrow. However – that is quite likely.

- **When you get chatting – if there is a connection to any current/recent news agenda story point this out** early on, eg 'well, following the recent sexual offences stats story... our new report will show that perpetrators are too often not required to complete programmes...'. Point out all sides of the story – of course X will oppose what we say but we believe that is misguided. Say why you're doing it now.
- **Think how they think - eg visually for TV, variety of commenting voices for print** – tell them what they could film & who they could interview. Be creative too – tell them about archive footage, street scenes, monuments etc (how many naff visuals do you see in TV news?!). For newspapers too, a good photo or maybe a graphic will add power to story. For radio – suggest other interviewees who you'd debate or who might give background etc. Think about what the journalist needs to do to tell your story and get a 'package' together. Read/watch/listen to news all the time with this in mind – what does each report or 'package' consist of, it's usually at least 3 or 4 elements.
- **Social media** – at this mid week point be sure to call/email/tweet (via direct message if possible) key social media targets. If they're going to write/share they need a heads up too. **beware, if they are a very significant blogger with a lot of readers you might want to leave them out if you have a print exclusive. Some papers do see these as competitors.
- **News channels** – just make sure diary has it day before. They'll generally decide and call you on the day if they want you – at short notice!
- **Thursday** – call them all again, as above, they'll be more up for it today! 'Hi, have you heard about the report/story we have out tomorrow...?' Start early, ie 9am if you can. Newspapers are having the main editorial meeting at about 10am or 10.30 where they're deciding what's going in the paper. This can change throughout the day but the skeleton is roughed out now. That's why your work earlier in the week should hopefully have got you on the news 'list' for the day.
- **On the day - get it out there on social media** – especially by putting your comment in easy to find place on your own website and then links on facebook and twitter. Ask friends/followers to spread the message. Check what twitter hashtags are already being used for that issue and use them too and/or create your own. Tweet it to high profile tweeters directly.

- **Later on the day - Send Letter to Editor** for next day's paper if this will add value to what you already got. To one paper only (they generally only use exclusive letters. Do this by 4pm latest). **See separate *Guideline on Letters to Editors*.**

3. RESPOND TO / FOLLOW THE NEWS AGENDA

If on the day of your story, or the next day, or soon after, something else appears in the news with a connection to your story – respond to it referring to your story. Eg 'Responding to the announcement of a new scheme to regulate private landlords today, Bolton Homeless Project said its recent research has shown that illegal behaviour by landlords is routinely ignored...' Or, if you didn't get much coverage, rewrite your headline and top para and put it out again and ring round (change embargo to 'for immediate release'). And do a letter to editor pointing out connections.

4. MONITOR & EVALUATE

Boring but yes, important! Keep links to coverage in a document, and jot down what you've learnt for next time. And – save all your new contacts and write notes about them – how friendly/approachable etc – if you don't you'll forget who was who! If they did a good piece send them a one liner email saying you thought it was great and it helped raise profile of the issue and lead to new people calling your org or similar. Journos like to know they have a real world impact.

GUIDELINE: Writing Letters to the Editor

Why send letters to the editor

- They are a popular part of every paper – the original social media!
- They are often alongside the comment & editorial pages, sometimes put together by same people, so you're letting the paper know you're there and you have a view

Practical stuff

- Big secret – they don't receive many letters! Your letter will be read and if you send say one every quarter and they're fairly relevant and well written you'll get them in.
- Exclusive - Target and send to one paper only; they generally all want exclusive letters only and might even call to check on this
- Signatory - For broadsheets, it's usually best to use as senior or titled a person as you can (and do include CBEs/MBEs!)
- Joint letters - are great if you have time to get a few orgs to sign off
- Timing – it's not as fast as breaking news agenda, it's 1-2 days behind, letters page is reflecting on news; it's best to send a response to the news report in the paper (see below) and then you must try to get it in by 4pm latest the day you send it. Eg story breaks mid morning Wednesday when new government stats released; Thursday papers cover it; you send letter by 4pm thurs which might then appear in fri or sat paper.
- Don't forget to include postal address! They won't consider your letter without one. They won't include it in the paper but they abs refuse to handle anonymous correspondence. Include a phone number that will be answered – it's common for letters editors to call and check a fact or ask if they can trim slightly.
- Tabloids – are often printing SMS and tweets, eg Metro. Check this out and if you can be super succinct it's a great way to reach a wide audience with little fuss.
- Practice – read letters pages often as you can. They have a certain style. There are lots from NGOs and biz as well as private individuals. Note the style. It is often a kind of 3-point rhythm: 1. Opening sentence/short para – refers to the story/issue you're writing on and takes a view, '...is alarming that...'; 2. Adds new info/facts/comment/analysis, 'but this is not unlike the problem of... / in fact this problem is widespread...'; and 3. Conclusion is call to action, 'what is needed...' preferably with some nice succinct or metaphorical language.
- Succinct – make every word count, trim, resist verbosity-jargon etc. As in all media work – think abt the reader and what they need to know...
- If it's very important to you it's fine to call and check they received it; call switchboard and ask for letters page.

EXAMPLE LETTER STYLES:

Letters Editor, The Independent
letters@independent.co.uk

11 January 2013

Dear Sir,

Your report on the new government statistics on sexual offences ('The Rape of Justice', 11 Jan) shows starkly that the vast majority of rapes and sexual assaults go unreported and only a tiny fraction ever result in a conviction.

The recent release of the distressing report on Jimmy Savile's abuse, and what we know about the 'grooming' of teenage girls in Rochdale and elsewhere, adds to the picture of a country where violence against women and girls is far more widespread than is commonly thought and perpetrators often act with impunity.

This absolutely must be a turning point for how we deal with sexual violence. And as well as better justice measures, we need to aim to prevent abuse in the first place.

The key is to start with young people at school – we must have compulsory and comprehensive sex and relationships education which goes beyond biology and talks about consent and healthy relationships. It should assure young people that if you are assaulted you can seek help and you will be believed. We must support this work by ensuring all teachers, and other frontline professionals, have ongoing training and, critically that survivors of abuse have the support they need.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Green
Title, End Violence Against Women Coalition
PHONE; WEBSITE
EVAW Coalition, ADDRESS

TABLOID VERSION

Dear Mirror –

It's horrible to read how few rapes get reported or convicted.

Jimmy Savile got away with it for years, while hiding in plain sight. We've got to learn the lesson.

One of the best things we can do is sort out sex and relationships education – so every child learns that no one is allowed to do anything to you that you don't want. And that adults will listen and believe you if you report it.

Sarah Green, End Violence Against Women Coalition... PHONE, POSTAL
ADDRESS

GUIDELINE: Requests for and working with survivor ‘case studies’

***this section is written with issues/organisations in mind where ‘case studies’ may be vulnerable in some way and where therefore ethical issues are raised when facilitating media interviews with them. If your organisation promotes allotments, bees, new technology or something entirely positive you are probably less likely to have qualms about these requests and might want to skip this section.*

This issue needs no introduction – many charities have been on the end of the phone to a journalist who cold calls you, begins politely and then pops the ‘so have you got a victim case study there I can talk to?’

Discuss this issue internally and have a policy/protocol

This issue is not going away. Even if you are not very active in the media it is good to have discussed the ethical and practical issues around these requests and to have a clear idea about how you want to see them handled, rather than always handling it relative to the pressures of the day.

You could for example draw up a short protocol saying under what conditions your organisation will agree to help facilitate such requests, how you will ensure the person giving the interview understands what’s being asked of them and what the media context and possible consequences are, any support you might wish to have in place and more.

What you can request of press

Anonymity. Plain and simple. For all forms of media. You will have commonly seen people on TV with identities and voices disguised or have read anonymised cases in newspapers. It is very common. It is a bit more ‘thrilling’ for the journalist when they get someone willing to be identified (improves human interest value and audience’s ability to empathise), but it is by no means essential.

If you are setting up a case study interview you should basically make as good an assessment as you can about what the journalist is likely to ask, and then talk that through with the journalist – ‘will you ask age? Occupation? Will you ask X to recount what happened to them? How much detail?...’ Do not hold back. Ask very specific questions. Note it all down and discuss it with the interviewee.

You can ask the journalist not to ask particular questions (eg you may not ask for X kind of detail; you may not ask about survivor’s children/family; you may not ask about immigration status etc). ****The journalist may dispute this and complain. THIS IS WHY YOU ARE HAVING THIS CONVERSATION NOW**, ie beforehand, rather than on camera. You can negotiate. They might even threaten to pull it. Be prepared to hold to your standard and call their bluff. 99% of occasions they will do it how you want. **DO NOT BE BULLIED BY THEM.**

The caveat here is – don’t assume the reporter has loads of knowledge (or empathy) about your issue, and do, therefore, explain to them why you are requesting these

limitations, eg 'I am asking these questions or asking you not to refer to X because the consequences of that information being made public...' If they understand why you need this it will help their greater understanding of the issue and will improve the whole relationship, rather than having them think you're just a heavy handed press officer type!

You can also reasonably suggest/request A fee for the survivor for their expenses-time. Other people in the media regularly receive fees.

What are the alternatives to the 'case study interview'? How can we challenge this way of reporting our issues?

- Rather than the survivor of abuse, is there someone else close to them who is willing to be interviewed to report on their experience as someone who looked on, eg family member / advice worker at your organisation? This would still make a powerful 'second person report' which would have an impact on the audience [strictures for this kind of interview should still be strong, as above]
- Police, lawyers, doctors, other professionals who can give a 'first hand report' of working on such cases in general. You might know someone you can recommend. Or you can just advise reporter to go and seek this person out.
- Similarly – can you recommend an academic or other expert in this field? It's helpful to say to the reporter, Professor X has done many interviews with people with experience of X and will be able to talk in detail about what they told her.
- You could invest once in making a video or an audio recording with one case study person and then making this available to press in future. This has the advantage of giving you & the interviewee complete control over content. A more economical version is a simple transcript of an interview with a case study or even just a collection of quotes. You'd often use materials like this for other purposes eg fundraising – they're sometimes acceptable to press too.
- You can even - refer the journalist to fictional representations of the issue, eg current/recent storyline in a soap opera, well known film/TV series etc. Press and broadcasters can get stock images & clips from these and use them to accompany stories. I have done it. It works. It is better than nothing for someone on a deadline. It is better than just putting phone down on them!

TEMPLATE Media plan, eg new report on asylum decision making

News and timeline

New report on asylum decision making; includes statistics on numbers refused and quality of Home Office assessments, new legal opinions, anonymous case study interviews. To be published May when Home Affairs Select Committee will also be looking at the quality of decision making.

Campaign objective(s)

Show government the asylum decision making process is in places poor and based on inaccurate information, such that it discriminates against people from particular regions and people with particular claims; show government it is not living up to its international obligations; make the case for policy change and secure a commitment to such change

Media objective

Secure high profile media coverage in target media both 1. Exposing poor decision making 2. Setting out what change is needed

Key messages

- UK asylum decision making is patchy and too often based on inaccurate information, and this has grave real life consequences for individuals/families...
- UK is not fulfilling its commitment to protect
- What is needed is political commitment to improve the decision making system as a matter of urgency

Target audience

- Government: No 10, Home Office, Tory & LD Ministers
- Opposition
- International: UN, EU, more
- Legal community: enumerate
- Refugee/asylum/human rights sectors
- Towns hosting detention centres? Local community/activists/MPs

Target media

- broadsheets – news and comment; and Mirror?
- national news broadcasters: Today, other Radio 4, BBC bulletins, BBC & Sky news channels, C4 News
- national broadcast debate/analysis: newsnight, Sunday AMs
- comment: broadsheet blogs, political blogs
- BME press – radio, papers, online
- Regional dailies and BBC radio in relevant towns?

Media plans and activities

- diary notice and embargoed PR and ring round; decide embargo time
- broadcast or print exclusive?
- interesting comment piece writer?
- Interesting interview guests – expert lawyer, supportive MP, anonymous whistle-blower?
- Case based or other feature (anniversaries, old cases, stats-datablog)
- Prepare briefing with clear prominent facts/stats and one para cases
- Will there be an action people can take? Petition?
- Video? talking head?
- Draft social media plan – have materials ready to go; need images; twitter - choose hashtag, and contact a few twitterati in advance, @ opinion formers; links for facebook

Media contact table

MEDIA	NAME AND CONTACTS	NOTES...
PA	Eg janet smith	Mon – called, left voicemail, chase Tues
Guardian		
Indy		
Tel		
Times		
FT		
Mirror		Case?

BBC 1,6,10		What can they film?
ITN		
C4 News		
Today		
WATO		
WT		
Woman' Hr		Case study? Or other guest eg leading woman lawyer?
5 live		
Radio 1 Newsbeat		Got a young case study?
BBC news channel		
Sky News		
Guardian Commentisfree		Remember to offer to debate live online
New Statesman		
Huff Post		
Labour List		
politicshome		

Asylum Focus

DIARY NOTICE: LAUNCH DATE 2013

NEW REPORT ON UK ASYLUM DECISION MAKING PROCESS [can also refer to other pegs here, eg ‘...AS HOME AFFAIRS CTTEE PREPARES TO INSPECT ASYLUM SYSTEM’]

PHOTO/FILMING OPP: if your story is likely to produce good photos/video, say that here too

Leading refugee rights organisation, Asylum Focus, will publish a comprehensive new XXpp report on the quality of the UK asylum decision making process on Monday 29 January 2013.

Advance copies of the report and briefings are available – please contact Asylum Focus on the number below.

Experts and refugees / asylum seekers are available for interview.

ENDS

Media information, interviews, briefings:

Sarah Green: PHONE

Follow us on Twitter: @...

WEBSITE

Asylum Focus

STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL: DATE 2013, TIME EG 00.01 HRS

HEADER: NEW REPORT REVEALS...

Subheader: Call for better training for border staff and...

Can also bullet here: XX EXPERT(S) AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

Leading refugee rights organisation Asylum Focus today (29 January) publishes a new report which assesses the quality of decision making in the UK asylum system and finds it is at best patchy and in places woefully poor and potentially leading to life threatening outcomes for those it is supposed to protect.

The report comes as... RELATE TO NEWS AGENDA eg '...comes as the Home Affairs Select Committee prepares to examine... and just weeks after it was reported that people in asylum detention in some parts of the UK were being denied access to legal advice...'

Report findings in a bit more more detail: The 89pp report exposes...

- You can even bullet them...
- If you want...

Case study

Quote – Asylum Focus CEO Janet Smith said:

“Our report reveals a catalogue of failure to properly assess claims and the return of people to countries where they may face serious human rights violations...

“Our asylum system was set up to.... And Britain has a proud history of.... Our findings should be examined with urgency by the Government and commitments made to X, Y and Z.”

More detail and quotes; try to write roughly in a news style – most important and newsy information first, including key what-where-when-who-why facts; succinct; talking to an interested but lay audience.

Include links to any related / older stories etc.

ENDS

Media information, interviews, briefings: Sarah Green: PHONE, WEB, TWITTER

SOME USEFUL TOOLS AND CONTACTS

All the national and local papers are very usefully listed here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK_newspapers

Media UK is an excellent directory of UK media including links to websites and some phone numbers: <http://www.mediauk.com/>

Journalisted, a very useful index of who has written what recently, which helps you look up who is interested in your subject (“...hi, I read the article you wrote last week about....and I wondered if you’d like to know more about...”) <http://journalisted.com/>

Google News, click on ‘news’ top right from google home page; can be used as a FREE news coverage monitor. You can set it up to email you links to any news article mentioning your organisation. Professional PR companies pay thousands of ££s to monitor the media for mentions.

Excel – if you have no ££s for a contacts database but you use Excel already it is a much better way to save contacts than Word. Do keep notes about journalists you speak to because it’s easy to forget names and conversations over time but they are invaluable next time you want to comment or get something out, “...hi, we spoke about the Tesco food waste story a couple months ago...”

Mailchimp Is an excellent web-based newsletter sender that can also be used for sending press releases to a large number of contacts. Loads of advantages to doing it this way and best of all – it’s FREE: <http://mailchimp.com/>

Google Analytics, If you don’t use it already, create an account and start keeping an eye on your website visitors and what they do on your site. Also FREE. <http://www.google.co.uk/analytics/>

Get any female spokespeople/activists listed on **The Women’s Room** database of female media commentators: <http://thewomensroom.org.uk/>

Complain!

If your organisation or a story related to your issue is reported unfairly, inaccurately or in a discriminatory fashion, complain to the appropriate regulator. Complaints are sometimes upheld, the newspaper/broadcaster is reprimanded and sometimes required to retract, AND you can publicise the fact that you are complaining and any success with your complaint:

- Newspapers: <http://www.pcc.org.uk/complaints/makingacomplaint.html>
- Television: and radio: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/>
- Advertising: <http://www.asa.org.uk/Consumers/How-to-complain.aspx>
- BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/>