



Raising your profile in the media

The local media could be your greatest ally. Media support is vital in attracting attention to your event or programme. Nothing beats a screaming headline calling for action or a news item on regional television or local radio news. And don't forget the value of the letters page in your local newspaper. It is a good idea to make contact with the local media before you get going with Civic Day.

If you don't already have any direct contacts, then call the 'news desk' and explain who you are and what you are doing. You might be able to persuade a local newspaper or radio station to join with you in supporting an event – and a call for volunteers would be a great way of getting extra support.

Local TV or radio news might also be interested in filming or recording your event and talking with people who participate, particularly if you have a programme focussing on young people.

Once you have made contact with initial information make sure that you have more to add when they ask for it and be able to point them to other people who are interested and might comment. Be prepared with responses to some of the obvious issues. An effective way of grabbing attention is to identify a local celebrity who might be [persuaded to support you – either by making a statement to the media – or, ideally, by attending and playing some part in your event.

Don't forget to notify the Civic Team nationally (civictim@civictim.org.uk) of your plans or to send in copies of your press release and any media coverage. In this way information about your events can be included in the national media campaign.

Writing a press release

Getting the attention of the media for your work can be a major boost – but it doesn't come easily. Good press releases and good contacts are key.

When drafting a press release, remember the six basic ingredients to grab the attention of a journalist.

1. Get the facts straight

A simple rule is to find answers to questions pertaining who, what, when, where and why (the 5 Ws of your story) – don't forget the 'How' either. Put a date on the release and you might want to embargo it for a few days time. Remember, yesterday's news isn't going to go far.

2. Identify your story's angle

A good story needs:

- A headline fact or insight
- To be timely
- To stand out from the crowd.

A journalist will often only read the headline and, if you are lucky, the first paragraph. Make sure it tells your story in a compelling way.

3. Create a catchy headline

Keep the headline short and simple, using less than ten words. It should convey the key point raised in the opening paragraph in a way that catches the imagination. If you want the news to go live immediately – say so and make this clear at the top by saying FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. It is often better to send your release out in advance and have an embargo when it can be published. This gives journalists time to research the story and get in touch.

4. Write in the third person

A press release should be presented objectively from a third person point of view. Only use 'we' in quotes from a spokesperson. Refrain from expressing opinions, unless they are contained in quotes and keep the focus on your society or event and not on personal views. Draw conclusions from facts and experience only – not general opinions.

5. Provide 'quotes' from a spokesperson

Put the most important message down in a quote from a spokesperson. Journalists tend to use quotes to add a personal note to their reports. If the press release contains quotes that are important and relevant to the story, then the chances are high that they will be replicated in full in the published article or broadcast.

6. Provide additional background information

Include background information as footnotes or even as an appendix (for example information about your society, Civic Day generally or Civic Voice).

Involving partners

By selecting suitable partner organisations to involve in your events, you may be able to take advantage of their:

- Members
- Media contacts/profile
- Mailing lists
- Publicity machine
- Exhibition/events venues, equipment and materials.

There are many organisations such as:

- Local Councils
- Scout Groups, Guide Companies, WI, Rotary etc
- Media companies – local press, radio, TV, PR companies etc
- Local businesses

If you do find a media partner, make sure that you retain your brand identity and that of Civic Day/Civic Voice.