

Something to shout about: Promoting your group in the local media



Engaging with local media is a great way to promote your group. The media always wants good local stories, or a local take on a national story, especially if it has a human interest angle. If you have a good story and follow some basic guidelines, you might find the local media is an effective way to raise your profile.

We asked some groups about the benefits local media coverage – here's what they said:

- “To keep active members”
- “To promote a positive message about deaf issues and raise deaf awareness in the community”
- “To reach out to a larger audience, help families promote well-being and break down taboos”
- “To increase membership”
- “To raise awareness that there's local support available and reach out to families with deaf children who may need support and advice”
- “To find good quality volunteers”

What kind of story do I have?

There are different types of 'local story' – not everything is suitable for the news desk. The main categories are **news**, **features** and **listings**.

- **News**
Make sure that it is news in the media sense. Just because something is of interest to you and your local group, remember that it may not necessarily be news. Ask yourself these questions: Is it new? It is likely to be interesting to the person on the street? Can you get a good photo? And crucially, is there a local angle? If it's a 'yes' to these questions, then you may well have a good local news story.
- **Features**
A 'human interest' feature is a personal story, one family's experience, a triumph in the face of adversity, anything that is centred on a person or people who have experiences to which readers can relate.
- **Events listings/diary**
When you want to promote an event you are organising, try to make sure it is mentioned in the 'forthcoming events' sections of all local papers.

Be creative

If your group has had relatively little exposure in the local media try thinking up an interesting story to give them:

- Is someone from your local group doing something unusual or interesting?
- Has something you've come across, while being involved in your local group, moved or intrigued you?
- Can you localise a national issue, e.g. by using a case study of a local family who has been affected?
- What anecdotes would you use to describe what is lively and interesting about your local group? These stories might work well as local media stories.

Getting to know your local media

You should become familiar with your local media: the main newspapers and magazines, the free press, the local radio and TV programmes.

You could also get to know your local newspaper journalists; they depend on you for their news and stories about the local community. Identify the contact name of the right person for your type of story. This is not too difficult: just looking through your local paper you will see stories about similar themes to yours - make a note of the section and the writer, and try to place a similar story in the same section yourself.

Remember, no outlet is too small. Often the free newspapers circulated in residential areas are more widely read than national dailies. If you are stuck for contact details, the NDCS press office should be able to help.

When do I want this to go out?

Newspaper deadlines are extremely tight - ring up your local newspapers and ask what the deadline for copy is. Television local news requires a fast turnover - make sure you are ready with the right people to be filmed before you approach them. It is important to get the timing of stories right - anything too old, even a great story, won't get used.

Getting in touch

Start with a phone call to the newspaper or broadcast outlet to find out which department or journalist deals with your type of story. The newsdesk is often a good place to start, or you could try features, a specialist correspondent (e.g. health or education, if they have one), listings or the picture editor.

The first time you call, introduce yourself and ask about their deadlines - when do they go to press, when do they have a news meeting, when would they like to be contacted. Ask what kind of stories they are interested in.

Make sure you get their direct phone line or e-mail address. Be ready to email them immediately with your press release or another clear, snappy document.

Invite them to any event your group might have - once you meet face-to-face they are more likely to remember you. If you know a journalist personally, do call them first and offer your story or ask their advice about placing it.

Do I have photos?

Are there good quality photos available, or a photo opportunity for the press? Photographs can make all the difference, especially in local newspapers as a story with a good photo is much more likely to be printed. Even just a photo with a caption is a good way to get coverage. Good visuals are also central to successful television coverage, so remember think about this if you're targeting television.

Logos

As an affiliated local deaf children's society you can use 'A registered association of NDCS' logo on all your materials. If you don't already have access to it, contact us at local.groups@ndcs.org.uk and we can send it to you.

You could also create your own logo – ask children for their ideas, or you could even hold a design competition to get members involved.



Be accessible

When you have a story to run in the local media it is important to make sure that you are accessible. When talking to the media, always give your contact numbers including your home or mobile phone - being accessible out-of-office hours may make the difference between a story being run or pulled.

Be prepared for interviews

Here are some tips:

- Try to find out in advance what questions they want to ask you.
- Be clear and concise. Before the interview, think about the two or three key messages that you want to get across.
- Be prepared – are there any statistics and facts about deaf children in your area that you could use?
- Find out how long your interview will be. Are you the only one interviewed or do they have other guests. Is it live or pre-recorded? If it's pre-recorded and you made a

mistake you can always ask to answer the question again; not such a good idea though if it's live! Another thing to think about if it's pre-recorded – they are likely to only use a short clip from your interview, so try to really focus on your key messages.

Be persistent

If your story gets dropped or gets bounced from the front page to half a column on the inside, don't worry. It doesn't necessarily mean your story is not newsworthy. Priorities change all the time. Editors have a range of pressures to juggle and stories often get overtaken by events. If your story does not succeed at first don't take it personally and don't be afraid to get back in contact with the newspaper or broadcaster to try and find it a new angle or slot. You are not going to get every story you suggest to the publication or programme covered, so don't be put off trying again!

Check list:

- **Identify** who from your group will deal with the media
- **Identify** your best spokesperson – someone articulate, friendly, well-informed, comfortable in front of a camera and likely to be available at short notice.
- **Be ready** - Have back up photos, case studies and people prepared for interview. Identify your story and your media outlet? - Who, where, when, what are you doing? Do you have photos to go with the text? Which media should you send it to?
- **Be creative** - Find a way to link up local events with a national issue. Organise events with local people or in a local venue if you possibly can, but if not, focus on some appealing aspect of what you do and the people you work with.
- **Be persistent** - When you are rejected, keep working down the list of possible outlets. It is more satisfying to get a nice story in a small local free newspaper than nothing at all on the local TV news.

If you have any queries about promoting your local DCS, please contact the National Deaf Children's Society Media Team on 0207 014 1178 or email media@ndcs.org.uk. We are always happy to have a chat and offer advice.

Information in this guide was sourced from the Media Trust, who work with the media industry to empower charities and communities to have a voice and be heard. For more advice and resources, see www.mediatrust.org