

5.0 USING THE LOCAL MEDIA

Using your local media is a really useful tool to help you spread your message, generate publicity, and gather support. It allows you to reach a much wider audience, attract more people to your events and put pressure on decision-makers.

5.1 Keep it local

Your local newspaper is the best place for you to target as they will be interested in what people are doing at a local level. In most cases you are more likely to get coverage if you highlight the local angle. For instance, explain why an Anti-Slavery group has been set up in your area or why you are lobbying your local MP. Try and keep it simple as any complex human rights issue which needs explaining in a lot of depth can be off-putting to journalists and the public.

Try and build a relationship with a local reporter as this will help you to get your issues or events covered in the future.

Please note that Anti-Slavery groups should not contact national media as Anti-Slavery International's Press Officer is responsible for this. If you are contacted by national media, please do let Paul Donohoe, Press Officer at Anti-Slavery International, know on 020 7501 8934 or p.donohoe@antislavery.org.

5.2 Preparation

- Get contact details for the local press. Try and contact someone in the editorial or news team and find their email and phone number (you can usually find this online).
- Find out what their deadline is. If it's a weekly paper then you will normally have to submit information up to a week before publication. However, if you send them something too early then it is likely to be overlooked or forgotten. If you are planning an event call them a few weeks before to build interest and find out the deadline.
- Make sure you can provide journalists with contact details of someone in the group who can respond promptly as journalists have tight deadlines to meet and you do not want to miss an opportunity.

5.3 Write a news release

A news release is one of the most effective tools you can use to contact your local media. The purpose of writing a news release is to inform the media about an issue or event in a thorough yet brief way. Because journalists receive hundreds of releases a day, it is vital you make yours stand out. It should be eye-catching, informative and succinct.



Check the press releases and any other information on our website www.antislavery.org

Ask yourselves these questions:

- What is new about the information you are sending them? There is no point in sending a news release about the existence of modern slavery. You need to give journalists something new to work with. For instance, what new thing is your group doing, what new facts have emerged about slavery?
- What is of interest to the reader? This is essential to think about if you want coverage.
- Is there is a 'hook' - something that would make it more newsworthy? For instance, a specific date that relates to the issue (see section 4.4) or a new report that has been released?
- What is the local angle to this story?

A news release should be no longer than one page. If it goes over, ensure the least important information is on the second page or details that they will want to read, e.g. the notes for editors, that obviously follow-on from the first page. These are vital, so they will be expected.

Headline

Use a headline that is going to make the journalist want to pick up and read the release. Make it interesting, but ensure it is not misleading.

First paragraph

This is the most important part of the news release. It should state what, where, when and why? Most journalists have limited time and will not want to read the whole news release therefore the first paragraph should state what or why an event is being held or, if it is about something that has happened, what happened and why this is important.

The body

This is made up of paragraphs that explain the issue you are introducing in the opening paragraph. It is also used by the journalist when he or she is writing an article. Put the most relevant information at the top and work your way down in importance.

Quote

A quote is an opportunity to include emphatic and interesting opinions which will help a journalist write a more colourful article. Quote yourself or someone from the group and include your group name (i.e. Joe Bloggs of Oxdown Anti-Slavery group says...).

Contact details

These come at the end of the release. One way for it to stand out and warn the journalist that something specifically for them is coming up is to preface it with a note clearly dividing the text from these details, e.g. Notes for editors. Put anything that needs to stand out in bold. This would include a contact name, position, telephone number and email address.

Keeping track

Put the date and number of the news release at the bottom so the journalist knows the time-frame and you can keep track of news releases you have issued.

Follow-up

It's always good to give the news desk (or wherever you send the release) a follow-up call just to check if they have received it and jog their memory!

5.4 Write a letter to the Editor

Another good way to get your messages heard is to use the letters pages in a local paper. This can be either to react to something that has been featured before and relates to the work of the group, or could proactively highlight a new issue and initiate a debate.

Here are some points to consider:

- You've guessed it..... the local angle!
- Express an opinion. Editors like a strong message but make sure you keep within your campaign messages (see section 3.3).
- Less is more! Keep it short and try not to cover too much- just one or two key messages are fine. If you write too much then the editor may cut out your key points. Try and keep to 100-150 words.
- If it is in response to a previous letter, quote the date and author.
- Don't get angry- remember you want people to engage so make some informed and reasonable points.
- Include your name and address.

5.5 Use events listings

Many local papers have events listings. Try and send your press release or some of the vital information about your event to these sections too.

5.6 Set up a photo call

If you are handing in a petition to your MP, holding an event or doing a public stunt, then you could invite a

photographer from a local paper to come along and take a photo:

- Think about how newsworthy an event would be.
- Send a news release to picture desks. Give full details of the time and location. You can also call a picture desk to check it is in their diaries.
- Make sure you have a spokesperson available to talk to them and written materials printed out that you can give them.
- Remember to take your own photos as the photographer may not show up. This way you can still send photos to the paper after the event.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Top DJs spin discs to help fight slavery

Top DJs will perform at a world music night at the Scala Club, Oxdown to raise awareness of modern slavery on Monday 25 February 2009.

Organised by the Oxdown University Anti-Slavery group, the night will include music ranging from traditional Tibetan folk to cutting edge dance from the internationally renowned Giles Peterson and DJ Vadim.

Today an estimated 12.3 million people live in slavery. Across the world, people are forced to work without pay or freedom to leave their job, under the threat of violence or other penalties. Even in the UK vulnerable migrant workers are trafficked for sexual exploitation, as well as domestic and agricultural work.

Student Joe Bloggs, aged 19, of Oxdown Anti-Slavery group, says: "Despite the abolition the Transatlantic Slave Trade over 200 years ago, most people think the issue has gone. I am hoping this night will make people realise that slavery continues across the world today and may even encourage them to get involved in the struggle to stamp out slavery."

Event information

- Monday 25th February 2009, 8pm-3am, the Scala, Oxdown
- Tickets cost £7.50 on the door. Proceeds go to Anti-Slavery International.

CONTACTS:

- Main name; telephone number(s); email address
- Second contact name; telephone number(s); email address

NOTES TO EDITORS

Anti-Slavery International, the world's oldest human rights organisation, is committed to eliminating all forms of slavery throughout the world. Anti-Slavery International works to end these abuses by campaigning for the eradication of slavery, exposing current cases, supporting local organisations to release the 12 million people in slavery, and pressing for the implementation of international laws against slavery.