

A community group's guide to radio and TV interviews

Tips about getting an interview on the radio or TV, and what to say once you're there.

Local radio stations are always looking for interesting local news, and it is relatively easy to get on the radio. You can advertise events, talk about your organisation's work, ask for volunteers or get coverage of an event you are putting on.

It can be harder to attract the attention of TV stations, but if you succeed you will reach a far wider audience. You are most likely to get coverage via the local news if you are doing or saying something that is relevant to other news going on at the time. For example, if you are campaigning for more funding for local mental health services, you are far more likely to get covered if you contact the station just before National Mental Health Awareness Day. They may already be planning a feature about the day and be looking for stories to cover. At other times, your campaign won't fit into their programme so well, so they are less likely to cover it.

If you are interested in doing an interview, email a news release to your local radio or TV station, giving details of the event or issue you want to talk about. Then follow up your email with a phone call – be prepared to summarise the news release clearly and concisely, and if they want you to re-send the information, check what email address you should send it to. You may find it helpful to look at our information sheet *Writing a News Release*, and our list of local media contacts in Brighton and Hove¹.

Tips for giving interviews

Be prepared

Think about the main points you want to make in advance. Note down the two or three things you think are the most important to get across and concentrate on these. You won't be able to fit in everything you want to say. Don't have lots of notes, as you will just get confused shuffling through them. If you want to have something written down, use index cards to note down a few central facts and your main points.

¹ www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/local-media-contacts

There may be a chance to have an informal chat with the interviewer or researcher before you go on air. Ask them what questions they plan to ask you.

Coming across well in an interview

- ♦ Turn your mobile phone off before you start.
- ♦ Try to relax! Take several deep breaths before the interview begins. Everyone gets nervous, but it's usually easier once the interview gets started.
- ♦ Take yourself seriously. You are being interviewed because you know about the subject. What you have to say is important!
- ♦ If it is a happy story, it's great to be positive and enthusiastic. If you are campaigning for a change because there is a problem, it's fine to sound serious, but don't be aggressive or defensive.
- ♦ Talk naturally and simply. Try and imagine you are talking to a friend. Using complicated language will make it hard for people to understand you.
- ♦ Mention your website and any events that you have coming up.
- ♦ Don't fidget, tap your pen on the table or rustle papers.

How radio interviews work

Local radio interviews are often live. They will be broadcasting it as you speak. You may not get very much warning of when the interview will take place and it may be early in the morning. You may be asked to sit in a studio with the radio presenter, or you might be interviewed over the phone.

Listen to radio interviews and think about what works and what doesn't. If you know who is going to interview you, try to listen to their programme to get a feel for their style. Some radio interviews are very short, usually only around 2 minutes, and the interviewer will be speaking for some of this. Other interviews will be longer. Ask the radio station in advance how long you will be expected to speak so that you can prepare something which is appropriate for the time you are given.

How TV news interviews work

If you are interviewed for TV, they are likely to interview in advance, and then only show a few seconds of what you say. Watch some local TV news to see how long people generally get to speak for – it isn't long! You need to summarise your key message in just a few sentences.

They will probably want to interview you in a location that is relevant to the story. For example, if you are campaigning for more school funding, they might want to meet outside the local school. Think about the message you want to get across, and location settings that will help tell your story. You have more local knowledge than them, so they will probably be open to your suggestions.

More information

For more help with getting media coverage, see out information sheets on:

- ♦ *Local media contacts in Brighton & Hove*
- ♦ *State your case: how to write a campaign briefing*
- ♦ *Writing a news release*