

PUBLIC RELATIONS: USING THE MEDIA A practical guide

Using the media is a vital part of PR. It reaches out to a wide, loyal audience, raising awareness of what you are doing and increasing sales of local food. This practical guide aims to help you establish and foster a good working relationship with journalists, from information about the various types of local media to engaging their interest through events and press releases.

If you need any help with publicizing an event or would like some clarification on any of the information below, the communications team is always happy to help. Contact us by emailing katherine.darling@plunkett.co.uk or by calling 01993 810730.

Local media

Different types of local media have varying interests. It is a good idea to familiarise yourself with your local and regional media to enable you to target the most relevant publication or radio station. Below is some general information about different types.

Regional dailies and evening newspapers

- -have a loyal readership and are very influential in the local community
- -have a wide circulation

Local weekly newspapers

- -can be difficult to get stories in as they are published less frequently longer term planning is needed with plenty of notice given
- -better for occasional stories or articles

Local free newspapers

- -varying quality
- -limited space
- -will possibly suggest you pay for advertising; if your piece is purely editorial, you shouldn't have to pay!

Local Radio

- -radio stations that play a lot of music have limited air time for news stories; they are still worth approaching but be aware they present fewer opportunities for coverage
- -talk-based stations are ideal identify your local BBC radio station

Local TV

- -the forward planning department is your contact
- -contact via email as it can be put straight in the diary if of interest
- -ensure your email is concise and keep in mind they are only interested in visual stories: what can you offer in this respect?



- -won't be in-depth coverage
- -be aware: you might not know for definite whether they intend to come until very short notice!

Contacting the media

- Knowing who you need to speak to is important. This will usually be the News Editor in the first instance. However, if you have read something related to your work in the publication, ask for the journalist who wrote it by name.
- Familiarise yourself with the publication or journalist's work so you can be relevant.
- Prepare what you are going to say. It can help to write down a few key phrases or bullet points of the things you wish to convey.

Remember: always assume that what you say might end up in print – nothing is ever 'off the record.'

Opportunities for local publicity

To attract media attention you must have a 'hook' – the fact you are selling local food is not enough on its own. Where possible, try and link what you are doing to wider/national stories or issues. Journalists often like stories of triumph over adversity – how has the community pulled together to promote local food? Why have they done this? Was a producer or shop struggling before the introduction of local food?

Use events as hooks. Invite a local celebrity or notable person to officially launch your range of local produce. Think visually – is there a ribbon they can cut? Invite local producers to exhibit their food on stalls around the shop and make sure it looks appealing – use bunting, flyers, balloons...

Invite the media to your event. Use a press release in the body of the email – not as an attachment. Make sure the title of the email is the title of your press release. If you have a generic email address, address it for the attention of the news editor or, where possible, a named journalist.

Be aware of publication deadlines and contact via email or phone in the morning to avoid stressful afternoons when journalists are rushing to get their copy in for the following day's publication. Aim to send your press release two weeks before the event, and follow up with a phone call a couple of days beforehand if you have not received confirmation of attendance.



Photography is important. Ideally a press photographer will attend the event, but they can often be called away at short notice, so always have someone on hand who can take photographs on the day that can be sent to the publication afterwards. Wherever possible, stage photographs to ensure they are suitable for the publication. If you have more than one person in the shot, make sure they are standing very close together so the photo can be cropped if necessary. Think about what you want in the background of the shot – a shop's sign, for example, or a logo.

Writing press releases

The purpose of a press release is to grab a journalist's attention quickly. It must be factual, concise and informative.

Headline: Don't spend time thinking of a clever headline; sub editors will do this themselves. Use a title rather than a headline, for example '[Local celebrity] to launch local food range.'

Opening paragraph: Your opening paragraph is the most important part of the press release; if it doesn't command attention in the first line the remainder will not be read. You are not telling a story, so come to the point straight away. If you are inviting the press to an event, include the date, time and location in the first paragraph.

Second paragraph: Give some more information. Why have you organised this event?

Comment: Include a quote – it gives the press release a human element.

Fourth paragraph: Background information. This would be where you explain what the Look for Local Food project is and the wider aims of the Making Local Food Work programme.

Contact details: Give a mobile number whenever possible. This persuades the journalist you are easy to get in touch with and means they can call you on the day if they need directions, for example.

Notes to Editors: Include any other relevant information that an editor might wish to know and point anyone interested in setting up a community-owned shop in the right direction. See the sample press release (below) for our approved information about the Plunkett Foundation.

Avoid jargon: Always assume your reader has no knowledge of your subject matter. Avoid technical language and state explicitly why local food is important.



Proof-read: Spelling and grammar mistakes will undermine your credibility. Read quotes aloud to make sure they sound like someone has actually said them.



Sample Press Release

MP to join host of special guests for community spirit celebration

Exemplary XXXX Community Shop throws party for whole village

XXXX MP is set to join the villagers of XXXX in celebrating the official opening of their village shop on **Saturday 10 April at 1pm**, to mark the culmination of a community campaign to re-introduce a vital village service.

The celebrations mark the end of a challenging process that has taken villagers from wondering whether community ownership was a possibility to a fully-fledged and flourishing shop, both owned and run by the villagers themselves. To celebrate, XXXX Community Shop is to throw a tea party for the entire village, showcasing the diverse range of local produce the area has to offer.

XXXX says: "We are delighted to be able to celebrate the official opening of our village shop after a journey that has been long and complicated but also great fun. We hope that people from the wider community will also be able to join us, and that our success will encourage other communities to follow suit and reintroduce vital services which are rapidly disappearing, particularly in rural areas.

"We have invited producers from across the area to exhibit their food, so there will be cheese from XXXX farm, home-baked cakes and bread from XXXX and fruit from XXXX, involving the whole community and treating them to the delights of [the county]."

XXXX Community Shop takes part in the Look for Local Food scheme which aims to increase access to local food for communities, and to help local food producers find outlets for their food. By 2012, Look for Local Food aims to support 200 community and village shops in finding, stocking and selling more locally produced food and drink, and in doing so to double the amount of local food sold through these shops.

-ENDS-

For any press and media enquires, please contact Katherine Darling on <u>katherine.darling@plunkett.co.uk</u> or 01993 810730/ 07810 832980. Case studies and photographs are available on request.



Notes to Editors:

Look for Local Food is part of Making Local Food Work

(www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk), which is a five-year £10m programme funded through the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund. It helps people to take ownership of their food and where it comes from by supporting a range of community food enterprises across England. Community food enterprises are businesses run by communities for their benefit, which are involved in at least one part of growing, harvesting, processing, distributing, selling or serving local food. Examples include farmers' markets, community-owned shops, community supported agriculture, country markets, food co-operatives and many others. Making Local Food Work pools the expertise of seven partner organisations including Co-operativesUK, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Country Markets Ltd, FARMA, the Plunkett Foundation, Soil Association, and Sustain to help communities gain access to good, fresh, local produce, with clear origins.

The Plunkett Foundation (www.plunkett.co.uk) helps rural communities, through cooperative ownership, to take control of the issues important to them. It supports the network of 247 community-owned village shops across the UK and has supported a wide range of co-operatively – owned rural services. Plunkett also supports a wide variety of community food and farming enterprises.

The **Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces** programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The programme is funding a range of activities from local food schemes and farmers' markets, to education projects teaching people about the environment.

The **Big Lottery Fund**, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.

Big Lottery Fund Press Office: 020 7211 1888; Out of hours: 07867 500 572 Public Enquiries Line: 08454 102030; Textphone: 08456 021 659. Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available on the website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk