

Tips for contacting local media

Making sure local communities aren't just aware of what they can do, despite the coronavirus restrictions, but feel motivated to take part, is very important as it helps people understand how and where they can keep moving safely. Focusing on what we can do, rather than what we can't, can help us all reframe how we feel about the current situation.

Local newspapers and radio stations are great sources to help get important messages like this out and ensuring people know about the opportunities still out there.

Tips for contacting the media

- **Identify which media to target** – It may sound obvious but local newspapers and radio stations will only cover stories that fall within the exact area they cover. The newspapers you should contact are the ones available to buy, or free, in the area. If you're unsure, you can always ring and ask what area they cover. With radio, think about your local BBC station as well as any commercial networks in your area.

Most newspapers and radio stations will have an email address for the news desk on their website. They'll receive a lot of emails so it's worth calling the news desk to tell them about your story and ask if there's anyone you should send it directly to.

- **Draft your press release** – Press releases are the format journalists are used to receiving stories in. We've included a template in the Autumn/Winter Activity Toolkit you can use, or you can draft your own. Here are some things to think about:
 - **Make sure you have a good story to tell** – Think carefully about what would be interesting to local people who read the news. In this instance, you're trying to encourage more people to keep active in response to the return of heightened restrictions due to the coronavirus (Covid-19). You also want to make sure they know what resources are available to help them keep active both in the home and outdoors. Many people will be feeling anxious about exercising. This story is about reassuring them and helping them find

ways they can enjoy keeping active and being safe doing so. Think about the human-interest angle – people like reading about other people.

- **Think about a hook** – Journalists are looking to cover stories that are timely and already in the public interest. We know lockdown measures are very timely, but the hook maybe making sure the public realise how important it is trying to keep active during this period, for both their physical and mental wellbeing. You want your local media to be a helpful voice in promoting this message.
- **Provide high quality photo and video** – Videos and photos can really improve your chance of gaining publicity. Make sure you provide the names of everyone in the video and photo and make clear who is who. Videos can significantly boost the prominence of online articles and increase chances of securing broadcast coverage.
- **Include a case study** – Real people who've found ways to be active despite the restrictions can really help relieve anxiety and inspire others. Reach out to your communities to ask if they have any good examples of people who've done so. These people can be used as a case study, which can include a quote in the press release, or a short video for use online.
- **Spokesperson** – It's important to think about who from your organisation could speak publicly on the messages in the press release. The media may call you about the story you've shared or want to talk to a case study you may have used. Having these people identified in advance and included in the press release makes it easier for the journalist to cover the story. It's important you prepare any spokesperson, before they speak to the media, with a briefing covering the key messages of the story. In this case it is about getting across the benefits of being active, that it can still be done so safely, and that there are places they can go for inspiration on how they can get active in a way that suits them.
- **Include your contact details** – This is essential. Make it easy for the journalist to get in touch if they have any questions. This may sometimes be after 'office hours', so always try and provide a mobile number, if possible, as well as an email.

- **Sending it out** – It's best to paste the press release into the body of the email rather than attach it, so journalists can read the information quickly. Think about your subject line as this is the first thing the journalist will see, and if it doesn't catch their eye they may not even open the email. It's a good idea to reference your local area in the subject so the journalist can see it's relevant. If you're sending to multiple contacts, it's best to put everyone's email address in the BCC box and not CC.
- **Follow up with a phone call** – Journalists receive lots of emails and may need a nudge. Try to leave it a few hours at least so they have a chance to read it.