

How to promote your group through local media?

Why contact the media?

Getting into the local newspapers, radio, television and online could help to raise the profile of your group, help with your work and attract new members. If people know what you have achieved and what you do, they are more likely to support your group. The more support you get, the bigger your impact.

It gets your message across to a wider audience

Local media is consumed by many people so using it to share information means your news will spread further

It helps you target your message to the people you want to hear it

The media is very varied and widespread but targeting **local** newspapers and radio mean you can reach people for whom your group is relevant

It offers free publicity and exposure

Media coverage is free, unlike some advertising. But to earn it, you may need to keep in touch with journalists, offering them well-written news and be willing to speak to them

It increases your profile among the general public

Media coverage will build your profile in the community, which means you may be able to attract more members, donors, fundraisers, supporters and helpers beyond the people you have already considered

It increases your profile among decision makers and VIPs

Being in the media not only gets you noticed by the general public, but also among decision-makers, VIPs and local government officials / councillors who may then link up with you

It can shape opinions

One of the most significant powers the media has is that of being able to shape opinions. This presents great opportunities to get more people thinking positively about diabetes after hearing positive news coverage of your group activities

Here are some examples of great local headlines...

Carlisle group helps people with diabetes lead healthier lives

All welcome as new Manchester group offers diabetes advice

Special event offers support for people in Suffolk who have diabetes

Diabetes UK president comes to Hastings

Local diabetes group raises £500 towards a cure

Volunteers wanted: diabetes group needs help at upcoming fundraiser

How we can help

At Diabetes UK there are a central press team in London, media officers in national offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and a number of regional press officers across England. The media team works hard to get diabetes and Diabetes UK in the papers, on the radio and on the television.

Your local press officer can support your group, but bear in mind that their time is often limited.

We can support you by:

- Giving you contact details for journalists in your area and make suggestions about who to contact.
- Helping you to draft press releases if your group is new, to help promote the group and/ or recruit new members.
- Giving you advice and support about how to get media coverage for your meetings and events.
- Drafting press releases about outstanding or special events, such as a trip or programme funded by your group.
- Advising whether or not your idea for a story might be interesting to the media.
- Giving you official and approved information about diabetes and Diabetes UK.

In the rare event you feel an issue could potentially lead to negative publicity, or if you have been approached by any national journalists, please get in touch with the local press officer to discuss further.

When you get in touch with us, please be aware it might be several days before you hear back. It's always a good idea to give us as much notice as possible.

Top tips for approaching the press

1) Have a good story

Try to be objective about your story. If you weren't involved would you like to read about it in the local paper?

Think about the 'sitting on the bus' approach. If you heard someone telling the story on the bus would you want to listen?

2) Know your local media

Familiarise yourself with your local papers and any local radio stations or magazines, taking some time to read or listen to them.

What kind of stories do they cover? Do they cover the work of other charities and groups?

Do they use many photographs?

Can you see your story in the paper?

3) Know their deadline

Most local papers come out on Thursday or Friday and deadlines can vary from Monday to Wednesday. Give your story plenty of time to appear – there is no point sending a story to a weekly paper the same week the event is happening.

4) Making contact

Phone first and ask for the news desk.

Be ready with your information but keep it brief. Explain your story in just one sentence first. The reporter is then likely to ask you send something over in writing.

5) Get the right contact details

Ensure you get the contact details of the reporter, name, email address and direct telephone number.

6) Sending the information.

Use a clearly written press release on branded paper (see our *template press release*).

Attach the press release to the email with a short “catchy” subject heading and sentence or two of the key points from the release.

Make it interesting, short and clear – the subject may be the only thing the journalist reads so make this count.

7) Ensure your press release includes:

Who? Where? What? When? Why? How?

8) Include your contact details.

Your name, phone number (home and mobile) and email address.

9) Use different approaches

As well as press releases, photos can add colour to a story.

The story might be better suited to the letters page so you could draft a letter to editor.

10) Take advantage of social media

Social media offers the opportunity to contact newspapers and journalists in different ways.

11) Don't be disappointed – understand why

If your piece doesn't appear try to be objective about why it didn't appear.

Perhaps you missed the deadline, or there was other important news that week or you didn't grab the journalist's attention this time.

But don't be disheartened try again, taking on board any learning points.

12) Build relationships

Once you have the contact details of journalists build your relationship. Stay in touch and be helpful, you may be asked to be involved in another article in the future.

But don't bombard them – only send them a story which they may be interested in.

Broadcast interviews

If you are asked to take part in a radio or television interview, contact your local press officer to let them know. We may be able to give you some advice and useful information. On some occasions, the interview topic might be more appropriate for a Diabetes UK spokesperson so we can advise on this as an option.

Interview requests are mainly from radio stations asking you to talk about either your personal experiences of living with diabetes or promoting a local event that you are organising.

Whatever the topic, always view it as a free opportunity to promote your group's activities and to get more members.

If you are contacted directly, these are questions to ask the journalist first:

- Is it live or pre-recorded? If it is pre recorded when will it go out?
- How long is the interview going to be?
- What's the format? Is it a one-to-one interview or is there another guest at the same time?
- What is the main topic of the piece?
- What sort of questions will they ask you?
- Who is the interviewer/host?
- Where is the interview? Will it be in the studio or on the telephone? Will they be sending a journalist to see you?

Local radio stations will often call you to be interviewed and will prefer a landline number if possible. Make sure you take the call in a quiet room where there will be no interruptions.

If possible, try to talk to the interviewer briefly before the interview starts so that you can ask about the content of the show.

Be confident, and be ready to answer questions so that there is not always empty air after each question is asked. Remember you are the experts about your experience or your event so be confident about talking about it. Interviewers aren't looking to catch you out.

Have a crib sheet to hand with your group's contact details and details of the event if that is what you will be talking about this takes the pressure off having to remember everything.

Make sure you mention Diabetes UK and give out the website address www.diabetes.org.uk possibly more than once, but obviously not excessively.

On the odd occasion the presenter could ask you a question that is outside your remit of knowledge but if you are put on the spot simply say: "I'm sorry, I'm not in a position to answer that but what I can say is..." and then repeat one of your main points.

NB: Some radio stations, particularly the smaller ones, do event listing and its worth groups finding out if their local radio will help them in this way.