

Let your local media know what's happening at your church by compiling a simple news release.

In this brief you will find the latest tips on getting noticed by journalists along with a section on what makes a good story for journalists.

Format, style and best way to send news

The best research on the media had found that 70% of email news releases are trashed without ever being opened because of boring subject lined emails sent to journalists by unknown individuals.

Three steps to attracting media attention

1. Contact

News Releases should be sent by email to a named journalist. Once you have your story ready (see *What is News?* and *Release Format Tips* below) give the newsdesk of your local paper a call letting them know you will be sending them a story-you might try selling it to them as you have them on the phone.

Ask for the best email address to send your news release to and get the name and number of the journalist. Once sent, follow up with a phone call if they fail to contact you. If your Release cannot be used, be clear you know why.

2. Format

Your news release email should sent in plain text format with , if you have the software, the release attached as a Word file types with one-and-a-half line spacing, all on one A4 page, or two at the most (See below for *Release Format Tips*).

3. Subject line of your email

For journalists, an interesting email subject line and knowing who it is from gets it opened. Imagine you are a journalist and an email pops into your in box with the subject: '20,000 expected to sing carols in Manchester Cathedral'. The subject line implies that something big happening at 'our' cathedral' and the journalist is more likely to open the story, especially if you have called before and said you were sending it.

Heading

This should be a catchy, short title giving a sense of the story in very few words. Use headings for subsequent paragraphs if appropriate although they are not essential.

First paragraph

It is absolutely vital that this is short, to the point and newsworthy. It must clearly state the 'five w's' (in any order). The five 'Ws' are:

who,?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

This paragraph must be able to stand on its own as a concise piece of information and a summary of the story.

Second paragraph

This should provide the next piece of information: either more details about the above, or new information.

Third paragraph / additional paragraphs

Use these only if you have more new information. This paragraph could be a quote from someone involved who is willing to talk to the press if requested. The quote must add a new dimension, such as the personal side of the story. Alternatively it could be a quote from your spokesperson explaining the importance of the story in strong authoritative language.

Photo opportunity

The opportunity needs spelling out to the photo editor. Describe the photo.

Contact details

Your name, title, telephone number and home or mobile phone should be included in clear, bold print at the bottom of the document. Provide a contact number for when you are out of the office. This can make the difference between your story being covered or not.

Be available for a phone call or a visit from a reporter when you have sent your news release. They will want to give your release an angle of their own. Think out in advance what further information you are willing to disclose.

Additional information for editors

Describe the organisation in a few words. Give any relevant basic information and statistics. Include your website address if you have one. This information might go over the page.

Hard news is about people. It deals with the

Shocking

Unexpected

Secret

Disaster

Major events

Hard news stories can attract major media interest, call the Press Officer for advice.

Soft news is less critical and is often more 'entertaining'

Openings

Launches

Features

Competitions

Giving your story bigger news values

A story goes up the news agenda if it is:

The oldest

Biggest

Highest
Smallest
For the first time ever
Great concern...
Urgent appeal
Controversial
For the last time ever...
Crisis
Serious danger
Object to

Pegs on which to hang a story

Launch a campaign.
Issue a report or annual report.
Hold a meeting.
Lobby someone else's meeting.
Get backing from a well-known personality.
Send a letter (to an MP or to the Company concerned).

Get a lot of children together to do something.
Mark an anniversary.
Announce a new appointment.
Welcome proposals.
Condemn new proposals.
Unveil plans for the year.

Present a cheque (in an imaginative way) or receive a cheque.
Make an award or receive an award.
Announce oldest/youngest/100th/1000th . . . whatever!
Urge government/local authority to take action!
Reveal unlikely people working together.
Claim first or last person to do this.

Announce new scheme or project.
React to news with what it means for local people.
Invite celebrity or dignitary to visit. (They don't have to accept!)
Organise a competition.
Introduce a new product.
Move, refurbish or build new premises.

Take part in local event/parade/fun-run.
Dream up a publicity stunt.
Survey