

Your guide to...

ATTRACTING MEDIA COVERAGE

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This guide aims to provide resources, templates, and tips on contacting the media, crafting tailored pitches, and creating newsworthy stories.

CONTACTING THE MEDIA

To secure media coverage, you will need to contact journalists and media outlets and pitch your story to them, offering them prepared press materials, an interview, or inviting them to an event. Start by researching relevant media such as local radio stations, newspapers, and television channels that cover similar topics and might be interested in your story. As a starting point, use [Media UK's free media database](#) of the UK print and broadcast media. You can also check:

- **BBC Local News:** The BBC has a local radio station for the entire of the UK.
- **Community Radio Stations in the UK**
- **UK Local Newspaper Contacts**

Often media outlets have reporters and journalists with their own specialisation. Instead of contacting the general enquiries of a media outlet, it is best to address your media pitch to the person most relevant to the subject of your story. Make note of local journalists who cover environmental issues or community news by checking social media, websites and newspapers.

If you're having trouble finding a point of contact in the media or getting interest, reach out to other community groups and organisations - they may be able to put you in touch with relevant contacts or have access to PR databases. Collaborating with other groups can help amplify your message and increase your chances of attracting coverage.

For local coverage, many local media outlets maintain online community event calendars which welcome submissions. Google your local newspaper and media outlets to add events. This way you can reach a wider audience, and perhaps attract a reporter too.

CREATING A STORY

A story should have a clear narrative underpinned by a core message, and pitch a compelling account that highlights the significance of an issue. This could include the impact of an issue on the environment, local community, or public health, and challenges and progress of work to address it. For example, see this local news story: “[Shocking sewage spillage reported in River Wharfe](https://www.ilkeleygazette.co.uk/news/24118749.shocking-sewage-spillage-river-wharfe-ilkeley-reported/)”

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As well as a key message, your story needs to appeal to the media and their audiences. To make your story newsworthy you should consider:

- **Applicability:** the story should be timely, relevant and of interest to the target audience of the media outlet.
- **Angle:** A clear or exclusive angle, sometimes called a ‘hook’, to grab the audience's attention eg. a unique perspective or a shocking development.
- **Killer stats and facts:** Quantifying the impact of your story helps to emphasise your message, adding credibility and engagement to stimulate the audience.
- **Local Engagement:** Engage local stakeholders such as local councils, businesses, sports and community groups - or even local celebrities. Having more people involved can boost your story, and they may be able to contribute.

See [here](#) for more tips on writing a newsworthy story.

However, what makes a story newsworthy will depend on the type of media outlet you are aiming to attract and your target audience. You should **tailor** your story appropriately, considering the media format and the interests of the outlet and their audience. For example:

➤ Radio

- **Human interest:** Radio relies heavily on the power of storytelling and the human voice to connect with listeners. Human interest stories evoke empathy and compassion and are a great way to emotionally connect with audiences audibly.
 - E.g.: Health impacts, damage to historically and culturally significant natural features, local community impact, stories of resilience or activism.

➤ Television

- **Visuals:** Television relies on visuals to engage and captivate viewers. Photos, videos and infographics can strengthen your pitch by providing visual context and understanding to a story. Visuals evoke emotions and allow viewers to create a visceral connection with the issue. They also add clarity and authenticity, and make the story more memorable.
 - E.g.: Photographs of sewage spills, dumping, damaged wildlife, or infographics.

➤ Articles (newspapers, magazines, blogs)

- **Quotes:** are a great way to provide firsthand perspectives, expert insights, and emotional resonance in written media stories. Allowing readers to hear directly from key figures connected to a story captures attention, sparks controversy, and makes a story more compelling. Whether offering analysis, personal anecdotes, or calls to action, quotes enrich newspaper articles, enhancing their impact and relevance to the audience.

SENDING A PRESS RELEASE

A press release consists of a concise, written statement announcing a news story or event to the media, often referred to as a 'pitch'.

Journalists are often time-poor so its important to provide them with all the key elements of a story. For example, if it's about pollution - where is it happening, when, how often? What do you think about it? (Quote) What do other people in the area think about it? (Quotes) What do you want to be done about it? Include a photo and a potential headline eg 'Local scout group join call for United Utilities to stop dumping untreated sewage into local river'.

A pitch usually follow a specific format and include important details such as:

✔ **Subject Line**

This will be your first point of contact and impression with a journalist and will set the tone for your pitch. You should keep it short (under 50 characters), impactful, and relevant to the contents of your pitch.

✔ **Subject Line The Five 'W's'**

Your first paragraph should get straight to the point and explain the key facts: Who, What, When, Where, and Why? Mention the importance of your story, and why it is unique, offering an appealing angle.



Quotes

Include a quote from a key figure, giving the name and role, consisting of a short sentence using emotive language. This is a key detail that will appeal to journalists.



Personalisation

Mention why you chose this journalist and personalise your pitch to their interests and target audience. Link your pitch to other news stories covered.



Call to Action

Make a statement that emphasises the significance of the story to the target audience and prompt further engagement and action on the issue. Signpost any opportunities to get involved or upcoming events.

You might also want to include other important materials such as fact sheets, visuals, and information documents. Again, make sure these materials are concise, informative, and tailored to the interests of journalists.

Useful resources:

- Friends of the Earth provide a useful [template press release](#) for community groups, along with tips on how to write it.
- [How to send a press release by email](#)