Disability Awareness in Action

Media Information

Resource Kit No. 1

Contents

About Disability Awareness in Action

This resource kit was produced through the generosity of the Platinum Trust and Charity Projects.

Media Information

1. The Media

Awareness

One of the main aims of the disability movement is to change the structures of society and the attitudes of its members towards disabled people. But if people are to support your cause, they need to know you exist. The quickest and most effective way to make people aware of disability issues is to use the media.

Changing attitudes is difficult. But when disability issues are mentioned in newspapers and magazines, or on radio and television, they are going straight into people's homes; into their jives. Once there, even new and strange ideas start to sound more familiar and acceptable.

The media - newspapers, radio, television and advertising - have an enormous and increasing influence on they way almost every person on the planet views the world, their own and others' place in it. What we see, read and listen to mixes with our own direct experience to shape the way we think and feel about things. If, as disabled people, we wish to make changes in the way the non-disabled world thinks about us, we must make use of the mighty power of the media.

People

The media are professional gatherers and dispensers of news and feature stories. It is their job to inform, educate and entertain. They have demanding and constant deadlines to meet and welcome help from people willing to give them ideas; to do some of the research to make developing a story in a short time a little easier. If what you offer is well-prepared and suits the requirements of an editor or producer, it is far more likely to be used.

People who work in the media are not as glamorous, powerful, intimidating or inaccessible as they sometimes seem. They are people like you, with a job to do. Although, they have chosen to work in a profession that has enormous power over the hearts and minds of viewers and listeners, you'll find most of them will be aware of the responsibility that goes with that power.

Methods

Get to know who's who in the media. Study the bylines of newspapers. Listen to radio and TV broadcasts and note down the names of shows. Often the name of the producer, editor or researcher will be given after the programme, so you can address press releases and inquiries to that person.

Find out the lead times of newspapers, magazines and relevant radio and television shows. The lead time for a feature or news story is the amount of time that information needs to be received in advance for it to stand a good chance of being used. Ring up and find out what these lead times are.

which programmes or papers to approach.

- Remember, local stations and local newspapers are interested in local stories.

Whenever you work with journalists, encourage them to focus on social rather than individual problems and solutions. Make the themes the obstacles and discrimination which disabled people face in institutions, in the environment, in people's attitudes, rather than the individual's impairment.

Quite simply, many of the day to day problems disabled people face are caused by the fact that society is organised to meet the needs of non-disabled people. Point out that disabled people are unnecessarily segregated, not because of their impairments, but because of badly designed buildings, inaccessible public transport, and discriminatory attitudes and practices in education and employment. Then provide a local example - an inaccessible school or work place. This will make the issue more easily understandable to local people.

You might disagree with the way disabled people are portrayed in the media, or how a particular story is reported. Editors and producers are interested in what their audiences think. Let them know. A large number of individual complaints, clearly and politely made, can be the most effective.

If an article or programme is offensive to disabled people, get individual members to write and say so Bigger radio and television stations will have a complaints department. For newspapers and magazines, address complaints to the editor. Your letter may well be printed on the Letters Page - one of the most widely-read sections of any publication. This is another good way of getting your message across.

You can write to papers and broadcast stations at other times too, with suggestions for features and news items. Editors and producers are often short of local news stories. If you need to be persuasive, use statistics they will appreciate. Remind them that disabled viewers, listeners and readers make up at least ten per cent of their audience. Let them know that there's a market waiting to be supplied.

2. Images

The images and language used to portray disabled people are vitally important in the battle to change perceptions of us as passive and bitter creatures, leading useless lives. We all know the abusive terms which have been and are still used to describe disabled people. Our own language and images must emphasise the value of disabled people's lives; our dignity and strength; the contributions we make and can make to society. They words and pictures we choose really can help to change the world.

All your communications with the media, members of your organisation and the public should show the diversity of disabled people. We are of all ages, all ethnic origins and religions; both men and women. If you use visual representations, make sure they express this, and that all types of impairment are represented.

You could use these guidelines as a campaign on representations of disabled people in the media. Send copies to newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, suggesting a meeting to discuss the issues raised.

Stereotypes

Disabled people, more often than not, are portrayed either as "super" disabled people or as the passive recipients of care and charity.

There is nothing wrong with recognising outstanding achievement by disabled individuals, but it has a negative effect if they are only seen in this way. Similarly, the repeated image of disabled people as victims of accident, tragedy, illness or injustice reinforces the stereotype of the helplessness and inferiority of disabled people.

Social and Individual Models

Disability is not simply a medical condition or personal problem. Rather, it arises out of the interaction between an individual with an impairment and an inaccessible physical environment and negative, stereotyping attitudes. So getting rid of the barriers to integration depends not on the individual but on social change.

Images of disabled people must reflect this by placing the emphasis on the individual as an integrated member of society, and not as someone set apart and segregated by their apparent "difference".

Words

- Use language that stresses equality and active participation.
- Avoid language that implies victimisation or is patronising.
- Disabled people should speak for themselves.
- Disabled people should be used as on-screen narrators.
- Television messages must be close-captioned in order to reach hearing-impaired and deaf people.

Pictures

- Show disabled people as having a wide range of interests, activities, lifestyles and leisure pursuits. Show men and women, people of all ages and races.
- Use a person with a visible disability in a picture. Avoid the tendency to show people with visible disabilities only when the message has something to do with disability.
- Show people with a wide range of disabilities, including people with invisible disabilities.
- Don't use non-disabled actors to portray disabled people.
- Make sure that the main messages are available audibly for people with visual impairments.
- When setting up a scene, be sensitive about the positioning (dominant/submissive roles) and interaction among the people portrayed.
- Make sure that disabled people are photographed in the same way as non-disabled people.
- Make sure that film-editing does not create unintentional or subtle commentary on possible disability limitations, through shot juxtapositions and angles or visual links.

3. Alternative Media

To ensure equal opportunities, all communications and information should be accessible to all disabled people, including people with visual or hearing impairments and those with intellectual impairments.

This can be an expensive process, but there are ways of doing things cheaply - by borrowing equipment, using volunteers or getting sponsorship just for this.

Written Word

Should also be available in:

> Large print. At least 16 point, preferably 18 point.
> On tape. When recording the tape, speak clearly. Try not to speak monotonously. Include titles and headings, describe pictures and make sure any numbers are quite clear, especially financial data.
> In braille. Your national organisation of or for the blind will have information on who can do this.

Write things in simple language, without unnecessary long words.

- It's much easier to understand information that is broken up into short paragraphs with bold headings and not too tightly packed on the page. Illustrations, diagrams and pictures can make material more interesting, and more accessible.
- If there is anybody who still cannot read the information, make sure it is read to them.
- Don't present written material at meetings without reading it aloud.
- When making visual presentations, don't forget to describe what you are showing.

Spoken Word

When speaking to a person who has a hearing difficulty:

- Face them all the time you are speaking.
- Don't cover your mouth with your hands.
- Speak clearly and not too slowly or too quickly.
- An expressive and mobile facial expression gives more clues than a passive one.
- Eye contact is very important. Don't be put off if you are watched very carefully. The way you speak can take some getting used to.
- There is no need to shout or make funny faces.
- If the person uses sign language, make sure that there is an interpreter available. If the interpreter is expected to sign for a long time, or for a number of people, then there should be more than one interpreter.
- Make sure there is enough light, so that speakers and interpreters can be seen.
- Talk to your local organisations of deaf and blind people, and of people with intellectual impairments, who may also be able to give you guidance.

4. Press

Every day, hundreds of thousands of words are printed in local, regional and national newspapers and magazines. There is space in these publications for mention of your organisation, for discussion of disability issues, for the views of ordinary disabled people. Make sure that you make the most of the press.

If you want a story to appear in a newspaper or magazine, you can contact the editor, who has overall responsibility for the content of the whole publication, or section editors - finance, health, family, women's issues, lifestyle - who have detailed responsibility for the content of various sections within the publication.

If he or she is interested, the editor will probably assign a reporter to speak to you and to write the story. This reporter might be a staff-writer (a permanent member of staff) or a freelance writer (a journalist who works for several publications and is paid per story).

In the case of a highly topical story, which you think should go into the next edition of the paper or magazine, you should telephone the news desk and speak to the news editor or one of the reporters.

Perhaps you would like to contribute a small piece yourself? For a news story, remember that press releases are sometimes used almost exactly as they are written, if they are written well. Study the content and style of the short news items in your local papers and try to imitate it.

If you want to write a feature, try to discuss it with someone first and to get an indication of whether or not the editor might be interested in the final story. He or she may also have helpful suggestions on how to write the article. Don't expect a firm commission. This is almost always reserved for full-time journalists whose work is well-known to the editor. He or she will probably want to see the feature before letting you know whether it will be used. Talk to the editor's secretary or assistant to find out what approach the editor prefers.

Be aware of deadlines, especially if you are dealing with a daily paper. The best times to telephone are in the morning, at around 10 am, or in the early afternoon, at around 2.30. Many daily newspapers go to press at around 4 pm, so this is a bad time to telephone. Normally, however, you will speak first to a secretary or receptionist when you phone. Though he or she may be busy themselves, they should be able to tell you a more convenient time to ring and exactly who to speak to.

5. Radio - The Magical Medium

Millions of people around the world have access to a radio. You don't have to know how to read. You can live miles from a town or city. And yet, as you listen, you share something very special with thousands of other people.

Radio creates an enormous intimacy between speaker and listeners. Many people have a radio in their homes to keep them company; a friendly, calming voice to link them to the outside world.

Radio is an enjoyable, relaxing, almost magical medium. It is also a potent tool for development. In particular, local radio can popularise and further understanding of issues directly related to communities. If you have an important message to convey, radio, in many ways, is the ideal medium.

Community Radio

The World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) is an international non-governmental organisation serving the community radio movement. Community radio responds quickly and spontaneously to community concerns because it belongs to and is part of the community. This fact makes it a particularly good agent for cultural development, democratisation and social change.

For more information on community radio, contact: AMARC, CP2SO succursale De Lormier, Montreal, Quebec, H2H 2N6, Canada, Tel: 514 982 0351.

Action Ideas

- Find out about community radio in your area. It's quite likely that there will be only two or three permanent staff. Approach the producer to suggest topical news stories about disabled people in the community. If there is nothing similar at present, suggest a regular weekly or monthly programme concerned with disability issues, to be presented by a disabled person.
- When writing a script for radio, obtain interest in the very first sentence. Use short sentences and conversational language. Avoid complications. If you use numbers, round them up or down: say 200 people, not 197. Be too short rather than too long. It takes about one minute to speak 150-180 words.
- Remember, local stations are interested in local stories.

6. Television - More people learn about the world by watching television than by reading papers.

Contacts

You can contact television people by press release, letter or telephone. Ask for the news desk if you have a topical news story. If you want to approach a particular programme, perhaps to recommend a feature idea or to ask whether someone from your organisation can be invited onto a chat show, find out the name of the producer. Write to them first and then follow this up with a telephone call.

Remember, television news people would rather cover a fire, flood or storm than a press conference: they want stories that make good pictures and exciting news.

When you're planning an event and want to invite the television cameras, make it as interesting and exciting to look at as possible. Choose an interesting location. If you can get well-known people to attend, you increase your chance of getting TV coverage. Your press release to television companies should emphasise what is to be seen at your event - famous people, displays, slogans.

Why not contact mainstream" programmes - game shows, chat shows, etc. - to suggest that disabled people take part in programmes that have nothing to do with disability? You may encounter awkwardness from production staff at first - these programmes are not the most innovative or progressive - but it's worth persevering and reminding them that disabled people are viewers too.

In the long-term, DAA would like disability organisations to have consultative status with television channels; to help form policy on equal opportunities for disabled people in programming, imagery and employment.

Why not send a copy of the imagery guidelines to the director general or most senior person at the company and suggest a meeting to discuss these issues?

Structure

For a feature-length programme, as opposed to a news item, television, more than any other medium, requires long-term planning. It's important to remember this when you are thinking about media coverage of events. The longer you can give production staff, the more likely they are to be able to produce something.

Below is a summary of the commissioning schedule for programmes in the Education Department of the BBC. Your broadcasting service may be different but the timescale will be similar. Check with them for full details.

Summer - Education officers research ideas for the following year.
Autumn - These research papers are taken to advisory committees.
December - BBC staff and independent companies invited to bid on ideas.
February - Get ideas from production staff and outside sources.
Spring/Early Summer - Sifted through by executive producer, cost control manager, deputy department head and department head. Money meeting to sift ideas.
September - Final offers meeting with channel controllers.

7. Free Advertising!

Listings and Public Service Announcements

Local papers and community radio stations often offer space or air time to local organisations. The intention is usually to inform the public of a community event or a current campaign. These slots come in the form of calendar listings or public service announcements (PSAs). Don't let this free advertising go to waste!

Most newspapers and magazines carry a calendar of listings of coming events. They will have titles like: "Community Calendar", "What's On", "Around Town". Radio stations provide air time for PSAs, and certain local programmes on some TV stations include announcements of forthcoming community events.

The event should be open to the public and is usually free (unless it is staged to raise funds). You might want to use listings or a PSA to publicise a "Speak Up", a public meeting, conference, workshop, seminar, or the signing of the Reaffirmation of the World Programme of Action.

Action Ideas

Listings and PSAs contain only basic information.

Keep the writing style straightforward, free from adjectives and not longer than about two paragraphs. Use informal spoken language and short sentences.

For radio, the slots will probably be between 10 seconds and a minute long. Read through what you write in a slow voice to time how long the announcer will need. If you stumble over a phrase, rewrite it.

For broadcast, type triple-spaced in block capital letters; for print, type double-spaced in upper and lower case letters. You will save editors the work of converting from block capitals.

If you give a contact, make sure they will be there during office hours, and that you have enough people to cope with feedback.

Lead times for listings and PSAs are quite long. Monthly magazines might need up to six weeks; Sunday papers might need a week and a half; daily newspapers often need at least three days of lead time.

8. Press Releases

Who, What, Where, When Why?

A press release must always answer these five questions, preferably in the first one or two paragraphs.

Remember, local press and radio receive many press releases each week - yours must stand out. It must be immediate, interesting and intelligible. You must also make clear why the story is of interest to a particular audience. The release must be brief, getting quickly to the heart of the news story or event, provide all the relevant facts, and give the necessary contact to follow up.

If you check radio listings, you may be able to find the producer or other person in charge of a programme. For local papers, address the release to a specialist reporter if you can find a relevant one; if not, to the editor.

The Pyramid

To write a press release, think of an upsidedown pyramid. The broadest part is at the top, and this is where all the most important information goes. At the bottom are extra facts, which if never printed or broadcast won't mean readers or listeners miss what is essential. Editors often start cutting stories from the last paragraph.

If your first two or three paragraphs contain all the most relevant information, and the

following paragraphs add more and more supplementary information, your release is more likely to be used whatever space or airtime the editor or producer has available. Remember, make it easy for people.

Hard News Releases

Hard news press releases announce a specific piece of news. Most often, they are written in a way that will allow the printing or broadcasting of the content as it is written, or in a way that can be easily edited by journalists. A hard news press release may also stimulate media people to research the subject and produce an in-depth story on an issue-related event or subject.

You might use a hard news release to announce cutbacks or increases in budgets, reactions to changes in laws relevant to disability, expression of outrage at lack of action on key issues, launching of programmes or projects, the special honours or achievements of group members.

Soft News Release

Soft news releases are intended as teasers, containing enough information to stimulate journalists or producers of TV or radio shows to write a feature story or conduct an interview.

The feature news release doesn't aim to provide all the information. It outlines the issue, gives examples of people who might be suitable for interviews, and describes what personal or unusual stories they might have to tell.

Invitation Release

These are not intended for publication or broadcast. They are intended as invitations to the media to attend certain events, such as a press conference. Your aim is to interest editors, so that, after reading the release, they will assign a reporter to attend, and ultimately to write or conduct interviews for print or broadcast on the subject announced at the actual press conference.

Action Ideas

- Listen to the output of the station and read your local press to get an idea of their programmes and style.
- Before you start, it's a good idea to write down key ideas, words or phrases. You can then draw up an order of importance for the main facts.
- Now try stating to yourself in a sentence or two just what the whole piece is about. Write it down as quickly as possible. Don't worry about spelling or grammar; just spill it out on to the page. It's much better to have a draft to work on than a blank page.
- Now look carefully at what you've written. Have you been specific enough? If you've mentioned a large crowd, say how large: 1,00 people or 100,000?
- Keep your writing simple and clear. Don't fill your sentences with adjectives ("amazing, fantastic, awful") or superlatives ("the best, worst, biggest"). Extra words take up space and air time. Delete them. Facts will speak for themselves.
- Break the release into paragraphs of about six sentences. This makes it easier for journalists to identify which bits they want to use. Each paragraph should deal with one point and communicate one vital major piece of information. Make sure that the paragraphs follow each other in a logical order.
- Always include a paragraph stating the name and purpose of your group or

organisation. Put this at the end or at about paragraph three.

- Provide background as well as the implications of the event or story, announcement or problem.
- If something is a first, say so in the first sentence.
- Check and double check every fact... names, dates, times, places and quotes.
- Revise and correct it if necessary. Let someone else read the release and ask them to tell you what immediate impression it made on them.
- Type double-spaced, with wide margins and on one side of the paper only.
- Put a descriptive title or headline at the top of the press release, leaving about one-third of the page blank at the top. Editors rewrite headings, give typeface designations and other instructions here.
- Don't break a paragraph at the end of a page, even if it means leaving a lot of white space at the bottom.

Keep a copy.

At the end of the release, type -30- or five asterisks (*). This is to let journalists know that they have reached the end.

Follow Up

Make follow-up phone calls. Check receipt of the press release. Be brief and specific. Busy reporters and editors won't have a lot of time to spend on the phone. State your name and organisation and the subject of the release.

If your release is used, send a note to thank the relevant editor, reporter or producer. You have now established a contact with that person and it may well be possible to encourage them to publicise a future event.

[Sample press release layout]

Press Release

6 October 1992

Press Contact - [First Name, Last Name, Phone Number]

Readers'/Listeners' Contact - [First Name, Last Name, Phone Number]

Disabled People "Speak Up" About Their Lives

On the 12th of October, disabled people in [your area] will join others around the world to speak up about what their lives are like.

At the same time, at the United Nations in New York, Disability Awareness in Action, a one-year international public education campaign, is presenting a collection of statements made by disabled people from all over the world. These include letters, poems, diaries,

pictures, photos and cartoons, in every language, including braille and sign.

[Name of your organisation] is holding a public reading of statements written by local people as part of this international event. Disabled people will be telling the stories of their lives; letting non-disabled people know about the difficulties caused by inaccessible buildings and transport, segregated education, poor employment prospects and poverty.

[You might include details of some of the letters you have collected, putting the emphasis on the physical and social barriers which prevent the full participation of disabled people in society.]

The presentation to the United Nations is to mark the end of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992); to assess what has been achieved and to plan for a Society For All by the Year 2000.

Please come along to the "Speak Up" at [venue] on [date] at [time].

For Further Information, Contact:

[Name

Address

Tel.]

9. Press Conferences

Timing

Press conferences should be held at times convenient for press deadlines because reporters will try to report the news on the same day as the conference, or for next day's newspaper. The best time of day is usually about 10 am or 10.30 am on weekdays, the earlier in the week the better. Remember that TV reporters need time to process and edit film, usually to meet a 6 pm news deadline.

Try to make sure that your conference doesn't conflict with other major news stories. If you can, call a friendly editor and find out what else is scheduled for the date you have in mind.

Invitations

Send out an invitation press release, announcing the press conference, giving the who, what, where, when and why of the conference. Give an indication of what the subject will be, but don't give everything away. You want to encourage the media to come along to find out the full story at the conference itself.

If possible, your conference press release should hit journalists' desks a week to ten days in advance of the date fixed for the conference. Two or three days before the event, call to ask if the invitation has been received and whether a reporter will be assigned to attend. Busy editorial offices receive many press releases, so telephoning will jog people's memories. Make a note of the names of anyone indicating interest, as this will give you

an idea of how many people to expect. You can then make sure that you have enough press packs.

Press Packs

In addition to the initial press release, you might want to prepare written information to hand out at the press conference itself. This might include brief biographies of the speakers; copies of research studies, the results of which are to be revealed at the conference; details of grants received, with the name of the funding organisation.

Location

Choose a place that's convenient for all media, with good parking facilities. Sometimes what you are announcing will determine the site. If you announce the opening of a new centre, for example, you should hold the conference there.

A large, simple room is all you need - perhaps a school room or a room in a community centre or church hall. If there is a parking fee charged by the owners of the site, try to arrange for media to be admitted free of charge by showing a press card or invitation.

If the room is inside a large building, arrange for signs pointing the way to the conference. Check that TV crews, carrying camera, lighting and other equipment, can find their way to it easily. Check that the room has good lighting, a neutral decor, and isn't next door to a noisy event on the day of your conference.

Make sure the room and building are accessible to disabled people. If possible, provide an induction loop and sign language interpreters.

Equipment

Check that there are enough electrical outlets to let TV crews plug in extra lighting equipment, if they need to.

If the press conference is small, normal speaking voices will be enough. For a public meeting or event where you expect larger numbers of people, it's sensible to provide a microphone. Some places, such as hotels, may provide amplification equipment. Otherwise, you may be able to rent or borrow them.

Speakers usually have either a stand-up microphone or sit at a table with a microphone in front of them. For conferences featuring a panel, or more than one speaker, more than one microphone may be needed.

If possible, have your speakers arrive early enough to speak into the microphones and test their voices out for sound level. This will give you a chance to check the equipment for interference before the press conference begins.

Visuals

Your group may have supporting photographs, graphics or posters available to depict the theme or goal of your organisation. If so, it's helpful to set these visual elements up, either behind the speaker or in a separate area where post-conference interviews can be conducted by reporters. Visual elements appearing in the background of any coverage can add enormous impact to the words you choose to convey your message and will attract TV people to the conference.

Rehearsal

Depending on the news or story, try to anticipate what questions will be asked by the media. Help your speaker to plan the factual content of appropriate answers. Things will go much more smoothly if there is time for a practice question and answer session before the conference.

On the Day

When members of the media arrive, they should be given copies of any back-up materials. It may also be helpful to give them a list of the names of people speaking and any people or organisations mentioned during the conference, so that print journalists can ensure correct spellings.

Give tags with names, titles and the name of your organisation to speakers and other representatives, or put a name sign in front of them if they are seated at a table. Make the writing as large as possible.

It's normally the task of the person who has taken responsibility for contacting the media to introduce the speaker. Keep this brief and factual. Provide the names and titles of the speakers and a brief summary of the reason for the press conference.

The speaker usually begins by reading from a prepared statement, giving the facts and implications of the news being announced. If you are speaking, try to keep your voice as natural as possible. Speak clearly, slightly slower than normal and, if you make a mistake, begin the sentence again.

Questions

After the prepared section of the press conference, ask for questions from members of the media. This part of the conference can take up to about half an hour You need formally to bring it to an end when questions seem to be slowing down. Some reporters may then want an opportunity for a brief one-to-one interview with speakers. It is usual to allow TV the first opportunity, followed by radio people and finally by print reporters.

10. Events

Though conferences, workshops, seminars and public meetings are intended more for group members and the public, the media should be encouraged to come along, and to report on the subjects discussed, decisions reached or new findings announced. In this way, you can continue and broaden the debate begun at these events, and gain publicity for your organisation and the issues that concern it.

MediaAction Ideas

- Issue a press release inviting journalists and describing the theme of the conference, seminar or public meeting. List speakers and the topics on which they plan to speak.
- If speakers are best-selling authors or authorities in their field, people who hold controversial views or have led extraordinary lives, let the media know in advance. State the date, place and time of the event.

- The invitation press release should be circulated at least ten days in advance of the date of the event.
- Contact speakers to ask if they plan to use a prepared text. If so, ask them to provide copies for the press pack. Also, if speakers are prepared to have their speeches released to the media in advance, you can include them with the invitation press release. Make sure you place an embargo on it: "Not for release until [date of conference]".
- For a full-scale conference, include the full programme of the conference itself. Reporters may not be able to attend every thing, but can at least determine which of the events they are most interested in.

Press Passes

On registration or arrival, members of the media should be given identification tags with "Press" written on them, and their name and publication or company.

Welcome

Someone from your organisation should greet the media, offering whatever help may be required and providing background material and information.

Press Tables

Reserve special seats or a press table where reporters can see and hear easily. You could reserve front row seats or set up a press table on one side of the platform.

Press Room

If the event lasts a full day or longer, members of the media will appreciate having a room to themselves. This will give them a quiet place where they can look at their notes or study the programme and other background materials. Extra copies of texts of speeches, programmes and research papers should be available in the press room. Try to make sure that there are telephones nearby. You could make coffee and light snacks available as well.

Afterwards

It might be worthwhile to issue a press release after the event. If you are writing a release after a conference, seminar, workshop or meeting, remember that the release isn't being written to describe the conference or meeting in the order of what happened there.

- List the most important decisions reached, the most newsworthy announcements made and the most quotable highlights of what speakers said.

11 Interviews

Approach

Your aim is to interest an editor, reporter, researcher or producer in a story that you (or

someone associated with your organisation) knows a lot about.

In an interview, you have the chance to put your point of view on an issue, make that issue known to readers, listeners or viewers and gain publicity for your organisation. Interviews usually set up a degree of tension between the interviewer and the person being interviewed. Audiences like this tension; are more alert as they listen to what is essentially a conversation with a structure and an aim.

Study the print media and get to know the bylines and subjects covered by specialist writers, columnists, and special sections of publications. Think about radio and television programmes for your area. What programmes are interview shows, community or public affairs-related programmes, issue-related shows? What audience is the show aimed at? Learn to distinguish national programmes from those that originate locally. In most cases, you will want to aim for the latter.

You can approach media people by post, telephone or in person. In all cases, have a letter or press release outlining the story idea written in advance.

For a print interview, you can approach an editor in the hope that he or she will assign a reporter to develop the story. Or you can approach a reporter, who may in turn propose the idea to the editor and ask to be assigned to research and write it. If you've already made a contact, this may be the best approach. For broadcast, the Producer of a particular programme is usually the person to approach. If you're not sure, phone the station and ask.

You might prefer to telephone and present your idea briefly, then offer to send written material. Or you can send written material and follow it up with a phone call. When you do, try asking for an appointment to discuss the idea in person.

Ask if print reporters or broadcast researchers want to conduct interviews by telephone and be prepared to provide them with the phone numbers of people willing to be interviewed. Alternatively, offer to bring interviewees to a location of the reporter's or researcher's choice - after making sure that it is accessible.

Prepare

If you don't want to be interviewed yourself, choose someone who will enjoy the process and can relax. In broadcasts, hesitation creates "dead air" - a few seconds silence which sounds like forever.

For radio or TV, choose someone who can deal with the subject concisely in a two-minute interview, or expand on the topic if needed. Two minutes may not sound like much, but a lot can by conveyed in a very short time by broadcast.

During a print or radio interview, when you aren't being seen by the public, it can sometimes be useful to note facts, figures and information on small, file-size cards that can be held in one hand and glanced at from time to time.

The best way to ensure that an interview goes well is to be well-prepared. Whether you are being interviewed by a print reporter or a broadcaster, the most important thing to do is to guess which questions that are likely to be asked and to plan possible answers. This isn't as difficult as it sounds. Although you've got to be prepared for anything, on the whole, interviewers will ask the obvious questions, though they may do so in interesting ways.

Use your knowledge of your organisation and its activities to pinpoint areas of interest and controversy. Write them down and beside them add possible answers.

Only prepare answers in a general way, however, so you can be flexible if things don't come up in exactly the way you thought they would. You want your answers to sound spontaneous, not pre-written to a formula. You can prepare some quotable quotes or catchy phrases to sum up your theme. If you can say something in one or two sentences, that is snappy and succinct, yet sounds sincere, it will be remembered. These are called "soundbites" and are becoming increasingly popular with people who appear frequently in the media.

On Air

Studios vary from small, enclosed rooms with microphones on tables or hanging from overhead, to large halls for studio audiences. Before the interview, you'll be asked to speak a few phrases into the microphone to allow technical staff to take a reading of your voice levels and make any necessary adjustments to equipment.

On most occasions, the interviewer will discuss the scope of the interview before the broadcast: the areas to be covered, although not the exact questions; the duration of the interview; the context, format and time of day of the programme.

Listen to the questions carefully and answer calmly and deliberately. If you know ahead of time that there is a particular piece of information or message you want to convey, and the questions don't let you do so, try to redirect a question or phrase your answer so that you can include what you want to say.

Be aware that the interviewer may put questions to you that are highly critical of your views and aims. Try not to get annoyed. These may not even be his or her own views. Remember that it is the interviewer's job to put obvious criticisms to you and to allow you the chance to answer them. Recognising the existence of an opposite view will make you appear more human and more credible. Professionalism, personal experience and a sense of humour always come over well.

Ideally, the interviewer won't ask questions that require a simple yes or no answer. You want to get beyond this to your argument or to the most important facts.

Action Ideas

- Check in advance that the studio is accessible.
- For a TV interview, don't use notecards. Even brief glances at notes will make you look inattentive or insecure. TV's strength lies in the immediacy of its connection with the audience.
- Recognise the constraints of time. A lot can be said in two or three minutes, but you must get straight to the point and make that point clearly and concisely.
- Talk towards, not directly into, the microphone.
- Speak as fluently and naturally as possible. Use simple, conversational language.
- Try to keep gestures to a minimum. Be aware of what your hands are doing; they can betray nervousness even more than your face. If you can, keep your hands folded in your lap.
- Keep eye contact with the interviewer and listen carefully to each question. It helps to make things come across naturally.
- Be aware that more than one camera may be in use. The camera with the red light on is the one filming. If you want to speak directly to the audience from time to time, look at the camera with the red light showing.

- Expect the lighting to be bright. You may feel very warm, as TV lights generate a lot of heat.
- Wear clothes with plain colours, not patterns. Avoid shiny fabrics and lots of white. Both of these reflect the light and can be very distracting for viewers.

12. Printing, Circulation and Distribution

Some useful information for the production of newsletters, campaign materials, leaflets and press releases.

Printing

The method of production you use is likely to depend on your budget. Photocopying is practical and cheap if the print run is a relatively small one of, say, up to 100 copies. For larger runs, it's sensible to use a professional printing process.

Photocopying and other straightforward duplicating processes impose certain restrictions on the kinds of illustrations that can be used. Line drawings or cartoons will reproduce reasonably well, photographs won't. Offset printing or instant printing is a good choice when you want to include photographs.

Production

The method of printing you use will determine how you produce the copy. You can have it professionally typeset, or produce it yourself on a typewriter, word processor, or desktop publishing system.

If you use professional printers, start with a consultation. Printers want your custom and will guide you through the production process with advice and information. They'll supply samples of the various type styles and sizes available.

With the information you get from the printers, you will need to prepare clean, error-free material to be sent to the typesetters. It's up to you to decide on suitable typefaces and typesizes for headlines, captions and other print elements.

If you are preparing your own copy, a trick to be aware of is that typed copy can be made to appear more like typeset copy if, once it's typed, it is reduced in size. You can reduce the size by taking the typed copy to an instant printer or on some types of photocopier. The end product becomes crisper and more sharply defined, very much like typeset letters. Usually a reduction of about 10-15 per cent will improve the look of the type.

You can produce good headlines on a word-processor by choosing a larger typesize. On a standard typewriter, use capital letters for all headings. If you're planning to photocopy or instant print your publication, you can work with transfer lettering to achieve a good variety of headline typesize and typeface.

Copy

Check all copy for accuracy of names, places, dates and times. Spelling should be correct and consistent and the text free from grammatical errors.

All copy prepared for publication should be proof-read, by two people if possible. It's sensible for someone other than the person who wrote or typed the copy to do the proof-reading. If you are very familiar with the copy, you may have greater difficulty spotting errors.

Art Work and Photographs

Line drawings are the most common and least expensive form of illustration. You can create your own using a black felt tip pen. You can also trace existing drawings, but be sure the original is not covered by copyright law. There are copyright-free books of line drawing illustrations available through graphic art supply shops and in some large libraries.

Photos can be cropped - the edges can be eliminated to make the central content stand out more. You can also reduce or expand the size of a photo. Photos reduce or expand in size proportional to their original measurements.

If photos have been produced by a professional, they may be under copyright. As with articles, if you want to reprint someone else's material, you need to ask permission. This is almost always granted. You may also have to pay, so it might be better to use your own photographs if you can. For photocopying, black and white photos copy better than colour.

Layout

Aim for a clean, organised look with a logical arrangement of content.

If someone in your organisation has experience of publication lay-out, use them. If not, ask your printer to do it for you.

Circulation

Get to know who's who in the media. Study the mastheads and bylines of newspapers and general interest, news, feature, professional and trade magazines. Listen to radio and TV broadcasts and note the names of shows. In radio or TV, remember that, as well as the host or star, behind-the-scenes people with titles like producer, assignment editor or researcher should also receive press releases.

Use this material to draw up mailing lists, which you can then re-use. You will almost certainly want to compile more than one mailing list. You'll need a specialised list for listing/PSA mailings, with the titles and addresses for all outlets in print or broadcast in your area, and at least one other for press releases. You might want one release mailing geared to hard news and another geared to features.

Newspapers or magazines may accept a supply of camera-ready art displaying the name of your organisation, its logo and message for use as a filler if advertising space is available. For a public service broadcast on a local TV station, you might consider including two copies of one 35 mm colour slide, showing the name of your organisation, logo and a brief message. This will provide a visual element while your script is being read by an announcer.

Don't send press releases, listings or PSAs to the named holder of an editorial position unless you've made a phone call to discuss the information first. Media people change jobs a lot. Compile the list by job title, the name of the publication or the show and broadcast station and address. You might need to send the release to several people at

larger newspapers - editor, education, health or finance reporter, for example. For broadcasting, job titles will be producer, news editor, assignment editor, researcher or public service director.

Distribution

Distribute your material as widely as possible within budget limitations.

Check with the postal authorities as to whether your publication is eligible for reduced postage rates. Be sure that any postal registration number issued by the post office is clearly displayed.

13. Contacts

Making contacts in the media is very important if you are to let people know about disability issues. Make sure you're reaching all the right people. Once you have made a contact, work hard to keep it.

Action Ideas

A large library will have copies of media directories. These list media outlets - publications and broadcast stations, their addresses, phone and fax numbers and chief personnel. The listings are usually alphabetical.

Draw up a list of the ones that may be relevant to your work. Listen to their output or buy a copy of a journal to see how disability issues can be added to their coverage.

Maintaining contacts with the media is very important. Once editors and producers know that you can provide them with stories, that you are reliable and knowledgeable, they will be keen to work with you again.

Whenever you speak to anyone at a newspaper or broadcast station, be polite, even if they seem difficult. It may be that you've called at a bad time; that they have a deadline to meet. Chances are, if you ring back another time, they won't remember they were rude, or even who you are. If this happens, just start again as pleasantly as you can. If you still encounter rudeness, don't take it personally. On the whole, though, people will explain if they are too busy to speak to you.

Take a note of the names and titles of people you have contact with. If something comes out of your discussions - a mention, a news story, a feature - write a note to thank the people involved. They're more likely to remember you.

Above all, think of your relationship with the media as a partnership, which can be of benefit to all. Good luck!

14. Definition of Terms

Alignment: The arrangement of type and other graphic matter to be perfectly level in one horizontal or vertical line

Artwork: Illustrations and other decorative material prepared for reproduction Body copy or text The main text of a work, excluding the headings

Bold face: A typeface which appears with blacker, heavier strokes than normal and is used for emphasis (for example, in headings)

Break a story: To (be the first to) make a piece of news known

Byline: A line printed with a newspaper or magazine article or photograph that gives the author's or photographer's name

Capital: A large letter. A, in contrast to a. Also known as upper case

Caption: The descriptive heading or accompanying wording of an illustration, or the heading of an article, chapter or section

Centre: To align a line of type so that the middle of the line is at the centre of the specified width

Circulation: The spreading of information

Column: A vertical section of a page containing text or other information

Commission: To offer a firm commitment to print an item

Copy: Material to be printed, e.g.. typescripts, photographs and line drawings

Copy-editing: The preparation of a manuscript for typesetting, including correcting linguistic usage, spelling and punctuation according to printer's guidelines

Copyright: The legal and exclusive right of an originator of an article or illustration to reproduce that work unless he or she gives permission to another

Credit: An acknowledgement of the organisation or person that has provided an illustration, photograph, etc.

Crosshead: A centred heading for a subsection or paragraph

DAA: Disability Awareness in Action

Deadline: The date before which a task must be completed; e.g., the time after which material for an issue of a newspaper or magazine won't be accepted

Decade: The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992)

Design: The planning and arrangement of the form of publications, including format, typography, photography and illustrations

Desktop publishing: A publishing system made up of a personal computer, the necessary software and a laser printer, used to produce printed material, including text and graphics

Director: The head of an organisation; the person who is responsible for supervising the

artistic and technical aspects of a broadcast

Distribution: The sending of material from producer to consumer; e.g., from your organisation to members of the media

DPI: Disabled Peoples' International

Draft: A basic outline, plan, or rough version of text, illustration, etc.

Editor : Person responsible for editorial policy and content of a newspaper or periodical; person who prepares copy for publication or broadcast

Embargo: An order not to use a piece of information (until a specified time)

File: To submit copy to a newspaper

Headline: The line at the top of a page containing the title of an article

House style : The set of guidelines on spelling, punctuation and linguistic usage of a printer, typesetter, or publication, as opposed to the author's usage

Illustration: A drawing, photograph, painting, used to explain or decorate text.

ILSMH: International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicap

INGO: International non-governmental organisation

Italic: Type that slopes to the right. It is used for emphasis in the text

Journal: A periodical concerned with specialist subjects; a daily newspaper

Justify: To adjust the positions of words on a page, distributing additional space in lines so that the right margin forms a straight vertical and parallel edge to the left margin

Large print: Printed in very large type for reading by partially sighted people.

Layout: The plan of a publication showing position of type and illustrations, and specifying typesizes and typefaces

Lead: The main news story in a newspaper

Leader: Newspaper editorial (opinion piece by the Editor)

Lead time: Amount of time needed if a story is to used by journalists

Lower case: The small letters of the alphabet. a, as opposed to A

Magazine: A publication issued regularly containing articles, stories, etc. by various people and usually including advertising

Margin: The space on a page that surrounds the printed text

Masthead: The name of a newspaper or periodical in the typographical form in which it normally appears; a similar block of information used as a heading

Medium: A means of effecting or conveying something. Plural: media

News agency: An organisation that collects news and sells it to newspapers, periodicals, television and radio companies

Newspaper : A publication issued usually daily or weekly containing news, reviews, articles and advertisements

Periodical: A magazine or journal issued regularly, e.g. monthly or quarterly

Picture library: A resource that contains a collection of photographs which may be used, for a payment and with due acknowledgement, for reproduction in a publication

Press: A printing press; a printing or publishing organisation; newspapers, magazine, etc., considered collectively

Press pack: A collection of written material giving information to journalists

Press release: A statement giving information about something, sent or given to newspapers, reporters, etc.

Print run: The number of copies printed at a single printing

Producer: Person with responsibility for the administrative aspects of the production of a programme

Reaffirmation: Reaffirmation of Commitment to the World Programme of Action

Story: A news article or broadcast

Text: The main written or printed words in a publication, in contrast to the preliminary matter, headings, illustrations, etc.

Typeface: The printing surface of type cut into one of a variety of styles

Upper case: A capital letter. A, in contrast to a

WPA: World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons