



CAMPAIGNER NETWORK TOOLKIT

4) Speaking to the local press

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Involving your local newspaper, radio or TV station can be a great way to let others in your community know about your campaign and put pressure on decision makers.

Good times to contact the press are ahead of campaign events, at the start of your campaign, or when you've secured a significant change or commitment. You should refer to yourselves as Vegan Society Campaigners (separate from Vegan Society spokespeople who are based at national office).

1. Preparing a press release

Press releases are still one of the best ways to get your message across to the media. They should be short, clear and well presented, summarising the key points of your campaign. Remember to include your campaign's key messages and the change you'd like to see.

- ◀ Grab the journalists' attention with a headline.
- ◀ Keep the opening paragraph short – 30 words is ideal.
- ◀ Remember to include the 5 golden Ws – who, what, where, when, why.
- ◀ Include a quote from the person leading the campaign and/or someone affected by the issue locally or a supportive statement from a decision maker or Vegan Society member of staff.
- ◀ Include your contact details at the end of the page.

2. Making contact with the press

You've written a press release with all your details – so how do you get your story into your local paper or onto your local radio or TV station?

- ◀ Find out what local newspapers, radio and TV stations cover your area. You can find their contact details online – call the main number or email them directly and ask how to contact their news desk.
- ◀ Contact them a couple of weeks before your event, or at the start of your campaign.
- ◀ Briefly explain your event or campaign and ask if you can have an email address to send through your press release. When you email your press release, send it in the body of the email rather than as an attachment – it makes it harder to ignore!
- ◀ If you're sending a press release to a newspaper, make sure you also email a good quality photo of yourself or your event as they're more likely to cover stories with photos.

Top tip

Never agree to an interview without preparing beforehand. Always stick to the main points of your campaign – keep your campaign's key messages to hand.

- ◀ If you don't hear anything, don't panic. They may just run your story without needing to ask any extra questions. If you have time, you could get in touch with them after a week to see if they are going to feature your story.

You could also send a post-event press release if you had a notable person in your community attend the event, such as your local MP, or have great photos showing your campaigning activity. Getting your story in the press can be a little hit and miss – there's no guarantee they'll cover anything, but it's always worth a go. Good luck!

3. Organising a photocall or media stunt

Be creative to get noticed!

- ◀ Make sure you have an 'angle'. As with a press release, you must have a reason for the media to take interest – before you start. What is the point of your stunt? What are the issues you want to get across? How can you make it relevant at a local level? How can you present it as a visual story – something that will get photographed and reported on?
- ◀ When using a campaign action direct from The Vegan Society, make sure The Vegan Society logo is obvious in the picture. This could be a t-shirt, banner, poster or other official campaign material.
- ◀ Attract attention with fancy dress, local celebrities, prominent members of the community, and good humour.
- ◀ Choose an outside location if possible, one that's easy to get to, where there's space for a group of people to gather without causing an obstruction.
- ◀ Write a press release to send to picture editors and TV stations.
- ◀ 11 am is usually a good time to start, meeting the needs of both morning and evening papers. Give full details of the location.
- ◀ Make sure you have a spokesperson available at the event who is able to explain the background to the event and its associated campaign.
- ◀ Take your own photos in case the newspaper does not send a photographer. Keep a note of which journalists and photographers turn up.
- ◀ Have a copy of the press release and written details of the event ready to give to journalists, with names and titles of anyone appearing in the photograph.
- ◀ Have a contingency plan in case of last-minute problems such as rain or illness.
- ◀ Stunts can be a powerful way to get across key messages to the media but you should be prepared with official facts and figures to back up your photos.

4. Letters to the editor

Another good way of getting an issue into the local paper is to use the letters page. You could either initiate a topic or react to a letter or article that has already appeared in the newspaper. Linking national and international issues in with local concerns will increase your chances of getting your letter published and this also helps to highlight how your Campaigner Network group is strategically working with Vegan Society national campaigns. Again, it is always worth following up with a phone call to ensure they have received your letter. Letters are one of the most widely read parts of the paper and can spark debate and generate wider coverage.

Your letter to the editor should try to be:

- ◀ Opinionated, but conveying campaign messages and statistics
- ◀ Short and to the point – approximately 250 words
- ◀ Include a contact name and address
- ◀ In response to a previous letter (quote the letter writer and date) or on a new issue.

5) Broadcast media

Opportunities

Local BBC stations, local television coverage and commercial radio stations all provide opportunities for working with broadcast media.

How to get a radio interview

- ◀ Highlight the interview potential on your press release, giving a number to call to set up interviews and offering spokespeople/ interviewees.

- ◀ Send releases to the producer/researcher for your chosen programme or the news desk for commercial radio and follow up with a phone call.
- ◀ Have an articulate spokesperson available. Make it local, giving a local link and something that local people can do.
- ◀ Some radio stations will do interviews over the phone, although they usually insist on a landline rather than a mobile.

How to be the perfect interviewee

- ◀ Be prepared: re-read your press release – they will base questions on this. Why are you there? Be clear on what you want to achieve. Have three main points you want to get across, and take them with you if you're not sure. If they don't ask, you can take the initiative and say 'and I'd also just like to make these points...'
- ◀ Talk about a real life example, using it to help explain the issue.
- ◀ Be confident. Presenters are friendly! Just think of it as an informal chat with a friend to talk about the latest Vegan Society campaign and what you are doing at a local-level as part of the Campaigner Network. Remember to keep it simple and don't use complicated language or jargon.
- ◀ Talk about how local people can get involved or are affected.
- ◀ Quote telephone numbers, website addresses, local venues for more information.
- ◀ Arrive at least ten minutes early.

Ask for help

More often than not we'll provide you with template press releases and guidelines for media activities along with each campaign action. If you do secure some media coverage we are here to help with briefings or training for interviews.