



# **Working with the media: lessons for volunteer-involving organisations**

**Institute for Volunteering Research and the  
Voluntary Action Media Unit**

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### The Voluntary Action Media Unit

The Voluntary Action Media Unit (VAMU) is a three year project funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Set up to investigate the relationship between the voluntary sector and the media, the project was conceived by and is now managed by TimeBank. TimeBank's partners in the project are the Media Trust and the Institute for Volunteering Research. For more information about VAMU visit: [www.vamu.org.uk](http://www.vamu.org.uk)

### The Institute for Volunteering Research

The Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) is a specialist research and consultancy agency on volunteering. IVR is an initiative of Volunteering England and the University of East London. It was set up in 1997 in response to the increased demand for research on volunteering. Over the past ten years IVR has carried out a wide variety of research, consultancy, and evaluation projects on many different aspects of volunteering. For more information see: [www.ivr.org.uk](http://www.ivr.org.uk)

# 1. An Introduction from VAMU

The media can be a powerful tool for volunteer-involving organisations. The tactical and imaginative use of newspapers, radio, TV, magazines, websites and events can give charities fast access to large audiences of potential volunteers. Yet so many organisations feel much trepidation at the prospect of working with the media.

In 2005 the Voluntary Action Media Unit (VAMU) produced a report *Culture Clash? An investigation into the relationship between charities, the media and commercial PR agencies*. The report highlighted what the media wanted from charities: good stories and great human interest case studies. The journalists and reporters interviewed weren't in any way opposed to covering volunteering stories, just as long as they were "strong stories" tailored for their publication or programme.

The challenge in undertaking this project was to try and find those strong stories about volunteering hidden inside two organisations with little experience of working with the media. Could we help them discover that the barriers to getting media coverage were not time, nor lack of money, nor indeed lack of experience? We set out to help these organisations uncover those stories which can inspire people to get involved in their communities and volunteer for local voluntary organisations. We wanted to equip these two organisations with the simple skills needed to harness the power of the media and we hoped, along the way, to dispel some of the widely held fears voluntary organisations have of working with the media.

## 1.1 About the project

This project explores the day-to-day experiences of organisations as they seek coverage in the local media. To do this, two different kinds of organisation were selected as case studies. Both organisations previously had limited experience of dealing with the media and received minimal coverage. Neither had a member of staff dedicated to marketing and communications. Over a period of six months, Cheltenham Volunteer Centre and Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People (BACYP) received free coaching and advice from the Voluntary Action Media Unit (VAMU) to help them in their media activities. This focused on improving the ability of the organisation to recruit volunteers and promote volunteering through the media and took the form of weekly phone calls and additional advice via email and over the telephone when needed. In return, the two organisations shared their experiences and learning with the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) who have documented their activities, the processes they have gone through and the impact they have had so that this can be shared with other organisations.

This report tells the story of what went well and what wasn't so successful for the two organisations. It draws out the learning in the form of tips and advice for organisations seeking coverage to recruit volunteers. This report is primarily aimed at small and medium sized volunteer-involving organisations and volunteer development agencies who may not have a marketing team or a budget for communications but are keen to work more with the media to recruit volunteers or promote volunteering.

## 1.2 The Case Study Organisations

### Cheltenham Volunteer Centre

**What it does:** Provides support to volunteers, potential volunteers, volunteer managers and front-line volunteer involving organisations in their local area. It is responsible for matching individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate opportunities in the local community, developing new volunteering opportunities and promoting and marketing volunteering more generally at a local and regional level. It also provides a community transport service for older and disabled people.

**Number of staff:** Involves two full time equivalent paid staff and four volunteers involved with administration, marketing and website development.

**Experience with the media:** Has been highly irregular and limited. In the past they have had some negative experiences which has discouraged them from pursuing media activities.

**Barriers identified:** Lack of time to contact and liaise with the media, limited expertise in knowing how to write a good story and a perceived lack of interest and understanding by the media in the volunteer centre.

**Other issues:** Typically, Cheltenham Volunteer Centre has between 130 and 150 volunteering opportunities to be filled. However there are always too few potential volunteers for the available roles. Opportunities particularly hard to fill are trustee roles and positions involving older people, disabled people and those with mental health problems.

### Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People (BACYP)

**What it does:** Provides support to youth leaders and young people throughout the six unitary authorities of Berkshire. It is a membership organisation with approximately 120 affiliated youth groups. BACYP also runs the West Berkshire Millennium Volunteers programme on behalf of the government.

**Number of staff and volunteers:** 19 paid staff, ten of whom are full time. No member of staff is dedicated to marketing or PR activities specifically. The 120 youth groups involve between 600 and 700 volunteers, while a further 400 volunteers are involved through the Millennium Volunteers Programme.

**Experience with the media:** A limited number of local papers have run stories over the past years, but this has not been part of a concerted, planned or strategic effort on their part. Limited attempts to gain coverage have been made and these have been generally irregular.

**Barriers identified:** No allocated budget is available for marketing or PR and the limited contact which has been made with the media has generally been in addition to the current responsibilities and duties of staff.

**Other issues:** Experience particular difficulty in recruiting volunteers to take on trustee or youth-leader positions.

## 2. Laying the foundations for media work

The two case study organisations were essentially starting their media work from scratch. They had few contacts in the media and it was not a focus or priority for either of the organisations at any level. Reflecting on the experiences of the organisations during the six months, it is possible to identify four key areas which the organisations needed to think about before starting media work.

### a. Identifying the objectives of media work

The work with the case studies showed that being clear about what the organisation wants to get from media coverage was essential from the very beginning. The organisations were encouraged to think carefully about the reasons why they wanted to engage with the media and what purpose it would fulfil within the organisation. VAMU identified the importance of *“not doing media work because they think they should or because other people are or because it’s the thing in vogue or seems exciting but genuinely what is it they want out of it?”*

Developing an informal media strategy helped the organisations to identify their key objectives for media work (see section 4). For BACYP this was to promote positive perceptions of young people and to raise the profile of the organisation. For Cheltenham Volunteer Centre the identified objective of media work was to increase awareness of the Volunteer Centre amongst the general public and the media.

### b. Organisational commitment and agreement

It can be difficult for someone to work with the media if there isn’t organisational commitment to it or if there is a lack of agreement about what the organisation wants to get out of it. In the two organisations there appeared to be support at the senior level for media work. The CEO of BACYP, for example, described increasing media coverage as *“essential”* at the start of the project although this appeared to develop more fully as the projects progressed and the successful outcomes of the media work were seen.

The mentee at BACYP felt that *“at the organisational level they are really keen, and they are very aware of the need to build on it.”* Indicative of this was the BACYP’s Board decision to recruit a trustee with a key remit for media and press coverage in order to establish better relationships between the organisation and the media. Towards the end of the project, Cheltenham Volunteer Centre’s Chief Executive said:

*“We realise that publicity and marketing needs a higher priority than we’ve given it...it has now become engrained into our working practices. Whereas at one time it would have been something we would have done if we had had time to do it.”*

Highlighting the successes of media work across the organisation was clearly influential in this. Cheltenham Volunteer Centre, for example, displayed a copy of an article they had published in Cotswold Life on a board in their office which helped give *“everybody a real boost, it has really raised people’s confidence.”* (Cheltenham Volunteer Centre Chief Executive)

The two mentees highlighted the importance of recognition and support of senior staff for media work as well as their involvement in strategy building, although this was not always evidently present within the two organisations. Such support will help ensure that media work is kept high on the organisation’s agenda and helps to build a supportive and motivating environment for those working with the media. It is difficult for individuals to spend time working with the media without the support and commitment of senior staff.

In Cheltenham Volunteer Centre, for example, it was difficult at times for the mentee to rationalise spending time on media work when it was questioned how far this would help bring money into the Volunteer Centre – a key focus for those at the senior level dealing with the sustainability of the organisation. As the project progressed however, it was evident that the link between media work, its impact on raising the profile of the Centre and funding could more easily be seen and understood.

### **c. Dedicated staff time**

Lack of time was identified by the two organisations as the biggest barrier to doing media work before, during and after the project. For each of the case studies there was one specific member of staff who was mentored by VAMU and it was recommended that they spent no less than two hours a week on the project, which included mentor phone calls, recording their progress and completing tasks. This was carried out in addition to their existing work commitments. Dedicating time to media work was difficult for the mentees:

*“It’s just that it’s been a bit of a nightmare time recently, and it’s slipped down the priority list as there’s only so much that I can do.”* (BACYP mentee)

Both of the mentees recognised the importance of setting time aside for media work and typically were more successful in terms of getting media coverage when they did this. As identified by the Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee:

*“You really have to ring fence some time and say today I’m going to do this and you have to let some things slip.”*

VAMU highlighted the importance of time management and approaching media work with a ‘bite sized’ approach rather than a ‘global’ perspective – making one five minute call to a journalist rather than thinking you need to phone every journalist in the local area.

BACYP and Cheltenham Volunteer Centre felt that they would have liked to spend more time on media work to help them develop more in-depth and meaningful relationships with the media. However, they found that as the project progressed, media work became easier and quicker as they got more confident and developed their skills.

*“Now it just feels like it’s part of my job...it’s just what I do and it doesn’t feel like a burden.”* (BACYP mentee)

### **d. The importance of the individual**

Work with the case study organisations revealed how important it was for individuals working with the media to fully recognise the value of media work and for them to have a clear understanding of what they were trying to get out of it. Commitment and enthusiasm for working with the media were important. Without it media work suffered. At one stage with BACYP, for example, the mentee was uncertain of an approach they had adopted for collating case studies for the media which impacted on her enthusiasm for media work:

*“I don’t think I was really enthused by it, and when I get like that I will keep putting it off and finding something else to do. It was getting to the stage where I was not sure of its relevance.”* (BACYP mentee)

The project also found that a willingness to learn was enough to enable an individual to start engaging with the media. It was not necessary to have had experience in dealing with the media before and the mentees quickly developed the skills and confidence which made contacting and engaging with journalists easier and less daunting every time:

*“I think it has been very constructive. We’ve learnt as we’ve gone along and we’ve learnt by mistakes. We really have come a long way from where we were....we didn’t have the time, the drive and the skills.”* (Cheltenham Volunteer Centre)

As the project progressed it was evident that the organisations and the mentees themselves had pre-conceived ideas about 'media experts' and how their own press releases and media contact could not meet the standards of these 'experts'. At times these perceptions impacted on the confidence of the mentees and in one particular case marginalised the mentee when 'more experienced' individuals were brought in to publicise an event. These experiences highlighted the need for organisations to invest trust and confidence in the person designated to undertake media work.

### **TOP TIPS: BEFORE YOU BEGIN...**

#### **Ask yourself the following key questions:**

- Why does your organisation want to recruit volunteers?
- What do you want the volunteers to do?
- Who do you want to recruit and what kind of skills do you want your volunteers to have?
- What do you think potential volunteers would want from their volunteering experience with your organisation?
- Why do you want to use the media to reach these potential recruits?

The more targeted your approach, the more successful it will be. Begin by thinking about:

- How will your organisation deal with new volunteer enquiries?
- Who will be responsible for looking after new volunteers?
- Who will be running the publicity and advertising campaign for your recruitment push? (Ideally only one person should be designated to deal with the media)
- How much time do you have to spend on media work? (Be realistic about how many hours you have to spend on the recruitment project each week)
- Have you got any budget to spend on advertising and publicity work?

### **TOP TIPS: GETTING SUPPORT FROM YOUR ORGANISATION**

Whether you're a small community group or a large organisation, before starting your volunteer recruitment campaign you're going to need to get the whole of your organisation on board. You're going to need their support to help you with your media work. The first of your communications challenges will be to sell the project to them and win their support:

- Call a meeting or create a brief newsletter/ email to everyone in the organisation explaining that you're running a volunteer recruitment campaign. Really sell the project to them. Explain why your organisation needs new volunteers and why this media campaign is vital to reach potential recruits.
- Show them how you want to use the media to reach potential volunteers. Inspire them by showing how other organisations have used the media.
- Ask your colleagues to support you by volunteering to be potential media interviewees/ case studies. Ask them to give you access to their clients and projects (sources for potential stories/ inspiration for media coverage).
- Make sure everyone knows that you've got the backing of your Chief Executive/ Director.

Once your media work is underway make sure to keep everyone informed. Shout about your successes; prove to the organisation the value of your media work; tell them about the contribution new volunteers are bringing to the organisation.

### 3. Finding out about the local media

#### Reading, listening and watching local media

From the beginning of the project VAMU emphasised to the case study organisations the importance of getting to know the local media to help them to better understand what media outlets are available, what stories they cover, what their audience is, how stories are presented and what opportunities there might be.

An important part of this was keeping abreast of the local media – skimming the local papers and magazines, listening to local radio and watching local TV. Both of the mentees recognised this as important. The Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee, for example, said: *“we must get to monitor our press and media more effectively to see what’s happening out there...to pick up the flavour of the month”*. However, in reality both mentees found it difficult to find the time to do this during the project and to make it part of their ‘daily routine’. This was particularly difficult for BACYP who had a regional remit and were less aware of the local media outside their immediate area of Reading. Staff also experienced a practical difficulty in getting copies of local papers from different parts of the county not available in the head office area.

When the organisations did actively read the local papers and listen to the radio (they did this more frequently as the project progressed) they found it useful and informative. BACYP was particularly surprised about the number of stories relating to young people and to volunteering which gave them more confidence about the potential interest for their stories. The Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee felt that *“knowledge breeds confidence”* and found that this kind of ‘research’ helped them better prepare when it came to approaching journalists: *“it stops you being wrong footed from the start”*. For this organisation one of the key lessons from the project was:

*“Realising that doing your research before you speak to them... research the media, identify the key players, listen to them on the radio, read their stuff and think they are the people and shape my approach in that light...getting the approach right and knowing what is right to stimulate them.”*

Cheltenham Volunteer Centre also highlighted how important it was to continue to read the papers, listen to the radio because *“having done so you need to keep on top of it because organisations change”*.

#### TOP TIPS: KEEPING ON TOP OF THE LOCAL MEDIA

Start your research by watching, listening to and reading as much local media as you can. Note down any mentions of other charities or any coverage which could be connected to your organisation or volunteering; try and collect the names of the journalists and reporters behind those stories:

- Go to several local newsagents and look at all the titles on offer.
- Watch out for any free magazines and newspapers given out at your local train station, in the doctor’s surgery or at your local library.
- Listen to a different local radio station each day in your office.
- Flick through all the TV channels watching out for regional bulletins and local programmes.
- Search the Internet and look for local news and lifestyle web sites.

Please see the list of useful resources at the end of this report to find out the best ways to get the contact details of media outlets in your area.

## Getting in touch with local media

To get a fuller picture of the local media and to find out more about the kinds of stories they were interested in and who the best contact is for stories, quick phone calls were made with three or four journalists, reporters or editors at the local papers, magazines, radio and TV for each of the case study organisations. Both organisations found this useful in a number of ways. Firstly, it helped them to re-evaluate their perceptions that the local media were not interested in volunteering or their organisation. They were pleasantly surprised by the positive attitudes of journalists towards volunteering and volunteering stories. The Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee, for example, found local journalists to be *“surprisingly receptive”*. Generally, it was observed that rather than a lack of interest in their organisation, it was a lack of awareness of their organisation – the media had not been approached by them so did not know what work they did. This is interesting information which could be shared with trustees to highlight the need for media work.

Secondly, it was useful to hear from journalists the types of stories they covered (and what they didn't) and who their audiences were. In both Berkshire and Cheltenham, local media highlighted the value of human interest stories and case studies, for example, stories about volunteers themselves and their beneficiaries. When asked what they were looking for in a good story one journalist, for example, said *“something that is useful to listeners, it has to be interesting to the target audience”*.

Thirdly, it was very helpful to find out who the best contact was for the organisation's stories and how best to get in touch with them. Phone calls, for example, were often highlighted by the journalists as a good way to make contact. Some of the journalists highlighted that when they tried to contact organisations *“the biggest frustration is when no one is there to answer your call”*.

### TOP TIPS: GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE LOCAL MEDIA

Carry out your own research and find out as much as you can about local media outlets. Call and ask a reporter, forward planner or editorial assistant:

- Who is their target audience?
- What kinds of stories are their audience interested in? What issues and topics are they particularly interested in?
- What kinds of charity/volunteering stories do they cover? Do they have charity partners? Do they take on campaigns?
- Who would be the best person to contact with a story? How do they like stories to be pitched to them?

## 4. Developing a Media Strategy

Once the organisations had a clearer idea about who their local media were they needed to develop a plan to help them focus their aims for media work and their ultimate goals and targets. To help them do this, VAMU developed a series of questions for them to answer (see figure 1). These focused on identifying what the organisations wanted to get out of media work and how they could achieve this. The idea of this was not for the organisations to develop formal or official strategy documents but was seen as a relatively informal method to record what the organisations wanted to achieve – a document which can be referred to and revised every six months to a year as priorities change and develop.

The organisations found developing their strategies useful. In particular it helped them to reflect on and identify their reasons for media work in a more strategic and focused way. Commenting on the template questions, Cheltenham Volunteer Centre, for example, said: *“it’s stimulating, it’s thought provoking...it focused the mind. It has crystallised thought to get it down on paper”*. The approach the Volunteer Centre took was to ask several members of staff and trustees to complete the questions and compare what they put down. They found this useful in helping to prioritise what they wanted from media work although they found this challenging when they had different ideas from different people. From this they tried to identify common themes and prioritise them.

When developing the strategy it was difficult for the organisations to identify with those outside the organisation and what would be of interest to them. At first, for example, Cheltenham Volunteer Centre identified the promotion of their website as a priority. They said: *“there were a large number of things that we considered ‘interesting’ but weren’t sure if they were newsworthy”*. It was questioned whether the website would be interesting to the wider public and as a consequence the organisation re-evaluated their priorities

for media work. An important part of this was identifying who the target audiences should be for their media messages. This was challenging for the organisations and it was suggested that they focus on specific audiences - for example, promoting volunteering to young people rather than the ‘general public’.

It also became clear during the project that it was important for the organisations at this early stage to set realistic, achievable and focused goals for their media work. VAMU warned that failing to do this was *“like setting yourself a huge hurdle which inevitably will depress you and make you feel like failing when in fact any coverage is a win”*.

Reflecting at the end of the project, the BACYP mentee highlighted this as a particular challenge:

*“I wanted to get far more out of it than was realistic, and I was probably naively ambitious.”*

Looking back at their media strategy BACYP felt that it focused too much on ‘outcome-based’ targets (such as those concerned with the amount of press coverage and the recruitment of new volunteers). Given that the mentee thought these targets were unrealistic, she felt that the media strategy had been of limited use. A more effective approach from her perspective would have been to focus more on ‘process-based’ outcomes (such as developing skills in writing press releases) which would have helped the organisation feel that they were making progress and made the media strategy feel more relevant and useful.

VAMU highlighted that targets for working with the media need not be linked to the quantity of coverage but to developing new connections and contacts.

VAMU encouraged the organisations to revisit their strategies during the project to help them reflect again on the aims and targets they set themselves. It would have been useful for the organisations to do this more frequently although it did take place:

*“We have looked back at it intermittently just to remind ourselves of where we were going, what for and how. Some aspects we had to re-evaluate as we went along.”* (Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee)

Working through the questions in the media strategy document (figure 1) the organisations identified the following as their priorities for media work.

## **The case study priorities**

### **Cheltenham Volunteer Centre**

- Awareness of the centre and its place in the community. A celebration of the centre's work.
- Supported volunteering - increase awareness and understanding.
- Business, employees and volunteering - increase local business/employers' interest in the centre.
- Volunteer Managers Forum - encouraging more charities to use the centre's services.

In addition to this the Volunteer Centre set themselves the target of fostering relationships with three different media contacts – one in a local newspaper, one in a local radio station and one in a magazine.

### **BACYP**

- Increase awareness and raise the profile of the organisation, its activities and its role.
- Promote positive stories about young people in the press, and help to move away from a focus on media stories with a negative focus, such as young people and antisocial behaviour.
- Increase attendance at events run by the organisation.
- Encourage more people to apply to become volunteers as trustees within the organisation and youth leaders within the affiliated youth clubs.

## **Figure 1: Devising a Media Strategy**

**Work through these questions, answering each one as fully as possible.**

**1. Why do you want to work with the media?**

**2. What event/ campaign/ story/ services/ volunteering opportunities are you trying to promote?** You can have more than one but try to prioritise.

**3. In each case, what key message/s are you trying to get across?** Limit it to a maximum of three messages and keep them simple.

**4. In each case, who is your target audience/s?**

**5. What media do you think these audiences use? And what media do they have access to?** Be as specific as possible – e.g. magazine titles, radio programmes, websites, street posters in particular areas etc. Think local and national media where appropriate.

**6. What resources do you wish to devote to carrying out your media strategy?** Think about number of work hours you want to commit. What kind of budget do you have to spend and how might you spend it – e.g. on paid advertising, leafleting, targeted telephone marketing?

**7. In the case of the media/ journalists, how will you get them interested in your story/ stories?**

**8. Can you think of any events coming up which might add to (or clash with) your media campaign?** For example, think about other organisations' planned events, the Christmas season, a local newspaper's current campaign etc.

**9. How will you evaluate the success of your strategy/ publicity?** For example, by counting the number of new calls to your centre or the number of articles in local press or by running a focus group etc.

## TOP TIPS: DEVELOPING A MEDIA STRATEGY

A media strategy is simply a plan. A concise plan: a tool to help you focus your volunteer recruitment work. If you can answer these two questions in a concise, clear statement, avoiding any 'generalisms', then you've got the backbone to your media strategy:

1. Why does your organisation want to recruit volunteers?
2. Why do you want to use the media to recruit these volunteers?

You need to make sure you do the following:

- **Set yourself clear goals:** A media strategy can have long term vision. For example: "We want to increase awareness of our organisation and focus on encouraging young people to get involved in our organisation. In the next 12 months we hope to secure a media partnership with a local youth radio station". A media strategy can also be short term and immediate. For example: "We need to recruit 10 volunteers for an event next month in Newcastle. We want to target 30 to 50 year old professionals in the city for this event".
- **Predict & plan:** Think of everything you're going to need once you've launched your media strategy into action. Are you going to need to find potential case studies before you start calling journalists? Do you need to get photos together to illustrate your stories? Are you going to need facts and figures to back up your volunteering campaign? Do you need to get initial commitment from staff or volunteers to support you before you start booking an event?
- **Deadlines:** Be ambitious but make sure your short term targets are achievable. Break your strategy down into bite size chunks/ activities. Without the motivation of small successes it's easy to become discouraged, drop your strategy and abandon your volunteer recruitment work. Set yourself realistic deadlines for achieving sections of your strategy. Allow yourself as much planning time as possible.

As you begin to build your recruitment campaign and develop your media work, you'll need to keep revisiting your strategy. As your knowledge of the media increases and as you get to know your target volunteers make sure to keep feeding that valuable information back into your media strategy.

Please see page 39 for a list of useful media strategy guides to consider.

## 5. Monitoring and evaluating media coverage

Alongside identifying what they want to get out of media coverage, organisations also need to think about how coverage will be monitored and measured. Suitable methodologies need to be developed before media work begins to enable them to evaluate how successful media activities have been.

### Monitoring coverage

It was clear through the activities with the case study organisations that keeping track of local media was an important part of monitoring coverage but was often neglected by the mentees. With Cheltenham Volunteer Centre, for example, it was not uncommon for them to be unaware that they had received coverage in the local newspaper until a few days after it had been published.

Before the project, both organisations collected press cuttings of their stories which received coverage in the local press. The case studies continued with this approach but did not document the coverage in a systematic way. A monitoring sheet, for example, could have been set up to record the date of coverage, where the item got coverage, brief details of the story and so on. On reflection, both BACYP and Cheltenham Volunteer Centre said this would have been useful.

### Evaluating media coverage

Both of the case study organisations found it difficult to evaluate their media coverage and to set up systems to enable them to do this. Cheltenham Volunteer Centre asked people who contacted them how they heard about the Centre and tagged those who found out through the media. This was challenging as a number of different people were responsible for logging enquiries and it was often neglected. It was also difficult to get information about where individuals had heard about the Centre when they contacted them by email.

The Volunteer Centre also monitored the number of volunteer enquiries during the media project and compared this with figures for the same number of months before the project. From this the Centre found that there had been a 68% increase in the number of people making enquiries over the period of the project. Whilst in part this could be explained by other external factors (including seasonal variations) it suggests that the media activities did make an impact. The mentee said *“I am convinced that this [the media project] has been a significant factor in the increase in these figures.”*

Evaluating the impact of media work was perhaps more difficult for BACYP whose key aims were to raise the profile of the organisation and to improve the public image of young people through the media. These were difficult to assess during the course of the project and the staff involved recognised that they might only be able to see the impacts in the long term. To do this the organisation could develop methods for measuring public awareness and perceptions, for example, through a community survey. This could ask questions on a rated scale such as:

‘How much do you know about X and the work it carries out?’  
(Gaskin, 2007)

Much of the evaluation of BACYP’s media work was carried out informally. For example, the mentee noted that several visitors had attended events as a result of coverage about it in the local paper. The organisation did not feel that a more systematic approach to evaluating their coverage would have been appropriate.

## TOP TIPS: WAYS TO EVALUATE MEDIA COVERAGE

Evaluation is the toughest task any PR faces. Make sure to collate and record all the media coverage you achieve. Keep a cuttings file and record which page the story appeared on or how long the radio coverage was at what time of day etc.

- Tracking responses to the coverage you achieve is one of the best ways to prove the value of your media work. From the moment the article appears, in the paper or on the radio, monitor all responses generated. Ask those who email or call for more information about volunteering how they heard about your organisation.
- Traditionally the value of editorial coverage is thought to be up to 4 times more valuable than purchased advertising space. You can calculate the value of your coverage by working out the number of square column centimetres of the article and multiply that by the cost per square centimetre to place an advert on the same page of that newspaper or magazine. This of course is not a true value of the coverage content but it will give you some figures to impress others with.
- Measure any increase in activity. Check the number of people visiting your organisation's website. See if there's any increase in activity the day (and week after) the article about your organisation is published or broadcast.

There is another way to really examine the quality of media coverage your organisation is achieving. With each piece of coverage you secure work through these questions and give yourself an honest mark out of 10. The closer your total score is to 100, the more successful that coverage has been for your organisation:

1. Did the key message you want get included in the article? Was it clear and easy to understand?
2. Was the tone of the article what you wanted?
3. Did your organisation get a good/ positive mention in the article?
4. Was the size of the article good?
5. Was the article placed prominently in the paper? Front page or page 245?
6. Was the headline good or eye-catching? Was a large font size used?
7. Was a good photo included with the article?
8. Did the story reach the intended audience?
9. Did you get your organisation's phone number and web address printed?
10. Did you get your "call to action" for volunteers included in the article?

## 6. Making contact and selling stories to the media

The next stage for the case study organisations was to think about good stories to sell to the local media. VAMU encouraged the organisations to think clearly about the message for the story and who the audience should be and shape the story to the media being approached. Undertaking research before hand - reading the local papers and listening to the radio - helped the organisations to think about these issues as the project progressed. Importantly, instead of approaching the journalists they knew and were more confident with, VAMU encouraged the mentees to contact journalists they had not been in touch with before in order to widen their circle of media contacts. The BACYP mentee said:

*“[VAMU] has helped to push me down certain avenues that I don’t think I would have gone down myself, and [they have] helped to make me a bit more proactive.” (BACYP mentee)*

VAMU also asked the organisations to be creative in thinking about where their stories could go in the media, highlighting that it might be of interest outside the charity pages of local papers and magazines.

One of the key challenges for the mentees was their lack of experience and confidence in speaking with journalists. This made the prospect of contacting them daunting, particularly because the mentees felt unfamiliar with the way the media worked and fearful of saying the ‘wrong thing’. The BACYP mentee for example said: *“media people have their own language and I’m not speaking it”*. She also described the media as a *“big black hole that I wasn’t willing to go near”*. As the project progressed however, both mentees developed new perceptions and understandings of the media and journalists. The BACYP mentee, for example, said:

*“This project is helping to tell me that the media is full of normal people, and I think as an organisation, we’ll feel more confident about approaching the media now.”*

Cheltenham Volunteer Centre was equally positive. The mentee described journalists as *“enthusiastic”* and *“caring about the community”* and recognised that working with the media wasn’t just a one way relationship: *“[the media] needs us as much as we need them.”* As the project progressed both organisations were surprised by how receptive the media were to their stories.

As well as overcoming the fear of the ‘alien’ territory of the media, the organisations were also concerned about not knowing enough about a certain subject or being caught out by questions they couldn’t answer. This made them uneasy about making contact with journalists but they recognised as the project progressed that communicating the key messages was far more important than ‘knowing everything’.

It was evident that the two mentees became more confident in making initial contact with journalists – relying less on email which they often found to be less successful and more on direct phone calls. Developing a better understanding of how the media worked was a key element of this, in particular the need to be proactive and chase up journalists when necessary.

The case studies also learnt new ways and techniques when making contact with journalists.

The mentee at Cheltenham Volunteer Centre found their first attempts to contact the local paper frustrating because it was

difficult to get hold of the community reporter. The key contact was finally found by the mentee looking through the local paper and finding her name. He said:

*“One of the first problems I encountered was that I was sending things off to the news desk, I was ringing the newsdesk. I’d send it and nothing happened and I tried several times. It wasn’t until I picked up a name which I got from the paper and I thought that’s the name to go for and I asked for this person and spoke to her. So it’s a research thing. That combined shortly after with a visit to the editor really made it start to happen.”*

The Centre also found that asking the local media for a meeting or site visit was an effective way to make contact and develop relationships with local journalists. They initiated a trip, for example, to the local newspaper (as referred to above) and to the local radio station and found it invaluable in understanding who their target audience was and how their stories should be pitched.

Similarly, BACYP developed their ways of working as the project progressed. Previously, the organisation’s approach was to send a press release to all journalists in the relevant area (this could be up to 50 individuals). On the whole this was unsuccessful and through the project they adopted a more focused approach - building relationships with selected individual journalists and targeting their contact. They found this had much more success in terms of coverage than the more broad brush approach.

Both organisations also found it useful to ask colleagues and other organisations for their media contacts. Cheltenham Volunteer Centre, for example, was able to make contact with the Editor of a local paper through a colleague and resulted in a visit to the local paper.

## TOP TIPS: HOW TO SELL YOUR STORY TO THE MEDIA

Before you start sweating over your press release first make a call to one of the journalists you want to sell your story to and gauge their interest. Timing is everything. Catch a journalist at a bad time and they're likely to slam the phone down on you:

- Editorial meetings are usually at around 10.30am. On daily papers usually the worst time to ring is from 4pm onwards. Deadlines vary for different publications and programmes, so you'll need to do your research.
- Content can be decided up to 4 months in advance. Make sure to contact forward planning desks well in advance (especially for features in magazines).
- Don't get offended. If the phone gets put down on you, don't take it personally. It just means the journalist is frantically writing to meet a deadline or a reporter is editing their package for their next bulletin.

Journalists say that they can usually tell within the first 30 seconds of a call if they're interested in hearing about your story or not. So you've got to sell your story fast:

- Sound confident and enthusiastic.
- Keep your pitch fast and simple. Think about what they're going to want to hear, rather than what you want to tell them.
- Don't over-complicate your story. Give them the bare minimum to get them interested. Don't get bogged down in details.
- Find out what you can about the journalist before you call them. Read, listen to or watch their latest stories. Find out what their interests are. Let them know that you follow their work. Flattery gets you a long way.
- Be persistent (but not annoying). If they sound uninterested, ask if there's a better time for you to call. Ask them what might make the story work for them.
- If they ask you to email them, do follow it up immediately with a personal message and press release. Never fax. Never send email attachments.
- Make sure you keep a contacts book with notes on all the journalists you speak to. It's valuable information which will help you successfully pitch stories to them in the future.

Other ways to befriend local journalists/ reporters:

- A personal handwritten letter to a journalist always catches their attention.
- Ask if you can take them out for coffee/ a drink.
- Return journalists' calls promptly and they'll add you to their contacts book.
- If you offer a journalist an exclusive story, make sure it stays exclusive. Nothing annoys a journalist more than seeing a rival media outlet run their exclusive. They also hate it if you offer a colleague of theirs the same story.
- Invite a journalist to get involved with your organisation. Ask them to come and take part in a volunteering activity. Tailor the activity to suit them. If you've invited them along to an event, make sure you meet them and look after them.
- Ask the Editor of your local media outlet to allow you to visit their offices. Explain that you're keen to find out more about how they work so that you can supply them with great local stories.

## 7. Keeping in contact with the media

Both organisations quickly recognised the need to maintain good working relationships with journalists. Reflecting on the project, the Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee said, for example, *“I’ve learnt the importance of developing personal contact”*. This required both organisations to be more proactive in the way they communicated with journalists and recognition that a few good relationships with journalists were better than poor relationships with many.

Cheltenham Volunteer Centre was particularly successful in developing an effective working relationship with one journalist at the local paper. The Centre kept in regular contact with the journalist, passing onto her stories of interest which consistently received coverage. It was recognised however, following guidance from VAMU, that they needed to select stories carefully and not send her everything and overload her. The Centre also invited the journalist to events including a forum for volunteer managers. This was felt to be beneficial for the journalist, other organisations and the Centre itself: *“she made links, they [the attending organisations] got the extra chance to talk to a journalist so they could put a face to a contact that they could ring up and make contact with”*. The journalist also got involved in volunteering with the Centre on a personal basis.

At a point when the Volunteer Centre were feeling disheartened by their media work, the mentee, Chief Executive and one of the trustees of the Centre visited the local paper and met the editor. The mentee found this *“invaluable”* in learning more about the paper, how they work and developing a positive relationship with them. The Volunteer Centre’s Chief Executive said:

*“This was incredibly useful because she gave us a good two hours of her time. She was talking to us, introducing us to her team, the news desk, the photographers. We can make direct contact that we couldn’t make before...so it is much easier getting exposure.”*

Usefully, the Editor also gave them an honest appraisal of the press releases the Centre has produced in the past which encouraged them to think about how they could improve them in the future.

At BACYP, the mentee found that it was useful to phone journalists and thank them for the coverage of their stories. This was a new approach adopted by the organisation; historically they would have made initial contact and not followed this up. As a result, the mentee reported that the journalist expressed an interest in running further stories from BACYP in the future. The mentee however felt that the organisation could have secured more coverage in the paper if they had been able to commit more time to developing productive and ongoing personal relationships with journalists.

In terms of sustaining relationships, Cheltenham Volunteer Centre’s mentee in particular highlighted the importance of having a consistent point of contact within the organisation for journalists. This was identified as important for a number of reasons but most notably because it helped to ensure consistent messages are given to the media and helps to ensure that personal contacts and relationships can be built. The Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee said:

*“I’ve learnt that you really need a single, cohesive voice for an organisation....too many cooks can spoil the broth. This doesn’t mean that one person is the voice pipe. ....it means giving a consistent cohesive view that you are going to present to the world of your organisation”*.

The mentee felt that this could be done by:

*“Developing with your boss clear boundaries, clear methodologies, clear procedures that you all sign up to in the team. Keep them in the loop but they don’t have to get involved. You need boundaries and team responsibilities.”*

For the mentee, ensuring that he was the main contact helped to *“maintain the integrity of my professional contact so that they trust you and you trust them.”*

The work with the organisations highlighted the need to be proactive in getting in touch with new contacts when others leave. In Cheltenham, for example, the Volunteer Centre found it difficult to sustain the momentum of their media coverage when their key contact left.

## **TOP TIPS: MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA**

Having befriended or worked with a journalist, make sure you stay in touch with them:

- Give journalists your mobile phone number. Journalists always need good contacts who can help them before 9am, after 5pm or over the weekend.
- If a journalist does pick up your story, then send a card to say thank you. Tell them what a difference the story meant to your organisation or how many new volunteers were inspired to get in touch because of their story.
- Use your local media contacts strategically. Don’t bombard them with any old story. Select stories carefully tailored for them.
- Always return your media contacts’ calls promptly. Help them out on their stories whenever you can.
- Make sure you are the only person from your organisation who contacts that journalist. Don’t confuse them.
- If you find a journalist has left and moved on, find out who their replacement is and start building a new relationship with them.

Remember: Stories do get dropped and it’s not usually the journalist’s fault. If a big news story breaks, your story may be pushed off the pages or not make it into the TV news bulletin. Although it’s infuriating after all your hard work, don’t take it personally. It’s just how the media works.

## 8. Ways of liaising with the media

### 8.1 Case studies

Case studies, for example, stories about specific volunteers, can help bring an article to life and make a story interesting to the local media and their audiences. BACYP and Cheltenham Volunteer Centre used this approach less often than would be expected however it became a key part of BACYP's activities. During a quiet time for events, the mentee collated a selection of case studies of volunteers and young people to be used by the organisation when requested by the media. She did this in a number of ways which included:

- Asking colleagues for details of young people and volunteers who might be willing to be interviewed; and
- Including a few paragraphs in a newsletter sent to clubs which asks them to inform her of any potential case studies.

As part of this process the mentee recognised that most of the case studies were from young people and so specifically targeted older volunteers in order to have a diverse collection of case studies to present to the media. VAMU highlighted that collecting these case studies might not only be useful for getting media coverage but could also be used in funding applications to illustrate the work and impact of the organisation.

The mentee found the process of collecting case studies from older volunteers challenging. It was difficult to get the youth clubs to send her case studies and those that were collated were not as useful as hoped. As a result, during the six month mentoring period none were used to promote volunteering in the press and no stories were secured. The lack of success can be partly attributed to the hierarchical organisational structure of BACYP and its member youth clubs. The individual clubs, while members of

BACYP are largely autonomous and BACYP is relatively removed from the front line clubs. This made it difficult to encourage the clubs to support the organisation in collecting case studies and made it challenging to persuade them to work with the media. This illustrates a wider problem of communication that can be experienced by many organisations that have a central head office and regional affiliated organisations or members.

While the case studies collected by BACYP had limited success, they did highlight the importance of 'human interest' stories to the media – the young people and those they support - at events and activities. The mentee noted that journalists were particularly interested in talking to them and highlighted the need to ensure journalists were given the opportunity to meet them. BACYP took part in a radio interview to promote an event, for example, during which the mentee told the story of a young person as a case study. Reflecting on the interview, the mentee said that they felt it could have made a bigger impact if the person interviewed had been a young person or a volunteer rather than an employee of BACYP.

## TOP TIPS: COLLECTING CASE STUDIES

Almost every story needs a case study. Human interest stories always sell and a strong case study can bring even the most dull story to life. By providing the local media with strong case studies, you're guaranteed to have journalists queuing round the block to speak to you:

- Ask clients and colleagues if they would be willing to be “media volunteers”. Send round a newsletter or a personal email explaining what you're looking for and what might be involved.
- Ask your colleagues to look out for any exceptional stories or people they come across in their daily work who could be good “media ambassadors” for the organisation. For example, it could be a volunteer who's done something amazing or the survival story of someone a volunteer has helped.
- Go out on visits to meet the volunteers who work for your organisation. Chat to them, collect their stories and see if you spot any possible case studies.
- Keep a record of all potential case studies and their contact details (including mobile numbers). This way if a story suddenly comes up or a request from a journalist comes in, you're prepared to respond swiftly with an offer of a possible case study from your organisation. It's also very useful to have a photo of your case study on file.
- Support and prepare your case studies. Explain clearly to your media volunteer what the journalist is writing about, what kind of questions they're likely to ask them. Explain clearly where the story will appear and when.
- Choose a case study who is articulate and understands the possible implications of doing an interview. On the whole journalists are not out to trip people up or misquote them.
- Journalists tend to be very unwilling to work with anonymous case studies. If your client is vulnerable and needs to protect their identity for legal reasons then change their name or ask the journalist to disguise their identity. Make sure that no distinguishing features appear on camera which could identify them.
- If you are working with children, you'll need their parent/ guardian's consent for them to appear in the media. For more information see: Talking to journalists: A MediaWise guide for young people [www.mediawise.org.uk](http://www.mediawise.org.uk)

## TOP TIPS: RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR CASE STUDIES

If a journalist calls you asking for a case study:

- Find out who else the journalist has approached. Don't waste hours finding the perfect case study for them if their story is a “maybe” or if they've approached several other organisations too.
- Ask them exactly what angle their story is taking so that you can quickly find the right case study for their story – or decide that the story isn't right for your organisation.
- Find out what the journalist's deadline is and respond as quickly as you can with possible case studies. Don't make promises you can't keep.

## 8.2 Press releases

Once the organisations had contacted journalists to sell their idea for a story the next stage was to write a press release. Neither of the mentees had much experience of writing press releases and had a limited understanding of what the media wanted from them. During the project, press releases were the predominant approach used by the two organisations and their experiences highlight a number of key lessons.

### ***Understanding what the media and audience want***

The organisations found it difficult to identify what would make a good story. VAMU encouraged them to think about stories with human interest and to find a good story. The mentees found this challenging. The first press release produced by Cheltenham Volunteer Centre, for example, was about an employee volunteering event with Greater Western Railways and Chevron Oil volunteers.



October 2006: Employee Volunteering Story  
Included with kind permission from the Gloucestershire Echo  
Copyright: Gloucestershire Echo

The story received coverage in the local paper. However, VAMU felt the press release focused too much on quotes from the different parties involved rather than human interest: *“the press release seems to service the volunteer centre's needs, GWR's needs and Chevron's - all pushing their quotes and projects. But where does it service the journalist? Where's the story gone?”* The mentees developed a better understanding of this as the projects progressed.

BACYP were concerned that the media wouldn't be interested in their stories about young people, perceiving that the media would only be interested in *“bad news stories”*. As a result, they spent time thinking about the 'hooks' within their stories that could appeal to local papers. They focused for example, on specific sports activities and when promoting a forthcoming event through the media included key facts about local athletes in their press releases to give them a local and human interest focus. Similarly for their 'Get In' events, which are run for 'disaffected youth' to help them develop skills and improve job prospects, key statistics were included about young people who are not in employment, education or training. BACYP also appeared to develop an understanding that it was important to *“give the press what they want”* and provide them with what they need to make it as easy as possible for them to run a story.

Cheltenham Volunteer Centre also felt that as the project progressed they developed a better understanding of what the media wanted from a story and improved their skills in engaging with the media:

*“It has helped us increase our creative skills..we now think this is what we want to get across but what will enthuse [the newspaper] to get that piece in...what would be of interest to them and their readers so we can shape it accordingly... we put a spin on. We wouldn't have thought about doing that before.”* (Cheltenham Volunteer Centre Chief Executive)

*“We have developed effective techniques for stimulating interest and we have begun to realise that they need us too, they need stuff for their media”.*(Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee)

Despite the hard work invested by the organisations, success was not always guaranteed. After a press release generated a good level of interest from a number of journalists for BACYP’s ‘Taste of Sport’ careers fair, several told the mentee that they would come to the event. However, on the day, no journalists attended and no post-event coverage was secured. The mentee was disappointed and frustrated given the level of enthusiasm the press had demonstrated before the event. However, discussions with the mentor helped the mentee to understand how at times different stories can come up at short notice and journalists can quickly drop a story without telling the organisation, something that is not necessarily a reflection on the story or press release itself.

### ***Clear and simple messages***

VAMU encouraged the organisations to think carefully about communicating a clear and simple message in their press releases. For BACYP this included key facts such as the location, time and date of events being promoted. Commenting on the employee volunteering press release, for example, VAMU felt that Cheltenham Volunteer Centre’s message was too complex, particularly as it included lots of quotes from different people involved, a number of different contact details and a complicated description of the Volunteer Centre. Because the press release was too long and complex the local paper only printed the first two paragraphs.

It became apparent how a simple and clear message in a press release can be highly effective. The Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee, for example, wrote a short, simple article for the paper promoting a volunteering event at a local supermarket. As a result the Centre received at least nine phone calls from potential volunteers as well as emails about the event. This showed how a simple piece of coverage can get a good response.

These experiences taught the mentee to: *“keep it simple..think what the response will be at the other end. I’ve learnt to keep it simple, not too many big words, keep it breezy, keep it bright, keep it interesting, keep it short, don’t go on and on, bearing in mind you are competing for column inches.”*

## **Can you help pack?**

BAG packers are needed to help Marks & Spencer raise money for charity.

The Simply Food store at Kingsditch Retail Park, in Cheltenham is offering the service in aid of the Cobalt Cancer Appeal.

Volunteers aged over 16, are needed for the shifts at the store in Kingsditch Lane, running from 10am to 1.30pm, then 1.30pm to 5pm on Saturday December 16. T-shirts will be provided.

Anyone who can help should contact Cheltenham Volunteer Centre on 01242 257727 or email [enquiries@volunteeringcheltenham.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@volunteeringcheltenham.org.uk)

November 2006: Simple call for volunteers

Included with kind permission from the Gloucestershire Echo

Copyright: Gloucestershire Echo



Chief executive of Cheltenham Volunteer Centre Hazel Lonsdale; Tony Stratton, office manager Peter Day, assistant transport coordinator Pauline Cooke, volunteer driver Chris Hughes and Cheltenham Community Transport coordinator Tim Turton,.

## Service with a smile

*Volunteering not only provides a valuable service to the community - it can also be of enormous benefit to the volunteers themselves. Katie Jarvis signed up with Cheltenham Volunteer Centre for the day, and took to the roads as a driver for the Cheltenham Community Transport Scheme. Mike Charity took the pictures*

## Planning and timing

A key issue for both of the case study organisations was the time it took to write press releases. At the beginning both were quite meticulous - ensuring that all parties involved in the story were quoted and satisfied with the content and revising several re-writes which took considerable amounts of time. For Cheltenham Volunteer Centre and their employee volunteering article, this meant that the press release was sent late to the journalist.

At the start of the project, BACYP and Cheltenham Volunteer Centre demonstrated a lack of confidence when writing press releases. For BACYP this issue was them not knowing “*when a story was ready*”. As the project progressed, however, the mentees developed informal and faster ways of working, which meant they could write press releases far more quickly and with more confidence. The BACYP mentee, for example, felt that by the end of the project they were able to confidently tell when a press release was ready to be sent to journalists on their first attempt at writing it.

An aspect highlighted by the mentees was the importance of planning and thinking ahead of time. This was pertinent for Cheltenham Volunteer Centre’s feature in *Cotswold Life*, for example, which had a long lead in time (the article was published six months after the mentees first approach to them) but also for articles which need to be published by a specific date. For ‘Make a Difference Day’, for example, the mentee wrote a simple press release with photographs asking people to contact the Centre to volunteer. Unfortunately the press release was published on the day of the event so it was too late to recruit volunteers. The mentee felt that next time he needed to be clearer to the media about the timeline for the article.

By RACHAEL ARMSTRONG

**VOLUNTEERS** are being asked to help make a difference to Cheltenham for a day.

Cheltenham Volunteer Centre is looking for helpers to take part in Make A Difference Day tomorrow.

People are urged to take part in projects throughout the town for the 24-hour community challenge.

The College Road volunteer centre is hoping people can give up just one day to help their communities.

People are invited to play the role of gardener, builder, hostess and driver for the day.

The Leonard Cheshire Home in Charlton Lane, Leckhampton, is looking for green-fingered helpers to pick up their spades and shears to tame their unruly garden.

Strong assistants and drivers are sought by Reclaim Furniture to pick up and to clear away unwanted items.

The recycled-furniture company is based at the Hester's Way Community

## Centre asks for willing volunteers

Resource Centre in Cassin Drive, Cheltenham.

DIY enthusiasts are asked to pick up a hammer to help build a play boat cabin for children at Seven Springs Play Centre near Cheltenham.

Those who prefer cocktails and canapes can pick up a tray to assist at a gala evening party to raise much needed money for Gloucestershire Breast Screening Service. The event will be held at Rendcomb College, near Cirencester tonight.

Centre manager Peter Day said: "Volunteering is a fantastic experience. "It's a great way to give something back to your community, have fun, get skilled and meet new people. So why not give it a go?"

"Volunteers should be ready to get messy and get their hands dirty, but it'll be rewarding and greatly appreciated by many."

Make a Difference Day is the biggest volunteering event in the UK, with more than 115,000 people taking part in projects nationwide.

To take part contact Cheltenham Volunteer Centre on 01242 257727 or email to enquiries@volunteeringcheltenham.org.uk

“Volunteers should be ready to get messy and get their hands dirty, but it'll be rewarding and greatly appreciated.”

Peter Day

October 2006: Call for volunteers for ‘Make a Difference Day’  
Included with kind permission from the Gloucestershire Echo  
Copyright: Gloucestershire Echo

BACYP also identified planning to be important. They found that an effective approach was informing the media of their events prior to the day, reminding them a few days before and then chasing them up if they had not heard anything. The mentee felt that this approach helped increase attendance of the local press at their athletics events. The mentee also described how learning had spread through the rest of the organisation. Other teams within BACYP had subsequently built in dedicated time into their event planning schedules for time to write, promote and follow up press releases. This reflects the recognition in the organisation that they need to become more proactive in their work with the media.

## Photographs

The research carried out at the beginning of the project with journalists highlighted to the mentees the importance of having a good photograph with a press release. They found that this helped secure coverage. Both of the organisations used photographs in their press release where possible and did so in a number of different ways. Photographers from the paper were invited to take photographs to promote an event or activity, for example, 'Make a Difference Day', or to take photos at the events for a post event press release. The BACYP mentee took photographs herself at events which were then sent to journalists. When she was unable to do this the organisation felt that the media would be less likely to cover the story.

# Extending first-class sport and leisure activities

## Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People

**BERKSHIRE** Association of Clubs for Young People is an independent organisation that was established in 1946.

BACYP provides support to youth leaders and young people across the whole county and within the surrounding authorities. Working in partnership with the Gloucestershire C&A will help BACYP to continue to develop new opportunities in West Berkshire for both youth leaders and young people.

Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People works to expand our Sport Leagues and Activities Program throughout West Berkshire, encouraging more young people to be engaged in positive activities with appropriate adults who are suitable trained and able to deliver locally.

The BACYP programmes are open to the young people of West Berkshire and are available through direct provision, but also in partnership with local youth clubs and providers, working with more than 140 youth groups each year.

The BACYP sports and leisure team's reputation for delivering first class leisure time activities programme means that demand has reached saturation point in West Berkshire.

BACYP provides middle youth provision across the county, supporting youth leaders to run activities from football to canoeing, chess, cycling, fishing, tennis and table tennis. The events and activities organised by BACYP are always about having a go, but if talent emerges they can provide a pathway to elite regional and national competitions. Currently 90 per cent of the team's time is spent supporting rural youth work projects in West Berkshire and it is felt that the time has come to establish a dedicated team to work in the area to enable BACYP and other to meet the demand and to be able to extend its services to other West Berkshire areas.

The expanded BACYP project would enable training and support to be made by volunteer leaders and leaders so that a balanced programme of leisure activities could be provided for young people in the West Berkshire area.

The above list of findings is reported to come from a survey, interviews, focus groups, focus groups, interviews and one-to-one interviews.

These findings will be used to inform the BACYP project and if successful, the expansion would mean the team for two years.



Visiting the Gloucestershire C&A to meet with BACYP to develop new and positive opportunities for leaders and young people in West Berkshire

May, 2007: Article about BACYP  
Included with permission from Newbury Weekly News Group  
Copyright: Newbury Weekly News Group

# Can you help out for a day?

Picture: Mark Terry-Lush, Renagedphoto.net



**HANDS FULL:** Peter Day is urging people to come forward and help out on Volunteer Day tomorrow

October 2006: Call for volunteers for 'Make a Difference Day'  
Included with kind permission from the Gloucestershire Echo  
Copyright: Gloucestershire Echo

## TOP TIPS: WRITING PRESS RELEASES

Always make a phone call first and sell your story to the journalist. Then work fast to produce a press release for them. If you find writing press releases difficult, a well written personal letter with all the info a journalist needs can work just as well. Each press release needs to be tailored to each media outlet/ journalist. One side of A4 is plenty; a couple of paragraphs will often do.

### Basic ingredients of a press release

- A punchy or funny headline. Make this bold.
- Go straight into explaining what the story is in the first sentence.
- Write in the third person. Don't use jargon. Keep it simple and easy to understand.
- Explain where and when your story is happening (if it's related to an event or launch)
- Who's involved? List case studies and potential interviewees.
- You can include a quote from a key player in your organisation but keep it very brief.
- Suggest a photo opportunity. Offer case studies. Are you offering an exclusive?
- Give that particular media outlet a reason as to why they should cover your story.
- Give them the closing paragraph you'd like broadcast or printed.
- Only give them one web link, one charity name, one phone number for the article. (e.g. Find out more from [www.charityname.org.uk](http://www.charityname.org.uk) or call 020 7888 5555)
- Your contacts details: name, phone, mobile, email
- Repeat the key, most important information at the end – the event, place and date (if appropriate) and your key message.
- "NOTES TO EDITORS" – This is where you can put a couple of sentences about your organisation and what it does.

## TOP TIPS: HOW TO DISTRIBUTE YOUR PRESS RELEASE

- Never send attachments. Targeted distribution of a tailored press release following a phone call is always best.
- For broader distribution try [www.communitynewswire.press.net/](http://www.communitynewswire.press.net/) who will distribute your press release for you nationwide via the Press Association. Other free online distribution services to try: [www.pressbox.co.uk/](http://www.pressbox.co.uk/) and [www.allmediascotland.com/](http://www.allmediascotland.com/)

## TOP TIPS: HOW TO MAKE YOUR STORY STAND OUT

- A great photo will always catch a journalist's attention. Don't send photos as email attachments. It's better to post them on your web site or [www.Flickr.com](http://www.Flickr.com) and send the journalist a link.
- A brilliant, snappy, eye-catching headline.
- A mobile phone number so a journalist can contact you at anytime.
- If your press release is well written, you'll find that quite often it will make it to print without any changes. You need to write the story for the journalist.

### 8.3 Radio interviews

Both of the case study mentees took part in radio interviews during the project. BACYP's mentee was involved in a radio interview to promote one of their RAF events for young people and Cheltenham Volunteer Centre worked with a local station to promote an event where a team of volunteers from a local school got involved in some gardening for Leonard Cheshire.

The work with local radio again highlighted the importance of undertaking research before initially approaching them in order to: *"identify what each station offers and what it does and keying that to what you want them to broadcast. Trying to understand what they are about and what they are trying to deliver"* (Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee). To help them do this the Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee listened to the local radio and noted how the programmes were arranged. They also went to visit the station where they found out useful information about the station and how its audience was changing from youth to a community focus.

Cheltenham Volunteer Centre used a story plan developed by VAMU to help them think about the key messages for the story (see appendix 3). The mentee said that he found this useful for helping to prepare for the interview to *"concentrate his mind"* and get to the *"bare bones"* of what he wanted to achieve.

VAMU highlighted that for any story, including those on the radio, it was important for it to stand out. For example, with Cheltenham Volunteer Centre's event with young people, it was 'Mission Impossible'. VAMU suggested a number of ways organisations could think about creating an effective headline for future stories:

- 1) Take a recent, popular TV programme format and re-create it locally for a story.
- 2) Take a movie title - use [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) for inspiration.
- 3) A line from a famous song (e.g. It's off to work we go!).
- 4) Pick up anything popular (sayings, stories, headlines etc.) at the moment in popular culture/the press.

The mentees were apprehensive about taking part in the radio interviews. The Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee said, for example, *"there is something different about talking on the radio....Once you've done it once you're ok but it still requires the same planning and the same rigor"*. The BACYP mentee felt nervous and apprehensive because she was worried about what to do and how to behave. However, the mentee described how *"the journalist guided me through ok, and when my colleagues listened to it, they said that it was good and that I got everything across."* In both organisations, the mentees found the journalists welcoming and gave them good guidance on what they needed to do.

It was also important for the mentees to communicate clearly the messages they wanted to get across. VAMU suggested that the organisations should think in advance about the two key messages for the radio interview. Securing mentions of their organisation on air was also key, particularly as both case studies were keen to raise the profile of their organisation through the media. Briefing fellow interviewees was important in ensuring that they stayed 'on message' about the organisation.

Both of the radio interviews took place with few problems. The BACYP did a pre-recorded interview which was broadcast the same day. Cheltenham Volunteer Centre was pleased with the coverage they got on the radio which included a news item the day before, mentions about the event before it took place, and interviews with the mentee, a volunteer and representative from Leonard Cheshire. The only aspect which didn't work so well was failing to record the coverage.

## TOP TIPS: TAKING PART IN RADIO INTERVIEWS

- Listen to the programme or radio show you are going to take part in and think about what speakers you found most interesting and why.
- Find out roughly how long you will be on for and who will be interviewing you.
- Work out what you really want to get across. No more than two messages per interview.
- Don't write notes or a script to use during the interview. Notes are fine as preparation but if you try to read them during an interview you will lose all spontaneity.
- Try to "paint pictures" and/or tell stories to illustrate your key points. Listeners find it very hard to remember statistics or generalisations but they do remember human stories and things they can visualise.
- Try to temper your pace and tone to that of the programme. A news programme will want a pithy, short sentence or two, a "soundbite", but many radio programmes are quite relaxed. They want an informal chat and, as long as your answers are interesting, they can be quite long.
- Try to get in a mention of your charity, but don't keep mentioning it every other sentence. It sounds "pluggy".
- Make sure the presenter, producer and web producer have the correct details for your charity, its website and its phone number.
- Get feedback from the producer and/or presenter after the interview. Their observations will help you do it better next time.
- Get someone from your office to record the interview.

## 8.4 Visits from journalists

Where appropriate the mentees invited journalists to activities and events in order to improve the chances of securing coverage and develop ongoing relationships with them. This included, for example, a volunteering day designed by Cheltenham Volunteer Centre for a journalist at Cotswold Life to volunteer with their community transport team and the attendance of local journalists at BACYP events. This can be seen as somewhat of a turning point in BACYP's relationship with the media, never having had journalists attending their events in the past.

Both mentees emphasised the importance of planning and co-ordinating the day. Cheltenham Volunteer Centre, for example, needed to plan carefully the timings for the journalist's visit - who they needed to meet and when. The mentee at BACYP found their role needed to include arranging interviews, looking after the journalist, arranging and introducing relevant staff to the journalist and helping to co-ordinate photo opportunities. BACYP found it useful to have copies of the press release with them on the day of the event to give to the journalist and to plan ahead potentially good photo opportunities with specific times and locations.

It was also important for the mentee to brief the relevant individuals about the visit or the event, including details about why it was taking place and its importance to the organisation. At Cheltenham Volunteer Centre senior staff played an important role in communicating to other staff the purpose of the journalist's visit so that this was clear to everyone involved.

It also became clear through the activities of the organisations how important it was to communicate the key messages clearly and concisely to journalists. Whilst BACYP's coverage of one event was positive the story published did not include background information about the event or its aims and objectives which limited the impact of it, particularly in terms of raising the profile of the event and the organisation.

### TOP TIPS: HANDLING A VISIT FROM A JOURNALIST/REPORTER

Having successfully sold your story to a journalist and inspired them to come and write about your organisation or event, make sure you're ready for their arrival:

- Plan what you want the journalist to do during their visit and what you want them to see. Find out in advance what the journalist wants from you.
- Think carefully about who you want the journalist to meet during their visit.
- Brief everyone in your organisation. Explain what the journalist will be doing and what the story they are writing is about. Get them all "on message" and deal with their concerns. Some may not want to appear on camera or talk with the journalist.
- Meet the journalist yourself and give them tea or lunch before they begin. This is your chance to befriend the journalist and to reinforce your key story messages.
- Don't be too protective. Trust the journalist to chat with case studies, volunteers and your colleagues. The journo will want to get a real "feel" for the organisation.
- Make sure the journalist/ camera crew / photographer get the pictures they need. This could be the key to making sure your story makes it to print/ broadcast. Follow up their visit with a thank you email, telling them how much you're looking forward to seeing the story.

## 9. Sustaining contact with the media

Following the end of the mentoring period, a key issue for the organisations is how to sustain the quantity and quality of their media work. A review of both organisations three months after the mentoring came to an end found that the media activities in the two organisations had slowed. In Cheltenham Volunteer Centre the mentee moved from the organisation which left a considerable gap and their main media contact in one of the local newspaper left. However, consequent discussions suggest that their media activities since this time have been reinvigorated. Two articles have been published in the local paper and the Centre had three live interviews with three different local radio stations over the period of a week. An invitation to visit the Volunteer Centre has also been accepted by one of the local radio stations.

Echo  
7/8/07

# Check inbox if you can help us

**A VOLUNTEER organisation has come up with a new way of encouraging people to give up their time for others.**

Aware that many people are keen to lend their services but can't make a regular commitment, Cheltenham Volunteer Centre is launching a database for volunteers on demand.

People who sign up to Match - Making Minutes Matter will receive an email whenever a charity wants assistance. It will then be up to them whether they get involved.

Charity bosses hope it will create a well of willing helpers to call on.

Chief executive Hazel Lonsdale said: "There are lots of charities wanting one-off things doing like a gardening or decorating or fundraising.

"During the flood we saw real generosity as people joined together.

## Scheme to volunteer by email

August 2007  
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visit our website [www.thisisglo](http://www.thisisglo)

# Weekend Comment

By Hazel Lonsdale  
Chief Executive  
Gloucestershire  
Association of  
Volunteer  
Centres



## GIVE A LITTLE AND BENEFIT COMMUNITY

"WHAT would we do without volunteers" is a frequent cry among those in the voluntary sector.

In the last two weeks these words have echoed along the corridors of many organisations from councils to the ambulance service.

August 2007  
Included with kind permission from The Citizen  
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Discussions with the organisations following the mentoring period revealed there are four key challenges that the organisations need to continue to work towards. These closely reflect the key foundations discussed in section 2.

### **Revisiting the objectives of media work**

In many respects both Cheltenham Volunteer Centre and BACYP made significant progress in their media work. Cheltenham Volunteer Centre, for example, met their target to work with three new journalists in different types of media. However, both did seem to lose sight of the objectives they laid out for themselves in their media strategies. For BACYP, they felt that this was the result of setting unrealistic targets from the outset. Speaking at the end of the project, the CEO felt that the expectation created by these unrealistic targets was too great *“for a small organisation”*. He interpreted the overall aim of engaging with the media (encouraging more people to volunteer with BACYP) could only be achieved through longer term and sustained media coverage which sought to raise the profile of the organisation, rather than providing direct appeals for volunteers.

The organisations need to revisit the media strategies they developed at the beginning of the project and re-evaluate what they want to get out of working with the media and set targets to enable them to achieve this. At the time of writing neither of the organisations had done this but recognised the need to do so. As identified by the Chief Executive of Cheltenham Volunteer Centre it is important that staff within the organisation are in agreement about what they want to get out of it:

*“In the past it always used to slip to the bottom because there is no one telling you you have to do it...there are no real targets to aim at. We have to discuss between us what we want to achieve.”*

VAMU highlighted the need for the organisations to now develop new ‘bite sized’ realistic targets and to be *“brave about trying new things to develop new contacts”*. They also emphasised the importance of sustaining relationships with key contacts.

### **Keeping media work high on the agenda**

Before the start of the project, working with the media was relatively low on the agendas of both organisations. As a result of the coverage received in the media during the six-month project, there seemed to be a greater awareness of the value and benefit of media work amongst senior staff within the organisations as well as the mentees. In BACYP, for example, the mentee felt that the organisation had become more proactive in their media work, the project having *“thrown media back on the agenda”*. Speaking at the end of the project, the CEO appeared to have a clear understanding of the role and value of media engagement within BACYP. He saw the potential for the media to approach BACYP for stories more proactively, noting that this had occurred on several occasions towards the end of the project. He felt this was an objective that the organisation could realistically hope to achieve in the future.

In the day-to-day existence of an organisation, working with the media often competes with many other demands and priorities. In the face of these, there is always a risk that media work can slip off the agenda of an organisation. Both organisations said that it was important that this did not happen and that media work continued:

*“We realise that publicity and marketing needs a higher priority than we’ve given it...it has now become engrained into our working practices. Whereas at one time it would have been something we would have done if we had had time to do it. What we need to ensure is that we don’t let it slip again and that we maintain momentum.”* (Cheltenham Volunteer Centre Chief Executive)

Both organisations have also made strategic changes to help develop their work with the media. At BACYP, media engagement has been written into the business plan for 2008 and the CEO has indicated an interest in disseminating the learning from the project to other members of staff. The organisation has also started the recruitment of a trustee with media experience. The CEO stated that he felt the decision to advertise for a trustee as *“one of the best things to come out of the year”*, interpreting it as a change in the attitude of the organisation towards its work with the media. At Cheltenham Volunteer Centre they have recently recruited a Publicity and Marketing Development Officer whose key role will be to support the promotion of volunteering and volunteering opportunities across six volunteer centres in Gloucestershire.

### **Dedicating sufficient staff time**

Ensuring that staff spent dedicated time to working with the media was an important part of the mentoring project. It highlighted the importance of having one individual responsible for media work to enable the development of relationships with journalists which allowed a consistent point of contact for the media and the communication of clear and consistent messages about the organisation. However, having the time to commit to media work was still recognised as the biggest challenge to working with the media by the two organisations. The CEO of BACYP recognised the considerable impact that the mentee had made, but acknowledged that *“[she] can’t develop the relationships any further”* due to pressures on her time. He noted that this was one of the key motivations behind their decision to recruit a trustee with responsibility for media engagement.

The amount of time given to working with the media seems to be closely linked to the priority the organisation gave to working with the media. The BACYP mentee, for example, noted that as it moved up the agenda of the organisation she found it easier to spend time on media work. Cheltenham Volunteer Centre identified the importance of ensuring that media activities do not just become an ‘add on’:

*“We have to ensure we don’t slip back to [media work] being an adjunct and something to do when you have time because you never do have time. Unless you build it into your time management and to-do lists then it’s not going to happen.”*

*“It’s making sure it’s on the agenda all the time and building it in to everyone’s agenda because we mustn’t lose the momentum of it.”*

One of the most successful elements of the mentoring relationship was the setting of achievable deadlines for media work. This seemed important in ensuring that organisations set time aside to undertake media work and gave a sense of achievement when targets were met. Organisations could easily set these kinds of deadlines themselves.

### **Linking media work to other agendas**

At the start of the project the organisations had given little thought to how media work could link to the organisation’s other agendas and targets; for example, how media coverage could be used in funding bids to show the value and impact of the organisation’s work. Comments from Cheltenham Volunteer Centre show the increased recognition of linking media coverage to other areas of work:

*“We need to establish the link between publicity and marketing and bringing in money.”* (Chief Executive)

*“The exposure in Cotswold Life has done us enormous good on lots of levels. It is a terrific marketing tool and its given us a marketing tool we can present to funders and potential funders...you read that article and you just know what we do, what we’re about and why it’s important.”*(Mentee)

*“We are now getting funding from the Borough Council for the very first time - I just know that this is in part due to all the publicity effort that has been put in.”* (Chief Executive)

Raising awareness of the organisation's work with the media and celebrating media coverage and achievements were also highlighted as important. Organisations should think about how staff within the organisation are kept informed about the successes as well as those outside the organisation. Approaches such as using the organisation's website could demonstrate to others where the organisation is getting coverage and its recent achievements.

Whilst organisations need to think clearly about the opportunities media work presents, the project also highlighted how organisations need to consider the implications of successful media work and campaigns. Is there capacity to cope with increasing numbers of volunteers for example? Does the organisation have systems and procedures in place to enable the involvement and management of more volunteers?

## 10. Some thoughts on mentoring

The approach adopted in this project presents an interesting model for mentoring. The weekly mentoring sessions with the organisations and the additional advice and guidance provided by the mentors was on the whole highly successful in helping the organisations to develop their media contacts and the way they liaised with the media. The mentors and mentees had limited face to face contact, relying primarily on the telephone and emailing which highlights how remote mentoring can be a successful approach. The documenting of the organisation's activities on a blog by the mentees was also useful, particularly for monitoring progress, although the mentees did find it difficult to find time to do this on a regular basis.

Above all, the mentees valued the ideas suggested by the mentors and the encouragement and motivation they provided. The BACYP mentee, for example, said:

*"[VAMU] has helped to push me down certain avenues that I don't think I would have gone down myself, and [they have] helped to make me a bit more proactive".*

An important element of the mentoring was the focus and discipline it provided. The regular telephone sessions and the setting of achievable targets and deadlines during these sessions encouraged the mentee to be proactive in their media work and to work towards meeting the deadlines. Commenting on the mentoring process the Cheltenham Volunteer Centre mentee said:

*"She sets deadlines and I'm happy about that, it focuses me. The deadlines and the appointments help me get my thoughts together"*

Importantly, the mentees increasingly relied less on the mentors for advice and guidance as the project progressed. They did not send them every press release they produced as they had at the beginning of the project and were more confident in what they produced. This suggests that the six month mentoring period was a sufficient amount of time to help tool the organisations to do media work on their own without the help of a mentor.

This project raises interesting questions about how a similar approach could be adopted in other organisations. Opportunities for the involvement of media professionals and media graduates in volunteer mentoring roles to support and provide advice to voluntary organisations could be further developed. This could build on interesting projects such as the Media Trust's Media Matching Service [www.mediatrust.org/media-matching](http://www.mediatrust.org/media-matching)

# 11. Conclusions

This report has identified some of the key lessons and issues organisations need to think about when seeking to liaise more closely with the media. The work with the two organisations has shown above all that much can be achieved by dedicating just a couple of hours a week to media work and that you don't have to be a media mogul to do it! Significant progress can be made over a relatively short period of time. The two organisations during the six month project, developed good working relationships with journalists, developed the confidence of their staff to work with the media and received good coverage about their organisations and volunteering. This was reflected in a comment by the Chief Executive of Cheltenham Volunteer Centre:

*"We've kind of grown up. With media contact and media exposure we have become much more confident about who we can approach and who to approach, not being frightened to approach. It has increased our visibility in and amongst the community, the media, client charities and the general public."*

The project has also shown that you don't necessarily need a dedicated marketing and communications team to get coverage for volunteering and recruit volunteers through the media. Significant progress can be made with someone who is enthusiastic about media work but has limited experience. Further, the work with the organisations showed that to be successful you do not necessarily need a large budget for media work. Beyond staff time, resources for phone calls and buying newspapers and magazines neither of the organisations spent money on media work over the six month period.

The organisation's activities have shown that with some basic ingredients, much can be achieved in small organisations with the media. They have also highlighted the need for organisations to identify why they want to work with the media and what they want to get out of it. Above all this project has shown the importance of setting realistic and achievable targets for media activities and the need for persistence. In the words of the BACYP mentee: *"be realistic in what you want to achieve, be consistent and don't give up."*

## References

Gaskin, K. (2007) *Check it out: A toolkit to assess the impact of Volunteer Development Agencies*. Institute for Volunteering Research

Voluntary Action Media Unit (2005) *Culture Clash? An investigation of the relationship between charities, the media and commercial PR Agencies*, VAMU.

## Appendix 1: Media coverage received during project

### BACYP

November 10th 2006	Radio Interview with mentee at the team challenge event organised by BACYP and the RAF	Time 1066 Radio Station	
November 17th 2006	'A smashing time' – team challenge event organised by BACYP and the RAF (with images)	Slough Observer	
February 22nd 2007	'Careers fair' – sports careers fair organised by BACYP at Newbury College	Newbury Weekly News	
May 10th 2007	'Extending first-class sport and leisure activities' – article about the work of BACYP (with image)	Newbury Weekly News	
May 10th 2007	'And they all sang 'Marley!'" – article on boxing event organised by BACYP member club (with images)	Newbury Weekly News	Pages 70 -71
May 10th 2007	'Sonny so much in command' – article on boxing event (with images)	Newbury Weekly News	Page 70
May 10th 2007	'Sprott: They're a knock-out!' – article on boxing event (with image)	Newbury Weekly News	Pages 70 -71
May 31st 2007	'Berkshire's young stars shine on the big stage' – article on the county young people's athletics championships organised by BACYP (with images)	Maidenhead Advertiser	Page 91
June 1st 2007	'Pembroke wins another gold' – results listing for the athletics championship with brief introduction	Windsor Express	

## Cheltenham Volunteer Centre

October 12th 2006	'Railway volunteers signal their intent to restore station' – employee volunteering event at Greater Western Railways	Gloucestershire Echo	Page 18
October 27th 2006	'Can you help out for a day?' – request for volunteers for Make a Difference Day	Gloucestershire Echo	Page 20
November 11th 2006	'New bus will help disabled get about' -presentation of cheque for new vehicle	Gloucestershire Echo	
November 23rd 2006	'Can you help pack' – appeal for volunteers to pack bags for the Cobalt Cancer Appeal	Gloucestershire Echo	Page 5
January 31st 2007	'Have you got time to help out?' – appeal for volunteers for Cheltenham and District Carers and Families	Gloucestershire Echo	
March 7th 2007	'Charity in need of volunteers' – appeal for volunteers to take on fundraising activities for the Cobalt Appeal Fund	Gloucestershire Echo	Page 11
March 14th 2007	'Mission impossible' - event for Pittville School volunteers at Leonard Cheshire	Star Radio	
June edition 2007	'Service with a Smile' – article about volunteering with the Community Transport Team	Cotswold Life	Pages 126 - 129

## **Appendix 2 - Useful resources for organisations**

[www.VolunteerGenie.org.uk](http://www.VolunteerGenie.org.uk) - Shows charities how to use the power of the media to recruit volunteers. It's free and it's packed with guides to planning and creating volunteer recruitment campaigns. It includes useful information on how to devise a media strategy and how to make a charity story newsworthy. You can also find all the latest research on volunteer recruitment. On the site there are also over 30 campaign case studies showing how charities have used the media to reach potential volunteers.

### **Details of media outlets in your area**

[askCHARITY: www.askCHARITY.org.uk/mediadirectory](http://www.askCHARITY.org.uk/mediadirectory) - A directory which gives charities insider information about how to approach particular media outlets. Any charity registered on [askCHARITY.org.uk](http://www.askCHARITY.org.uk) (a free service) can search the directory, create a new entry or update the contact details for a media outlet (it's a Wiki).

MediaUK: [www.mediaUK.com](http://www.mediaUK.com) – Lists audience details and gives you some key contacts for all UK radio, newspapers, magazines and TV.

Hold the Front Page: [www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk](http://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk) - Lists details and circulation of all daily regional newspapers.

The Newspaper Marketing Agency: [www.nmauk.co.uk/nma/do/live/factsAndFigures](http://www.nmauk.co.uk/nma/do/live/factsAndFigures) - Supply free information on the audiences and reach of every newspaper in the country.

Media Directory 2007: The Essential Handbook published by Media-Guardian. (£19.99)

[www.communitynewswire.co.uk](http://www.communitynewswire.co.uk) – Post a press release on the site and they'll send it out via the Press Association to every newsroom in the UK for you.

Association of Publishing Agencies produce a free contacts directory for customer magazines (for example it tells you who produces Tesco's Clubcard regional magazines and who publishes your local train company's on-board free magazine) <http://www.apa.co.uk>

MediaAtlas ([www.mediaatlas.co.uk](http://www.mediaatlas.co.uk)) and MediaDisk ([www.mediadisk.co.uk](http://www.mediadisk.co.uk)) are two of the main suppliers of online media directories. They hold the key contact details for practically every media outlet in the UK. These are expensive services; subscription costs approximately £3000 per year (charity discounts are available).

### **Media strategy guides**

Media Team - support community organisations in Australia and they have a free online "Strategic Communications Plan Generator". [www.mediateam.com.au/survey/9/Strategic-Communications-Plan-Generator.aspx](http://www.mediateam.com.au/survey/9/Strategic-Communications-Plan-Generator.aspx).

The Media Trust - publishes a media strategy guide and template: [www.mediatruster.org/training-events/training-resources/online-guides-1/guide\\_developing-a-communications-strategy](http://www.mediatruster.org/training-events/training-resources/online-guides-1/guide_developing-a-communications-strategy).

The DIY Guide to Public Relations for Charities published by the Directory of Social Change [www.dsc.org.uk](http://www.dsc.org.uk), (£16.95) is a good resource for beginners.

## ***Appendix 3 – Making a story plan***

### **Online guides and templates for writing press releases**

Media Trust: [www.mediatrust.org/training-events/training-resources/online-guides](http://www.mediatrust.org/training-events/training-resources/online-guides)

Media Team [www.mediateam.com.au](http://www.mediateam.com.au)

### **Other useful resources**

[www.countmeincalendar.info](http://www.countmeincalendar.info) – a free listings service for charity events and campaign launches. Useful for your story planning; to prevent event clashes, to spot ways of hooking your story into other charity's events

### **A guide to getting your story in the media**

**There are no hard and fast rules for approaching the media and shaping a story. Every story will be different and every story will need a different approach. Working through this list of questions should help you build a story plan and prepare your story.**

- 1. What's the story?**
- 2. What's the main message?** Can you explain it in a clear and simple way?
- 3. Why do you want the media to cover this story?**
- 4. Who's your target audience for this story?** Who do you want to hear, see or read this particular story? Why?
- 5. Which media outlet(s) do you want to cover this story?** Is there a particular journalist or reporter you want to target?

**6. What do you know about that media outlet / journalist?** Who are their readers/ listeners/ viewers?

**7. What would make your story appeal to that media outlet?** What would sell it to them and their readers/ audience? (For example: Photos? Case studies? A light hearted tone and an upbeat story? Or hard news and new research statistics?)

**8. How are you going to approach that media organisation?** Who are you going to approach? Which department, desk or programme?

**9. Make a timeline.** When are you going to pitch the story by phone, email the journalist and make a follow up call? What date are you aiming to have your story printed or broadcast?

**10. Who in your organisation is going to run this story/ media approach?** Be clear about who your organisation's point of contact is for the story. Give the journalist that person's mobile number too. Building a relationship with a media outlet or journalist needs consistency. Don't have different people from your organisation calling in, contacting the same journo.

**11. A press release / email doesn't need to be sweated over!** Keep it simple. Think of it as an invitation. It can almost be a series of bullet points. Make it personal and like a targeted letter to that journalist (when you can). No attachments.

**12. Who might you want the journalist/ photographer to meet for your story?**

**13. What if a journalist wants to interview you? What if a journalist calls you?** Make sure to respond to their requests as fast as you can, but don't promise things you can't deliver. If you're asked an awkward question, it's fine to say "I'll need to go and check that. Can I call you back in 2 mins?" Have a think about what it is you want to say, find that information they wanted and call them back ASAP.

Work through your story plan. Get it clear in your mind. Think about what your story is & who it's for. But don't waste time writing a press release yet.

Phone the news desk / features desk / forward planning / target journo at "The Daily News" or "The Morning Show". Pitch your story. Keep it short, clear and punchy. Who are you, why are you calling them in particular, what have you got to offer them. Sell your story to them! Gauge their interest.  
\* Remember to call at a good time: not at deadline time, not when they're about to go on air.

**Interested.** Get name and contact details of journo you spoke to.

Work fast and write that press release. Send them a brief, punchy press release as a follow up to your call. No attachments.

Tailor the press release in response to info you may have gained from your initial call. Which elements of your story seemed to most appeal to that journalist?

You may get referred on to another journalist. Get their number and begin the process again.

**Follow up your email with a phone call within next couple of days.** Do they need any more info from you? Can you set up a photo opportunity or case study interview for them? Keep them talking, keep them interested.

Stress the key message you want published/ broadcast. Stress the dates or urgency if appropriate. Ask them clearly to include your organisation's details at the end of the article/ bulletin. Check the details they have.

**Make yourself available** for any last minute queries that journo may have. Keep your mobile on. Don't expect that journo to let you know when your story is going to be published or broadcast, so make sure to monitor those media outlets you approached. Chase that journalist with friendly calls to see what's happened to your story if it doesn't appear. When it does run, send a quick thank you email, ending with "let's speak again soon". Keep building that personal relationship.

**Not interested.**

Ask them what might make your story work for them?

**Still not interested**

Ask for their name and contact details. Ask if you can come back to them with future story ideas.

Don't be afraid to go back to them with another story. **Start to build a relationship with that journalist** and understand what kind of story they might want from you in the future.

Try the Letters Page if appropriate. Or, begin again and try pitching your story to another media outlet.

**Try and evaluate the response your story gets.** Increase in donations?  
Increase in calls to your organisation?  
Increase in number of volunteers?