

# how to gain media coverage to showcase your involvement

Media coverage of your activity can attract local support for what you are doing. This may lead to help from a local company or other group that will link your work to the wider community.

Media attention can motivate your team and bring extra excitement and fun.

It can also help to recruit new volunteers.

## How do I go about it?

- There is no magic formula to getting a story into a newspaper or onto local radio, generally editors look for stories that makes readers react - things that make people react emotionally.
- Some items are obviously news, but you may find that your Sewa Day activities are better covered in the 'What's On' guide, the events diary, the charities section or the letters page.
- Your event may be particularly interesting and newsworthy in itself - the more unusual and wacky the better - or it may be you have a personal story to tell. Many of our volunteers have powerful reasons for wanting to help which make ideal 'human interest' stories for local papers.

## Contacting the media

- Call the news desk/action desk on your local newspaper or radio station. Email, fax or post them with further information.
- If a journalist contacts you, do not feel pressurised to speak to them there and then.
- Ask them if you can ring back in five or ten minutes to give you a chance to gather your thoughts and prepare what it is you want to say.

## Writing a press release

Your news will be in competition with information from many other sources so clear and concise presentation is important.

## If you write a press release, remember the five 'W's:

- Who - is the story about?
- What - is the most important angle?
- Why - is it important?
- Where - is it happening?
- When - did it happen / will it happen?

It is useful for the media if you include information on Sewa Day. Standard wording can be found on the template press release. Please contact the Sewa Day Press Office for further help and advice or to request information.

**Tips:**

- Don't forget to give your project a catchy title.
- Make sure you write "Press Release" at the top and if something photogenic is planned add the words 'Photo Call'.
- Put the most interesting facts about your activity at the beginning of the press release. Paragraphs should be added in order of importance, as editors will not use information at the bottom of the release, if they run out of space.
- Issue the press release 1-2 weeks before the event.
- Offer a photo opportunity.
- Stick to the facts. Remember press releases should be brief and factual – not adverts.
- Avoid PR 'puffery' and avoid over-use of adjectives.
- Include a brief quote from an appropriate spokesperson.
- Include a local contact name and telephone number of project spokesperson (ideally daytime & evening).
- Follow up your press release by phone or email a couple of days later.
- Please send a copy of any press release you issue to the Sewa Day press office on [press@sewaday.org](mailto:press@sewaday.org)

**After the Event**

You can send a follow-up press release to local media, to let them know how successful the event was. This is particularly useful if some journalists are unable to attend. Sending information as soon after the event as possible will maximise your chance of media covering the story.

Have photographs available if possible, but remember these must be good quality (high resolution) if they are to reproduce successfully in a newspaper.

**Thank you**

Letters to the Editor are a useful tool for any organisation. One way to almost guarantee publication is to write a letter thanking everyone who helped contribute to your Sewa Day activity.

**Volunteer Story**

Please let us know about your experience on Sewa Day – we may use your story for our website, marketing materials or future media opportunities, to help encourage even more people to take part in the future.

## Photographs

- The old cliché of a picture being worth a thousand words is still true. People remember pictures and faces more easily.
- Think about what the content of your photo is going to be they should be clear, lively, interesting and attention grabbing.
- Offer a photo opportunity when you send in your press release but be flexible. Photographers may not be able to attend at the time you specify and they may have their own ideas of what makes the “ideal photo”.
- Don’t forget to wear your Sewa Day T-shirts in any press photo. They are bright and colourful and provide good publicity for the campaign.
- Get consent from those in the photograph before you pass pictures on to the press (by filling in the Photo Consent section on the Volunteer Record Form template).
- Send us your pictures, complete with labels and Volunteer Record Forms and we can publicise the success of your event in the articles we produce for the media. We will also put your photos on the Sewa Day website’s Photo Gallery!

## Tips

- Keep empty space around the subject to a minimum and go for a clean background.
- Show volunteers involved in their activity.
- Tell the story - depending on the activity, before and after shots can be effective to illustrate what you have achieved.
- If you have money available in your budget, it is worth booking a photographer to come to your event to take pictures which you can send to the local media.
- You must give your photographer a clear outline of the pictures you want. For example, are there key supporters who should have their photograph taken with the attending VIP?
- The best way to book a reliable local photographer is to contact your local newspaper and ask them to recommend a freelance photographer.