

Telling it as it is...

Public Relations and Media Handbook for Disability Networks

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FOREWORD

People with Disabilities in Ireland (PWDI) was founded in 1997. It is the national representative organisation of people with disabilities. PWDI aims to promote the human, civil, social, economic, political and cultural rights and freedoms of people with disabilities and to achieve the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities. It has approximately 6,000 members nation wide. There are 30 networks of PWDI, one for each county in the republic, four in Dublin and two in Cork. Each Network is cross-disability representative: members are people with physical, sensory, learning and mental/emotional disabilities, parents, relatives and carers of people with disabilities, advocates and organisations of people with disabilities.

This handbook is a supplement of the EU Horizon training programme of the PWDI "Training and Development of County Networks". This training programme is part of the Employment Horizon Initiative of the European Social Fund, which primarily intends to explore new and more effective ways of tackling unemployment and marginalisation for the labour market among people with disabilities. An important means of bringing people with disabilities in from the margins is strengthening their own organisations and networks. With this objective, the PWDI Horizon programme consists of three training modules: Communicating with Others, Working with Others and Disability Awareness, Employment and Equality Issues. This handbook was developed as an additional resource for the "Communicating with Others" module. It was compiled for the use of the thirty Networks of PWDI and outlines how to devise and employ PR and media strategies. It can also be a useful tool for all disability organisations and voluntary or community groups.

WHY USE PR & THE MEDIA?

One of the main aims of PWDI is to secure the implementation of the 402 recommendations made by the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities in their report (1996) "A Strategy for Equality". If people are to support your cause, they need to know you exist. The quickest and most effective way to make people aware of disability issues is to use the media.

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

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

Remember that when you are trying to interest a journalist, a policy-maker or a decision-maker, you are a sales rep- representing a cross-disability organisation of people with disabilities. Every time you want to publicise an issue you need to identify.

- What's new about our story?
- What's different about our story?
- What do we do that others don't?
- Who do we need to influence at Local Level?
- Who do we need to influence at National Level?

Get to know about important people, associations and organisations, their policies and the ways decisions are made – by talking to people, watching televisions, listening to the radio, reading papers and magazines, asking for information.

What is being said about the issues that concern you? Who is most likely to be sympathetic to your cause? What happens at a Town or County Council meeting, in the Seanad or Dail? What national laws are being debated? What European and International (UN) directives, regulations, conventions and resolutions has the government ratified or supported? (To ratify is to agree to follow something that isn't automatically binding, such as a convention. Once ratified, a convention becomes part of national law.)

It might be useful to have one person in the Network to watch out for developments. Keep a file on people, organisations, laws and policies. Remember that things can change quite quickly.

CREATING GOOD PR & A VISIBLE PROFILE OF YOUR NETWORK

Society won't change on its own. It only changes when large sections of society want change. As people with disabilities, as Networks of people with Disabilities and as PWDI, one of our primary objectives is that we want to use our influence to bring about the social change necessary to allow us full and equal participation. You know best what your needs are your contribution to the process of change will make it more effective. Social change can happen through changes in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and through change in laws, policies and services. To change attitudes and behaviours, people need to know about you, your needs and what you have to offer and contribute to your community, society and the world. To change society's formal structures, we need to make sure that law and policy-makers, as well as service-providers, know not only about our needs but also our ideas for solving problems.

One thing to remember is that the traditional stereotyped images of people with disabilities have been a major barrier to the understanding of disability issues by the general public and policy-makers. The structures and attitudes of society are the problem.

Some Action Ideas

- Arrange of phone-in talk shows on local radio programmes to encourage community debate on disability issues, to change stereotyped views of people with disabilities and promote solutions of benefit to all.
- What about short talks by people with disabilities at local schools and community groups during National Disability Awareness Week in May and on the International Day of Disabled Persons on 3 December.

Who to Influence at Local Level

Who	Why
Local Authorities, Town Planners, Civil Servants, Public Representatives etc.	To influence local by-laws and budgets and to formalise change.
Members and other people with disabilities	To raise awareness through community leaders and for specific action: e.g. accessible schools and churches, a local radio programme on disability accessible health services etc.
Professionals in education, health, welfare, business, law, media, etc. Trade unions, Religious leaders etc.	

Who to Influence on National Level

Who

Ministers & Civil Servants

Other statutory authorities; health, housing, transport, etc

Disability organisations, other voluntary and community organisations, trade unions, Partnership Companies etc.

Associations of professionals: Architects, Teachers, etc

General public

Why

To influence national laws, regulations and programmes

To influence their policies and practices and for specific action, such as community-based facilities, accessible housing and transport systems, etc.

For support in campaigns

To change their policies and practices to include the real needs of people with disabilities and to get their support in raising awareness.

To raise awareness of disability issues and to show that we are part of the general public.

HOW TO CREATE AWARENESS OF ISSUES & PROACTIVELY SELL THEM TO THE MEDIA

One of the simplest ways to raise awareness about disability issues is to talk to people. When you tell someone about yourself – about your daily life, your thoughts and feelings – you make it a lot easier for them to understand you. If each of us talks to the people we meet about the ways society disable us, we can go a long way towards raising awareness and changing attitudes about disability.

Coming together with other people with disabilities also important in helping to change attitudes. As a Network the first step towards change is getting together with your members to discuss and identify the key issues of concern to you. If necessary prioritise these issues and agree a strategy for when, where, how and with whom you will raise each issue. The next state is to go and tell the relevant media, policy-makers and decision-makers about what your members want.

Set Clear Objectives

Campaigning is defined as ‘a systematic course of purposeful action for a specified purpose’ – in other words, it has precise aims and objectives and is pursued with a sense of direction. ‘Making people aware of a problem’ or ‘creating greater public awareness’ is not campaigning.

Holding public events to which the local community is invited can show how people with disabilities are already, and want to become more, active participants in society – with ideas, skills, needs and rights. It is very important to make sure that such occasions do not reinforce the traditional stereotypes of people with disabilities as little more than passive recipients of charity and care.

Using the Media to Get Your Message Across

You will often find it difficult to interest the media in your stories and when you do gain their interest, you may find it difficult to sustain it over time. There are several reasons for this. On the one hand, voluntary organisations are often seen to be ‘worthy but dull’ and of little news value. They are forever running fund-raising events, one more like the other, or ‘whinging’ about their lack of money, neither of which are especially newsworthy.

Talk to producers of local and community radio programmes and editors of local newspapers. Ask them to broadcast a programme or print an article about disability issues or print a regular column by a disabled person. Encourage members to write in to comment about these. You might be able to get a regular show on disability issues on the radio, once a month or even once a week. Remind editors and producers that disabled people and their families are readers and listeners.

When talking to the press, stress the human rights angle and the practical steps that can be taken to improve things. Don't let reporters dwell on personal tragedy-type stories. Raising awareness about disability, as defined by the social model, opens the way to finding solutions to problems. Stress that action on disability is everybody's responsibility.

Let media people talk directly to people with disabilities – for example, schoolchildren can talk about the benefits of living and learning together in mainstream education.

Ways of working with the Media

- Press conferences
- Press releases
- Photo events and opportunities
- Offering comments
- Proposing articles, features
- Seminars
- Launches of reports
- Letters to the editor

Whenever you work with journalists, encourage them to focus on social rather than individual problems and solutions – not on the disability but on the social barriers that prevent people with disabilities from taking part. Make the obstacles and discrimination which people with disabilities face in their daily lives the themes, for example:

- The architectural and communication barriers
- Access to and participation in education, training, employment, sports, social and recreational activities etc.
- Society's attitudes to disability

Promote the values of:

- Rights, Not Charity
- Respect, Not pity
- Equality
- Nothing About Us, Without Us.

Devising a Media Strategy

It is difficult to influence the political agenda and decision-makers unless they are persuaded that there is some underlying public concern 'out there' and the level of media interest in a topic is often the yardstick by which this is judged. More positively, the media can focus and intensify interest in and concern about an issue to the extent that decision and policy-makers feel obliged to respond.

Checklist for Planning a PR and Media Strategy

- What is the problem the difficulty, the issue?
- Why is it a problem?
- Why are its effects so serious?
- What costs does it impose?
- What do we want done about it?
- *Who* do we want to do *what*?
- Is this a problem of policy, the allocation of resource, procedures of what?
- Who benefits if this problem is solved?
- Show how changes benefit everybody.

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE – DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Traditionally, disability has been seen as the “problem” of the individual and it has been the individual who has had to change, or be changed by professionals through rehabilitation or cure. Now, people with disabilities and their organisations all over the world have described, from their own experience, how economic and social barriers prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in society.

This explanation is known as the social model of disability, because it focuses on society’s disabling or handicapping environments and barriers of attitude, rather than on individuals with impairments. The social model was formulated by people with disabilities and has now been accepted by many governments, non-disabled academics and professionals. It stresses human rights and equalisation of opportunities.

Words and Pictures: Images of Disability

When you are working with the media suggest these guidelines to media professionals:

- Use words that stress equality and active participation.
- Avoid language that portrays people with disabilities as tragic, pitiable victims, in need of charity and desperate for cures.
- People with disabilities should speak for themselves and be used as programme presenters.
- Television should be subtitled to reach deaf people. Make the main messages available audibly for people with visual impairments.
- Show people with disabilities who have a wide range of interests, skills and lifestyles. Show men and women, of all ages and backgrounds, with various types of disabilities.
- Don’t employ non-disabled actors to portray people with disabilities in films or on television.
- Make sure people with disabilities are photographed in the same way as non-disabled people.

YOUR AUDIENCE AND YOUR MESSAGE

If you want your audience to listen to and be influenced by what you are saying, it must come across in a way that is both interesting and understandable. People are bombarded with media messages from radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the advertising, which surrounds us daily. You need to make people sit up and pay attention to you. To do this, you must have something interesting to say, and a stimulating way of saying it.

You should also think hard about who your target audience is: their age and gender, educational level, whether they live in cities or rural areas, whether they are trade-unionists, students, farmers, unemployed people or employers, decision makers (e.g. politicians, administrators, researchers/policy advisors), the general public. Clarifying this will enable you to talk to them in language that will make sense to them, and get them on your side. Whoever you are talking to don't use jargon.

The 5W's & 6C's of Effective Communication

Whatever communication task you are undertaking, always remind your self of the 5W's & 6C's before you start. This will give your communication a better chance of success and make the task easier:

Always Know Why? Who? Where? When? What? How?

Always Be Concise, Concrete, Courteous, Constructive, Correct, Complete.

What do you want to say? Know what your aims are, know the policy of your organisation. Do you want to make a case for funding, for changes, for changing the law, for changing practices or attitudes?

How are you going to say it? Work out what major points you want to make during the interview.

Who are you trying to influence? The general public, fellow campaigners, workers, decision-makers, or all of these?

FORMS OF MEDIA

National Media

National media refers to newspapers, radio, and television that have a national audience or distribution network. Of the National newspapers there are daily morning, evening, and Sunday papers, both in tabloid and broadsheet formats. In the broadcasting format radio and television news are the most popular programmes. Apart from the main news bulletins on RTE and TV3, Nationwide is an important programme that gives a national view by travelling out to the regions of Ireland to make special reports.

Provincial Media

Provincial Media are Newspapers, TV, Radio and Magazines that cover and have their readers and listeners in a specific region or county. Examples: The Skibbereen Eagle, The Limerick Leader, Radio Kerry, Connemara Community Radio. Their audience is mainly within specific geographic boundaries and therefore the items they cover have to be either about, or impacting on, the people, the organisations, the politics and the economy of that area. Provincial Media cover items topical to the region and to specific communities within that region.

The Provincial Media are generally easier to access. As long as the News items sent to them have genuine News value they will run them if they have the space. The amount of available space depends on the number of big news stories that have come in, and the amount of advertising that has been secured.

Stories for local media

If you are concentrating on your local media, give television, radio and newspaper reporters examples of local discrimination – inaccessible shops, people barred from restaurants, cinemas, jobs and schools. An individual's story is always appealing to the media.

Such stories, while highlighting the issue, should be done in such a way that they do not discourage local business people from responding to the needs of people with disabilities.

Special Correspondents

Most of the National Media have Special Correspondents who solely write News and Features in a particular field of interest. They can be Staff or Freelance journalists.

Examples of Special Correspondents:

Women Politics European Affairs Environment

Sports

Health

Education

Economics

An environment correspondent for example will cover many different kinds of stories but they will all in some way involve the environment and our use of it. An environment correspondent might be very interested to know of things such as access to public buildings for people with disabilities – very definitely a story with an environmental ‘angle’. So build up contact with a range of special correspondents over a whole range of issues. Looking at the above list of examples of special correspondents you can probably think of many situations where disability issues would have occasion to overlap with these subjects.

Specialist Magazines & Publications

All specialist magazines cover particular areas of human interest and appeal to people who participate in or have an interest in that particular activity. Specialist magazines cover a range of topics such as Movies, Science, Archaeology, Current Affairs, Sport, Computers, Fashion, Cars, etc.

People with disabilities participate in many activities and you may want to ensure that their participation is reflected in the pages of specialist publications. Disabled people wear fashionable clothes, enjoy sport, use computers, make art and music, drive cars, vote in elections and, like everyone else, and have many interests. Do specialist magazines acknowledge this fact in their coverage of all these areas of interest?

Should they sometimes look at their area of interest from the point of view of disabled people? Do they need to be reminded that disabled people get involved too?

Internet

Many voluntary groups are now using the internet for their publicity work. An increasing number of Irish newspapers have electronic versions (e.g. Irish Times, Munster Express) and others have e-mail addresses. Most local stations have a home page, which gives some information about their catchment areas and programmes.

The internet may be used for electronic mail, e.g. issuing press releases or responding to items in the media, or for providing information on activities. Many newspapers (e.g. Irish Times, Evening Herald and Irish Independent) have regular columns which list new internet sites. Groups which launch new home pages (new websites) should inform the journalists who compile those columns about their new services.

Aertel

Aertel is RTE’s teletext service. It provides information that can be viewed on television sets. Aertel is used a lot by the Deaf community and other groups. Users are restricted to the amount of information that can be contained in one

screen, i.e. 39 characters across and 23 lines down, including all space, punctuation and headings. Information for Aertel must therefore be very carefully and concisely written.

Aertel may be contacted at Aertel, RTE, Donnybrook, Dublin 4

Cablelink

Cablelink provides information on forthcoming events. Information should include details of the event, venue, time, place and contact phone number, and must be sent in writing 10 days in advance to Cablelink, 10 Pembroke Place, Dublin 4.

WHERE DO NEWSFEATURES COME FROM?

“News is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress; all the rest is just advertising”.

Lord Northcliffe, press baron who founded the Daily Mail.

“News is people. It is people talking and people doing. Committees and Cabinets and Courts are people; so are fires, accidents and planning decisions. They are only news because they involve and affect people”.

Harold Evans, former editor of the Sunday Times.

A news story literally tells of something new. Features are usually longer and typically give more background, include more quotes and do not have the same kind of sell by date as news stories. Other stories could be in the form of a report from an event or conference, a regular column (e.g. opinion column, social welfare, or any particular topic of relevance).

News is literally something new. It could be

- A new organisation, event, research findings, publication.
- Information on a celebrity – his/her sponsorship/ support for your event.
- A novel event – Competition, Fundraiser, Prize.
- Problems – Splits, Misappropriation of Funds, Resignations, Sackings.
- Something confidential – Secret business deals, Contributions to Political Parties.
- Something shocking – Discrimination, Levels of Poverty, Maladministration.
- Something that affects many people – Tax Cuts/Increases, Telephone Charges, Major Strike, Health & Safety, Discrimination/Equality, Changes in advance.
- Press Releases – are the main way in which pre-packaged news arrives. The biggest manufacturers are government departments, the police, local authorities and commercial companies (often using Public Relations agencies) trying to get publicity. But groups and campaigns in the community can often compete successfully because their material is local.

PRESS RELEASES

Press releases should always be used to send newsworthy stories to the media. News journalists are very busy people and there are stylistic conventions for preparing press releases that make them easier to read and use, thereby saving the journalist some time. A badly prepared and presented press release may be instantly binned, so it is very important to know and use the correct structure for your release. Several factors will influence whether or not your news story will be used, such as:

- its perceived 'importance' as a story
- the size and importance of the other stories it is 'competing' with for space
- the amount of space which has to be 'filled' with news that day or week.

Getting it Right

Make sure your press release contains genuine news – important stories about your Network and its activities or your Network's reaction and viewpoint on local or national issues. Do not send out releases to the media unless you genuinely have something to say, launch, announce etc. You will be constantly building a relationship with the media and probably with individual journalists and their perception of your credibility as an organisation will be influenced by the newsworthiness and presentation of the press releases you send to them.

Presenting The Facts

The information contained in a press release should be presented in descending order of importance, with the most important facts first, followed by supporting facts and information presented in decreasing order of importance. The first paragraph of a release should contain all of the most important information:

- **Who** – who is launching, announcing, reacting? Who will it affect?
- **What** – What is happening or being said?
- **When** – When is something happening – day, time, date?
- **Where** – Where is something taking place?
- **Why** – Why is it happening? Why is it newsworthy? New or unique?
- **How** – How will something be done? How will it affect people?

The next (second) paragraph should contain more elaboration or background information.

The third paragraph may contain further information and may also contain a 'quote' from someone in your organisation (commonly your Chairperson) about the news you are announcing or the reaction you are giving to an issue or a topical news story. Again you are saving the journalist time if you give them a quote they can use without having to call you. Don't forget to mention the title and the organisation represented by the person giving the quote. The

best press releases are the ones which could be used 'verbatim' (word for word) by the media so when writing a release make sure it is clear, concise, direct and presented with all of the main facts and information in the first and second paragraphs.

Fourth, fifth and sixth paragraphs may be needed to present further background material but your release should not contain any unnecessary or irrelevant information. In terms of length, a release should be as short and concise as possible while still containing all relevant facts and information. It is permissible to include a brief paragraph about your organisation (membership/evolution/significant achievements) but this should be a final paragraph to your news/press release. A press release should not be more than two pages long.

Style

Your press release should:

- Be factual and direct
- Have short sentences and relatively short paragraphs.
- Avoid repetition.
- Include contact names and phone/fax/e-mail details (including an after office hours contact number if the news story is very important) at the end.
- Be one page if possible, two at the most. Include words 'more follows' at bottom of page one if it runs to two pages. Have word 'ends' at bottom of second page.
- Identify the sender (headed notepaper with name, address and phone/fax is ok).
- Have the date prominently displayed (on both pages if sending two).
- Have good size margins.
- Use double spacing.
- Be neatly typed with no factual or spelling errors (proof read carefully, have more than one proofreader).
- Stick to facts and avoid comment except in a quote.
- Be typed on one side of A4 paper only – never use both sides of the paper if you overrun one page.
- Spell out numbers one to ten (use the words). For numbers above ten, use numerals.
- When using dates in text do not use 'th' and 'nd', e.g. 22nd June 1999. Instead use this format: June 22 1999.
- Avoid improper use of capital letters.
- Have a 'headline' (capitalised, top of both pages) which encapsulates content of news story, for example, 'WATERFORD NETWORK OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES SECURES EU FUNDING FOR LOCAL PROJECT'.
- Have numbered pages.

Additional Material

You may need to include a brochure or pamphlet with your press release, e.g. about a new service you are offering, or about technical equipment. Keep these inserts minimal but do include them if they give the journalist more information for the story. You may also include a small leaflet/pamphlet about your Network/ICPD.

Distribution

Decide whether your press release should be sent to the national or local media, or both (how important is your story outside of your own county? Is it a first or something unique or pioneering? Does it have implications for all people with disabilities in Ireland?)

Distribution

Decide whether your press release should be sent to the national or local media, or both (how important is your story outside of your own county? Is it a first or something unique or pioneering? Does it have implications for all people with disabilities in Ireland?).

Send your release to the News Editor of the media you have selected. Send a copy at the same time to any journalists you know or have had contact with previously and send a copy to the Features Editor (for newspapers and magazines) and the Producer (for radio programmes). They might find your news story interesting and want to have a feature article written about it or have you on a radio show to explain more about it. It is common protocol to also send a copy to the Editor (for newspapers and magazines) although the Editor will not usually read press releases. It is critical that you ensure that all journalists and editors receive the press release at the same time. If one receives and prints it first then the others will not use it and the coverage of your story will be limited. This may also damage your good relations with the media so do make sure they all receive it on the same day at around the same time. You can post your press releases but bear in mind that they should all arrive on the same day. It is common to post a press release one-day and then fax your story to the same media the following day to make sure that they have all safely received it. For your local media you may like to hand deliver press releases to make sure they arrive.

Deadlines

All media operates to deadlines – deadlines are the time by which all stories for the next edition or programme must be received. Daily media have daily deadlines, weekly media have weekly deadlines, monthly media have monthly deadlines. You should research and know the deadlines for all the media you deal with and have your press releases to them in good time. If your story arrives at the wrong time it will not be used.

Follow-Up

Make sure that the people named as contacts for your Network on the press release are easily available by phone after the media receive the release, to answer any further questions the journalist may have. You may 'follow up' your release by a phone call to specific News Editors or journalist to politely inquire if it has been received. It is not a good idea to ask if your story will be used- newsrooms are very busy places and if a journalist feels you are being too 'pushy' you may defeat the purpose of your call – which is to try to ensure your story is noticed and used. If you have a relationship with a particular journalist, or if they have covered your stories before, then you might tell them that you will be available if they want further information. Always keep your phone calls very short when calling a newsroom-you do not want to be regarded as a pest. If this happens then the journalist may not want to take a call from you again.

EVENT ORGANISATION

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

There are many different events that could publicise and celebrate your issues and work – community meetings, discussions, marches, stalls in public places, concerts, integrated sports and arts events, vigils and street theatre illustrating disability issues.

If you are organising a local event, invite a local community leader or celebrity to open it as guest of honour. This will get other people interested in the event. You are also more likely to get coverage in the media.

To plan and organise a successful event give careful consideration to the following factors:

Venue

Your venue may be your own office, community hall, a conference centre, or a hotel room – this will depend on the size and nature of your event. It is crucial to make sure that your venue is appropriate, accessible and adequate for your needs in terms of size and facilities. Within your community are there accessible venues that you can hire at a reasonable rate? You might consider using an unusual venue for a press launch, such as an accessible art gallery, library or heritage centre. These venues would benefit from their accessibility being publicised and may accommodate your event at no charge.

Speakers

There will be speeches at most public events you organise. At conferences and seminars the whole day may consist of talks by different speakers. Press launches, exhibitions, public meetings, open days and other events will need speeches of introduction (usually by someone from your own organisation) and often will involve speeches offering endorsement by invited dignitaries (e.g. councillors, politicians, personalities, experts). When organising public events give some thought to the speakers you will invite. If your event has a very serious message that would like to get across to the community then you will want to invite speakers whose endorsement of your 'message' will add serious weight to your viewpoint. For open days or press launches where you are launching or announcing something, a 'celebrity' speaker can bring the crowds and almost guarantee coverage from your local media. You must plan your event well in advance if you want to invite speakers – they will need plenty of notice. Give them all the information they need about your

organisation and your event. Check what facilities they will need on the day (e.g. overhead projector, video, flip chart etc.)

It is important not to overload your audience with too much information. Therefore it may be better to have less speakers and instead allow more time for audience participation through questions and answers or through workshops.

Invitations

How many people do you want to attend your event? Who will you invite? Make sure that the invitations are sent out early enough for people to have plenty of notice (for local events seven to ten days is usually sufficient). If you are inviting anyone who will have a distance to travel, give them a little more notice as they may have to arrange accommodation. Make doubly sure that the invitations contain the date, time, place and venue of the event, and enclose explanatory material if required. Also enclose your address and phone/fax/e-mail so that your invitees can contact you if they wish to (you may put an 'RSVP' on the invitations if it is very formal or if a meal is involved).

Timing

Check that your event is not clashing with another big event in your area. You do not want your events to be affected by your invitees and the media being split between two competing events. Also remember to arrange your event to suit the deadlines of all the media you wish coverage from (it suits most local papers for your event to be early in the week, local radio and national media are more flexible). Timing is also important for your invitees – they may not be able to attend a daytime event due to work or family commitments so give some thought to the suitability of the timing of your event.

Media

You want to ensure maximum press coverage for your event. Any coverage you get before the event (pre-publicity) lets people know that it is going to take place and outlines the details in advance. If you want pre-publicity, send out a press release announcing and explaining your event two weeks in advance, making sure they arrive before the deadlines for your local press. The press release should outline the event and the reasons for it, who the speakers are, and a running order for the event. The press release should also emphasise any unique or newsworthy features of your event and give a brief introduction to your own organisation. Follow up your press release with phone calls to news/features editors three or four days before the event to see if any journalists are available to cover it.

Recording

If your event is an important milestone for you Network you may want to organise to have it recorded or documented for future reference. You could arrange to have it filmed or photographed for example (do not film without

participants' permission). You could also have a 'signing in' book for attendees so that you have a record of who came. You might want to have a 'comments' book at a conference or seminar so that people can give their opinions confidentially.

Disability Awareness

Ensure that:

- You provide sign language interpreters for people who are deaf/hearing impaired Advertise this fact well so as to proactively target the Deaf community
- People who are blind or visually impaired have easily accessible seating where they can clearly hear the speakers
- People using wheelchairs have clear access to and from the room
- Seating is well spaced for people with mobility difficulties
- Your venue is fully accessible
- Accessible toilets are situated nearby and clearly sign posted
- Information and materials are available in a variety of formats such as Braille, audiotape, computer disk. You may also want to consider producing easy to understand versions with pictures/cartoons which take the needs of people with learning disabilities and people with low levels of literacy into account

Preparing Your Venue

Do you need to organise:

- Posters/banners for the room or hall
- Display stands
- Microphone and PA for speakers
- Podium for speakers (make sure it is accessible for wheelchair users)
- Decoration for podium/stage (flowers,. Logos, banners)
- Tables, chairs
- Iced water for the speakers
- Equipment – TV, video, projector, screen, overhead projector, flip charts, pens
- Signing-in tables, signing-in books, name badges for participants/attendees
- Information table(s) (agenda for event, background information, membership applications etc.). Information tables/areas should be clearly sign-posted and supervised by informed members or personnel.
- Supervised Press table, where media can readily access information specially pre-packed for them (a press pack) and can arrange to interview key people. Press table should be clearly sign posted.
- Well informed members of your Network to look after you guests.

Media Coverage – Preparation

Ask your main speakers to let you have a copy of their speech in advance of the event (if possible). Prepare a press release about your event as if it has already happened. Use the main points from the speeches of your main speakers to outline what was said at the event and who was there. If any of the invited media do not attend your event, send them this press release just after your event has concluded. Obviously you will have to make amendments first if some of your speakers do not turn up or divert greatly from the speech they sent you in advance.

If you have hired your own photographer to record the event (making sure you specify the picture you want) get the prints as soon as possible (10x8 inch size is best, 5 x 7 alternatively). Caption them with the names and titles (if appropriate) of the people featured, the nature of the event, who organised it and the date, time and venue of the event. Type or neatly write the caption of a strip of white paper and attach to the back of photo lightly with sticky tape. Send or deliver to news and picture editors of print media who did not attend, along with press release about the event. Do not forget to give phone and fax contact number for spokesperson from your organisation on all press releases.

Event ideas:

- Conferences and workshops for the media or public. Invite policy makers to address your meetings on areas of their speciality.
- Solidarity days with other groups – your local place of worship, community or political group.
- Competition for local children to make housing accessible – who can build the simplest ramp.
- Integration days – children from a local mainstream school can visit a school for disabled children.
- You could also organise a public reading (with sign language interpretation) of statements by people with disabilities about their lives, plus exhibitions of pictures and cartoons. Make sure you include women and men of different ages and backgrounds and people with different types of disabilities.
- Arrange 'open days' on particular themes. Ensure that policy makers are invited.
- Host a dinner or meeting at which the policy maker can meet members in a productive and non-confrontational manner.

MAKING EVENTS VISUAL

In any news pictures are as important as words. In tabloid newspapers, the accompanying photograph is given greater prominence than the story itself. Newsreaders like looking at pictures. Not only must newspaper content be good and read well, but it must also look good. Appearance must attract readers. Photographs and other pictures enhance newspaper layout and from an editorial point of view they add conviction and indeed proof to a story. Why else would photographers wait around, sometimes for weeks, during a major news story, to capture the single moment, the conclusion to a siege, kidnapping or marathon meeting?

Many community events consist of meetings of various sorts such as conferences, training sessions, campaign meetings or AGMs. These make for boring photographs and unless there is a guest speaker of particular importance they are not likely to attract the interest of picture editors. To do this, set up a side event that is of more visual interest. Include an exhibition on the work of the organising group. If the topic of your meeting is urban dereliction, hold a press conference in the midst of a derelict site. Each event will have its own visual dimension. It is up to you to identify it and enhance it to make it attractive to photographers.

Protest marches and pickets make excellent picture material, particularly if they include unusual banners, placards or fancy dress. Street theatre also provides interesting photographs, as do children who are refreshingly less stilted than adults.

Avoid exploitation, particularly with children. If you are setting up photographs for the media be sure that the people involved have given informed consent.

Every community organisation should have at least one member with the task of taking regular, good quality, black and white photographs of events, developments and members. In this way a stock of photographic material can be built up and used as required by newspapers, local newsletters and other publications the organisation may be involved with. If no member is interested in photography try and get the services of a good amateur. Alternatively there are a small number of photojournalists who will build up files on your behalf. They will retain the copyright and charge only a small fee for the use of photographs in your own publications.

Photocalls

If you will be arranging a photocall at your event (an organised photo opportunity for the media) then send out a press release and details of the time and content of your photocall to the Pictures Editor of any print media you are inviting. Sometimes a journalist might not be available to attend and write about your event but in the photo captions (writing under picture giving who, what, where of photo) this can also be very effective. Usually a photocall would involve pictures of 'VIPs' with members of your organisation (holding a

report you are launching for example), however the local papers also like pictures of the community and often like 'fun' photocalls.

Checklist of Contents for a Press Pack

Press packs are information folders collated specially for the media. The journalist attending an event is given all relevant information and background material necessary to inform him/her in writing the story. They may attend your event briefly, take the pack away and write the story as if they had attended the whole event. Therefore it is important that the press pack contains everything relevant to their writing the story. Press packs are also sometimes sent to the media in advance of an event (with announcing press release), for example if you are running an event involving different workshops you could send a 'flyer' for each workshop along with the release. The 'flyers' might contain more detail on each workshop than you have room to fit into the press release.

A Press Pack Should Contain:

A press release

A Press release prepared for collection by the media at an event should be written as if the event was already over i.e. 'The County Manager, Mr. Kevin Lyons today officially launched the Donegal Town Access Survey for the Donegal Network of People with Disabilities, Speaking at the launch in County Buildings he said that'

Main speeches

You will have given journalists what you consider are the main points from speeches in the enclosed press release. Also include transcripts of main speeches so that journalists can use more quotes if they wish to.

Information about the event

Timetable/agenda of the event, list of speakers and the organisations they represent, background information about your own organisation (brief history, membership, achievements) and other participating organisations (if appropriate).

Copies of report or brochure being launched

If you are launching any printed material make sure there is a copy in the press pack (even if you have given every guest a copy at the door).

Pictures

Pictures may not be used in every press pack but if you are launching a product or service you may wish to enclose photos. For example, if you are announcing a new arts project you may include pictures from your last arts project.

List of sponsors

When you have received sponsorship for an even or project always give your sponsors credit for their contribution to your activities.

Other relevant supporting information

Background information to your event (facts, statistics, history). Add to press pack when appropriate and keep it as short as you can while still containing necessary information. You do not want to overload a journalist with unnecessary information but you must ensure that they have enough material to write an accurate story about your organisation and event.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Public speaking may involve anything from introducing a speaker or thanking a speaker to giving a short presentation or a longer lecture. For those who are not used to speaking to a group of people any of these tasks may seem daunting. Here are some guidelines you can follow to assist in preparing and delivering your material. Being well prepared will help you overcome nerves.

Preparation

- **Who?** Who will you be speaking to? Who is your audience?
- **What?** What will you say? What is expected of you?
- **When?** When is your talk-how long do you have to prepare?
- **Where?** Where will it be—is it a formal or informal occasion?
- **Why?** Why are you there—to introduce, inform, facilitate, entertain?
- **How long?** How long do you have to speak for?

Answer these questions. Decide clearly what your talk is to be about and how you can best communicate with your audience – you would not address schoolchildren in the same way as business people for example. Look at the time you have to fill – ten minutes may seem long to an inexperienced public speaker. In fact, when you are speaking in public time passes quickly. How much you can include in your talk depends on the time you have to fill.

10 Point Guide to Drafting Your Talk

1. **Collect your information.** Find the information you need to draw on for your talk – do as much research as is necessary.
2. **Make doubly sure it is accurate.** Get facts and statistics to back up your information.
3. **Study your information.** Decide what you want to use and what is important. If your talk is not information based (e.g. after dinner speech) then draft what you want to say.
4. **List your points under headings.** Begin to put a logical sequence on your information. List your points under main headings. Put these points in order of importance. Look again at your main headings and decide what order they should be in to make a logical structure for your talk.
5. **Write the body of your talk.** Use your main headings and listed points to help you construct your talk.
6. **Write your introduction.** Your introduction should outline the purpose and scope of your talk or pose the problem you are going to examine.
7. **Write your conclusion.** Your conclusion should sum up the main point or points of your talk (keep them brief) and gives you the chance to drive your message home.
8. **Examples and humour.** Are there examples you could use to illustrate your points? Would some humour be appropriate
9. **Practice your talk.** How does it sound – does it make good sense? Ask someone to listen while you practice. Edit if necessary. Check for timing.

10. Transfer pints to record cards. Put your main points on to index or record cards-as briefly as possible, using key words or phrases which you can then expand on. Number the cards sequentially and use them to glance at during your talk (making sure you put each used card to the back of the pile).

10 Tips for During Your Talk

1. **Protocol.** Follow the correct rule of protocol. Thank the person introducing you, acknowledge dignitaries (by title) and your audience, e.g. 'Thank you Madam Chairperson, Minister, ladies and gentlemen...'.
2. **Contact.** Establish contact with your group, introduce yourself if necessary. Be yourself. Be friendly but not over-familiar.
3. **Speech.** Do not adopt an accent or way of talking that you do not normally use. Speak slightly louder than normal speech. Stay about a foot away from a microphone. Do not talk too fast and keep good eye contact with your audience (for a large audience look to the back of the hall). Try to vary the tone and pitch of your voice for emphasis and variety.
4. **Props.** Use props when appropriate – they break up the body of the talk for you and your audience (projectors, chars, diagrams, video).
5. **Comfort.** Keep your index cards in your hand and use them, remembering to put used cars to the back.
6. **Questions.** If you are asked a question during or after your talk, pause to consider it. This gives you time to think and shows you are giving it serious consideration.
7. **Blanking.** If you can't think of what to say next, refer to your index cards or other notes. Never be afraid to refer to your notes – consulting your notes shows your audience that you have done your preparation and they will wait for you.
8. **Nerves.** Even the most practised public speakers experience nerves-it is perfectly normal. Good knowledge of your material and good preparation improve your confidence. Breathe deeply twice or three times before starting to speak. Creating a rapport with your group by introducing yourself and your talk can help overcome nerves and get you 'warmed up'. Speaking normally and remembering to breathe normally also combats nervousness.
9. **If you make a mistake do not panic.** Retrace your steps, find your place in your notes and continue your talk. Your audience do not expect you to be perfect.
10. **Have a glass of water beside you.** It is essential if your mouth dries up and it can be a very useful way to take a moment to refocus. It is a good idea not to drink coffee or alcohol for at least an hour before your talk as these will dehydrate you and make you thirsty.

In Practical Terms

- Don't be afraid of the microphone. Sit about 12 inches away.
- Don't fidget, tap you fingers, cough, etc.
- Don't be rushed and breath normally.

- Avoid “ums” long pauses and linguistic bad habits, e.g. “y’know”, “honestly”, “well, um”, etc. Cut out interference. Cover the budgie, tie up the dog, take the phone off the hook, if the interview is on home ground!
- End with a brief chat. Ask when you’re likely to hear the interview broadcast. Exchange contact names and numbers.
- Unless it’s absolutely vital, don’t ask the reporter to play the whole interview back to you ... he/she won’t like it.

Dealing with Disaster

If there is an error in media coverage relating to your Network, supply friendly, but firm, corrections. Make a telephone call to see where the misunderstanding arose, and how it may be corrected. Call the journalist first, and the editor only if you need to. This would probably result in a formal correction (immediate) or a balancing follow-up story (later). Use an appeal to the Broadcasting Complaints Authority only as a very last resort.

HOW TO USE LOCAL RADIO

There are several ways of getting publicity, depending on the message itself and the format in which you would like it presented.

Local Event Diaries – most stations take in and broadcast information about upcoming events, as long as these are organised by non-commercial enterprises. Full details in writing should be sent several days in advance, giving also contact number (day and evening).

Newsroom Diary – Send details of forthcoming events to the News Editor for inclusion in the Newsroom Diary. Again, give both day and out-of-hours telephone numbers, as most newsrooms operate 24 hours a day. Try to arrange a spokesperson who knows the subject and speaks well. Always try to provide some comment on an issue if asked by a reporter. Simply be concise and reasonable. Weekends are always “slow” news times, so take advantage of the newsroom’s desire for fresh material.

Features – These are often follow-ups to news stories. Generally 2-4 minutes, but can be programmes of up to an hour.

Chat shows and phone-ins – Take every opportunity to take part. Your contribution can range from a brief comment between records and commercials to a much longer discussion, often round-table. With phone-ins, alert colleagues to take part by ringing in. Make sure your phone is in good working order. Switch off your radio before going “on air”. Have relevant figures at hand, otherwise approximate.

Preparing for interviews

- First determine what subject you’re asked to talk on.
- Will it be “live” or recorded? How long do they want you to talk for? How will it be used (for news, features, etc.)?
- If it’s live, who’ll ask the questions? Get there in plenty of time, i.e. 15 minutes to half-an-hour before a live programme.
- Make sure the interviewer knows what you want to say. Ask her or him what ground they want to cover.
- Do write down any telephone numbers or addresses you have to give out on the back of an envelope which you can hold while the interview is going on. Some people find a few key words jotted down in advance can be a helpful reminder of the main points to be made, **but...**

Don’t write a script for yourself and don’t take in lots of notes. The presenter will not be following a script, and you may well find you are unnecessarily confused trying to sort out which bit of your script is relevant. In any case, if you read answers you will almost certainly sound unnatural, wooden and lifeless, which will do you no good at all in communicating your message! Don’t over prepare. Be prepared to be spontaneous!

During The Interview

- Don’t waffle, hit home. Try to keep the main points self-contained.

- It's very difficult on radio to lose your temper or be sarcastic and still keep the audience's sympathy. Most of this is to do with the tone of your voice – keep cool and you can be very effective. This is particularly true in debates where you may find yourself sitting cheek to cheek with someone you dislike a great deal!
- Also notorious as losers of audience sympathy are abstractions, jargon, technical terms, bundles of initials and anything that makes you sound pretentious.
- Speak clearly concisely and vigorously, but don't try to put on a "radio voice". Use short sentences and everyday conversational language. Illustrate what you mean with examples, anecdotes and comparisons to make your message come alive. Sound enthusiastic, but don't speak unnaturally fast in order to cram everything in.
- Don't assume the interviewer is ignorant, but he or she is unlikely to be as expert as you. Interviewers are easily bored... grab their attention and keep it.
- Keep your answers short, but not monosyllabic. A useful hint – for a news item the reporter will generally want to keep his "cut" (the part of the interview played during bulletin) to between 20 and 40 seconds. Bear this in mind when making a point.
- If you make a minor error or stumble, battle on.

In Practical Terms

- Don't be afraid of the microphone. Sit about 12 inches away.
- Don't fidget, tap your fingers, cough, etc.
- Don't be rushed and breathe normally.
- Avoid "ums", long pauses and linguistic bad habits, e.g. "y'know", "honestly", "well, um", etc. Cut out interference. Cover the budgie, tie up the dog, take the phone off the hook, if the interview is on homeground!
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USING NEWSLETTERS AND PUBLICATIONS

Newsletters, magazines and publications can play a crucial role in the way Networks and PWDI influence policy. Although most newsletters start as a means of helping members of the group keep in touch with each other, many evolve into important ways of enabling you to define issues, keep up pressure and persuade other people to accept your point of view.

Producing a newsletter can be a great way to get different members of your Network working together. A newsletter can be as simple as one A4 page. The best way to learn how to produce a newsletter is to actually do it. So the first thing to do is look at skills and roles.

Skills

Invite members to discuss what skills you have collectively as a group. Is there someone in the group who can:

- Take the time to go to meetings and take notes?
- Write up a story?
- Do necessary research?
- Conduct an interview over the phone?
- Type up your stories?
- Lay out the stories, maybe using Microsoft Publisher on the Network's computer?
- Take a photo?
- Draw cartoons or illustrations?
- Read your newsletter onto tape?

Roles

The roles are not set in stone, and each job involves a bit of everything. This list is simply to help you focus on what needs to be done. For most things it is better if at least two people work together on any given task, after all two heads are better than one, and each person can support the other.

Administrating

Keep the diary. Update and maintain the mailing list. Organise the print run. How many pages? How many copies? What weight & colour paper? What colour ink? How much? How is distribution going to be done? Computer mail merge? Who will set this up? All posted? Some hand delivered, e.g. a bundle to certain organisations/Who is going to do this? Distribution is definitely an 'all hands on deck' situation.

Researching

Check out things, gather information, maybe then write up the information and pass it on. Monitor the media. Either turn a national story into a local one by looking for new angles, local people to comment etc., or follow up a story in the local media. It is a good idea to hold files of press clippings and keep tapes, or at least notes of radio interviews.

Reporting

Cover events, interview people, write up stories, re-write press releases. When you go to relevant meetings and events in your area think as a reporter, take a few brief notes, and get your story written up as quickly as possible while it is still fresh in your head. If you know someone attending an event you could ask them to do the same.

Designing, Typesetting & Sub-Editing

Diversity in style, content and length will make your finished product more interesting. Plan the layout, type up the stories, include the visuals (any cartoons, drawings etc) write headlines that fit the space available and put in the captions.

Editing

Edit the text if necessary making sure it is concise, well written, to the point, and accurate etc. Editing also involves prioritising what goes where, e.g. what is the front page lead story going to be?

Proof Reading

While everyone is collectively responsible for accuracy, this task should be specifically given to at least 2 people who are good at spotting possible spelling and other mistakes. Network newsletters should go before the Committee of the Network before they go to print.

Visuals

When you start putting your articles together consider if you can get any visual material to go with them. Drawings, cartoon, photos etc. help to make each page more interesting and easier to read. Check to see what cartoons you may reprint without breach of copyright.

Format

Always be mindful that you will have to organise someone to put the newsletter on tape, and make it available on disk, and in Braille if possible/required.

Three Important things to remember

- **Deadlines** – If you are putting a newsletter together you can ask people to submit articles. Often this requires lots and lots of follow up and chasing, so make sure you are clear about your deadlines.
- **Disclaimer** – Insert the sentence – “The views and opinions contained in this newsletter are the contributors own, and do necessarily reflect those of the County Network”.
- **If in doubt, leave it out** – Please, please always be aware of libel and accuracy. Double check the spelling of names and places, titles, times etc. Always make sure that you get at least two people to proof read all material such as press releases, brochures, newsletters, etc., for accuracy and for spelling.

Using Annual Reports Effectively

Although many organisations publish annual reports, not all use them effectively as a means of influencing decision-makers. Many organisations present dull annual reports and spend considerable resources in doing so, missing a great opportunity to present their case for change. Although annual reports are primarily published in order to provide a means of accountability for the organisation to the public, supporters and the tax-payer, they can have an important role to play in the work of winning friends and influencing people. New documentation or information presented in a lively and hard-hitting manner in an annual report can make it a strong force for change.

Brochures

Brochures are an important tool that can in a simple and effective manner introduce your Network to potential members, government departments, Ministers, statutory and voluntary & community organisations. Brochures should however be updated regularly, actively promoted and circulated using a number of locations, agencies and key contacts.

Keep a Record

Keep scrap-books of clippings of your coverage in the press (including videos and tapes of any television and radio appearances) and either use them in your annual report, in displays or send them on to some of the people you are trying to influence. In effect, it is an indirect but powerful way of saying the media think we are important- you should too. Keeping scrap-books and tapes is always valuable for later reference purposes.

MEDIA DO'S

- Do listen to the question.
- Do back up what you're saying. No assertions without evidence.
- Do keep your listeners in mind.
- Do talk people, not principles.
- So give singular examples. Remember Stalin: "Forty thousand soldiers killer in a war is a statistic. One child drowned in a pond is a tragedy."
- Do take the initiative. If the interviewer looks blank, or if there's a pause: go for it.
- Do talk to the people worth talking to. Any audience is made up of 3 groups: those who already agree with you (the converted) those who'll never agree with you (the unconvertible) and those who are open to be convinced (the floating voters). Don't waste time preaching to the converted, don't waste time on those whose vested interest is against you. Talk to the floating voter.
- Do rely on the interviewer. If you don't understand the question, ask for clarification. If you get lost, simply say "Sorry. Lost my train of thought. What was it you asked me, again?"
- Do answer the data part of the question, not the emotive part.
- Do concentrate on what you're there for, which is to influence people and change attitudes. You're not enter a popularity contest, so don't waste time seeking to be likeable, just don't bore us.
- Do get to the most interesting point first. No introductory paragraphs.
- Do interrupt when you feel like interrupting. Don't postpone it. Nothing worse than the Wally on the Late Late who, ten minutes after a theme has finished, says "I just want to refer back to.." TV/radio are like conveyor belts; always moving.
- Do treat all cameras and microphones as live once you're entered a studio.
- Do be assertive and passionate.
- Do correct any mis-statements on the interviewer's part, but do it in a way that minimises egg on his or her face.
- Do get the permission of family /friends if you plan to tell stories involving them.
- Do let people know that disability will touch their lives, through illness, accident or age. Talk baby buggies as well as wheelchairs, people losing some of their hearing/sight as a function of age. Inclusion works both ways. Teach the concept without using the word: every family will be touched by disability at some point.

MEDIA DON'TS

- Don't wait for the right question. It may never arrive. You're there to offer the points you have prepared, not simply to respond to questions. It's an interview, not an exam.
- Don't get so concerned about words you must not use that you don't say anything. If you concentrate on all of the phrases currently unacceptable, your brain is too occupied in defensive thinking to work out what you want to leave the listeners with. A currently incorrect word can be apologies for – an interview without content is inexcusable.
- Don't use percentages when you can say "One in Ten". Keep your examples singular, rather than massively plural.
- Don't cause surprises. If you need a particular amount of space, assistance of some kind or use a signer, tell the programme people in advance. It's part of the national education task we all have – helping journalists and broadcasters come to terms with specific disabilities. Just don't reprove them for not already knowing.
- Don't use lists. Never mention more than three times in a row. People's minds scroll away the first one as soon as you go down the line. Plus, it's boring: none of us takes the telephone directory to bed for a good read.
- Don't postpone getting in. TV/Radio interviews/programmes feel about half as long as they actually are. When you want to make an input, make it. Think of airtime as a fast-moving conveyor belt. It's your personal responsibility to put your items onto that conveyor belt. Not the responsibility of the interviewer/presenter.
- Don't look for justice. There is no fairness in radio and TV just excitement, interest, the heat of conflict, the light of insight. There are no I 'shoulds'. Get in, get it said, make it interesting and don't rely on anybody other than yourself.
- Don't lecture. We all love to learn. We all hate being taught.
- Don't move the chair in a TV studio. It's been lit in that position.
- Don't touch the microphone. Ever!
- Don't answer a heckle unless you've first repeated it so everybody's privy to what was said.
- Don't ask questions of other people. Keep the spotlight on you and on your content.

NINE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PUBLICITY

1. Why are we doing this?

Publicity is not an end in itself. You cannot run a campaign or a community organisation solely through the media. Successful publicity usually creates extra work, even though it may bring in more people to help do it. It's not just about coverage. To measure your success you need to know in advance:

- Who do you most want to talk to?
- What do you most want to say?
- What do you most want them to do?

2. Why Bother with the Mass Media?

Face to face communication is the most persuasive, and it gives you complete control over the message. So does producing your own leaflets, newsletters, posters, videos etc. The problem is distribution. The mass media is important when you want to:

- Get a message across to a large number of people
- Put pressure on decision makers

3. Discuss and Agree Amongst Yourselves

Make sure there is agreement within the group on your publicity aims. You cannot deal with the mass media as a group, so make clear arrangements for authorising statements, e.g. give one person responsibility for speaking to the media and agree a statement together before going public on it.

4. Don't Take the Public for Granted

If you are using any mass medium – press, radio or TV – you are addressing a large and general audience. You are not preaching to the converted. Avoid mysterious jargon and abbreviations, and don't treat outsiders as if they were already members of the group.

5. Start From Their Point of View

The history of your group from the year dot may be fascinating to you – if you are already involved. If you're not, it can be very boring and off-putting. Start from your audience's point of view – their interests, desires, problems or needs and then show how your group can help.

6. Put the most clear & concise Members/Staff at the Front

There will always be a limited amount of time or space in which to argue your case. Get straight to the point that most concerns your audience. Don't get lost in explaining the finer details of your case – if the

audience is not familiar with the broader argument then they will not follow you. You don't have to tell everyone everything all at once – and it's best not to try.

7. Keep It Personal

The media may reach a mass of people – but they are all individuals. Don't hit them over the head with abstract ideas. Present your argument in terms of what people are doing, or what is happening to people. Use examples, comparisons, and stories.

If you are trying to persuade someone to do something, then it is a good idea to make their part in the story seem positive, and valuable.

Use ordinary language. Be sensitive to the words people use to describe themselves. Have you ever heard anyone say "I'm jobless at the moment"? Don't use words or phrases you wouldn't use to someone's face. "Anyone" is someone else.

8. This One Will Run and Run

Don't try to say everything all at once. Hammer one point home at a time. Seek separate coverage of other points, and build them into a campaign. Plan your publicity over a period of time, and anticipate opportunities to give your campaign a boost.

9. Keep At It

You will have disappointments and disasters, but the more publicity work you do, then the more practised, confident and effective you will become.

40 WAYS TO GET PUBLICITY

1. Send a letter.
2. Send an urgent message/letter/fax.
3. Issue a report.
4. Publish the finding of a survey/opinion poll.
5. Hold a meeting
6. Lobby someone else's meeting.
7. Get backing from a well-known celebrity.
8. Launch a campaign
9. Adopt a mascot
10. Get a lot of children together to do something
11. Mark an anniversary.
12. Hold an Annual General Meeting
13. Hold an Open Day.
14. Announce a new appointment.
15. React to the verdict or sentence of a trial.
16. Welcome new proposals.
17. Condemn new proposals.
18. Unveil plans for the year.
19. Present a petition.
20. Present a cheque.
21. Receive a cheque.
22. Make an award.
23. Receive an award.
24. Oldest/Youngest/1000th/millionth member.
25. 2/3/4 or more generations doing the same thing.
26. Quiz election candidates.
27. First in Republic of Ireland to
28. Last in Republic of Ireland to
29. Urge a party conference to
30. Hold a vigil, picket, demonstration.
31. Call for an enquiry....
32. Announce a new project.
33. What national/international news means for Ireland.
34. Give evidence to an enquiry/commission.
35. Invite Minister/dignitary to visit.
36. Write an obituary.
37. Refurbish or get new premises.
38. Do something somewhere famous/historical/unusual.
39. Celebrate the official opening of new offices.
40. Do a publicity stunt.

CREATING A DATABASE & MANAGING MEDIA CONTACTS

Assembling a Media Mailing list

Does your Network have a database of all national print, radio and television contacts that might be useful? Putting this together as a group is a good way of making everyone aware of the different types of media out there waiting for you to tap into it.

Once your Network decides that it wishes to influence a policy or decision, has set down its proposals and has a spokesperson, assemble a list of the media with which you wish to work. In any media organisation, there are many branches (e.g. news, features, business, arts). Within each organisation, there will be particular individuals your Network may wish to contact – like social affairs correspondent, or people who have regular columns. There is a basic media listing in the Institute of Public Administration IPA Yearbook and producers of each programme may be found in the RTE Guide.

Don't forget the specialised media too, such as education magazines, women's magazines, and the various professional journals or magazines.

Managing your General Mailing list

Most voluntary organisations and community groups regard their mailing list as one of their least important tools. Looking after the mailing list is considered a major chore, one attended to only occasionally.

In fact, the mailing list may be one of the Network's most important tools. One may even say that an organisation is only as good as its mailing list and the last time it was revised. In effect, the mailing list is your statement of who you wish to influence in the political system.

Check your Mailing List & Keep it up to date!

Do you check it every week? Every year? Never?

Will you revise it after the next general/local/European Election?

Will you revise it the next time a Minister is moved or changed?

Will you revise it when the new schedule of radio programmes come in?

Are you compiling a list of e-mail addresses for an electronic newsletter?

Managing Your Contacts

Making contacts in the media is very important if you are to let people know about disability issues. Make sure you're reaching all the right people. Once you have made a contact, work hard to keep it. Maintaining contacts with the media is very important. Once editors and producers know that you can provide them with stories, that you are reliable and knowledgeable, they will keen to work with you again.

Action Ideas

- A large library will have copies of media directories. These list media outlets-publications and broadcast stations, their addresses, phone and fax numbers and chief personnel. The listings are usually alphabetical.
- Draw up a list of the ones that may be relevant to your Network. Listen to their output or buy a copy of a journal to see how disability issues can be added to their coverage.
- Whenever you speak to anyone at a newspaper or broadcast station be polite, even if they seem difficult. It may be that you've called at a bad time, that they have a deadline to meet. Chances are if you ring back another time, they won't remember they were rude, or even who you are. If this happens, just start again as pleasantly as you can. If you still encounter rudeness, don't take it personally. On the whole, though, people will explain if they are too busy to speak to you.
- Take a note of the names and titles of people you have contact with and put them on your mailing list. If something comes out of your discussions – a mention, a news story, a feature – write a note to thank the people involved. They're more likely to remember you.

Work at Every Level

It's important to try to have an influence at every level – local, national, regional and international level- with government; with local, national and multinational companies; and with non-governmental organisations (community & voluntary groups). Your work at one level can help indirectly at other levels as well. Above all, think of your relationship with the media as a partnership, which can be of benefit to all.

Good Luck!!

RESOURCES

1. *Working for Change: A Guide to Influencing Policy in Ireland*, Brian Harvey, Combat Poverty Agency, 1999.
2. *SIPTU/PWDI (Training Pack)*, Sept. 1998.
3. *Information Pack for Daytime Voluntary and Adult Education Groups*, Aontas, 1997
4. *Community Organisations and the Media – A Guidebook to using the media for Community and Voluntary Organisations in Ireland*, Barry Cullen, Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin, 1989.
5. *Disability Awareness in Action, Resource Kit No. 1, Who and What We Are – Media Information*, 1993.

SOURCES

1. Ideas for the section on Forms of Media and Where News and Features Come From, were inspired by media training delivered by Brid McGrath and Simon Devilly for the National Social Services Board, NSSB.
2. Media Do's and Media Don't's were adapted from a media strategy document prepared by Carr Communications for the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities.
3. The Sections Nine Basic Principles of Publicity and 40 Ways to Get publicity were adapted from the Aontas Information Pack for Daytime Voluntary Adult Education Groups.