IN THE NEWS
USING THE MEDIA

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN

Planned media activity can publicise your events, deliver your campaign messages and generate debate about youth knife crime. As well as raising your profile locally, media activity will also promote and strengthen the national campaign.
The most common way of using the media is by sending press releases about your campaign to journalists who can pick up on the story. If you have media handling experience, you could also invite local radio and TV news journalists and offer them interviews about your campaign work/event/partnership.

Plan

- Make sure you have an up-to-date list of journalist contacts for your local media outlets. You need to email press releases to the right journalist.
- Send press releases out in good time – ideally a couple of days before you want the story to appear.
- Make sure you have up to date facts and figures about your campaign.

Deliver

- Be quick and efficient and stick to deadlines. If you need to gather information for a journalist, tell them how long it will take and make sure that you call them back when you say you will.
- Always be positive about the campaign, and try to have an appointed spokesperson on standby to talk about your campaign.
- Be persistent if you don't get much media coverage at first. If the local media do not attend your event, make sure you take some high resolution digital photographs yourself and email them to press contacts with a press release after the event.

Evaluate

- What worked well?
- What could you do better next time?
- How can you learn from the experience?

TOP TIP

Take advantage of your partners' contacts – they may have an experienced media team who can use their contacts to publicise your campaign..

HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

A press release is a 1-2 page document which informs journalists about events or news which they may wish to report. Journalists are sent hundreds of press releases every day, so you need to make yours stand out from the others. You want to make the journalist think: 'that's really interesting' or, 'I didn't know that'.

YOUR PRESS RELEASE SHOULD ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- **Who** is behind the project/ new service/campaign?
- **What** does the activity/event hope to achieve?
- **Where** has the initiative/ campaign/event been set up?
- **Why** has this been set up?
- **When** will it happen?
- **How** will the campaign/ event work?

Getting contacts right

It is very important to send press releases to the right individual. If you are not sure who that is, then call the local paper, local TV station or radio newsroom and ask who would cover stories on this topic. Even if they give you a general type of address, you can at least address the note to the right person. Do follow-up the email with a brief phone call to ensure the journalist has received the document and to see if they need any more information or are interested in an interview.

10 STEPS TO WRITING A PRESS RELEASE:

1. A catchy headline will capture media attention. Base this on the most exciting or attention grabbing part of your news
2. The first paragraph is most important. It should summarise the most interesting points of the story and encourage the journalist to read on
3. Build the story through the following paragraphs, adding detail and keeping the most important points high up in the release
4. Keep paragraphs short and punchy and follow this order:
   a. Introduction
   b. Explanation
   c. Background
   d. Additional information/quotes
5. Use clear language and write in the present tense. Be direct and avoid jargon or abbreviations
6. Include quotes from service users, partners or members of your own team to add human interest. Ensure the quotes are concise and relevant
7. Place the words 'Press Release' across the top of the first page and 'ENDS' at the foot of the release. If you go over one page write 'm/f' for 'more follows' at the foot of the first page
8. You can use a 'Note to editors' at the end of the press release to place details which you do not want to include in the 'story' of the release, but which are of interest
9. Place full contact details, including email address and out-of-hours contact numbers, in bold at the end of the release
10. Re-read and check your press release, and get someone else to check it before you issue – any spelling mistakes or typo's will not be well received by a journalist

Once you have completed your release (and checked it!) email it to local journalists.