

## Media Guide 5 - Interview Techniques

Journalists and researchers get most of their information and stories from talking to people and often they want to hear views and stories 'from the horse's mouth'. Interviews, therefore, form a large part of any media output.

### **General advice**

Prepare three or four points you want to get across, but remember to answer the questions also and not to just pursue your own agenda.

If you need to use figures/statistics, put them in context.

Use examples to illustrate a point.

Always assume absolutely no previous knowledge on the part of the reader.

If the interviewer challenges you, don't get angry or defensive, they are probably trying to get more information.

Think of a question you would least like to be asked and prepare for it.

### **Radio and TV**

There are some differences when being interviewed by radio or television.

Unlike with a newspaper, you can't go back and re-listen to a radio/TV interview. So it's important to make your points clearly, concisely and with impact. Try and find a way of re-stressing your message without sounding repetitive.

Find out what programme you will be on. Will it be recorded or live? How long will the finished piece be? Who else will be contributing? Be sure about the purpose of the interview and the audience.

If you are not familiar with the programme, listen beforehand.

Ask the interviewer what the first question will be, this will give you the chance to prepare your opening sentence.

Tell them if you want to give out a contact number.

Avoid using jargon – be brief, factual, relevant and recent.

Take with you a note of any vital points, figures of information – but never read a prepared speech.

Speak slowly and clearly. Try to be natural and don't worry about accents or pauses.

If it's recorded, don't be afraid to ask if you can do it again or repeat an answer you're not happy with – you are both after the best result.

Beware of jewellery that rattles, nervous pen tapping, finger drumming. Get comfortable, keep still and talk directly into the microphone/interviewer.

Leave plenty of time for the interview, TV crews may arrive early or late.

TV crews may want to film some action shots which can be edited in with the interview. Make sure that everyone who is being filmed knows and agrees to appear.

### **Access to clients or volunteers**

Most journalists (listeners & readers) prefer to hear a personal account in relation to a story or issue. This can be problematic for both journalist and organisation.

 <p>Registered charity No. 1054498</p>	 <p>Hampshire County Council</p>	 <p>Company Registered in England No. 3165839</p>	<p><b>The Tilmore Centre</b> 1 Tilmore Road, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 2HG</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Phone:</td> <td>01730 710017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fax:</td> <td>01730 710017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Email:</td> <td><a href="mailto:admin@cfeh.org.uk">admin@cfeh.org.uk</a></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Web:</td> <td><a href="http://www.cfeh.org.uk">www.cfeh.org.uk</a></td> </tr> </table>	Phone:	01730 710017	Fax:	01730 710017	Email:	<a href="mailto:admin@cfeh.org.uk">admin@cfeh.org.uk</a>	Web:	<a href="http://www.cfeh.org.uk">www.cfeh.org.uk</a>
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The media want to get a first hand account, this means talking directly to, for example, the victim of racial discrimination. Questions of confidentiality and insensitivity immediately arise. Many charities object to the term 'victim', with its connotations of helplessness and passivity. It can take a lot of effort to organise an interview which may after all your hard work lead to disappointment – people being let down, the story not being published.

Journalists on the other hand often feel frustrated when their requests are rebuked, they resent being treated as ogres or voyeurs, especially when their intentions are quite different. Their previous record of sympathetic reporting may be ignored, or they may be accused of having a political line when they do not.



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