

Maximise your project's publicity

A media toolkit

drinkaware.co.uk
for the facts about alcohol

Action checklist

- Invite your local MP / Councillor
- Send a press release
- Arrange a photo-call
- Write a letter to your local paper

Using the media to publicise your project helps the community know what you are doing and spreads the message about responsible drinking.

Invite your MP / Councillor

A good way of boosting your reputation and attracting publicity is to get your local MP or Councillor involved. You can find out who your local MP or Councillor is at <http://www.upmystreet.com/commons/>

MPs are very busy people, and will receive hundreds of requests like yours, so get your request in as early as possible.

Your letter should be short and simple, spelling out when and where your project is taking place, as well as what's in it for them (e.g. the chance to see a groundbreaking peer education project in action). There is a MP letter template in this pack you may like to use (see page 5).

If you're lucky enough to have your local MP attend your event think about what they are going to do when they are there. Perhaps you can arrange for them to meet some young people involved in the project, or ask them to give a short speech about the importance of alcohol education. Maybe there is an activity they can get involved in.

Make sure you have a chaperone assigned to accompany the MP during their visit so they are well looked after.

After the visit you may want to send a card to your MP to thank them for taking the time to visit you.

Write a press release

Press releases are the most common way of informing the media about your project. Your press release should be one side of A4 maximum and kept as simple as possible. Keep sentences short, use plain English and don't use any jargon or acronyms.

Your release should include the 5 w's (or 4 w's and the h) – when, why, where, what and how: what is your event; when is your event; why are you doing it; where is it taking place and how do we get more information.

You should also include a snappy headline (look at the headlines in the media for inspiration) and maybe include a quote from your organisation's spokesperson.

Please mention Drinkaware in your press release. We can provide you with a logo too, and even supply you with a quote endorsing your project. For more information call the Drinkaware press office on 020 7307 7459 or email pressoffice@drinkaware.co.uk

Finally, make sure you put your contact details in the release so journalists can call you to find out more. You must make sure you are available on the numbers you give. There is nothing worse than sending out a release and then not being available. You may want to give a mobile number as well as an office number to ensure you can be reached.

There is template press releases in this pack (see page 6), but you may also like to use this check list:

- Is my press release one side of A4?
- Do I have a snappy headline?
- Have I got the 5 w's in the release?
- Have I mentioned Drinkaware?
- Have I included contact details for further information?
- Have I proof read it for spelling and typing errors?

If you would like our press office to check your release through for accuracy, or to provide you with any tips on increasing your chances of gaining publicity please call the Drinkaware press office 020 7307 7459 or email pressoffice@drinkaware.co.uk

While we don't require you to send us your releases for approval, it can be useful for us to have a copy for our records.

Sending out your press release

You may know your local media already, but if not try looking in your local Yellow Pages. Often people just focus on newspapers but there is also TV, radio and local internet news sites to consider.

Before you send out your press release it's worth checking the deadlines. Daily regional titles will often have a daily deadline of around 4pm or 5pm. Weekly papers often have a deadline of Tuesday lunchtime. Call the news desk to find out the deadlines of your local papers. There's no point sending a press release on Tuesday if the deadline was Monday.

The preferred method for sending out press releases is by email. However, it's best to avoid sending attachments if you can as they sometimes get blocked by IT security systems. Instead paste the text into the main body of the email and don't send images unless requested by a journalist.

Try to send your press release early in the day as many journalists get very busy in the afternoon as they rush to meet deadlines.

Follow up calls

It can be beneficial to put a call in after you have sent your press release. If you do this make sure you do it before lunchtime as many journalists will get very busy in the afternoon. Remember journalists work to tight deadlines and may get hundreds of calls every day so keep it short and to the point. Briefly explain your project, ask if they saw your email and see if they want any further information, e.g. images or an interview.

Giving interviews

If you send out a press release you may get calls to give an interview. For some this may be very daunting, so think about who you are going to put up as your spokesperson before you start.

Try to find out if they are taking any particular angle on the story. For example, if your project is about teen drinking they may link it into a local story.

It's unlikely they will provide you with a list of questions in advance, and even if they do they may not stick to them so it could be a red herring. However you may wish to ask what types of questions they might ask, without being too specific.

If you are doing a radio or TV interview you should also ask whether the interview is live or 'pre-recorded'. Also find out whether the interview will take place in a studio, on location (if you are holding an event) or on the phone. The later would usually only apply for radio. Also ask if they will be interviewing any other guests.

If you are doing a newspaper interview don't be pushed into speaking there and then. Ask if you can give them a call back in five or ten minutes to give yourself time to compose yourself and work out what you are going to say. Don't forget to call them back though!

Preparing interviews

For all interviews you should take some time to prepare what you are going to say. Try to think of three key points you would like to get across. If you are feeling nervous try doing some slow deep breathing or some stretches to relax you.

Try to think of the interview as just a conversation you're having with someone at a bus stop, or a chat with a friend on the phone. Don't worry about putting on a performance, or keeping the conversation flowing – that's the journalists job. They will want to get the best out of you so relax and have fun! Remember – you're not the Prime Minister and they're not Jeremy Paxman so it's highly unlikely they will give you a hard time.

Photo calls

If you are holding an event you may wish to think about possible photo opportunities. Although you can take your own photos and send them to the press afterwards, often they will prefer to send their own photographer.

You may wish to set a certain time for the photo opportunities. This may be useful if you are staging a drama which may be disrupted by photographers popping in and out, or if you have an MP coming and they are only available for a short time.

If you wish to do this then you should notify the press by sending out a photo-call notice. Your photo-call notice is different from a press release. It's much shorter and is not for publication. It is essentially an invitation to attend. There is a template photo-call notice in this pack which you may wish to use (see page7).

Remember that although you can send photo-calls to TV as well as newspapers and picture desks, **DON'T SEND THEM TO RADIO!**

Often the photographer may have their own ideas of what the photo should be, but it's still worth thinking about what you would like. How best can you represent your event through a picture? Do you want any branded materials in the shot? A group of people wearing suits and standing in a long line is rather boring and will not do your project justice. Try to go for action shots, and if there are young people involved in the project make sure they are included.

If you are going to include branding in your shot remember that often a photographer will take a very close shot – head and shoulders only. So maybe use branded baseball caps or small posters behind the person at eye level.

Letter to editors

You may also wish to send a letter to the letters' page of your local newspaper. These take very little time and are a good way of getting publicity. Here are three key tips on getting your letter in the newspaper.

- Keep it short – 150 words max
- Letters' pages are for debate not advertising so try to promote a discussion rather than make a blatant sell
- Give it a snappy headline like you would a press release

There is an example of a letter to editor in this pack which you may wish to use and adapt as appropriate (see page 8).

If you have any more questions about publicising your project through the media please call the Drinkaware press office on 020 7307 7459 or email pressoffice@drinkaware.co.uk

LETTER TO MP TEMPLATE

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[MP's Name]

[MP's Address]

[Date]

Dear [MP's name]

I would like to invite you to [name of project] which will take place at [venue] on [date] at [time].

This project, which is funded by the national charity Drinkaware, is an opportunity for you to see what is being done at a local level to tackle the issue of alcohol misuse.

[Short description of the project – 50 words max].

We would be delighted if you could come along and [details of what you would like the MP to do].

We understand that you must be very busy, but we believe that this would be an excellent opportunity for you to engage with the local community on this very important issue. We hope very much that you will be able to come.

Please feel free to contact me on [phone number] or [email] to discuss further.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[You may like to enclose a few leaflets from your organisation if you have them]

NEWS RELEASE TEMPLATE

NEWS

For immediate release: [date]

[SNAPPY HEADLINE – TRY TO KEEP IT TO JUST ONE LINE]

A group from [area] are today launching a new initiative to tackle the issue of alcohol misuse.

OR:

The issue of alcohol misuse and the country's drinking culture will be top of the agenda today with the launch of a new initiative from [insert project name and area].

TO FOLLOW:

The project, [insert name if not already mentioned] is funded by the national charity Drinkaware, and aims to [short description of the project and its aims].

Local MP [name and constituency] will be visiting [insert project name] and [short description on what the MP will be doing and quote from the MP if possible].

[Name of spokesperson] from [name of project] said of the project:

“[short quote on why you think this is a valuable contribution to the local community]”

The project has the full backing from the UK's leading responsible drinking charity, which aims to change public behaviour and the national drinking culture to help reduce alcohol misuse and minimise alcohol-related harm.

A spokesperson from Drinkaware, [insert name if possible], said: [please call the press office on 020 7307 7459 or email pressoffice@drinkaware.co.uk if you would like a quote for your release].

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The launch of [name of project] will take place at [venue], on [date] at [time]. The event is/isn't open to the public.

Anyone wanting further information about the project can visit their website [website details if you have one].

For photo opportunities, please contact [insert relevant contact] on [phone number] or [email]. Out-of-hours contact [mobile].

PHOTO-CALL TEMPLATE

PHOTO-CALL

[SNAPPY HEADLINE – TRY TO KEEP IT TO JUST ONE LINE]

A group from [area] are today launching a new initiative to tackle the issue of alcohol misuse.

The project, [insert name if not already mentioned] is funded by the national charity Drinkaware, and aims to [short description of the project and its aims].

Local MP [name and constituency] will be visiting the project and [short description on what the MP will be doing].

When: [time/date]

What: [location]

Onsite contact: [name and mobile number of someone who can handle media calls on site]

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For further information please contact [insert relevant contact] on [phone number] or [email].
Out-of-hours contact [mobile].

LETTER TO EDITOR TEMPLATE

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[Editor's Name]

[Editor's Address]

[Date]

Dear Editor,

More needs to be done to tackle alcohol misuse

Alcohol misuse in [area] is a growing problem. Not only the social disorder it creates, but the impact on individuals' health is a major concern. Is enough being done?

At [name of project] we have received funding from the national charity, Drinkaware, to run a project [short description of the project].

Alcohol education at grassroots level is essential and we feel this project is a positive step in tackling the issue. We hope that the project will be a success and there will be other initiatives like it in the future.

Yours sincerely

[Your Name]