

## Working with the local press



### Why work with the local press?

Local newspapers, radio stations, and community websites are valuable partners. They can:

- Share your events with a wider audience.
- Celebrate your parish's achievements.
- Help the community understand the role of the church.
- Build trust by showing openness and engagement.

### Understanding how the press works

- **Deadlines are important** – news outlets work to tight schedules. If you miss a deadline, your story may not get published.
- **They want a story, not a notice** – focus on why the public should care.
- **Local angle matters** – emphasise people, places, and issues in your community.
- **They may edit** – journalists often shorten or adapt your words; this is normal.

### Preparing your message

Before contacting the press, decide:

- **What is the key point?** (What do you most want readers/listeners to remember?)
- **Who can speak for the church?** (Have a named spokesperson – often the vicar, churchwarden, or PCC communications officer.)
- **What's the hook?** (Is it unusual, inspiring, timely, or connected to wider community concerns?)

### Writing a press release

Press release basics:

- **Headline** – short, clear, and interesting.
- **Opening paragraph** – who, what, when, where, and why in the first sentence.
- **Body** – 2–3 short paragraphs with details, quotes, and context.
- **Quote** – a warm, human comment from the vicar or organiser.
- **End with contact details** – name, role, phone number, and email.
- **Attach 1–2 good photos** (landscape orientation, clear, high-resolution).

**Tip:** Always date your press release and write it in the third person

## When the press contacts you

- **Pause and prepare** – you don't have to answer instantly.
- **Be honest** – if you don't know something, say so and offer to follow up.
- **Stay calm** – even in tricky situations, respond with grace.

## Handling difficult or sensitive issues

- **Check with the diocesan communications team** – they can help with wording and strategy.
- **Acknowledge without fuelling controversy** – show you are listening, but don't speculate.
- **Keep pastoral care central** – remember you are representing the church's values.
- **Never speak "off the record"** – assume anything you say could be reported.

## Building positive relationships

- Invite journalists to key events.
- Thank them when they cover your story.
- Follow local reporters on social media and engage politely.
- Offer human-interest stories, not just notices (e.g. a 100th birthday, restoration project, community meal).

## Useful resources

[Coventry Diocesan Communications Team](#)

[Church of England Communications](#)

[BBC Editorial Guidelines](#) (for understanding media standards)