



FAITH COMMUNITIES AND MEDIA COVERAGE

A Guidance Note

This short note reflects discussion at IFN Faith Communities Forum meetings across recent years and good practice suggestions received from external bodies.

The following guidelines may be useful to consider:

- Be familiar with media processes: for example, how journalists work; the need for swift response; and the particular context of a given piece.
- Ensure that you have agreed spokespeople and processes within your community or organisation for responding to requests to comment or provide material. Be clear on where responsibilities sit.
- Provide, or secure, basic training for relevant staff and volunteers on how to engage effectively and well with media requests. Additional training should be provided to those likely to engage with TV/ radio requests.
- Consider creating a list of key messages about your community or organisation that people can use as a quick reference.
- Keep your own outlets, such as your website and your social media platforms, such as Twitter, up to date and regularly refreshed to encourage journalists to draw on information there.
- Invite journalists to relevant online and in person events.
- Approach media outlets as positive partners in the conveying of accurate information and increasing religious literacy.
- Build good contacts with individual journalists.
- Highlight for the media positive stories about and involving your community – including about inter faith action and dialogue
- Keep in mind that journalists see a duty to report a story as they understand it following research. The perspective of their articles may differ from the bodies or communities their reports cover.
- In the event that there is believed to be a case of misinformation, contact the publisher/broadcast company in the first instance to seek to correct that.
- Familiarise yourself with the relevant regulatory authorities¹ and, if necessary, raise an issue with them.

¹ IPSO, the Independent Press Standards Organisation, <https://www.ipso.co.uk/>, OFCOM, the Office of Communications <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/>; and, where an issue relates to advertising, the ASA, Advertising Standards Authority, <https://www.asa.org.uk/>. A more detailed list of relevant regulators can be found at <http://mediastandardstrust.org/resources/contact-a-regulatory-body>.

- If you do raise an issue, and also raise it publicly through a route such as Twitter, consider whether you may also wish other faith communities to be aware of it and – where relevant and appropriate – also to do so.
- Issues about editorial judgements can also be matters for discussion with publishers/broadcasters. (Where there is disagreement and that is subject to a process of engagement which is ongoing or where an outcome of a complaint to the broadcaster or publisher has been published, be aware that other bodies may in some instances be unlikely to engage without having seen the positions of both sides.)

There are a number of useful resources, in particular the Religion Media Centre. <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk> The Media Trust also provides a number of useful resources. <https://mediatrust.org>

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