

Press toolkit

Introduction

Engaging with press is a fantastic way to raise awareness of your organisation and showcase your great work within your local community.

This press toolkit will provide you with all the tools and ideas you need to generate local media coverage of your activities during Pro Bono Week.

Press coverage is valuable because a feature in a local newspaper highlighting the impact of a volunteering project is an independent, trusted view in a way that an advert or a newsletter piece is not. In addition, highlighting the work of local firms, third sector organisations and law schools to the media is an important part of making the case for better access to justice for everyone.

This pack contains information about local media, how to issue press releases and manage media relationships. It also includes examples and templates of suggested materials for you to tailor and distribute to your local media.

Local and regional Media

Every area has different types of local media. Some areas are very well served by local media and will have several local newspapers, radio stations and a TV station. Some larger towns or cities may not have a local paper dedicated to their specific area and you may instead need to target a larger regional paper (such as the Yorkshire Post or the Northern Echo). They are far more likely to run a story if they have a local relevant photographic opportunity, especially if the picture shows people from the local area.

The media needs you to fill their pages as much as you need them to promote your message, so press relations should be viewed as a partnership. Make journalists aware of your events, activities and programmes which showcase the work and impact of your pro bono services. Don't be afraid to invite them along but do give them plenty of advance warning!

Consider your audience! For instance, local media publish stories for local people and often have an older demographic. Human interest is the main content of all local newspapers; people want to read about what happens to other people in their local area – real life stories are key.

Regional media publish regional or national issues with a regional perspective. Securing coverage in regional media can be more challenging than with a local publication.

What makes a good story?

Finding a strong news angle will help ensure interest from the media. Consider the following:

- 'A first' or new – for example a new pro bono clinic, or a new pro bono volunteer

- An ambitious project or case which could impact a wide user group
- Link your story to a big issue in current news and include any hard-hitting facts and figures
- A David and Goliath story – overcoming the odds
- Milestones as plans take shape, including the launch of a project/clinic
- Impact on the local community
- Involves local people
- Make your story relevant to the reader

Be selective about what you issue, it will stand out more!

How to write a press release

When writing for the media it is important to remember how many press releases and Invitations to photocalls are received by the press - make yours as attention-grabbing as possible. Develop a headline which sums up the message in one snappy sentence or phrase. Try to be bold, original and creative with your title.

After the headline, the most important feature of your press release is the introductory paragraph. It must attract the readers' attention and summarise the story using the five W's:

- **WHO?** (is involved?)
- **WHAT?** (is happening?)
- **WHERE?** (is it happening?)
- **WHEN?** (is it happening?)
- **WHY?** (should anyone be interested?)

Top tips for writing a press release:

1. **Keep your release short.** Aim for 25-30 words per paragraph and no more than one A4 side.
2. **Write in the third person about your activity.** Prioritise the facts, putting the most important information first
3. **Include a quote from the people involved**, for instance a VIP speaker or panellist
4. **Put 'Ends' at the foot of the last page** and include full contact details for a suitable person in your project. This person will be the main point of contact for media, and must be able to speak about your release.
5. **Include a date at the top.** Journalists need to know your press release is current and not old news.
6. **Include a photo or two.**
7. **You can talk about the wider pro bono work of lawyers** and include a paragraph about the week in your "Notes to editors" at the end.

See our template press release and quotes at the end of this toolkit.

Photos

The print media are always looking for good pictures so including a photograph with a press release will enhance your chances of getting it published. Sometimes the local paper will send a photographer to cover your story or event. If this is not the case, you may decide to take your own pictures to accompany a story. You may decide to use a professional photographer or take these yourself.

What makes a good photo?

- Photos which illustrate your story
- Include people in your photos, either in an 'action' shot, showing them at work or engaging with your event, or a group photo of the key members and spokespeople at the event
- Ensure you have their permission and names (the journalist may ask)
- Photos available in high and low resolution for both website, print and social media
- Only attach one or two low resolution photos with your press release – otherwise it may get blocked by the publication's spam filter

How to approach the press

Step 1: Write a press release

Step 2: Contact your local newspaper, radio, TV station and local networks (i.e. community Facebook groups, local blogs, council magazines, community digital radio stations

and free lifestyle magazines). Approach contacts via email or telephone. Details can be found by looking at their publication/ website/ social media for details. Send them your press release.

Step 3: Ensure your contact details are easy to find on your press release. Respond to any press enquiries promptly!

Step 4: Many journalists and bloggers are active on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Tag a journalist or media or send them a message (you'll need to be followed by them on Twitter to send a message). Add your press release to your website and post a link to it on social media.

Step 5: Timing is crucial, send out close to the event (not past it) – one week before at least for online press and as soon as possible after the event.

Speaking to the media

Journalists and media often have limited time to meet deadlines. To increase the chances of getting your story covered by the media, consider preparing the following in advance for when journalists get in touch:

1. **Provide a short phrase that sums up your work** - have three key messages ready to communicate
2. **Have ready to use content prepared** - facts and statistics, press release, photos, quotes, video / audio content they can publish
3. **Have someone available who is happy speaking to a reporter** (an official spokesperson or someone who has benefited from or delivered your work e.g. a pro bono lawyer).
4. **Think of potential criticisms** and how you would respond
5. **Consider the target audience** – tailor your message to who the journalist is writing for. The more suited to their reader, the more likely your story will be featured
6. **Meet their deadline.**

Social media – top tips (also check out our full comms toolkit on the [website!](#))

1. If you're posting and sharing news on social media, please include #ProBonoWeek and #WeDoProBono in your posts so that we can pick it up and retweet to reach a wider audience.
2. Upload photos – adding photos means the social media algorithm is more likely to highlight your posts.
3. Time your post affectively – ensure that posts go live in the morning (8.30-9.30am), lunchtime (12:00-2:00pm) or early evening (5.00-7:30pm) as these are popular times for audiences to read their social feeds. Include as much info about your event and/ or include a link to your activity webpage.
4. Tag special VIP guests and speakers (with permission) into your posts and ask them to reshare the post as this will allow you to reach wider audiences
5. Adding a video is another really great way to stick out in news feeds (for instance, a supporter endorsing your event or activity). This can be done on a livestream or pre-recorded on a smart phone.

Share with the Pro Bono Week 2024 team!

Share your event details with us and we will promote as part of the Pro Bono Week programme. We will add your event to the [Pro Bono Week calendar](#).

We can share on our social media channels: [LinkedIn](#) and [X/Twitter](#).

For any guidance please contact:

info@probonoweeek.org.uk

TEMPLATE Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

TITLE [Insert your own title to describe the event]

Date

X organisation is hosting XX event on XX date at XX venue as part of [Pro Bono Week 2024](#)

[A paragraph about your event]

In its 23rd year, Pro Bono Week will take place from 4th to 8th November. Events and campaigns offer a unique opportunity to celebrate and recognise the deep and longstanding commitment of the legal profession across the UK in giving free legal help to many people and organisations in acute need.

Pro bono is vital to making sure that everyone has access to justice, but it is also a key tool in professional development and wellbeing for lawyers, as well as playing a role in staff recruitment and retention.

This year's Pro Bono Week theme is "**The Power of Pro Bono**" and three subtopics which will be a focus within that are:

1. **Barred from justice** – the powerful, everyday stories of the impact of lawyers and law students who give their time to protect the rights of those most disadvantaged in society.
2. **Embedding pro bono in your organisation and career** – placing pro bono at the heart of everyone's practice and hearing from those at the forefront of establishing business structures for pro bono within law firms, chambers, in house, universities and charities.
3. **How technology can enhance access to justice** – existing and new tools to ensure pro bono is innovative and effective.

[A quote from a member of your team about the event]

Pro bono legal services are not a substitute for a proper system of legal aid. However, for individuals not eligible for legal aid but are unable to pay, and for those charities or community groups with limited resources, free advice and representation provided by volunteer lawyers is often the only means of obtaining access to justice.

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Pro bono is where lawyers volunteer to provide free legal help to those in need. It is not intended to and cannot replace a properly funded legal aid system.
2. Pro Bono Week is organised by an organising committee that includes representatives from pro bono charities, law schools, law firms, in-house lawyers and the professional bodies. For more information visit probonoweek.org.uk.
3. Media may contact [your name], [your phone number] and [your email address]
4. For updates follow [add in links to your organisation's social media channels here]

#ProBonoWeek
#WeDoProBono

A quote you could use for your Pro Bono Week press release:

Toby Brown, chair of the UK organising committee of Pro Bono Week, said "*Pro Bono Week has become a central point in the year for us as a profession, with the charitable sector, to focus on how legal pro bono helps those in need. This year the organising committee selected "The Power of Pro Bono" as the overarching theme, emphasising the positive impact that lawyers can make when volunteering to provide free legal assistance.*"