



Local Sports Partnership Media Resources

The importance of publicity

Publicity is essential for every Local Sport Partnership (LSP). People need to know you exist and how to get in touch with you

Publicity is more than media coverage. The first time someone picks up a Lsp leaflet, phones the Lsp or hears of an experience someone has had with you, it should have a significant and positive impact

How you communicate with the public will say a lot about the organisation you represent. Every time someone from the Lsp speaks to a member of the public or media, they need to be aware that they are the face of the organisation and act accordingly

The media has an enormous and increasing influence on all our lives. Using the media effectively gives you the opportunity to make a significant impact on a large audience quickly. If the Lsp is mentioned on the radio or in the local newspapers, your message may have an immediate impact

Planning a Lsp publicity campaign

For some people, organising a publicity campaign can seem like a daunting task. In reality it can be as simple as sending out a letter to publicise a meeting or issuing a press release. The extent of your Lsp campaign will depend on what you want to achieve and the resources available

Identify your objectives before you start

Before starting your campaign, it is important to identify what you want to achieve. All campaigns should set out to achieve clear objectives. A single publicity campaign can be used to achieve any of the following results for your Lsp: -

- Create awareness – e.g. to let people know there is a Lsp in their community
- Provide information – e.g. on changes in the latest budget
- Help educate – e.g. about a new Lsp/IsC initiative
- Start debate – e.g. create a discussion about the sport facilities, programmes, etc that are needed locally
- Produce action – e.g. to get volunteers to help the Lsp

Getting started

Whatever your campaign objectives, a few basic guidelines will help your chance of success: -

- Publicity does not happen by accident – one or more individuals must accept responsibility for it
- Without clear objectives, your campaign will not have a focus – identify what you want to achieve
- Objectives must be attainable – match what you want to do with available resources
- Using several kinds of publicity has a greater effect than just one – e.g. put up posters as well as sending out a press release about an upcoming Lsp event
- Think of your target audience – what do they need to hear? How best can you get your message across?

Once responsibility for publicity has been agreed, a number of crucial steps should be taken to lay the foundations for your publicity campaign: -

- Assess your current activities – how can they be improved? What needs to be done differently?
- Plan a calendar
- Develop a comprehensive circulation list – this should include all relevant local contacts including media, public representatives, local sport groups and voluntary groups. This list should be updated regularly

Evaluation of a publicity campaign

Through regular evaluation, the effectiveness of your Lsp's publicity campaign can be assessed and modifications made. This will also ensure the best use of available resources. The implementation of any publicity campaign should be evaluated on a regular basis, at least every six months. This evaluation should be formal, and involve everyone who has a substantial role in any aspect of your publicity campaign. To facilitate this evaluation, the coordinator should circulate to the evaluation group, in advance of the meeting, the following documents: -

- List all publicity activities since the last evaluation
- Note all media enquiries
- Listing of all publicity related documentation issued by the Lsp, and the reason for issuing
- Listing of all media coverage indicating date, location, journalist, topic/issue, Lsp input and whether it is balanced/neutral, positive or negative from the point of view if the Lsp

The objectives of the Lsp would be to: -

- Critically examine the profile of the Lsp through all public events and media coverage since the last evaluation, including any “missed opportunities”
- Identify and address any specific organisational difficulties, which may have arisen in the implementation of the publicity campaign
- Highlight any unintended effect of media coverage of the Lsp or its activities
- Assess the interest shown by the media in the Lsp and consider how it may be enhanced
- Review the publicity calendar in light of the evaluation
- Decisions should be documented and monitored until fully implemented

Organising a public event

Public events or activities will help to increase the visibility of the Lsp. They will help to establish the Lsp as an integral part of the community, and will present potential media opportunities

There are several different types of events you can organise either independently or in partnership with other Lsps or, one or more local organisations. The following list is indicative: -

- Host an open evening – e.g. to provide information on the Lsp, its objectives and vision for the future ... guest speakers ...
- Organise a public meeting – e.g. host an information evening on what the local community want from the Lsp, and what the Lsp has to offer
- Launch a report – e.g. on the activities of the Lsp
- Plan a community exhibition – e.g. involve a significant number of other local sporting organisations showing the services they provide for the community

Planning the event

Any public event requires advance planning to ensure the smooth running of the activity

Timing

In order to maximise attendance and media coverage for your events: -

- Avoid clashes with major local, national and international events – e.g. these vary from the local football final to broadcasting of an international soccer match
- Don't run events at times of the year when a large number of people are particularly busy or away – e.g. Christmas and mid terms from school holidays
- Consider local media deadlines – e.g. host an event on a Monday evening if the local newspapers' deadline is on Wednesday

Choosing a speaker

When you are inviting a guest speaker, you will need to time your event around their availability: -

- Contact the guest speaker well in advance
- Clarify the subject on which they will talk
- Check what facilities they will need on the day – e.g. projector or video facilities
- Confirm whether they are willing to speak to the media in advance or at the meeting
- Request a copy of their speech in advance in order to prepare a press release
- Ask for photographs of the speaker so they can be used for publicity purposes

Choosing a venue

- Issues to keep in mind when choosing a venue: -
- Capacity – how many people do you expect to attend?
- Facilities – are they available/can they be sourced?
- Location – is the location easy to find?
- Disability access – is there appropriate access for all?
- Parking – is there adequate, safe and accessible parking?
- Cost – is there a venue you can use free of charge?

- Transport – do you need to hire a mini bus or organise car pools?

Let people know in advance

You can plan a perfect event but unless you tell people about it, nobody will turn up. In the two weeks prior to the event, you should: -

- Distribute posters and leaflets
- Inform the local radio station so they can include your meeting in the events diary
- Send a notice to the local correspondent for inclusion in the community notices of your local newspaper
- Phone all relevant radio shows to promote the event
- Issue a press statement
- Inform key groups directly

Publicity material should contain the following information: -

- Date of event, time, location and direction to venue
- Title of the event, names and titles of speakers
- Indicate if there is an opportunity to ask questions
- Contact number/email for further information

Getting media coverage for a Lsp event

The media should be invited to all public Lsp events. Keeping the media informed of your activities will help raise public awareness of the event and of the Lsp in general. In advance: -

- Appoint a publicity coordinator for the event
- Compile a list of local journalists you would like to cover the event
- Send them individual notices with the details of the event
- Notify news desks and photo desks of local newspapers
- Follow up with a phone call to confirm attendance and receipt of invitation
- Ring relevant radio shows to inform them of the upcoming event
- Book photographer for photo call

On the day: -

- Issue a press release to the local radio station and newspapers in an effort to get media coverage to promote the event
- Telephone the news editors to ensure they have received the release and offer extra information or an interview with a guest speaker
- Reserve seating for members of the media who have agreed to attend
- Organise a photo opportunity
- Double check to make sure everything is working – projectors, videos, etc
- Have a guest book at the front door
- Ensure all journalists who attend receive a press pack
- Arrange Lsp poster and leaflets for the venue
- Talk to the media who attend and get to know them

Press pack

A press pack is an aid for a journalist and should give all the relevant information needed to write a report on the event. A press pack should include: -

- A press release
- Copies of any speeches given
- Background information on the Lsp
- Any relevant photographs with captions
- Present the pack in a simple folder so that all the information is contained in one place

Photo opportunities

Newspapers like photographs and may use one even if they don't carry a news report. The more unusual a photograph the better the chance of it being carried. Formal posed shots tend to be boring, relaxed shots showing genuine interaction of people or action shots are better: -

- If you can afford one, book a professional photographer or perhaps use a photographer who is willing to provide this service at cost price
- Invite the photographers from the local newspaper; if they attend they will submit the photographs to their publications automatically. You can submit their shots to other papers and magazines, which don't attend the event
- Identify a specific time for photos – at the beginning or end of the event – and request that guests pose for photographs

- If you organise the photographs yourself, send them to the local papers with a press release and caption attached to each photo as soon as possible in order to meet deadlines
- Each photograph caption should state who is in the picture, what Lsp event they were attending, and the date and venue of the event
- Ensure that there is a clear reference to the Lsp in each caption
- Write or type the caption on a piece of paper and tape it lightly to the reverse of the picture

After the event: -

- Send press packs to the media who could not attend
- Make follow up calls to see if any of the journalists require further information
- Issue photographs, which were taken at the event, accompanied by captions
- Send letters of thanks to all those who facilitated the event, especially guest speakers
- Keep a file of the positive and negative coverage, which was achieved, and lessons learned from the event

Writing and issuing a press release

Journalists are sent a huge number of press releases, and many of them end up going straight in the bin. This may be because the press release is irrelevant or badly put together

Writing a press release

Two golden rules to press releases are: -

- ❖ Make sure you have genuine news – a new service, a new office opening, results, etc. Looking through the papers and listening to the radio will give you an idea of the kind of stories, journalists are interested in
- ❖ Keep press releases short, ideally one side of a typed A4 page. It is fine to include additional materials, such as leaflets, but keep it relevant. Remember, if the journalist is interested, they will contact you for more information

Content

- *Date* – the date you issue the release
- *Embargo* – if you do not want the story covered until a certain date/time, you can put an embargo on it, in which case you must make this clear on the releases – e.g. Embargo: 5pm 24th April 2002. Be aware however that embargoes can be broken by accident not just by intention
- *Heading* – a short headline summarising the story
- *First paragraph* – the most important facts should be included in the first paragraph. Newspapers often cut the information to make it fit the space available, and this is likely to be from the bottom up, so vital information could be left out if it's not at the beginning of the release. Answer as many of the “W” questions – what, when, where, who, why and how – as you can in the first paragraph
- *Second paragraph* – provide more detail or further information in the second paragraph, including any of the “W” questions you couldn't fit into the first paragraph
- *Quote* – a quote can explain the importance of the story in clear language, or it can add a new dimension such as the personal side of the story. Quotes may also be very useful in other ways – e.g. identifying the spokesperson of the Lsp, or as a means of endorsement by a supportive individual or organisation, thus adding to the Lsps credibility. However, don't use quotes just for the sake of it, they must bring extra value to the release
- *Additional paragraphs* – if you have more information, add further paragraphs but don't write more just to make the release look more important
- *Contact details* – the contact name, title, day, time and out of hours telephone number should be included in clear, bold print at the end of the release. Email and website addresses should also be included where possible

Checklist for issuing a press release

The following checklist should be placed beside the Lsp fax machine and used as a final checklist before you send out every press release: -

- Is the release printed on Lsp paper?
- Is the release dated?
- Is there a headline?
- Is an embargo necessary?
- Are the most important facts in the first two paragraphs?
- Have the “W” questions been answered – what, when, where, why, who and how?
- Are the facts, spelling and grammar correct?
- Have you got someone to proof read it?
- Is there a contact name and telephone number for further information?
- Is the layout simple and clear?
- Have you checked the newspaper and radio deadlines?
- Have you checked an updated listing for recipient contacts?

Interviews

Sending out a press release with the full details of any news may result in coverage in the newspaper or on the radio. If a journalist requires further information or is particularly interested in the story, you could be asked to give an interview on behalf of the Lsp

Preparing for interviews

First, find out as much as you can about what you are being asked to say: -

- Ask the interviewer what areas they want to discuss – they may not tell you exactly what questions they will ask but they should give you an idea of what they want to cover. You may even be able to suggest some areas to cover yourself
- Ask how long the interview will last
- Check what type of article or programme it will be used for – e.g. news, profile article, talk show, etc
- Find out whether anyone else is being interviewed at the same time or on the same topic
- If the interview is for radio, check whether the interview will be live or pre recorded, and ask how long they expect the interview to last
- Familiarise yourself with the programme – e.g. the format, the presenter's name, the producer

Be proactive and think about what you want to say, and what information you want to get across. Being prepared will give you more confidence, but don't over prepare; allow yourself room to be flexible: -

- Think about who your audience is, and who you want to reach
- Write down a few key words to remind you of the points you want to make but don't write a full script
- Try to illustrate your points with examples, anecdotes or comparisons, it helps people to understand
- Jot down the Lsp's telephone number and/or email address so that you can give it out on air, or give it to the journalist to include in the article

On the day

If you are being interviewed face to face, at home or in the office: -

- Make sure you won't be interrupted – take the phone off the hook, get somebody to stand guard at the door – especially if it is a radio interview

If you are being interviewed on the phone: -

- ❖ Use a landline not a mobile
- ❖ Use a phone without "call waiting" services as this may disturb the interview

If you are going into a radio station: -

- Give yourself plenty of time to get there, and try to arrive twenty minutes before you are due to be interviewed
- Be prepared to be kept waiting as programmes do not necessarily stick to original schedules

Additional tips for radio interviews

- Sit about thirty centimetres/twelve inches away from the microphone
- Don't fidget, tap your fingers or rustle papers
- Ensure you have a glass of water available in the studio
- Keep your sentences short and simple, don't waffle and use every conversational language
- Avoid "ums" and "ers" if you can
- Try not to leave long pauses
- Stay calm, don't be rushed, breathe normally and give yourself time
- Try to slow down your normal speech and speak clearly. Don't put on a special voice
- Be positive and upbeat in your tone, vary the pitch of your voice and use emphasis to highlight key phrases
- If it is a pre-recorded interview, find out in advance if it is going to be edited
- If you make a mistake, don't worry, carry it and just carry on

After the interview

- Find out when the interview is going to be printed or broadcast
- Exchange contact names and numbers with the producer/reporter in case either of you need to check anything at a later date

Media Dos and Don'ts

General dos

- Plan a twelve-month publicity campaign and update it at least every three months
- Appoint someone to coordinate the publicity campaign
- Keep an up to date contact list, which included details of community organisations, public representatives, media, etc
- Make sure you have read the publication/listened to the radio programme before you contact it
- Find out when deadlines are
- Check the names of the news editor/producer and key journalists you are contacting
- Try to establish an ongoing relationship with journalists/editors, etc
- Think about who the audience is and who you are trying to reach

General don'ts

- Assume people will be interested in your story, or have any knowledge of the Lsps
- Call a journalist close to their deadline date

Press releases' dos

- ❖ Make sure the people named as contacts are easily available by phone, also at weekends
- ❖ Follow up a press release with one phone call to check it has been received and say you are happy to supply further information – an interview, photograph, etc
- ❖ Keep your phone calls to a newsroom short otherwise you could end up being regarded as a pest
- ❖ Always ask the journalist have they time to talk to you. If they don't, ask what time would be convenient

Press releases' don'ts

- Send out a press release unless you have genuine news
- Ask repeatedly if the story will be used
- Keep calling again and again

Interview dos

- Ask for clarification if you don't understand the question
- Get to the most interesting point first
- Treat all microphones as "live"
- Give examples to illustrate your point
- Get permission from people if you plan to tell stories involving them

Interview don'ts

- Panic if you make a mistake
- Speak too quickly
- Try to cram in too much information

Monthly Lsp notice board

Publicity is essential for every Lsp. The public needs to know you exist and how to get in touch with you. The creation of a monthly notice board will mark the beginning of the Lsp's campaign to promote their activities and establish themselves as a resource to the community

Raising the profile of the Lsp locally means an increase in public awareness and an increase in support for the partnerships as their activities become more transparent

The Lsp notice board will have to be focused with clear objectives. Think of your target audience – what do they need to hear? How can you best get your message across to them?

Template

A new era for sport – monthly letter from Lsp Coordinator (100 to 150 words)

Introduction

E.g. The Irish Sports Council (ISC) have introduced sports' programmes for adoption and adaptation by the Local Sport Partnerships (Lsp) to suit local needs, with an emphasis on the provision of quality training and support materials for sports' leaders, coaches, parents and volunteers. Through our programmes, the Lsp will encourage participation across all age groups in their local areas, working closely with local communities, agencies on the ground and national bodies

- Why is there a need for a Lsp?
- Why was your county chosen as an area appropriate for a Lsp?
- How do the public get involved?
- What will the Lsp mean to the area?
- What have the Lsp done to date?
- What is the vision of the Lsp for the future?
- A picture of the Lsp team and a profile of each member (100 words each). The profile of the coordinator should be longer, listing their relevant qualifications for their job and also emphasising their passion to make a difference to the sporting community (200 words)

Forthcoming events in bullet point format

- Date of event
- Time of event
- Location
- Brief information about the event

The soapbox

The public will be encouraged to write into the notice board with comments, ideas and suggestions about the Lsp. A local sponsor could be brought on board to reward the best letter each month with a prize (100 words)

The month in review

A short narrative summing up the Lsp activity for the month (200 words)

Sports person of the month

This could be anyone from a player on the U10 football team to the captain of the county's hurling team. This section would include: -

- ❖ An action shot of the sports person
- ❖ A profile of the sports person – their sporting achievement, age, occupation, how they got interested in sport, what they hope to achieve in the future, etc. Follow with a question and answer format based interview (100 words)

Feature – sport of the month

Each month, there would be a section focusing in a different sport – e.g. sport for older people, tennis, hurling, etc. Look at any new developments available in the latter sport and plans for the future (200 words)

Contact details

- Email
- Website address
- Telephone number
- Address