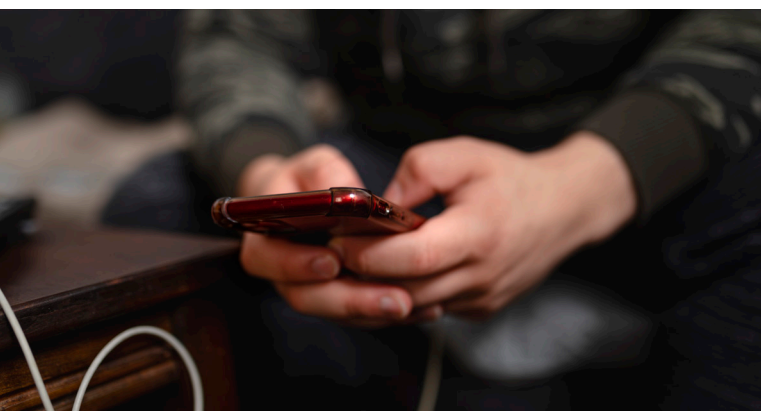


How to use local media to help end homelessness



One of the most effective ways you can help end homelessness is by using the local media to get some of your key messages across.

A keen eye, ear and a bit of teamwork can raise the profile of homelessness in your area and create debate and discussion. It can help get Crisis campaign messages to wider audiences and encourage others to become Crisis supporters.



MP's offices and local councils keep a close eye on local media to gain insight on what matters to voters. Raising homelessness through this forum will help ensure that your MP understands the issue and what actions they can take.

Below you'll find some simple steps you can take to use local media to end homelessness for good.

1. Understand your local media

Most areas have a range of local newspapers, radio stations, community TV channels and social media pages that you can interact with. A good first step is to develop a clear picture of which media outlets you can engage with.

Try:

- A simple internet search of 'local media' and your area name should highlight the main local newspapers and community outlets.
- More detailed searches for things like community websites, community radio or community tv stations in your area could also highlight a range of useful outlets.
- Look for regional media too which may be useful, particularly in larger urban areas.

2. Start monitoring

When you've done your research and decided your scope, you can start monitoring the coverage of homelessness in your local media so that you can respond



when the opportunity arises. Here are some ideas of how to get going:

- Check local media outlet websites regularly for articles or letters relevant to homelessness. Use the site search function to search for 'homeless' or 'homelessness.'
- Follow local media outlet's social media outlets on Twitter and Facebook.
- Set up a Google Alert for 'homelessness [your area]' to help you with monitoring.
- Check in at the start of phone-in radio shows to hear what issues they are looking to cover that day.
- If working as a group set up a rota for monitoring.

3. Respond to media coverage

A good way to maximise the chance of getting your messages out there is to respond to articles, letters, features or discussions. Follow these top tips:

- Use any articles or letters as an opportunity to raise the profile of homelessness or of any ongoing Crisis campaign messages.
- Write to the letters page – there are some tips on that coming up.
- Use comments sections on articles.
- Respond to local media social media posts.
- Call in to phone-ins where there might be an opportunity to raise the issue or promote a Crisis campaign message.

For your own wellbeing as well as the clarity of the messages you want to get across, don't get drawn into arguments or contentious areas. Always be polite and contact us at campaigns@crisis.org.uk for advice on how to respond on tricky issues.

4. Keep homelessness on the agenda

It's also possible to influence the local news and media agenda in your area to raise the profile of homelessness. Being proactive can be particularly helpful when Crisis is running a campaign and we want to broadcast our messages as widely as possible.

- Look out for local media releases and other resources from Crisis while we have a campaign running for you to use to gain coverage. Visit our website to find out about the latest Crisis campaigns here: crisis.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/
- Between campaigns you can write a letter to the Editor. If you're working together as a group, you could take it in turns to write in responses to support them and add further points.
- Work together to follow up radio phone-in contributions.
- Look out for opportunities like broadcast or online election hustings or question time style events to ask questions, or make comments in.
- Share, like, re-tweet and respond to each other's social media posts.
- Don't be afraid to try to start a conversation yourself, but don't be discouraged if it doesn't get picked up. Just keep trying!

5. Look for collaborators

While this is something you can do as an individual, finding some like-minded people to work together with will spread the work and make it a more exciting process.



You could start by contacting Crisis to find out if we have a Skylight service, a regional group or any other interested campaigners in your area. You may already have some friends or colleagues who are keen to support our campaigning work.

However you want to kick off, contact us at campaigns@crisis.org.uk to find out how we can help you move forward.

6. Stay in touch

We want to help and support you as much as we can – and we want to know how you're getting on!

Contact us at campaigns@crisis.org.uk or via the portal on this hub to let us know if you've managed to get some coverage, or if you need anything more to help you.

Thanks so much for supporting Crisis, by campaigning and by all the other things that you do. Together we can and will end homelessness – and we'll keep going until we do.

Top Tips for your 'letter to the Editor'

- Keep it simple, short and to the point – don't assume your audience knows the issues.
- Include your name and address – you can ask a newspaper not to print your details, but if you don't supply them you won't get in.
- If you're reacting to another letter or an article, quote the letter writer and the date.
- Personalise your letter with your thoughts or experiences, as well as giving the campaign messages and statistics.
- Make local links. You are more likely to get your letter printed if there's a handle for local readers.

- Avoid jargon wherever you can.
- Avoid language that sound like preaching; and avoid exaggeration.
- Follow up with a phone call to ensure the paper has received your letter.

Some simple messaging

If you're looking for some simple messaging to use in several situations, here are some suggestions:

- In 21st century Britain, everybody should have a place to live.
- People lose their homes for a variety of reasons. Rising pressure from high rents and low pay, or a sudden life event like losing a job or family breakdown, can quickly force people into homelessness.
- We can end homelessness for good. This doesn't mean that no-one will ever lose their home again, but that everyone facing homelessness gets the help they need quickly.
- It means making sure we all have a place to live, and together doing everything we can to stop people from losing their homes in the first place.
- We know it is possible to end homelessness, but it will take political will and commitment to make it happen.
- We call upon all politicians and political parties to commit to ending homelessness for good. ■