

Speaking to the media



An interview with a journalist

If you are considering talking to the media remember that the media are very likely to be looking for a 'story'. The child in the story will be your child. You will be emotionally involved and what you say might affect your family. Think carefully about how you want your child and family to be portrayed.

Ask what sort of article it is that your interview will be a part of. What will be the central theme of the article? Be aware that you can withdraw at any time if you are unhappy with the journalist or the article. Be sure that you are happy with any pictures.

A major reason for agreeing to an interview is likely to be raising awareness of the support group. Be careful that you confirm any contact details for the group which will be reproduced in print e.g. do you want to include a telephone number or an address as well? If you wish to have details of the support group included, specify these carefully and check they are correct.

You can ask the journalist to provide a list of questions so that you can prepare. You can also ask the journalist to read back the transcript so that facts can be verified. It is not always possible to see the article before it goes to print, but certainly you can insist on having a good understanding of what the piece will contain.

Watch out for the end of the interview being followed by 'just one more question'. This may well be a question on a controversial topic. Do not be caught out!

It is useful to make sure that the journalist has your contact numbers so there is no excuse for any lack of feedback. Ask when the article is due to appear so that the group can prepare for possible public interest and increased enquiries.

contact a family

209-211 City Road London EC1V 1JN

Tel 020 7608 8700 Fax 020 7608 8701 Web www.cafamily.org.uk e-mail info@cafamily.org.uk
Helpline 0808 808 3555 or Textphone 0808 808 3556 Freephone for parents and families

TV and radio interviews

Similarly to interviews for newspapers, check the context your interview will be used in. What is the programme about? What is the purpose of your interview? How will your child and family be portrayed?

Before the interview ask what the first question will be and how long the interview will last. You will want to know whether it is 'live' or recorded. ('Live' has the advantage of being exactly what you have said. Recorded material can be cut and edited, but there is the advantage of stopping the interviewer and asking for a repeat performance if desired.)

Remember the rule of thumb is to think of three points you would really like to get across and stick closely to this. Using examples, imagery or some basic statistical facts will make more interesting listening.

Media opportunities and Contact a Family

If you do choose to speak to the media and your subject is your child's rare or specific condition it will be very valuable if you can include details of the Contact a Family freephone Helpline 0808 808 3555 (Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm) as well as the name and details of your particular support group. This means that the article or story may be of use to anyone with a rare disorder as well as those with the specific condition that your support group is concerned with. It is also very helpful if you can let Contact a Family know the media you have spoken to so that coverage can be monitored.

This guide is part of the Contact a Family Group Action Pack. For more information please visit **www.cafamily.org.uk** or telephone 020 7608 8700.

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