Dundalk Simon Community has been involved in a number of different programming activities on Dundalk FM. For the last two years Dundalk FM has supported the organisation during Simon Week by offering them a regular slot to promote the events of the week, the key messages and work of the organisation.

You may think that media and promotional activities will create too much additional work for your organisation – PROS, press releases and preparing for interviews are some of the challenges that organisations may have to come to grips with. Niall Cassidy, CEO with Dundalk FM, explains how this is not necessarily the case when dealing with Dundalk FM. ‘We do issue press releases sometimes, and we will be contacted by the Dundalk FM newsroom to expand on it,’ he says. ‘We have had some experience of using the media over the years but are limited in our training. We don’t have a dedicated PRO but have now employed a full time fundraiser whose brief includes PR work. We tend to share the spokesperson piece between the managers depending upon what aspect of the service we are promoting.’

So what was the experience of being on radio like? ‘Staff from Dundalk FM have met with us prior to the programmes and together we agreed a format etc for the show’ says Niall. ‘The station provided training to staff and service users on presenting a show. They were also very helpful when we raised concerns over protection of people's anonymity – Alan (the Station Manager) drew up guidelines around how best Dundalk FM would work with Community & Voluntary Groups in this regard.’

Going on Air

One of the biggest issues mentioned by community organisations in their dealings with the media relates to nerves. Speaking on the radio, representing an organisation, advocating on behalf of a group or highlighting a controversial issue can be daunting for even the most confident community activist. Niall suggests a few tips for helping to prepare in advance of a broadcast interview.

‘Being nervous (cautious) is a good way to be! There are potential pitfalls so you do have to go in with your eyes open to them and have thought through why you are getting involved with the media in the first place. I would advise being upfront about what you want out of it, what you can offer and areas that are a ‘no go’. There are times when it may be appropriate to raise real issues of concern to our project and other times when it may be more strategically and politically astute not to. From the point of view of promoting your work and the good that is being done, it can be a very powerful ally but you do need to have thought it through beforehand. In relation to Dundalk FM itself I have always felt that they are extremely supportive of our work and have never tried to exploit any of the issues we may wish to raise.’

Benefits for community groups

Niall outlines a number of benefits and real outcomes from using the station, from the more obvious ones to those which may not spring to mind immediately. They included ‘increased publicity of our work, our messaging and any fundraising events we are running; training for staff and service users which apart from anything else was a good confidence booster; embedding our name more and more within the local community – if we don’t have the support of the people of Dundalk then we will struggle to carry on our work. Working with Dundalk FM eases the way for us.’

“Decent and productive work is one of the most effective ways to fight poverty and build self-sufficiency.”

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
Message for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
17 October 2010