

## **Guidelines for dealing with the media in a crisis, prepared by Friends House and issued to LM's at AM 18th September 2011**

- Acknowledge the fact that there will be publicity and that the timing will be outside your control.
- Clarify aims, e.g. restrict publicity, maintain good media relations, convey something of Quaker principles.
- Recognise that this is not the time to try to publicise Quaker events or interests.
- Limit contact with the media by being the one contact person who will be responsible for issuing any statements and engaging with the press.
- The designated media contact should liaise with the media relations officer at Friends House\* as soon as possible to explain the situation. The MRO will be able to advise on how to proceed with the press, what to say and what not to say, whether or not a formal press statement is necessary, and on the wording of any such statement, according to the particular situation.
- All Friends should beware of talking 'off the record' and not allow themselves to be drawn into chats with reporters.
- All Friends should refer all media to the designated media contact, and inform the contact of any media enquiry.
- Discuss your position with regard to Quaker publications and newsletters, bearing in mind that they will be in the public domain and therefore may be seen, monitored and quoted from by members of the media.
- Ask Friends to monitor the media and notify the contact of any reports, sending cuttings (with page number and date), and details of any radio or TV coverage. The media contact to keep a file of these for the Meeting's records.
- Prepare a skeleton press statement as soon as possible. This will be a template that may need to be adapted according to the questions you are asked. Only use the statement in response to an enquiry by the press. Don't release a statement unless you are asked.
- The media contact should be courteous to the media, return calls, be sympathetic regarding reporters' deadlines and be practised in responding with "no comment".
- The media contact should log details of contacts made by the media, including date, time, name and contact details of the reporter, name of publication/station, information requested, when the item will go out and any points of particular interest. You may need this information at some future point.
- Don't give out phone numbers of other Friends (except for the media contact). If asked, say: "I'm sorry I can't give you their telephone number, but X (media contact) would be willing to talk to you."
- Revise and update the press statement as necessary.
- Be prepared for increased interest, say, once a plea is taken, or when a case reaches crown court and again when the sentence is passed.

### **Difficulties**

Despite all your planning, there will be the unexpected:-

- A Friend may knowingly or inadvertently talk to the media
- A Friend may decide that writing for a minor Quaker newsletter doesn't count. (Remind the friend of the decision to have one contact and that the Quaker publications are themselves media.)
- Knowing when to challenge any inaccuracies that have been published. (Whether

it is important enough to do so; whether anything will be gained or correction achieved – weighing up the time and persistence required and that it might serve to stir up more negative publicity.)

- The defendant may give an interview to the media, including details or names the media might try to pursue.

**Media Relations Officer at Friends House (as at September 2011)**

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