

Media interviews - guidance

1. Check out with whoever contacts you exactly what they want, work with them and use it as a very positive opportunity to say what you want to. Be 'pro disclosure' on your terms.
2. Ask for advance notice of questions if possible and prepare brief answers.
3. Never offer more than three key messages. Less is more.
4. Check facts and figures.
5. Avoid jargon.
6. Rehearse how you sound. Change anything you find hard to remember or awkward to say until it comes naturally.
7. Establish if the interview is live or pre-recorded. You can change a 'pre-record'.
8. Agree a time/place for the interview. If you're offered a time or place that is not convenient, suggest alternatives.
9. If it's a radio interview, it's acceptable to read your answers from a prepared script as long as it sounds natural.
10. Think of possible 'follow-up' questions and have the answers ready on your script or in the back of your head.
11. One way of making a script is by creating a 'mind map' – a tree structure showing your proactive 'first offer' messages and reactive 'if asked' answers.
12. Identify three messages that you want to give and do all you can to introduce them into the interview from the start in a natural way.
13. Back up your responses with 'real life' examples or research findings.
14. Whatever the questions, make sure you get your story across. Try these phrases: 'The key point to make is...' 'To return to the main issue...'
15. Only say what you want to say - don't be tempted to fill silences left by the journalist, or be side-tracked onto other issues. Remember your key messages.
16. Always respond to enquiries, even if you have to be a little bland or non-committal. Do explain to the journalist why you have to take this stance, eg 'We are still trying to ascertain the full facts'. Follow this up with a confirmation email.
17. If an interviewer makes a statement that is wrong, correct them and spell out the correct information.
18. If there is something big in the news about the Church on the day, prepare to be asked for your views out of the blue.
19. Try to treat the interview as a normal conversation – and relax.
20. If the final story contains inaccuracies, let the journalist know. You may have to ask for an apology or correction.