

A hand is shown from the palm side, reaching out towards the viewer. The background is a map with various patterns and colors. The text "AWARENESS DAY" is written in a white, serif font across the center of the hand.

# AWARENESS DAY

“Lay visitors are independent members of the local community who visit police stations unannounced to check on the welfare of people who are in police custody.”

get  
switched  
on

Each year there are thousands of visits to police stations by lay visitors. These provide independent and impartial inspection of custody areas by volunteers from the local community on behalf of the local community.

These visits help to maintain and improve standards of detention and provide an important link between the community and the police.

The National Association for Lay Visiting (NALV) are organising the first National Lay Visiting Day. The aim of the Day is to raise public awareness of the important role of lay visiting in police/community relations.

This Guide is intended to help you plan activities in your area which will help raise that awareness and promote the theme of community involvement in local policing.

Lay visiting is an important activity all the year round. Promoting the scheme on National Lay Visiting Day does not mean that its benefits should not be advanced at all other times. The Day should serve to provide a focal point for activity throughout the country.

National Lay Visiting Day will be on **Wednesday 20 January 1999**. Like visiting itself, flexibility and discretion should feature in what you choose to do in your own area.

The success of the Day will benefit from the efforts of police authorities, local panels, lay visitors and the police, working together at local level.

# Events for the day

## The Open Day

One idea is to put together an Open Day to outline the benefits of the scheme. Access to police stations, particularly operational custody areas on a busy day, may not be the best idea. However, liaison between lay visitors and local police should be able to determine when best the police station may be 'open' to the public. It may be that in large towns and cities, a particular station could be made available for part of the Day. Many of you will have had experience of previous open days and will know best how to attract the local community.

This could provide an opportunity to approach local companies who may wish to support the Open Day by supplying balloons or hats or pens or whatever with their company logo to attract the younger members of the community and their parents.

Make sure that local press and media who turn up at any Open Day are provided with the relevant details of the Day and lay visiting.

“Lay visitors must maintain their independence and impartiality. They do not take sides but merely look, listen and report on what is said to them.”

## Talks, Seminars and Displays

There are many interested groups in your area for example schools, rotary clubs etc who you could approach offering to give talks on the role of lay visitors in their community.

Speak to groups of local teachers and school governors.

Ask local major employers, shops, stores and supermarkets if you can put a poster on display and if you can provide a stock of leaflets.

## Local Radio

Contact local and regional radio stations and try to arrange to take part in phone-ins on the day or just before it. Choose an experienced lay visitor who will come across well 'on air'.

## Television and Newspapers

Look for photo opportunities involving national or local personalities that will attract media attention. For example, you may have a well-known person being 'visited' in a police cell.

# Using the media

This section of the Guide is to help you to make the most of your local media. The media will look for an event or an activity and this will depend on what you plan locally. One of the first things you will have to do is work out your activity programme for the Day.

## First Stage - Potential Contacts

Make sure that you liaise with others in your area involved in lay visiting. The local media will not appreciate approaches with the same angle from different sources.

Target the media you wish to approach and decide how best to approach them.

Find out their schedules and deadlines. Some parts of the media—particularly television and radio—may plan months ahead. Feature editors for weekly newspapers may

need two or three weeks notice. News items for local or regional daily newspapers will be a week or so.

Build up a list of contacts in the media. You may already have this from your day-to-day work. Addresses can be found in your Yellow Pages and Thomson Local Directory. Try to find out the name of news and features editors. When you first approach them you may not have yet worked out a

detailed programme of events for your area. What you should be able to give them though is:

- a clear idea of what the Day is about.
- what you intend to focus on locally.
- who you are working with in your local area, that is members of the police authority, local panels of lay visitors, the police service or other voluntary groups.

## Second Stage - Planning Your Campaign

### By mid November

Have your contacts list and deadline schedule organised and a broad outline of events and activities planned.

### By the end of November

Issue your first press release.

### Mid December

Follow up your press release with a phone call, find out what your target media require, arrange to meet with them, offer to brief them about lay visiting. Find out from the local and regional radio stations if they plan to run

any special features and see if regional television intend to carry any items.

Try to organise phone-ins on local radio stations.

### End of December

Make sure that all the media who intend to cover the Day are fully briefed and that any arrangements for filming or recording of features are finalised. If you are being interviewed, make sure that you are fully briefed on lay visiting and fully aware of events in your area. Confirm that arrangements for

all events and any photocalls are finalised.

### One week Before

Final ring round to all media attending events.

### Day Before

Issue a press release to all local media even if they are not attending any specific event or have not expressed any earlier interest.

### One week After

Issue a final press release telling of the successes of the Day.

### Third Stage - Communicating with the Media

#### Press releases

Principal media targets: local/regional newspapers, radio and TV.

There is little point in sending a local story to a national newspaper as the nationals pick them up from local news agencies.

Press releases should include a **brief** outline of the issues involved plus other essential information such as direct quotes, facts, figures and contact person and telephone number. However, there are no guarantees they will be used.

#### Content

A good press release should contain the basic information of who, what, when, where and why. Always write in the third person, apart from direct quotes. Use headed A4 paper marked at the top either 'EMBARGO' or 'FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE'. As editors edit from the bottom up, the first paragraph is the most important, and must grab the reader's attention. The second paragraph should include human interest and be topical, expanding on the first. Include the reason for the press release: is it linked to a

launch or event? Keep it brief - no more than two sheets of A4 stapled in the top left hand corner.

#### Layout

Date the press release at the top. Leave approximately 25mm/1 inch left and right margins. Type in double spaces to allow journalists to 'mark up' for type setting. Type 'ENDS' at the bottom and check you have included the contact. Copies of letters can be press-released along with your own covering press release.

Avoid embargoes, which should only be used when the news contained in your release is time-specific (eg event, launch). Despatch well in advance to allow journalists to plan coverage, then send a reminder nearer the time.

Forget the adage that only bad news is good news. Written interestingly, good news can also be printable and in any case, it is all publicity.

Do as much background research as possible as this will increase your chances of publication.

#### Despatching

Send copies to as many contacts as possible. Do not fold. There is usually no need for a covering letter. A faxed release communication should be followed up by post later.

#### Photo-opportunities

Send full details and timings to the news desk. Try to avoid photo shoots on Sundays (often a local press rest-day) and known busy days: your event should be the local major happening of the day. Consider inviting freelance photographers as back up.

#### General advice

In all your publicity dealings remember: **DO YOUR HOMEWORK!**

#### Get the facts right:

Always check facts and figures carefully including information from official sources, names, addresses and especially telephone numbers.

#### Keep it legal:

It is libellous to communicate a defamatory statement in a press release even if it is not used. Although libel applies to individuals

as distinct from companies or official bodies, if in doubt, leave it out.

#### Official secrets

If in doubt, consult your police authority's legal department or the Home Office.

#### Letters

Letter columns of local/national newspapers are a useful and free means of publicity. They can be used to support, amend or outline aspects of lay visiting. Letters should be concise and logical and written in the first person. Be prepared for them to be edited.

Check that you are able to make a personal statement on your scheme's behalf.

#### Community publications

Big benefits can accrue from publications with small circulations. Parish magazines, student newspapers, the ethnic minority press, newsletters of tenants' associations, interest groups and in-house journals of companies are all platforms for publicising lay visiting, enlisting support or

recruiting. Local listings, magazines and free 'What's On' publications that carry some editorial can also be used.

#### Newsletters and leaflets

If you start a local publication such as a newsletter, remember it will require a team of people prepared to undertake the planning, research and information gathering, writing and typing, printing and distribution.

A leaflet should contain the minimum to convey the message to its target audience. Include a picture if possible: it will add impact. Remember to include a local named contact and telephone number for further information.

#### Positive promotion

Lay visiting is hardly the most charismatic of topics, and whilst the press like to hear about things which go wrong, generating publicity to promote a positive image of lay visiting can be demanding. When successful, it can also be very satisfying!

## Sponsorship

Sponsorship may help you plan additional activities in your area and enhance existing events. Just as you are looking to gain something, the sponsor will also be considering what they will get from associating their company with National Lay Visiting Day.

There is little or nothing to be gained in the way of commercial sales from the activities of lay visitors. So what can you offer a commercial company to attract their sponsorship? Well, if you can show a co-ordinated publicity programme that will receive coverage in the important and high profile area of policing and community relations, a sponsor may release their name.

All sponsors wish their name to be associated with a good cause, helping to serve the community in which they are based.

Before approaching a potential sponsor you should consider:

- is the request for support reasonable and affordable?
- is the proposal properly costed?
- is it clear, precise and well presented?
- how much publicity the event is likely to attract.
- what other groups or local agencies you are working with.

The potential sponsor will want to know if you have already spoken to the media and whether any indication has been given of likely coverage.

When you put your proposal to a sponsor, try to make sure you are speaking to the person who controls the budget. This could save you a lot of time and effort.

## Suggested Timetable

### Mid December

- Follow up you press release with a phone call, find out what your target media require, arrange to meet with them, offer to brief them about lay visiting.
- Find out from the local and regional radio stations if they plan to run any special features and see if regional television intend to carry any items.
- Try to organise phone-ins on local radio stations.

### End of December

Make sure that all the media who intend to cover the Day are fully briefed and that any arrangements for filming or recording of features are finalised.

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### One week After

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**For further information contact your local scheme at:**



**Headquarters**

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