

How to write a press release

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Where to start and how to improve

If you're facing a blank piece of paper and not sure what to write, why not try out the following suggestions?

Where to start:

- 1. The facts** – what you've done or are doing and why it is news, dates, times, location, prices, funders or sponsors, key people and their roles should form the beginning of your press release. Get to the point quickly and use simple language with no jargon or acronyms.
- 2. Contact details** – make this very, very clear and as easy as possible for the journalist to contact you. For national coverage, you may need to consider offering an out of hours contact number – preferably a mobile and a willing volunteer to answer it!
- 3. Appeal to their interests** – for local papers make sure the local angle is in the headline i.e. Keighley Community Group helps 12 local people into jobs.
- 4. Meet their deadline** – find out the newspaper or magazine's deadline and get the press release done and sent out as a priority.
- 5. Pictures** – essential to add interest to the piece and sum up your story. If it's people into jobs you could take photos of them in their new role (but not sat behind a desk!)

How to improve:

- 6. Plan ahead** – your project plan should include when to write press releases and who to send them to but also how this activity fits with other publicity and Public Relations (PR) i.e. your newsletter/ poster campaign and fundraising events.
- 7. Set a target** – have a goal in mind i.e. 2 articles per year in the local press, one in a specialist magazine and regular diary entries for your events. An end result – perhaps a question in your annual members' survey about perception of your group or awareness of what you do, would also help keep your media plan focused.
- 8. Maintain contact** – don't be put off if your information isn't used. Keep up contact with journalists and keep sending in your news stories.
- 9. Add interesting quotes** – try and get comment from your chairperson, a service user, local resident or councillor, even a celebrity or sportsperson (as appropriate!)
- 10. Make use of newswire services** – Send your draft (in plenty of time) to Community Newswire a free news distribution service run by the Press Association and the Media Trust. Details at

<http://www.mediatrust.org/community-newswire>

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