



Pressing concerns:

Securing media coverage that benefits your charity or community organisation and its beneficiaries



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This toolkit explores ways that community organisations can build effective relationships with the press and media.

Positive media coverage can be a great way for community organisations to engage potential beneficiaries, enhance their profile, and build relationships with funders and partners.

In this toolkit we will equip you with some of the core skills needed to understand when, and how to work with the press - and how to avoid common pitfalls.

What will I learn?

- 1) Why do you want press?
- 2) What makes a great story?
- 3) Writing a press release
- 4) Building relationships with journalists



Why do you want press?

Before thinking about *how* to get press, it is important first to consider *why* you want to get press. Of course, it can feel good to see your name in print. But what are the tangible benefits to your organisation or beneficiaries?

Press coverage can be a powerful tool for highlighting new projects, reaching new beneficiaries, engaging funders or developing relationships with community partners, or contributing to a national debate that affects your group.

The key things to think about are:

- **What are your aims?** (i.e. to let people know about a new project or to bring in funding for a particular need)
- **Who do you want to engage?** Who do you want to engage through this coverage and what actions do you want them to take?
- **Is press coverage the most effective way to achieve your goals?** Is getting press coverage the most effective and best use of your resources. For example, some audiences are easier to reach via social media or through in-person activities.

For in depth guidance on community engagement you can download this Locality toolkit: <https://mycommunity.org.uk/engaging-your-community-in-a-meaningful-way>

What makes a great story?

Journalists are always looking for stories – the key is to make your story exciting and relevant to the audience you are writing for.

Local press love stories that involve local people and places and events in their community.

For national press you will need to think carefully about how your work relates to a current news topic or how it could be of interest to people living the other side of the country.

When putting together a story for the press, you should think about the following:

- Is your story timely? Think about what makes your story a current news item.
- Is your story relatable and engaging? Why would the readers of your target publication be interested in your story?
 - Human stories are your holy grail. Try to find simple, memorable stories that encapsulate the work your organisation does and the impact it makes. Whenever possible, try to include direct quotes from your beneficiaries.
 - Provide quotes from key staff members. Quotes can really bring your story to life and help a journalist understand the impact of your work.
 - Do you have memorable statistics you can include? Carefully chosen statistics can hook readers in and motivate them to act.
- What do you want your target audience to do? Make your call-to-action as simple, persuasive and specific as possible.
- Keep it simple. For those of us passionate about our cause, it can be tempting to tell people everything about our work and its impact. However, journalists have limited time – only include information relevant to your story and be ruthless with the rest.

Press release – tips

Whenever writing a pitch or press release for journalists, it is important to remember that you are not writing poetry. Your entire focus should be on grabbing the attention of the journalist or editor. Below are some top-tips for press release writing. On the next page you can find a paragraph-by-paragraph press release template.

- Use clear, concise, simple language – the [Hemingway app](#) can help with this.
- Frontload your copy with the most exciting, newsworthy aspects of your story.
- Avoid spelling and grammar mistakes. Proofread everything you send. Apps like [Grammarly](#) can help.
- Keep your press release short – one page, two at very most.
- Send your press release as a word document and/or embed it into the email. Do not send it as a PDF as Journalists often want to cut and paste copy (particularly quotes) directly from the press release.
- Make sure you get the name of the journalist and publication right!
- If you have a relevant high-resolution image, attach it to the email. Do not embed it.

PRESS RELEASE

Embargo Date: use the word embargoed if you are sending your press release out before the date you want it to be published.

Headline: Short, attention-grabbing sentence that captures your story

It is worth dedicating time to honing your headline. This is key to grabbing the attention of journalists. Your headline should also be the subject line of your email.

Paragraph 1: If the headline is the bait the intro paragraph is the hook. In under two lines try to cover the key points of your story (what, where, when, why, who, how).

Paragraph 2/3: Use these paragraphs to provide the important factual information journalists will need to tell your story.

Quotes: Provide quotes to bring your story to life and provide the human angle. Make sure the quotes sound like a human, not a machine. Choose a spokesperson who represents your organisation – this may be your CEO or a project leader. Try to include a quote from a beneficiary that shows the impact of your work. Always get permissions before quoting someone.

Closing body paragraph: use this paragraph to add extra factual details. This is an opportunity to explain a little more about your wider work, impact, partners etc. We encourage Locality members to explain that they are part of the Locality Network here.

ENDS: Close you press release with 'Ends' This makes it clear to the journalist that the body of your press release is complete.

Contact section: Include the name, address and phone number of the person handling your press and media enquiries.

Boilerplate: Finish off your press release by adding your 'Boilerplate' copy. This is a short, snappy paragraph that explains who you are, what you do and why.

Building relationships with journalists

The most effective way to get press for your organisation is to build and maintain positive relationships with the journalists and publications you want to work with.

- **Take time to identify your target journalists and publications** - A little research can go a long way when it comes to identifying journalists and publications – for example many twitter accounts have contact details. Most areas have two or three local papers, a regional BBC TV and radio station, and a number of community radio stations. Create a document with the contact details of your target journalists and update it regularly.
- **Think carefully about how to approach your targets** - If you have a current news story use the guidelines on page three to put together a story. If not, you can always put together a briefing document or email that outlines who you are, what you do etc. You may also use this as an opportunity to ask what sort of stories they would be interested in from you.
- **Keep your approach simple, specific and relevant**- You want journalists to know who you are but you don't want them to know you as the group that send through poor quality, non-stories. Make sure that the stories you send journalists have all or most of the key story-telling points discussed in this toolkit and are relevant to their audience.

Resources and consultancy

- If you would like any further support or assistance with media engagement please contact: info@locality.org.uk
- Effective Media Relations for Charities - What journalists want and how to deliver it, Becky Slack, 2016:
<https://www.spmfundamentals.org/publications/effective-media-relations-for-charities-what-journalists-want-and-how-to-deliver-it/>

Locality is the national membership network supporting community organisations to be strong and successful.

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