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| **Top 10 Tips: How to write a great press release** |

Regional press and local media should be great allies for your Neighbourhood House in terms of getting out your message. Be aware that most regional papers are time-poor and will publish your press release word-for-word – if you hit the mark with a story they like. This means you need to provide them with everything. Don’t expect them to write/edit your story and don’t expect them to come and take a photo (if they do, that’s a bonus!).

**Make sure your story is newsworthy**

* Before you start, ask is this genuinely newsworthy? And if so, who is going to be interested?
* To be newsworthy it should be at least one of the following:
  + Relevant and interesting to the readership (typically your local community)
  + Not something of past interest
  + ‘New’ – ie not previously reported
  + Where possible, include some quantifiable figures. Stats add weight and provide context. (Draw on government stats, your own stats, Council stats etc)
  + Ideally, have human interest angle
* Work at finding and creating the good news stories within your organisation. This should be part of your communications and marketing plan.

**Grab attention with a good headline**

* The beginning of a press release is the most important. A strong headline that is engaging, concise and accurate will ensure journalists notice it.
* Keep it simple. If journalists don’t understand it immediately, they’ll hit delete.

**Get the most important bit in your first sentence**

* Your first sentence has to grab readers – otherwise you’ve lost them
* Your first line should be a summary of the story (in no more than around 15-20 words) and read like the opening of a news story.
* Get the five Ws - who, what, where, why and when - in the opening line of news stories (think 6 second elevator pitch.)

**Keep it short**

* Press releases should be about 300 to 400 words.
* Break the release down into three or four short paragraphs plus a couple of quotes.
* Keep information about your organisation to the minimum – and do not include it in the opening paragraph.
* If necessary, include more detailed information about your organisation in “notes to editor” section at end of release. (You can run over to a second page for this).
* If providing statistics, consider listing as bullet points as easier to assimilate.
* Sub-headings are fine.

**Use quotes to provide insight**

* Including quotes from people in your organisation can be helpful for journalists
* Quotes should be used to provide insight and opinion and sound like a real person said them. They definitely shouldn't be full of jargon or technical language.
* Quotes from those who’ve benefitted from the services provided by your Neighbourhood House are terrific additions to press releases.
* Don’t use quotes to provide factual information; they are there to add colour and personal views

**Get a great photo**

* A photo printed with your story will increase readership significantly. Photos with people in them work better than an object alone. Try to get a human interest element in the photo and include a relevant, succinct caption.
* Steer clear of ‘cheesy’

**Spokesperson for your organisation**

* Consider whether it would be beneficial to have one (or more) spokespeople for your organisation. This way your organisation becomes identified with a key person (or people) within your organisation. This can be great for building community awareness and putting the ‘personal face’ behind the organisation particularly if your spokesperson is included in photos on a (fairly) regular basis that go out with releases**.**

**Tweak your release for different publications**

* Think carefully about the readership for each publication, the style of publication and tailor your release accordingly. This may mean just altering a sentence here or there – even this can make a huge difference!

**What to send in your email to journalists**

* Think carefully about the subject line. It needs to grab attention (because most journalists receive hundreds of emails every day).
* Subject line should start with ‘Press release’ and then have an attention grabbing subject line that is also accurate.
* Include a one paragraph outline of the news story and why you believe it would be of interest to the publication’s readership.
* Paste your press release underneath in the body of the email; don’t include as an attachment as a busy journalist may not open it.
* Attach one photo if it adds to the story, with caption and stating whether approvals have been received (particularly parental approval if there are children in the photo). Ensure resolution quality is suitable for print. A useful guide is [here](http://myloupe.com/resources/dpi.php).
* Don’t blast out releases en-masse to journalists. Personalise each one.

**How often should you be issuing press releases?**

That of course depends on how much of what you are doing is newsworthy. However, the bare minimum for a community organisation like a Neighbourhood House should be once per month, ideally more.

**Sources:**

[**http://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/jul/14/how-to-write-press-release**](http://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/jul/14/how-to-write-press-release)

[**http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zach-cutler/press-release-tips\_b\_2120630.html**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zach-cutler/press-release-tips_b_2120630.html)