



Refugee Week 2019

Engaging local media

General tips for writing and pitching a press release

What is a press release?

Press releases with an accompanying pitch are the staple tool used to provide you with the opportunity to secure coverage of your event or story. It does not – and should not – be complicated. Instead, it just needs to convey all the relevant information that a journalist will need to cover your story to achieve your aims on one side of A4. In essence, a sales pitch to convince a given media outlet to report on your story.

What is a pitch?

A pitch is the 30 second sound bite or two to three short sentences in an email that will accompany your press release to a journalist. It is the key tool to enable you to secure coverage of your event or story. Format wise, it includes the subject line of your email and must grab the attention of the reader or listener. Find or work out how your story will be of interest to your target – for example, have they covered a similar story before?

General tips for pitching and writing

- Keep sentences concise, and use simple, easy to use language. Remember that most people won't understand technical terminology or jargon. Don't use acronyms without putting their meaning in brackets the first time you use it – e.g. JCWI (The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants). If a journalist doesn't understand something, they won't read and won't use it.
- Don't attach your press release to an email. Copy into the bottom of an email. It's easier for a journalist to copy and paste from an email, and your headline will immediately be seen when they open your email. Include a short message – your pitch - above the release addressed to the journalist.
- Ensure email subject line stands out. For example: "NEWS: Refugees raising money for Coventry's homeless"
- Ensure font is consistent and easy to read. Use double spacing and ensure paragraphs are short and spaced apart. Use clear and simple formatting.
- Try to think about how you can make your story more interesting than "**Organisation holds event**". What is your 'hook' or story? Despite being a high-profile event, some journalists will not consider Refugee Week by itself to be a hook. Do you have a person of interest attending? Do you have a particularly captivating human story? Is there something else interesting about the event?
- Consider meeting your friend for a catch-up coffee who has little interest or knowledge about what you do. What is the first thing you would say to them to interest them? Good start for your 'hook.' Why should they care about it?
- Research the journalist beforehand. Have they written about this subject or type of event before? That can be part of your pitch.
- Tell your story in time. Send out an event diary note at least three weeks before. Follow up with a press release a minimum of two weeks before.
- Follow up. Don't be put off if you don't get a response. Your press release is often one of thousands in a journalist's inbox. Follow up with a call if you hear nothing back and have your



'sales pitch' ready – the first couple of sentences need to grab their attention and let them know why it is worth covering.

- Make it easy for the journalist to cover. If you have a great story and all the information easily accessible, in most cases your piece will get used. Journalists – particularly local and regional - are extremely busy, so any help you can give them in finding good stories will most likely mean it is used. The elements you should aim to provide include: the news content (what's happening), one or two quotes from relevant people, and a high quality image (ideally of people) to accompany the piece.
- Keep press release to one side of A4. It is ok for the additional information at the bottom of a release to lead on to another page.
- Include the official Refugee Week boilerplate – separate link – at the bottom of your press release

Additional information

If you have any questions or require any additional support with your media efforts, please contact the Refugee Week press officers Niall Mann:

- Niall.mann@imix.org.uk / 07788 973474