

TOP TIPS FOR WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

Writing a press release

Getting the attention of the press for your story may seem like a daunting prospect. But in reality publications want to feature stories about real people doing amazing things. Making it easier for them – by sending a well-written and concise press release – will only help your chances.

Think of a press release like your own news story, and structure it in the same way. It should have an exciting introduction which tells the story in a nutshell, it should have quotes from one or two key people and it should answer the key questions of any news story – who, what, when, where, why and how. Always write in the third person, except for quotes e.g He/she/them not I, we, me.

- Keep your story to one page of A4.
- Remember we are The Children's Hospital Charity, not Sheffield Children's Hospital Charity.
- Try and format the press release neatly so it is clear and easy to read. A space after each paragraph helps break up the text, and a centrally aligned, bold headline grabs attention.
- Don't forget to include your contact number. The press may want to interview you, or they may just have one or two more questions.

Introduction

The introductory paragraph should be no more than 30 words long, preferably shorter. But it should give enough information to hook the reader into wanting to find out more.

e.g A grateful gran is set to take on one of the countries toughest races in aid of the hospital that saved her grandson's life.

Don't worry about getting all the facts in there. A good intro tells the story without giving everything away.

Quotes

Quotes are essential to a good press release. Don't use quotes to repeat facts you have used elsewhere, but instead use them to convey your emotions about the story. How do you feel about The Children's Hospital? What was it like carrying out your fundraising? If you can, include two quotes.

e.g "I can never thank staff at The Children's Hospital enough for everything they did to save little Joe's life" said Jane Bloggs. "Every step I take in the race will be tough, but if it means other children can be saved like Joe then that is enough motivation to keep me going."

The facts

Stick to the who, what, when, where, how and why of the story and you won't go far wrong. Make sure you include where you are from, ages of key people and complete details of your fundraising. If you have a personal reason for supporting The Children's Hospital Charity, then don't forget to mention it!

Photo and video

The Children's Hospital Charity*

- Editors love a great photo and a good photo will enhance your opportunity to get more coverage. Bright, colourful pictures where the subjects fill the frame are much better than those taken from a distance with loads of wasted picture space.
- Send a couple of pictures - both portrait and landscape if you can. If your event has lots of participants, a big group shot alongside a shot of a smaller group gives the journalist a choice. If you send several good-quality pictures, the journalist may even print them all!
- Make sure you have permission from all the people in a photo before you send it, and write a caption including their names.
- If you shot any video footage, why not send a short clip? It doesn't have to feature any fancy editing – just a straight clip will do. You will probably not be able to send large files such as video over email, but sites such as www.wetransfer.com will send them for free.

Sending your story

- Identify which publication you want your story to go to. Your local paper is the best bet, as well as radio stations, TV channels and online publications in your area.
- Most publications will have a general editorial email, however it is often better to email journalists directly. Pick up the paper you are interested in and see what sort of things the different reporters are writing about. Then pick the one you think is best suited to your story.
- Email is the best medium for sending a press release. If you do not have an email address, consider asking a friend with an account to send it on your behalf.
- If you have sent your email and not heard anything within a few days, don't be afraid to make a follow up call directly to the newsroom.

Social media

Got Facebook or Twitter? Then share your story with your friends and the world! Don't forget to tag us @Sheffchildrens on Twitter and Sheffield Children's Hospital and Charity on Facebook.