

Media Presentation Notes – Refugee Week Conference 2017

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SLIDE 1: TITLE PAGE

Hi everyone! Thanks so much for being here today, it's great to see such a full house. My name's Mya, I'm the communications coordinator at [Right to Remain](#) and I've also been lucky enough to join the 2017 Refugee Week team as their media consultant. My background is in freelance print journalism so I've got plenty of experience with the pitfalls and frustrations of pitching to media organisations and have also worked as a broadcast news and documentary producer.

I'm going to introduce our media strategy for this year and give you some practical tips on how to get your events and stories taken up by the local press. Then I'll pass over to Jenny, our social media consultant, to share some of her guidance before you all break up into groups and start putting this stuff into practice...

SLIDE 2: OUR SHARED FUTURE VISION

*This year's theme is *Different Pasts, Shared Future*. We're bringing into focus a celebration of diversity; how different people, with different pasts and from many different cultures live and work together to make our streets, businesses and culture great. And we're acknowledging that while this past year has thrown up a lot of challenges and divisions, with the Brexit referendum passed we now need to come together and build strong communities, finding the courage to imagine and work to create a better future for everyone.*

SLIDE 3: GOLDEN RULES

These are my golden rules for get your story out there, whatever it is, wherever you're pitching to:

- ◆ **Be prepared:** create your strategy well in advance to avoid missed opportunities
- ◆ The media industry is becoming more fast-paced every year. Even journalists that aren't plain lazy, sorry, I can say this because I was one, are increasingly *busy*, so make it as **quick and easy** as possible for them to pick up your story by providing all the information they need clearly and concisely, setting up clear channels of communication to address any questions
- ◆ Though a high profile event, Refugee Week is not in itself a story, so **you need a hook:** something special to catch attention. For local media, this could be the human story of a refugee living in the community. Otherwise, what motivated *you* to get involved in Refugee Week can serve as a good guide to what might make the story interesting to others
- ◆ **Target your audience** in everything you do, from press releases to interviews. That means tailoring your message to suit the journalist, publication and audience.

SLIDE 4: OUR STRATEGY

What is refugee week about?

- Hosting and supporting a whole range of events that facilitate understanding through positive encounters between refugees and the general public
- Demonstrating the enormous value refugees bring to our communities through skills, culture and lived experience
- Providing information which raises awareness of the reality of refugee experiences in the UK and abroad
- Exploring new and creative ways of addressing refugee issues in a way that connects with a broadest possible range of people by focusing on our common humanity

SLIDE 5: YOUR STRATEGY

WHAT: start by considering what kind of coverage you want – what's your story? It could be people's stories, promotion of an event, coverage for an action or if one of you is brave enough, debates and panel interviews!

WHERE: would you like to pitch to? You can and should target a range of media outlets: local papers, radio, magazines and online. But bear in mind different outlets will be looking for different things and adapt your cover letter accordingly. For example, if asking someone to come and film at your event, you'll need to describe what it will look like visually, who they might be able to speak to, and so on. Ask yourself who your story will be relevant for and interesting to, and briefly explain this in your pitch to each media platform.

WHEN: timing is key. Event publicity must be arranged well in advance, while coverage will follow it. Submission deadlines vary, so find out what they are to plan your strategy. Print magazine deadlines may be 8 weeks in advance of publication. Broadcast media can be as little as 24 hours, but there's no harm in sending initial emails well in advance.

WHO: whoever your story centres on – a refugee, local volunteers - they are the most interesting part of the story. So where possible, bring your story to life by making it personal: why do they care about Refugee Week and why should the audience?

WHY: what happens locally during Refugee Week is connected to other people, other events happening all over the country. Link back to the fact you are part of something bigger and incorporate the 'core messages' for this year. They will connect your story to the 'bigger story', ensure a coherent message that's relevant to the widest audience and give journalists a sense that your event, which might be local, is actually of national significance.

SLIDE 6: CORE MESSAGES

Our core messages within the different pasts, shared future theme are...

- We have different pasts, but a shared future – obvious enough!
- We must build strong communities to meet the challenges ahead – importantly this links the interests and future of British communities with refugee communities.
- Imagining a future without discrimination – personally, I particularly like this one. Creates room for a lot of creativity and real vision, which I think is what a lot of people need right now...

And the first real channel for communicating those core messages will normally be your press release.

SLIDE 7: WRITING YOUR PRESS RELEASE

Press releases are for events. If you want to pitch a story, for example an opinion piece about Refugee Week and related issues, or a personal story, what you need is a concise cover letter. But for event promotion and publicity, or anything you might classify as a 'news story', press releases are the way to go.

Now, we've made a template press release that will be available to download from the Refugee Week website and which I recommend everyone look at – but in the meantime, some general guidelines.

There are three absolute must's for any press release:

1. **CONCISE:** It should fit onto an A4 page – but I recommend that as well as attaching it as a word document, you just copy/paste it straight into your email. Truth is, many journalists might not take the time to open your attachment.
2. **CLEAR:** You should structure the press release by order of importance: headline – by-line – paragraph summarising the story – then quotes, extra detail, contact information and so on. And remember,
3. **QUOTABLE:** that means not just actual quotes but engaging content so make sure you've covered your what – where – when – who – why

A solid press release might look like this:

1. **Headline:** This should be a factual summary of what the press release is about.
2. **Sub-heading:** 1 sentence focusing attention on why this is an important story to cover: who's involved and why it's newsworthy. Remember, most journalists will decide based solely on the headline and sub-heading whether to read your release or not! (To make sure they get the message even without opening the email, your subject line should read Press Release: followed by your headline and sub-heading)
3. **Release date:** (when the story can be published – probably immediate)
4. **Summary paragraph:** a few lines that include all the most important information a journalist will need. The summary paragraph should be enough for them to know what's going on, when and where.
5. **Description:** descriptive paragraph can go into a bit more detail
6. **Quotes:** A few short quotes from key people. Unless it's a very personal story it's good to have a few of these from a range of people i.e. refugees, community leaders, 'ordinary people', etc. Quotes from organisers are also the best opportunity to communicate the core messages!
7. **Content continued:** the rest of the detail on what's happening, when and where, who's involved, why it's worth covering. You may wish to leave this section until last, so you know how much space you have to fill ensuring that you keep to 1 page. (If you absolutely can't resist exceeding a page, add a separate document with your additional material entitled 'notes to editors' rather than cluttering your press release.)

8. A statistic or two if appropriate – but no more than that otherwise the story tends to get lost. They can always go to google if they want more!
9. About us: some information about your organisation, group or community if you wish to include this, linking to websites and social media where possible
10. Background information: on refugee week, using the text and links we have provided
11. Links to further information i.e. about organisations involved, the Refugee Week website, etc.
12. Contact details: how to reach local organisers who can answer follow-up questions and liaise with the press about the story. If you have anyone willing to make media appearances, you can also add their details here. Be sure to provide both email and phone contacts, multiple if necessary to ensure the media will be able to reach someone at any time. You can also add the central Refugee Week media contacts provided on the template press release.

SLIDE 8: LOCAL PRESS

1. Do your research – familiarise yourself with different outlets and journalists to find out which ones are most likely to cover stories like yours. Then when following up your press release, you can focus your attention on them. Look for outlets that focus on local community news or journalists sympathetic to refugee issues
2. Use your networks – is there anyone in your group or working at your venue that already has relationships with local media? If you don't ask, you won't know.
3. Watch the front pages – remember, there's a link between local and national news. If a national story breaks that's relevant to refugee issues, make the link. Local press are often keen to engage with national stories *particularly* with the uniquely local angle you can provide through Refugee Week.
4. Meet when possible – even before it's time to issue your press release and your event is still being organised, if you know roughly what's going to happen don't be afraid to approach a journalist and request a personal meeting. Keep it brief, but use this as an opportunity to make a personal connection, make the case for Refugee Week and talk about how you could make your event appealing to the local press.
5. Community, community, community – local journalists will prioritise local issues, so make this one. Highlight local community and voluntary involvement in organising your event, the positive aspects of refugees being part of your local community, how they are being affected by the issues and how local people are responding.

SLIDE 9: HOW TO SURVIVE AN INTERVIEW

Lots of people assume that you need to be an academic or an expert to give a good interview – but that's not the case at all. Most interviews are only about 3 minutes long – that's barely enough time to read a postcard, so you don't need to write and revise pages of notes, either! And these kinds of media appearances, especially in local media, can be some of the most powerful and effective means to promote your principles and your event.

Everybody gets nervous before giving interviews, so don't let that put you off. And some really simple advice for how to survive an interview:

1. **Breathe!** Slow, steady breathing makes all the difference.
2. **Focus on conversing** and connecting with the interviewer. Ignore the rest.
3. **Talk to Marge** – yes, Marge Simpson! It's easy to assume that others know as much as we do about the things we're passionate about, but media appearances are about speaking to and connecting with the widest possible audience. So when thinking about the kind of language you're using and how quickly you're delivering information, ask yourself: would Marge Simpson be following you and connecting with what you have to say? Imagine you're addressing her all the time and adjust your message accordingly.
4. **Take your time.** Speaking slowly or pausing can make you appear more confident and easier to understand. Remember, you're familiar with these ideas – but your audience may not be.
5. **Don't be afraid to re-direct** if you get a tricky question, i.e. "I hear what you're saying, but I think the real question is..." "Look, what this event is about is..."
6. Remember: what you have come to say is important and **you have a right to be there**. So speak from the heart!

SLIDE 10: HOW TO SURVIVE AN INTERVIEW PART 2

As for what you're going to say...

- All your notes should fit on the back of a small envelope
- Start with the name of the presenter and a :) to remind you to *smile*
- Beneath that draw a triangle. Within the triangle, you're going to write your 'core message' and down each side, a different reason for your core message. For example, your core message might be 'come and support this event' and each side might read:
 - ✓ Because Refugee Week is an important cause

- ✓ Because it'll be fun/interesting
- ✓ It's a chance to meet/strengthen our local community
- You can add 2 or 3 little side-points to each of these, but whatever question you're asked, see it as an opportunity to make one of these points, and then bring that back to your core message. We promise you won't run out of things to say – interviews are over much quicker than you expect!

SLIDE 11: NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

Last key principle: 'Nothing about us without us' is an old European social movement saying. It was getting at the fact that no policies should be introduced without consulting the community affected by it, especially marginalised groups – like refugees – too often ignored and undervalued. And it's a really important principle for storytelling, too. Not only is it a moral principle – it's always more effective to have the power of lived experience as part of your story.

So if you're writing a press release, give refugees the opportunity to contribute quotes. If you've successfully booked a radio interview, see if they're willing to invite a refugee to come on with you and have their say.

1. **Right to Remain:** asylum seekers still waiting to be granted a legal right to remain in the UK will have legal considerations that should be discussed with their lawyer before they agree to any media appearances or divulge personal information to the press
2. **Informed Consent:** you should take responsibility for ensuring informed consent has been given, and that everyone understands what they are agreeing to. You can also make sure the appearance is a positive and empowering experience for refugees you work with by asking for their questions in advance and establishing clear boundaries if there are certain things they do not wish to speak about.
3. **Editorial Control:** particularly for written pieces focused on a person's individual story, try to maximise the degree of editorial control given to the subject, for example by encouraging journalists to invite the refugee subject to have input in interview questions and be given written assurance that their approval will be sought for the final text before it goes to print. This will also help build trust in you and protect the long-term relationship you are building with the local refugee community.

More [detailed guidelines](#) issued by the BBC on securing consent from vulnerable participants are available online.

SLIDE 12: CALL OUT FOR CASE STUDIES

Every year, Refugee Week issues a short list of case studies designed to compliment the needs of the media and amplify our key messages. If your organisation provides direct support to refugees or you're working with refugees in your local community, you may be able to help us find case studies that will help get the word out in the national press. You can also use these case studies as examples to guide your own work. This year, we're particularly looking for:

Resettlement stories, especially families - connecting the past & future theme, i.e. 'this was our past, this is what we can now hope for the future'. Many resettlement stories will focus on Syrian people but we're also keen to use Refugee Week to give voice to non-Syrian refugees, so we're looking for case studies from the broadest possible range of countries of origin

Refugee camp case studies - of people who spent considerable time living in open camps in Italy, Greece or Calais

Love stories - of couples reunited after being separated by borders or detentions

Volunteer case studies – stories of British people volunteering both abroad (in refugee camps and support projects in Europe or Turkey) and here at home; what motivates them and what they have learned from their experiences

Children's stories – case studies looking at the experience of refugee children and content produced by children from both British and refugee backgrounds

We'll be sending everyone a full brief of case studies which will also be available on the Refugee Week website with details about how to submit.

SLIDE 13: SPEAK FROM THE HEART

My last piece of advice? Speak from the heart. That's the best way to keep on the right track *and* it delivers the most powerful and effective content. It can feel awkward and counter-intuitive: in professional environments we feel pressure to 'act professional' and show how much we *know*. But more than statistics, what we *feel* is what connects with people.

I didn't realise how true this was until I found out for myself under quite extreme circumstances. When I was working as a freelance journalist and aid volunteer in Lesbos I was working hard to get my stories out there, with little success. I was also involved in coastal rescue operations, and one night - 28th October 2015 – a boat of 300 people sank just off the coast. That was one of the most traumatic nights of my life. I performed CPR for the first time, and many of the kids we worked on didn't make it.

The next day, on very little sleep, I sat down and wrote a blog about what had happened. It was raw and emotional, longer than an article should be and full of typos. I never expected anyone to read it. It was really just my way of processing what I'd been through, and as a sort of commemoration. And completely by accident, that was the piece that went viral, was published on three continents and inspired a number of people who read it to come out and volunteer themselves.

You're all here today because you believe in what Refugee Week is trying to achieve and our vision of a shared future in which refugees are accepted into our communities and given the sanctuary, freedom and dignity we all deserve. Let that shine through, and you'll do great.

And now I'm going to pass over to Jenny for some social media tips before we take some questions and get you all involved to share *your* ideas with each other. And if you have any follow up questions, don't be afraid to get in touch:

My email: marienna@righttoremain.org.uk

Emily's email: emily@counterpointsarts.org.uk

Thanks for listening!