

Top Tips for Producing 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 musts for any press release:

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.

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,

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 be structured as follows. You can check out our example press release based on this structure as well as downloading and using our template to save you time!

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.