

Youth in Action

www.britishcouncil.org.uk/youthinaction

Media Toolkit

The Golden Rules for Media Relations

Whether you want to gain coverage in your local press for your Youth in Action project or are planning a specific event, there are a few simple rules you need to remember:

1) Get to know your media

Local media are told hundreds of stories each day, but by getting to know the type of story they print and how they talk about what is happening in your local area it is more likely that your story will be printed.

The key to this is **RESEARCH**. Identify which media covers your local area, this is most likely to be your local newspaper, TV or radio station, then buy some copies, if it is the local paper, and look to see who is writing about youth projects, young people or community issues. Then find out their contact details (e-mail and phone number) by either looking on the website or call the paper to find out.

Build a relationship with a journalist. Phone them up and seek their advice on what they would be likely to cover – get your name known.

Write to the editor well in advance to discuss ways of getting coverage. Invite the editor to be a VIP guest at an event.

If you are part of a large organization, do not forget to consult with your press or communications team (if you have one), as they will be able to provide you with expert advice.

2) Make your story stand out

Journalists like real life stories, so if your project has had a real impact on your life or members of your local community – tell them about it. Did you find out something amazing through your Youth in Action project? Has it made you do things differently? Has it connected you to people you never thought you would meet? If so – these are the types of stories journalists like to write about.

3) Give them the facts

A good story needs to answer the following questions:

Who – Who was involved? i.e. “young people from...” or “youth workers from...”

What – What did you do? i.e. “organized an international music event with your local community”

Where – Where did this take place? i.e. “in the community hall...” or “in Belgium as part of a youth exchange”

When – When did this take place (it needs to be relatively recent to gain coverage, unless you are following up on its impact – i.e. “After holding a Youth in Action exchange in August last year, young people are now looking to put into practice the tips they learned about making their voice heard in the local community by...”)

Why – Why did you do this or why is it important now? i.e. “Members of the group wanted to learn about the different ways young people in Germany get involved in their local community to see if there was anything they could be doing differently in Oldham to get other teens involved in positive activities...”

4) Present the story in their style

The standard format for providing press stories to the media is through a press release. These should be used to complement the personal contact you have made with the journalist, by putting your story down in a clear and concise way.

- Find out how the media organization you are targeting likes to receive press releases – these days most of them prefer to receive press releases in the body text of an e-mail, rather than an attachment. Ask them for the e-mail address to send press releases to.
- Your language should be about reporting the story – like you would read in a paper – so tell the story in the third person, e.g. “A young person and her youth worker from...” rather than “Me and my youth worker...”

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- Keep the headline straightforward and brief – make it snappy and interesting.
- Put the really important information in the first sentence. Generally it should answer the questions who, what, where, when and why. After that put information in descending order of importance.
- Use short sentences and paragraph and active, dynamic language. Avoid jargon. Try and write it so that it could be used unchanged as a news item.
- Include brief, lively quotes from a named person.
- Put the word 'ends' to signify the end of material you would want to appear in the article.
- Further background information, including a contact name and number, can be given in 'notes to the editor' at the end of the release. Indicate here if you have photographs available or if you are providing a photo opportunity. Remember – a picture says a thousand words.
- When you send the release to them by e-mail, put it in the body text rather than an attachment to make it as easy as possible for the journalist to read what you want them to without having to open another document.
- Once you have sent your release, give them a call to find out whether it is something they are likely to feature – if not, ask them why and see if you can give them any extra information to change their mind.
- Have you provided visual interest for a photo call? The more creative the better!
- Have you got real people to speak for you? Try holding training sessions with your spokespeople, especially young people, so they can think through what they might say and get used to the interview situation.

5) Monitor

You have done the hard work, sent out your press releases, held your event and photo call. Now it is time to find out if you have been successful.

It is always worth asking the journalist when they are going to run your story, and check the media a few days before and afterwards – sometimes they will run a story on a different day, or not at all. Keep a folder of your press cuttings – but do not photocopy them or keep electronic versions, as there are strict regulations regarding copyright.

Don't be put off if your local press don't seem that interested! Journalists are under constant pressure of deadlines and local media have seen big cuts so staff are extremely busy.

Keep at it – follow up with a phone call and even if a journalist can't come to an event, send a follow-up release and photos.

Good luck and enjoy showcasing all of your hard work!

Resources

We suggest you download our templates. They will help you with contacting your local media:

<http://bit.ly/qNxBhS>

If you are holding an event...

When you plan your event think about the needs of the media:

- Have you provided them with the complete information they need, for example in a press release?
- Have you informed them of a photo call? If so, make sure that someone from your organisation is ready to meet the press photographer on the day.

How can you get involved?

Please visit our website for more information:

www.britishcouncil.org/youthinaction

Guidelines and supporting documentation will help you complete your applications.



Advice and Support for Youth in Action

If you have any questions or would like to talk about your application then please use the following contact details:

England

National Youth Agency
Tel: +44 (0)116 242 7400
E-mail: yia@nya.org.uk

Scotland

YouthLink Scotland
Tel: +44 (0)131 313 2488
E-mail: mforrester@youthlinkscotland.org

Northern Ireland

Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Tel: +44 (0)289 064 3882
E-mail: bsweeney@ycni.org or
mcunningham@ycni.org

Wales

Connect Cymru
Ffôn / Tel: +44 (0)2920 575 705
E-bost / E-mail: info@connectcymru.org

Other Support

Eurodesk UK is a free information service on European work, study, travel and volunteering opportunities.

To learn more, please see:
www.eurodesk.org.uk



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