

UHB Charities – Press release toolkit

Firstly, thank you for fundraising for UHB Charities – we couldn't make a difference without your support.

If you want to publicise the fantastic work you are doing, writing a press release is a great way of spreading the word and may even help you raise further funds.

This document is designed to help you write your own press release using the template supplied.

What is a press release?

A press release, or news release, is simply a written statement distributed to the media. A press release can communicate a range of news items, such as announcing a forthcoming fundraising event or publicising the results of a fundraising campaign. Your local media includes newspapers distributed in your area, local tv and radio stations, and online media, such as websites about your area or connected with your story.

Writing a headline

Your headline should be brief, clear and to the point: an ultra-compact version of the press release's key point.

Press release headlines should have a "grabber" to attract readers, just as a newspaper headline is meant to grab readers. If you are contacting local press, it's important to emphasise the 'local' angle of your story and this can be done in the headline.

The simplest method to arrive at the press release headline is to extract the most important keywords from your press release. Now from these keywords, try to frame a logical and attention-getting statement e.g. 'Susan's supper sensation supports hospital'.

Headlines are written in bold and are typically larger than the press release text.

Writing the body copy

The press release should be written as you want it to appear in a news story.

The lead, or first sentence, should grab the reader and say concisely what is happening. The next one-two sentences then expand upon the lead.

The press release **body copy** should be compact. Avoid using very long sentences and paragraphs. Avoid repetition and over use of fancy language and jargon.

A first paragraph (two to three sentences) must actually sum up the press release and the further content must elaborate it. In a fast-paced world, neither journalists nor other readers would read the entire press release if the start of the article didn't generate interest.

Deal with actual facts - a simple method for writing an effective press release is to make a list of following things:

Communicate the 5 Ws and the H. Who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Now from the points gathered, try to construct paragraphs and assemble them sequentially.

The length of a press release should be no more than two pages. If you are sending a hard copy, text should be double-spaced.

The more newsworthy you make the press release copy, the better the chances of it being selected by a journalist or reporting.

Remember that some journalists won't have heard of UHB Charities, so an explanatory sentence such as 'the official charity of the Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak hospitals' will clarify this for them.

A quote from you will help explain more about your story. This needs to come from someone involved in the story and needs to add detail, rather than repeat information.

Add contact information. If your press release is really newsworthy, journalists may like more information or would like to interview key people associated with it.

If you are comfortable with the idea of being contacted directly by the media, you can provide your contact details on the press release page itself.

Signal the end of the press release with - **Ends** - centered directly underneath the last line of the release. This is a journalistic standard.

Before sending your press release, please email it to charities@uhb.nhs.uk, along with a list of which media you are going to contact. Your press release will be checked over by the UHB Charities team and any additional detail added. It will then be emailed back to you.

Contacting the media and emailing your press release

It's best to phone your local press outlets and ask to speak to the person who deals with local news stories from your area. Use this opportunity to briefly explain your story to them – it's a good idea to make a list of bullet points you want to get across during the conversation. Ask the journalist for their specific email address so you can send over your press release and any related photographs to them.

Use your headline as the subject line of the e-mail. If you've written a good "grabber" headline, this will help your message stand out in the editor's e-mail inbox.

Attach your press release as a word document and attach any relevant photographs. Also copy your press release into the body of the email itself, so journalists can see it at a glance.

For further help, please contact UHB Charities fundraising team on 0121 627 5753.

Good luck and thank you for your support.