

# Guide to writing a press release





## Generating publicity

We feel it's important that the value of the work done by all the organisations Youth Music supports is publicly recognised.

We therefore ask that you grasp every opportunity you can to publicise the great work you do in your local or relevant sector press. This helps to build a regional and national profile both for your organisation and for Youth Music. Positive publicity can also help you to secure partnership funding and long-term sustainability.

We recommend that you try to attract media attention at least once during your grant funding period. We hope this guide on writing a press release helps you take the first step in generating worthwhile publicity.

## Tips for writing a press release

Invariably, when you contact the news, arts or education desk of your local paper or any other publication you want to target, they will ask you to send something in writing.

Bear in mind that journalists are often working to very tight deadlines so the more groundwork you do to give them the information they want in the form they want, the more likely they are to cover your story.

That's why it's often best to send them a press release before you contact them by phone so that they might already be familiar with the story of your event or if they haven't, you can refer them to the email you've sent with the press release.

Writing a press release isn't that difficult but there are a few principles to bear in mind. The less work you give the journalist to do in terms of editing your press release the better.

## Here's our headline tips:

- Make sure your story is newsworthy for your targeted media – find a good angle
- Write snappy headlines that will entice your audience
- Get your top newsline in the first line of the body of your press release
- Build in answers to the questions journalists usually ask in your press release - Who? What? Where? Why? When?
- Be concise (400 words approximately)
- Use quotes to convey aspirations or opinions, not information

## Make it ready to publish

You **write it exactly how you might expect to read** about your project in a newspaper or magazine. That means no "I", "We" or "Us" – everything is written in the third person

**Good example:** "The project leaders plan to develop unique instruments so the young disabled musicians taking part can contribute fully to this special orchestra"

**Bad example:** "We're aiming to provide unique instruments to our young disabled musicians playing in our special orchestra"

The only part of your press release written in the first person should be the quotes you provide (see below).

## Language and jargon

For local media outside the music education sector, be careful to describe your project only in language a person who knows nothing about music education understands and not in the language used on your grant application form. Don't use jargon such as "improving music education infrastructure", "increase young people's agency", "deliver musically inclusive activities" etc.

Readers will want to know the basics – the difficult circumstances faced by your target group, the kind of musical activities they will be taking part in, what they might learn and where it's all happening.

## Keep it truthful

A good journalist will embrace his/her responsibility to be balanced and fair in his/her reporting and to ensure that any claims made are backed up by evidence. So **it's better not to write about your project and the organisers/leaders in superlatives** that cannot be established as factual. If you're "over the top" about how you write about your project you're giving the journalist unnecessary sub-editing work to do and they may simply move on to a better-written press release from someone else if they have an impending deadline. You can write something more aspirational in the quote you provide from one of your officers (see 'Add a Quote' below)

**Bad example:** The Young Voices Ensemble is the best choir in the North West. No other choir can rival these great singers.

**Good example:** The Young Voices Ensemble aspires to become one of the best known choirs in the North West and beyond, with a big emphasis on funky melodies and great harmonies.

## Look for an angle

The journalist will be looking for a fresh angle that sets your story out as different from others

**Bad example:** This project will serve the south east of the county offering classes in learning an instrument and music production

**Good example:** This project aims to fill a gap in music services in the south east of the country where young disabled children have little access to music tuition. It will also offer the opportunity for young people who don't play an instrument but are interested in developing studio-based music recording skills. All students will work together to release a record, with the proceeds of sales going towards the xxxx charity.

## Write clearly and anticipate journalists' questions

Get the main information over but don't get bogged down in the detail:

Write clearly and simply, following the standard journalistic principles of asking 'Who', 'What', 'Where', 'Why', 'When' and the principle of succinctness will help you write a good press release.

Translated into your grant award announcement, you might like to build in answers to the following questions in your press release. Build these into one or two short paragraphs describing your project

- **Who** will the project be aimed at/who will be taking part
- **What** is the project about? What will participants be doing?
- **Where** is the project happening? What is the catchment area?
- **Why** is there a need for the project? Is it helping to solve problems in the area or satisfy a need not currently met?
- **When** does it start and how long will it run for?

What you don't need is information about parking at the project venue and directions to it. Additional background information can be included in a "Notes to Editor" section of your press release (see template below). The journalist can use these notes for additional background information and decide to include some of it or not as appropriate.

## Include pictures and/or video material

**Don't forget to include good images or video material** if you have it. Most newspapers have online versions for which they also look for visual material to support the story. Your story may not be covered if you don't have any pictures. You might have some appropriate images from a previous project you've done. Bear in mind you need the permission of

those over 18 depicted in the image and if under 18, the permission of their parents.

Add a short caption for your images e.g. "Young musicians from [X] perform at [Y]"

The correct quality standards of an image for online use is 72dpi and for print use is 300dpi.

## Be aware of deadlines

The deadline for receiving material for monthly magazines in particular is often early the previous month so if you want to target monthly magazines prepare your press release early.

If you call the media outlet news desk, most will be happy to tell you when their print deadlines are. It's always best not to bother a journalist with questions on the day his/her paper is going to press.

## Know your audience

You'll want to write your press release in different ways if the readership of the magazine paper you're targeting is 18 rather than 60.

## Add a quote

You can add opinions or aspirations in the form of a quote from an organiser of, or participant in your project. This adds colour to your story and also helps to personalise it. A quote is ideally in three sentences, four maximum.

Youth Music is always happy to provide an additional quote in support of your project from our Chief Executive Officer Matt Griffiths or our Programme Director Carol Reid. We like to be included!

#### **Quote guidelines**

1. Length – No more than three/four sentences
2. Name the person being quoted (first name and surname)
3. Include the title of the person being quoted

#### **Example quote:**

Richard Masters, Studio Project Manager for Base 2 Beat Studio says: “We are so pleased that Youth Music is giving us the opportunity to run this project for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. There is a such a wealth of musical talent in Rotherham. Now we will be able to support so many young people in finding their own way of expressing themselves through music and sharing it with their peers and the wider public. We are also very excited to be able to provide structured support for young people to develop their music mentoring skills and to help break down barriers between young people from different educational backgrounds.”

## **Reference Youth Music**

You are obliged by your Funding Agreement with Youth Music to acknowledge our funding support in any press release you issue. This can be included as the last line in your press release but please use the following specific words only:

“[project name] is supported by Youth Music and using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.”

## **Make it easy for the journalist**

Keep your press release limited to around 400 words. Additional information can go in the ‘Notes to Editors’ at the end.

Send the press release in the body of your email, not as an attachment, making it as easy as possible for the journalist to read. A journalist may never get around to opening an attachment. Note: The headline in the subject bar of your email is important and should entice the journalist to open your email.

## **Include contact details**

Make sure you include a contact name, that person’s role in relation to the event, email address, mobile and landline telephone number in case the journalist wants to follow up the story. Be aware, this may happen out of hours, so it’s best to include a mobile number.

## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

The following is a fictional press release with the formatting made clear

[LOGO if you have one]

**PRESS RELEASE**

**DATE: [DAY],[MONTH],[YEAR]**

[headline centred in bold]

**Budding disabled musicians in Ambridge set to benefit from grant award**

[sub-headline centred in bold]

**The Archers Arts Group awarded £50,000 grant by Youth Music charity to support new music project for disabled musicians in Ambridge and surrounding district**

[first para – 3 sentences approximately]

Budding disabled musicians in Ambridge are set to benefit from a £50,000 grant award by the National Foundation for Youth Music to the Archers Arts Group in Ambridge. The money will be used to develop a unique music project for disabled musicians in the area which will culminate in performances by a new orchestra featuring disabled and able-bodied teenagers. The Archers Arts Group found that there were no outlets for young disabled young people in the Ambridge area who have an interest in music but no access to specialised tuition suited to their individual needs. The Group has drawn together a team of music leaders with expertise in enabling young people with severe disabilities to discover their musical talent and take it a step further.

[additional para with news angle]

The Archers Arts Group has also engaged a team of experts in the latest music technology to develop special instruments for young participants whose disabilities prevent them from playing conventional instruments. This will enable any young

participant to take part in music-making regardless of the severity of their disabilities. All those taking part in the project will be joining the local Ambridge Youth Orchestra for a special series of performances in the Harlequin Hall later this year.

**[Quote from project representative – nb make sure you include Name and surname along with role title]**

Neil Joyce, Chief Executive, Archers Arts Group said: “We’re delighted with this grant from Youth Music. The money will be put to great use enabling young disabled musicians to take their rightful place in a series of public performances as part of the Ambridge Youth Orchestra. We aim to show that disability is no barrier to music-making and hope that with a range of specialised instruments designed for their individual needs, our young project participants will be able to develop a life-long engagement with music-making.”

**[Quote from Executive Director, Youth Music]**

Matt Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Music said: “We’re very pleased to support this very worthwhile project. Our vision is that every child, regardless of circumstances, should have the opportunity to explore their musical creativity. Ambridge Arts will be enabling many young people to fulfil their musical potential and enjoy the thrills of live performance. We wish them all the best with this exciting venture.”

**[Background para on Youth Music]**

Many of the young people supported by the national charity Youth Music face significant challenges in their lives. These may arise from poverty, disability, illness or mental health issues and other life circumstances such as being a carer or refugee. Youth music supports 75,000 children and young people every year but the charity knows that for every child it supports there is another one waiting for help. Its fundraising campaign Give a Gig aims to help the charity reach out to those in need of help.

**[mark end of press release]**

**ENDS:** [This lets journalists know that this is the end of the main body of the press release]

**[Include pictures or videos]**

**PICS:** [Make sure to provide caption for photograph and give name/organisational role of person or a description of any activities depicted in the image]

**[Background information Notes to Editors]**

Notes to Editors [further information for journalists]

## ABOUT ARCHERS ARTS GROUP

XXXX

For enquiries about Ambridge Arts Group, please contact

[name]

[title]

[email]

[official telephone number]

[mobile telephone number]

## ABOUT YOUTH MUSIC

- Youth Music believes that music-making is life-changing and the charity wants the opportunity for music-making to be available to all children. Every year, Youth Music provides 75,000 young people with the chance to take part in a local music project.
- Many of the young people supported by the national charity Youth Music face significant challenges in their lives. These may arise from poverty, disability, illness or mental health issues and other life circumstances such as being a carer or refugee.
- In addition to developing musical skills, Youth Music projects help young people to develop their creative and social skills, make positive contributions to their community and live happy, successful lives. Youth Music projects work across all music genres.
- Youth Music currently supports over 400 music projects around the country
- The charity knows that many more young people still need its help and continues to fundraise to realise its mission to ensure that all children and young people have access to life-changing music-making opportunities. Its current fundraising initiative 'Give a Gig' asks music fans, artists, venue owners and promoters to donate a portion of gig earnings to support Youth Music's work.
- Find out more about the work of Youth Music by visiting [www.youthmusic.org.uk](http://www.youthmusic.org.uk) For more information about Give a Gig visit [www.giveagig.org.uk](http://www.giveagig.org.uk)



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