



Writing a press release

****Please ensure you liaise with your organisation's communications team if you would like to send out a press release or promote your work to the media.****

A press release is a compelling news story or statement written and sent to targeted members of the media. It provides a concise, ideally 1 page document, with everything the journalist needs to know about your news.

What is news?

News is by definition is something that is 'new'. It must be new or original information, timely, and relevant.

Basic principles

All press releases should address the 5 'W's' in the first paragraph. Who? What? Where? Why and When? This method of writing is common in journalism and called the inverted pyramid. It enables the reader to get the key facts as quickly as possible.

Use short paragraphs, short sentences and simple syntax.

Always provide contact details for more information and reference the COT website as a source of further information for the public.

Think about your audience

It is important to ask yourself who will be interested in reading the story. The journalist will be thinking about their readers or listeners and so should you.

Consider:

Who are you trying to inform/educate or influence?

What are your core objectives?

If it is the general public or someone outside the health sector?

Lastly people are interested in people and occupational therapy is in the perfect position to respond to this. Always add the human element to the message you are trying to convey.

Make it stand out from the crowd.

Journalists are extremely busy and receive hundreds if not thousands of press releases every

week. The press release will need to grab their attention as quickly as possible and the more enticing the story the greater your chances of it being picked up by the media.

Use

- Eye catching headlines
- Statistics and facts to provide context – do you have some results or outcomes to share?
- Direct quotes from service users and occupational therapy colleagues
- A striking, good quality photography to add value to your story

Offer an interview

Is there someone in your service that is happy to tell the media a bit more about their work. This will be attractive to journalists and helps to bring the story to life.

Before you send the press release

If your press release is very time specific i.e. you need it to coincide with your event, the publication of a report, launch of new service etc than you can send your press release under an embargo.

This means that the journalist cannot publish or broadcast your press release until the specified date of the embargo. By doing this it gives the media time to gather all the information they need *in advance* of the news going public.

Find out when the newspaper(s) you are targeting goes to press or when the TV/radio station broadcast the relevant programme. Try and target regional newspapers as soon as possible after their print date when they will have started to plan for the next issue.

Make sure you have the name and contact details (email address and telephone number) of the journalist(s) you are targeting. In most cases it will be the health reporter/editor, regional or local reporter or editor. Avoid sending it to a generic contact number or email address.

Always highlight your contact details as prominently as possible so that you can be contacted as quickly as possible.

After you have sent the press release

Follow up your press release with a phone call where possible. Ask them if they need any more information, if your story was of interest, and if they have some time to discuss your story further.

Dated July 2016

ENDS

