



Voluntary and Community Sector Media and Communications toolkit



Media

Pitching a story to journalists can be hard, a story needs to be news worthy for a journalist to cover it.

The TRUTH acronym can be used to see if your story is 'newsworthy'. It means journalists are looking for something:

T – topical; of the moment, timely, new and something people are talking about

R - relevant to a specific audience

U – unusual; not what people already know or expect. Something which will surprise the audience. Is it the first? The biggest? The smallest? In the world of social media it is something which will make people click through to the story (clickbait).

T – trouble. Show how you are solving a problem. If your story is not strong enough a journalist will look for the conflict angle.

H – human interest. What is in it for people? What impact will it have on your customers?

News outlets

The main news outlets that you will be pitching to are the local press; Hackney Gazette, Hackney Citizen and Hackney Today.

You may also try and pitch your story to regional press like the Evening Standard or even national press like the Guardian, if your story links to regional and national issues or you can offer a case study example from your organisation.

Another news outlet to consider pitching to is the trade press, such as Children and Young People Now. Your group might work closely with a particular industry and could offer an interesting insight for trade press journalists.

Writing your release

A press release is a written summary of your story for the media. It will include the key facts, quotes from spokespeople and contact details for more information.



Press releases should be sent out in a timely manner so it is still newsworthy. To maximise coverage you should send out regular releases, at least four times a year.

Once you know who you are pitching to, and have considered the TRUTH acronym it is important to think about these points when writing a press release:

- Make the information easy to find: The first paragraph should have all the information concisely, the 'Who, Where, What, Why, When'
- Second and third paragraph can expand on the story with more information as well as facts and figures
- Closing paragraphs can include what might happen next and if there is anything you would like people to do e.g. volunteering or coming along to another event
- Keep it short and smart. Write succinctly, less is more
- Include a quote from a person involved. Use their full name, age and where they live e.g. Harriet Smith, 42 from Clapton said: “---“
- Include an interesting quote from a named person in the organisation, John Okoh, Befriending Coordinator said: “—“
- Use simple everyday language
- Offer extra content to journalists such as videos, interviews and more photographs
- Send 1-3 captioned photographs (under 2MB) along with your release
- Paste your press release into the body of the email to journalists, do not send as an attachment

For more information the Media Trust has written a number of free guides which you can download:

Getting your message right:

<https://mediatrust.org/communications-support/resources/getting-messages-right/>

Writing and releasing press releases:

<https://mediatrust.org/communications-support/resources/writing-press-releases-pitching-media/>



Getting coverage in the local press:

<https://mediatrust.org/communications-support/resources/get-local-regional-media/>

Sample press release

Headline: Hackney Forest School launches with free family fun day

First paragraph: Making mud cakes, climbing trees and building dens (**what**) are just some of the activities on offer when the Hackney Forest School (**who**) opens its doors for a fun day this month.

Running from 12-4pm, on 10 June (**when**) at Clapton Park Children's Centre (**where**), the free fun day will give children a first-hand taste of nature (**why**) and let them see what a typical day is like at the Forest School.

Quote from a participant - always include their age if quoting a child: Georgia Norman, aged 7 from Clapton, who has been attending the Hackney Forest School pilot said: "My favourite thing about Forest School is that we get to go out and play and have fires and eat marshmallows and it's just really good for us." Georgia said she would recommend Forest School and would give it 20 gold stars, she wanted to encourage other children to come, going on to say: "You should go to forest school because you can have some fresh air and you get to play everywhere in the forest."

Quote from organisation or teacher: Sandra Hayes, Forest School teacher said: "We provide high-quality, fun and exciting curriculum-linked activities. Children are exposed to fresh air and gain much needed physical exercise, children who come to Forest School are found to be healthier than children cooped up in indoor environments."

Call to action/what people can do next: You can find out more about Hackney Forest School and their fun day launch by visiting the [Hackney Forest School website](#), and you can also contact the Children's Centre directly by calling: 020 8986 7437 or emailing: info@hackneyforestschool.co.uk.

Media contacts

Hackney Council	<p>For general advice regarding media relations or marketing (leaflet re-prints, deliveries etc) and to promote upcoming events via resident newsletters:</p> <p>Helen Clarke Strategic Communications Manager Helen.clarke@hackney.gov.uk 020 8356 3539 Or the communications team 020 8356 3736</p>
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Local press	<p>What: Good news, events, results How: Email a press release, call to follow up with the journalist a day or so later Note: Photos are crucial. Send a few good photos (landscape and portrait), including the names and ages of the people included.</p>
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Hackney Today and Love Hackney website	<p>Sappho Lauder htnews@hackney.gov.uk</p>
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Hackney Gazette	<p>Weekly, published on Thursdays (deadline for copy Tuesday PM), paid for</p> <p>Sam Gelder Chief reporter sam.gelder@archant.co.uk 020 7433 0104</p> <p>Editor Ramzy Alwakeel Ramzy.alwakeel@archant.co.uk</p>
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	020 7433 0110
Hackney Citizen	<p>Monthly, free, available from cafes, bars etc</p> <p>Editor Max Eckersley Max.eckersley@citizen.co.uk</p>
East London Lines	<p>East London Lines news-desk (student-run paper): news@eastlondonlines.co.uk</p>

Other local marketing opportunities	
Hackney Under 5s newsletter (Council service)	press@hackney.gov.uk
Young Hackney newsletter (Council service)	press@hackney.gov.uk
Family Information Service (Council service)	<p>The Family Information Service is the Hackney Learning Trust's newsletter for families. It features reminders about services (like registering for free childcare), good news stories about schools and early years settings in the borough and fun activities for children and their families. They promote these through their newsletter and on their social media channels. fis@learningtrust.co.uk</p>
Hoop	http://hoop.co.uk/organisers/
Mumsnet Hackney	https://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/local?locality_id=75

Social Media

Think about what social media you use personally, as people in your group what they use at home and at work. You may already have a social media skill base in your volunteers and participants.

There are many different social media platforms, these have differing formats and demographics of users.

The type and amount of social media channels your organisation has is dependent on the audience you are aiming to reach and the capacity you have to manage an account.

It would be best to focus on 1-3 channels depending on how much capacity you have. These are the top three to consider:



Most useful Social Media platforms



- Widely used
- Easy to use
- Can create closed groups that users apply to be a member of
- Parents look at Facebook for around 1 hour each day



- Widely used
- Quick to use
- Can create a closed account that users apply to view
- Used a lot by younger parents and teenagers



- Widely used
- Easy/Quick to use
- Used by a lot of older teenagers and adults
- Used by journalists
- Can link to websites using RSS feed

Things to consider

Social Media is a great tool for engagement, and can help you build new relationships and reach out to communities and organisations in Hackney.

There are some principles you should consider though when posting and creating content on social media. The real world and digital world should not be considered different, don't do or say anything online that you wouldn't say at a public event, use your common sense. Consider that anything you post on social media (even if you delete it) will be permanently there and could potentially be seen by a wide number of people, or even be picked up by the media.

Be responsible and always check with people that it is okay to share comments, photographs or videos with them in. It is useful to get volunteers and group members to sign a consent form for photographs and videos so they understand where you are using their images.

Setting up social media accounts

- The account name should be the same account all platforms and should be associated with your organisation
- Avatar should be your logo
- Use a photo of one of your activities for the background
- Once you have set up your accounts start to follow people such as local organisations or people who might be interested in following you back

Content

Types of content:

- Short video clips
- Photographs
- GIFs
- Comments
- Links
- Events (only on Facebook)

Content creators:

- Volunteers

- Participants
- Organisers

Create a social media content calendar to ensure high quality content is posted regularly and ensure plans are made around important dates such as festivals and events.

Be reactive to trends, check to see what hashtags are trending such as #worldcatday to see if you can create content and join in the conversation.

Interact with people and respond to people interacting with you.

Use of images

When creating a post you will get a lot more attention if you use an image alongside it, this can be a photograph or even a related graphic

Don't to use bad images that are blurred or that aren't related to your post or related to your organisation.

Memes

- A 'meme' is a virally-transmitted cultural symbol or social idea.
- The bulk of internet memes are humorous and have a shock-value, as these grab people's attention more quickly than normal content.

Some memes have double meanings or can develop a different meaning with young people over time.

For instance Wendy's a burger chain in America unintentionally posted a racist meme 'Pepe the frog' when responding to some feedback on Twitter.

Another often misposted meme is 'Netflix and Chill' originally, the phrase was innuendo-free, but then it became a euphemism.

It would be best practice in most cases not to use memes but just focus on content that is relevant to your posts.

#Hashtags

Bad use of images





When it comes to social media, the hashtag is used to draw attention, to organize, and to promote.

Hashtags make it easier for people to find, follow, and contribute to a conversation.

They are essentially social media keywords, and help to identify what your content entails quickly. For example a social media post about your volunteer open days could have hashtags like #OpenDay, #volunteer, etc so that your audience can identify the topic.

#Hashtagrules No spaces, no special characters, no punctuation, not too long, don't use more than two hashtags, don't use hashtags on Facebook.

Viral challenges

Good sharable content that can gain media attention if it is shared widely enough.

If your raising money for charitable causes getting involved in a viral charity challenge can be a great way to engage parents and the community into giving.

Helpful Twitter guides

Twitter top tips:

<https://mediatrust.org/communications-support/resources/top-tips-using-twitter/>

Mastering the basics of Twitter:

<https://mediatrust.org/communications-support/resources/twitter-mastering-basics/>

Raising your profile on social media:

<https://mediatrust.org/communications-support/resources/raising-profile-social-media/>

A complete beginners guide to Twitter:

<https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/library/a-beginners-guide-to-twitter/a-beginners-guide-to-twitter.pdf>



Useful free online tools

Design software: create posters, leaflets, infographics and shareable content: <https://piktochart.com/> or <https://www.canva.com/>

Photo editing software: crop photos, reduce the file size and play with brightness levels and colour tone: <https://www.befunky.com/create/>

Website creator: Create a simple page that has contact details some information on your organisation and links to your social media where there is regular updates: <https://wordpress.com/learn-more/?v=site>

E-Newsletters: Share information with participants and volunteers on a regular basis with e-newsletters and mail outs: <https://mailchimp.com/>

Social media management tool: <https://buffer.com/> This is free for the first three accounts so can help manage a facebook, twitter and instagram account.