

7. Letting the media know

Number seven in a series of nine campaigning factsheets

If you're holding an event with local parliamentary candidates or just sending a postcard to your MP, it's a good idea to draft a short press release to send to your local papers. If you haven't written a press release before, here are eleven commonly practised 'good habits' to help you on your way.

- 1. Put a date on it:** Always start with the date of submission – and add the words 'For immediate release' so news editors are aware that the story is for use straight away.
- 2. Give it a strong title:** The job of the title or a headline is to capture the attention of the journalist or editor receiving your press release. Make it short and self-explanatory and try to capture the essence of your story in this one sentence. It's not your job to craft a brilliant headline – that's the job of the paper's sub-editor – but an interesting headline will help.
- 3. Keep it brief:** The job of a press release is to give a flavour of your story to news editors and their readers – not to draft an essay. A journalist will follow up with you if your story looks like it has potential. Aim for one side (or two at most) of A4 – and use double spacing.
- 4. Start with the 'five Ws':** A common rule of thumb is to ensure your first paragraph covers the 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where' and 'when' of your story. This means all the need-to-know elements are up front and helps the news editor.
- 5. Include a quote:** Quotes add a human dimension to stories as well as a sense of opinion or authority. Anyone with something to say can be a spokesperson. Quotes are often made up by the person drafting the release but once in print you would never guess! Name your spokesperson and do get their permission.
- 6. Keep it simple:** If you like writing it can be tempting to go to town and be really creative or use lots of long words – try to write simply and use short sentences.
- 7. Put an end to it:** At the end of your release add 'Ends' – this indicates that anything above this point is news copy.
- 8. Notes to editors:** What follows your press release is a note to editors section. This is a chance to include any relevant context, background, web links and statistics.
- 9. Contact details:** Don't forget to offer your name, email and telephone number for journalists who want to obtain further information or follow up with you.
- 10. Check your timing:** Don't miss the deadline! When is your local newspaper issued – weekly, fortnightly, a weekday or a weekend? Papers are compiled over a few days and the copy deadline may be four days or two weeks prior to issue.
- 11. Email or post?** Some editors say they prefer to receive news by email and some by post. If you're sending an email, it's good practice to paste your story into the main body of your message and not to send it as an attachment.

If you don't know who your local newspapers are we can tell you - contact Maria Chica on email mchica@wea.org.uk or by phone at 0207 426 3486.



See over
for sample
press release

Press release

15 February 2010: For immediate release

Volunteers stage 'Question Time' for parliamentary candidates



Members of the Wimbledon branch of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) have joined with the Wimbledon Trust to hold a debate with local parliamentary candidates on the subject of lifelong learning. Over fifty people are expected to gather at Friends Meeting House next Saturday 20 February to quiz local candidates about their views on the importance of publicly funded adult education.

Stephen Hammond MP will be joined by Labour candidate Andrew Judge and Shas Sheehan who was this week nominated as the Liberal Democrat candidate.

The meeting has been called by the WEA in the hope that the candidates will pick up a clear message about the need to continue funding adult education into and beyond the election. Chris Hills, Branch Secretary of Wimbledon WEA says:

"In a time of recession everyone is talking about cuts. We want our politicians to understand how important adult education is and to support adult education in Merton and Wimbledon. WEA students and learners come from all walks of life and subsidised courses mean more people can access adult education – to learn new skills and develop personal interests. Adult education keeps people's brains active, creates a sense of community and makes Wimbledon a better place to be."

During the meeting, the three local candidates will be asked to respond to a recent report which recommends greater public investment in adult education for families and for adults throughout their whole life. Members of the public are invited to join the meeting which starts at 10.30, next Saturday 20 February.

Ends.

Notes to editors: see overleaf

There are nine Speak up for Lifelong Learning factsheets:

1. Your campaign pack
2. Why we're campaigning
3. Getting involved locally
4. Send a postcard!
5. How to call a meeting
6. Tips for running a meeting
7. Letting the media know
8. Making connections
9. Further Information

If you have a question...

You can contact us to ask about anything in this pack – or for more information:
Maria Chica, email: mchica@wea.org.uk or call: 020 7426 3486.

Workers' Educational Association www.wea.org.uk
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