

London Region PR Peer Group Meeting Feb 7th, 2022

Writing Effective Press Releases

Meeting notes

1. Rodney welcomed everyone and ran through a few slides to set the context and the agenda. (slides 1 -4)
2. Concentration was focused on WRITING and DELIVERING press releases with the additional aim of forward planning for u3a Day events later in the year.
3. The second part (slides 5 – 21) provided constructive help with identifying suitable outlets and having another look at the press release issued about the Tree Initiative.
4. Ray Hardisty then took over (slides 22 – 41) and talked us through the basics of writing a press release. His tips included – having a punchy headline to grab immediate attention; keeping the information local; be succinct; use simple language and sentences of no more than 20 words, and again keep the information local; include photos & images but get consent; your piece has to be a story; keep it to one page of A4; don't refer to your organisation as 'we' – always remind the reader you are XXX u3a; don't overdo the capitals, exclamation marks etc . Ray stated there was no problem in providing news releases on a regular basis, provided they were each not just repeats of the same messages, have a clear local angle and are interesting! It was felt that Interest Group related releases would receive a warmer reception than some other subjects.
5. Following Ray's advice we had a Q & A and some discussion which was very valuable.
6. For the last part of the afternoon, participants were asked to share possible headline ideas – just off the tops of our heads. After a minute for thinking time, the ideas started to flow and we had a lively time.
7. For the Take-Away we were asked to send our ideas – more headlines and if possible a press release – to Rodney so that these can be circulated and we can all benefit from each other's ideas - collaboration and practise being the best way forward.
8. We will look at the outcome of our joint efforts in the first half of the next meeting. We also had a brief discussion about topics for future meetings and have some excellent lines to follow up.

Additional subjects discussed included these points:

Some u3as have paid for advertising in local press. None are currently doing so as far as anyone was aware.

It would appear that the national office has placed a u3a advert in the HSBC pensioners magazine Horizon. This raised a brief discussion of promoting u3a through employer staff magazines, retirement packs, etc.

The question was raised as to why u3a does not have a patron or patrons. Jenny will pursue through London Trustee John Bent.

It was mentioned that more national coverage was required to make the u3a name much better known. A comparison was made to the WI, who appear much better known than u3a even though they have a lot fewer members. It was pointed out that the WI has a top-down H.O. and branch structure, has a significantly higher membership cost and has many more staff both nationally and regionally. It was still felt that u3a needs to especially make big national activities for the 40th Anniversary. Several people suggested London Region should be more proactive in getting press coverage in subjects with a cross-London interest. Point taken, but remember The Region is also strapped for resources, and also trying to work with many u3as that do not even have a local person responsible for publicity / PR.

Several **publicity items** were discussed. Hillingdon u3a is developing a 2022 40th Anniversary (which times with their own 21st Birthday) bookmark.

These can be provided to the libraries to be available for their visitors, available for handouts at events, etc

Croydon u3a has developed a postcard for members to use as part of their word- of- mouth discussions with friends, etc.

Details of these two items will be included in the next London Region PR Mailing, due out in the next few days.