

# Spread the word: how to get media coverage for your Arts Award project



## Introduction

Good publicity can build your reputation and help you grow by raising awareness of what you do. By communicating with a wide range of audiences inside and outside the Arts Award network, you can raise awareness of your work, help encourage participation and build support for the programme that can help your organisation's future development.

Media coverage, social media engagement and other communication channels that may exist within your organisation and Arts Award can all be used to build our public profile.

Media coverage is influential and can help you reach a large audience in your local community and beyond. This coverage is free, but demand for free publicity is high and journalists are inundated with press releases and requests to cover stories and events. To be successful takes time, energy and a long term approach to building meaningful press relationships.

This document provides some guidelines to help you communicate your successes and improve your public profile. It covers:

- what makes a good story
- how to write a press release
- pictures and video
- how to distribute your press release via local press, online and social media
- advice on handling media interviews



## What makes a good story?

Before you start planning a press release or media campaign, ask yourself 'why would someone be interested'? It is important for each story to have a 'hook' that will engage a potential reader or listener.

Stories should be:

- timely or topical
- relevant to the audience you are targeting
- unusual or newsworthy
- have some human interest angle

Potential news articles might be focused around:

- things that are new or just beginning, eg new awards, new developments, new events

- things that are interesting or important, eg specific events, interesting or important people/visitors
- things that are ending, eg celebrating successes/achievements at the end of programme
- landmarks, eg anniversaries, significant number of participants or awards given

### *Examples*

#### **Celebrating success**

A press release announcing the success of your young people in achieving their Arts Awards will be well received by local media especially if it is accompanied by photographs and quotes from the adviser or young people themselves.

#### **Young person's story**

This type of press release can be sent out at any time throughout your Arts Award journey when you identify a newsworthy angle or story. To identify this type of story think about what makes your project/activity special and different, what it has done for young people and how does it illustrate the advantages of running Arts Award. Remember to check with the young person you want to focus on (or their parents or carers if they are aged under 16) that they are happy for their story to be published.

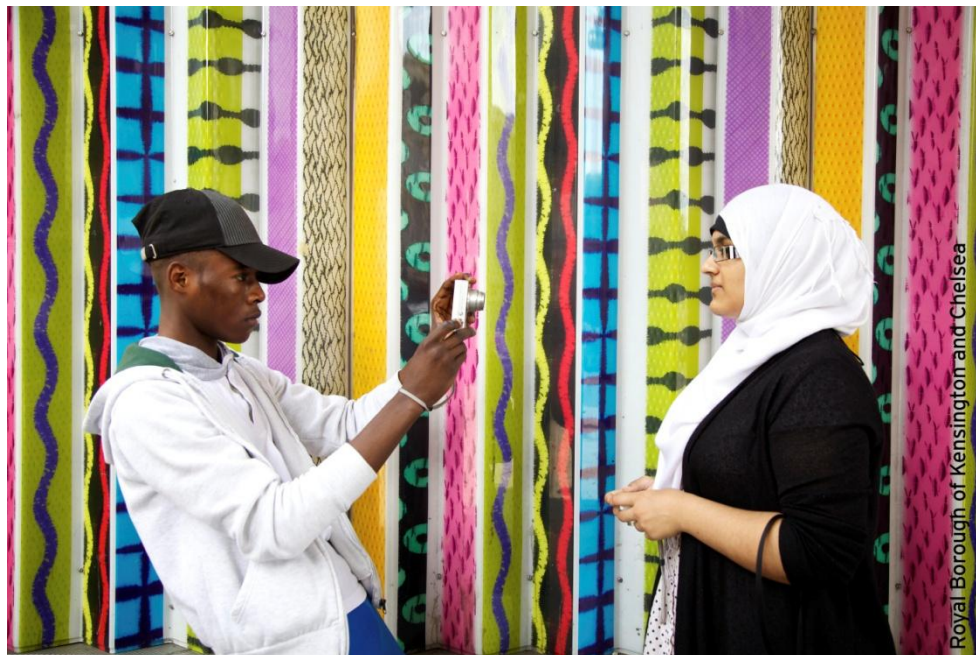


## Writing a press release

Whatever story or media outlet you choose, your press release will be central to getting noticed. By putting time and effort into writing a strong and targeted press release you improve the chances of your story being picked up by the media.

### Things to consider

- Prepare your press release at least two weeks before the event
- Be focussed. Stick to one message/announcement at a time
- Research the publication(s) you are targeting and try to adapt your story to their target audience, style and tone of voice
- Look at the media kits/advertising kits of your target publication (often free to download from their website). This will tell you a lot about the demographics of their readers and who their target audience is
- Proofread your press release carefully, double check all names, dates, venues and times and always ask at least one other person to check it for you
- Keep it factual, relevant and succinct. Write in plain English, avoid exaggeration or sounding overly promotional
- Make sure your press release answers the main questions: what, who, where, when and why?
- Include quotes from advisers, young people or other important people. Make sure they have agreed to their name and quote being included in the press release
- Write in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person eg 'Trinity has announced today that...' (not 'We have announced today that...')
- Use active verbs rather than passive verbs (eg 'John Smith achieved Bronze Arts Award' not 'John Smith has received Bronze Arts Award')



## Structure

When writing a press release there is a structure that should be followed.

### Heading & date

Use the heading 'Press release' or 'Media release' together with today's date. If you are sending information ahead of time that should not be public knowledge yet, include 'embargoed until [date]' to avoid the story being published too early.

### Headline

Open with an eye-catching headline

### Paragraph 1 / key information

Start with a couple of lines that capture the reader's interest and explain what is newsworthy.

### Paragraph 2 / summary

The next paragraph should expand on the introduction and summarise the story, including the key facts.

### Further paragraphs / main body

Another 3-4 short paragraphs can go into more detail about the story, giving some background information and using quotes from the people involved.

### Last paragraph

Reiterate any event times, details and include the event contact for the public.

### Ends

Always make clear where the story for publication ends

### Contact details

Agree who will field enquiries from the press and include their name and contact details here. Make sure this is someone who will be easily available to answer phone and email queries when the press release is sent out.

### Notes for editors

Include additional notes for editors, including standard information about your organisation and Arts Award. If photos or videos are available or have been sent with the press release, include details about them here.

Sample press releases and templates are available (see below). These contain the correct branding, logos and key messages about Arts Award and should always be used as your starting point.

## More resources

Download sample press releases from the website

[artsaward.org.uk/gettingpublicity](https://artsaward.org.uk/gettingpublicity)

[artsaward.org.uk/celebrate](https://artsaward.org.uk/celebrate)

## Pictures and video

A picture says a thousand words, and stories that are illustrated with eye-catching visuals will always be more attractive to journalists.

You can either invite the press to a photocall, or provide your own photographs or video material.

### Photocall

A photocall is a great way of inviting photographers from your local newspaper to an event and gives them an opportunity to take pictures at a specific time.

To promote your photocall to journalists send a simplified press release approximately one week before an event so it will be considered when they are planning their weekly schedule. Always follow up with a phonecall.

Think about setting something up for the photographer to capture: for example, part of a performance by young people, young people working with a professional artist, young people receiving their certificates. Inviting a local MP or VIP from your organisation to feature in the photograph may also stimulate interest.

### Top tips

- Try to offer an exciting photo opportunity - pictures of groups of dignitaries, someone giving a speech or people shaking hands are rarely interesting, unless the participant includes someone very famous or newsworthy
- Most local press or media organisations prefer to hold photocalls before noon
- If you are inviting a local MP, contact them via their researcher and try to schedule photocalls for Fridays when they are back in their constituencies

### Your own photographs

With stretched budgets and limited availability, news organisations will sometimes be happy to use photos that you have provided. Sending visuals with a press release can make them more attractive to print and online publications.

### Top tips

- Always use a professional photographer - ideally one with press photography experience - to ensure quality
- As above, look for exciting and interesting photo opportunities that capture something different
- Make sure individuals are looking towards the camera and that photos are eye catching, well-lit and bright
- Make sure images are of good quality and a high enough resolution to be a reasonable size when printed
- Make sure you have copyright permission from the photographer to use the images to promote your organisation
- Provide details of your photographer in your press release details so they can be credited with the image



## Video

With an increasing focus on enriched online and digital content video is becoming ever more important - both for online news organisations and as part of your own social media campaign. If you have an event that might provide engaging video, consider how you might use this as part of your media plan.

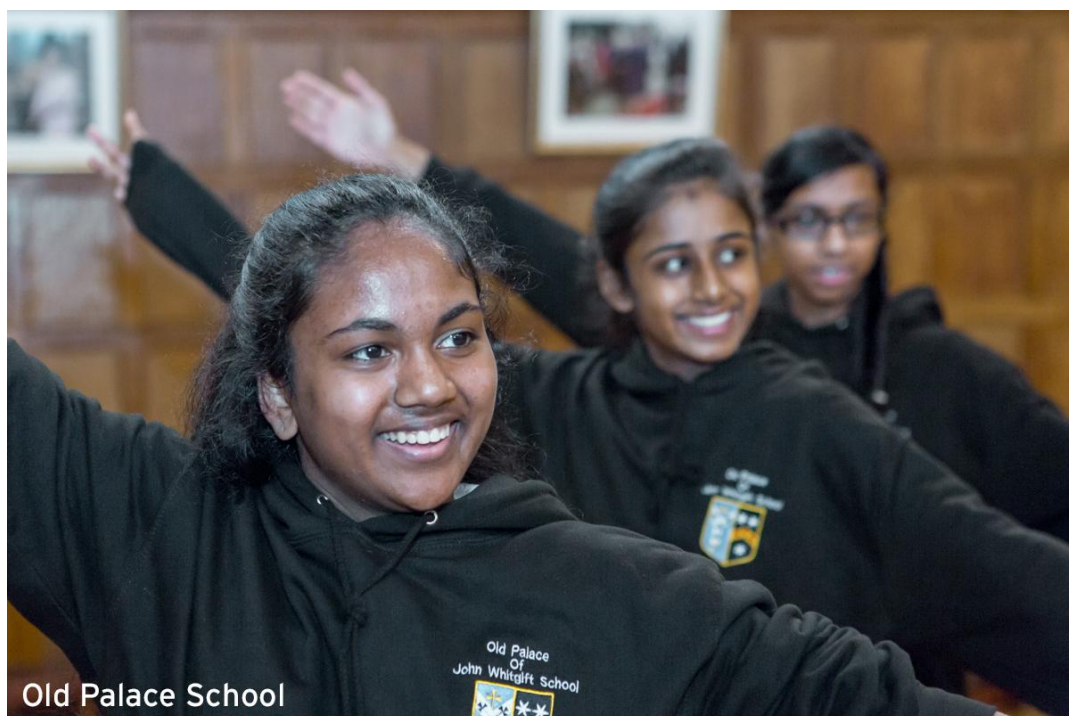
Possible subjects for video include films of an event or performance, an 'exclusive' back stage report, interviews with key people such as advisers or young people. You might also want to ask young people to make their own films that showcase their portfolios and how they evidenced Arts Award.

## Consent

If you are working with young people under the age of 16, don't forget to get written consent from parents or carers that they are happy for their child to be photographed or filmed and for the picture or film to appear in the media or online. If you are planning to send photos or films to the Arts Award team please ask for permission for Trinity College London to use images to promote the programme.

## More resources

Download Arts Award photocall notice template from the website [artsaward.org.uk/celebrate](https://artsaward.org.uk/celebrate)



## Distributing your press release

Targeting the right journalists and media outlets who are mostly likely to be interested in your story is as crucial as writing the perfect release. It is important to choose the right audience and medium for your press release.

There are lots of options open to you when trying to get media coverage – as well as local newspapers, think about local TV and radio channels, local magazines or websites, blogs or websites with a special interest in the arts and relevant social media channels.

### Local press

Make an effort to get to know your local journalists. Find out who your local contacts are and which areas they specialise in. Arrange to meet them to start building up a relationship with them so they are aware of you and your organisation.

Find out if your organisation has an existing press database that you can access, or start to build your own.

#### Top tips

- When sending out press releases to a local paper, think about all the different people that might be interested. Try contacting the arts editor, arts correspondent, reviews editor and picture desk as well as the news desk
- Find out when their press deadline are (particularly for weekly publications) and send in good time
- Read the local press to build up a picture of the different journalists and their interests
- Use your local library to find information on local press contacts
- Follow relevant journalists on Twitter
- Send press releases by email and include the release in the body of the email. Don't rely on journalists to open attachments.
- Always follow up with a phone call to make sure that journalists have received your release and whether they need any more information
- Call again several days later to find out when the story will go to print
- If journalists are attending an event, call them afterwards to check if they need any clarification or further information
- If your press release generates any interest from national media, please get in touch with the central Arts Award team at Trinity

### Online media

Look beyond the traditional local press and try to engage bloggers or websites that may be interested in your story. There are often niche interest or local blogs or websites that may have a much lower readership, but be highly targeted to the type of audience you are trying to reach.

As with local press, look to build relationships with these contacts and nurture them so that they are familiar with you and your organisation when you contact them with press releases or invitations to events.

## Social media

Social media such as Facebook and Twitter gives you access to a much wider online community. It is also a good way to reach journalists who often trawl social media looking for news stories. Any media campaign should be integrated with your organisations social media channels so that it instantly gets seen by your own followers, as well as a wider audience.

### Top tips

- ▶ Make sure that content is relevant, timely, focussed and likely to be of interest to users
- ▶ Where possible, use pictures or links to videos that add interest and engage users
- ▶ Use your organisation's own social media networks to send out news stories
- ▶ Actively engage with other like-minded users - by building social media relationships other people will be more open to sharing your content
- ▶ Target key accounts such as other organisations, journalists, bloggers etc. When you have something to share - tag them directly to make sure they see your story
- ▶ On Twitter, use hashtags to link your tweets to current events or local information to make sure they are seen by more people
- ▶ Connect with central ArtsAwards social media channels (see below) so that we can see your stories and share them on your behalf

### Other channels

Consider what other outlets may be available for your story, or other ways to raise your organisation's profile. These could include:

- ▶ Write letters to the local press on relevant topics. In addition to sending press releases, this may help keep issues important to your centre in the public eye, and show news editors that these issues are important to readers
- ▶ Share your stories via the Arts Award blog ([artsaward.co.uk/blog](https://artsaward.co.uk/blog)) to share best practice with other centres
- ▶ Become an Arts Award Good Practice Centre to share your experiences and expertise with other Arts Awards centres
- ▶ Look internally at what newsletters/blogs/forums exist within your organisation

## Resources

Arts Award social media channels to link with:

Twitter: @ArtsAward @ArtsAwardVoice

Facebook: Arts Award, Arts Award Voice

Instagram: Arts Award Voice



Dance United photo Pari Naderi



## Media interviews

Interviews can take many forms - over the telephone, face to face, in a radio study or in front of a TV camera. They are a great way of getting your message across and telling a journalist more about the Arts Award activities at your centre.

Love them or hate them, the simple tips below will help handle interviews with confidence. Please also read the key messages document for some key facts about Arts Award that you should include if possible.

- ▶ Gather all the basic information you need (telephone numbers for the journalist, contact details/web address for where people can find out more)
- ▶ Do some research, read the publication and find out what the journalist has written in the past and get familiar with their style
- ▶ Check out the stories running in your local area and look for ones that you might be asked about
- ▶ Discuss the interview with colleagues - they may offer some good ideas
- ▶ Prepare no more than three key messages that you would like to get across during the interview and have examples to bring them alive
- ▶ Consider tricky questions the journalist might ask and think through an answer
- ▶ Gather all the facts and figures that you might want to refer to in the interview and put them into a simple document you can refer to during the interview

## Further information

For more information on getting media coverage for your Arts Award project take a look at the following useful resources:

- ▶ Arts Council information on promoting your activity  
<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/information-funded-organisations/promoting-your-grants-arts-activity/>
- ▶ Arts Marketing Association resource for best practice in marketing  
<http://www.culturehive.co.uk>

For further information and support from Arts Award contact [artsawardenquiries@trinitycollege.co.uk](mailto:artsawardenquiries@trinitycollege.co.uk)

