



# Local PR guide for The Boys' Brigade

## What is PR?

Every organisation, no matter how large or small, ultimately depends on its reputation for survival and success.

Customers, members, employees, journalists and regulators can have a powerful impact. They all have an opinion about the organisations they come into contact with - whether good or bad, right or wrong. These perceptions will drive their decisions about whether they want to work with, shop with and support these organisations.

The Boys' Brigade is no different. Reputation can be the BBs biggest asset – the thing that makes you stand out from the crowd and gives you the edge. PR can help manage reputation by communicating and building good relationships with journalists and the wider public – it can drive what people would term 'good publicity.'

- Public relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you.
- Public relations aims to earn, understand and support and influence opinion and behaviour.
- PR not only tells an organisation's story to the public, it also helps to shape the organisation and the way it works.

It should:

- position the Boys' Brigade to reflect where it stands, for the benefit of members, supporters, peers or other influencers
- provide news about successes and achievements (such as raising funds)
- use comment or opinion to inform and educate an audience on any of these
- build a profile through endorsement by the press and allow the organisation's messages and aims to be translated in a meaningful manner so that they can be aired for the target audiences.

## Why bother with PR?

No reason at all, providing that the only people you need to talk to are already members of The Boys' Brigade.

For a variety of reasons, most organisations with a public face need to convince audiences that their aims (the organisation's) are good for them (the audience). Talking directly to the media is a lot easier – and cheaper - than knocking on every single door in the UK or standing in the street with a megaphone.

## Press Releases

The key to writing a press release is to put yourself in the position of a journalist. You are working at a newspaper and you are sent hundreds of press releases on a daily basis. Why should the journalist print your story rather than press the delete button.

Simplicity is the key. Does the journalist know what your press release is about? Does he or she know who is sending it, what you're trying to achieve and is it relevant to his or her readers?

Some top tips:-

- **So what?** – When writing a press release, always ask yourself if ticks the 'SO WHAT' box. A news story that may be interesting to you may not have mass appeal. If it doesn't tick the 'SO WHAT' box, leave it out!
- **KISS** – KISS stands for Keep It Short and Simple. The main role of a press release is to sell a story to a journalist in a punchy, headline grabbing way. Press releases do not need to be flowery and contain unnecessary details. Ask yourself what exactly the story is and then write it down. A journalist can add colour and additional insight, if required.
- **Stick to the facts** – Only ever stick to the known facts. Never add opinion or unsubstantiated rumours or speculated figures. While there is a place for 'opinion pieces', these should be drafted by a specialist PR practitioner in a controlled environment.
- **The one page rule** – There is no hard-and-fast rule about how long a press release should be. However, most people accept that 1 A4 page is generally long enough. If you feel that you have told the full story, don't add anything else. Less can be more.
- **Short and snappy quotes** – It's always good practice to have a quote in a press release from someone in the organisation. Make sure the person you have quoted is aware of this and happy with the wording. Keep the quote relatively short. 2 short paragraphs generally suffice. Avoid clichés such as 'I am delighted' and stick to adding a bit more insight. Use the quote as an opportunity to emphasise the strengths of the organisation and add a little professional personality.
- **Pictures sell** – Your press release will always stand a greater chance of being featured in the local newspaper if it is accompanied by a nice picture. The image should always be a relatively high resolution (at least 1MB) and should convey a professional image (no cropped faces, excessive corporate branding, such as Coca-Cola cans, and nothing offensive)
- **What do others think?** – After completing the release, share it with colleagues and ask them to give their genuine views. If they were reading the article without any prior knowledge of your organisation, would they have fully understood the story?

A reader of a newspaper and a journalist need to know what the story is from a quick glance at the top line.

For example:-

*40 volunteers from The Boys' Brigade (BB) have been recognised for their contribution in delivering the Queen's Diamond Jubilee events and Olympic and Paralympic Games at a reception hosted by The City of London Corporation (3 June 2013.)*

The story is there in the top paragraph. It should be the main thrust of the story, the journalist must immediately understand the point of the news; it should be written as if it could be lifted and used straight onto the news page.

Between first and second paragraphs: who, where, what, when and why should have been covered.

The second paragraph should be used to expand the story:-

For example:-

*The event, at the prestigious Guildhall, heralded the start of Volunteers' Week and was attended by volunteers from the ten youth organisations represented by YOU London.*

Keep press releases as concise as possible, but without missing key pieces of information.

Journalists love facts and figures – any stats/numbers/facts all help to put more meat on the bones.

For example:-

*The UK's longest-running voluntary uniformed youth organisation, The Boys' Brigade (BB) is celebrating its 129<sup>th</sup> anniversary and is on the lookout for new members. The BB was conceived by William Alexander Smith in Glasgow on 4th October 1883 and quickly spread across the United Kingdom before becoming a worldwide organisation by the early 1890s.*

*Since The Boys' Brigade's inception, much has changed. The organisation, which started just seven years after the invention of the telephone, 20 years before Wilbur and Orville Wright's first successful aeroplane was built and 25 years prior to the Model T Ford, has survived two world wars, 44 UK prime ministers, six monarchs and the birth of the computer. Despite this, membership of The Boys' Brigade is still healthy today and as it moves into its 130<sup>th</sup> session, the BB is hoping to increase its numbers further still.*

Quotes

Quotes are incredibly important as they should back up the initial story. Again, the more simple they are, the better. Try to keep out terminology which may not be understood outside the BB. Indenting quotes on a press release make them stand out better and they should always be xxx xxx said:

"and then the quote tabbed from the left to make it stand out."

Eg. Steve Dickinson, CEO, The Boys' Brigade, said:

"I am immensely proud of all our volunteers who helped out at these major events - it's a great endorsement of the BB as a whole. Volunteers' Week may be over, but the work of our 14,000 volunteers continues throughout the year.

"We rely heavily on our volunteers and I would personally like to thank and highlight the work of our unsung heroes who are making a real difference to young people across the UK."

Each paragraph of a quote should begin with quotation marks. There should only be closing quotation marks at the end of the quote, not the end of each para.

Quotes should back up facts of the story and develop opinion.

## Notes to Editors

This is the section at the foot of the press release which contains key messages and background information about The Boys' Brigade. Currently, there are two versions – one for Scotland and another for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Any information that is too complicated or wordy for the main release can be added to the Notes to Editors.

These should be included at the bottom of ALL press releases:-

In Scotland:

Notes to Editors

1. The Boys' Brigade was founded in Glasgow on 4th October 1883 by Sir William Alexander Smith. From this one Company formed in Scotland the BB has grown in to a worldwide movement having worked with millions of children and young people for well over a century.
2. In Scotland, The Boys' Brigade cares for and challenges young people through a programme of informal education in a fun way. Each week around 20,000 young people, aged 5 to 18, take part in one of its 450 groups.
3. For more information, please contact:

In the rest of the UK:

Notes to editors

1. The Boys' Brigade was founded in Glasgow on 4th October 1883 by Sir William Alexander Smith. From this one Company formed in Scotland the BB has grown in to a worldwide movement having worked with millions of children and young people for well over a century.
2. The Boys' Brigade cares for and challenges children and young people through a programme of informal education in a fun way. Each week more than 50,000 young people, aged 5 to 18, take part in one of its 1,450 groups supported by 12,000 volunteer leaders.
3. For more information, please contact:

## Photography

If budget allows, we would always recommend you use a professional photographer. If the press release has been done before the event, they will read the release and work with you to capture an image that complements and enhances the story. However, if you're doing the pics yourself, here are some tips:-

- **Your target?** - Consider who you are targeting, both in terms of who will be publishing the picture (the target media) and who will be reading it (the target audience). Different media have different requirements; for your local newspaper will probably want pictures of the local people involved, while others might want group shots. If in doubt, take both.
- **Check your equipment** - Are your batteries fully charged? Is the lens clean? Have you got the camera on the right setting? You'd be amazed how often a good photograph is ruined because there's a thumb print across someone's face. Simply checking your camera before you go to the photo shoot can help mitigate a photography disaster.
- **Be prepared** (as somebody else once said!) - Don't expect a great photograph to take itself, it takes preparation. For example, you may be promoting a seasonal event months in advance; using appropriate props can really help to set the scene.
- **People** - At its worst, PR photography consists of three or four people stood awkwardly in a line in front of the company logo. Where possible, try to get people to do something that illustrates the story, such as putting up Christmas decorations or loading products into a box. Try to get them to relax and smile. If appropriate ask them to crouch down or turn sideways, so just their head is looking at the camera, as this looks more interesting, but make sure they don't look uncomfortable.
- **Composition** - Try to keep the composition quite 'tight' – make sure people are stood closely together and lean slightly towards each other.
- **Light** - Light is important for photography – get it right and it will make the shot, get it wrong and your photos will be a disaster. With this in mind, don't shoot directly into the sun as the people will be silhouetted. By the same token, if your subjects are facing the sun, they will probably be squinting. Finally, try to ensure there are no strong shadows.
- **Safety in numbers** - Always take plenty of different photos, varying the angle, composition and type of images. For example, take some portrait and some landscape; take close-up shots and some that are further away; and take the background into consideration – does the background in one direction make a better photo than in another direction? Ultimately, the more pictures you take the better chance you have of taking the perfect PR shot.
- **Watch the professionals** - If a professional photographer is attending your photo shoot it's worth asking if they mind if you take the same photograph – they usually won't and you can pick up some tips.
- **Sending pics to the press** - Always send pictures as attachments – rather than in the body of the email. They should be jpeg and at least 1MB in size. Low resolution pictures have VERY little chance of making it into the newspaper. 1MB or higher is best.
- **Labelling** - Make sure you label the people in the photograph too. Do the work for the press rather than have them coming back to ask for details.

## Remember

When taken correctly a good picture will increase the space allocated to your press release as picture editors are always on the lookout for good photography that will enhance their title.



## Examples/Templates

Feel free to use/adapt some of these templates for local press. Quotes are in here as examples only! Best to use your own words:-

### 1. Queen's Badge

#### Boys' Brigade members get the top honours

XX senior members from Boys' Brigade (BB) Companies in XX Town/City/County XX have been presented with Queen's Badge Certificates at a presentation ceremony at XX Venue XX on XX Date XX

XX Name XX hosted the event, with the awards being presented by XX Name XX

The Queen's Badge is the highest award that may be gained by a member of The BB and this year celebrates the centenary of its predecessor the King's Badge, first awarded in 1913.

XX BB representative XX, The Boys' Brigade, XX location XX, said:

"I am incredibly proud of our young people who have achieved the Queen's Badge. All have worked very hard towards this. The aim of the Queen's Badge is to engage with the local community, take on responsibility, set personal goals, build self-confidence and experience a sense of achievement.

"A lot of time was put in too, as the work is carried out over a 12-18 month period. Each candidate had to provide a minimum of XX hours supporting others outside the BB and many will continue with this after their award. The total time spent volunteering for this year's group is around XXX hours, so I absolutely commend them for their commitment and hard work."

XX Young Person XX said:

"I am honoured to have received my Queen's Badge. We put in a lot of work to achieve this, but it was great fun at the same time.

"I have gained in confidence and made so many new friends whilst working towards my Queen's Badge and receiving my Award today is the icing on the cake."

Notes to Editors

\*\*see previous section

## 2. KGVl

### BB young leaders graduate in XX location XX ceremony

XX young volunteers, between the ages of 17 and 22, have graduated from The Boys' Brigade's (BB) flagship King George VI Youth Leadership Training (KGVl) course.

XX Name XX, presented certificates to the BB members from across XX Town/City/County XX at a special graduation ceremony at XX Location XX (XX Date XX).

The course, which began in the 1950s in memory of King George VI is a two year programme which covers key aspects of BB training equipping young leaders to lead activities in their local BB group.

The KGVl programme is very successful, providing quality trained young people to work in BB groups across the UK. As there are no academic entrance qualifications, the course allows young people to show and develop their skills, regardless of academic ability, which they can transfer into the workplace/further education. (SCOTLAND ONLY - As of 2013, the course is SCQF Credit Rated by the SQA.)

XX Name and position XX, The Boys' Brigade, said:

"The KGVl Youth Leadership course is an incredible experience for our young people. Given the time and efforts which the young people devote to the course and also the organisation as a whole, it is only proper that their achievements are celebrated at such an occasion. We were delighted that XX NameXX was able to present the certificates.

"The KGVl graduates go back to their local group and make a significant impact, using their time, talent and enthusiasm to make a difference to the next generation of BB members. Recent growth in our membership underlines the need for even more adult volunteers, such as these young people, so we can continue to provide opportunities for children and young people."

XX Young Person XX said:

Notes to Editors

\* see previous section

### 3.DofE

#### BB Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award recipients

XX young people from The Boys' Brigade (BB) have been presented with Gold Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award Certificates at a special ceremony at the XX Location and date XXX

The ceremony, held in the presence of XX Dignatry XX, saw a record number of youngsters from Voluntary Organisations, such as the BB, attaining Awards this year.

Celebrities from TV, music, radio and sport including XX Names XX ,were joined by proud parents and BB and other voluntary organisation leaders at the VIP event.

XX Name and position XX, The Boys' Brigade, said:

"It's fantastic to see even more BB young people achieve the prestigious Gold Award. This increase comes at a time when we are seeing evening more attaining advanced awards, such as DofE and our own Queen's Badge. I am delighted for these young people and they and their families should be rightly proud of this impressive achievement. It is only appropriate we also pay tribute to the many BB adult volunteers whose commitment and expertise have ensured that programmes, like Duke of Edinburgh's Award, take place."

XX, Director of DofE said:

"XXXXXXXXXX."

DofE Gold Award recipient, XX Name XX, XX BB Company XX, said:

"This achievement is very important to me, as it will serve me in great stead in the future when it comes to searching for employment or going on to further education. The experiences I've had and skills that I've developed have benefited me greatly, and are the sort that may not have been available to me if I hadn't participated in the award.

"Personally, the most rewarding aspect was the opportunity of being able to learn new skills whilst enhancing already existing ones. In addition, it has allowed me to strengthen friendships with the people in my company that have completed all three awards of the DofE alongside me."

Notes to Editors

\*see previous section