

Suzanne's Top Tips for Approaching Media & Building Relationships with Press

- **When contacting a journalist or newspaper keep your pitch short and snappy.**
Journalists and editors don't have time to be reading long winded press releases initially or over-complicated stories. Pull them in with a catchy title or brief summary – ("Brownies Break World Baking Record in Berkshire!" "Girlguiding Isle of Wight Leader Presented with One of the Highest Awards for Service")
Most publications keep to around 400 words.
- **Try to find an angle in your story that has local interest or taps into a current issue.**
Local papers are targeted to a local audience. Try to find an element to your story that could tie in with an area of interest. For example, a story about a Brownie unit having a community clean up drive could be a positive response to a Town's recent survey on the increase of litter in the area. Or a feature of a young leader receiving an award could show how a village is celebrating achievements during the local Council's new youth work agenda.
- **If you are sending in a story, try to accompany it with a photo.**
This hands over the full visual package to an editor who is far more likely to send it to publication. The photo should be clear and relevant to the story. A photo with a group of girls is a winner as family members and friends will buy and keep news articles that include a loved one's picture so these sell papers!
**Always ensure the relevant photo permissions are in place before submitting photos of people!*
- **Journalist's love being offered a refreshment!**
If you are inviting a member of press or media along to cover an event or story – let them know there will be something for them to eat and drink. A simple but effective method to encourage their attendance!
- **Build a two-way line of communication**
Journalists will always be looking out for interesting angles and viewpoints on their upcoming articles. Start a dialogue by asking them what topics they have coming up or to get in touch with you when they might have relevant features to cover. You could then adapt your stories accordingly to be of more interest.

Suzanne Whitewood, Comms and PR Advisor for Girlguiding Isle of Wight, writes regularly for the IOW Echo and has been a journalist in the South West for many years. Below are a few Guiding related examples of articles she has had published.

[ISLAND GIRLGUIDING LEADER PRESENTED WITH AWARD FOR SERVICE - Island Echo - 24hr news, 7 days a week across the Isle of Wight](#)

[LONG SERVICE AWARDS FOR TRIO WHO HAVE GIVEN 100 YEARS OF SERVICE TO GIRLGUIDING - Island Echo - 24hr news, 7 days a week across the Isle of Wight](#)

[GIRL GUIDING LOOKS FOR ISLANDERS WITH SPARE TIME TO HELP RUN SESSIONS - Island Echo - 24hr news, 7 days a week across the Isle of Wight](#)

[Girlguiding Isle of Wight leader presented with one of highest awards for her service \(onthewight.com\)](#)

