FACT SHEET

How to Get Your News Story Published in the Northumberland Gazette

Got a great story about your project? Need to engage with the local community or drum up more volunteers? Won a funding bid and want to shout about it? These days you don't need to find a reporter. You can write your own story and send it in as a Contributor via the newspaper's web portal. If you do it right – you'll get it published.

The Northumberland Gazette is one of a raft of newspapers owned by National World and published in paper and digital format. Increasingly, media outlets are laying off reporters and relying more on citizen journalism to get their stories. This is a great opportunity for you. Craft your news item carefully to give it the best chance of being selected for publication by the editorial team.

Practical Tips

Make sure your story is newsworthy.
Before you even attempt to write a news item, think about the things you like to read, watch and listen to in the media. Is your story exciting? Does it share a community success? Is it about people pulling together? Will it encourage people to act after reading it? Have you got a great, high-resolution photo to send in with it?

A Headline that grabs attention
The Editor may change it. But if you choose a good one, the chances are s/he won't. The headline should be indicative of the story that follows and contain meaningful keywords. This is often called 'The Hook'. Choose words which convey energy and action.

First paragraph is vital
Put the key, most interesting information in the first paragraph. The reader wants to know what the story is about from the first few sentences, to encourage them to read on and discover more. The first paragraph should convey the who, what, when, where, and why of the story in a few sentences. Be as succinct and precise as possible and cut out any padding or unnecessary content.

Use the inverted pyramid
Subsequent paragraphs should add supporting information and more detail. See the diagram below.
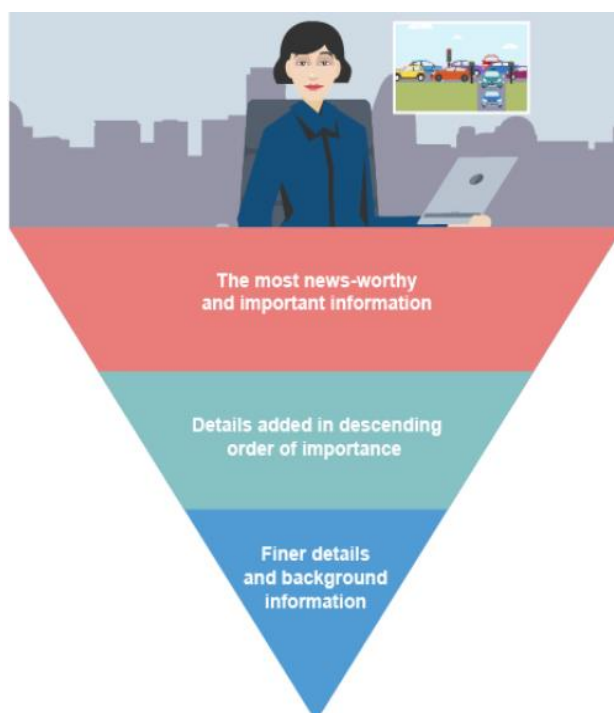
Write for your target audience

People skim read the news, so use familiar words and keep sentences and paragraphs short. In practise, this means a new paragraph every two sentences. Newspapers are image driven these days, which discourages people from reading even more. Readers just want a quick image that captures the essence of the story, saving them time to read through it.

Watch your word count

Aim for your story to be 350, 500 or 900 words. With 500 words include 1 photo. With 900 you may get a full-page article and 2 photos.

Only submit high quality images

Send in good quality photos with the subject clearly in view. Editors will reject anything blurry, out of focus or too small.

Include quotes

Readers like to know what other people think of the project, their opinions and feelings - especially if they are positive and complimentary of what you have achieved. Quotations are very important in news stories as they add authenticity and credibility. Quotations capture human responses and add colour and atmosphere to stories. Make sure you attribute them – double check the spelling of names. If you shorten quotations, add ellipsis points (…) to show that words have been left out.

Your closing paragraph

If you want people to contact you then your last paragraph must be a call to action with key information: the name of the project, your website and an email address.

Write and rewrite

If you want your copy to be the best it can be, then re-write it. Write, re-write and re-write again. Each time, simplify it and cut out any unnecessary adjectives or phrases.

Use a proofreader

Ask someone in your group to proof your copy and to give constructive feedback. Don't try to proofread it yourself – it's impossible to be objective and you *will* miss spelling errors and punctuation slip-ups.

Submit your copy online

Register for an account at https://submit.nationalworld.com/.

1. Once you have a password you can submit your copy following the steps in the online form. It's a good idea to have your copy already saved in a final Word or text document – then you can just cut and paste it into the form.

2. Upload your photograph(s) and make sure you give it a caption. Double-check the spelling of the names of anyone included in the photograph.

3. Finally, accept the news website's terms and conditions, confirm that all photos belong to you and press the Submit button.

4. If your story is accepted, you will receive an email from the editorial team to let you know and it will be published in the online version – usually within the hour.

Good Luck!