

THE PULSE STYLE GUIDE

Word Count

The maximum number of words should be 300 words and should always have a photo.

Features – special in-depth feature articles can be up to 700 words long and must have a photo. This will be subject to editorial approval.

Although each page needs a page lead, it is very important to also have shorter stories.

Try and make sure you have plenty of these shorter fillers and stand alone photo captions.

Introduction

- The first paragraph should attempt to provide key points of story in no more than 28 words.
- All stories should include 'The five Ws' – who, what, when, where and why – with at least four in the introduction.
- Try to tell the story in the first two paragraphs and then go on to explain in more detail.
- Avoid starting stories with 'NHS Lanarkshire'.

i.e. - Nurses at University Hospital Monklands won a top award at a glittering ceremony in London in July for their fantastic patient care.

- Always try to use a quote from the subject of the story, or relevant expert, early on in the article.
- Try to hang stories on a person rather than a department or group.

i.e. Susan Smith is providing a new dedicated service to cancer patients after NHS Lanarkshire introduced an innovative new post at Monklands Hospital.

(Please remember this type of introduction may not work as well for a press release where it may be more useful to highlight the benefits to patients) i.e. Cancer patients in Lanarkshire are benefiting from a brand new service launched at University Hospital Monklands.

General writing tips

- Avoid using the term 'we' when referring to people in general or to one or more other people as a group – you must make it clear which group of people you are referring to. For example:

“We have responsibility for producing the Pulse.”

This should read: “The communications department has responsibility for producing the Pulse.”

- Likewise, avoid using the term 'our' – you must make it clear which group of people you are referring to.
- Keep sentences short and language simple;
- Avoid clichés and jargon;
- Try to get as much personal information as possible from people quoted – age, address, schools, work etc. People are more likely to be interested in reading a story if they can identify with them and the more personal information we can include the more likely they will be able to do this. This also helps localise stories for sending to the press;
- Avoid using bold type or italics unnecessarily. The same applies if capitals are used excessively – they can all make copy more difficult to read.

Names, job and organisations

- Always check spellings of names – even simple ones like John Allan could be spelled Jon Alan;
- Do not cap up job titles or departments – eg porter, senior charge nurse, chief executive;
- Do not use Mr, Mrs, Ms or Miss or initials instead of first names.
- Organisations are not capped up – council, company, church - unless using their full title, eg North Lanarkshire Council, NHS Lanarkshire, Church of Scotland;
- Businesses and organisations are referred to as singular: NHS Lanarkshire is meeting all government targets. One exception is football teams/clubs.

Quotes

- Direct quotes should be written in the past tense and within double quotation marks after a colon – John said: “The Pulse is a wonderful publication.”
- For quotes within a quote, use single quotation marks – John said: “Anne told me, ‘It’s very important to have a style guide’ and I would agree.”

Abbreviations

- Do not use abbreviations until you have explained what they are. Write them out in full the first time you use them, followed by the abbreviation in brackets, eg community health partnerships (CHPs). You can then just use CHPs in the rest of the article. The exception to this rule is the NHS!
- Use ‘do not’ rather than ‘don’t’, ‘we are’ rather than ‘we’re’ etc. The only time these abbreviations can be used is in quotes.

Apostrophes

Care must be taken over the use of apostrophes.

- It’s – an abbreviation of ‘it is’. All other uses should be spelled ‘its’;
- You’re – means ‘you are. Your is used to refer to a possession;
- Plurals tend not to have an apostrophe – DVDs, not DVD’s;
- Decades do not have apostrophes – 1960s, 1990s etc;
- Possession - use apostrophes to indicate belonging, ie John’s book, NHS Lanarkshire’s policy etc.

Numbers and figures

- Numbers – one to ten must be written in full: one, two, three, four etc; 11 and over write in numerals: 11,12,13 etc;
- Currencies – give in pounds sterling. Spell out million, billion etc in the first instance and then use £20m, £55bn (no space between number and letters);
- Dates – write day, then date in format of day, month and year if required – Friday 13 June 2020;
- Times – use 9am, 1pm. Never use 12pm or 12am, it should be noon or midnight;

- Percentages – use per cent rather than %;
- Ages – write as Bob, 25, (do not use brackets) or three-year-old son.

Words to avoid

Some examples include:

among	not	amongst
while	not	whilst
live	not	reside
up	not	upwards (same for down)
north	not	northwards (same for other directions)
try	not	endeavour (try to, not try and)
use	not	utilise
before	not	prior to

- Avoid American spellings: specialise, not specialize.
- Use advisor, not adviser.

Photographs

- Try to avoid taking large group photographs – these can be quite boring to look at, especially if there are many of them included in the same edition of The Pulse;
- Take a variety of different photographs – use different angles, different backgrounds, some with less people in them etc so you have a better variety to choose from;
- Make sure you have at least the full names and job descriptions of everyone who is in the photograph – unless it is a very large group photograph;
- Always take two or three shots of every photograph that you take – this helps to avoid having to use photos where people have their eyes shut etc.

Press Releases

All Pulse articles should be written with the assumption they will also be sent to the media as press releases.