

# PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR LIONS CLUBS IN IRELAND



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## Public Relations for Lions Clubs in District 133

### THE PRO – PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

Now that you are PRO for your Lions Club you can look forward to new responsibilities, some recognition and lots of enjoyable activity.



Briefly your responsibilities include:

- Communicating information about your Lions Club to the local Community.
- Using a variety of media to achieve this objective.
- Keeping your Club aware of current and future PR activity.
- Supplying information to Lions HQ via the 'Submit a Story' feature on the LCI website ([www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)).

### GETTING STARTED

- Set some PR goals and objectives for the year.
- Plan PR work ahead for Club projects and activities.
- Check out the resources available on the LCIF website.
- Keep in touch with the District PR Coordinator for hands-on assistance ([fcorr100@gmail.com](mailto:fcorr100@gmail.com))
- Be Persistent - the impact of PR is gradual and builds with regular activity.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

PR is about Communication with Target Audiences. There is no point in spending time and effort in communicating with an audience which is not relevant. It is most important therefore to identify target audiences and to direct all public relations efforts towards those target groups.





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### IDENTIFY YOUR MARKET

- The Local Community - the prime audience for your Club.
- National - when you have something relevant to say that is of national interest.
- International - when you want to communicate with the broader Lions family or with an overseas audience relevant to your Club project. (e.g. if your Club is welcoming participants in a Youth Exchange, the media in the visitors' home town would be interested)
- Special Interest - Voluntary organisations with an affinity to your project (e.g. Diabetes Association, Cancer Support Group, etc...)
- Conference - when you have something to say to Lions at District or Multiple District Conference
- Current and former Lions



### Typical Local Audiences for a Lions Club would include:

- **Your own Club Members** - keep them informed and engage them as ambassadors for the Club. Wearing a Lions pin, tie or blazer tells people that you are a Lion and relevant conversations can take place. This can also be a means of attracting potential Lions to your Club.
- **Banks** - keep your finance provider informed at all times. Banks like to know about their customers and are potential supporters and sponsors.
- **Local Community** - these are the people we serve, so it is most important that we keep them informed about Lions activities. Develop a database of local voluntary organisations, parishes, sports clubs, and youth clubs and include them on the e-mail list which you send to local media.
- **Leaders** - Chairpersons of organisations, local Councillors, clergy, team captains - they are all leaders in your community. Communicate with them and enlist their support. We are currently compiling a database of all Irish Public Representatives and we will circulate this when it is complete.
- **Potential Lions** - Who are they? - Where are they? Define the types of people you want to attract, and direct your PR efforts towards them. This can be a very useful strategy for Clubs who have a Membership Recruitment Plan.



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### Public Relations



## THE COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

Now that we have defined some key audiences, let's look at how we can communicate with them:

### PR TOOLS

**Word of Mouth-Network** - the best promotion you will ever get is by word of mouth. Encourage Lions to talk about the Club and its activities. Remind them that PR is the responsibility of EVERY Lion and, as the supermarket says: 'Every Little Helps'. It is also a good idea to encourage other participants in projects or recipients of Lions services to talk about their experience.

**Media Relations** - get to know people in the media and tell them what you are doing.

**Local Journalists** - are most important and most accessible. You may never get to know Ryan Tubridy but you can easily get to know the Editor of the local paper, the news staff and producers on your local radio station, local photographers, bloggers in your area and also the local reporter for RTE or the national newspapers. We have an extensive media database, so if you want a list of local contacts, e-mail [fcrr100@gmail.com](mailto:fcrr100@gmail.com).



**National Journalists** - many national news media have local correspondents. Get to know them. Tell them what you are doing. They are the best channel into the national media.

Nothing beats getting to know key journalists on a personal basis. If you meet them at a local function, sports event or Council meeting- introduce yourself, let them know that you are the Lions Club PRO and get their contact details. If that fails, call the local Editors/Photographers/ Producers and fix an appointment. Usually they will be happy to give you the ten minutes you need.



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**Newsletter Editors/Secretaries** - every community has newsletters published by clubs, parishes etc. Send the editors/secretaries information about your activities. There is every chance that it will appear in the local newsletters.



**Local Radio** - get to know local radio producers, journalists and presenters. We can also send you a list of these on request.

**National Radio** - as well as getting to know the local correspondents try contacting the phone-in programmes- if you can think of an angle or make a comment you can get national air time for your Club.

**Your Club website** - Make sure that it is up to date and post all information which you send out on the website on the same day.

**Social Media** - See Special Section.

## ENHANCING THE IMAGE

The following are just a few examples of what can be done to enhance your communication effort:

- Participate in local community events. Try to participate in a unique and interesting fashion. Often local parades, events or shows need participants who can add color or interest to these events. Be creative.
- Seek opportunities to address relevant associations, schools or other community organizations. Before addressing any such group, release a news story announcing the event and your club's participation, if the host organisation is not doing so. Send an advance copy of the talk to appropriate editors and/or radio and television broadcasters. Publication deadlines will vary, so be sure to give advance notice appropriate to each publication's specific requirements. Radio and television also need as much advance notice as you can give them.



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Don't overlook newsworthy events which may be a regular part of your club's activities, such as:

- \* Lions Club Projects
- \* Appointment of New Officers
- \* Retirements
- \* Participation in Community Activities
- \* Club-Sponsored Scholarship Recipients
- \* Award Winners, such as "Member of the Year"
  
- \* Special Events/Meetings
- \* Scholarship Sponsorship/Availability
- \* Education Support, Donations, Presentations
- \* Annual National Convention
- \* Social Events



### CREATE A STORY

A press release about your Club will end up in the bin unless it contains a story of interest to the media. It is possible to generate publicity through:

- **Any Lions Club Project** - the vast majority relate to serving the local community and are therefore of local media interest.
- **Projects serving a wider national or international community can be of wider interest.** If you have a project which you believe to be of national or regional interest please send details to [fcrr100@gmail.com](mailto:fcrr100@gmail.com).
- **The election of a President** merits a press release and a call to your local newspaper may result in an interview of profile. When sending an appointment release, make sure to also send an accompanying image. Ideally this should be a jpeg file of at least 500kb and it should be accompanied by an appropriate caption.
- **A visit to your club by the DG** can result in coverage if you issue an appropriate press release.



## WRITING YOUR PRESS RELEASE

The first thing to remember when writing a Press Release is that it **MUST** be of interest to the intended readers/listeners and to the journalists/editors who will receive and process the information. A Press Release is intended as a News Story or Feature and is **NOT ADVERTISING**.

### The Format:

- The Press Release should be typed clearly on Lions Club headed paper (even if it is being e-mailed).
- It should include the date of issue on the top of the first page.
- If an Embargo is requested this should be clearly stated.
- It should be as brief and concise as possible. If back-up information is being provided this should appear as a 'Note to Editor' at the end of the release.



### The Content:

A Press Release **MUST** contain information of potential interest to the audience served by the media to which it is sent. To assess its effectiveness ask yourself the question: *'If I were the editor with a choice of many stories competing for my available space, how would I rate this release?'*

- Make sure that the first two paragraphs of your release answer the six questions: who?, what?, where?, when?, why? & how?
- Use simple language and avoid clichés.
- To optimise the effectiveness of a Press Release begin with an attention-grabbing heading. For instance:



*'Lions President to Work for Street Children'* is a lot better than *'New President Appointed'*. If you have difficulty with a heading, contact [fcorr100@gmail.com](mailto:fcorr100@gmail.com) for help.

Next, put the most newsworthy element of the release in the first paragraph.

*'Up to 10,000 people in Bray may have diabetes without knowing', according to Declan McAndrew, president of Bray Lions Club, who are holding free Diabetes Screening at the local Tesco Centre this Saturday.'*



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This is more likely to catch the attention of an editor rather than ‘*Bray Lions will hold a Diabetes Screening this week*’ or similar.

Put the essential information in the following paragraph - time, place, beneficiaries, price, etc.

Add a quote from the Club President or Project Leader - but keep this to a single sentence.

End with a final interesting fact – e.g.: ‘*Medical experts estimate that up to 200,000 Irish people have diabetes*’.

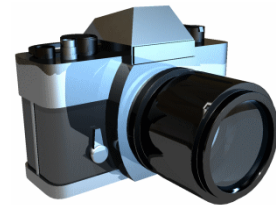
At the end of the release indicate a source of further information, for example:

‘Further information from Frank Corr, PRO, Bray Lions Club at **086-8274710 / fcorr100@gmail.com**

Once again we can help draft Press Releases if asked in good time. Contact [fcorr100@gmail.com](mailto:fcorr100@gmail.com).

### ADD AN IMAGE

‘Every Picture Tells a Story’ is an old but true adage. Nowadays the media tend to refer to ‘images’ and if possible your Press Release should be accompanied by an appropriate image.



Advances in technology enable the capture of images (taking of photographs) by many means; from the enthusiasts’ multi-lens camera to your own Smartphone. It is also relatively easy to distribute images via social networking sites (see section below) e-mail etc... In order to be of use to print media however, the electronic photo files (jpegs) must be significantly larger than those often used on websites. It is very important therefore to check the size of the file before sending it to print media editors. In general, a photo file for a newspaper should be at least 500kb and for a glossy magazine it needs to be in excess of 750kb.

**With so many images on websites and social media, editors are today seeking to attract reader attention with creative pictures.** The traditional ‘handshake’ or ‘soccer team’ type picture is less likely to be published. Think creatively when choosing an image for distribution. Try to include some action; an image of a newly-elected President engaged in a project (say with the outgoing President) is more attractive than the ‘*Look at Me with my New Chain of Office*’ type of image with which we are all familiar.





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- Make sure that all images are in focus and get as close to the action as is possible before you record the image.
- Limit the number of people in the group to 5-6 if possible.
- It is also a good idea to take a large number of pictures and choose the best shots for distribution to the media.

Each image should have a caption embedded in the file itself (i.e. name the photo file “Bray Lions Club President Declan McAndrew at the New Years’ Day Sea Swim”) and also included at the end of the Press Release. When sending an image to a Photo Desk, send the Release also.

One more thing - post a selection of images on your Lions Club Website.

### DISTRIBUTING THE RELEASE



E-mail is the preferred means of distribution for media today. Be sure to have a list of e-mail addresses for every media contact and send your releases and images to them via this channel.

In a few cases (Church Newsletters perhaps), it might be necessary to also send the release by post.



In all cases know the deadlines which apply to the edition you target and make sure that your release arrives in advance of that deadline. A missed deadline can often result in a good story ending up in the bin.

### FACT SHEET

Journalists always welcome background material, so create a Fact Sheet about Lions International (available on the LCIF website) and your Lions Club and distribute this along with every release. It is easy if you use e-mail. Just remember to keep your Fact Sheet up to date. An inaccuracy is not a fact!



### FOLLOW UP

If an event or project is successful consider writing a ‘Letter to the Editor’ of local media thanking the public for support.



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### RADIO AND TV

Ireland now has a network of Regional and Local Radio Stations as well as several national TV networks. As a result many opportunities arise for radio and TV interviews.



To stimulate radio and TV interest:

- Identify relevant producers, researchers, presenters and journalists and include them on your media database (We can help with contact details).
- Include them on all releases, but do not send images to the radio stations!
- Contact them in advance of your project or event.

For radio and TV you will require a spokesperson who might be the Club President, Project Leader or PRO. Lions being interviewed should:

- Know all relevant facts and be well briefed in advance.
- Practice answering probable questions in advance.
- Give brief, clear responses to questions.
- Mention key points early in the interview.
- Mention the Lions Club frequently rather than saying 'I' or 'We'
- For TV, avoid wearing pinstripes, white shirt, loud prints and excessive jewellery.

### THE INTERNET – E/PR

Create a Web Site - every Lions Club should have a website. Creating a site is now relatively inexpensive and easy. Templates can be downloaded from the Internet.

Here are some useful sites which offer free Templates:

Register 365 - <http://bit.ly/1bwMIjG>

Wix.com <http://bit.ly/15MjpoR>

A good Tutorial for starting a website is at:

<http://www.2createawebsite.com>





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### Some essentials of a Lions Club website are:

- It should project the Lions brand - so use only official Lions logos in the approved colours. These can be downloaded from the Lions International website [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)
- It should project the image of your own club - so use your club name prominently.
- Most importantly - it should be updated regularly. A website with old, outdated content is of no use to visitors and can actually damage the Lions brand image.
- It should use as many images as possible.
- Your website address should be printed on every poster, advertisement, flyer etc, as it directs your target audience to a place where they can find out more about your club.
- You can add a QR code (See below) to all printed materials too.

### Suggested sections (pages) include:

- Home Page
- About Us
- What We Do (details of projects)
- News (keep this up to date - otherwise it is not news)
- Image Gallery
- Contact Us
- Links (to Lions, Local Organisations, Partners etc...)
- Archive

**You could also have a Members Area with access via a Password.** This can contain Club information, minutes, agendas, reports, headed notepaper, Members Directory etc...

We like our Bray Lions Club website - have a look at [www.braylionsclub.com](http://www.braylionsclub.com)

**Get Priority** - Google and other search engines constantly update their systems for priority listing of search requests. Previously it was important to have meta words in the web description but the emphasis now is on frequent updates and animation. Adding content to the site on a weekly basis will help your Club up the priority list and including videos is also a big plus.





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**Have a Blog** - Blogging is a new form of journalism and Bloggers are now highly regarded as media players. The word 'Blog' is a contraction of 'Web Log'. Look at the web and if you find Bloggers specialising in a relevant subject- e.g. Youth Education, Health, Sight issues, Senior Citizens etc, think about joining in their 'conversations' or including them on your media mailing list. More adventurous Lions PRs might also consider joining the Blogging Community. If so please contact [fcrr100@gmail.com](mailto:fcrr100@gmail.com). We may be able to help.



**Send e-mails** to media, parishes, schools, voluntary organisations, Chambers of Commerce, Members - it is the most effective means of communication and is entirely free.

**Add a QR Code** – A QR (Quick Response) Code is a type of Barcode that can be optically read by a Smartphone, and directs the user to a specific website. You can generate a QR Code for your Lions Club website at [www.qrstuff.com](http://www.qrstuff.com). All printed material (posters etc...) should then contain this QR Code. The example attached directs you to [www.braylionsclub.ie](http://www.braylionsclub.ie).



**Create an e-zine** - Printed newsletters can be expensive, but e-zines are just as effective. You can view a selection of e-zines at [www.ezine-dir.com](http://www.ezine-dir.com)

You will find Newsletter templates on Microsoft Publisher which comes with most Microsoft Office packages.



**Send Texts** - a great way to get a short message out fast. Create groups on your Smartphone (local media, Lions members, local groups who might be appropriate). Don't overdo this however - nobody likes spam.

### GUIDES, SIGNS & POSTERS

- Inclusion in Local Guides provides very valuable exposure. They are usually published under the auspices of the local Chamber of Commerce and entries are generally free. Ask the Chamber to advise you when the next Guide or Directory is being prepared.



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- Organise a display of your Peace Posters in the local library.
- Place 'Welcome' signs with the Lions logo on roads leading into your town (You will need Council permission to do this).
- Put copies of the 'Lion' magazine in your local Library, doctors' surgeries, etc...



### Tips on Working with the News Media

- Become familiar with the publications serving your audience and know what kind of information they need.
- Establish and maintain regular communications.
- Always be honest with the media
- Don't be afraid to say, "I Don't Know," but be willing to find someone who does.
- Be available.
- Maintain the schedules agreed upon with the publication.
- When you supply written information to an editor, make sure it's accurate, clear and complete.
- When talking to an editor, determine his level of understanding about Lions International and your Lions Club.

### SOCIAL MEDIA



Social Media is the greatest communication development of this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Every second of the day and night, millions of people are communicating via Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and other social media sites. Participating in these conversations is an essential element of 21<sup>st</sup> century Public Relations.



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In order to become familiar with these Social Media sites, we recommend one of the several Tutorials which are offered by the site owners. In particular see:

Facebook Tutorial Page: <http://www.gcflearnfree.org/facebook101>

Facebook Video Tutorial: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewlC5p851KE>

Twitter Tutorial Page: <http://www.gcflearnfree.org/twitter101>

Twitter Video Tutorial: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QihQbOdn01I>

LinkedIn Video Tutorial: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTTDmSe5AXo>

YouTube Tutorial: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31PfTHWnP3Q>

**Facebook** is primarily a site in which individuals communicate with each other. Signing up is easy (see Tutorial) and you can choose an initial group of 'friends' from a list of suggestions which will be presented to you. Postings should be as personalized as possible and as brief as possible. You can upload images and videos of Lions projects and also respond to postings by your 'friends'. Facebook can be very useful if you are promoting an event or want to draw attention to a project.



*'Really looking forward to the Lions Table Quiz in the Martello' is a typical posting- or 'Thanks to all who supported our Lions Street Collection', or 'Bray Lions will be out in force at the Sea Swim next Tuesday'*

The **Home Page** displays all of your Friends' recent posts and activities. Whenever your Friends update their status, it appears in the **News Feed** on your Home page.

While the **News Feed on the Home page** is all about your Friends' activity, your **Profile page** (also called your **Timeline**) is where you can share information about your Lions Club. Whenever you **post an update**, it appears on your Timeline, and on your friends' News Feeds. Your friends can also share posts on your Timeline, and share your posts on their own timelines, which makes your news available to friends of your friends.



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There are two parts of your **Facebook Profile**: the **Profile Page** and the **About Page**. The Profile page appears whenever you or anyone else navigates to your Profile, and also includes your **Profile Picture**, **Cover Photo**, along with your Timeline. The About Page includes the personal details (i.e. Club website, email address and Postal Address) and information you've shared.

Your Profile Picture could be the Lions Logo, and your Cover Photo could be a photo of a project you are involved in. When you add details to the About Page of your Profile, you can include information about your Club projects

You've probably heard about Facebook's privacy issues. They range from embarrassing photos, to harassment, to people who are fired for making negative comments about their workplace. You can almost always avoid these types of problems by being careful about what you share and by taking advantage of Facebook's privacy settings. These settings let you control exactly who can see the things you share.

**By default, the information you share on Facebook is publicly visible.** In other words, if you never change your privacy settings, then anyone on Facebook, or the wider web, will be able to find and view your Facebook information and activity.

Some information from your profile will always be considered public, no matter which privacy settings you apply. This includes your name, profile picture, and gender. Sharing information is not a bad thing, especially as a Lions Club when you are endeavouring to publicise your Club. Make sure however that you only include information that you wish to share (e.g. avoid entering your mobile number unless you wish this to be for public viewing). Your name when setting up your account should be given as, for example, "Bray LionsClub". LionsClub may need to be all one word as Facebook often only displays one surname.

When you connect with third-party websites and applications, you're giving them permission to access and share information from your Facebook account. Pay special attention to application requests before agreeing to connect.

Facebook advertisers use your public information to show ads targeted to your interests and personal information. Facebook does not share information about your identity without your consent. However, if you click on an advertisement, that advertiser may put a cookie in your browser for tracking purposes.

Facebook uses facial recognition technology to identify you in photos. Facebook is able to use your tagged photos to collect data that will recognise your face. Currently, this data is only used to assist with tagging uploaded photos.



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### TWITTER

Twitter is a **micro-blogging network** of real-time posts (called **Tweets**) that are limited to **140 characters or less**. It is a very useful and effective means of communicating a short message quickly. Lions Clubs for instance can Tweet about an event which takes place that day, or in the next hour. If an event has to be cancelled it is also possible to notify many people at short notice. It is also good to Tweet news such as 'We raised €1,000 at Coffee Morning' or similar.



Twitter is now less focused on "What are you doing?" and more about "What's going on?" It has emerged as a source for discovery with a focus on sharing relevant information and engaging in conversation. Many people now think of Twitter as a news source rather than a social network, using it for networking and discussion based on their own interests.

It is worth remembering that **65% of users only check the site for updates once or twice a week**. If you join Twitter, there's no pressure to spend hours tweeting or trying to gain followers. In fact, you don't even have to join the conversation. You can simply follow your interests and get information whenever you want without ever composing any tweets.

Also remember that **your Profile on Twitter is public**, therefore it is important for you to consider how you want your Club to be represented and viewed by the world before you sign up

As with all social media sites, you should assume that **everything you post is public and accessible to anyone forever**. Twitter is great for sharing and connecting, but not so great for private or extremely personal communication. Twitter does allow you to set privacy for your tweets, protecting them from being seen by anyone other than the followers you have approved to view them. However, any of your approved followers can **ReTweet** one of your tweets, thereby making it public, so your protection is limited.





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### LINKED IN

LinkedIn is a directory of professionals and companies. Individuals and companies use LinkedIn for networking, job searching, hiring, company research, and connecting with affiliates, including alumni, industry, and a variety of other business related groups. It is therefore an effective social networking site for Lions Clubs who wish to communicate with businesses and professionals.



To sign up go to [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) and complete the on-line form. You can then complete a Club profile and start posting messages. Building a network is a key element in LinkedIn. The system will send you lists of possible contacts and you can send them invitations to join your network. Equally other LinkedIn users will invite you to join their network and you can decide to accept or reject their invitation. Both systems enable your reach to grow. Because it is a professional network the language on LinkedIn tends to be more formal than that on Facebook or Twitter. You can use the system effectively to spread awareness of your Lions Club, to recruit membership or to promote projects.

### YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing website, on which users can upload, view and share video. Creating small video clips, or photo montages and uploading them to YouTube is a great way of showcasing some of your projects. These videos could then be embedded on your club website and shared via Facebook or Twitter.



For further information on Lions Club PR in District 133  
please contact

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