

HOW CAN I SHARE MY STORY WITH THE MEDIA?

What you will learn

This resource is intended to help prepare and empower individuals or community groups with lived experience of seeking sanctuary or becoming a migrant in the UK who have never done media before. It will also be useful for people who have not had a positive experience or are nervous about talking to press and want to have a positive media experience.

It is particularly designed for people with lived experience of immigration to learn more about the importance of storytelling, different platforms where they can share their stories and how to approach media requests and journalists while looking after themselves.

It encourages them, to think about one story of their life experience, and how they would like to share it with others, and what boundaries they need to set to feel safe and confident.

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Why it is important to share my story

We regularly talk about how important it is to share stories. If we are trying to shift public perception of immigration, it's vital to hear directly from people with lived experience of the issues involved with leaving your home and starting a new life in the UK.

Firstly, we will explain why stories are important:

- Stories will always have more impact than facts and figures.
- They humanise an issue, connect with your audience and can help change their minds.
- Even if someone hasn't had to seek sanctuary, they will be able to connect with your story in a different way; be it an emotion or experience shared, a value or interest. Or they might be inspired by what you share.

So far, we have learned the importance of sharing our stories, but why with the media?

Why talk to the media?

The media can impact how people think and feel about an issue. IMIX's own research finds that the most persuasive stories for undecided voters are those of refugees and migrants who overcame the odds to try to rebuild their lives in the UK.

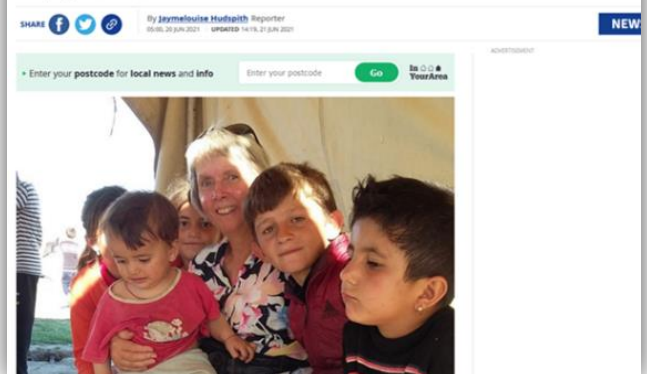
The week that took Windrush from low-profile investigation to national scandal

Britain's reputation has been shattered by the cruelty of the government's immigration policy



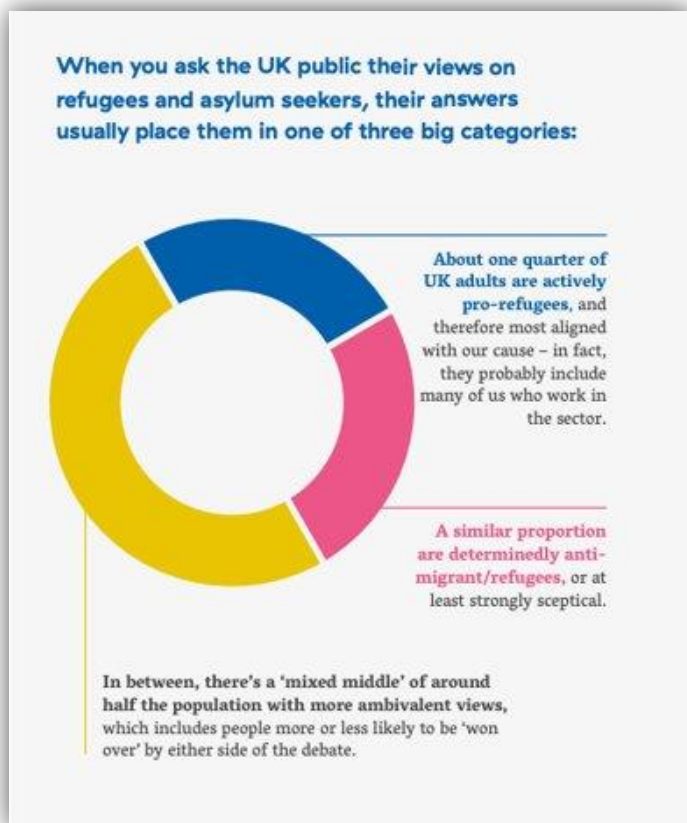
Anglesey woman's mission to bring fleeing families from war zones to North Wales

Catherine's mission began in 2015 after seeing the heart-breaking image of three-year-old Alan Kurdi who drowned attempting to reach Greece



Stories Can Help Changing Minds

- Politicians care about public opinion – when the majority of the population put pressure on them, they tend to act.
- Most studies divide the British public into 25% pro-immigration, 25% against and 50% undecided. We call this group the ‘mixed middle’ (imagine a dinner table with two people having a furious debate and the other two saying ‘I can see both sides’).
- These are the people we need to reach if we want real change, and we need to reach them on a huge scale.



The British families getting ready to welcome Afghan refugees into their homes

We speak to some of the increasing numbers of people in the UK who are offering their spare rooms to those fleeing persecution

By Eleanor Steafel and Luke Mintz
2 September 2021 - 5:00am



Becky Flynn and partner Simon Park | CREDIT: Jay Williams for The Telegraph

Key points:

- The media – even regional newspapers – still reaches millions of people every month. It's the best way to reach outside your own echo chamber.
- Roughly half the population is over 50. Older populations are far more likely to get their news from TV and newspapers.
- Refugees only make up 0.26% of the British population.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD NEWS STORY?

We all have so many stories to share, but what makes one particularly stand out?

To answer that, you need to look at your story from the perspective of a journalist and see what they are looking for:

- A journalist is working for their readers – they ask the questions a reader might ask
- They also want a good headline, because this is the only way their story will be read
- You want to reach their audience, and get across a key message

What does a successful news story look like?



Look at the above media coverage and think about what all the stories have in common.

Successful News Stories

A good news story is :

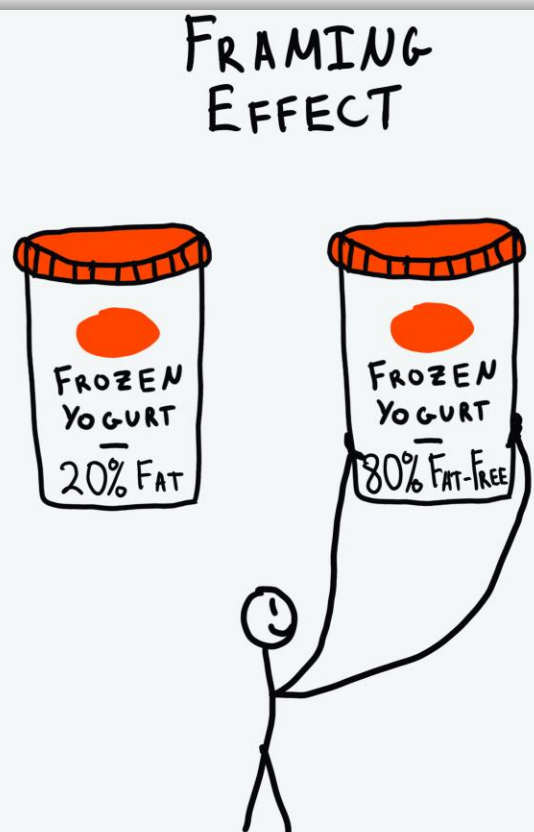
- Recent, relevant, important, has a person at the heart of it, and touches readers' heart.
- Features a well-known person, place or organisation that people care about – or someone they can relate to like a mum, dad, teacher or nurse.
- Timely, like Refugee Week, or linked to an important anniversary like Holocaust Memorial Day, or relates to something currently happening in the news.
- About an important subject like a mother's desperation to see her child, or the impact of the fall of Kabul on the local Afghan community.
- Something that moves readers – it could inspire them, or make them angry, sad or smile.

Getting Our Message Across

What is your key message and how would you like it to be perceived?

Looking at the photo on the right, are you going to put the customer's attention on how much fat is in the product or how much fat is not in it?

It's all about how you frame it for someone.



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Key message

Another big issue with interviews or sharing our story is that we usually have lots we would like to say. At the same time, interviews – particularly live ones – can be over very quickly or only use a little bit of what we've spoken about. There can also be a bit of pressure because we know thousands of people might be listening or reading our story, which can feel stressful.

To help ensure we get across what we want to speak about, we use a technique called '**key messages**.' But what is a key message and how do we shape it?

- Key messages are nothing complicated and actually very simple.
- We start by writing one short, simple sentence which should be our key aim of conducting this interview. This is the one thing we want our audience to remember – perhaps we want them to be inspired, to inform them, to change their opinion on something or perhaps we want them to come along to our Refugee Week event.
- Underneath this, we add three key messages – these again are short, simple sentences that we want to say during our interview which will help us to achieve our key aim.
- We only choose three, because in a very short interview, we might not get chance to say more than that. If we talk about ten different things during an interview, it's likely our audience will not remember any of what we've said. By focusing on three key things the audience are more likely to remember what we have said. Keep it focused!
- Always remember the **audience**. What do you want them to learn or feel? Remember their knowledge about the issue is probably quite low, so adapt your language accordingly and avoid using technical terms. Make it easy to understand.

Getting Our Message Across

Once you have your key messages, you can add other bits to this that will help you make your key messages more interesting and engaging.

Perhaps that is a fact that will help back up what you're saying or there is some personal experience or anecdotal experience you know someone else has had, which you can use to bring your key messages to life.



Bridging Technique

Journalists don't always ask the questions you want to answer, so you can use a technique called bridging to get your message across.

You can use a verbal '**bridge**' to get key messages across. The bridging technique is one of the cornerstones and an essential tool with which to control a media interview.

A - Acknowledge the question

B - Bridging phrase

C - Communicate your message

By doing this, we can change the conversation and introduce or restate our **key messages** and shift the interview onto our own agenda.



Some Bridging Phrases

- 'That's an interesting question, but to put it in perspective...'
- 'That's a valid point, but what's equally important is...'
- 'That's certainly been an issue in the past, however...'
- 'I don't have the precise details about that, but what I do know is...'
- 'I can't talk about that particular case, but from a general perspective what we are seeing is...'
- 'It's too early to talk about a trend amongst charities, but our experience is...'

Bridging Example

Question	How did you get to the UK?
Acknowledge	People are often curious about how refugees make their way to the UK.
Bridge Phrase	But I'm not here to talk about my method of travel, which creates trauma for me. I am here today to talk about my performance in a piece of theatre...
Communicate	that takes the audience on a journey through my life from Syria to Gateshead.

The above example is taken from an interview of a Syrian refugee who was doing press interviews around his performance in a piece of theatre he wrote and starred in. It shows how an awkward question that he did not want to answer can be quickly turned around using the bridging technique to get back onto the more relevant topic.

Safeguarding And Boundaries

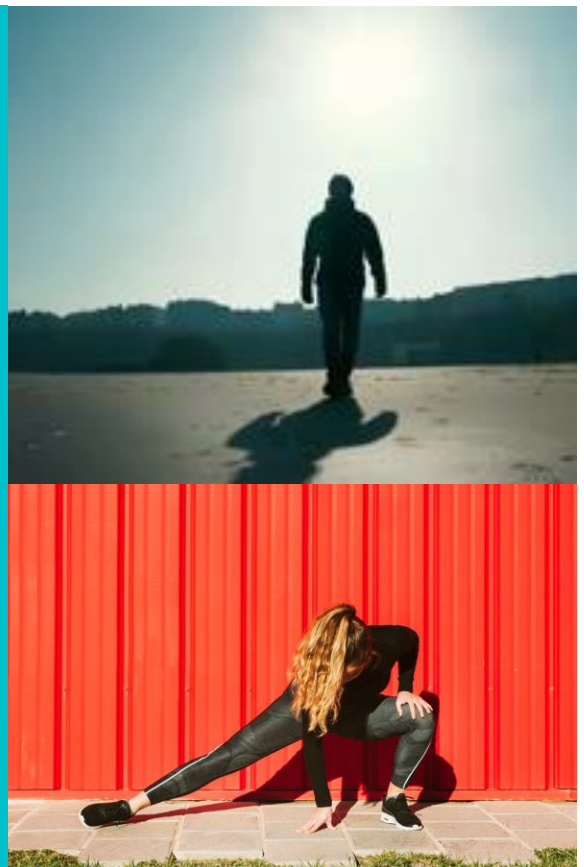
Talking to journalists or in general any engagement with the media might not be as easy as it sounds, and it could bring up difficult feelings and challenges.

A journalist's job is to ask questions. This could mean asking you about subjects you don't want to talk about or trigger some emotions. It is like reliving your story one more time so it can bring up some memories or emotions that you are not ready to deal with.

Journalists usually want to include someone's picture, name, age and location. They may not know about security concerns

Therefore, it is important for us to set some boundaries in advance, and make them a condition of the interview:

- Be clear about what you are and are not comfortable sharing.
- Bearing in mind all of this, could any information you share endanger you, your family or friends, wherever they may be?
- Likewise, with the potential trauma of recounting certain experiences – think carefully about what things you are happy to share and what things you do not wish to share well in advance



Media work can be very empowering with the right journalist, but they can also retrigger trauma with the wrong journalist, where you end up unhappy with how you are represented. It is important to consider this before you agree to doing any kind of media interview.

Safeguarding and boundaries

- In any media work it is important to know that our words will be recorded and publicly shared.
- Journalists use jargon like any other industry. Don't be afraid to ask them what they mean if you're not sure.
- If you're nervous about what will be shared simply say, 'This is for publication' or 'This is not for publication' to make it absolutely clear.
- If in doubt, just assume everything is 'on the record' and avoid saying anything if you're not sure about sharing.

'On the record'	I am writing down everything you are saying for publication
'Off the record'	Not for publication
'On background' or 'Unattributed'	You can use this information, but don't let it be traced back to me
'Source'	An anonymous interviewee
'On air'	We are recording and broadcasting live

At IMIX We have [a safeguarding checklist](#) which you can find on our website and which you can use as a reference for any current or future media work.



When I Was An Asylum Seeker I Wasn't Allowed To Work. Here's Why That Must Change.

As if the cruel, hostile asylum process isn't enough, not being able to work for three years made me feel ashamed of myself. We deserve to be treated with humanity.

By Amina Kodogo

Refugee and business owner from DR Congo

'I'm not dying without a fight': Nigerian man who fled home because being gay is a crime

EXCLUSIVE
Elisa Menendez

Published Jun 15, 2021, 1:01pm | Updated Jun 16, 2021, 8:20am



Despite Victor Iringere's hardship, he wants his story to be one of hope (Picture: Supplied)



Telling the human story of migration

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