

## Get your message across in an Open Hearts Open Minds article!



**Have you got experience to share or advice to give about social exclusion?**

**We want to hear what you have to say!**

**Here's how to shape your message, to help readers learn and take action.**

❑ **1. Think first about your audience:** We have hundreds of readers from a wide range of organizations, working at different levels. Our readers subscribe to Open Hearts Open Minds for information to help them learn more about tackling exclusion. **They want articles that give them insight into the realities people face. And they need ideas about how they can help make a difference through their own work.**

❑ **2. Then plan your article before you write it!** Jot down the key points you want to make, as a list. Then put the items in a logical order. Make sure this logic includes: a) describing the social exclusion issue you are dealing with and its impact; b) the inclusive measures you are taking and; c) what readers can do to respond to the issue in their own line of work. Take the reader on a learning journey, and build their confidence to do something about what they're reading.

❑ **3. Attract reader's attention with a catchy headline.** Think of something that grabs attention and tells the reader what the story is about. People have lots of information put in front of them. Make sure yours has instant appeal.

❑ **4. Follow this with a summary paragraph.** This should be a vignette of the story you want to tell and should carry your main message to your audience. And tell readers about the practical ideas the article offers to take away and use - these things are key in attracting them to read on....

❑ **5. Add depth to the story with subsequent paragraphs.** Make sure you include useful facts and figures – and that these are easy to understand. Draw out the Devon flavour and place this in the context of national experience.

❑ **6. Help the reader to scan the article.** Each paragraph should start with a sentence or phrase, **in bold**. These words in bold should let the reader know what the paragraph is about. Keep to one key concept per paragraph. Each paragraph should flow logically and build on the preceding one (your article plan will have helped with this). Check the reader can quickly scan read just what's in

bold as a kind of logical summary of what the article is telling. The bolds are also important to help readers find the detail they want.

**❑ 7. Don't go on too long.** Consider what you have time to read in your busy life! Two sides of A4 with about 600 words is plenty. Keep sentences short and avoid acronyms or jargon. Most people will scan read what you've written at the start of each paragraph in bold, and then pick out detail.

**❑ 8. A picture tells a thousand words!** Please provide us with a photo to illustrate your message. Make sure you provide us with permission from whoever took the photo, to use it on the website. If you are struggling to find an image – just let us know and we'll try to help.

**❑ 9. Give readers access to more information and resources,** so they can take further action if they want to. Provide details of useful websites and publications in a list at the end of your article.

**❑ 10. Tell the reader who you are!** State your name, job and organization, and email address, to sign off.

**❑ 11. Tell the reader where your information comes from.** If you've used materials from websites or publications or documents, state these sources so readers can go back to them. If you're drawing on experience, say so. If you are using material from service users, make sure you have permission to use it.

**❑ 12. Check your first two paragraphs:** They really do need to encapsulate your message and to convince the reader to want more. This is because while the whole article will go on the website news page, only the first two para's will appear on the e-news sent to subscribers, followed by a 'read-on' link to the website newspaper for the rest.

**❑ 13. Use this guidance as a checklist.** Please tick through the boxes to make sure you've followed the format - our readers have given us feedback that they like it this way.

**❑ 14. When you've finished,** please send your article as an attachment in an email to [info@openheartsoopenminds.org.uk](mailto:info@openheartsoopenminds.org.uk) and label your email 'Article written for OHOM' followed by the title. Please remember to give us a phone number so we can contact you to discuss any editing issues. (Please note we reserve the right to make editorial changes, but will endeavor to contact you about these.) We'll aim to include your article as soon as we can. If there is a special date you'd like it to go out in time for, please flag the email with high importance and make this clear in your email.

**❑ 15. Remember the bullet-point summary of key points** you made in step 2? Send us that too and we'll make it into a poster to go out with your article.

**We look forward to receiving your articles! Thank you!**