

WRITING A CASE STUDY

Telling powerful stories



GET BEYOND THE NUMBERS AND EXPLAIN HOW YOUR WORK IS CHANGING LIVES, THE ENVIRONMENT OR BOTH WITH A MINI STORY (CASE STUDY). HERE ARE A FEW REASONS FOR LOVING CASE STUDIES:

- They engage people on a rational and emotional level.
- They can be used to demonstrate outcomes (changes) and impact (longer term changes), both of which are difficult to measure.
- They are relatively easy to collect.

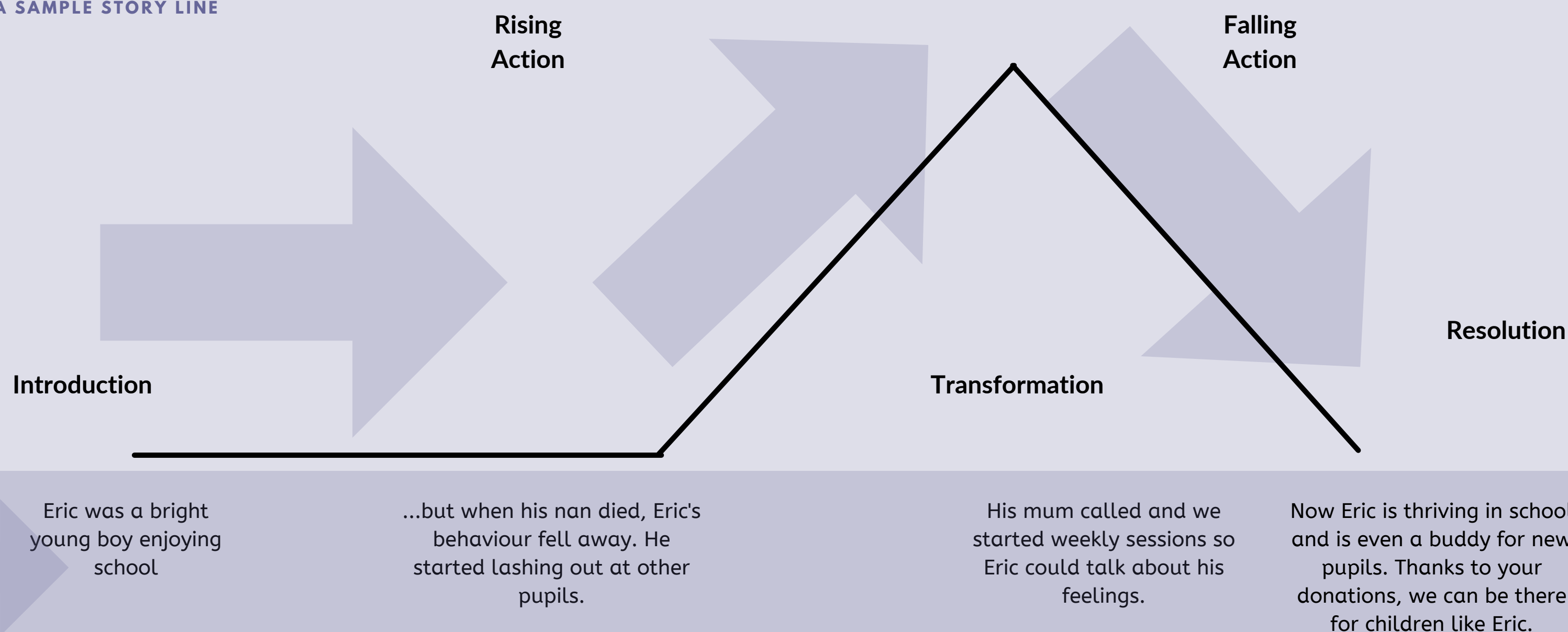
Don't forget

Permissions. Make sure you get permission that specifies the ways you might use their story. (Check and implement your Data Protection Policy)

Safeguarding. Deal with information in a way that doesn't endanger anyone. (Check and implement your Safeguarding Policy)

Examples of implementing this are not using a photo of a vulnerable person alongside their story, not using real names and checking that you are not including information that identifies a vulnerable person.

A SAMPLE STORY LINE



Another sample case study can be found [here](#) with further ideas in [this sample one](#).

TIPS

Purpose

You can use your case study to draw out a range of things and it is worth thinking about this beforehand. You can be:

- Demonstrating outcomes, impact or unintended outcomes and impact
- Demonstrating the quality of your work
- Demonstrating learning and changes as a result of learning (For a reminder of what outcomes and impact mean check out the Definitions section of [this page](#)).

Scope

I had always thought about case studies being about individuals, but you can cover projects or particular aspects of your project.

Good or Bad, it should be Honest

Not all of your case studies may demonstrate a positive impact. For more mature funders and for the improvement of your work it can be helpful to have a mixture of successes and learning opportunities. For instance, a case study may show that over Covid a befriending scheme did not vastly improve the happiness of an older person. However this may be an opportunity to point out that the older person was better than they might otherwise have been or that there are further needs to be addressed with more in depth counselling.

Target Audience

If your case study is for your annual appeal it is likely to be more informal than something for your funder, so think about who you are writing for. That said, even in a formal setting the use of plain and jargon free-English is a constant. Using quotes from the beneficiary can add an authentic voice.

Format

Case studies do not just have to be in writing. There are options for photos to accompany the writing, audio recordings or videos. Check out other resources on [uploading a video to YouTube](#).

Doing it

Larger organisations may have the ability to record permission to use a case study and the case study itself on their database. For smaller organisations it's worth asking these questions:

- Do we want to gather permission of the people in the case study in a form?
- Should the form have a Safeguarding reminder about things like not identifying vulnerable people?
- Should a case study template be used? (This can be helpful so that you record things like who wrote up the case study and when. [Sample template here](#)).
- Where should the case study itself be stored?

All organisations may benefit from asking, who will analyse the case studies? For instance, if you want to learn from your case studies then do you have a system for managers to analyse the case studies and highlight learning points? An easy way to do this is on the sample template above.