

SPEAKING TO THE PRESS

Involving your local newspaper, radio or TV station can be a great way to let others in your community know about your campaign and put pressure on decision makers.

Good times to contact the press are ahead of campaign events, at the start of your campaign, or when you've secured a significant change or commitment.

Top tip

Make it personal. Journalists want to know how your issue impacts real people in your community. Include real life stories and examples of the impact it's having – but make sure you have permission first.

Top tip

Never agree to an interview without preparing beforehand. Always stick to the main points of your campaign – keep your campaign's key messages to hand.

1. Preparing a press release

Press releases are still one of the best ways to get your message across to the media. They should be short, clear and well presented, summarising the key points of your campaign. Remember to include your campaign's key messages and the change you'd like to see.

- Grab the journalists' attention with a headline.
- Keep the opening paragraph short – 30 words is ideal.
- Remember to include the 5 golden Ws – who, what, where, when, why.
- Include a quote from the person leading the campaign and/or someone affected by the issue locally or a supportive statement from a decision maker or health professional.
- Include your contact details at the bottom.

2. Making contact with the press

You've written a press release with all your details – so how do you get your story into your local paper or onto your local radio or TV station?

- Find out what local newspapers, radio and TV stations cover your area. You can find their contact details online – call the main number and ask to be put through to the news desk.
- Contact them a couple of weeks before your event, or at the start of your campaign.
- Briefly explain your event or campaign and ask if you can have an email address to send through your press release. When you email your press release, send it in the body of the email rather than as an attachment – it makes it harder to ignore!
- If you're sending a press release to a newspaper, make sure you also email a good quality photo of yourself or your event as they're more likely to cover stories with photos.
- If you're running your campaign as an MS Society volunteer and you have a photo of yourself in an MS Society t-shirt – even better. Send the picture as an attachment, not in the body of the email.

> If you need any extra advice, you can contact the MS Society press office by calling **020 8438 0700** and asking to be put through to the press team or by emailing pressoffice@mssociety.org.uk.

- If you don't hear anything, don't panic. They may just run your story without needing to ask any extra questions. If you have time, you could make a follow up call after a week to see if they are going to feature your story.

You could also send a post-event press release if you had a notable person in your community attend the event, such as your local MP, or have great photos showing your campaigning activity.

Getting your story in the press can be a little hit and miss – there's no guarantee they'll cover anything, but it's always worth a go. Good luck!

3. Example press release

Date: *Insert date you send the press release here*

Immediate release

(Insert town/city and activity eg. Townsville mother launches campaign) to improve services for people with MS.

A woman/man/mother/father *(insert as applicable)* in *(insert town)* is encouraging local people to *(insert what you are asking people to do e.g. attend a public meeting)* next month where she/he will be launching a campaign to *(insert what the campaign aims to do e.g. improve services for local people with MS)*.

Name, age, *(insert how you are affected by MS e.g. who was diagnosed with MS two years ago)*, is calling on *(insert who you want to see change from/trying to influence e.g. local council)* to *(insert what change you want to see made e.g. improve services)* in *(insert town)*.

The event *(Optional – insert name of anyone notable in your community who is attending the event e.g. which will be attended by local MP Joe Bloggs)*, will be held at *(insert location)* on *(insert date and time)*.

(Insert name of campaigner) said: *(Insert quote by campaigner about how it will help people in the local community affected by MS e.g. "MS is close to my heart because my mother was diagnosed with the condition three years ago. Services are not good enough at the moment and the Townsville council could make small changes which could dramatically improve services for my mother and other people in Townsville affected by MS. We are hoping the people of Townsville will show their support by participating in our event and signing our petition calling for these vital changes).*

There are more than 100,000 people living with MS in the UK *(optional – insert number of people with MS in local area if known e.g. and just under 1000 people living with MS in Townsville)*. MS is unpredictable, one day you can be fine, the next you might lose your sight or be unable to move. People typically start experiencing symptoms in their 20s or 30s, which can include sight loss, pain, fatigue, incontinence and disability.

(Optional – insert quote from notable person (e.g. MP) explaining why they are supporting the campaign, if applicable).

(Insert any event registration/fee details). For more information, please contact *(insert name and contact details of campaigner)*

Ends

For press enquiries, please contact:

(Insert contact details here)

Notes to editors:

