

Guidelines for using external media

This section looks at how you can raise awareness through the media; newspapers (including online versions), radio and TV. Using your regional media is one of the most effective ways you can raise awareness. You are the perfect people to talk to journalists about MND and your branch and group activities.

Media in your area

Make a list of all the media in your branch/group area and, where possible, identify the current individual named contacts.

The following websites may be of use:

<https://media.info/uk> – contains a directory of television, radio stations and newspapers throughout the UK.

www.bbc.co.uk – links to all BBC radio stations throughout Britain

<https://www.ukonlineradio.com/> – links to websites of all radio stations throughout Britain

Most newspapers, radio and television stations will have a website on which you should be able to find out which journalists specialise in which areas e.g. Features Editor, News Editor, and also obtain their direct contact details. If you are unsure who is the best contact, make a note of the general 'news desk' or 'news' email address.

What makes a good story?

When considering whether you have a story that might interest your local media, think about the following:

- Does it have a human-interest angle (e.g. does it feature someone living with MND, a carer, or a hard-working fundraiser)?
- Would you, and people you know, be interested in reading or hearing about it?
- Be creative. Think about stories which perhaps involve a local person doing something interesting or unusual, or something you have come across which has moved/ intrigued you.
- In the case of a feature, firstly make sure that the person you have in mind is happy to share their story, talk to a reporter and ultimately appear 'on the news'.
- Tell their story simply, in a few words, and if the media are interested, they may well want to arrange a separate interview

What kind of story do you have?

There are different types of local stories or news. Each one should be offered to the appropriate section of the media. The main categories are news, features and events listings.

News:

A news item is linked to a specific date, a one-off event or a new piece of information like a forthcoming fundraising event, new research findings with relevance to the local area, the participation or endorsement by a celebrity at a local event, or a local issue affecting people living with MND.

Maybe our Chief Executive is coming to speak at your AGM, or you are holding a fundraising ball? Perhaps you are recognising an anniversary of your branch or group and are having an event to thank all those who have provided support over the years.

Most of your potential news stories will probably be news items.

Features:

Features come in all shapes and sizes and cover all sorts of themes. A 'human interest' feature is a personal story, one family's experience, a triumph over tragedy, anything that is centred on a person or people who have experiences readers can relate to.

Examples of features you could take to your local media:

- An in-depth article about your branch or group with statistics, case studies and strong quotes from spokespeople
- Profile of a local volunteer – an extended interview on why they got involved.

Some smaller newspapers do less features. Read your local papers and see whether there are regular people features and target that section or reporter.

Event listings/ diary:

When you want to promote a forthcoming event try to make sure it is mentioned in the forthcoming events section of your local paper.

Submit your story by writing a simple press release:

The best way to get a reporter interested in your story is to email them a news story or feature.

You don't actually have to write the article; just give all the information they need to see if they want to either publish your story or call you for more information or to arrange to interview someone.

Top tips:

- Include the 5 Ws – who, what, where, when, why
- Make sure you include the date, a contact name and daytime and evening phone numbers
- Put important information at the beginning of the release. The less crucial information comes in later paragraphs
- A quote from a branch or group volunteer, case study, or someone involved in the event should be included
- Do you have a person who is happy to talk to the media? One of the best ways to get into the local media is to use a person living with MND, who is happy to talk to the media, as a case study
- You can have as many case studies as you like. In fact, it is often good to have a few of them. Once you have a case study it makes it a lot easier to pitch your story to the media
- Please do let us know if you are aware of people affected by MND who have expressed an interest in supporting our media work. We are always on the look-out for strong case studies to help raise awareness nationally.
- Include our current key messages at the bottom of your press release
- Keep it short and send it by email
- Include a link to your branch/ group website as well as the main website

- Email a copy of your press release to volunteering@mndassociation.org – we might be able to feature your story on our website or social media channels

For some more detailed top tips on writing a press release, download our guide from the Volunteer Zone.

Submitting an event listing

Call the local paper and ask for the email or phone number of the person who deals with event listings then simply send them details of your event. Do give them plenty of notice – this is especially important for weekly papers.

Pictures

Photographs can make all the difference, especially in local papers. A story is much more likely to be printed with a good photo. Try to build up a bank of images by nominating someone at each event to take photos.

Every time you think of a story, consider whether there's a photo opportunity in it too. A good photo opportunity should be original and interesting. Please do not go to the trouble of getting a giant cheque for a presentation – get a bit more creative.



Remember if you are sending in a photo to a newspaper it needs to have a caption (left to right and with correct spellings of full names. Not just Mr. Jones)

Please do not use camera phones as the quality will not be good enough for use by the media.

Maximise your media potential

Don't limit yourself to one local newspaper; send your press release to all newspapers that cover your area. Also remember radio and TV (if the story is big enough).

If you have interest from radio or TV reporters, please do contact the Communications Team to help you make the most of your opportunity. Contact communications@mndassociation.org or 01604 611838.

Branches and groups putting 'working with the media' into practice

The Northamptonshire Branch, with support from national office, arranged a screening of the I Am Breathing film on MND Global Awareness Day in 2013.

There was an opportunity to promote the screening, which was to be held in Corby, Northamptonshire, on BBC Radio Northampton. After a little bit of persuasion Kate Inchley, Branch Chair, attended the studio with our Chief Executive Sally Light and undertook her first ever radio interview. Kate said "I was a little nervous to say the least, but when I got into the studio it was fine. Helen, the presenter, was lovely and put me at ease and the Communications Team at national office had given me lots of support beforehand".

BBC Radio Northampton got in contact again a week later as they were running a feature about how people who use a wheelchair are treated by the public. This time Kate took part by phone, along with Roger who is living with MND. Kate said, "I felt a bit more confident this time, although it was a different experience being on the phone rather than in the studio". Having stepped out of her comfort zone twice, Kate is now much more confident if ever asked to be on the radio again. A relationship has also been built with Radio Northampton which provides a fantastic opportunity for future awareness raising of the branch over the air waves.

The Portsmouth and South East Hants Group wanted to publicise a Walk to D'Feet event and also gain wider awareness of the Association and MND. Ashley Morgan who lives locally was happy to share her story of living with MND for ten years. With some support from the Communications Team, Ashley made the front page of the features section of the newspaper with a three-page story, an online version and even a video.

Thanks to one email, the **Shropshire Branch** was the focus of an hour of inspirational radio, raising awareness countywide of both the branch and Association. Keith Williams is living with MND and invited BBC Radio Shropshire presenter Jim Hawkins to find out more about the disease. Keith doesn't have any speech so recorded his thoughts on his iPad and met Jim at a branch support meeting held in the grounds of Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

Jim recorded his interview with Keith and also spoke to Keith's wife Ann, Jackie Dornford-May (RCDA) and two Association Visitors, Janet Morgan and Gerry Gibbons. Feedback from listeners when it was played out on air two days later included 'inspiring' and 'enlightening'.

When this opportunity for the radio interview arose, the Communications Team helped to maximise the opportunity and briefed our staff and volunteers as well as the radio presenter.