

How to work with the Local Media

Top tips for supporters

Getting started

You may be wondering how to raise awareness of your fundraising event or activity. Well, there are lots of ways we can help you.

Have a chat with the CMT United Kingdom office first of all. They'll have plenty of helpful advice for you, and may be able to help directly with publicity.

We've also produced some press release templates that you can use to contact your local media. Or, if you prefer, you can write your own press release or contact your local newspaper directly.

Here are our top tips to guide you on your way.

What are you talking about?

It might sound obvious but the first thing to think about is what you want your publicity to achieve. Knowing this will help you decide what important points or key messages you want to get across. It will also help you decide when you want to generate publicity.

For example, if you're holding a fundraising ball and want to sell tickets, your press release will need to include clear information on how much they cost and where people can buy them. You'll probably need to start your publicity well ahead of the event to allow enough time to sell places.

Who are you talking to?

You can find out by:

- ☀ Buying the papers – often reporters' names and contact numbers are published inside.
- ☀ Looking at the paper online. Most sites give contact numbers and details of the areas they cover.
- ☀ Listening to your local radio stations to get an idea of the kinds of stories or information they carry. Most will have a website with details on the presenters and how to get in touch.

Is it local?

Again, this may sound obvious, but regional media cover a specific, geographic area and this means that they want stories from their 'patch'. Does your story have a connection to their patch? If it does, make sure you flag it up early in your press release or telephone call. That way the reporter will know that your story could be relevant to them.

What's the story?

Local newspaper and radio stations want to know about what's happening in their area. But they're also very busy and get lots of information. So, to maximise the chances of getting coverage, think about your 'news angle'. Is there anything about your event, or the people taking part, that could capture a reader's attention if they saw it in their local paper? Why is it relevant to them? Why would they want to read on? Try answering the question 'So what?' to help you get to the heart of the story! Also, is there something unusual or quirky about your event or fundraising activity? Does it have a 'st' factor? Is it a first, a last, the biggest, the smallest, the oldest, the youngest etc

And remember, people want to read about people! So if you have an interesting, inspiring or emotional reason for raising money for CMT United Kingdom, make sure you talk about it.

Who, why, what, when, where and how?

Know your facts! Before you call the local reporter or write a press release, make sure you have all the key information at your fingertips.

Putting it into words

If you decide to write a press release, the best approach is to explain what you're doing while keeping it clear, simple and concise.

Some Golden Rules for writing a press release are:

- ⊗ Try to tell your story 'in a nutshell' in the first paragraph or introduction
- ⊗ Answer all the important questions - Who, Why, What, When, Where and How
- ⊗ Keep it short! Try to aim for 25 – 30 words per paragraph and don't use more than two pages.
- ⊗ Write in the third person e.g. A Newcastle nursery nurse will be dyeing her long blond hair bright pink to raise money for CMT United Kingdom.
- ⊗ Include quotes from one or two people involved.
- ⊗ Get the details right! Include full names, ages, and areas people come from. Always check the spelling of any names
- ⊗ Always include your contact number at the end so the reporter can call you if they want to

What's in a name?

You might be surprised to know how important the 'United Kingdom' bit in our name is in terms of fundraising. If you are generating publicity for your event, please make sure that you use CMT United Kingdom in full.

What are you raising money for?

And if a reporter asks you for some information on CMT United Kingdom, you could send them the simple facts below, or include them at the end of your press release under 'Notes to Editor'

"Notes to editors

1. CMT United Kingdom is the national support group, dedicated to improving the lives of people with Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease (CMT). We provide a service of support, advice and information to people affected by the condition, their families, carers and medical professionals.
2. Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease is a hereditary, neurological disorder, affecting the peripheral nerves leading to the arms and legs. This nerve damage leads to wasting of the muscles in the feet, ankles, legs, fingers, hands and arms, leading to problems with mobility, which can be severe, and difficulties with hand use. It is slowly progressive, and it is rare for people affected by CMT to lose the ability to walk completely.
The symptoms and severity even within a single family can be vary greatly. At present, there is no cure or treatment other than careful management of the condition.
It is not life threatening, but in rare cases, can lead to breathing difficulties which require specialised management in order to prevent complications.
3. CMT affects approximately 1 in 2500 of the population, across all ethnic barriers, which makes it the most common inherited neurological condition. It is also known as Hereditary Motor and Sensory Neuropathy, or Peroneal Muscular Atrophy.
4. Research is being undertaken all over Europe and North America to try to a) identify all the genetic components of CMT and ultimately b) find a way to modify these genetic defects in order to provide a viable treatment or even cure for this condition.
5. For further information on Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease, please visit www.cmt.org.uk or phone 01202 432048 between 9.30am and 3pm, Monday and Friday
6. CMT United Kingdom is run almost entirely by volunteers and is reliant upon the generosity of its supporters for all income.

If a picture paints a thousand words...

A good picture opportunity will really help your story. Look at the kind of photographs your local papers use so you get a flavour of the kinds of pictures they might want from you.

If you want to invite a photographer from your local paper to your photocall or event, you could include a 'photocall notice' in your press release. You need to include clear, specific information including Time and Date, Location (be specific and include the postcode if possible) and What the picture will be (it helps if you can describe it eg) and Contact (include a telephone number of someone who will be at the photocall).

If the photographer can't attend, you can take pictures yourself and email them to the paper.

Most good press pictures have the following in common:

- ☀ They tell the story without words
- ☀ They capture your attention
- ☀ They are animated
- ☀ They are well composed
This means that they are generally 'tight' shots, where the people involved are all in the frame, all looking in the same direction, etc.