

## **LAM ACTION MEDIA GUIDE**

Give the media what they want and the chances are your story will be used and your message carried straight to the people you want to reach.

Local newspapers and radio stations love to feature fun and quirky stories as well as serious health issues, especially those affecting local people, so make sure they know what you're doing. The best way to do this is by sending a press release – a short, snappy outline of what is happening – at least one week before your activity.

To create a successful news release, make sure the following key questions are all answered in the piece:

### **WHO?**

The best stories are always about people. Events happen – but they always involve people. A press release about a charity bike ride to raise funds, for example, should focus firmly on the people involved. Don't omit the basic details: how many miles, people, kids, etc, will be on the ride.

When giving the media details of someone, always try to provide a word portrait of that person, first and surname, age, occupation and where they live. For example: "LAM patient and mother of three Mrs Olivia Jones, aged 31, of Anytown, Lancs, said: ".....' Sending a picture of Mrs Jones sat on her sofa with her three children will help increase the chances of the story being published.

Make sure you say who the release is from, and, vitally, a contact telephone number so they can get hold of you. Also LAM Action's Just Giving website details; <http://www.justgiving.com/lamaction/donate> and address for donations: LAM Action Office, Division of Respiratory Medicine, Clinical Sciences Building, City Hospital, Nottingham NG5 1PB. Tel: 0115 8404773.

## **WHAT?**

Be exact about what it is you are trying to tell the journalist. Be brief but clear, ensuring to give a full explanation of the event and its purpose.

## **WHEN?**

Give full details of the date and time of the event. Ensure your release gives plenty of notice.

## **WHERE?**

As above, but give the location. Local papers and radio stations can be very parochial, so try to home in with a local angle for each particular outlet. You may live in one paper's area but the event you are organising is in another's – send the release to both as they will both be interested in it. Don't forget the regional morning or evening papers either as they have large news coverage areas, as do radio and TV.

Also consider whether the event may have an interest for the national press. Is there a twist to the story which will attract them?

## **WHY?**

What is the event about and why are you holding it? Is it to raise funds, awareness, encourage members to join a campaign? Be clear in your mind of the end result you want the story to achieve.

## **GENERAL**

Be painstaking about spelling, punctuation and grammar and take care to proof read the final document before sending it out. A second pair of eyes is

always a good idea. Remember you are now writing for professional journalists, and accuracy helps you gain respect and be taken seriously.

Make liberal use of quotes from the people the event is about. Strong quotes direct from the mouth of a LAM patient will greatly emphasise important points; eg: Mrs Olivia Jones of Anytown, Lancs, said: “This is a devastating disease that is very rare and poorly understood by the public and medical profession.

“We want to raise awareness of the need for people to sign up to the NHS Organ Donor Register. Please support our campaign, etc, etc.....”

This sentence has far more weight, because it is Mrs Jones saying it. It makes her an absolute expert on the subject and therefore what she says is to be taken notice of.

Remember to be succinct. Ideally a news release should be no more than one side of A4 (about 400 words). News editors have the attention span of a goldfish!

## **WHO TO SEND IT TO**

Generally, all news releases should be aimed at the News Editor – the senior journalist in charge of the team of reporters – who will look at the story and decide whether he wants it to be carried in the paper or not. This is where brevity and a catchy first paragraph pays off, as he has just a few seconds to absorb the essence of the story and decide whether or not he is going to assign a reporter to either rewrite it for use, or follow it up via the contact number you have provided.

There may be more local papers in your area than you think. Take a look along the shelves of your local newsagent to see the titles selling in your area, and buy a copy of each. A quick flick through will reveal the kind of stories they are interested in and will also provide contact details for the editorial

departments. There may also be a local reporter resident in a district office in your town or suburb.

A call to the paper's news desk or health correspondent to introduce yourself and to get a name of a reporter who would be interested in receiving your releases can pay dividends.

Make sure you send out your release well in advance of the date of your event – at least one week before. Give the release a couple of days to be absorbed by the news team and then make a phone call to the newsdesk to check if they have received it and whether they are interested in covering it. These calls are absolutely vital and will greatly increase the chance of coverage.

Now sit back and wait for the story to appear!