

# Press Advice

Taking your story to the papers can seem daunting, but it's a great way to share your experience with sarcoma, raise much needed awareness about this cancer, or encourage people to donate to your fundraiser.

Publishing your story is easier than you think. We've broken it down into manageable sections which you can use to help you develop your story and get it to the right people. There is also a sample press release template you can use on our website:

<https://sarcoma.org.uk/press-release-template-fundraising-eventsbit>

## Getting Started

Local newspapers can often be read more widely than national dailies. They also usually have a more interactive and local readership. If your story gets good pick up in local press it can sometimes be sold on to national press. So, a good place to start when you want to talk about your experience with sarcoma is often with your local journalists.

Most local papers will have their contact details in the physical copies and also on their websites. Sometimes lots of local publications will be managed and printed by a wider media group. If this is the case, you will be able to use these contact details to inform more than one paper at once. There's more further down about how to find and contact papers.

## Your Story

It's important to consider the following three points when thinking about what you want your story to look like once it's in the paper:

- What do I want to achieve by telling my story – eg raising awareness, advertising my fundraising event,
- What is my key message – eg “sarcoma research needs more funding”, “don't be afraid to go to the doctor”, “I'm raising this in memory of my dad”
- How much am I comfortable sharing/the people involved in my story

Once you have these key points in mind you can start to build your story. When doing this it's important to answer the following questions.

**WHO:** who are the key players – just you, your family, your partner, your nurses etc. Also, who does your news affect?

**WHAT:** What is new? - A fundraising event, new accomplishments post treatment

**WHEN:** When did this all happen, when did the story start and what is happening now?

**WHERE:** Where is this happening? In your town, city, specific location

**WHY:** Why are you talking about this and why now? What is your goal? What action do you want to see from others?

## Pro Tip:

- Include stats and figures about sarcoma as part of your story – you can find these and our key messages on our website:

<https://sarcoma.org.uk/news-events/press-centre/sarcoma-uks-key-messages>

## Communicating your story

If you want to write a press release, following the above pointers and keeping your story to 400 words or less is recommended. Adding a short and informative title will help your release stand out. Remember, this is just to get your story out there – journalists who are interested will often contact you for more details.

If you don't want to write your story down, you might find it helpful to bullet point answers to the above questions for when you're speaking to journalists or being interviewed.

## Contacting journalists

Once you have your press release ready, it's time to start sending it out. You can find the contact details of most publications on their website. Usually this will be a news desk email address (a group email which many reports will have access to stories from). This will usually be clearly marked in the 'Contact Us' section of their site.

Build a list of email addresses to send your press release too. A few from your local area will be enough, aim for between 5 – 10. Once you're ready, email your press release in the body of an email, with notes to the editors and your contact details at the bottom. Keep all addresses in the BCC section.

You can also phone news desks/journalists – contact details usually available in the same place – to let them know about your story. However, as they are normally busy and may prefer to see something written down. If this is the case, send them a few bullet points covering the points above and state that you are available for interview.

## When to send your release

When you send your release matters. If you are using it to advertise a certain event, send it no more than 5 working days in advance. This keeps things fresh and current whilst still giving the reporters time to work with you.

## Thinking about images

It helps if you can send a relevant image or photo along with your press release. If you're sending a press release talking about an event after it's happened, a clear image of the main people involved is advantageous, or if the release is being sent prior to the event such as a race, an image of you in your running gear is a good start. Make sure the people in the photos being sent are happy for this to happen.

# After Your Press Release

I didn't hear anything -

It might be worth contacting a couple of papers, by email or phone, to ask if they received your release and whether they would be interested in talking to you about it.

Don't lose hope, often if a journalist can come back to a release at a later date to cover a story once there is space in the paper/the timing is appropriate.

I've been contacted by a journalist but I no longer want to continue -

If this is the case, calmly explain to who you're working with that the timing is no longer appropriate and that you would appreciate that this story isn't published yet.

If you require any support or advice with this, you can contact the Communications Team at Sarcoma UK for assistance.

My story is going to be published -

Great! Well done, please send us an update, we'd love to hear about it.

My story has been published and I'm receiving negative feedback -

Unfortunately, from time to time, people leave negative comments on stories that are public. It's important to remember that whilst everyone is entitled to an opinion, their opinions are based on a few hundred words of an article, and therefore, not qualified to talk about your particular circumstances. Have confidence that by being brave and sharing your story, you will have helped raise awareness of sarcoma and made a positive impact to your community.

If you require any support you can contact our Support Line for advice and reassurance.

## Key Contacts

If you have any questions about talking to the media, we're here to help. You can contact us:

### **Communications Team - Sarcoma UK**

communications@sarcoma.org.uk

### **Communications Officer**

catherine.bennett@sarcoma.org.uk

### **Support Line**

Phone: 0808 801 0401

Email: supportline@sarcoma.org.uk

Opening hours, Monday to Friday 10am - 3pm.