

Raising awareness of what you do

Letting people know what you do locally

This information sheet looks at how you can use resources such as websites, social media and newsletters to reach out to your local audiences and let people know what you are doing. It also covers ideas on what else you can do to raise awareness such as giving talks and getting involved in MND Awareness Month.

Website

As more and more people are using the internet for their personal research into MND and the support that is available we are actively working to increase the online presence of our branches and groups.

Branch and group websites are a very useful resource for raising your profile and keeping people informed of the support you provide. Websites enable you to reach people at any time of the day and give you the chance to publicise your branch or group to a wide audience, most of who will have specifically searched for local information.

Ideally, your website should be treated in a similar way to your newsletter in that it should provide people with MND, their carers and families with additional local information that would not necessarily be available on our main website. This avoids duplication of information and effort, but you must ensure your website signposts visitors to our main website for the most up-to-date information on MND, care services, campaigning and research.

For more information about the options available to you when considering an online presence download our guide from the Volunteer Zone.

Social media account

Social media is an excellent way of keeping people up to date with your news, events and activities. Far from just being a way for friends to communicate and share photos, social media can provide us with a tool for communicating with those with an interest in us.

You can use social media to raise the profile of your branch or group and to raise awareness of the events and activities you are organising locally. For those of you without your own website, it provides an opportunity to have a presence on the World Wide Web, and for those of you with your own website, it is an additional web presence, potentially reaching a different audience.

Many branches and groups currently have a presence on Facebook and/or Twitter.

Sarah Milner, Branch Secretary of the Merseyside Branch says: "Even if you are not interested in social media for yourself, if you do it for your branch or group and promote all your events and meetings, you will be amazed at the strength of Twitter and Facebook. It really works.

"Just some of the advantages to us have been photographers offering to cover events for free, very generous raffle and auction prizes, lots of new volunteers and a new supply of people willing to come along to a sponsored walk or tea party etc."

More detailed guidance on the use of social media to promote your branch or group can be found on the Volunteer Zone.

Newsletter

Local newsletters are an excellent way of raising awareness of both MND and the work of your branch/ group. They keep your members and supporters informed about your activities and are particularly useful for keeping in touch with people who, for whatever reason, cannot get along to meetings.

Who can you send it to?

- Your branch/ group membership (all those who are listed on your branch/group listing which is available via the Information Exchange)
- Hospices and day care centres
- MPs and the Mayor
- Libraries
- Other local charitable organisations e.g. Rotary Club and Carer's groups
- Individuals/ companies who have supported your branch/ group
- MND Care Centre Co-ordinator
- Health and social care professionals

Please do also send a copy to the Volunteering Team and your Area Support Coordinator (ASC). We like to hear about the different events and activities that you do and often pick out ideas and good practice from branch/ group newsletters which we can share with other branches and groups.

Your newsletter should reflect both local and national issues. Each issue – whether monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly, should include items such as:

- Branch/group news and reports of recent events, including acknowledgement of monies raised and support given
- Wider Association news/updates – include articles from *The News* which you feel are relevant
- Local news/updates of interest to people living with MND
- 'What's on' diary of future events – include where they can get further details
- How to get involved – i.e. help out at an event or join the committee
- Contact details for the branch/ group committee members, regional staff.

Always ensure you include the deadline for articles for the next issue and encourage your members to send in their stories and information that they think might be of interest. To help reduce printing/ postage costs, send it by email to those that you can.

If you are a Newsletter Editor and would like more detailed information, download our Newsletter Guidelines from the Volunteer Zone.

Presentations

You may be called upon to give a talk about MND and the work of the Association by a local community group or business group who may be interested in supporting a local charity. Or you may be asked to say a few words as part of a cheque presentation where it's important to leave the donors feeling that they have made a difference.

If you are planning to give a talk, consider taking a person living with MND with you to talk about their own experiences. This can be very powerful for the audience.

Presentations are an excellent way of building up relationships with key groups. You can send newsletters to the audience afterwards and invite them to future events.

Knowing your audience:

Try and get a feel for the type of audience you are talking to. You need to tell the audience how important the Association is, what it does to help people living with MND and how the money is spent. It is a good idea to include some information in your talk about different ways the audience can get involved e.g. fundraising, volunteering, becoming a member/ Friend.

Handouts:

It is often useful to provide copies of your presentation. This can be done by providing printed copies at the event, or by emailing a copy of the presentation following the event. If you have a branch/ group leaflet, these could be given out to the audience, so they leave with your contact details.

Use the Association's key messages to build up your presentation. A template presentation can be downloaded from the Volunteer Zone. You can adapt the presentation to suit your needs and your audience. Feel free to personalise it and talk about your own experiences and examples. Include information about your website/ social media accounts at the end so that the audience can keep in touch with what you are doing.

This template will be regularly updated to ensure the information and statistics are accurate. Please therefore check that you are using the most recent template each time you deliver a presentation.

Branch/ group annual programme/ events diary

With many of you planning your year's meetings and events well in advance, why not create a handy card or small leaflet containing the details of your events as well as the main contact numbers for contacts within the branch, and the regional care development adviser.

These can be distributed to your members. You could also send out meeting reminders closer to particular dates and events. Some branches and groups use email or social media to do this.

MND Awareness Month

Each year throughout the month of June, we have our Awareness Month in which we run a major awareness campaign. The month also encompasses Volunteers' Week (1-7 June) and carer's week (2nd week in June, running Monday to Sunday).

The theme of the campaign may help you when planning your events and activities for June. Details of our Awareness Month campaign will be made available through The News.