

# Publicity for your group



There are various ways you might want to consider spreading information about your group and what you do. Whatever you do, try and target your information to where affected families are most likely to see it. As a general rule - keep it simple, and always double check the details.

## Posters

Posters are a good way of publicising the group and raising awareness of the condition. They can also be used for advertising specific events. Do not put too much information on a poster - keep it simple. Remember to include all vital information: who the event is for, date, time, place, any cost, further information from etc.

Possible locations for posters include:

- clinics
- child development centres
- libraries

It may be a good idea to have a supply of colour poster blanks which you can add details of events to by writing on them or putting them through a photocopier.

## *Poster example*

### **Do you have a child with Any Syndrome?**

The Any Syndrome Support Group offers a friendly listening ear and a chance to meet other families.

Contact

Mary Jones

Tel: 01333 123456

mary.jones@email.com

[www.anysyndromesupport.org](http://www.anysyndromesupport.org)

**contact** a family

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Freephone Helpline 0808 808 3555 (Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm) Textphone 0808 808 3556

## **Newsletters**

Your group may already have a newsletter to keep members in touch with what is happening. Other organisations and professionals may also like to receive the newsletter and this is a useful way to publicise your group. It is also an effective way of publicising details of any research currently underway. For more details see the Contact a Family Group Action Pack guide *Newsletters*.

## **Leaflets**

Leaflets have many purposes but essentially they tell people about your group and the condition which concerns you. A leaflet should be simple and accurate. For more information about producing a publicity leaflet see the Contact a Family groups Action Pack guide *Leaflets*.

## **Photographs**

Photographs are one of the most effective means of bringing the group and the condition you cover into the public eye. They can be used to enhance:

- posters
- leaflets
- newsletters
- illustrations for talks
- displays

Whenever your group has an activity photographs can be taken. Remember every one in the shot must give their permission for the photograph to be used. Your group can then build up a library of photographs for publicity use. Try to use positive images wherever possible.

## **Displays**

At some stage, there may be an opportunity for your group to have a display at a conference or similar event. It is good forward planning to have a display about your group which can be used either as the main attraction or as an informative backdrop. You do not need expensive, purpose built display stands - cork tiles stuck to thin plywood will do just as well. Make sure the boards are not too heavy or awkward to carry and that they will fit into the boot of a standard car. Keep text short, simple and large and put it on coloured paper for added effect. Ask your medical adviser to draw up a short simple text about the condition for use on the display. Use photographs and artwork (possibly drawn by your member's children).

## Public speaking

The group may be asked to give a talk to professionals or other organisations. It may be useful to have members in a number of areas of the country who can give talks to groups such as Rotary Clubs and Women's Institutes. This may help with fundraising. Local Councils for Voluntary Service should have a list of organisations and their contacts.

Before you start preparing a talk find out from the organisers:

- how long the talk is scheduled to last
- how big the audience will be
- if there will be facilities such as slide projectors
- if there will be a question and answer session afterwards
- exactly what they would like you to speak on: the group in general or a particular aspect of the group's activities

The audience may have a particular interest in the group but you need to be clear about what you say. Avoid jargon, don't assume your audience has knowledge about the condition and keep your sentences short.

Use any or all of the following to illustrate your talk:

- slides
- posters
- displays
- question & answer sessions
- group discussions & workshops

Make sure your talk has an introduction a middle and a summary. Use humour and smile when appropriate. Think of questions that you can ask the audience such as: 'Were there any children with disabilities at your school? How were they treated?' Asking questions keeps your audience involved and interested.

When you have rehearsed and timed your talk, put the main headings and associated keywords on a series of post cards. This not only ensures that you will not forget any parts but also does not allow you to slip into reading a prepared speech word for word: this can be very tedious to listen to. Rehearse the talk yet again!

## **Remember**

- Arrive for the talk with plenty of time to spare
- Make sure there is a glass of water
- Check the microphone and other technical equipment
- Speak clearly and project your voice
- Use pauses for effect - don't rush
- Don't turn away from the audience or speak to the floor
- Be natural and keep eye contact with the audience
- Keep an eye on the clock
- Do not go over the allotted time
- If you 'dry-up', pause confidently, take a sip of water and repeat the last phrase
- Enjoy yourself!

## **Magazines, journals and newspapers**

Tabloid newspapers and their magazine equivalents tend to go for the interest story format with headlines such as 'My daughter is the only one in the UK with Any Syndrome'. The bulk of the story line will be about the little girl and her family. These stories are usually written internally and can be in an advanced stage of preparation before your group finds out. It can be difficult to ensure accuracy and the inclusion of your group details.

Broadsheet newspapers and the more serious magazines will give prominence to research findings such as 'One in every 30,000 children is thought to have mild Any Syndrome'. The text will cover the background and implications of the research with a short quote from a family. This type of article is often submitted by a freelance journalist who will find out if there is a support network for the condition covered. You are more likely to be able to work with these journalists to achieve accuracy and correct details of your group.

For more information about interviews with journalists see the Contact a Family Group Action Pack guide *Speaking to the media*.

## **The press release**

One of the best and easiest ways to alert the media about specific events such as by issuing a press release. You may want to do this to publicise an awareness week, new medical information or a special event. Information about issuing press releases is available in the Contact a Family Group Action Pack guide *Writing a press release*.

## Using radio/television

Local stations are often interested in national group events in their area for inclusion in features such as 'What's On' slots, news bulletins, longer features or as part of a social action/community programme.

If you are asked to take part in an interview, think about the following:

- Consider what message you want to get across to the listening public.
- Try to brief the interviewer first. They should at least know your name, the name of your group and the main information you want to get across.
- Be ready with some facts about the group and your topic but bear in mind that most interviews are very short - get your key information in early.

National radio and television include more factual programmes and important news interest stories.

- Try to ensure that details of your group are given at the end of a programme.
- Unless you are fully prepared for it, avoid your telephone number being given at the end of the programme (your phone line could be completely blocked with calls - some made in the middle of the night!)
- Ask for a stamped addressed envelope from people requesting information.

For further guidance on TV and radio interviews see the Contact a Family Group Action Pack guide *Speaking to the media*.

## Group website

One of the most efficient ways of informing as many people as possible of the existence of your group is via the Internet. Many groups have developed excellent websites which have put them in touch with families. For more information about using the internet see the Contact a Family Group Action Pack guide *Websites*.

## A note of caution

When looking for publicity for the group, remember that the media is looking for a 'story'. The child in their story is your child and you are emotionally involved with your child and the situation affecting your family. If you speak to a reporter make sure that they understand that you expect to receive a copy of the story they write to check its accuracy. In some cases reporters have been over imaginative in fleshing out details. If you feel that your story will not be told accurately withdraw permission for its use. Many national newspapers reproduce reports first seen in local papers. Do think carefully whether an article suitable for a local paper will transfer well to a national paper

## Raising awareness checklist

- Are your group's leaflets up to date?
  - is the medical text of your leaflets checked regularly?
  - do you have a medical adviser?
  - is the text parent friendly?
- Do your leaflets state clearly:
  - the name of the group?
  - the aim of the group and its activities?
  - a contact name, address and telephone number?
- Do you have or are you planning leaflets for:
  - teachers & social workers?
  - paediatricians & GPs?
- Check your website
  - make sure it has all possible up to date facts
  - information should reflect exactly the information in your press releases and interviews
  - do not forget to ensure that your current event is mentioned; a common fault is to carry details of out of date events
- Are you looking for funding rather than bearing the costs yourself?
  - BBC Children in Need
  - Community Fund
  - grant making trusts
  - pharmaceutical companies
- Are you planning the most cost efficient method of distribution?
  - articles in professional journals
  - inserts in professional journals
  - using your members to distribute literature to the professionals they meet

This guide is part of the Contact a Family Group Action Pack. For more information please visit [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk) or telephone 020 7608 8700.

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