

NEWS RELEASE POLICY

The aim of this policy is to set out guidance on news release including:

- the quality and content expected in every news release.
- how the use of news release helps to further ME CIC's objectives.
- understanding and addressing risks.
- requirements around the conduct of trustees, staff and volunteers.
- who needs to be involved if things go wrong.

A General

The purpose of this policy is to set out what is expected from our staff, directors and volunteers when writing and issuing a news release. It is important to remember that we are all ambassadors for ME CIC and everything published can be seen by anyone and everyone.

B The scope of this policy

This policy deals with the use of all forms of news release, including all printed and online content and when asked for a comment by any journalist or media representative.

It applies to the use of a news release, both in your role as staff/volunteer and in private comments relating to ME CIC. Further, it applies regardless of whether the news release is made using ME CIC IT equipment or equipment belonging to individuals.

Any breach of this policy will be dealt with as part of the disciplinary policy and individuals may be asked to withdraw release or comments which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Any breach deemed to pose a safeguarding risk will be immediately withdrawn.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Social Media policy. This policy links to all other policies, therefore, any news release should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies such as equal opportunities, data protection etc.

C Why a policy is needed

ME CIC recognises that the Internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics relevant to our business using a wide variety of media, such as mediums identified above.

This policy aims to protect individuals and ME CIC and to encourage everyone to take responsibility for what you write and exercise good judgment.

Inappropriate use of a news release can pose risks to our reputation, confidential and proprietary information and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. To minimise these risks, to avoid loss of work time and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, we expect everyone to adhere to this policy.

D How to write a news release

1. Keep it brief

Aim for a maximum of two pages, but if you can keep your news release to one page, all the better. Busy editors/journalists do not have the time (or inclination) to work their way through page after page of information for PR. Keep your language simple, concise and to the point - avoid jargon at all costs.

2. Use attention-grabbing headlines

Not only should your 'header' sum up the story, it should also engage and command interest, otherwise your release could get ignored or binned. Don't try to be overly cryptic or 'amusing' in your headline - it can backfire.

3. Include a release date

You need a date, otherwise a journalist/editor will have no idea how old or new the story is. If, for any reason, you don't want your news revealed until a specific time, include an 'embargoed until' date. Journalists are usually happy to observe embargoes.

4. Convey the key facts in your first paragraph

Use 100 words maximum to explain who you are, what you're announcing, where it is taking place, when it's happening, possibly why and how. Answering each of these questions enables you to communicate the story's key facts. Treat this part as if the person is unlikely to read past it.

5. Expand the story - but keep it lean

Do not add information simply for the sake of it. Each subsequent paragraph should add colour and interest to the story, which means avoiding unnecessary waffle. When a reader gets to the end of your news release, every important question about the story should have been answered.

6. Include some good quotes

Comment from you and/or a representative of your business and the story's other main players (possibly a customer) make writing the story much easier for the journalist. Make sure your quotes are interesting and informative - not simply 'soft soap' about how great your business is. Any self-respecting journalist/editor will 'red pen' through such obvious 'puff'.

7. Add a profile or backgrounder and contacts

'Note to editor' should be at the end and include the following key factors, delete for Wight Sense/Sight for Wight as necessary:

- Dress for Less is the trading name of Millbrooke Enterprises, a Community Interest Company which provides an income source for Sight for Wight, a registered charity. (Isle of Wight Society for the Blind Known as Sight for Wight - Registered Charity Number 1149415, Company Limited by Guarantee Number 6240404.)
- Sight for Wight supports and represents 732 members, providing help, activities and peer-to-peer support to enable people to live safe, independent and confident lives. Sight for Wight relies entirely on fundraising, donations and the gift of time from our volunteers.
- Sight for Wight is the oldest working Isle of Wight Charity established in 1865 and has a charity centre at Millbrooke House, 137 Carisbrooke Road, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1DD.
- Dress for Less employs 2 part-time staff and has 26 volunteers who contribute over 250 hours per month – (check this number for latest).
- All contact should be made via Charity Head office at ceo@iwsb.org.uk phone 01983 522205 www.sightforwight.org.uk/dress-for-less

8. Include a photograph

The image should illustrate the story. It must be a high quality, high-resolution (i.e. 300 dpi) digital image saved in JPEG format. Make it visually interesting and always add an **IMAGE DESCRIPTION**. Put pictures at the end, not within the article or provide a link.

9. Eradicate spelling and grammatical mistakes

Spell-check and grammar-check your news release, and always have a second pair of eyes to confirm its accuracy.

10. Email your release to targeted contacts

Email is the most convenient way for journalists/editors to receive news releases. Paste your copy into the body of the email as plain text, rather than sending it as an attachment.

11. Finally the content

First and foremost, all news release should be used to promote ME CIC objectives, raise awareness of our business and allow information to be shared to aid fundraising.

E Guidance of what to write for news release.

1. What to write - the Do's

- The CEO will oversee all news release and sign them off before they are released.
- News release should be timed in advance of events to allow good notice to potential visitors.
- Always pause and think when completing a news release, and always try to consider adding impact, tell a story and find a hero that your audience can connect with. Maybe they're a member who has benefitted from donations, or maybe it's the donor themselves?
- Be accessible to our members, use voiceover software (text to speech), use large font, clear colours abiding by the Sight for Wight branding and ensuring any contrast used complies with Equality Act requirements.
- Say thank you as often as you can, without donors and volunteers we would not exist.
- All news release items must be approved by the CEO.

2. The specific don'ts and must do's

- Staff should not post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them in the media.
- If staff are sharing information about supporters, service users or third-party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from ME CIC.
- Always check facts. Staff should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification; for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.
- Be honest; say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.
- Never put yourself in any personal danger, or that of others, to gather materials; for example, a video of a stunt.
- Never encourage anyone to break the law to supply material, such as using unauthorised photo / video footage. All relevant rights for usage must be obtained before publishing material.
- ME CIC is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. No views should be expressed on any policies without prior written consent from the CEO.
- If a complaint is made on ME CIC's media, staff should refer to the Written Complaints policy and refer to the appropriate person.
- In summary, take responsibility for what you write, exercising good judgement and common sense. You are personally responsible for what they communicate in media as part of your role or on personal sites. Remember that what you publish could be read by the masses, colleagues, volunteers, future employers and social acquaintances.

F Fundraising

- When preparing a fundraising news release, do not just ask, **give**, by making the media follow these guidelines:
 - Show our charity's impact. Tell a story and find a hero that your audience can connect with. Maybe they are a member who has benefitted from donations, or maybe it's the donor themselves?
 - What are you fundraising for? A new member of staff? New equipment? To keep an important service running? Share your fundraising goal with your audience and say where they can follow the project if this is possible. This will inspire your followers to help you achieve your goal as well as highlight the impact their donations have had.
 - Without dedicated and generous supporters, many charities would struggle to provide a good service to those that need it. Always remember to thank your followers for everything they do to support your work.
 - Always add a payment link created by the Finance Officer/CEO.

G Staying safe - further guidelines and definitions

Libel

Libel is when a false written statement, that is damaging to a person's reputation, is published online or in print. Whether staff are posting content in the media as part of their job or in a personal capacity, they should not bring ME CIC into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that all staff abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

Confidentiality

Any communications that staff make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that ME CIC is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.

Discrimination and harassment

Staff should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official ME CIC media channel or a personal account. For example:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief.
- using social media to bully another individual.
- posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

Lobbying Act

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

Charities which spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, during the regulated period, need to register with the Electoral Commission. To abide by the Lobbying Act, campaigning activities in the media must not be seen as intending to influence people's voting choice. During these periods, all campaigning activity will be reviewed by the CEO.

Under 18s and vulnerable people

Young and vulnerable people face risks when using social networking sites. They may be at risk of being bullied, publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or from becoming targets for online grooming.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, staff should ensure the online relationship with ME CIC follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Staff should ensure that young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online and given guidance on security/privacy settings as necessary. Staff should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and ME CIC content and other content is appropriate for them. Please refer to our ME CIC Safeguarding Policy.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of ME CIC is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated

seriously and with respect. For staff, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to your contract of employment which details our disciplinary procedures. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the CEO.

Public Interest Disclosure

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member releases information through ME CIC's social media channels that is considered to be in the interest of the public, ME CIC's Whistleblowing Policy must be initiated before any further action is taken.

This policy will be reviewed annually or after any major incident.

Sue Bungey

Chair of Directors

Dated June 2026