# LM24 participants - media tips

Hello #TeamSamaritans runners,

Many congratulations on getting a place for the 2024 TCS London Marathon! Thank you so much for helping to raise vital funds for Samaritans in the process and we want to wish you the best of luck.

To help make the most of your incredible challenge, we’ve put together some useful tips to help you should you want to promote your journey in your local media.  

Getting media interest can be very hit and miss, and while there is no guaranteed impact, it is worth considering as it can boost your fundraising – while also raising awareness of the support Samaritans provide.

We know from [research](https://media.samaritans.org/documents/Media_Guidelines_FINAL.pdf) that when press publish stories of hope and recovery that it does encourage people who are struggling to reach out and get help. It can also encourage people to donate and or consider signing up to volunteer. As such, it’s a powerful way of helping others.  

**Please remember** – we’re more than happy to help support you with anything media-related – you’re welcome to contact us on [press@samaritans.org](mailto:press@samaritans.org)     

It’s also worth noting that you don’t *have* to consider using the media – anything relating to Samaritans can be extremely sensitive and personal - there’s no pressure or expectation to do anything you don’t want to do.

Sharing what might be your most difficult and sensitive experiences could activate emotions or take you back to a difficult time in your life and you should prepare for that possibility. It’s a good idea to let someone close know if/when you’re doing any media so you can discuss or debrief with them afterwards.

As we routinely work with national media outlets and are actively promoting our 2024 TCS London Marathon campaign, these tips are predominantly for **regional media** where you live (i.e. your local newspaper and radio stations e.g. BBC Radio Manchester or the Bristol Post).   
   
If we can help, please do get in touch,

Rebecca & Joe

Samaritans Press Office

**General tips on sharing your story with the media:**

* Remember that nobody knows your story better than you – you’re the expert and you can share as much or as little as you want.
* Sharing your powerful experiences and insights can have a big impact on inspiring and motivating the public to support you.
* However, you don’t have to share everything to achieve this – or ever have to answer any question you’re uncomfortable with – especially if it’s too personal or sensitive – ‘*I’d rather not go into* *that’* is fine.
* Samaritans [Media Guidelines](https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/media-guidelines/) provide guidance and advice on the language to use when talking about suicide to ensure safe and responsible reporting on the topic.  For example, research shows it’s best to avoid the phrase ‘committed’ suicide and instead use the phrase ‘died by suicide’ or ‘took their own life’. It’s also important that we avoid discussing any method or location when talking about suicide as it can impact vulnerable readers. For more information and guidance view our [Media Guidelines](https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/media-guidelines/) here.
* If you know there are topics or people you don’t want to mention, or can’t, you should let the journalist know in advance.
* If you’re asked anything you don’t know the answer to, it’s fine to say ‘*I’m not sure’* or ‘*that’s not something I can comment on’ –* please don’t guess or speculate.

**Tips on contacting your local media:** 

* It’s best to have a clear idea of what you want the media to help you with beforehand–for example to help spread the word you are running the TCS London Marathon next year and to encourage people to donate.
* Journalists receive a high volume of emails so in any approach start with the most important, eye-catching info. An initial email to a journalist trying to attract their interest should be approximately four sentences – you can give them more information later if they are interested.
* If you don't want to write a formal press release and would prefer to just send a more conversational email, you could say something like;

*Hello,*    
*In three weeks’ time I will be running the London Marathon for Samaritans – a charity that helped me turn my life around when I was at my lowest.*   
*I’m running to thank the volunteers that were there for me in the middle of the night when I couldn’t speak to anyone else.*

*This will be my first marathon – something I never thought I’d be able to do.*

*I’m trying to raise as much money as I can and wanted to see if you might be interested in organising a feature?*

*I’m happy to be interviewed - press release and photos attached – my fundraising page is here.*

*Looking forward to hearing from you,*   
*Kind regards,*

*Your name*

* Journalists’ details should be available on the local newspaper or radio outlets’ website, but we can help provide these too. It’s always worth including their general email address within the email too in case the journalist is out of the office or has left.
* Timing is key, so it’s best to think about when you contact them – if you know they go to print on Thursday, Friday-Tuesday are probably best as they’re likely to be less busy then.
* Think about who you contact – local news reporters, community reporters and lifestyle/real life reporters are most likely to be interested (whereas travel, business correspondents etc won’t be).

**Tips on drafting a press release:**

The templates we’ve provided are intended to be useful guides – but you’re welcome to adapt yours as everyone’s experiences will vary.

**Anything** you put in a press release will be considered as copy/quotes that can be used – so don’t include any information you wouldn’t want to see appear in print. As a rough guide, the main text of your release should be approximately 400-450 words.

Your release might be enough for a journalist to write their story, and they could do without letting you know or responding – however, they will most likely reply to get more info.

**Key things to consider:**

* **What** are the key things you want the release to do?   
  i.e. it could be letting people know you’re running the 2024 London Marathon for Samaritans or promoting a particular fundraiser
* **Who** are you? People will want to know about you and your connections to Samaritans – this will help to motivate and inspire people into supporting *you*.

Please only share information you’re comfortable with – don’t feel like you have to overshare or answer anything you’re not happy with.

Be mindful that anyone in your life – friends, family, colleagues may see, read, or hear any features or interviews that are publicly available.    
If the article is going online, it’s likely to be out there forever – some news outlets run comment sections beneath articles which can draw both positive and negative reactions, which can be upsetting. We encourage outlets to moderate these, or turn them off if they can’t, but this won’t always be the case.

* **Why** are you contacting media *now*?   
  Do you have a relevant event coming up, or an awareness day or other timely moment?

I.e. World Suicide Prevention Day (10th Sept) or a week or so before the marathon (21st April)   
Media outlets always need a reason, or ‘hook’.

* **When –** what details do people need to know?    
  Do always include a link to your fundraising page – as well as dates/times/locations for any upcoming fundraising events.
* **Which** media are you approaching?

As we routinely work with national media outlets, we’d suggest approaching the local media in your area.   
Only approach TV and radio outlets if you feel comfortable undertaking broadcast interviews. If you’d prefer not to be pictured, it might be better to consider radio interviews.  

**Tips on photos:** 

* For any print and online features (newspapers, and especially magazines) need a small handful of good quality images of you to accompany the article.
* It’s likely they will want a mixture of running photos – for example you in your Samaritans running vest alongside some more casual images of you. Include at least one photo of you in your Samaritans top (if possible)
* They may request images of you with anyone else who features in your story
* All photos need to be shared in their highest resolution (and size) as possible and preferably in landscape.

**Tips on media interviews:** 

* When arranging an interview, it’s best to arrange for a time that suits you. It’s worth checking to see whether the interview is live or pre-recorded. If there’s an opportunity to do a pre-recorded interview, this might be preferable for your first broadcast interview as it can take the pressure off slightly.
* Most interviews are conducted remotely over zoom/teams, or over the phone. If remote, consider arranging it for when you’ll be somewhere comfortable, can talk freely and not in a rush – ideally at home. Consider any background noise and how to limit this.
* If in person, it’s up to the journalist/crew to come to you, or find another mutually convenient location.
* **If TV** – more likely to be in person and they’ll want a visual background and need to capture additional footage other than you talking. Think about what you’ll be wearing.

Approximate filming time an hour to 90 minutes for a 3-5 minute package.

* **If radio**, they might invite you into a studio, which you’re welcome to do if interested and comfortable, however over the phone is more than fine and will help save time.
* You can request that a radio interview is done pre-recorded rather than live, which can be more comfortable and gives you more control as you can re-start answering any questions if you trip up.

Approx interview time – 5 minutes if live, 10-15 minutes if pre-recorded.

* Broadcast interviews can be fairly short so prepare in advance the key points you want to get across, what you are doing and why, and how people can support you.
* **If newspaper/magazine** – they may share the copy with you to approve or read it back to you over the phone – it’s always a good idea to do this so you can see what the article will be like. You can ask for changes to be made if necessary, however unless it’s factually inaccurate, journalists are unlikely to make changes. Editorial control lies with the journalist which is why it's important to only share what you feel comfortable sharing.

**Press Messages**

**Below are some simple messages that might help you when talking to the media about joining #TeamSamaritans and why you are fundraising for Samaritans.**

* Samaritans is the 2024 TCS London Marathon Official Charity of the Year
* The charity is hoping participants will join them and help raise £1.7 million, so more volunteers can support people to believe that a better tomorrow is possible.
* The money raised will help Samaritans train more volunteers and help the charity keep its helpline open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
* Join #TeamSamaritans at the 2024 TCS London Marathon and together we can believe in tomorrow.
* Every 10 seconds, Samaritans volunteers respond to a call for help.
* When life is difficult, Samaritans are here – day or night, 365 days a year. You can call for free on 116 123, email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org), or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org/).