

# Become a media volunteer



Leonard  
Cheshire



# Thank you

Welcome to the Leonard Cheshire media volunteers' guide. Thanks so much for your interest in our media work, it's good to have you on board!

Working with the media is a great way for the public to understand the experiences of living with a disability day to day. It can also be a really interesting and empowering experience.

As most people aren't used to working with the media (sometimes called 'the press'), this guide is to help make your experience easy and simple. We'll show you what journalists are looking for, how to prepare and how to express yourself. We'll also tell you about how Leonard Cheshire's press team can support you.

Remember that you are the expert. You know about your life and your disability.

There are no set rules about working with the media, but it is helpful to know a bit in advance, so you are prepared and you can make a great impact.

# Why your story is so important

People's life stories are at the heart of what we do at Leonard Cheshire.

Your story can bring to life our research, campaign and policy work and make a story real.

It's important to remember you are not being asked to represent Leonard Cheshire as an official spokesperson - it's about sharing your experiences. We want to get your story out there so people can understand both the challenges and opportunities for disabled people.

By sharing your story as a media volunteer, you are one of the voices that can make a big impact.

The more voices, the bigger the impact.

# How the Leonard Cheshire press team works

Our press team often work on stories that are ‘pro-active’ – we actively promote our events and campaigns and our work to journalists. Your story helps us to show them why something matters.

We also regularly get ‘reactive’ calls from journalists asking us to respond to a news story or feature, and who ask for ‘a case study’ of someone who has lived experience of disability.

In either case, our job in the press team is to match the right journalist and publication with the right media volunteer. We will never give a journalist your contact details without your permission.

## How we will work with you

We will:

- Take time to understand what kind of issues you want to raise awareness of or personal stories you want to share. We’ll also tell you about the topics we’re speaking to the press about to see if you’d like to get involved.
- Discuss what types of media work you’d like to try: from broadcast and print, to vlogging or blogging. We’ll also discuss any support you need to take part.
- Always run through with you what you want to say before taking part in media work.
- Decide with you how much you want to share with journalists; whether you want to be first name only or be anonymous. We’ll also discuss whether you’d like to give a full interview.

# The type of things you'll be asked to do

The short answer is: as much or as little as you like. You don't 'have' to do anything – it's about sharing whatever you are comfortable with.

As a media volunteer we will ask you to share your own experiences of things that affect your life – for example care, housing, employment or transport.

You can also be asked about life events or work that has supported and encouraged you. News does not have to be doom and gloom.

As a media volunteer, you could be asked to:

- Provide quotes (a short sentence) for a press release, news article or policy report (you don't even have to give your name).
- Give an interview over the phone or in person at a suitable venue.
- Go into a radio or TV studio and give an interview.
- Attend events with politicians and campaigning meetings to help them understand the issues.
- Feature in fundraising appeals.
- Share your story on our website or social media channels.
- Take part in a photoshoot to make images to illustrate a news story.

## How we will support you

The press and campaigns teams are here to help and support you throughout any interview or media project you are involved in.

We will:

- Make sure you are the right person to talk about a subject.
- Make sure you have a specific contact at Leonard Cheshire who will talk you through everything.
- Provide you with everything you need to know about the interview.
- Make sure someone is with you for the interview, if you want.
- Cover agreed expenses if you have to travel for an interview.
- In the run up to an interview, during and afterwards, we will be in touch with you as much as you need.

Remember: The news is now on a 24 hours a day cycle, seven days a week. So sometimes your story might not be published or broadcast – it just means another story came up. When this happens, we might be able to use your story on our website or social media accounts, or offer it to another journalist, if you'd like this.

## How media interviews work

Usually a journalist directly contacts the press office to find a 'case study' of a person who has experience with a particular subject or campaign – for example housing or benefits.

- We will email or ring you (whichever is your preferred method of contact) and ask if you are still available to talk to the media.
- We will help you put your story together and be on hand if you have last minute questions. We'll also make sure we protect your privacy.
- You don't have to tell a journalist everything about your life – just the bits you think are important and that you're happy to share.

Above all, we are grateful you agreed to be part of our media work.

If you give us permission, we will add your details to our media volunteers database, so that our press and campaigns teams can keep a record of your contact details and what kinds of media work you're interested in.

Having your details on hand means we can respond quickly to what the media want.

## Staying in touch

Each media volunteer will be given one person from the Leonard Cheshire press and campaign teams as their main contact.

This person will take time to get to know you and your interests and support you with media work. In very rare circumstances, if this person is off work and an opportunity for media work comes up that we think you'd like, you may be contacted by another member of the team.

If you sign up to be a media volunteer, don't worry if you don't hear from us for a while.

We want to make sure the right news story matches what you have to say.

However, every six months we will call or email you to update our records. We will note down any changes you may have had in your experiences.

We will make sure we contact you to let you know each time your story is used.

And if you are happy for us to use your story throughout a campaign and don't want to be contacted every time, let us know and we will leave you in peace.

## All about us

We are Leonard Cheshire – supporting individuals to live, learn and work as independently as they choose, whatever their ability. Led by people with experience of disability, we are at the heart of local life – opening doors to opportunity, choice and support in communities around the globe.

Visit: [www.leonardcheshire.org](http://www.leonardcheshire.org) or follow us on twitter: @leonardcheshire

## For more information – get in touch

Contact the press team to find out more or to apply as a media volunteer:

[press.office@leonardcheshire.org](mailto:press.office@leonardcheshire.org)

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