

THE  
**ASPIRE CHANNEL SWIM 2009**  
14 September to 6 December

# HOW TO APPROACH THE MEDIA

## BECOME A LOCAL MEDIA STAR FOR ASPIRE AND HELP SPREAD THE WORD!

So, you've signed up to do the Aspire Channel Swim. Thank you. Your hard work is going to make a massive difference to people with a spinal injury. Hopefully by now you've started pacing up and down your local pool and have lots of people sponsoring you. Now it's time to take your support one step further and tell your local press what your doing, and why. It's a fun, simple and free way to spread the word about the Aspire Channel Swim.

We've put this simple media info sheet together to help you every step of the way. So read on, and go get yourself 15 minutes of fame. For Aspire of course!

### WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

#### 1. Your local newspapers

Your local rag loves positive stories about ordinary, local people, doing out-of-the-ordinary things. And it's even better when it's for a good cause. Nowadays your local newspapers probably have a website too, so any publicity you get could have double the impact. When you call or email, ask to speak to the editor, or a reporter in the news team.

#### 2. Your local radio station

If you like talking and feel confident about the thought of chatting on radio, why not call your local radio station too? Ask to speak to a producer, or a reporter in the news team.

To make it as easy, we've got a list of contact details for local newspapers and radio stations. Just email [rosie.cotton@aspire.org.uk](mailto:rosie.cotton@aspire.org.uk), saying what county you live in, and we'll send it to you.

Check out the media release template too. Just fill in your details and send to your local media.

### WHAT DO I SAY?

You can either phone or email. Phone is often better as it's more personal and doesn't run the risk of them accidentally deleting your email, but email can work just as well. If you don't want to ring straight off, you could email first and then call them after a couple of days if they don't call you first. Remember, they will be happy to speak to you. You're doing them a favour!



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Firstly, say who you are and where you live. Then tell them that you're doing the Aspire Channel Swim (explain what it is), why you're doing it and that you'd love them to write a story/interview you about your experience to raise awareness. It's that simple.

### Here's an example of how to start off:

*"Hello, my name's Amanda Goodchild and I live in Cranbrook here in Kent. I wanted to let you know about a charity event I'm taking part in right now – it's the Aspire Channel Swim and this year is the 10th anniversary. I'm joining with 7,000 others from around the UK in swimming the length of the English Channel (which is 22 miles) in my local pool over 12 weeks. It's all to raise money for Aspire – one of the UK's leading charities that supports people with spinal injury to become independent. I would be grateful if you could write a story/interview me about my experience to raise awareness about Aspire, and people in the community can sponsor me or take part themselves if they want to."*

### WHAT WILL THE JOURNALIST WANT?

Once you've got their interest, the journalist is going to want more information and the chance to photograph you in the pool.

### MORE INFORMATION

Be prepared to answer a few questions such as:

- How did you hear about the swim?
- What pool are you swimming in?
- Do you personally know anyone with a spinal injury?
- When did the swim start and when does it finish?
- How old are you?
- What is your occupation?
- Is this the first time you've done the Channel swim?
- How much money do you hope to raise?
- How many miles have you got left to swim?
- How can people sponsor you?
- If people want to take part and swim themselves, what should they do?

You could either answer their questions over the phone, or ask them to email you a list of questions and you could email them back the answers. Just remember that anything you email could end up in the paper so be sure you're happy with what you write.

### POINTS TO REMEMBER!

1. Even if they don't ask you about sponsorship, tell them that people can sponsor you through your justgiving page and give the internet address e.g. [www.justgiving.com/yourname](http://www.justgiving.com/yourname)
2. Make sure you tell them about the website [www.aspirechannelswim.co.uk](http://www.aspirechannelswim.co.uk)
3. Offer to send them an email with some information about the event and Aspire. This will help them write a better story. (Cut and paste the information below).



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### NOTES FOR EDITORS ABOUT THE ASPIRE CHANNEL SWIM

- Every day in the UK four people incur a spinal injury and many are told they may never walk again
- Aspire provides practical support, funding, accessible housing and inclusive fitness and computer facilities to help the 40,000 people living with a spinal injury in the UK to increase their independence
- The Aspire Channel Swim is Aspire's national fundraising event. Last year the swim raised more than £480,000 and this year we're aiming to raise over £500,000.
- 2009 marks the 10th anniversary of the Aspire Channel Swim, and this year it's endorsed by Dermot O'Leary, Rosemary Conely, Mark Foster, Lawrence Dallaglio MBE, Gail Porter and many others
- Visit [www.aspire.org.uk](http://www.aspire.org.uk) and [www.aspirechannelswim.co.uk](http://www.aspirechannelswim.co.uk) for more information.

### THE ALL-IMPORTANT, SLIGHTLY-SCARY-BUT-LOTS-OF-FUN PHOTO

A photo is as important to a journalist as scissors are to a hairdresser. Also, if you can arrange a photo then your story is more likely to be read by more people. And don't worry – if you're self conscious about being snapped in your swimming kit – you can always ask the photographer to take a shot that focuses on your face and Aspire swimming cap.

To arrange a photograph simply ring the local pool where you're swimming, ask to speak to the manager or someone in charge. Explain that you're a regular swimmer, doing a charity swim for Aspire and the local newspaper would like to come and take a photo of you in the pool for a story they want to write. If they're happy with that (and most pools will be), you just need to organise a time that works for you, the newspaper and the pool. Then turn up at the right time, with your swimming gear, Aspire cap and most importantly - a smile!

### TELL US ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE DONE!

Once you've approached your local press and they've written a story or interviewed you, please tell us about it – email [swim@aspire.org.uk](mailto:swim@aspire.org.uk). If your story appears on a website, why not post a link to your Facebook profile, or to the Aspire Channel Swim Facebook group – your courage will inspire other swimmers to do the same.

Thanks for helping us spread the word, and if you need any extra help or support, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to seeing your face in print!

The Aspire Channel Swim team.



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