



Your Ambassador handbook

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Welcome Meningitis Research Foundation Ambassadors

At Meningitis Research Foundation our goal is clear: we want to see a world free from meningitis.



As an Ambassador, you are at the heart of our work.

When it comes to driving greater awareness and understanding of meningitis, nothing is more powerful than hearing from those directly impacted by it.

There are lots of different ways you can get involved and use your experience to help others. You might share your story within your local community, on your social media or as part of a newspaper interview. We will work with you to amplify your voice so that more people are aware of the signs and symptoms of meningitis, and feel empowered to seek help when they need it.



Thank you for being part of our Ambassador community.
Together, we will defeat meningitis.

How we're defeating meningitis

We're an international health charity headquartered in the UK, driven by a passionate mission to prevent the devastating impact of meningitis.



Founded by individuals whose lives were profoundly affected by meningitis, **we're dedicated to enabling positive change by uniting people and knowledge to save lives.**

Why we exist

There are over 2.3 million cases of bacterial and viral meningitis around the world every year*.



Bacterial meningitis is the deadliest form of meningitis. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that around one in six people who get bacterial meningitis will die, while one in five survivors will be left with life-long disabilities*.



Anyone, of any age, can get meningitis. Babies, children and young adults are some of the groups at highest risk.

*Headline figures reviewed on an annual basis. Last updated February 2025.

How we're defeating meningitis

What we do

We answer people's questions, so that **no one affected by meningitis feels alone.**



We've awarded 160+ research grants with a value of over £19.5 million. This investment enables vital scientific research into all areas of meningitis prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

We have developed the [Meningitis Progress Tracker](#), bringing together multiple data sources on meningitis. It can provide evidence that supports change in communities and countries worldwide.



Since 2016, we have worked with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other global health leaders to develop a worldwide plan to defeat meningitis.



We've been raising awareness and advocating for better access to meningitis vaccines since 1992.

This includes the MenB strain of meningitis, one of the most common causes of life-threatening bacterial meningitis in the UK and Ireland.



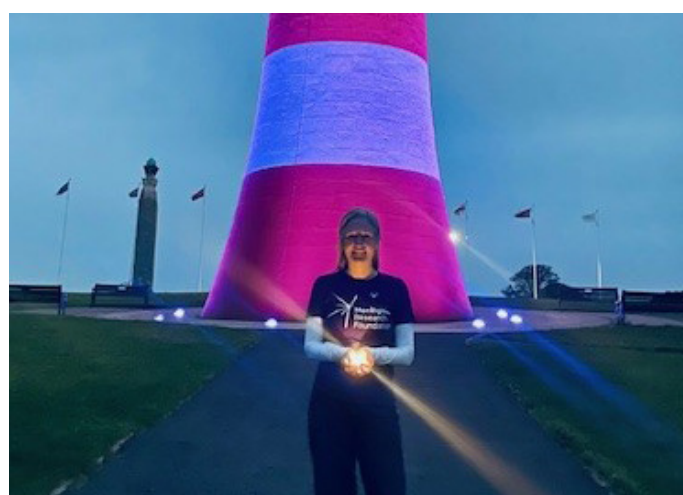
We commissioned the world's first Meningococcal Genome Library. This groundbreaking resource is designed to provide data on the four leading causes of bacterial meningitis.



In 2009 our Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO) members pioneered the very first **World Meningitis Day**, the leading global awareness day for meningitis.

Your contribution to our work

Ambassadors represent us in communities across the UK, spreading our message and raising vital awareness of meningitis.



Your contribution to our work

Whether you're distributing materials at a university freshers' fair, giving a talk at a local college or being interviewed on TV, you're helping to raise awareness of meningitis.

Together, our Ambassadors are a collective force, and every bit of work you do takes us closer to defeating this terrible disease.

Let's continue empowering people to:

Recognise the signs and symptoms of meningitis.



Seek help when they need it.



Learn about the vaccines available to protect against meningitis.



Understand who is most at risk.



By raising awareness, we can help people recognise the signs and symptoms of meningitis and seek medical attention early, **which can save lives.**

Being an Ambassador for us

As an Ambassador, you will have experienced the life-changing impact of meningitis, either personally or through someone you love.



As well as knowing that you're playing a key role in our fight against meningitis, you'll also have the opportunity to develop a range of valuable skills and meet other people who are equally passionate about defeating this disease.

Whichever activities you choose to get involved with, our dedicated [Support Services team](#) will help you at every stage and make sure your experience is a positive one.

Bookmark our [Ambassador Hub](#) for everything you need to master the role and get the support you need to make a difference.



By sharing your story, **you will help others understand the disease, its impact on people's lives and how we can defeat it.**

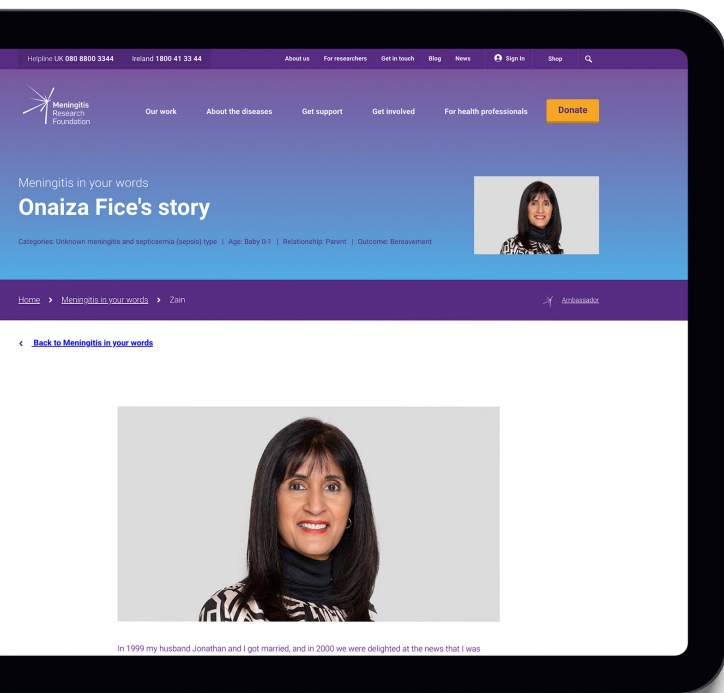
Ways to get involved

There are different types of Ambassador roles and ways of supporting Meningitis Research Foundation.

We will work with you to explore the different ways you can share your story, and find the best fit for you. On the following pages you'll find just a few ideas to get you started.



Meningitis in your words



Sharing personal stories can offer huge hope and comfort to other people impacted by meningitis. We ask all our Ambassadors to contribute to [Meningitis in your words](#), to help build the world's largest digital collection of meningitis experiences. Its aim is to help other people learn what it's truly like to be impacted by meningitis, and understand that they are not alone.

Public speaking



Giving talks at schools, family hubs, universities or even national events. The aim of these events is to raise awareness and increase understanding of meningitis by motivating and inspiring audiences, so it's important that you are a comfortable and confident public speaker for opportunities like these.

Media



Being an Ambassador can also involve working with the media at a local or regional level. This might involve participating in radio or TV features, or being interviewed for newspapers, magazines or online publications. We recognise that this level of visibility may take a bit of getting used to, so we work closely with our Ambassadors, offering training and support to ensure you're fully prepared for these situations.

Campaigns



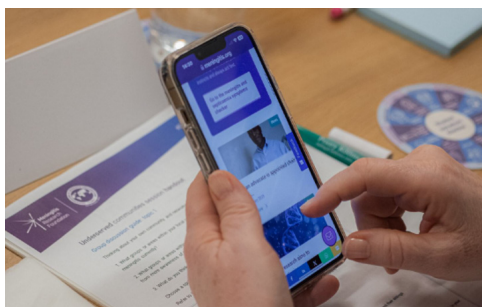
We need our Ambassadors to get behind our campaigns more than anyone else. Your visibility and influence really drive campaigns forward, galvanising existing audiences and introducing us to new ones. Campaigns you can support and feature in include [World Meningitis Day](#), the world's leading meningitis awareness event, and other exciting events throughout the year.

Community



Ambassadors are key to building awareness of meningitis within their local communities. This may involve acting as a stall holder at local events such as summer fairs and festivals. We also ask you to research local community groups, schools and businesses, and reach out if there are opportunities to promote the charity or raise awareness through various activities with them.

Social media



With so much of the world online, it's vital that we use digital power to promote our cause. Ambassadors will share key information and resources across a wide range of channels, including social media. We want to spread our life-saving messages far and wide. As an Ambassador you'll do this through consistent, relevant and authentic content that drives engagement and builds awareness online.

Take part in research



[Research projects](#) are constantly underway, all over the world. These vary from the development and improvement of vaccines, diagnostics and treatments, to gaining a better understanding of the lifelong impacts of meningitis. As someone with firsthand experience of the disease, you may get the opportunity to use your experiences to inform groundbreaking new research.

“I want to give back to the fantastic NHS staff who saved my life, prepared me medically for the future and drove me through rehabilitation. My story is their story. If I can bring that journey to life for current staff and for student medics, **there is tremendous potential to inspire.**”

Mike Davies, Ambassador

”

“Being an Ambassador **allows you to meet others with similar experiences** and see how positive they are. It also allows you to become an engaged and useful member of society at a time in your life when you want to hide away.”

Dianne Spalding, Ambassador

”

“Being an Ambassador is very important to me. It was an absolute privilege when **I was asked by Meningitis Research Foundation to help spread the word**, share awareness of meningitis and the impacts of it.”

Helena Campbell, Ambassador

”

Our commitment to you

We're here to support you at every stage of your Ambassador journey, from providing initial training, to ensuring your volunteer experience is smooth, rewarding and enables you to achieve your goals.

As soon as you join us, you'll be assigned a dedicated point of contact who you can reach out to at any stage for help and support. Our online [Ambassador Hub](#) is another good place to go for tools and training to master the role. We also have an active [Ambassador Facebook group](#), where you can find information and chat to other members of our Ambassador network.

We will invite you to exclusive Ambassador meet-ups and training events, so you can build on your knowledge and skills, and connect and learn from fellow Ambassadors.

The safety of our Ambassadors and volunteers – as well as anyone else who works for or with us – is incredibly important. Please take the time to complete all the required training. This includes policies and processes around safeguarding, plus the standards we expect all of our Ambassadors to follow.



Bookmark our [Ambassador Hub](#) for everything you need, and complete our essentials checklist.



Have a suggestion for a training topic or tool that would help you in your role as Ambassador? We'd love to hear it.
Speak to your Meningitis Research Foundation contact.

Supporting you

To support you as a Meningitis Research Foundation Ambassador, we will:

- Provide you with the training and resources needed to help you feel confident and supported in your role. You'll develop life-long skills such as public speaking, working with the media and community outreach.
- Provide a clear role description that explains the nature of the role, your responsibilities and our expectations of you.
- Celebrate your successes and valuable contributions as an Ambassador.
- Involve you in the life of the charity, including invitations to events where you'll meet the other remarkable Ambassadors who share your passion for defeating meningitis.
- Provide an inclusive and positive environment where everyone is treated with fairness and respect.
- Ensure our volunteering processes are in line with best practice and industry standards.
- Provide support and supervision. If there is anything you don't understand or is troubling you, we want to help. You'll have a dedicated Meningitis Research Foundation contact who will keep in touch regularly to see how things are going.
- Make necessary arrangements to ensure your health, safety and welfare at all times.
- Reimburse reasonable expenses incurred in the role, in line with our expenses policy.
- Do our best to match your interests and skills with relevant activities and events.
- Respect and listen to your feedback, and keep you informed of any changes.



Your Meningitis Research Foundation contact will keep in touch regularly with opportunities to **learn, grow and develop in your role.**

What we ask of our Ambassadors

As an Ambassador, you're a representative of Meningitis Research Foundation.

All of our Ambassadors are volunteers, not employees, so there are none of the obligations that apply to traditional employment. However, we do expect our Ambassadors to uphold the charity's high standards of conduct to protect our reputation. We ask that you:

- Follow and agree to our policies, procedures, agreements and training. This includes our volunteer agreement and safeguarding guidelines. These are in place to keep you, our service users and our organisation safe, so please do not operate outside of them at any point.
- Maintain confidentiality of Meningitis Research Foundation activity, the people that you come into contact with and our procedures.
- Act responsibly and legally to protect the charity's reputation at all times.
- Comply with any health and safety instructions given to you by the charity and/or event organiser(s).
- Agree to a criminal record check.
- Be positive about and supportive of Meningitis Research Foundation's charitable work.
- Work cooperatively with other Ambassadors and staff members.
- Treat everyone with respect, regardless of their beliefs or views.
- Perform the role to the best of your ability, as outlined in the role description.
- Use our resources wisely and act within the limits of our expenses policy.
- Let us know as soon as possible if you wish to step back from the role. We understand that people's circumstances change and are always grateful for the generous time and support of our Ambassadors.

How much time do I need to commit to?

Our Ambassadors carry out a range of activities, and as such there is no minimum time commitment – it is flexible and intended to fit around your life. However, Ambassadors will need to be prepared to give up some of their time to carry out activities and attend events. We rely on everyone to 'do their bit' so we can keep raising awareness of the disease in communities across the UK.

What if my situation changes?

Becoming a Meningitis Research Foundation Ambassador is a big commitment, so it's important that you recognise whether it's the right choice for you at this particular time. We understand that people's circumstances can change and ask that, if you're no longer able to be involved, you please let us know as soon as possible. This is so that we can celebrate your amazing contribution, as well as start the process for finding a new Ambassador.

Other ways to support us



There are plenty of other ways to support us at Meningitis Research Foundation, from getting involved in our campaigns to organising a fundraising event.

If you'd like to explore an alternative or additional way of supporting us, please speak to your Meningitis Research Foundation contact.



We're always happy to discuss new ideas, and are **incredibly grateful for everyone's contributions.**

Other information to note

Criminal record check

You'll need to agree to a basic criminal record check before becoming an Ambassador. We want to make volunteering available to everyone, so having a criminal record won't necessarily stop you from taking up the role. We consider each case individually and will base our decisions on factors such as the nature of a conviction and its relevance to the volunteering role.

Some activities may require additional checks, for example if you're regularly working with young people or vulnerable adults.

Recruitment and selection

As part of the recruitment process, we may conduct informal interviews and request references. This is to assess your suitability for the role and safeguard the people we work with. Not all applicants will be selected for the role. Decisions will be based on suitability, and priority will be given to candidates from underrepresented regions and backgrounds, as well as those who can fill skills gaps.

Safeguarding

We have policies to protect everyone. These include ways to recognise and report harmful behaviour. As a charity, we work with people who may be vulnerable, which means taking extra steps to keep them safe. As an Ambassador, you have a responsibility to be aware of our safeguarding processes, and you'll need to complete safeguarding training before starting the role.



Please contact our Support Services team should you have any questions or concerns. They can be reached Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm:



0808 800 3344 (UK) / 1800 41 33 44 (RoI)



helpline@meningitis.org

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Meningitis Research Foundation is committed to fostering a welcome and inclusive volunteering environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

To achieve this, we will:

Proactively recruit Ambassadors from varied backgrounds, including those who have historically been underrepresented. This includes individuals from diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as people of all gender identities and abilities.



Create a culture of inclusivity, where everyone feels safe, respected and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and skills.

Implement policies and processes to prevent bullying, harassment, discrimination or any other forms of misconduct.

Provide ongoing training and support to Ambassadors, ensuring they are equipped to engage effectively with diverse communities and promote our cause with respect and an open mind.



Work with organisations to target under-served communities where meningitis is least understood, with a goal of increasing awareness and encouraging participation.

This includes collaborating with groups that serve diverse populations, and focusing on areas with limited access to information about meningitis.



By actively promoting diversity, equality and inclusion, we aim to create an equitable, effective and vibrant organisation that better **serves the needs of all individuals and communities.**

Data protection and confidentiality

We are committed to protecting and respecting the personal data that we hold. Personal data is any information relating to an identified or identifiable living person. The nature of what we do at Meningitis Research Foundation means we often need to collect personal data, but we always aim to be completely transparent about the actions we take with it.

The Meningitis Research Foundation and Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO) privacy policy is available to all Ambassadors and volunteers. In it you will find information about the following:

- What personal data we collect and process.
- How we collect it.
- Explanation of the lawful basis for data collection and processing.
- How long we keep your personal data for.
- If and how we share data.
- Your individual rights regarding your personal data.

As Ambassadors and volunteers, we also expect you to protect and respect any personal or confidential information that you may have access to. This may relate to our staff, other volunteers or operational procedures within the charity.

You can find full details of our [privacy policy](#).

Insurance

Meningitis Research Foundation has insurance to protect our volunteers. This includes insurance to cover accidents that may happen while you're out and about volunteering. If you would like to see a copy of the policy, please ask your Meningitis Research Foundation contact.

Filming and photography



We regularly capture photos and videos of Ambassadors. Why? Because pictures help us tell the story of why meningitis must be defeated to people all over the world.

We may use these images in future publications, presentations, on our website and in social media. This can be over several years (because we like to make the most use of everything we do).

Please let any member of our team know if you do not want to appear in any photos or film we take at an event. Our team will then work hard to ensure you are not in shot.

But if you're happy for us to use your image to defeat meningitis, then just keep on smiling.

Expenses

We understand that volunteering for the charity is a big commitment, so we're happy to cover reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for travel and food when you're carrying out your Ambassador duties.

We're committed to making every penny count, so request that you please consider this too. Public transport is usually the most cost-effective means of getting around.

Before spending any of your own money please make sure you authorise it with your staff contact first, and keep receipts for any agreed expense payments. We'll do our best to reimburse you as quickly as possible.

For further guidance please read our expenses policy on the [Ambassador Hub](#).

Social media



Please always be mindful that as a Meningitis Research Foundation Ambassador, you are representing us. Only post things that are positive, respectful and in line with our charity values. Be considerate, use your best judgment and avoid sharing anything that could harm our reputation.

Media relations



We sometimes ask our Ambassadors to represent us in the media. If this is right for you, it would involve featuring in various media outlets, sharing your meningitis story firsthand and helping to drive greater awareness – locally, nationally and beyond. Media outreach can take many forms, but most likely will involve interviews, features or appearances across radio, TV or newspaper publications.

Please do not seek out or take part in any media opportunities on behalf of Meningitis Research Foundation without speaking to us first. Some journalists or media outlets may contact you directly. If this happens, please let us know before any interview takes place, so that we can support you with it.



If you're interested in getting involved with media opportunities, **speak to your Meningitis Research Foundation contact** for further information and advice.

Maintaining neutrality

As a charity, we work with a variety of different partners and organisations, so it's vital that we remain neutral and impartial at all times. In representing us, we expect you to do the same. We ask all of our Ambassadors not to share anything that may bring a medical professional or organisation into disrepute. For the same reasons, please also avoid sharing political views or opinions when representing the charity.

If you've had a bad experience relating to your personal diagnosis or treatment, talk to your Meningitis Research Foundation contact. We can help you share your story in a way that's respectful and neutral. Our [Support Services team](#) can also signpost medical negligence experts if this is something you need support with.

Smoking and substance use

Please don't drink alcohol or use drugs while volunteering. Please don't smoke or vape on or near our sites, or while wearing anything that displays the charity's name.

Speaking up and addressing concerns

At Meningitis Research Foundation, we encourage open communication and want you to feel comfortable raising any concerns. If you see or experience something that doesn't feel right, please speak to your Meningitis Research Foundation contact. We take all concerns seriously and will do everything we can to resolve them effectively.

How to raise a concern:

Step 1

The first step is to discuss the issue with your Meningitis Research Foundation contact. They'll hold an informal meeting with you and explore ways to find a solution that works for everyone.

Step 2

If a solution isn't reached through informal discussion, or if the concern is about your contact, you can raise it with their supervisor or email helpline@meningitis.org. The situation will then be reviewed, and recommendations made for how to address it.

Further support and advice

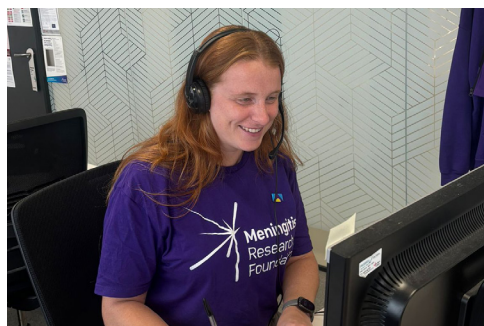
Our Ambassadors provide incredible support to us, so we want to do the same for you.

Whether you're adjusting to life with the after-effects of meningitis, or coping with the loss of a loved one, know that we are here for you. Our [Support Service team](#) are available for all Ambassadors to use, so please seek help whenever you need it. We understand that you have already been through so much and that sharing your story may be emotionally challenging.

If it ever gets too much, please let us support you in the role.

We are here so that you don't have to face meningitis alone.

How to get in touch



Our free helpline is available Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm. You can also email us at helpline@meningitis.org or contact us via our live chat service.

For free information and support:

Phone: **UK 0808 800 3344** | Phone: **Ireland 1800 41 33 44**

Live chat: meningitis.org | Email: helpline@meningitis.org

Keep up with our progress on defeating meningitis

You'll hear from your Meningitis Research Foundation contact regularly about the latest events and opportunities to get involved.

In the meantime, follow our research, event and campaign updates at:

-  meningitis.org
-  [Meningitis Research Foundation](#)
-  [Meningitis Research Foundation](#)
-  [@M_R_F](#)

Together, we can defeat meningitis.

For more information about meningitis and the work that we're doing to defeat it, visit meningitis.org.



#DefeatMeningitis

A charity registered in England and Wales no 1091105, in Scotland no SC037586 and in Ireland 20034368.
Registered Office: 7th Floor, The Programme Building, The Pithay, Bristol, BS1 2NB

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