



Spread out your picnic blanket and spread the word about WAY!

It's nearly Big Picnic time again and we're calling on our fantastic volunteers to help us spread the word about the work of local groups and WAY to support young widowed people across the UK. Local newspapers, radio stations and TV programmes need people like us to fill their pages or air-time and are often very interested in stories about local people and local events like our annual Big Picnic.

In previous years we had Big Picnic articles appear in local publications including the [Reading Chronicle](#), [Belfast Telegraph](#) and [Whitchurch Herald](#) as well as local radio coverage too (e.g. [Planet Radio](#) in Cornwall and BBC Tees last year).

Below are two template press releases (one for before and one for after the event) that you can tailor for your own event. You will ideally need to include some local information that will be relevant for your local town/city or region, whether this is a quote from a local volunteer or a reference to the local venue where the Big Picnic will be held.

There is also likely to be interest in the personal stories of volunteers or people attending the picnic so it would be helpful to decide in advance who may be willing to share their story and to talk about how WAY has helped them. Of course, not everyone is obliged to do so if they're not comfortable with sharing their story but it would help to get coverage.

#### Getting media coverage

These media tips are designed to help Area Contacts and Big Picnic organisers to contact their local media. Our Communications Manager Vicky Anning is also happy to help, so do drop her a line at [media@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:media@widowedandyoung.org.uk) if you have any questions along the way.

#### Print publications

Regional newspapers and magazines are you most likely targets and they may cover the picnic in the following ways:

1. a short news item/news in brief to tell their readers about the event in advance
2. a longer feature, interviewing local WAY members about their personal stories in advance of the picnic
3. a piece after the event, with photographs and possibly also interviews
4. a photograph after the event (either they'll send their own photographer or may invite you to send your own photographs) with a caption.



# Big Picnic!

## Broadcast media

Radio stations may want to interview a local member before the event to publicise it (BBC stations may include something on their websites).

Local TV stations may want to come along to the actual event to film it, although this is rare and unlikely due to limited budgets. You would need to make sure you had permissions in place for everyone at the Big Picnic before agreeing to host a TV crew.

## Photo calls

A good strategy is to tell journalists there's going to be 'photo call' – simply, a specific time when the maximum number of picnickers will be there and happy to be snapped. Avoid the end of the picnic, when everyone is tired and may be covered in chocolate cake!

The photographer will have their own ideas. If they seek advice, think creatively – group shots may not be the best option, look for scenarios with movement, that somehow convey something about WAY and show people having fun. Make sure you have as much WAY bunting/posters and branding in the shots as possible.

Pictures of one or two people often work well, and it would be great to capture a WAY balloon or hoodie or organise a fun stunt – WAY Oxfordshire once spelled out WAY using their bodies.

Please make sure you have secured permissions from all attendees for photo permissions.

## Who to approach for media coverage

Think about the best local media to target and do some research. Find out which papers/free sheets/community radio stations cover your patch using Google or looking out for the papers that land on your doormat.

Try to get the name of the best journalist to talk to, e.g. the name of the reporter who covers your local area or the community reporters. Or if you made any contacts last year, do follow this up. Websites and the inside front pages of newspapers often provide names and contact details, which will help to give you a headstart. Make the most of any contacts you or local WAY members may have.

As well as local newspapers, try BBC and independent radio stations, community radio stations and local TV news channels (BBC and ITV).

Be aware that most local media outlets have limited staff at the weekend, so may not be able to commit in advance to sending a photographer or crew to cover your Big Picnic. On the plus side, weekends can be slow news days and daily papers have pages to fill on Monday mornings so you can always follow up by sending over some photos from the event – making sure you have permissions in place from attendees.



### Tips on contacting journalists

Call the newsdesk of your target outlet two weeks before the Big Picnic and ask them if they are interested in this story.

Say you are calling from the charity WAY Widowed and Young, which supports people who've been widowed at a young age. That you are organising a Big Picnic on XXth May at [LOCATION] to bring young widows and widowers from the local area together, to help spread the word about WAY so that we can support more people who have been widowed at the age of 50 or under...

Find out when deadlines are – particularly relevant if you're talking to a weekly publication with deadlines that are likely to be further in advance, but it's also good to know when deadlines are so you can avoid calling at that time. Editors and journalists are more responsive when they're not close to a deadline.

Ask how to follow up – can you email them your press release? Would they like to interview you or someone else? What is their email and direct telephone line?

Follow up your call with a press release! Ideally addressed to the person you spoke to on the phone, or to their news editor.

There are two template press releases included at the end of these tips. Please add the location and date of your picnic and any other information that may 'hook' the media. Think about your target audiences/publications.

Please include contact details – mobile number, email address and website – [www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bigpicnic](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bigpicnic) – so journalists can easily get more information. You can also give out [media@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:media@widowedandyoung.org.uk) as WAY's media contact address but please do let us know so that we are prepped for any follow up requests.

Make sure your designated media contacts (you or someone you have chosen) has their mobile switched on for the day of the picnic and the days running up to it and afterwards.

Follow up again – if you don't hear anything after a few days, follow up. Ask if the journalist received the press release and if they have put the Big Picnic in their diary and are planning to cover the event. Be persistent!



### Managing media at the event

If you know a journalist will attend your picnic, either try to find a WAY member who is happy to be interviewed or delegate the running of the picnic to a couple of other people, to ensure you can focus on talking to the journalist.

You will need to let your picnickers know if a photographer or journalist is planning to attend. Make sure you have people's permission to be interviewed or photographed, particularly members' children. This will be particularly important if there is local TV coverage.

If people don't want to be involved, make it easy for them to avoid journalists and photographers.

Greet all journalists and make the necessary introductions.

### Tips for interviews

Speak naturally and clearly, avoiding long sentences

1. If on the radio, you need to paint the picture and describe the scene.
2. Remember to focus as much as possible on the local aspect of the story (i.e. the fact that WAY supports members in the local area).
3. Make sure to mention WAY's web address [www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bigpicnic](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bigpicnic) so people can find us
4. Remember: you probably know more about WAY and being widowed than the interviewer and you are in control! Don't feel obliged to answer anything you're not comfortable talking about. Discuss with the journalist ahead of the interview if there are any red lines for you (e.g. cause of death, your age, names of children etc).

Helpful information for an interview

#### What is WAY?

*It's a national organisation for people aged 50 or under who have lost their partner.*

#### What does WAY do?

*Provides information, advice, peer-to-peer support and campaigns for and on behalf of widows and widowers who were bereaved when they were 50 or under.*

#### How has WAY helped you?

*For example, WAY has been a lifeline and meeting up with like-minded people has helped you to rebuild your life.*

#### How many members does WAY have?

*More than 4,600 members across the UK and we are keen to spread the word about us so that we can help even more young widows and widowers to find out about our support.*

#### How many local members there are?

Please check and have this figure to hand.



**Big  
Picnic!**

### How many people are there at the picnic?

Please have this figure ready and add that there are more than 30 picnics taking place across the UK.

Remember, if you are interviewed for TV/radio, your conversation will probably be recorded (rather than live) and the reporter is likely to use a few sound bites. This is why it helps to prepare what you are going to say, to ensure you can state your main points clearly – if in doubt repeat them several times.

### Post-picnic follow up

If no journalists or photographers turn up on the day of the picnic, don't despair! You can always send your contacts a post-event press release and pictures (see template press release below).

It would be a good idea to ask for good photographers in your local group to take some photographs of the day. You could send the best photos to local newspapers (making sure you have permissions in place).

### Social media

Please do also share your best photos (as long as you have permissions in place) or quotes/anecdotes about your picnic on social media using the hashtag #WAYBigPicnic and encourage attendees to do the same. You never know who the post might reach. Do tag in WAY at @widowedandyoung too!

Think creatively about photos you could share – it could be a short video or Reel on Instagram that shows a small detail from the picnic (e.g. a WAY themed cake or a pet with WAY branding) rather than showing people's faces.

You can also email photos to [enquiries@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@widowedandyoung.org.uk) for use in e-news and the newsletter. We'll also be sending out separate details about our Big Picnic photo competition.

### WAY contacts and follow-up

If you need any advice or help with media coverage, please contact Vicky Anning at [media@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:media@widowedandyoung.org.uk).

If your picnic has been covered by the local media, please let us know and, if possible, send us a link to any coverage to the same media@ email address.

**Good luck** and **thank you** for helping us to reach out to other young widows and widowers who could benefit from our support. Please do let us know how you get on!



TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE TO SEND OUT BEFORE EVENT  
Young widows and widowers from [LOCATION] find a way forward in  
grief



Caption: WAY Widowed and Young members and family at a Big Picnic last year.

On [DAY AND DATE], young widows and widowers from [COUNTY/AREA] and their families and friends will be rolling out their picnic blankets together and sharing great food, drinks and fun at [LOCATION] to show there is support out there for people who've been widowed at a young age.

Hundreds of widows and widowers will be meeting up across the country from 20-21 May for the annual Big Picnic weekend organised by WAY Widowed and Young – a peer to peer support charity that has helped more than 14,000 people since it was set up in Wales [INCLUDE IF YOU ARE BASED IN WALES] 26 years ago.

WAY's annual Big Picnic weekend is a chance for people who have been widowed young to get together with other bereaved families – and for members of the public to find out how the charity works. Last year, this national event attracted more than 400 people to 30 of the most picturesque parks, beaches and beauty spots across the UK – from Scotland to South Wales and from Sussex to the Serpentine.

[www.widowedandyoung.org.uk](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number: 1164988  
Email: [enquiries@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@widowedandyoung.org.uk)  
Phone: 0300 201 0051

Address: WAY Widowed and Young, Advantage House, Stowe Court, Stowe Street, Lichfield, WS13 6AQ



“It’s a chance for WAY members and their families to get together with other people in the local area who understand what they’re going through,” says local volunteer [ADD NAME AND LOCAL LOCATION]. “It’s also a chance to reach out to other people who’ve been widowed at a young age like to show them there is support out there through WAY. And of course, to eat cake!”

The charity WAY Widowed and Young supports anyone aged 50 or under who is overcoming the loss of a partner – whether they were married or not, with or without children, inclusive of sexual orientation, gender, race and religion. It’s a peer-to-peer support network run by volunteers who have been bereaved at a young age themselves, so they understand exactly what other members are going through.

The charity was founded in 1997 by journalist Caroline Sarll, who was shocked to find that there was no support available for her sister when she was widowed at the age of 35. Since then, the charity has gone from strength to strength and now has more than 4,600 members across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## Editor’s Notes

Please come to WAY’s Big Picnic in [LOCATION] on [ADD DAY, DATE AND TIME] to meet local members of WAY Widowed and Young and find out more about its unique peer-to-peer support network.

There will be a photo call at [GIVE A SPECIFIC TIME]. [PLEASE NOTE: you can delete this if you’d prefer not to have a photographer on the day]. There are also photographs available from previous years that you can request.

## Further information

Please contact [NAME OF LOCAL ORGANISER OR MEDIA CONTACT] on [ADD MOBILE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS – not for publication] for further details and to arrange interviews.

[Please note: you can also give [media@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:media@widowedandyoung.org.uk) as a contact email but please do keep us in the loop and let us know details of which press you’ve reached out to and how you can be contacted on the day.]

Website: [www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bigpicnic](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bigpicnic)

Facebook: [@widowedandyoung](https://www.facebook.com/widowedandyoung)

Twitter: [@WidowedAndYoung](https://twitter.com/WidowedAndYoung)

Instagram: [@widowedandyoung](https://www.instagram.com/widowedandyoung)

#WAYBigPicnic

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Follow up template press release – after the picnic

Young widows find a way forward together in [LOCATION]

[ADD A PHOTO IF POSSIBLE – make sure you have all permissions in place]

Members of the charity WAY Widowed and Young and their families and friends proved that there is a way forward after the death of a loved one when they spread out their picnic blankets, opened up their picnic hampers and shared great food, drinks and fun at [LOCATION] this weekend.

Hundreds of friends, family and supporters came along to WAY's annual Big Picnic weekend, which included events at more than 30 of the most picturesque picnic spots across the country – including [YOUR LOCATION].

WAY was founded 26 years ago by journalist Caroline Sarll, who was shocked to find that there was no support available for her sister when she was widowed at the age of 35. Since then, the charity has gone from strength to strength and now has more than 4,600 members across the UK.

[ADD QUOTE FROM LOCAL ORGANISER – something like the below]

“What a great day we had at our Big Picnic yesterday! 43 people, a few furry friends and a few of those members travelled from other areas of the UK to join us. We had some long-term members, some very new members and some members in between those extremes. We are all at different stages in our grief yet the support and understanding was there in abundance. We had some tears, a LOT of laughs and hopefully some new friendships have started to form. Big Picnic sums up what WAY is about and to be part of it an absolute privilege. Something great to come from something so horrific.”

WAY Widowed and Young supports anyone aged 50 or under who is overcoming the loss of a partner – whether they were married or not, with or without children, inclusive of sexual orientation, gender, race and religion. It's a peer-to-peer support network run by volunteers who have been bereaved at a young age themselves, so they understand exactly what other members are going through.

Over the past 26 years, WAY has supported more than 14,000 young widows and widowers as they have adjusted to life after the death of their loved one.

WAY's Chief Executive Stephanie Patrick said: “We hope our Big Picnic weekend will help to show more young widows and widowers that there is support out there through WAY Widowed and Young's peer support network from other people who understand exactly what it's like to be widowed at a young age.”

Editor's notes

Please contact [NAME OF LOCAL ORGANISER OR MEDIA CONTACT] on [ADD MOBILE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS – not for publication] for further details.

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Or contact WAY's Press Office at [media@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:media@widowedandyoung.org.uk) for more information about our charity's work.

You can also find out more about WAY at [www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bigpicnic](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/bigpicnic)

Follow us on social media with the hashtag #WAYBigPicnic

Facebook: [@widowedandyoung](https://www.facebook.com/widowedandyoung)

Twitter: [@WidowedAndYoung](https://twitter.com/WidowedAndYoung)

Instagram: [@widowedandyoung](https://www.instagram.com/widowedandyoung)

[ENDS]

