

MEDICS FOR RARE DISEASE

Excellence in rare disease
medical training

Rare Disease Day 2026

Communications Toolkit



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Thank you for your support!

- Medics for Rare Disease are so grateful for your support and engagement with our campaign for Rare Disease Day.
- This toolkit provides some helpful information on how you can continue to support our Rare Disease Day activities in 2026, as well as what's new this year.

What's new for 2026?

- In previous years, Medics for Rare Disease has established the iconic **#ShowYourStripes** campaign, receiving over 200 photos showing support in 2025. This hasn't changed for 2026!
- However, the focus of this year's campaign will be to **#LearnYourStripes**: calling on **HCPs, medical students** and **decision-makers** to become more 'rare aware' by watching a brand new **five minute** training video.
- We are also kick-starting Medics for Rare Disease on TikTok! Follow us **@Medicsforrare**.

What's happening and when?

- **Medics for Rare Disease social media build-up:** Keep an eye on our Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok (@Medicsforrare) for ongoing updates about the campaign.
- **#LearnYourStripes - new mini training video launch:** 3rd week of January
- **Press Release distribution to media:** Last week of January
- **#ShowYourStripes - post photographs online:** Last week of February, in run up to Rare Disease Day on 28th.
- **Rare Disease Day:** Saturday 28th February. Contact Emily (emily@mearnandpike.com or 07384755096) for on-the-day support or questions about the campaign



Campaign Narrative

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3.5 million people in the UK are living with a rare disease. **That's as many people as those living with cancer.** They wait an average of **five years** to reach diagnosis, ping-ponging between disciplines and having unnecessary tests that further overextend our already stretched NHS. Most medics have never received any dedicated rare disease training.

Five minutes is all you need to become more 'rare aware' for Rare Disease Day. The new mini training video is available for free [here](#). Alternatively contact info@m4rd.org to enquire about in-person training. Being more rare aware will not only positively impact the lives of people living with rare conditions but also help ensure valuable NHS time and resources are used more efficiently.

#LearnYourStripes with Medics for Rare Disease

Medics are often taught that common things are common and "hear hooves, think horses... not zebras". **But that mindset is out-dated.** Whilst there are thousands of individual rare diseases, they **share many characteristics and people living with rare conditions share painfully** similar health journeys and challenges. This means rare disease training is completely achievable without having to learn thousands of individual conditions.

What you can do to show your support

- Wear a pair of stripy socks in the week running up to Rare Disease Day on Saturday 28 February, post photographs on social media and tag us at **#ShowYourStripes @Medicsforrare**
- **#LearnYourStripes** with our Rare Disease training and encourage others to do the same by sharing our new five minute training video.



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Resources

Press release

Call for healthcare professionals:

Take Five Minutes to 'Learn Your Stripes' for Rare Disease Day

- Charity Medics for Rare Disease launches a five minute training video for Rare Disease Day 2026, encouraging healthcare professionals to become more 'rare aware'
- 3.5 million people in the UK are living with a rare disease ¹ - as many people as those living with cancer ²
- Rare Disease Day will be marked globally on Saturday 28 February 2026

Medics for Rare Disease today announced the launch of a mini training video that will help HCPs become more 'rare aware' in five minutes. Since 2022, the charity asked HCPs to '**Show your Stripes**' for Rare Disease Day, by wearing stripy socks to raise awareness and show support for people living with rare conditions. This year, Medics for Rare Disease is asking HCPs to go one small step further and **Learn Your Stripes**, by completing the five minute Rare Disease introductory training video.

While there are thousands of individual rare diseases, they share many characteristics and those impacted face painfully similar challenges. The 3.5 million people living with rare disease in the UK wait an average of five years to reach diagnosis, ¹ ping-ponging between specialists and having unnecessary tests that further overextend our already stretched NHS. Despite this, there is no standardised rare disease education included in UK medical school curricula or specialty training. In a 2023 study, Medics for Rare Disease found that 73% of medical students surveyed couldn't correctly define a rare disease.

Press release



"It takes only five minutes to complete our new training video but it introduces a rare aware approach to clinical practice that can make a real difference to your patients living with rare disease."

Dr Lucy McKay,
Medics for Rare Disease CEO

Medics for Rare Disease CEO Dr Lucy McKay says "As medics we are taught 'common things are common' and 'hear hooves, think horse... not zebra.' That mindset is outdated and damaging. Our clinical ambassadors relay to us the ongoing working pressures of those on the NHS frontline and how challenging it is to do the best for your patients with limited time. That is why we've made it easier than ever to become more 'rare aware'. It takes only five minutes to complete our new training video but it introduces a rare aware approach to clinical practice that can make a real difference to your patients living with rare disease."

In 2025, over 200 images of stripy socks were posted on social media by healthcare professionals, medical students and changemakers, including Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health Ms Ashley Dalton MP and media medics Dr Sarah Jarvis and Dr Philippa Kaye.

In 2026, HCPs and supporters are invited to:

- Wear a pair of stripy socks in the week running up to Rare Disease Day Saturday 28 February, post photos online with **#ShowYourStripes** and tag **@MedicsForRare**
- **#LearnYourStripes** Rare Disease training at <https://www.m4rd.org/> and encourage colleagues to do the same
- Contact info@m4rd.org to enquire about in-person training

Press release

About Medics for Rare Disease

Medics for Rare Disease* is a charity that provides free Rare Disease training for UK healthcare professionals. Rare Disease affects 3.5 million people in the UK and most conditions start in childhood. People with rare conditions wait an average five years to reach diagnosis, commonly experiencing multiple referrals, unnecessary tests and misdiagnoses. Despite this, most healthcare professionals will never receive dedicated rare disease training. Medics for Rare Disease exists to provide essential free educational resources to doctors, medical students and other healthcare professionals, to improve the healthcare journeys of people living with rare conditions.

Medics for Rare Disease partners with commercial companies in order to receive funding and to progress its mission. The charity works independently from these companies. Sponsorship does not equate to endorsement of any company or its products. To find out more visit www.m4rd.org/sponsors

Thank you to our 2026 Partner Companies for supporting this campaign: Alexion AstraZeneca Rare Disease, Alnylam, Amicus Therapeutics, emotive, Kyowa Kirin, Medscape Education, SOBI and Takeda. Sponsorship does not equate to endorsement of any pharmaceutical company or its products. To find out more visit www.m4rd.org/sponsors

*Medics for Rare Disease is the working name for Medics 4 Rare Diseases - a charity registered in England and Wales. Charity number 1183996. Registered address: Medics 4 Rare Diseases, Unit 12, Treadaway Technical Centre, Treadaway Hill, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP10 9RS.

Interviews available with CEO Lucy McKay and Medics for Rare Disease Ambassadors available upon request.

Contacts

Emily Campbell, emily@mearnsandpike.com, 07384755096

Laura Chambers, laura@mearnsandpike.com, 07793049657

References

1. GOV.UK, Department of Health & Social Care. Published 28 February 2025. England Rare Diseases Action Plan 2025: main report. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-rare-diseases-action-plan-2025/england-rare-diseases-action-plan-2025-main-report>. Last Accessed: 24 November 2025.
2. Macmillan Cancer Support. Cancer Statistics in the UK. <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research/cancer-statistics-fact-sheet>. Last Accessed: 24 November 2025.

Website Copy

At [Organisation/Trust name], we're proud to support Medics for Rare Disease for Rare Disease Day 2026.

3.5 million people in the UK are living with a rare disease. **That's as many people as those living with cancer.** They wait an average of five years to reach diagnosis, ping-ponging between disciplines and having unnecessary tests that further overextend our already stretched NHS. Rare diseases share many common characteristics and people with rare conditions face painfully similar challenges. Despite this, most medics will never receive any dedicated rare disease training.

#LearnYourStripes with Medics for Rare Disease

Five minutes is all you need to become more 'rare aware'. To mark Rare Disease Day, we'll be sharing Medics for Rare Disease's new mini training video with our colleagues, equipping ourselves to confidently suspect and detect rare disease and better support our patients who are or may be living with a rare disease.

What we're doing to show our support

- Wearing stripy socks in the whole week running up to Rare Disease Day on Saturday 28 February, posting our efforts on social media and tagging **#ShowYourStripes @MedicsForRare**
- Sharing Medics for Rare Disease mini training with our colleagues, encouraging them to **#LearnYourStripes**

Rare Disease Day 2026 in 50 & 100 words

The following copy summarises the call-out to healthcare professionals, medical students and changemakers in a lower word count for however you want to spread the word and help others

Five minutes is all you need to 'Learn Your Stripes' for Rare Disease Day. Take the new training video on m4rd.org to become more 'rare aware' today and better support the 3.5 million people in the UK who live with a rare condition.



3.5 million people in the UK are living with a rare disease, waiting an average of five years to reach diagnosis. Despite this, most medics will never receive any dedicated rare disease training.

Five minutes is all you need to become more 'rare aware' for Rare Disease Day. 'Learn your Stripes' with the mini training video on the Medics for Rare Disease website. Equip yourself to confidently suspect and detect rare disease and better support patients. When we get it right, we can have a huge positive impact on their lives and ensure that valuable NHS resources are used efficiently.



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Show your support on socials!

Feel free to copy the post template below, or use it as a starting point to create your own content.

Saturday 28th February is Rare Disease Day, meaning we'll be wearing our stripy socks at work all week (commencing Monday 23rd February) in proud support of Medics for Rare Disease and their #ShowYourStripes campaign.

This year, we'll be going a step further by sharing the Medics for Rare Disease new mini training video with our colleagues, to become more 'rare aware' and better support patients living with rare diseases.

If you're a healthcare professional or medical student, five minutes is all it takes to #LearnYourStripes with Medics for Rare Disease!

Show your support on socials!



Digital Assets

- [Follow this link](#) to easily download social media graphics, infographics, email banners, video call backgrounds and more!
- **Infographic and poster** - print and display in your place of work or share digitally
- **Zoom background and email signatures** - share the campaign digitally on work calls and emails to start the conversation with your colleagues!
- **Social media tiles and GIFS** - a selection for you to choose how to share via Instagram or LinkedIn



Infographic with key stats to print and display or share digitally



Poster to print and display in your place of work

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Learn more - helpful links

- [Rare Disease Day 2026: #LearnYourStripes 5-minute training video, resources for download and more!](#)
 - [Get some Rare Disease day inspiration with our 2025 Gallery](#)
 - [Rare Disease 101 Training - Medics For Rare Disease](#)
 - [England Rare Diseases Action Plan 2025](#)
 - [Genetic Alliance UK](#)
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- For support or questions, contact Emily on emily@mearnsandpike.com or 07384755096

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