

ANNUAL BLUE SUNDAY FUNDRAISER



18 MAY 2025

FOUNDED BY
ANNA REDSHAW

ABOUT BLUE SUNDAY



ORIGIN STORY

Blue Sunday is a fundraising event for the ME/CFS community, their allies, and the ME/CFS charities who support them. Created in 2013 by Anna Redshaw, the aim was to mould an inclusive fundraising event around her illhealth and the restrictions that ME/CFS placed upon her life and the lives of the ME/CFS community.

The Tea Party For M.E., the premise for Blue Sunday, came about after Anna was too unwell to celebrate her birthday in November 2012. As she was unable to mark the occasion in ways she had before, Anna asked her family and friends to join her for a virtual party, posting photos and videos of themselves raising a mug of tea and enjoying a slice of cake. It felt so wonderful to feel connected with her loved ones when she was unable to leave the house or have any visitors.

As M.E. Awareness month (May) was approaching in 2013, Anna started to feel that something was needed to commemorate it. It seemed wrong that there was nothing (accessible) that people with ME/CFS could participate in. So, she had a go at changing that.

As someone with ME/CFS who is so restricted by ill health, the 'conventional' methods of fundraising, such as doing a sponsored run, weren't at all appropriate. The success of her virtual birthday party had Anna hoping she could do the same again as a fundraising event.

So, the Blue Sunday tea party was born. (The name 'Blue Sunday' came about completely by chance from a title of a blog post Anna made after the first Tea Party For M.E in 2013.) She invited friends and family to join her online again, only this time Anna was well enough to have a select few join her in-person, for afternoon tea. She asked for small donations of the price people would expect to pay for a pot of tea and a slice of cake in a coffee shop. She uploaded photos and videos of her little event to social media so that even those stuck in bed on the other side of the world could feel included.

THE TEA PARTY FOR M.E.

Blue Sunday Centres around the online Tea Party For M.E., where the ME/CFS community takes to social media to chat and share photos of their tea party set-up.

For most, this involves being in bed but for the occasion they might be wearing blue pyjamas, have a blue duvet set, have had their bedroom decorated with blue bunting or even balloons; anything to make the day feel that bit different from the everyday. Others may be able to host or attend an in-person Tea Party For M.E. either at home, in the garden, or in a hired venue. Those joining in on Blue Sunday have the freedom to mould the day around their own health restrictions.

Regardless of how people have their own Tea Party For M.E., they take to social media to share photos and feel a part of something of a virtual tea party, with participants from all over the world and multiple time zones breaking the isolation they so often feel by simply commenting on other people's photos or just scrolling through the community's posts. Social media becomes a sea of blue and cake and tea pots; for most it's a welcome break from the heavy duty awareness raising we are so often united by.



ME/CFS AWARENESS WEEK STAPLE

Purposely separate of World M.E. Day, Blue Sunday has become a staple in the community's calendar, influencing and encouraging M.E. charities to be more inclusive of the people they are supporting. It has a more lighthearted and celebratory feel than World M.E. Day, and having a gap between the two allows for pacing and recovery time for some of those who may wish to participate in both. Those with ME/CFS deserve a day of joy, away from the essential awareness raising we still find ourselves having to do, even in 2025.

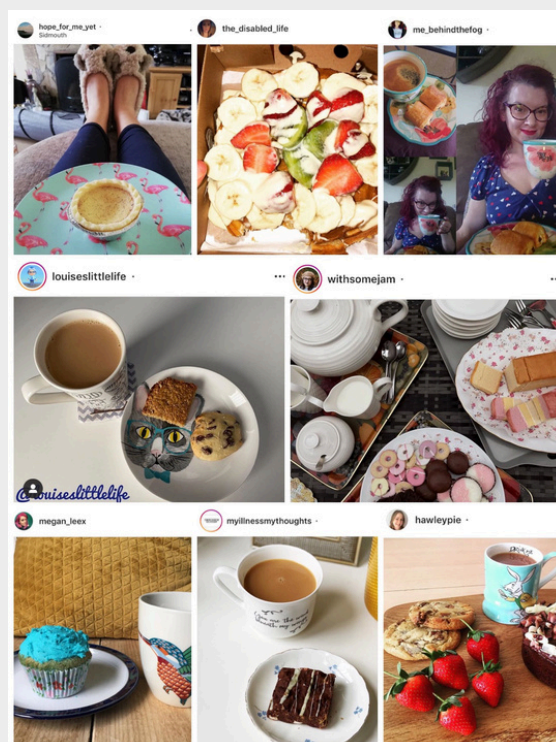
Tea Parties For M.E. are now held internationally, with members of the M.E. community and their family/friends hosting their own tea parties at home, at work, at street parties, or via video call.

Members of the ME/CFS community jump at the chance to be involved in something. Some raffle off their blue themed crafts and donate the proceeds, others hold bake sales at work or school. Most spend the day as they always do, unwell in bed, only this time the community has united online to share photos of their cup of tea. Blue Sunday has given so many people the opportunity to rediscover their sense of self beyond the illness, with Anna asking them to input their skills, to make the day a real group endeavour.

BREAKING THE ISOLATION

Life with ME/CFS can be incredibly isolating. Often, people with ME/CFS are too unwell to receive visitors. The communication, sensory overload, and exertion of even a five-minute visit will likely leave the sufferer worse off than they were before. Many people with ME/CFS are housebound, often bedbound, and so making a journey to be at an in-person Tea Party For M.E. is impossible.

Throughout the day photos and videos from tiny tea parties are uploaded onto social media where those unable to join an in-person event can feel a part of something.



POINTS OF NOTE

Blue Sunday is for ME/CFS causes only. With decades of neglect, Anna feels it is vital that Blue Sunday remain solely for the benefit of ME/CFS charities and causes,

Fundraising events and activities held on/for Blue Sunday should aim to be as inclusive of the ME/CFS community as possible, and should not be exercise or endurance based.

Please do not take images from Anna's website or social media pages. She is happy to provide these via email.

FUNDRAISING FOR ME/CFS CAUSES

Each year on Blue Sunday, people take the opportunity to donate to an ME/CFS cause of their choice. Asking those joining in to donate the cost of tea and cake has meant that those on lower incomes still feel able to contribute financially.

The money is sent directly to the charities, either via fundraising pages like JustGiving, or via the charity's website. Where possible, Anna tries to track the amount raised to feed back to the community after the event. The sense of accomplishment that those joining in feel when they hear how much has been raised each year is heartwarming.

Anna aims to list each fundraising URL on her website to make it easier for people to donate. **She would appreciate your help in setting up a dedicated Blue Sunday fundraising page if this something your charity has access to, and/or emailing her the total amount donated on/for Blue Sunday by the end of May.**



YOU'RE INVITED



It is Anna's hope that Blue Sunday can be of benefit to your ME/CFS charity.

Always aiming for the Sunday after World M.E. Day, this year Blue Sunday falls on 18th May. As the increase in donations and the reach of the event increases year after year, Blue Sunday's simple premise has been shown to be highly effective for both charities and the ME/CFS community.

Multiple charities find Blue Sunday provides their largest influx of donations.

With multiple time zones, there is no set time for the event but some charities host community video calls at specific times and invite their supporters to join them.

Please encourage your supporters to join in, in a way that works for them.

As a guide, in previous years ME/CFS community members have:

- held bake sales at work or school (on a day near to Blue Sunday)
- baked or bought their favourite cake to enjoy in the comfort of their own home
- hosted or joined video calls with family, friends, or the community
- worn something blue, decorated their bedroom with banners and bunting, or attached blue tinsel to their IV stands
- held quizzes or concerts online as entertainment for the community on the day
- held raffles or social media giveaways
- sold Blue Sunday or tea party themed merchandise

Anna has always asked that those joining in donate the price they'd pay for tea and cake in a cafe, to an ME/CFS charity or non-profit of their choice. To date, over £140,000 has been raised through Blue Sunday since it began in 2013.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Anna became unwell with ME/CFS back in 2010. Unable to work, Blue Sunday has become her sole focus each year. She spends her months preparing for, and then recovering from, her Blue Sunday efforts.

Anna has a small group of friends and volunteers within the ME/CFS community who help with proof-reading, and ensuring text, font and images are as accessible as possible. She relies on the community and charities to help spread the word about Blue Sunday.

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