

Sharing your experience

with the media

Why is it important for news stories to include the views and experiences of people living with mental illness?

Journalists speak to people with lived experience to hear first-hand what it's like to experience mental illness, as well as to understand the real-life impact of issues such as a lack of funding for mental health services. News stories which include the voices of people with personal experience can also help audiences connect with complex issues on a human level, educating them and motivating them to take action.



"Working with the media is a hugely enriching experience. It can be challenging opening up to journalists, but the team at Rethink Mental Illness helps you feel prepared and supported. I always seem to find something to say, which is testament to the value of lived experience. It is all within you. The opportunity to reach a wider audience and help people in this regard also has a really positive impact on my self-esteem." - **Julian**



"I decided to speak to the media with the support of Rethink Mental Illness as it enabled me to share my mental health story, improve understanding around stigmatised conditions like schizophrenia, and give back to the community. I found the experience liberating and empowering and I believe that the media work is part of my healing journey." - **Ashley**

What kinds of media opportunities might I be asked to get involved with?

Opportunities that people with lived experience can get involved in usually fall into these categories:

- Providing a written quote for press releases we send to media highlighting a particular issue, such as poor access to treatment. We can help you to draft this.
- Doing recorded interviews for use in television, radio, newspapers or online news.
- Having background chats with journalists so they can understand an issue.

Sometimes journalists may prefer to speak to someone who can use their real identity, but we can arrange anonymous opportunities on a case-by-case basis.

What kind of support does Rethink Mental Illness offer?

We understand working with journalists might feel like a daunting prospect, but the journalists we work with are often empathetic and knowledgeable and have good people skills, and we'll be on hand to support you. It can be helpful to remember that you are the expert of your own experiences!

When we share an opportunity, we'll give as much information as we can about what is likely to be involved, including how urgent the request is.

We'll call you before each media opportunity to help you prepare and make sure you have the support you need, And we'll touch base with you afterwards to debrief and follow up on any questions you have.

Things to consider

There are some things you should consider before working with the media:

- You should assume that any recorded interviews or quotes you provide will remain online indefinitely. While we are working hard as a charity to reduce stigma, there is sadly still discrimination around mental illness in society, and this is something you should carefully consider before taking part in media opportunities. Of course, if you are working with the media anonymously, this is much less likely to affect you.
- You have the power to decide whether there are any particular issues or experiences you do not want to speak about. Just because you've agreed to speak with a journalist, it doesn't mean you owe them every detail of your life story and we encourage you to decline talking about anything which you do not want to.
- Your wellbeing should always come first. There is no pressure for you to get involved in media opportunities if you are feeling unwell, or if you have a lot going on in your life.

We often share media opportunities that come in so you can let us know if they're relevant to you, or we might get in touch if your experience is a good fit with the issues we're campaigning on. We can't guarantee how many interviews you might do and we work with many Experts by Experience, but we'll share as many opportunities as we can.

