

# Checklists

## For Media Professionals, Interviewees and Supporting Organisations



**HEADLINE**

*Supporting media, changing attitudes*

## Part One: Tips for Before the Interview

### Sharing Information Before the Interview

#### MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

##### Explain:

The date, time, duration and format (medium / live or pre-record etc.) of the interview and who will undertake it

The purpose of the interview and what questions will be asked / topics discussed

That they can have a support person present with them if helpful

Whether and how confidentiality will be protected.

Any facets of the interview environment that could be stressful – people being busy, cameras / lighting, noisiness, quick movements, etc.

Any initial information about where it will be published/ broadcast and how their information may appear

#### INTERVIEWEE

##### It's important to know that:

You can ask for a detailed description of the interview process, i.e. who will be there, where it will happen, how long it will take, who will interview you.

You're entitled to know what the interview is about; you can ask for a copy of the interview questions or list of topics to be discussed, although you may not get a comprehensive list

You can bring a support person to the interview. Agree their role in advance e.g. a silent partner or someone who will speak up for you if things get tense

You can request clear info on confidentiality - if you could be identified from the publication or broadcast, and what details of yours they'll be publishing

You can ask the media professional if there will be cameras, lights, lots of people etc. so you feel prepared for whatever it involves.

You should know where your story will be published or broadcast. If this isn't made clear to you, ask for their publication/ broadcast plan

#### SUPPORT ORGANISATION

##### Ensure that you:

Get detailed information about the interview - date, time, duration and format (live or pre-record etc.) and who will undertake it

Help the interviewee prepare what they would (not) like to say – an advance copy of the interview questions, or a list of topics will facilitate this

Offer to accompany the person to the interview and agree your role (e.g. is it a silent support, or coming into the conversation if they need help).

Support the person to achieve clear information on confidentiality, limits to it, whether and how they will be identifiable in the final publication or broadcast

Ask for details on whether there will be cameras, lights, lots of people etc. to help the interviewee psychologically prepare for the interview

Request a publication/ broadcast plan



## Questions – Language, Topics and Triggers

### MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

#### Questions to ask:

- Do you have preferred words or terms to describe your experience?
- Do you have terms/words you would prefer us not to use? Explain that you will do your best to remember these on the day
- Are there topics you would rather not discuss or questions you'd prefer not to answer?
- Are there aspects of the interview/setting that could be particularly stressful for you? Is there anything we can do to make you more comfortable?
- Do you have someone to help you prepare for the interview? If not, help them to identify a mental health/media support organisation. Speak to Headline for advice on this

### INTERVIEWEE

#### It's important to know that:

- If there are certain words you prefer to describe your condition or experience, ask for these to be used
- If you have terms you do not like being used about your condition, tell the interviewer. If it's a common term, they may still use it by mistake
- Be clear and firm about what you will and will not talk about with the interviewer
- If there are things that make you particularly stressed, tell the journalist so they can help you be more comfortable on the day
- Some mental health organisations can help you prepare for media interviews, if you need it. You can ask the media professional to suggest one.

### SUPPORT ORGANISATION

#### Ensure that you:

- Encourage the interviewee to communicate their preferred terms for their condition/ experience to the interviewer
- Encourage the interviewee to communicate any terms they don't like being used to the interviewer or media professional
- Support the interviewee to identify and clearly communicate any topics they will not discuss
- Encourage the interviewee to tell the journalist about anything they find particularly stressful in the process, so discomfort can be minimised

## Consent

### MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

#### Explain:

- They can withdraw their consent to participate at any time – before, during or after the interview up to (what exact point: publication/broadcast etc)
- Withdrawing consent will have no negative impact on them
- Once the information is out in the public domain it cannot be withdrawn
- There may be additional media requests and public attention (positive or negative) through media / social media after their story is broadcast / published
- Explain what 'on/off the record' is, if this is relevant

### INTERVIEWEE

#### It's important to know that:

- You can withdraw your consent up until a certain point. Find out from the media professional when exactly that is
- Withdrawing from the process, even at the latest point, will have no negative consequences for you.
- Once a story is published it is very difficult to stop that information from being shared, even if you don't like how it is being shared/ interpreted etc.
- The public will likely engage with, and comment on or about your story on social media and comments sections. This may not always be positive
- Ask the journalist to take you through what is 'on/off the record' in the interview process

### SUPPORT ORGANISATION

#### Ensure that you:

- Encourage the interviewee to find out the last point at which they can withdraw consent
- Reassure the interviewee that withdrawing will have no negative consequences for them, including on their support from your organisation
- Remind the person, when discussing pros and cons of participating, that once the story is in the public domain it is difficult to stop it being shared
- Remind the interviewee that negative engagement with the story is possible, and that you are there to support them regardless.
- Support the person to understand or seek information on what is 'on/off the record' once the interview starts

# Part Two: Tips for During the Interview

## MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

○ Spend a couple of minutes getting to know the person before the official interview (if live, this might be at another time e.g. earlier in the day). This increases trust and openness

○ Treat them as the capable adult that they are – be respectful but do your job

○ Proactively look out for signs of discomfort and check in

○ Be authentically encouraging – connect to their motivation for doing this

○ Provide choice or control, even on minor issues, wherever you can

○ Listen to everything, not just the bits most interesting to you

○ If the person is stressed or nervous, reflect their words back to them. This gives them time to ensure they're happy with what they said or have said what they needed to say

○ Don't rush, but be clear about time limitations in a respectful way

## INTERVIEWEE

○ Before the interview starts, request a brief introduction and chat with the interviewer so you feel more relaxed for the main event

○ The media professional should be respectful to you, but also do their job. This may mean rushing, or asking challenging or probing questions

○ If you start to feel uncomfortable during the interview, you can pause and take some time to calm down and get clarity

○ In most cases, the interviewer has the same aim as you – to share an important story. Remember this if you're feeling nervous

○ If you are unhappy, uncomfortable, or unclear on anything, even in a minor way, let the interviewer know

○ The journalist may focus only on certain aspects of your story (e.g. significantly challenging things) in order to fit with their story. Tell them if there's something important you feel should be included that they are not asking about

○ If you start to feel stressed or nervous about what you've said, ask them to repeat your words back to you (unless the interview is a live broadcast)

○ Sometimes, a journalist might try to move on from something that is important to you as they run on very tight timeframes

## SUPPORT ORGANISATION

○ Encourage the interviewer to connect with the interviewee for a quick chat, in order to increase rapport and decrease stress

○ Ensure the interviewee understands the media professional will be kind and respectful, but also has a job to do which may at times feel probing/ rushed

○ Encourage both the interviewer and interviewee to be alert for and responsive to discomfort - this will ensure the interview stays on track

○ If the person is feeling intimidated or nervous, remind them that everyone has the same goal – to share an important story

○ Remind the interviewee that if they are uncomfortable, even with something minor, that they can request for it to be changed

○ Explain that media professionals may focus on particularly challenging (or in some cases hopeful) aspects of their story that may be required for the programme, but they can highlight what's important to them too

○ Remind the interviewee to ask for their quotes to be read back to them, or to repeat an answer to a question if they are nervous or concerned about what they have said [if interview is for print]

○ Help the interviewee understand that it may, at times, feel rushed, and this is because journalists usually have little time to get a lot of work done

# Part Three: Tips for After the Interview

## MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

- Check in with the person and thank them for taking part
- If possible, offer them a cup of tea or coffee or another gesture to show care
- Check that they have someone to talk to or debrief with if needed
- If relevant, remind them of how they can review quotes, content or final piece
- Give a contact phone number or email address for the interviewer or another team member in case questions or concerns arise
- Provide information about publication or broadcast dates and ensure you have their correct contact details should they need to be contacted with changes to these dates
- Highlight the possibility that publication/ broadcast of the article/interview may be cancelled / shortened/ postponed by the editor for reasons beyond the interviewer's control
- Alert participants to any rebroadcast, if relevant

## INTERVIEWEE

- After the interview is finished, take a few minutes to check in with yourself. The interviewer or a support person will likely check in with you too
- N/a
- Interviews about difficult experiences can take their toll. If you have a support person, have a debrief with them
- Ask if you are able to review any part of the article or programme before publication. It's important to note that due to timelines, this is often not an option
- Ask the interviewer for contact details if any questions/ concerns arise after the Interview
- Ask for a detailed broadcast/ publication plan, and tell the team that you want to be contacted if there are any changes
- Your contribution may not be used in the final product, or your piece may be shorter than you expect. This is due to editorial processes beyond the interviewer's control
- Some stories may be rebroadcast or republished after some time. Let the interviewer know that you'd like to be told if/ when this happens

## SUPPORT ORGANISATION

- Check in with the interviewee after the interview is finished to see how they're feeling immediately after
- N/a
- Interviews about difficult experiences can take their toll; offer the person a more in-depth debrief if they need it
- Remind the person they can seek an opportunity to review their input, although this is often not possible due to media timelines
- Have the contact details for the interviewer on record in case there are any issues or concerns at a later point
- Have information about publication or broadcast dates and give contact details to be notified of any changes
- Ensure the interviewee knows that content may appear differently to how they expected it to; shorter or may not appear at all
- Ask to be contacted if/ when the story is rebroadcast. Let the interviewee know beforehand, and follow up afterwards each time



## About this Checklist

The checklist accompanies guidance developed for media professionals for engaging people with lived experience of trauma or severe mental health conditions.

The guidance is a series of practice tips for media interview experiences. It has been developed from research with media professionals, mental health professionals and people living with severe mental health conditions.

This checklist provides a handy summary for media professionals, mental health professionals and people with lived experience considering taking part in a media interview. The full research and guidance can be found on [www.headline.ie](http://www.headline.ie)

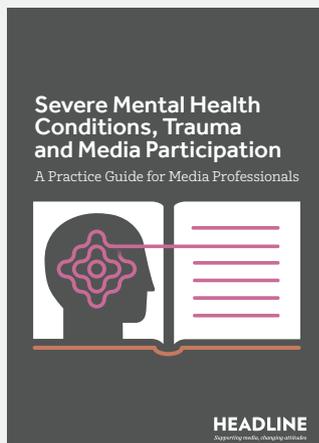
## Glossary

**Interview:** For the purposes of this checklist, 'Interview' is shorthand for any media engagement experience including, but not limited to, contributions to a print article, in-person or call-in live studio programme, contributions on radio or television, pre-recorded contributions in-person, or virtual contributions at online or real-life communications events.

**Media professionals:** By this we mean journalists, researchers, producers, reporters, camera operators, or anyone involved in news or media production.

**Interviewee:** By this, we mean a person with lived experience of trauma, severe mental health conditions or others as relevant, taking part in an 'interview' (see previous)

**Support organisation:** this means an organisation who is providing support to an interviewee, and may include, for example, a health or social care organisation. Some such organisations provide specific supports to people engaging with the media, and others do not. This guidance is intended to support any organisation working to support someone engaging with the media.



## Credits

This checklist was developed in 2021 by Headline and Quality Matters through a co-design process with people with lived experience of severe mental health conditions, media professionals and mental health organisations.

The checklist is part of a media guidance document 'Severe Mental Health Conditions, Trauma and Media Participation: A Practice Guide for Media Professionals' available from [www.headline.ie](http://www.headline.ie)

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