



Working with the media



Speaking out in the media can be very empowering and it can get your event or activity some welcome publicity. If you have a positive news story to share, for example a meeting with your local MP about a campaign, a fundraising event you're hosting, or you're setting up a new peer support group, consider contacting your local newspaper, online news site or radio station.



Looking after your wellbeing

Your wellbeing comes before the success of an event or campaign, so make sure you are comfortable before going ahead with media. Remember that what you share is then “out there” and potentially stays in the public domain for a long time. Only share what you are comfortable with, and ensure you have support in place if needed.

Do your research

Look into what local media you have in your area. There is likely to be a local paper or online news site, local radio stations, including community radio stations which may have a particular area of interest. Perhaps there is a local hospital radio. Thinking slightly further afield, there will also likely be regional news outlets, including a regional BBC radio station and news channel, and ITN have a regional news programme too. Stick within your county but get to know what the options are.

“I would definitely encourage other people to speak out in the media. I originally did it because I wanted to raise awareness of mental health issues for Rethink Mental Illness, and to help other people. But it actually turned out to be good for me too! It made me feel good about myself.”

Lorraine, Rethink Mental Illness Media Volunteer

Write a Press Release

If you want to get story in the media it is best to send out a press release to your local paper or online news site. A press release tells a journalist what your story is at a glance. They will get hundreds of press releases a day, so you need yours to stand out!

Make sure you catch their attention in the first few lines and that your press release is more than about 400 words. Keep in mind that if it does get published it will be edited to suit the paper's needs.

Do you have a good quality photo to illustrate the story? Let the journalist know as they often like to have photos alongside stories.

Top tip:

If you are on Twitter, follow your local news outlets and journalists as they sometimes do call outs asking for stories and guests around a certain topic. It can be a good and fast way to connect.



Example of a press release

For immediate release

Birmingham community activist wins mental health award

14th November 2015 – A community activist from Birmingham has been given an award by the national charity Rethink Mental Illness for his work to improve attitudes around mental health.

Steven Gilbert, from Birmingham, has been announced winner of the Janey Antoniou award for his passion and commitment to improving the lives of people living with mental illness.

Steven said, “I feel blessed to have achieved a level of recovery and believe it is important to speak openly about my experiences of living with mental illness to help educate others and reduce the stigma within my community.”

The Janey Antoniou award, set up by Rethink Mental Illness, is named after a well-known mental- health campaigner and researcher who died in 2010. The award was presented by Janey’s family to Steven along with a prize of £1000 at the Rethink Mental Illness National Members’ Day.

Steven was recognised for his efforts to speak out and highlight mental health issues among young African Caribbean men and his involvement in the Time to Change to Change project ‘300 Voices’, aimed at improving the lives of young African Caribbean men with mental illness.

“I’m honoured to have been given this award and will use this as an opportunity to share my reality of living with a mental illness, the good and the bad, to fight for parity of esteem and to reduce stigma” said Steven.

Steven has also recently been appointed to the West Midlands Mental Health Commission working alongside Norman Lamb and Geraldine Strathdee to assess the scale of the impact of poor mental health on the lives of people living in the region.

For more information contact
[YOUR NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS]

Who do I send it to?

The email address to send stories or letters to is usually listed in the “contact us” section of the publication or broadcaster’s website.

Sometimes bigger outlets might have different reporters responsible for different areas. For example, health or social affairs reporters will likely be a good fit for a mental health story. For smaller places, often there is just one email address to the main newsdesk.

**Did you get your story
in the media? We would
love to hear about it!**

**Let us know at
media@rethink.org**



Keep your email short and to the point. For example:

Good afternoon,

Please see press release below about a local event taking place next week, which I thought would be of interest to your readers/viewers/listeners. Photos available (if you have photos)
Any questions do let me know.

Your name and number

Don't be disheartened if they don't reply or decline. Lots of stories never make it into the news for all sorts of reasons.

If you don't hear back by email, you could find out the number (again, have a look in the contact us section of the website) and give them a brief call just to check they got the email. If you do this, be prepared to say in a nutshell what your story is about. If they say no, leave it at that.

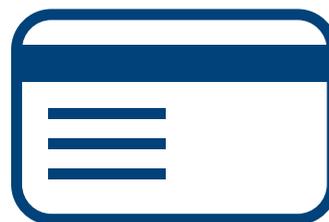
Maybe next time!

Get on the radio

Local radio stations are a good platform for you to talk about your event or activity. They like to share stories about local people or information that will have an impact on their listeners. So they may well be interested in talking about a new local support group or an event you're hosting.

Ideally choose a radio station you have listened to, as you'll be more familiar with what kinds of topics they cover. Alternatively look online and check what radio stations are in your area.

The best way to contact a radio station is to write a press release about what you want to share – see guidance.



Top tips for radio interviews

- Try to relax.
- Find out if it's live or pre-recorded.
- You might be asked to come to your local radio station studio, or they may ask you to do the interview over the phone from home. If you're doing it from home, call from a landline if possible and find somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed.
- Keep your language simple and to the point.
- If you make a mistake it's ok to correct yourself.
- Think ahead about what you don't want to discuss.
- Think about the types of questions they might ask you, and plan what your answers will be. You can even ask for questions in advance.
- Your interview may be edited so what you say may not be final.
- Remember, you are the expert! Take confidence from that.

Top tip

If you have any questions about working with the media, contact media@rethink.org and we will do our best to support you



**Leading the way to a better quality
of life for everyone severely
affected by mental illness.**

For further information
on Rethink Mental Illness
Phone 0121 522 7007
Email info@rethink.org

rethink.org