



## Story sharing guidance

A guide to inform the process of sharing personal experiences related to mental health and recovery

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## Foreword

When I started working in mental health, like many members of the public, I had a slightly confused picture of what it was all about. I discovered a complex set of ideas and approaches, backed up by its own special language. I remember attending a conference on 'Psychosocial Interventions' and feeling a little let down to discover that something, which on the face of it sounded pretty advanced and different, was in fact about talking therapies, education and family involvement – all things I thought, at the time, were pretty run of the mill. Was I missing something?

It wasn't until I first heard people share their personal story of mental health and recovery that things started to make much more sense for me. I remember people like Ron Coleman and Audrey Reid speaking at Hearing Voices Network events, offering exciting insights, challenging audiences and raising awareness. They reminded us that they were experts in their own experience and their contributions, and the contributions of many others who have since made that brave step to share personal experiences, has been central to the development of recovery approach in Scotland.

Sharing stories inspires hope and encourages recovery but it is certainly not something to be taken lightly. My story moves on a few years when at an event I witnessed someone become distressed and upset by the prospect of sharing their story in front of a large group of people. This was more than stage fright and it made me much more aware of the responsibility that the Scottish Recovery Network had as an organisation that had been promoting the idea of sharing experiences as a driver for change.

I hope that these guidelines are used in the spirit in which they were intended. They should not be seen as a prescriptive list of do's and don'ts, rather they should be used as a prompt and adapted to fit your needs, offering ideas and suggestions intended to ensure that story sharing experience is a positive one for all parties.

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This guide was developed by Heidi Tweedie of Moxie Media on behalf of the Scottish Recovery Network.

For more information on the Scottish Recovery Network visit:  
[www.scottishrecovery.net](http://www.scottishrecovery.net)

First published: 2009

## Introduction

Increasingly people are looking to narrative, or sharing personal stories, as an effective means of raising awareness in relation to issues of mental health, wellbeing and recovery. Gathering and sharing narratives can take a number of different formats. They may, for example, be written or involve people speaking about their experiences in training or at an event.

This guide aims to support and inform those wishing to assist others to share a personal narrative, as well as providing guidance for those considering sharing their own personal narrative. It does not attempt to address issues raised by the therapeutic uses of storytelling.

In developing this guide it is not our intention to control the story sharing process, rather we hope to offer advice and prompts based on our experience.

### **A note on language**

In this guide we use the terms *story* and *narrative* to describe the process where people share personal experiences. The term *author* is used throughout to describe the person who wishes to share their experiences. The term *story interpreter* is used to describe the person who supports an author in sharing their experiences.

### **Your feedback**

We anticipate this document will develop over time and we are keen to hear you thoughts on its content and style as well as its usefulness.

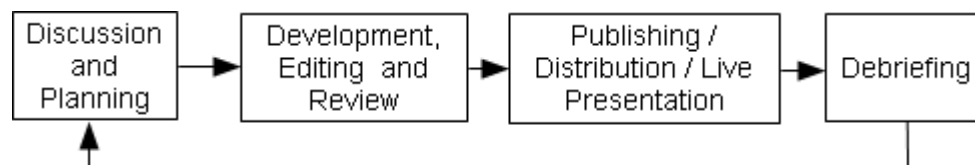
If you have suggestions on how it could be improved or developed please contact us via [info@scottishrecovery.net](mailto:info@scottishrecovery.net) or 0141 240 7790.

## Story sharing – principles and process

The following principles should be used to help guide and inform the story sharing process.

1. **Control:** The author should retain as much control of the process as possible.
2. **Support:** The author needs to be given the time and resources to make an informed decision about whether they want to share their story.
3. **Wellbeing:** The safety and wellbeing of the author needs to be placed at the centre of all considerations.
4. **Responsibility:** The author is ultimately responsible for the level of disclosure in their narrative.

The following diagram provides a suggested overview of the story sharing process.



The above process is cyclical to ensure that best practice continues beyond sharing the story with a wider audience. Each stage is important in fully supporting the author and maintaining the integrity of the process.

## **The story sharing process for story interpreters**

### **1. Discussion and planning**

#### **Explore motives**

Your aims as a story interpreter may be different from that of the person you are supporting. It is important to discuss these aims with the author to help ensure that the interests of both parties are met.

Some of the motives behind sharing personal narratives include:

- Providing messages of recovery, hope and inspiration for others.
- Providing examples for use in awareness raising or anti-stigma materials and presentations.
- To value people's lived experience.
- To inform policy and practice development.
- Empowerment for the person sharing their narrative.
- For research and evaluation.

It is also helpful at this stage for both parties to agree how the story will be used as well as discuss possible content or focus of the story.

It is often the power of the personal story that makes it appealing for use in training and resources; however, as with the sharing of any personal information, it must be treated with sensitivity and respect. It is good practice to remember that a person's story cannot be wrong, but it may be unsuitable for your needs.

If you do find that a story is unsuitable for your needs, signposting an author to a different organisation or story sharing group may help to prevent the author leaving the relationship with negative feelings.

#### **Acknowledge the use of language**

Keep in mind the use of language when working with those sharing their personal narratives. For example, the use of the words 'story' and 'narrative', which are used in this document to mean the same thing, have other connotations. Take the lead from the person sharing their story as to their preferred terms.

#### **Outline support and agree code of conduct**

Providing clear and sensitive support for those sharing their personal story will help to ensure a positive conclusion for both story interpreter and author.

The story author should be made aware of the following, if available:

- Your contact details including email and phone number.
- Any story sharing guidelines for reference (such as this guide).
- Prior examples of relevant comparable story sharing.
- Reassurance that they will receive copies of all notes, recordings and files created throughout the process.
- Personal support in the form of an advocate or friend for meetings if desired.

Clarity in communication is an important part of working with personal narrative. To prevent misunderstandings and negative experiences, a formal or informal code of conduct between all parties should be agreed.

This may include sections on:

- *Aims*: Clearly setting out why both parties want to share personal narrative and what they aim to gain from the experience, for example, sense of contributing for author and training resource for interpreter.
- *Expectations*: It is important that expectations are discussed, for example, timekeeping for appointments or possibility for retractions.
- *Confidentiality*: Agreeing a level that is practical in regards to aims and expectations, for example, use of anonymity and ability to restrict audience.

The discussions prior to story sharing provide the foundations for a supportive relationship. The process of investing time to create a document, or spoken agreement, gives value to the experience for all involved.

### **Discuss implications of the format**

Story sharing can have many forms, each of which have specific implications for both the interpreter and the author. It is vital that these implications are considered, discussed and agreed by all parties.

For the purposes of this guide we have three format groups: written, live and recorded media. The table in appendix 1 outlines the specific implications of the format for each of these different ways of story sharing. This table should prove helpful in discussions with the story author.

### **Discussion and planning checklist**

- ✓ Motivation discussed and acceptable to both parties
- ✓ Support materials provided
- ✓ Code of conduct agreed
- ✓ Discussed implications of format
- ✓ Review with author – are they happy to proceed?

## 2. Development, editing and review

### Recording and developing personal narrative

Supporting the story author to develop their recovery story may include:

- Interviewing the author and taking notes for them.
- Facilitating discussion to allow the author to explore their story.
- Drafting notes from discussion to assist in story exploration.
- Rehearsing for the event (live media).
- Reviewing or producing slides and/or aid-memoirs (live media).
- Reviewing and editing drafts of the story (written media).
- Sharing edits with the author and feeding back on production progress (written media).
- Supporting the author in relevant meetings, previews or on location (recorded media).

### Considerations for developing and editing a story

#### *Developing the story:*

Working together to explore and develop the story allows an author to fully consider all the aspects that they wish to cover and the level of detail they want to go in to. Additionally this provides you with an opportunity to consider the story's suitability for your aims and audience.

#### *Language and presentation:*

Issues such as explicit language, references to third parties and confusing local references, dialect, or strong accent, may affect the usability of a story. Sensitivity is required when reviewing these issues with an author but the final presentation must meet both your objectives and theirs. If language has to be altered encourage the author to remain true to the spirit or meaning they wish to convey and find an alternative way to communicate this.

#### *Editing someone else's words:*

The solution to editing any personal story is to remain true to the spirit or meaning conveyed by the author, making as few alterations and substitutions as necessary and reviewing the final edit with the author to ensure you have captured the story to their satisfaction, whilst still being relevant to your goals. This is probably the most skilled part of story sharing and relies on a good working relationship.

#### *Consent forms:*

Having a signed document shared by both the interpreter and the author provides clarity for both parties. Provide a consent form, allow for a cooling off period and beware of putting pressure on someone to take part. Ensure their awareness of potential wider implications of sharing their story, for



themselves, friends and family and your organisation.

*Legal issues:*

Slander (spoken) or libel (written/published) are the main legal considerations in story sharing. As a general rule try to leave out references to any organisation, company, individual, or product, unless you or the author have gained written consent from them.

*Ownership:*

Once the narrative is in a format ready to share with a wider audience the issues of ownership and control then become relevant. You may need to consider and discuss with the author the following issues:

- Will the author present this as their own words or will this be represented in a third party format (for example, as general comments from a member of a group)?
- Once the work is circulated will the author be able to retract/edit the story?

*Continual support:*

Of course no journey is static – an author's relationship with and feelings about a story may change over time. Also, working with an individual to share their personal narrative can bring both the positive and negative to light. Continual review with the author to ensure a positive outcome is important.

*Working with third parties:*

Third parties involved in your project, such as TV production companies, web developers, publishers, or radio producers, may present further communication challenges. Ensure that all parties are clear as to why the personal narrative is being used and the importance of supporting the story author throughout. Share guidance and best practice with them, such as this document, and discuss any reservations the story author has about the process. Accompany the story author to all recordings and meetings; be aware of any concerns that arise during the development process and support the author appropriately.

## **Review, prepare and practice**

*Review (written and recorded media):*

Once you have a final draft/version of the story allow the author time to review, give feedback and suggest edits before submitting it for publishing or distribution. Agree a meeting to discuss any changes an author requires.

*Practice (live presentation):*

Whether a live radio interview or speaking at a training conference, reviewing and practicing a story presentation boosts confidence and can prevent anxiety on the day. It may also be useful for the story author to explore some of the

challenges they may face and discuss relevant coping strategies.

Challenge	Possible Coping Strategy
A surprise audience member, for example, a family member, an old acquaintance or care provider.	Consider a worst case scenario; Would the story author need to cancel or perhaps ask someone else to deliver the story for them? Perhaps it is appropriate for you to request they leave the event for your presentation.
Negative feedback or inappropriate personal questions from event participants or interviewer.	Consider agreeing a safety signal for you or another supporter to step in and close that line of questioning.
Technical malfunction of equipment such as projector or microphone failing to work.	Have spare equipment or a technical supporter on hand.
Author becomes very nervous on the day and cannot present.	Would the story author need to cancel or perhaps ask someone else to deliver the story for them? Ensure the author is supported to practice their presentation prior to the event.

As soon as you know the timings for the live event pass these on to the author. It might be relevant to discuss any arrangements for travel, expenses or accommodation at this time.

### Development, editing and review checklist

- ✓ Author supported to record and develop story in own words.
- ✓ Legal and ownership issues explored.
- ✓ Support maintained.
- ✓ Draft format/presentation reviewed.
- ✓ Coping strategies for presentation challenges discussed.

### 3. Sharing the story – going live

#### Final checks

##### *Suitability:*

Unfortunately, even with the best intentions, and ongoing review process, stories may not meet your needs. Double check the story is still suitable for the author and for you. If it is unsuitable for your needs consider supporting them to share their narrative elsewhere.

##### *Publishing (written and recorded media):*

Before submitting or publishing the narrative, review the story and format with the author. Discuss the time frame for sharing the narrative, including the publishing date and where and how the story will be available. If it is a printed publication, provide a proof version of the publication if you have one.

##### *Follow-up and feedback:*

Support is still important after publication or sharing especially if the narrative draws further media attention. Ensure the author has your current contact details and arrange a follow up meeting or telephone appointment for review and support purposes. If the story has been published in a medium that allows updating or removal, for example on a website, then make the author aware of the process of doing this.

#### Sharing the story checklist

- ✓ Still suitable
- ✓ Consent form explained and signed
- ✓ Publishing information shared
- ✓ Support available
- ✓ Issues of updating or removal of story discussed
- ✓ Review date set

#### Live presentation - on the day

##### *Setup and preparation:*

The day of the live presentation is often tense for all involved, but with planning and organisation this can be minimised. Ensure all the arrangements agreed between yourself and the author have been carried out. For example: Is the seating as requested? Is there plenty of water to hand? Does the author have a copy of printed material such as a running order for the day?

##### *Support the author fully:*

Presenting a personal story live can be daunting and intimidating for a story author; a familiar face in the audience can be hugely reassuring. Ensure that the author has the support where and when they require it for their presentation. Ask them where they would like you to be for the presentation

(for example, standing beside them, behind them or in the audience) and delegate any outstanding tasks that may take your focus away from supporting the author for their presentation, as this must take priority.

*Introducing the author:*

Any introduction for the author should explain the nature of their presentation and ask that people respect and support the author in sharing their personal story. Ensure the author has met whoever will be introducing them to the audience/interviewer and that they feel comfortable with the content of their introduction.

*Safety signal:*

A pre-arranged safety signal between yourself and the author is useful in case of problems during the presentation. This may include negative reactions or comments from the audience or interviewers, technical failures or the author becoming too distressed or veering too far from agreed content.

*Follow-up and feedback:*

Make time to thank the author for sharing their story and review the live presentation directly after the event. The author may feel they need extra support at this time, especially if the presentation did not go to plan or there were unforeseen challenges. Check with them to see if they require anything such as a walk outside, a lift home or simply a drink of water and something to eat. Ensure the author has your current contact details and arrange a follow up meeting or telephone appointment for review and support purposes. This is doubly important if the narrative draws further media attention.

### **Live presentation checklist**

- ✓ Event setup acceptable
- ✓ Author support organised
- ✓ Tasks delegated
- ✓ Safety signal agreed
- ✓ Author thanked and given post event support
- ✓ Contact details provided
- ✓ Review date set

## **4. Debriefing**

### **The follow up meeting**

A debriefing conversation brings value to the story sharing process, echoing the concept that a personal narrative is ongoing and perspectives can change over time. It helps to fine tune your story sharing process, improve the experience and outcome, for both interpreter and author. It also offers an opportunity to thank the story author for their contribution, perhaps by

organising a special event.

Some of the issues you may wish to review with a story author include:

- Suggested improvements to your story support process.
- Further opportunities to develop a personal narrative either with your organisation or with an external group or organisation.
- Any plans to re-print or further distribute the story.
- Revisiting the story/opportunities to return to the narrative to remove, update or edit in future.

## 5. Specific considerations

### Ensuring equality and accessibility

Both the story author and the intended audience may have additional accessibility requirements. Ask the author if they require any specific supports and keep in mind your intended audience's needs. Note that individuals with learning disabilities or communication issues may require additional support.

These could include:

- *Communications considerations:* Would the audience/author prefer resources or support in other formats such as large print/brail/audio or require an interpreter?
- *Accessibility considerations:* Are there particular considerations for the author/audience in regard to accessing venues due to rurality/transport links/mobility/anxieties?

### Working with members of the BME community

When working with individuals from black and minority ethnic communities you should take account of the following additional considerations:

- *Confidentiality and anonymity:* Stigma is a common barrier to story sharing and can be a particularly sensitive issue for those from BME communities. It is essential to emphasise the availability of confidentiality and anonymity.
- *Communication:* Using telephone or face to face communication, rather than written, can prevent misunderstanding, promote a supportive story sharing relationship and make the process less intimidating. Ensure you are explicit about your aims and allow enough time to build relationships. This will help to achieve a meaningful outcome.
- *Access:* Ensure appropriate access in regard to timing of sessions, language and venues. Having an accessible and familiar venue,

considering religious or family duties such as prayer times or school hours, providing lunch and having familiar bilingual support workers all contribute to creating a relaxed and informal environment.

- *Cultural issues:* An awareness of what mental health and wellbeing means within an author's community is important. For example, in some BME communities a person's identity may be closely linked with their place in their family and community. This may affect the way in which you support their story sharing.

## The story sharing process for authors

### Why share your personal experiences with others?

The Scottish Recovery Network regularly supports individuals to develop and share their lived experiences of recovery. We have found that stories help to inform and inspire service providers, carers and those with personal experience of mental health problems alike. This in turn promotes recovery.

Individuals we have worked with have different reasons for sharing their experiences. Many people describe the process of developing and sharing a personal story as helpful. It can provide an opportunity to review the past and identify the things that have gone well and can create a sense of meaning and direction. Some people also describe the powerful sense of fulfilment they get from offering hope and inspiration to others.

In order to assist you in deciding whether or not to share your story we have provided the following considerations based on our experiences as story interpreters (people who encourage and support others to share their story) and on feedback from those involved in sharing their personal narrative.

### Discussion and planning

You, as the author, are the expert in your own story. Central to the story sharing process is both your wellbeing and personal aims. With this in mind the following questions should help to shape some of your key decisions in story sharing.

#### *Aims and audience:*

- What are you trying to achieve in sharing your story?
- Who are you trying to reach? What is your desired audience?
- Who can you work with - organisations or individuals - who will share your aims and enable you to reach your desired audience?
- Are there any individuals or groups you do not wish to work with or share your story with?

#### *Maintaining wellbeing:*

The process of sharing personal experiences can evoke both positive and negative emotions. Maintaining your wellbeing throughout this process is therefore a key consideration. Planning, including exploring triggers and coping strategies, can assist you in maintaining your wellbeing throughout the narrative sharing process.

- What support will you need from story interpreters, supporters, friends, family, carers and professionals to ensure your wellbeing throughout the process?

- What coping strategies can you put in place if the event the story sharing process is negatively affecting you?

*Format:*

Story sharing may take any form of media, written (websites, booklets etc), live (presentations, live television broadcasts etc) or recorded (pre-recorded radio programming, DVD productions etc).

Each format has specific considerations which you need to be familiar with to ensure you can fully take part in any planning decisions with your supporters (explored in appendix 1: Specific format considerations).

- Have you considered and reviewed the specific format considerations?

*Working with others to share your story:*

If you choose to work with others to develop and share your story the following questions may help to create a supportive working relationship, maintain your wellbeing and ensure a positive outcome:

- What are your aims and what audience do you wish to reach with my story?
- What previous experience do you have in story sharing? Are there examples of this work available for me to look at?
- What form of media (e.g. written, DVD, audio recording, live presentation) do you plan on using for sharing my story?
- How do you plan to distribute or share the final product?
- What support will be available to me throughout the process?
- Who will I be working with and where will I be able to contact them?
- What ability will I have to edit, update, remove or change my story in the future?
- What guidance documentation on story sharing do you provide?
- How long do you estimate the story sharing process taking from planning to debriefing?
- Will there be others sharing their stories in the same publication/event/recording?
- What can you do to assist me in maintaining my anonymity?
- When is the point of no return when I can no longer retract my story?
- What is your complaints procedure if I am unhappy with the story sharing process?

### **Story development, editing and review**

The next step is to consider the content of your story. Taking time to develop and explore what you want to share and how you want to share it will help you to retain ownership of your story. It will also help guide the support you get from the people you are working with to share your story (i.e. story interpreters).



*Anonymity:*

Sharing your story does not automatically require you to use your real name. You can use an alias or pseudonym and perhaps refrain from giving identifiable information in order to protect your identity and the identity of others featured in your stories.

- What level on anonymity will be suitable for you?

*Content:*

There is no right or wrong content for a story, although certain stories are more suitable for certain uses.

- Is the content suitable for your chosen audience?

*The future:*

Stories reflect an author's thoughts and feelings at a specific time in their life. Some story sharing formats, such as printed or recorded materials, cannot be changed, withdrawn or updated once they are published. Keeping this in mind while developing your story may prevent a negative experience.

- Is there anything in your story that you may wish to change at a later date?

*Consent:*

It's good practice to ask for consent from other people you identify in your story to ensure they are fully aware of the context and to protect their identity. Gaining written consent can also assist in protecting you from negative repercussions from those referenced. If you think that gaining consent may be an issue consider removing these references.

- Will those I reference be happy to give consent?

## **Sharing the story and going live**

The next stage of the process is where the story goes 'live', i.e. it is shared with a wider audience.

*Planning for live presentations:*

Taking responsibility to keep yourself safe when presenting or answering questions is important. Considering the following points might help:

- Knowing your audience as much as possible can prevent a negative experience.
- Occasionally people may ask inappropriate questions and put you on the spot. This is where planning and supporters play an essential role.
- Speak with other people who have shared their story and ask for their

advice on what helps make it a positive experience.

- Consider your personal limits. What you will discuss and what is out of bounds? Work with supporters to choose coping strategies and consider a worst case scenario.

One option for live presentations is to write down your entire story. You may then choose to read directly from it or even ask someone else to read it on your behalf. This can be helpful if you feel very nervous or uncomfortable with the idea of sharing your story when the day comes.

Preparation always helps. Practice in front of friends, family or supporters. You may also want to make sure that you have contact details for supporters/event organisers should you need to speak with someone after the event. Taking account of the following checklist should help ensure a positive experience.

### **Live presentation checklist**

- ✓ Have you discussed and made clear to supporters/event organisers your boundaries for question and answer sessions?
- ✓ Have you developed a contingency plan and coping strategies for using on the day?
- ✓ Have you practiced the presentation with friends, family or supporters?
- ✓ Have you arranged for a 'friendly face' in the audience; someone who can provide support and reassurance?
- ✓ If you work well with visual prompts have you considered making notes or slides to support your presentation?
- ✓ How will you look after yourself after the event?

### **Debriefing**

Once you have shared your story you may wish to reflect on the experience to explore what went well for you and what did not work. This is particularly important if you have decided to work with others to support your story sharing process. They may go on to support others in sharing personal stories and your feedback will assist them in improving their process.

You may also decide to continue sharing personal stories, perhaps exploring different formats and audiences. In addition you may wish to consider supporting others in their story sharing, providing your own experiences as inspiration and guidance.

## Appendix 1: Format specific considerations

Consideration	Written media	Live media	Recorded media
	May include newspaper articles, research papers, creative anthologies (such as poetry collections), posters, information leaflets, websites, blogs and research.	May include training events, awareness raising and conference presentations, art exhibitions, group discussions, live television programmes and radio interviews.	May include DVD resources, short films, online video, video journals, podcasts, recorded music, animation, pre-recorded television, recorded multi-art and radio interviews.
<b>Anonymity</b> A story may contain personal information that may make the author identifiable. This may be a concern in regard to the experience of stigma.	Would the author prefer to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym?	Would the author prefer to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym, perhaps allowing another person to present their story? Relates to the event itself and related documentation or publicity.	Would the author prefer to remain anonymous (perhaps allowing another person to present their story) use a pseudonym in credits? Actors or voiceover artist can be used to maintain anonymity if desired.
<b>Audience</b> The author may have concerns with sharing information outside of a specific group or organisation.	Who will read this story and what size is the audience? Is the format publicly available or is it specifically for use in-house?	Who will be present at this event, for example, others with similar experiences, professionals, journalists or the general public? What size is the audience? Will those mentioned in a story be present in the audience?	Who will have access to this story? What size is the audience (local, national or international)? Is the story publicly available or is it specifically for use in-house? Can the audience be restricted, for example, by preventing copies being made of the recording or requiring a consent form and guidelines for use?

Consideration	Written media	Live media	Recorded media
<p><b>Time in public domain</b> Often written and recorded stories are available for a long time after they are published or released; authors should be made aware that how they share their story today may not reflect the way they feel at a later date.</p>	<p>Can this story be updated, removed or edited at a later date?</p>	<p>Is there a possibility that the event will be recorded? (If yes - refer to information on recorded media) Will there be media attention, a press call, or photographs taken for publicity?</p>	<p>Can this story be updated, removed or edited at a later date?</p>
<p><b>Consent</b> Information in a narrative may also identify others including friends, family, colleagues, professionals and supporters of the author.</p>	<p>How will other people be contacted regarding consent?</p>	<p>How will other people be contacted regarding consent?</p>	<p>How will other people be contacted regarding consent?</p>
<p><b>Presentation style and other content:</b> Graphics, surrounding content and presentation style, including formatting for printed supporting material or presentation packaging, affect how an audience relates to a story. If possible involve an author in selecting or reviewing presentation style.</p>	<p>What will the final draft look like? Will there be other personal stories in the same publication? Will the author be able to review a draft version and make comments?</p>	<p>Will there be other presentations or stories shared at the same event? What will be the objectives and style of these? Will there be any printed materials for this event? What will these look like? Will the author be able to review a draft version of printed material and/or slides used on the day?</p>	<p>Will there be other stories shared in the same programme/recording? What will be the objectives and style of these? What will printed materials such as supporting documentation and packaging look like? If this is a visual recording will there be any graphics used on screen? Will the author be able to review a draft version and make comments?</p>

Consideration	Written media	Live media	Recorded media
<p><b>Planning</b> Awareness of creating an environment that supports story sharing is important; involving the story author in planning decisions or implementing requests gives more value to the experience.</p>	<p>Can the author be involved with planning this written project? What level of support, from you and/or other supporters, would the story author require to feel comfortable during creating and reviewing their story?</p>	<p>Can the author be involved with the planning of factors such as – microphone use, positioning of presenters (for example, sitting/standing for presentations), staging, dress code, and audience size? Will there be a question and answer session or an informal networking after an event? What level of support, from you and/or other supporters, would the story author require to feel comfortable before, during and after the presentation?</p>	<p>Prior to recording: Can the author be involved with the planning of the recording? What level of support, from you and/or other supporters, would the story author require to feel comfortable before, during and after the recording?  After the recording: Is this a production you have control over or a third party project? Will you and the author have access and input in to the editing process?</p>
<p><b>Presentation/communication skills</b> A story author may not have wide experience in presenting and live delivery. Their style, accent or delivery may make their story inaccessible to an audience.</p>	<p>(see page 8: <i>Language and presentation</i>)</p>	<p>Have you allowed time to practice or rehearse the event? Is the author willing to practice their presentation? Can you provide additional coaching or training in presentation skills to boost their confidence?</p>	<p>Can you provide additional coaching or training to boost their confidence? Can you provide any alternative methods of presentation for the author? For example, if a camera makes the author very nervous, one option would be to use alternative images whilst using their voice. Would the story author prefer others delivered or presented their story?</p>
<p><b>Time frame</b> Most story sharing projects are time sensitive and have completion deadlines.</p>	<p>When will the story be published once a final draft is agreed on?</p>	<p>What if the author is unable to present their story at the event? What contingency plan would be suitable? For example, would the author allow another person to share their story?</p>	<p>When will the story be published or distributed once a final version is agreed?</p>

## Appendix 2: Working with the media

Sharing personal stories via press such as newspapers, trade press, radio and television, adds further considerations to story sharing. Issues often arise due to a requirement for a third party, such as a journalist, producer or editor, who is perhaps not as aware of the sensitivities of working with personal stories, to produce a piece which does not allow the author to review, revoke or edit before publication.

The media is a fast moving environment and journalists are often under a great deal of pressure to meet deadlines, fit content to existing format and create copy that meets their editor's wishes. Although a journalist may produce a supportive piece it can be changed in the editorial process and may even not make it to publishing.

This process is not something you or the author has much control over. However, there are ways to make the process run more smoothly and successfully:

- Have someone act as a mediator or 'middleman' to the sharing process. This person can support the author sharing pre-agreed information with journalists and ensuring that an author feels supported. This can prevent an author feeling intimidated in interview situations.
- Practice interview scenarios including on camera/vocal recording or, if available, access media training.
- Ensure you are aware of the journalist's aims for the piece and that they are aware of the key facts the author would like to share or areas they do not wish to be questioned on. It might also be useful to check if they are considering more than one subject, for example, recovery and stigma.
- Check with the journalist if they aim to interview the author solely on personal experiences or if they will ask for their general comments about a specific topic, for example, provision of services, government policy etc. Authors may also want to know if the piece will focus solely on them, or whether it might be part of a larger feature or item.
- Understand the format by reviewing previous publications/episodes or ask to see previous similar examples. Ask if it is possible to see a copy of the final draft prior to publication but be aware that this is usually impossible due to deadlines and editorial process. (If this is an issue support the author in rethinking sharing their story in this way).
- If possible find out when the coverage is likely to appear so that the author has a rough idea of when, and if, their story's going to appear in the public domain.

Journalists work to an unspoken code of conduct but are also regulated by the Press Standards Agency. Remember that if you or the author feel the story has been reported poorly i.e. is defamatory, libellous or contains misinformation you can complain and ask for a retraction.

Journalists sometimes appreciate the offer of a fact sheet so that they have some basic knowledge about their subject and the author before the interview takes place. There are a range of fact sheets available on the 'see me' website that may be useful (see Further Reading, Support and Contacts).

Student journalists may also get in touch looking for people to interview. Authors should be made aware of the fact that, because they're in the process of learning their craft, student journalists may not be as proficient at conducting interviews as their more experienced counterparts.

## Further reading, support and contacts

For more information on recovery and the Scottish Recovery Network:

Web: [www.scottishrecovery.net](http://www.scottishrecovery.net)

Email [info@scottishrecovery.net](mailto:info@scottishrecovery.net)

Phone: 0141 240 7790

Fact sheet resources for journalists from 'see me':

[www.seemescotland.org.uk/aboutmentalhealthproblemsandstigma](http://www.seemescotland.org.uk/aboutmentalhealthproblemsandstigma)

'see me' also have guidance available regarding their volunteer protocol for their media work. If you would like more information on this please contact them directly via their website.

Positive Mental Attitudes have used this guide as a reference for creating their own 'Good Practice Guidance and Volunteer Agreement'. Please contact them directly for further information via their website:

[www.positivementalattitudes.org.uk](http://www.positivementalattitudes.org.uk)

## Thanks

Thanks to the many people who have contributed to this publication most notably those who have shared their personal stories of recovery. We would also like to thank the following for their detailed input:

- Rob Mackay, The Robert Gordon University
- Equalities and Planning Directorate, Health Scotland
- 'see me'
- Positive Mental Attitudes