Media guidelines

Portrayal of people living with mental illness and mental health issues in Aotearoa

Checklist

Have you considered:

☐ Language
Words can help or hurt others. Use language that promotes inclusivity and reduces stigma and discrimination. See our guide of recommended terminology.

☐ Sources
Information about mental illness, treatments and the sector are changing constantly. For reliable, accurate and up-to-date information consult widely with experts in the sector and the Mental Health Foundation.

☐ Balance
Include the voice of people who have experience of mental illness and/or use mental health services, along with their whānau, support people, kaumātua or kuia where relevant. See recommendations for framing mental health issues and mental illness in the media.

☐ Cultural sensitivities
Ensure different cultural worldviews on mental health and wellbeing are considered. Seek expert cultural opinion or perspective from kaumātua, kuia and Pasifika mātua.

☐ Interviews
Interviewing a person with current or past mental illness and/or their whānau experience requires compassion, sensitivity and privacy considerations. See interview guide.

☐ Images
Don’t undermine the good work a story can achieve by using outdated, inaccurate images, e.g: headclutcher, hospital ward, pills and injections.

☐ Helplines
Include appropriate helpline numbers such as 1737 to support help-seeking. See recommended helplines.