

Media Volunteer Pack

For more information, please contact us by
email: communications@bipolaruk.org

Who are we?

Bipolar UK was originally formed in the 1980s as a local support system for the community by the community. Our first meeting was held in 1983 and since that day Bipolar UK has supported people living with the condition and their loved ones.

Today, Bipolar UK is the only national charity dedicated to empowering individuals and families affected by bipolar. Peer support is at the core of our work and many of our volunteering roles require lived experience of the condition.

Our aim is to enable everyone affected by bipolar to live well.

Each year we support thousands of individuals through our range of peer support services, which include:

- Peer Support Groups (in-person and online)
- A call-back Peer Support Line
- Our eCommunity
- Employment Support

We are also working to reduce the risk of suicide in the bipolar community and to improve treatment and support for people with bipolar. You can read more about our campaigning work [here](#)

In the years ahead, providing peer support services will remain central to everything we do. This vital work is only possible because of volunteers such as yourself.

Our volunteers

We couldn't exist without the amazing support of our dedicated team of volunteers. They help us by giving us key insights from our community. They also provide hands-on support so we can run a significant network of peer support groups and a one-to-one peer support line via telephone and email.

Thanks to the incredible collaboration between our staff team and our volunteers we currently empower approximately 1,000 people a month to stay well, and we have the ambition to reach thousands more.

Bipolar UK is committed to embracing diversity by promoting and sustaining an open, inclusive and supportive environment.





Media volunteering

Bipolar UK is often contacted by journalists from magazines, national newspapers, TV and radio asking if we can set up an interview with someone affected by bipolar. It is useful for us to have a bank of people with a diagnosis of bipolar or their family/friends who we can contact when media opportunities arise.

It is hoped that through this volunteer role we will be able to enhance public awareness and understanding of bipolar, and to address stigma and misinformation in media representations of bipolar.

Our media aims

Enhancing public awareness and understanding of bipolar disorder

Bipolar UK aims to promote accurate information about bipolar to increase public awareness and understanding, highlighting information about the condition such as its symptoms, treatment options and impact on people and their families.

Addressing stigma and misinformation in media representations

We are committed to challenging stigma and dispelling misconceptions surrounding bipolar in media representations. We advocate for fair and sensitive portrayals that reflect the diverse experiences of people living with bipolar.

Supporting families affected by bipolar

Bipolar UK recognises the significant role that families play in supporting people with bipolar. We provide resources and guidance to families affected by the condition.

Providing advice and support to individuals sharing their stories

We offer guidance and support to anyone affected by bipolar who choose to share their personal experiences. Our aim is to empower people to tell their stories while ensuring their well-being and safeguarding their privacy.



Our principles

Accuracy and sensitivity

We prioritise accuracy and sensitivity in all media engagements, ensuring that information about bipolar is presented in a respectful and responsible manner and counteracting any misinformation.

Respect for privacy and consent

We respect the privacy and autonomy of people affected by bipolar, seeking their informed consent before sharing their stories or personal information with the media. We prioritise their well-being and provide support throughout the process of media engagement.

Diversity and inclusivity

We recognise the diversity of experiences within the bipolar community and strive to amplify a wide range of voices and perspectives in media representations. We are committed to promoting inclusivity and representation, ensuring all individuals feel heard, valued and respected.

Key messages for media

Addressing stigma

We aim to address stigma by emphasising that bipolar can affect anyone. By highlighting the diversity of experiences within the bipolar community, we challenge stereotypes and promote understanding and empathy.

Educating about bipolar

We provide clear and accurate information about bipolar, including its symptoms, causes and treatment options. Through education and awareness-raising, we aim to educate the public about what bipolar disorder is and what it is not.

Explaining available help

We aim to educate the public about the help and support available for people affected by bipolar, including peer support groups and our eCommunity. By raising awareness of available resources, we encourage individuals to seek help and support early in their journey.

Discussing early symptoms and tackling the delay to diagnosis

We provide information on early symptoms of bipolar disorder to aid recognition and early intervention. By raising awareness of common signs and symptoms, we empower the public, as well as professionals, to recognise potential indicators of bipolar in themselves or their loved ones and reduce diagnosis time.

Explaining severe symptoms

By providing information on severe symptoms such as manic or depressive episodes, psychosis, and suicidal ideation, we promote understanding and encourage compassionate responses to individuals experiencing crisis situations.

What to consider

Bipolar UK has a responsibility to ensure that, when agreeing to a media opportunity, all of our volunteers have made an informed decision.

This means they:

- Are in good mental health
- Have had time to think about their own story
- Have considered the pros and cons of going public
- Have enough support and information
- Are well briefed about the key messages we hope to deliver through media opportunities.



The pros and cons of sharing your story

Engaging with the media can be a really positive way of sharing your story to make a difference to others. However, it is really important to consider both the benefits and potential risks of 'going public'. Even if you do sign up as a Media Volunteer, it is always up to you to decide which opportunities you would like to take part in – please don't feel compelled in any way to take part in something because we have asked you.

| Pros | Cons |
|--|---|
| Raising awareness: media volunteers have the opportunity to share their experiences to get accurate information into the media and promote understanding in society. | No turning back: once your interview has been broadcast on TV or radio, printed in a newspaper or uploaded online, it will be in the public domain forever. It's permanent. |
| Provide inspiration: someone with bipolar who is newly diagnosed, in crisis, or searching for information may turn to the media for help. Your story could remind people that it is possible to live well with bipolar. | Emotional toll: talking about challenges and difficult times in your life can be very draining. They may ask you questions you weren't expecting, or you may find memories trigger uncomfortable feelings. |
| Reduce stigma: poor awareness in communities impacts upon the recovery process. Sharing your experience of bipolar has the power to engage and influence people in a way that facts, figures and quotes from experts cannot. | Media scrutiny: volunteers may face scrutiny or criticism from the media or public, particularly if their stories are misrepresented or misunderstood. Bipolar UK will always help with this as much as possible. |

Questions to ask yourself

Before saying yes to an opportunity, these are the questions you need to ask yourself:

1. Am I well enough to share my story? This is especially important if it's still quite soon after recovery.
2. Will going public cause me unnecessary stress? Can I cope with extra stress currently?
3. As well as the Bipolar UK Media and Peer Support teams, what support do I have around me through this process?
4. How much detail do I want to share? It's worth taking time before an interview to consider what you do and don't want to mention.
5. Do I want to remain anonymous or use my first name only?
6. Am I happy to have a photo printed with an article?
7. Am I happy for people to look me up on social media once my story is shared? You may want to check your privacy settings.
8. Is my healthcare team happy to be named?
9. What types of media am I happy to be involved in?
10. How would I feel if aspects of my story are not told as I would like?

The volunteering process

1. If you are interested in becoming a media volunteer, complete our [online form](#).
2. We will store your details on our secure media volunteer database. You can ask us to remove you at any point and we will delete your details straight away.
3. At this initial stage, we may be in touch to clarify a few details and ask some specific questions.
4. If a suitable media opportunity arises, we will be in touch. We will never share your information with a third party without getting your consent first.
5. Before you make a decision, go through the above considerations and questions.
6. If you do decide to share your story, we will arrange a call for you to chat to one of our media team and talk through the process.
7. If you're still happy, we will then pass on your contact details to the journalist who will be in touch directly to arrange an interview.
8. Afterwards, we will be in touch to find out how it went and how you are feeling. You will also be given the option to speak to one of our Peer Support Team.
9. In the event you found the interview or publication upsetting or triggering, we will provide all the ongoing support you need.

Data protection

Your details will be stored on our secure database. You can ask us to remove you at any point and we will delete your details straight away. We will only ever pass your details onto a publication or journalist if we have your specific consent at the time.

You can read our [Privacy Notice here](#)

Accessing support

Peer Support Line

Our Peer Support Line is here to give practical information, advice and support by phone and email, as well as through our website. With an emphasis on self-management, the Peer Support Line provides:

- Advice on how to support a loved one
- Information on how to manage your bipolar
- Coping strategies to stay well
- Links to useful support services

We can talk you through any issues that are on your mind and share our experiences as people also affected by bipolar. We're here to help you find a way forward.

[Find out more here](#)

eCommunity

The bipolar eCommunity is a safe online forum where you can discuss the challenges you face, ask questions and share your experiences.

[Find out more here](#)

Peer Support Groups

Our Peer Support Groups are located across the UK. Some groups are online and some are in person, some are local and some are national. All groups are open to anyone affected by bipolar, with or without a diagnosis, as well as their family, loved ones and friends.

[Find out more here](#)

Any questions?

If you have any further questions about becoming a media volunteer, please do reach out to our media team at

communications@bipolaruk.org

