

Community Projects Engagement Policy

Last updated: August 2026

Our approach

Hikikomori UK is primarily a support and information network for parents, carers, and families affected by prolonged social withdrawal. We also seek to ensure that the dignity, autonomy, and perspectives of individuals experiencing hikikomori are respected in all media activities.

Hikikomori UK welcomes community projects that improve understanding of hikikomori and prolonged social withdrawal. Community actors and external partners have an important role in informing public understanding, policy, support services, and future interventions. We recognise that responsible engagement can increase awareness of hikikomori and prolonged social withdrawal, reduce stigma, and encourage better support.

Participation in community projects should never compromise recovery or wellbeing.

People experiencing social withdrawal and their families should not simply be the subjects of stories told by others. Where possible, they should have opportunities to tell their own stories in ways that feel safe, meaningful, and empowering.

Types of community projects we welcome

- Participatory community projects
- Co-produced initiatives
- Lived experience-led projects
- Consultation and service development activities
- Educational resources
- Awareness campaigns

- Creative and arts-based projects
- Projects designed alongside people with experience of social withdrawal

1. Recovery comes first

The welfare of participants takes priority over project outcomes. We will not support activities that are likely to increase distress, anxiety, or withdrawal.

2. Participation must be voluntary

We will not encourage families to recruit, persuade, or pressure individuals experiencing social withdrawal to participate in community projects.

Any decision to participate must be made freely by the individual concerned where they have capacity and wish to engage. Choosing not to participate will always be respected.

3. Informed participation is essential

Participants should fully understand:

- The purpose of the project
- How their information and contribution will be used
- Who will have access to the project outputs
- Any potential risks and benefits of taking part
- Their right to withdraw

Organisations should provide information in accessible and understandable formats.

4. Agency and control matter

Participants should have meaningful control over their involvement, including what they share, whether they remain anonymous, and whether they can withdraw.

Participants should be told before taking part whether they can review quotations, creative contributions, or materials before publication, and any limits on review, anonymity, or withdrawal should be explained in detail and in advance.

5. Lived experience should remain central

Wherever possible, individuals experiencing prolonged social withdrawal should have the opportunity to contribute to the design, delivery, and evaluation of projects.

Parents and carers are participants in their own right and offer important insights into the impact of hikikomori.

Understanding the condition requires attention to both individual and family experiences.

6. Privacy and safeguarding

Organisations should have appropriate procedures in place to protect privacy, confidentiality, and participant wellbeing. Many individuals and their families experiencing social withdrawal are extremely uncomfortable with public attention and may wish to remain anonymous.

Particular care must be taken when engaging with vulnerable young people and their families, who may participate while experiencing profound grief, shame, self-blame, stigma, or emotional exhaustion.

Engagement should adopt a compassionate approach that values experiences without attributing blame or reinforcing stigma.

Organisations must not gain access to support groups, online communities, forums, or private communications through deception, false identities, undisclosed recording, or other covert methods.

7. We do not recruit participants

Hikikomori UK does not provide organisations with direct access to members of the community. We will not provide access to private groups, meetings, or personal contact details for community project purposes.

Where appropriate, opportunities may be shared with our community, but any decision to make contact rests entirely with individuals and families.

8. What we ask organisations

Please consider:

- What is the purpose of your project?
- How will participants benefit?
- How will participants be protected?
- What safeguarding measures are in place?
- How will confidentiality be respected?
- Can contributors withdraw and when?
- How will outcomes and learning be shared and with whom?

Families considering a community project request may also find our [guidance for parents and families](#) helpful.