

HIKIKOMORI UK

Media Engagement Policy

Last updated: August 2026

Our approach

Hikikomori UK is primarily a volunteer-led 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 media coverage that improves understanding of hikikomori and prolonged social withdrawal. Media have an important role in informing public understanding, policy, support services, and future interventions. We recognise that responsible media coverage can increase awareness of hikikomori and prolonged social withdrawal, reduce stigma, and encourage better support.

Media attention must never come at the expense of an individual's wellbeing, privacy, or recovery.

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 media projects we welcome

- Lived experience storytelling
- Collaborative journalism
- Creative projects
- Educational documentaries
- Awareness campaigns
- Co-produced media work

1. Recovery comes first

The welfare of participants always takes priority over media outcomes. We will not support media activities that may increase distress, anxiety, shame, or withdrawal.

We expect media coverage to be respectful, accurate, and non-stigmatising, recognising that people experiencing social withdrawal and their families are individuals with strengths, aspirations, and agency, not simply subjects of a story.

2. Participation must be voluntary

We will not encourage families to recruit, persuade, or pressure individuals experiencing social withdrawal to participate in media 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 consent is essential

Participants should fully understand:

- The purpose of the story
- How their information will be used
- When and where the story will be published
- Any potential risks and benefits of taking part
- Their right to withdraw

Journalists 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 or contributions 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 share their own experiences.

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

Journalists should take reasonable steps to protect privacy and confidentiality where requested. Many individuals experiencing social withdrawal, and their families, 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.

Journalists and media 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 journalists with direct access to members of the community. We will not provide access to private groups, meetings, or personal contact details for media 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 journalists

Please consider:

- Why is this story being told?
- How will it improve understanding?
- How will participants be protected?
- Will anonymity be respected?
- Can contributors withdraw before publication where possible?
- How will the story avoid reinforcing misconceptions?

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