

# Responding to Media & Research Requests

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## Our philosophy

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 and research activities.

We believe that people experiencing prolonged social withdrawal should not simply be the subjects of stories told by others. Whenever possible, they should have the opportunity to become authors of their own stories, choosing if, when, and how those stories are shared. Our role is to create the conditions in which those voices can emerge safely, voluntarily, and with dignity.

## Our advice

Media and research can contribute to greater public understanding of hikikomori. However, recovery and wellbeing should always come first. If participation feels empowering, supportive, and voluntary, it may be worthwhile. If participation risks increasing stress, anxiety, or withdrawal, it is entirely appropriate to decline. There will always be other opportunities to share experiences.

Our community is often approached by journalists, researchers, and documentary makers, and we value their role in raising awareness of prolonged social withdrawal. These requests are usually well-intentioned. They deserve careful consideration, and the purpose of this guidance is to help you make an informed decision.

You may also want to read our [Media Engagement Policy](#) and [Research Engagement Policy](#), which set out what we expect of journalists and researchers.

## 1. Questions to ask yourself before taking part

Before agreeing to participate, consider:

- Who benefits most from this request?
- Will my child feel supported by this?
- Could this impact trust between us?
- Would they be comfortable with this being available in the future?
- Am I sharing my own experience, or speaking on behalf of them?
- Could this reveal information that my family member would not wish to share?

## 2. Questions to ask researchers or journalists before taking part

- What is the purpose of the project?
- Who is the intended audience?
- How will information be used?
- Can anonymity be guaranteed and/or identifying details be removed?
- What steps will be taken to protect confidentiality?
- What safeguarding procedures are in place?
- Will I be able to review quotations or contributions before publication, and are there any limits on doing so?
- What happens if I change my mind?
- How long will the content remain publicly available?
- How was my contact information obtained?

## 3. If your child wants to participate

Support them in making their own informed decision. Help them understand:

- What participation involves
- Who will see, hear, or read it
- The potential long-term nature of publication
- That they can decline questions
- That they can stop participation at any point

Avoid pressuring them either to participate or not to participate.

#### 4. Alternatives to direct interviews

Some people may find it easier to interact in writing rather than direct conversation.

Some people may find creative expression more comfortable than direct conversation, for example poetry, artwork, or photography.

These approaches often give individuals greater control over what they share.