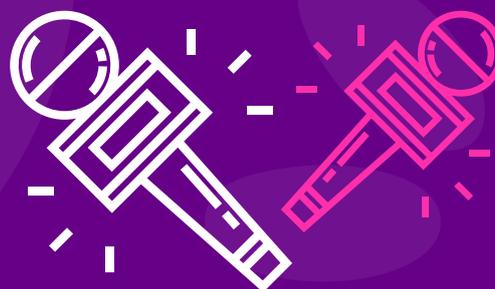




Cymorth i Ferched Cymru  
Welsh Women's Aid

## Guidance for journalists interviewing survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.



Journalists have a unique and powerful opportunity to support survivors to share their stories and raise awareness about these pervasive types of violence and abuse. Done right, stories like these can tackle harmful stigmas, inspire cultural and social change and in some cases even be lifesaving.

Below are some short points on helping you to make sure your engagements with survivors are trauma-informed, and will help to achieve the most positive, impactful story for the both of you.



### Accessibility

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Do not make assumptions about the person you are interviewing. If a survivor has a disability or an access need, they might require support or adaptations to the interview. Some survivors will find physical meetings and filming sessions difficult but may be happy to be interviewed digitally. Similarly, do not assume that survivors will have access to laptops or other technology needed for online interviews. Ask the individual what platforms they would feel most comfortable communicating across.



### Anonymity

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Consultation with survivors has shown that one of their biggest concerns when being interviewed is being identified by their perpetrator. It is important that you are clear about whether you can offer anonymity to a survivor, and what steps you will be taking to enact this- for example, can you blur a face, provide a voice-over or change a name? It will be worth checking with your production team beforehand about this process and the different levels of anonymity that can be worked with.

If anonymity cannot be guaranteed, be honest about this. If a survivor is identified, it can potentially create a very dangerous situation, be incredibly traumatic for them and even result in the abuse continuing, so transparency and clarity is needed.



## Intersectionality around approach and questioning

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Think about who often gets to tell their stories and how your the story you're working on might create a space for other survivors to offer their experiences.

Be mindful about your approach. Some survivors have more privilege than others in how easily and freely they can communicate their stories. This could be a consequence of race, age, sexuality, disability, complex family circumstances and so on. Some survivors will have additional barriers and anxieties around speaking to the media, but this doesn't make their stories any less important or valid. Allowing the time to build trust with interviewees, ensuring an understanding support system is on hand and working alongside specialist services can go a long way in helping.



## Time commitments

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Anybody can be a survivor, and so schedules are varied and likely busy. Many survivors will have working commitments, caring responsibilities, religious practices, school runs and other obligations. Being interviewed about experiences of violence or abuse can be upsetting and potentially retraumatising, so it's important to allow individuals the control to select the time and environment to conduct this in. Be as accurate as possible about the amount of time needed to do an interview, doing so will allow a survivor time to factor in preparation and any self-care needed following.



## Pre-interview introductions

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Knowing what a journalist's voice sounds like and building an informal rapport with them before an interview is often crucial to making a survivor feel comfortable. This is dually beneficial, as a survivor will be more likely to be open and give more confident, clear answers to questions if they feel at ease with a journalist. An introduction also allows you the space to explain processes, such as who your camera crew might be (are you working with a male or female team) and the practicalities of an interview.



## Respect boundaries

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If there is a certain question or subject that a survivor has made clear they don't want to discuss, respect that boundary and don't pressure them. Even if you believe this particular detail might make for a 'better' story, the survivors wellbeing should be a greater priority.

Overstepping boundaries crosses lines of consent.



## Trauma-informed language choices

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Survivors are people and humanising language should always be used when talking to and about them. Move away from clinical terminology such as “case study” and instead say “interviewee” or “individual central to our story”. Ask an individual if they identify as a survivor or as something else. Be compassionate and empathetic in communications, try to always keep in mind how much of an emotional toll this contribution has the potential to take from the individual.



## Survivors are experts

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Survivors are experts, not only by experience but in the ways they have recovered, engaged with services and empowered themselves. They will also have various life experiences, knowledge and careers; therefore, they are invaluable to messaging and awareness raising. Treat their stories and views with the same respect that you would any other expert you were interviewing.



## Survivor responses are individual

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There is no standard or correct way to respond to or live with the trauma of violence and abuse. This means there is no way to predict how survivors will respond to certain questions- they may appear detached from the situation, or they might be very emotional. Whatever the response, remember to be compassionate and patient. The most important response is to listen and believe. Support is available if a survivor wishes to access it following the interview. Live Fear Free is signposted at the end of this resource.



## Clarity

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Giving a survivor an active say and control over how their narrative is told is hugely important.

It is important to let a survivor know as accurately as possible how the content from their interview will be used. If possible, it's also great to manage expectations; for instance, if an interview that asked quite traumatic questions is likely to be reduced down to a couple of small sound clips, let them know. Try to communicate via a support worker when the story that involves them will air/ be published so they have time to take the make the necessary self-care or safety arrangements. If the story is delayed or cancelled try to update the survivor through their support worker and if possible, let them know why.

Taking part in a media process can be emotionally complex and sometimes retraumatizing for survivors. Every survivor will be at different stages in their journey and have different levels of support around them. As a journalist with your own experiences, you may also hear something that triggers a difficult memory for you.

In all of these circumstances the Live Fear Free helpline is available. The Live Fear Free helpline is a Welsh Government funded, 24/7 helpline, offering compassionate support and advice to survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence as well as concerned others- such as loved ones, neighbours, colleagues and professionals.



**Llinell Gymorth Live Fear  
Byw Heb Ofn Free Helpline**

**0808 80 10 800**

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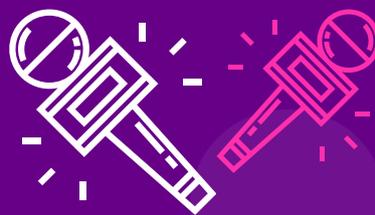
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Webchat: [gov.wales/live-fear-free](https://gov.wales/live-fear-free)



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**Cymorth i Ferched Cymru  
Welsh Women's Aid**

Welsh Women's Aid  
Pendragon House, Caxton Place, Pentwyn, Cardiff, CF23 8XE

[www.welshwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk)

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