

Key Principles for Responsible Media Reporting following a UK disaster

The National Emergencies Trust is committed to providing the best possible care for people affected by UK emergencies. This includes advocating for responsible media reporting that prioritises the needs and wishes of individuals impacted above all else.

National emergencies, and the milestone dates associated with these, can garner significant media and public attention, and we recognise that responsible reporting can bring significant benefits:

- Highlight the personal and community impacts of disasters
- Support fundraising efforts that can help meet the needs of those affected
- Convey important information to keep the public safe
- Highlight the causes of disasters and the measures taken, or required, to address them

The National Emergencies Trust works closely with survivors of UK disasters to learn from their experiences and to help create positive future change. We have collaborated with individuals affected by past emergencies to explore their personal experiences with UK media.

Together, we have shaped the following Key Principles for Responsible Media Reporting to help members of the media to meet their professional objectives while protecting disaster survivors' needs and wishes at what is often an extremely traumatic time in their lives.

Key principles for Responsible Reporting

1. **Respect space** – in the aftermath of an emergency, and around key milestone moments, survivors and loved ones may be experiencing extreme trauma. Contact the communications team at the local police force who can help to coordinate requests to those affected. If making a direct approach, provide your contact details once, and then take care not to pester or pressure individuals over social media or in-person.
2. **Seek permission** – never use pictures or personal details of those who have died, been bereaved or seriously injured without family permission. This includes obtaining images from social media. Please note that if you are planning to film or interview a child under the age of 16, additional permissions and safeguarding steps are needed.
3. **Understand boundaries** – there may be aspects of people's experience they don't wish to share. Help survivors to set their boundaries before any formal interviews by asking what they are comfortable/not comfortable, to talk about. Where possible, conduct interviews in a private space.

4. **Offer support** – individuals who agree to be interviewed may benefit from being accompanied (on the phone or in person) by a person they know and trust that can offer support. Wherever possible, offer this opportunity, and ensure they can take breaks from the interview if needed.
5. **Promote choice** – trauma can affect a person's decision-making. Take steps to explain how you intend to use someone's story and any information they give you. Send questions in advance so they can prepare. Offer the option to conduct interviews via email where there may be more time to reflect on responses. Where possible, ensure those interviewed or providing comment can fact-check and sense check the full article or segment before it's published - and contact you afterwards.
6. **Protect privacy** – do not seek to persuade survivors to waive their right to anonymity. If you agree to anonymise a survivors' identity, ensure the protections are completely effective for their voice, appearance, and location. Never use pictures of the family homes of those affected by disasters.
7. **Report factually** – avoid speculation and sensationalism. Be mindful that speculative reporting can cause undue distress to those affected by disasters, while sensationalising key facts and events can be retraumatising for all those involved. Report factually and with compassion.
8. **Signpost services** – please include signposting to support services for anyone who may be affected in the aftermath of an emergency or could be retraumatised at a later time from a previous experience. This could include signposting to charities such as Victim Support, Mind or Samaritans, for instance, or dedicated local charities.
9. **Help to support children and young people** – if you're planning to interview someone under the age of 16, explicit parental consent is needed., as well as extra safeguarding measures. Take care to never pressure a child or young person into an interview, and ensure that any interview is conducted in an age-appropriate manner. Be mindful of the long-term impact any interview might have on a child or young person, and ensure you are acting in according with the guidelines signposted below.
10. **Respect memorial events** – if planning to attend memorial events attended by those affected by disasters be mindful of the significance of these events to those involved. Take care not to pressure attendees for interviews or to crowd the memorial space.

Useful resources

Survivors Against Terror is a Community Interest Organisation (CIO) and network of survivors of UK and overseas terror attacks. Its report on media intrusion, [A Second Trauma](#) sets out further helpful guidelines and insights from those affected by terrorism.

For more information and guidelines on responsible media reporting, including engaging with children and young people, explore the [Ofcom Broadcasting Code](#), [Independent Press Standards Organisation \(IPSO\) Editors' Code of Practice](#) and [BBC Editorial Guidelines](#).

If you are a member of the media seeking comment or further assistance, please email the National Emergencies Trust team on media@nationalemergenciestrust.org.uk or visit our website for more information: www.nationalemergenciestrust.org.uk