

The Media: Your Rights

Dealing with journalists: what are my rights during an interview?

- Put simply – you don't have to say, provide, do or agree to anything you don't want to.
- You should expect to be treated with dignity and respect throughout.
- You can ask that the website address and telephone number of Missing People be published as well as police or other contact details so readers or viewers can report sightings or any other information.
- It's not advisable in the early days to sign any 'exclusivity' contract which restricts you from talking to any other publications or appearing on any other television or radio programmes. You may want as much publicity as possible to try and reach your missing person.
- If you feel that your wishes and dignity are not being respected, you have the right to terminate an interview, ask a journalist to leave your home or complain to their Editor.
- You have the right to end any interview that is making you feel distressed, pressurised or otherwise uncomfortable.
- You can refuse to allow other family members or friends to be photographed.
- You can refuse to allow certain areas or rooms in your home to be photographed.
- You can refuse to allow photographs to be taken of your missing person's room or possessions.

Checklist of questions to ask the journalists

- **What is the name, direct line/mobile number and email address of each journalist I have approached? What is the best time of day to contact them?**

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- **When will the article appear? Later today? Tomorrow?**

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• Whereabouts in the newspaper or programme will it feature? Will it be given priority and be easily visible if in print?

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• Is it going to appear in just one place or does the paper have the right to 'syndicate' (sell articles on to other publications)? If so, which other publications? (Bear in mind you may have no control or choice in this).

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• What kind of format will the appeal run in? Will be it a 'first person' article using only my own words to tell your story or will the writer tell my story in his or her own words? (Journalists report news in their own style and that of the organisation they work for and you may have no control over the outcome).

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• If copy approval has been agreed, when can I expect to have the article read back to me?

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• Can you include Missing People's number for any information or sightings, and make a direct appeal for the missing person to get in contact with Missing People in confidence?

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• Can you include a direct appeal to the missing person? (This may stress that it is not a crime to be missing and that they are not in trouble, or that you just want to know they are safe).

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Additional Notes

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Summary

A professional journalist will try to do their job and put you at your ease at the same time. They may not be able to answer all your questions – what is going to run when and where can change rapidly on a newspaper or magazine depending on breaking news - but should try to be as open as possible about what they are going to write and when it will appear. Journalists should be aware that this is a time of distress and confusion for you and their manner at all times should be sensitive to that. If it isn't, don't work with them. Dealing with someone you feel bullied by or don't warm to is not what you need at the moment.

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For further information and guidance on the issues addressed in this guidance sheet, or for support relating to any aspect of someone going missing, call Missing People's free and confidential 24 hour helpline on **116 000** or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk

Whilst this information has been provided in good faith, it should not be taken as legal advice. For information tailored to your circumstances, please contact your police force, solicitor or an advisory organisation as appropriate to your query.

Please let us know whether this guidance has been useful, either by answering a few short questions at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MissingPeopleGuidance> or by emailing your comments to policyandresearch@missingpeople.org.uk