



YOUR EXPERIENCE MATTERS

**A guide to assist people in sharing their
experience to inform and influence others.**

INTRODUCTION

This guide was compiled by the Steering Group of the Voices for Truth and Dignity (VOICE) Research Programme, who recognised that sharing experiences can be a big step for many people. It's important that we value this courage and create the right environment and support so this can happen without further trauma, ensuring the individual feels the experience has been positive. Therefore, we produced this booklet to assist organisers in preparing their event, with a focus on the impact it may have on speakers with lived experience.

For this project, we have updated the booklet to reflect today's society.

For the purposes of this guide, we refer to those who have shared their experience as speakers with lived experience. **We thank you for creating the space to ensure the voice of those with lived experience can be heard.**

AIMS AND FUNCTION OF ANY EVENT HOSTING A SESSION WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

The main aim should be to enable speakers with lived experience to share their stories with organisations of influence in the field of safeguarding practitioners, to increase learning and improve responses to those who experience assault, bullying, harassment, or discrimination. The event should acknowledge that abuse and exploitation occur within all walks of life, and that it is extremely difficult for anyone to come forward and speak out.

The event should aim to inform individuals and organisations who can, in turn, influence institutional reform and cultural change, improving conditions and routes to help all those in sport and physical activity to respond appropriately.

5 FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN PREPARING FOR THE EVENT

- 1 Safety and Support:** It is important when preparing for the event to consider the experiences of those who are speaking as a key factor in selecting the venue. Speakers with lived experience should feel safe and supported when sharing their stories.
- 2 Environment:** For example, **an individual may not feel comfortable speaking in a setting where they previously participated in the activity.** Hotels, for instance, may have been used as places of abuse. Consider your speakers' circumstances when choosing a venue. Business-like venues such as conference centres, large airy meeting rooms, etc., may be more appropriate.
- 3 Consent:** No recording of the event should be allowed without the speaker's **full consent.** Speakers with lived experience should have full control of their content if it is recorded.
- 4 Delegate Care:** Ensure that at the beginning of the session, delegates are made aware of the content and **reassured that if they need to leave, that is okay.** We do not know who in the audience may have been affected by harmful or abusive behaviour. Try to ensure there are private breakout areas for anyone needing to step away for a short period.
- 5 The Media:** Discuss the possibility of media representatives or journalists attending and the **unintended consequences of their interpretation of key messages.** **Any restrictions should be announced before the speaker begins, to inform any media of their wishes.**

SPEAKERS' SUPPORT

In preparation, ensure that you can **support the speakers with experience if required**, before, during, or after the event.

Speaking openly about their experience could trigger flashbacks, PTSD, anxiety, etc., so it is important to ensure appropriate support is available throughout the process. Many speakers already have supporting structures in place that could be utilised for consistency.

Post-event support is critical, as reflective anxiety about disclosure may occur. Therefore, you should have a documented plan in place to ensure that if this happens, there are support mechanisms ready to be activated.

Clear guidelines with guiding principles should be announced to attendees before the session. Add a disclaimer to state that all names, places, and organisations will be anonymised, no photos will be taken, and limits on social media will be agreed with the speaker prior to the event.

SPEAKER (VOICE) PREPARATION

Inform the speaker of the necessity of non-disclosure of identifying details when speaking, including all names, places, and organisations, which must be anonymised.

Share the list of invitees with the speakers including invited officials, beforehand to ensure they have no personal difficulties with any individual invited.

Be creative with methods of communication for the speakers with experience. Some may not wish to stand in front of strangers to speak about their experience.

Alternative methods may include audio recordings, videos with the speaker anonymised, written text delivered by a friend or support agency, storyboards, short dramas, etc. You can also assist the speaker with telling their story through a

question and answer session, this could be shared with them prior.

Allow the speaker to attend with a supportive friend. Ensure they have access to support following the event, should they require it.

Advise and assist speakers in preparing their speech. For example, sharing questions and detail prior.

Discuss and agree upon social media usage during the session, as well as how journalists might be managed. Establish if the speaker is willing to take questions at the end or if they prefer to simply deliver their speech. Offer the option for them to respond to questions after the event via email through the organiser.

MEDIA & SOCIAL MEDIA

Clarify the use of social media during the event:

- Which platforms are they already on?
- Can they be tagged?
- Are they comfortable with photographs being used?
- Are they happy to be part of communications following the event?

Note: Be aware of the risks of journalists attending. Most will be upfront about being journalists, but some may not disclose this, and you may have no knowledge of their attendance.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Take the time to introduce yourself to all speakers upon arrival. Ensure that questions posed to the speakers are relevant and not intrusive. Ask the speakers if the question is one they wish to answer.

During the speakers' sessions, facilitators should be mindful of the delivery, and

watch for signs that intervention may be needed, such as:

- Distress
- Agitation or anxiety
- Uncomfortable pauses in delivery

If necessary, interrupt the session to ask:

- “Do you wish to continue?”
- “Do you need a break?”
- “Would you like a glass of water?”

Have tissues on hand and be prepared to stand alongside the speaker as support. Be ready to intervene and stop the session if distress is evident.

As a facilitator, it is your role to manage the session. Don't hesitate to interrupt or end it early to protect the speaker.

MAIN EVENT

3 Key Considerations when Running the Event

Be clear about the guiding principles with all those attending the event as an observer or speakers with experience.

- 1 Ask attendees to be mindful of the trauma the speakers with experience may have experienced, and request they do not ask intrusive questions about the abuse itself.
- 2 Consider how the formation of the room looks from a participant's perspective.
- 3 If you have opportunity, ask speakers if they prefer a formal theatre style or a more informal circle.

The facilitator should introduce the day and present the guiding principles, including limits on photos and social media.

Welcome the speakers and ensure that you listen attentively.

After the speakers have spoken, give them space. Several speakers have reported being overwhelmed by a 'rush' of delegates following their sessions, with some going on to disclose their own experiences. This can be difficult to manage, especially after sharing their own stories.

Enable the speaker to leave the room by holding the delegates' attention for a few minutes while the speaker is taken somewhere quiet, if they wish. Be mindful of queues of people wanting to speak to the speaker, and offer them an exit if needed.

Ensure it is someone's role at the end of the session to protect the speaker from overzealous delegates seeking more information or trying to engage them for personal projects. Avoid delegates sharing their own personal stories with the speaker immediately after their session.

Consider a break at this stage for delegates, allowing time to absorb the messages. It can be traumatic listening to speakers with lived experience, so this will help listeners reflect and recover.

AFTER THE EVENT

- 1 Write thank you letters to speakers with experience and the speakers support.
- 2 Follow up a few weeks later to ensure there has been no detrimental effect on your speaker.
- 3 Implement your post event plan and ensure the victim support is on hand to offer support following the event for up to 3 months if required.

USEFUL RESOURCES

<https://www.youtube.com> - search terms: “top tips for filming interviews” “making better films” “how to make short films” “better sound for films” “camera set-up for interviews”



