

Your Stories

LANCASHIRE MIND – YOUR STORIES OVERVIEW

Blogs and stories can show that people with mental health problems are cared about, understood, and listened to. We can use it to challenge the status quo and change attitudes. We believe that no-one should have to face a mental health problem alone – and blogs, real stories from real people, can play a part in achieving this.

Reading a blog by someone going through a familiar experience can have a big impact. 'You've put into words how I feel' is a comment we often see on our guest blogs. And reading or watching a piece about an experience we didn't know about can open up our eyes, give us a unique insight and help us learn.

These guidelines explain what we're looking for from blogs.

Before we begin...

Are you feeling ok? These guidelines are for people who are feeling well enough to tell their story. If you're not sure you feel up to it yet, or need to talk to someone right now, visit our Get Help Now page www.lancashiremind.org.uk

WRITING YOUR BLOG

Style

We find that blogs work best when the style is informal and conversational.

Here are some tips:

- Write as if you were talking. Picture someone you'd like to tell your story to and imagine telling it to them in person as you write. Write in the first person – use 'I' and 'me'.
- Be yourself. Don't feel you need to be 'a writer' – just be you! Let your personality come through in your writing (writing as if you were talking will help with this).
- Use short words instead of long words where possible, for example 'try' instead of 'endeavour'.
- Use short sentences and short paragraphs.

Structure

- Think about your opening sentence. What can you say that will have an impact on your readers and get them interested straight away? This doesn't mean you need to say something shocking; it could be something simple and honest.
- Think about the events in your story and build your story around these. Stay focused and keep it simple – make it easy for your reader to understand what's going on. Avoid repeating yourself.
- Once you've finished, try to read through your blog/story from the perspective of one of your readers. Will it make sense to them? Is it focused? Edit it to make any changes/improvements you think are needed. Most writers say that editing their story down to size is most difficult – but also the most useful – part of the process.
- Aim for your blog to be between 600 and 1,000 words in length.

What We Can't Use

We don't often publish opinion pieces from guest bloggers, e.g. views on a mental health or political issues.

We don't publish triggering descriptions of suicide or self-harm. When talking about these, it's important to focus on feelings, not behaviours. Avoid giving detailed descriptions or talking about methods.

We don't publicise or recommend specific suppliers or commercial advertising. Talk in general about services (e.g. counselling) or activities (e.g. yoga).

Legal Points

By submitting a post for publication on Lancashire Mind's blog, you are confirming that the rights to any materials used are yours, and that any sources are credited as necessary.

You are also granting Lancashire Mind all rights to the copy.

We may reproduce your blog, or quotes from your blog, in public relations (PR), electronic media and promotional materials.

We reserve the right not to publish any blog post submitted.

PUBLICATION PROCESS

We will usually edit your final blog for clarity, plain English and web usability. We make changes to nearly all blogs, even ones we really love, so they fit our communication style. If we change your blog significantly, we will send it back to you to view before publishing.

When we edit your post, we will provide links to our own information and remove any which are promoting or advertising commercial companies.

As we plan our blog content up to a month in advance, it can take a while for your story to be published. We will always let you know the planned publication date.

If you would like to include a photo of yourself, please make sure it is website quality and ideally send us a few to choose from.

You don't have to use your real name if you don't want to. We understand some people haven't told their friends, family or employer about their mental health problem and aren't yet ready to. You're welcome to use a pseudonym if you wish – just let us know when you submit your story.

CHECK LIST

1. Write with a clear purpose.
2. Create a title.
3. Give credit to sources and provide any links.
4. Use sub-headings to break up long sections of text.
5. Use smaller paragraphs.
6. Use bullet points and lists if needed.
7. Remember to take a break when writing.
8. Proofread and check spellings/grammar.
9. Send us your social media handles so we can tag you.
10. Submit your writing to: blogs@lancashiremind.org.uk

Thank you.