

Speakout



**The
media
issue**

**Behind the scenes on
EastEnders and *Emmerdale***

How we helped two top soaps to develop storylines around mental health

**Real life
stories**

Getting your stories heard

In this issue...

Welcome to our new look magazine!

As well as giving it a new name (previously *Update*) and a new look, we've also given it change of focus. Each issue will cover a particular area of Time to Change's anti-stigma work.

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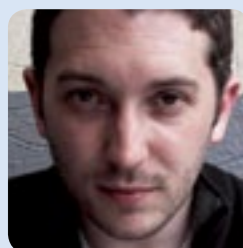
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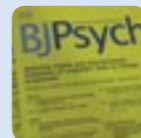
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Keep in touch!

Be the first to hear about the exciting new developments:

- Sign up for all the latest news and updates - www.time-to-change.org.uk
- Keep in touch online - [facebook.com/timetochange](https://www.facebook.com/timetochange)
- Follow us @timetochange on Twitter
- E mail us - info@time-to-change.org.uk
- Call us - 020 8215 2356



Follow Sue on Twitter: @suebakerTTC



Hello and welcome to the new Time to Change magazine, **Speak Out**.

Introduction

With the fast pace of our work to tackle stigma and the growing importance of our digital channels to keep you up to date, we felt that the magazine, published three times a year, has a different and distinct role to play. It's a chance to reflect on what's been achieved, share the learning and tell some of the great stories about the work going on tackling stigma and the people who have been involved, that we don't always have room for in a tweet or Facebook post.

“The media is such a powerful influence on all of our attitudes, so encouraging more realistic, sensitive portrayals of mental health and getting more people's real stories told is high on our agenda”

We have also moved to themed issues, with each edition looking in depth at a different area of anti-stigma work - starting with the media. Engaging with the media is a key focus for many local, regional and national anti-stigma efforts, as well as for campaigns in other parts of the world. It's such a powerful influence on all of our attitudes, so encouraging more realistic, sensitive portrayals of mental health and getting more people's real stories told is high on our agenda. In the last year we have worked with Channel 4, *EastEnders*, *Emmerdale*, and *Casualty* among many others so now seems a good time to share what went on behind the scenes.

At the time of writing, the evaluation of Time to Change's first phase (2008-2011) has just been published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, showing a significant reduction in levels of discrimination, and a positive trend in public attitudes. Part of the evaluation looked at how print media coverage changed during this period, and found that there is now a higher proportion of anti-stigmatising articles, more people with mental health problems are being quoted as sources, and among the more stigmatising

articles fewer now portray people with mental health problems as harmful to others. Although these improvements are heartening, we should aim for an overall decrease in the proportion of stigmatising coverage - so there is still much more to do. The media advisory programme was launched as part of our current phase to drive forward this change at a more strategic level in the media, as well as offer day-to-day advice.

The evaluation also confirmed that individuals with lived experience of mental health problems speaking openly are central to improving attitudes and behaviour among the public. Those of you who have worked with us for a while will know that we term this 'social contact' and it's the life blood of what we do. The next issue will focus on how social contact is changing people's hearts and minds in communities across England, including through our grant-funded projects.

We hope that you'll find this new-look magazine is a valuable tool for the anti-stigma work you're doing, whether that's as an individual or as part of an organisation. Turn to page 16 to find out how you can order more copies, and for details of the other resources we can offer for people working in the media.

Sue Baker
Director, Time to Change

• Follow Sue on Twitter: @suebakerTTC

Introduction from our guest editor: Jenni Regan



I'm Jenni Regan, and I run Time to Change's Media Advisory Service - and that's exactly what we do. We work alongside newspapers and TV companies to make sure that when the subject of mental health is covered, in print or on screen, it's handled in a sensitive and informed way.

We cover all kinds of media, from news reporting, through documentaries, to fictional portrayals in soaps and drama. Our services include supplying accurate facts and information, training for journalists, giving feedback on scripts, and linking writers, producers and researchers up with people who have personal experience of the issues, so they can give them a better idea of what it's really like to live with a mental health problem.

We also run networking events where we can showcase examples of people who are already producing good work on mental health, and give professionals the chance to learn more and ask us questions.

Visit time-to-change.org.uk/media-advice for advice, support and resources on portraying mental health in the media

This edition of *Speak Out* focuses on the work we've been doing with TV producers. Inside, you can find out about what goes on behind the scenes from the perspectives of everyone involved.

I write about how we provided advice on the recent depression storyline in *EastEnders*, and we also hear from Kevin, the Time to Change supporter who shared his own experiences to help make the storyline more realistic.

Our interviews in this edition are with Fiona McAllister, a researcher on ITV's *Emmerdale*, who worked on character Zak Dingle's recent struggle with mental illness, and Lina Prestwood, Commissioning Editor for Channel 4's mental health season

Happy reading - we hope you find it interesting!

Time to Change Champion Nikki Llewellyn told journalists about her own experience of depression at one of our media networking events.

“Speaking about my depression at the first Meet the Media event was very emotional but also very rewarding, as I believe it is so important that journalists hear and report real stories instead of repeating myths and stereotypes”



Stats behind the stories

Featuring characters with mental health problems in soaps and dramas can have a positive impact. Getting it wrong can reinforce negative stereotypes.

Research around portrayals of mental health in television drama and soaps in 2010, found that:

- over a 3 month period 74 programmes contained storylines on mental health issues.
- of these there were 33 instances of violence to others and 53 examples of harm to self.
- almost half were sympathetic portrayals, but these often portrayed the characters as tragic victims.
- 63% of references to mental health in TV soaps and drama were “pejorative, flippant or unsympathetic.”
- terms included: “crackpot”, “a sad little psycho”, “basket case”, “where did you get her from?”, “Care in the Community?” and “he was looney tunes.”

Making Drama out of a crisis: Authentic Portrayals of Mental Illness in TV Drama.
Greg Philo. Lesley Henderson. Katie McCracken. Shift. June 2010.



Minister for Care Services Norman Lamb signs our pledge for the Department of Health

2012 was a milestone year for tackling mental health stigma and we were really delighted to see many important moments receive widespread media coverage. Here are our top 10 mental health stories of 2012:



Sue and Time to Change Champion Bryony at the Lambeth Palace multi-faith event

Mental health highlights from 2012

1 Members of Parliament (MPs) spoke out about their own experiences of mental health problems for the very first time as part of a debate in the Houses of Parliament in June.

2 The Mental Health Bill edged closer to becoming law. MPs voted in favour of the bill, which will put an end to archaic laws that prevent people with mental health problems from participating in jury service and becoming or remaining a company director. The new law will also put a stop to MPs losing their seats if sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

3 More celebrities spoke openly about their own experience of mental health problems, which encourages others to do the same. Celebrities opening up this year included Frankie Sandford, Freddie Flintoff and David Walliams.

4 Some of our best loved soaps tackled mental illness on our screens with *EastEnders'* Ian Beale and *Emmerdale's* Zak Dingle both experiencing depression. This led to media interest in real-life accounts of depression: some of our volunteers shared their stories and spoke out about mental health stigma.

5 US drama *Homeland* also highlighted mental health problems to a wide audience with its nuanced portrayal of Carrie's bipolar disorder. Again, this led to media interest in bipolar disorder, and the stigma around this.

6 Channel 4 embarked on the '4 Goes Mad' mental health season in July. They also became the first national media company to sign the Time to Change pledge as an employer.

7 Other major employers including British Gas, Pepsico, Lloyds Banking Group, Shell, Accenture, and The Labour Party signed the Time to Change pledge showing their commitment to tackling mental health discrimination in the workplace.

8 The Department of Health became the first Government department to sign the Time to Change pledge as an employer, with Minister Norman Lamb aiming to encourage all other Government departments to follow suit.

9 After signing the pledge himself earlier in the year, the Archbishop of Canterbury hosted a multi-faith event with Time to Change at Lambeth Palace to discuss mental health stigma and how faith leaders and communities can work to tackle it.

10 The NHS Mandate sent a strong message that mental health is a priority and recognised the importance of people with mental health problems being treated on a par with those with physical health problems in the NHS - a long overdue commitment.

You can read more on page 14 about how Time to Change's Senior Media Officer, Hayley Richardson-Roberts, works to get stories about mental health in the media.



Some of Channel 4's mental health themed programmes, from left to right: Jon Richardson: a little bit OCD, The world's maddest job interview, My mad fat teenage diary

Channel 4 Goes Mad



We interview Lina Prestwood, Commissioning Editor - Documentaries, at Channel 4, about their '4 Goes Mad' season, which aired in 2012.

4 **Goes Mad** was billed as a "schedule takeover", and included various different documentaries about mental illness, as well as featuring people with mental health problems on established prime-time shows like *Location, Location, Location*, *Countdown* and *Come Dine with Me*.

Volunteers who appeared in the documentary *The World's Maddest Job Interview*, shown at the end of the season, had featured over the course of two weeks in several of these prime-time shows. But viewers had no idea about the mental health history of the participants until it was revealed on *The World's Maddest Job Interview*.

Other documentaries included *Time to Change* supporter Ruby Wax following people as they disclosed their mental health problems to their employers, and comedian Jon Richardson looking at what it's like for people living with severe OCD. The season was accompanied by a website where viewers could go to share their experiences and

find more information. Let's hope that, in future, more mainstream broadcasters will address stigma and discrimination in their programming.

Lina Prestwood tells us more...

Can you tell us the background to planning the 4 Goes Mad season - how did this come about and why did Channel 4 want to do this?

The initial idea came from the production company Cineflix. They came up with the idea of 'hiding' people with mental health problems in the schedule. I think they'd seen the Channel 4 Mash Up that had happened at the beginning of last year and thought there was something that could be done with that format, using the whole of Channel 4 and not just specific programmes to tackle an issue.

The idea of taking a subject like mental health and putting it at the heart of the schedule rather than a marginal space, felt exciting to us. Mental health is not known to be a massive turn on for viewers so that was the big challenge.

What did Channel 4 get out of working with Time to Change on the season?

A lot. First and foremost there was a really good sense of guidance. It felt like a really safe space. One of the things I think Time to Change knows better than anyone is that people are quite scared talking about mental health for fear of putting their foot in and saying the wrong thing. Getting guidance on a language in such a safe space was great.

But really, more than anything, there was constant reassurance, a sense that 'we want mental health to be at the heart of the schedule, we want it to be in primetime, we want it to be bold, we want it to be entertaining, we want it to be funny, we want all of those things and we want to help you do that'. That was amazing. It gave us license to be as creative as we wanted to be and to not play it safe and without that we wouldn't have been able to be as successful, I don't think.

From a day-to-day more practical point of view there was a huge amount of work that came in from Time to Change in terms of helping us cast the programmes because it was a phenomenally difficult thing to cast. For example for *Location, Location, Location* we had to find some who'd had a mental health condition or was experiencing one at the time, who was living within a very specific

geographical area and was mortgage ready, with a pre-approved mortgage.

How were people with experience of mental health problems involved?

Most of the contributors had mental health problems, past or present. I think in the end six out of the eight contributors involved in *The World's Maddest Job Interview* were people with mental health problems, and obviously everyone from Jon Richardson to Ruby Wax to the man who hoarded were. Pretty much about 80 percent of the people onscreen had direct experience of a mental health problem.

And what's so interesting about Time to Change is there's a huge input from people with experience of mental health problems, so we know they helped inform the decisions we made with you.

What was the audience reaction to the season? Do you think that 4 Goes Mad has helped people with mental health problems to come forward and be more open about their experiences?

I think it's raised awareness within the audience of people who previously were a bit clueless about mental health but also with people who had been affected by it, people who directly had mental health issues themselves or had a friend or a

“Mental health is not known to be a massive turn on for viewers so that was the big challenge”

Continued from previous page

family member or a colleague - it raised their awareness about all sorts of things to do with mental health. I think one of the things that really struck people was the fact that you can't tell if someone has a mental health condition.

The Twitter responses were phenomenal - the programmes caused loads of discussions and the feedback was hugely positive, both in terms of the content and the decision to even do the series at all.

Do you think the season will affect the way Channel 4 approaches its programming in future?

It's an interesting one. But actually in a small but really significant way, when we started working together, the series producer of *Location, Location, Location* said that it would affect their casting in the future, in the sense that in the past they might have looked for a character or contributor with a physical disability because of the special things they have to accommodate when they're looking for a house, but she thought mental health was something they'd definitely look at in the future.

It's reaffirmed the fact that people are interested in the subject if you approach mental health in a way that isn't condescending, that's good television, that's responsible. For example, we've also shown *My Mad Fat Diary* on E4, a drama series which explores teenage mental health in a warm, relatable way. It's been praised for its truthful portrayal of mental health, and is really chiming with our younger E4 audience.

It's certainly going to be covered in our programming in future. ■

Impact

- 74% of people who watched the season said it made them think about the challenges faced by people with mental health problems in a different way.
- 70% said it made them think about how we can change attitudes to people with mental health problems.
- 85% of Time to Change Facebook users thought that the season may have reduced stigma and discrimination in the workplace.

The World's Maddest job interview - what you thought

“ I particularly like the fact that all the participants in the job interview had been in other 'ordinary' programmes in the same week. This meant that they were seen as 'normal' before they were seen as 'mad'. ”

“ I just found it inspirational. It was educational but entertaining at the same time, loved the Apprentice-style theme and surprise elements, it was just a very clever programme. The season as a whole made it acceptable to talk about. ”

“ I was pretty excited to see the programme once I saw the trailer, and the show itself exceeded my expectations. It was extremely well done and got across perfectly the messages that people with mental health problems are indistinguishable from everyone else - and just as employable - while demonstrating the unfair prejudices that employers hold. ”



Turn over to read about Kevin's experiences of advising on this storyline

Behind the scenes on EastEnders by Jenni Regan



Last year, the BBC's flagship soap *EastEnders* asked for our help with a depression storyline they were developing for one of their major characters, Ian Beale. Our Senior Media Advisor, Jenni Regan, describes how she worked with the *EastEnders* team to ensure Ian's story was portrayed with accuracy and sensitivity.

I have to admit, I had bit of personal as well as professional excitement when we were approached by the *EastEnders* team to advise on the Ian Beale storyline. I have been a loyal fan of Albert Square for many years and already felt like I knew the characters as though they were my friends and neighbours. I also knew the possible impact that a character with a mental health problem in such a high profile programme could have in tackling stigma and discrimination.

The first step for the writing team was to work on the story arc to ensure that there was a clear beginning, middle and end for the story. This was to make sure that Ian did not suddenly wake up one day in the middle of a crisis or appear completely cured just days afterwards. The beauty of working with a soap is the timescales, where storylines can go on for weeks or months.

We tried to make sure that viewers were watching symptoms build over many weeks. One of the biggest battles was then with the climax. Dramatic endings when a character has a mental health problem tend to involve violence to others, despite this being a very inaccurate view of what it is like to have a mental health problem. In this case we managed to persuade the team that Ian simply walking away from his life was a much more realistic peak.

A 'real-life' Ian Beale

After the initial storyline was sketched out, we brought in our 'real life' Ian Beale. Kevin Shepherd is one of our media volunteers who

had written a blog about his experiences. He was around the same age as Ian, was a real life eastender and shared experiences with the character. We put him in touch with the *EastEnders* team and he provided unique emotional insight to the character, helping to guide the team on how Ian may be feeling or may react.

Script checking

In conjunction with Kevin's crucial work I would offer a script checking service. Each script will generally be re-written around three to four times and I offer suggestions and raise possible issues at every stage. The kind of feedback I would provide was around symptoms, treatment options and the way Ian interacted with others. The dramatic climax for Ian saw him walking off down a dual carriageway - barefoot and 'broken'. Anyone who questions the reality of this scene may be interested to know that it was based on a very similar real life experience of Kevin Shepherd.

It's inevitable working with a soap that the writers will always favour drama over reality, after all it is meant to be entertainment rather than a documentary. However for us it is a unique opportunity to show millions of people the reality of living with a mental health problem, using a well known character such as Ian shows that it really can happen to anyone and we hope that the story got people talking. Soaps have such a powerful role in shaping opinions when done well and our role with this storyline means that we have been able to ensure as much accuracy as possible. ■

“ It's inevitable working with a soap that the writers will always favour drama over reality, after all it is meant to be entertainment rather than a documentary ”





Time to Change supporter Kevin Shepherd worked with the *EastEnders* team over a number of weeks to advise them on how they should write about Ian Beale's depression. Here, he tells us how he got on.

Walking in Ian Beale's shoes

When I was contacted by Time to Change about advising a TV series with an upcoming mental health storyline I never imagined it would be as such a high profile programme as *EastEnders*!

Contact was quickly made with the research team and many emails and phone calls were exchanged over a period of time, the outcome of which was the Ian Beale breakdown story. My input was welcomed and I quickly realised that this was going to be something I could really help with; I could draw on my own experiences and do my bit to make sure that Ian's illness was portrayed accurately and as far as possible, realistically and believably.

Mental illness is a massive umbrella covering a vast array of different diagnoses. One of the biggest challenges in creating awareness of mental health issues is breaking down the stereotypical way people think when confronted with the term "mental illness" and Ian's breakdown is just one of so many different ways that the illness can manifest itself. My personal experience is of a mental breakdown and anxiety/depressive disorder and I could really empathise with the story.

Right from the start of my illness I was advised to start a blog being as open and honest as I could. I was told it could prove to be very therapeutic and it was. I wrote as often as I could, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. I plucked up the courage to share the blog

with a few close friends and eventually it became even more public. Some of the entries (especially the very early ones) are quite painful to look back on, but that was me at the time, that was my life, and it helps me when I am having a bad day to look back and see where I was then and how far I have come since those dark horrible days.

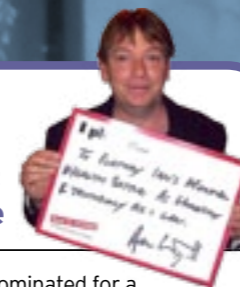
One of my blog entries recalls an episode where I was walking along a dual carriageway completely lost and in total despair. As you can imagine I found it very tough to watch Ian do a very similar walk in the episode when his breakdown completely hit. I have to say that Adam Woodyatt who plays the character Ian Beale played the part superbly well. The whole build up was acted brilliantly and the exit was outstanding in my opinion. Having seen some of the comments on social media sites it was also widely praised for being both moving and realistic.

My experience of helping out with the story was enormously positive. The people I was in contact with were superb and could not have been more supportive and understanding of the issues which they were portraying.

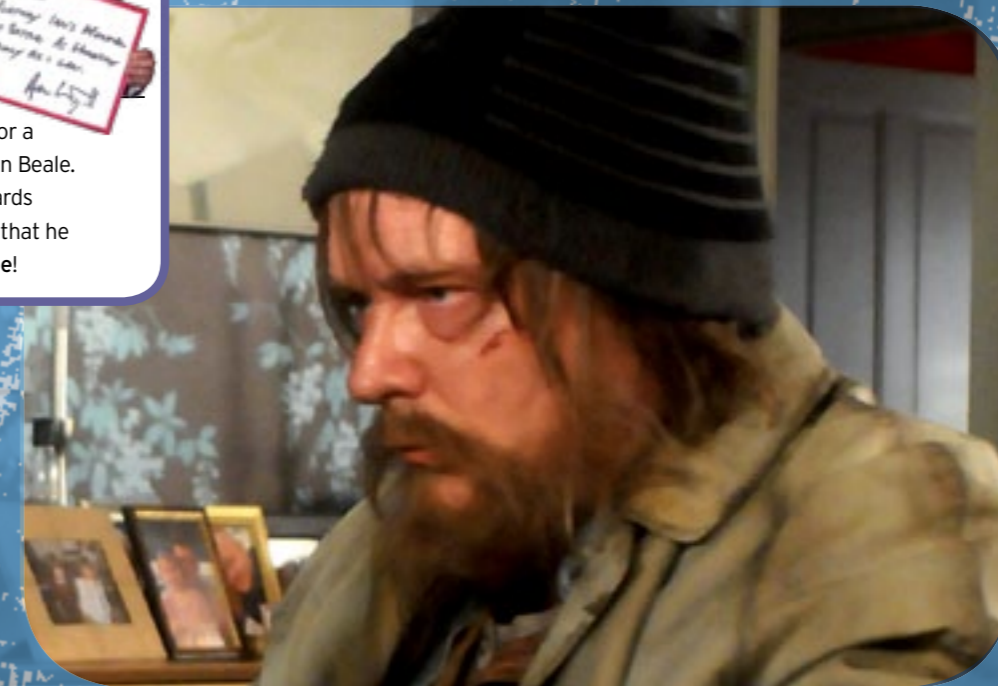
What next for Ian?... Well, you will have to wait and see. I just hope that in some small way I have managed to do a little bit to make people see that mental health issues can affect anyone at any time and if this venture encourages just one or two people to challenge their preconceptions regarding mental health issues I will consider it a massive success. ■

Join our story bank
We will contact you whenever any opportunities come up to advise on scripts or feature in newspaper stories. Find out more at time-to-change.org.uk/media-volunteers

Adam Woodyatt signs our pledge



Adam Woodyatt was nominated for a Mind Award for his portrayal as Ian Beale. We caught up with him at the awards ceremony and were very pleased that he signed the Time to Change pledge!



What you thought: your comments on Facebook

“Returning as psychotic, unkempt and helpless, shows one outcome of mental illness, but is not very helpful as far as educating people who have no experience, directly or indirectly, of the illness.”

“Perhaps the sudden absence by Ian did not do the decline into depression justice? The physical changes portrayed once Ian returned, I feel did. Many people who are depressed cannot manage daily routine like getting up, dressed etc.”

“In my opinion, soaps can make small changes to people's attitudes, remember how the gay kiss opened up debate in the 90's?”

Turn over to read another script advisor's story

Emmerdale researcher Fiona McAllister tells us how she developed Zak Dingle's recent Mind Media Award-winning storyline, working with media volunteer Lol Butterfield.

Emmerdale



What does your role involve?

In the researcher role at *Emmerdale*, you have to guide stories from their inception all the way to transmission, working alongside the writers, storyliners, script editors and the production teams to ensure that timelines, procedure and dialogue are as accurate as possible. It's a lot of work for one person, you have to be able to multitask as you're working across several months of scripts at any one time.

Also, the buck stops with research if anything gets through to air which is unjustifiably inaccurate. Ultimately, the researcher has to say when a story doesn't fit and offer creative solutions which keep the story within the boundaries of reality without undermining the dramatic intention - although a lot of this comes down to having long gossipy chats with your contacts to try and come up with new stories, which can be fun.

How did your work with Lol translate into what we saw on screen?

It's important to try and find good, dependable and knowledgeable contacts like Lol as early as possible in the process so you can work with them as the story develops. In Zak's case, the main story arc was across an eight month period so it's inevitable that it changed from its initial concept as other stories change and impacted on Zak (it's a small village!).

There were a few things that we had to compromise on as the story developed, but ultimately I'm really proud of this story. Showing a patriarchal figure like Zak Dingle going through a period of mental distress is a really tough call, and we're still showing the reality of his long term recovery. I think it was dramatically brilliant and it also did its bit challenging stigma, which is always nice.

Did you do any other research for Zak's storyline? If so, what did you do?

Absolutely, although Lol is an outstanding research contact - he read an obscene number of storylines and scripts for the sake of professional accuracy -

it's always important to get as many professional opinions as possible. Zak's story was quite complex so I also spoke with a psychiatrist, another mental health nurse and a police officer who has had a lot of experience in the field. Thankfully they hardly ever disagreed with one another, which is a rarity! The reason Lol was so indispensable above and beyond his vast professional knowledge was his openness about his own experiences, and these personal touches really fed into the script and informed the excellent performances.

How receptive do you think script writers are to the information you give them?

The writers always want the scripts to be as good as they possibly can be, and although it can be frustrating for them to have to change or rethink stories because of research, if the story's strong enough then there's always a way to make it work. Otherwise, there's no point having it!

Bill Lyons, the writer who initially came up with Zak's story, had done a huge amount of research himself into the sectioning process and he pitched an accurate story from the get go - he had even visited a psychiatric unit to get a better understanding. It's always slightly intimidating for a researcher when a writer has done their own research to start with but it worked brilliantly in this case. It's also got a lot to do with the producer - Stuart was very keen to keep the story as true to life as possible.

Have you ever had to ask for major changes to be made to a storyline? If so, what happened?

All the time, but thankfully not on the Zak storyline! There are always inevitably a few last minute tweaks - for example the writer had to have a last minute rethink of Zak's second admission into the unit because I missed the fact that it took place on a bank holiday meaning the psychiatrist wouldn't be present to readmit him; but we found a way to make it work without detracting from the drama. It takes a brave person to tell a room full of storyliners that they need to change the story they've been working on for

weeks at the last minute, but it's important to iron out the inaccuracies as early on in the process as possible.

Do you think that being accurate is more important than creating powerful drama - or is it possible to do both?

I'm biased but of course it's completely possible. In fact, I think research helps the drama, often giving another perspective on a story that the team might not have considered. Although soaps tend to show an improbable number of things happening to a fairly small number of people, ultimately any of these things could happen, and are happening, to real people. Issues like mental illness, births, infidelity, physical illnesses - this is the stuff of real life and anyone could be affected by a certain aspect of a soap at any one time.

Although we're not a public service broadcaster, we owe it to our viewers to try and reflect the reality of what they might be going through. In reality, only a tiny amount of what is researched for a story appears on screen - the team just ensures that it's ticking along subtly in the background, invisibly informing the powerful drama that makes soap operas like *Emmerdale* so watchable. ■



Much-loved *Emmerdale* character Zak Dingle experienced a mental health crisis in 2012. Media volunteer Lol Butterfield advised on the storyline. Lol has experienced depression and is also a qualified mental health nurse, so he was able to share his knowledge and experience on both fronts.



Lol's top tips

These are Lol's top tips for scriptwriters portraying a mental health crisis

- Reality is the key. It is imperative that the character's portrayal is as plausible and authentic as possible. This will make it easier for the viewer to identify and empathise with them.
- Knowledge of services, treatment programmes, and the care planning process adds to the authenticity.
- Scriptwriters need to be flexible and willing to modify scripts depending on feedback around mental health signs and symptoms.
- Non-verbal communication and body language are as important as verbal communication when covering a condition such as depression.
- It's important to show mental health in a more positive light and not resort to negative stereotyping. This could be the stereotypical mad axe man or the hysterical woman who is a danger to her family.
- For people living with a mental health condition there are good days as well as bad days. It's useful for the viewer to be able to understand this. Moods fluctuate depending on different external factors at the time, just like everybody else in the population!
- It is only when mental health deteriorates severely that the bad days become very bad and the good days are very few and far between, so showing somebody with a mental health condition only having bad days is not very accurate.
- Soaps and dramas have the power to 'normalise' mental health issues so viewers have a greater understanding of the 1 in 4 statistic and appreciate that they too could also become mentally ill at any point in their lives.



Hayley Richardson-Roberts,
Senior Media Officer

Real life stories and mental health reporting



This issue has focussed on our work with TV soaps and dramas, but we also work with the media in lots of other ways to challenge stigma and discrimination and get your voices heard.

Storylines like those we've talked about in this issue often lead to more public interest in mental health and to journalists wanting to hear real life stories to bring the topic to life. This gives people with direct experience of mental health problems the chance to tell their own stories, have their voices heard and counteract the many myths that exist about mental health.

When we get requests from journalists we consult our database of media volunteers – these are people who have shared their stories of living with mental health problems with us and are ready to talk to the media when opportunities arise. We try to link journalists up with volunteers who match their request. Due to a well subscribed database we can normally find someone who is perfect for the opportunity.

For example US hit drama *Homeland*, which features Carrie Mathison, a young high-flying CIA agent with bipolar disorder, prompted a journalist working on a story for the Daily Mail's 'You' magazine to approach us for a real life story of a young professional female with bipolar disorder. We didn't have any suitable CIA agents on our database (!) but we did have someone who was able to talk about their experiences of managing their mental illness in the workplace. Like Carrie, Sonia works full-time, and although her illness is a challenge, it hasn't stopped her from being successful in her career.

Last year we worked with Guardian journalist Mark Rice-Oxley on a feature in The Guardian 'The truth about depression: six people speak out'. Six of our media volunteers featured in this. Nina (pictured left) shared her experience and talked about the damaging affects of stigma: "I think there is still

too much stigma attached to having a mental health problem, especially with something like depression because it is not an illness you can see, I think it is quite misunderstood".

Getting other mental health stories out there

We also work to make sure that important stories about mental health stigma and discrimination, (such as those featured on page 5 of this magazine) get the prominent media coverage they deserve, and are always keeping an eye out for opportunities to get our messages out in the media.

Just one example of this was last year, when we issued a statement within 30 minutes of hearing that four MPs had spoken out about their mental health problems during a debate in Parliament. It was the first time an MP had opened up about this publicly – let alone four in one day! We'd been waiting years for it to happen so we wanted to shout about it from the rooftops, and use it to get the wider messages of Time to Change out there.

And we did! Our Director, Sue Baker, was quoted in several national newspapers, interviewed on TV and radio and we also managed to get broader opinion pieces into The Guardian and the Huffington Post. We also asked Shea, one of our media volunteers, to blog about her reaction to the story so that we could get across what this milestone moment meant for people directly affected by mental health problems:

time-to-change.org.uk/blog/commonsdebate

To find out more about how you can become a media volunteer with Time to Change, visit time-to-change.org.uk/media-volunteers or email h.richardson@time-to-change.org.uk or larissa.abl@rethink.org



Time to Change media
volunteer Nina

Press coverage of mental health is a key issue in the fight against discrimination. When it's done well, it can be a force for good in changing public attitudes. But the media can also play a damaging role, by fuelling unhelpful stereotypes of people with mental health problems.

In recent years, there has been a rise in the number of people who feel more able to be open about their mental health, including high profile public figures. But how much is the media getting on board with this growing social movement? Is this culture change being reflected in the press?



The changing face of mental health in the media

In April 2013, the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London, published its evaluation of the first four years of Time to Change (2007-2011). It looked at all aspects of Time to Change's work, and considered the extent to which the programme is reducing discrimination in different areas of life.

One area of focus was a study looking at the way newspapers portray people with mental health problems, and report on mental health.

How it worked

The study analysed newspaper articles, both national and regional, chosen at random each month from 2008 - 2011.

What it looked for

- Whether or not positive coverage of people with mental health problems had increased
- Whether or not articles that stigmatised people with mental health problems had decreased
- Whether people with mental health problems were being given more of a voice to share their experiences in the press.

What it found

- There has been a 10% rise in anti-stigmatising articles – so a significant increase in pieces

that talk about mental health problems in a constructive and sympathetic way.

- More people with mental health problems are being quoted in articles.
- The amount of stigmatising articles about people with mental health problems has stayed the same between 2008 and 2011. It hasn't increased, but it hasn't decreased either.
- But – the content of negative articles has changed. Journalists are writing fewer pieces that draw a link between violence and mental illness. Instead they are writing more pieces that portray people with mental health problems as weak or incapable.
- The number of articles about discrimination faced by people with mental health problems has also stayed the same.

What does this mean?

There are a lot of encouraging things to take away from these results. Stigmatising media coverage is still happening, but whereas previously the number of negative articles outweighed the positive ones, the rise in constructive pieces now means that the balance has been redressed.

Equally, it's good news that media stereotyping of people with mental health problems as violent has also decreased.

The increase in the number of people with mental health problems being quoted in pieces also means that the public are getting more opportunities to hear about what it really means to live with a mental health problem, directly from the person who experiences it.

Why is this happening?

Many factors may be affecting these changes. A general increase in openness about mental health in society may also be influencing the way journalists write about the issues. Equally, hardening of attitudes brought on by the recession might be preventing a decrease in pieces that stigmatise people with a mental illness.

It's also worth bearing in mind that the study did not look at how things have changed since 2011, when we started our media advisory service, partly as a result of these findings, which suggested that a more strategic approach to improving media portrayals was needed. It did not look at changes in other areas of the media, such as radio and television, where we work closely.

Find out more about what the evaluation of Time to Change phase 1 means, and find out how you can read the full results, at time-to-change.org.uk/impact.

Time to Change on tour

Time to Change has been getting the public talking about mental health at the Time to Change Village.

The Village is the pop-up space we've been taking to different locations across England. It's made up of marquees representing different things you might find in an English village: a cinema, café, post office and village green. Each Village is staffed by a team of local volunteers who have personal experience of mental health problems. Throughout the day, they share their stories with members of the public, so they can learn about mental illness in an engaging way. In 2012 the Village went to Liverpool, Norwich, London, Totnes, Leicester's Caribbean Carnival and Birmingham for a special young people's event.

In 2013 our volunteers hit the Stereo-Hype festival in East London, which Time to Change organised in partnership with Mellow. The event explored stigma, discrimination and well-being issues within African and Caribbean communities.

time-to-change.org.uk/village

facebook.com/timetochange



Round-up – Time to Change around the country

You've been reading all about our work with the media in this issue, here's a flavour of what else we've been getting up to...

Start your conversation: our new advertising campaign

In January we launched a new advertising campaign, including a new TV advert, radio advert and online films. We've been also been encouraging lots of conversation on our social media pages, and, of course, our media team have been getting lots of real-life stories into the press!

We want people who don't have much knowledge about mental illness to feel that they can be the ones to start a conversation. We also want people to realise that you don't have to be an expert about mental health to be there for someone you know.

The campaign showcases inspiring stories from real people. You can watch their films on our website.



Young people's film premieres

We've been asking young people to stand up and be counted against discrimination in an online video, Stand Up Kid.

It's part of a campaign we've been piloting in the West Midlands to break down discrimination amongst under 25s. We want to make sure the one in ten young people who experience mental health problems don't have to deal with bullying and teasing on top of their symptoms. Changing attitudes in the young also makes them less likely to discriminate later in life. We'll now be running a second pilot in the Kent and the South East.

time-to-change.org.uk/youngpeople

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Order more copies: time-to-change.org.uk/magazine. Or download some of our other media resources: time-to-change.org.uk/media-advice

What do you think?

Do you have any feedback about this issue? We'd love to hear any comments or ideas you have.

Email us at:
magazine@time-to-change.org.uk

**Next edition:
the community
issue**