

Natasha Devon MBE Teams Up with Charities in Ambitious Campaign to Make Media Reporting on Mental Health 'Responsible, Genuinely Educational & Stigma-Reducing'

[Tuesday 10th October] To mark World Mental Health Day 2017, former government mental health champion and leading campaigner Natasha Devon MBE has teamed up with charities to create a 7 point mental health charter for newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, bloggers and YouTubers.

The charter, which was compiled in association with the Samaritans, Mental Health First Aid England and Beat, has so far been endorsed by Girlguiding, The Coalition for Men & Boys and the Labour Campaign for Mental Health. It lists 'dos' and 'don'ts' for the media when discussing or depicting mental health stories. It includes suggestions such as replacing the term 'committed suicide', which suggests that the act is a crime, with 'ended their own life'.

The recommendations are based on evidence collated by charities determining what might induce 'imitational' behaviours in vulnerable people, set back recovery or cause distress to people who have experienced mental illness and their families. They also take into account suggestions from the public based on feedback Natasha has received online, following her long-standing social media campaign.

Natasha Devon MBE said: *"If my decade as a campaigner working in this field has taught me anything, it's that language and imagery matters when it comes to shaping social attitudes. I do a lot of work in schools and pupils often bring thoughts they have picked up about mental illness from media outlets into the classroom.*

This isn't an attempt to curtail freedom of speech, but rather asking the media to be more thoughtful in the way they describe and depict mental illness. The more media outlets sign up, the greater the step towards genuinely educating people about mental health and reducing stigma around mental illness".

The first editors to sign were Natasha Pearlman at Grazia Magazine and Ann Mroz of the Times Educational Supplement (TES), who Natasha has praised as 'pioneers'. The Eastern Daily Press, Norwich Evening News, Heat Radio, Kerrang! Radio and Planet Rock have also signed up. Supporters will receive a 'stamp of approval' for their website and social media outlets, specially designed by illustrator Ruby Elliott (aka @rubyetc).

Ann Mroz said: *"Ensuring we talk about mental health in neutral and non-judgmental terms is...a vital step towards reducing the stigma that surrounds it. It should be any more embarrassing to talk about depression than it is to discuss a broken leg".*

On 10th October 2017, Natasha will send an invitation to the editor of every major publication in the country inviting them to sign up to the charter. She'll then keep an ongoing record of those approached and their responses using the hashtag #MHMediaCharter. She has enlisted the help of Girlguiding and Beat advocates, Time to Change young champions and more than 100 bloggers and youtubers to help spread the word.

The initiative has been praised by Norman Lamb MP, former Minister for Care and Support, who said: *"I applaud this really valuable initiative and offer my full support. The truth is that the words we use matter"*.

Former Shadow Minister for Mental Health Luciana Berger, campaigner Jonny Benjamin MBE as well as actor and director Adam Deacon have also backed the campaign.

END OF RELEASE

**You can keep up to date with Natasha's campaign on Twitter
@MHMediaCharter**

Media enquiries (including requests for spokespeople from any of the organisations listed above) to: anna@ampliterary.co.uk

Notes for Editors

A copy of the charter is attached, for your information.

About Natasha Devon MBE

Natasha Devon is a writer, campaigner & pundit. She tours schools and colleges throughout the UK, delivering talks as well as conducting research on mental health, body image, gender and social equality. She regularly gives evidence to the Education and Health Select Committees, representing the interests of teenagers and teachers. In 2016, the Sunday Times and Debrett's named Natasha one of the 500 most influential people in Britain.

Natasha's book 'A Beginner's Guide to Being Mental' will be published in May 2018 by Bluebird Books.

About Ruby Elliott

Ruby Elliot is an illustrator, cartoonist and author. She uses humour in her work to talk openly and honestly about what it's like living with mental health issues. Posting daily under the name 'Rubyetc', her drawings about everything life can throw at you have gained her a popular online following. Ruby's book, 'It's All Absolutely Fine', was published in 2016 by Trapeze

To find out more about Girlguiding visit www.girlguiding.org.uk

To find out more about Mental Health First Aid England visit www.mhfaengland.org.uk

To find out more about The Samaritans visit www.samaritans.org

To find out more about B-eat visit www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

To find out more about the Coalition for Men & Boys visit www.menandboyscoalition.org.uk

To find out more about the Labour Campaign for Mental Health go to www.labourformentalhealth.com