

**YOUNGMINDS** Amplified



**Digital Engagement  
in Participation**

# Amplified

This toolkit was created as part of the Amplified project run by YoungMinds and commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement. Amplified is a programme that aims to support the participation of children, young people and their families at every level of the mental health system.

We support providers and commissioners to excel in participation by showcasing good practice across the system and promoting access to resources that support in four areas:

- Promoting and championing participation
- Strategic participation of children, young people and their families
- Promoting young people's access to and their voice within services
- Supporting the collaboration of young people and their families in care and treatment.

## About this guide

This guide is primarily aimed at health professionals working in participation, or health professionals looking to expand their knowledge of digital engagement. It may also be useful to those working in charities, voluntary organisations and other settings.

The guide can also be used as a basis for you and your organisation to start developing your own approach to digital engagement. Alternatively, it can support you to adapt your current methods of participation to a digital format. It aims to:

- Provide skills and knowledge in delivering safe participation and engagement digitally, and in-person
- Give advice on implementing digital participation and engagement in your own practice
- Inform ways to enable and practice meaningful participation and engagement
- Provide suggestions for engaging with young people digitally in a safe and supportive way

We have also created a training course on Digital Participation which is run through Amplified and as part of the wider YoungMinds Open Access training model. This guide can be used as an accompanying resource to this training, or as a standalone guide to developing your organisations' digital engagement practices.



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# Introduction

In March 2020, we all faced an unprecedented situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Abrupt changes were made to schooling, social and professional life, housing, face-to-face healthcare and mental health support.

It quickly became apparent that the consequences of the pandemic would have a tremendous effect on the mental health of children and young people, and require significant changes in how mental health services respond and operate.



**Young people's voices need to be heard and listened to more than ever, but the usual methods of participation are not always possible or appropriate**

In a YoungMinds survey, young people with experience of mental health needs were asked to describe their mental health during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup> In autumn 2020, 58% of respondents described their mental health as being poor prior to schools returning after the first lockdown; this rose to 69% when they were back at school.

The COVID-19 pandemic has required many of us to make changes to the way we work, communicate and engage with each other, and this is as true for YoungMinds as it is for other organisations. Young people's voices need to be heard and listened to more than ever, but the usual methods of participation are not always possible or appropriate.

When the first COVID-19 lockdown was announced, at YoungMinds we needed to develop our work and adapt to digital delivery across the charity to ensure we continued to deliver and engage with children, young people, parents, carers and professionals in a meaningful and useful way. We modified our resources, explored different digital platforms and developed our skills. We asked young people what they thought worked well online and what needed to be better. As a result of this journey we created our vision of what good digital engagement looks like.

Building on our existing toolkits and our skills in participation, we aim to provide clear and practical ways to facilitate rewarding and meaningful engagement digitally, as well as in-person. This guide outlines tips and advice for digital engagement, our values and how we practice safe and impactful participation, both digitally and in person. The guide also provides guidance on how to run safe digital participation in your own workplace, including tips on developing interactive activities and engagement methods, how to support the collection of information from young people and parents or carers, and troubleshooting common problems online.

Although our move to digital participation was initially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the attested benefits of engaging digitally have become apparent and as a result, appreciated in their own right. We hope digital engagement will continue to bring benefits to you and the people you work with, and the techniques you acquire in this guide will remain valuable throughout your work and practice.

<sup>1</sup> YoungMinds (2020) Coronavirus: Impact on young people with mental health needs, Survey 3: Autumn 2020 – return to school, <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/4119/youngminds-survey-with-young-people-returning-to-school-coronavirus-report-autumn-report.pdf>



# What is participation and engagement?

Participation is integral in enabling and empowering children and young people with direct or indirect experience of mental health issues to become experts in their own experience. Participation encourages children and young people, as well as parents and carers, to use their experience to make vital changes and improvements to mental health services, projects and policy, whilst being actively involved in the direction and development of mental health services in a meaningful, beneficial and empowering way.

The YoungMinds definition of participation, co-created with young people is:

**“Participation in mental health means young people taking an active role in: caring for their own mental health, decision-making about the mental health care they receive and shaping the services they use and communities they live in.**

**Participation creates change to make the experiences of young people better and takes place through young people working as equals with adults and with each other.”**

## YoungMinds Participation Values

YoungMinds participation is participation that...

- **Matters:** we always start from young peoples' experiences meaning we only work on, and involve young people in issues that matter to them.
- **Is safe and ethical:** our participation is always designed with the safety, experience and motivation of young people as the primary consideration.
- **Drives change:** our participation results in positive change for children and young people, and the mental health system as a whole.
- **Is expert and always improving:** by listening to children, young people and parents and incorporating new evidence from participation, health care and beyond we aim to keep improving our approach to participation.
- **Shifts power:** we design participation that shifts the power in relationships between young people and adults, and between professionals and service users.
- **Is part of everything we do:** the commitment to participation is championed from the top of our organisation and embedded throughout our work.
- **Is transformative for young people:** we offer young people the tools they need to participate, and help them build skills and knowledge they can use in the future.
- **Builds on the best in everyone:** we design participation to harness the unique strengths that young people, adults and communities already have.
- **Amplifies the lesser heard:** in all our work we make sure we recognise, understand and create space for the most marginalised voices, to ensure their needs and priorities are met.
- **Is creative:** we empower young people to share their story in the way they want to, using innovative and self-created methods to help adults visualise and understand their world.

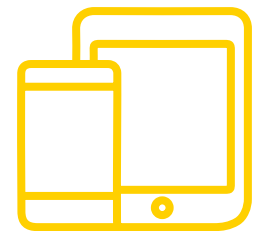
# Digital Participation

## Benefits of digital participation

We have learned that digital engagement has many advantages. Below are some of the key benefits that we have identified through our work. This is not an exhaustive list and you may discover additional benefits through your own work too.

### Accessible

Digital engagement enables you to work with people who may experience additional barriers to face-to-face participation. For example, people who are geographically spread out across the country or abroad, and people who have caring responsibilities. It can also be more accessible for people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), mental health problems, or physical and long-term health conditions.



### Flexible

Digital engagement gives people more freedom to choose how and when they participate. Participants can choose to have their camera and microphone on or off, and can easily sit out of or just observe activities if they would prefer to do so.



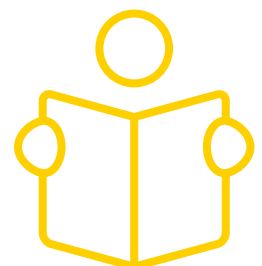
### Engaging

There are many ways to adapt in-person participation activities into an interactive and engaging digital format. Young people in particular are increasingly in tune with technology, and therefore digital participation offers an excellent way of engaging with young people in a way that they are often familiar and comfortable with. Digital participation also allows people to network and collaborate with others, and perhaps meet people virtually that they may have not had the opportunity to meet in a face-to-face context.



### Resources

Digital engagement can eliminate travel, accommodation, and refreshment costs for both participants and facilitators. It is also more time efficient, especially for people who would have had to travel long distances.



### Opportunity for learning

As a facilitator, this is a great opportunity to expand your knowledge and expertise, and explore new and creative ways to engage with participants.

# Principles for best practice digital participation

Through our practice we have developed a set of standards that we follow in all of our digital participation activities. We have outlined these below and provided tips on how you can embed these in your own work.

We believe good digital participation is...

**Safe**

**Accessible**

**Engaging**





## Safe

Making sure digital delivery is safe should always be the most important consideration. You may have some concerns about the safety of online activities but there are plenty of ways you can still offer the same amount of support and guidance to participants:



- Your organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures were likely developed for a face-to-face setting. If you are facilitating digitally, consider how you can adapt these for digital delivery. Do you need to update your risk assessment template, or develop a different procedure for responding to disclosures?
- Think about the ratio of staff to participants. When facilitating a digital workshop, this may need to be higher than if you were delivering the same workshop face-to-face. Consider having an additional facilitator to manage the group chat, or to address any technical difficulties.
- Consider whether the content is appropriate for a digital format. There may have been additional measures that you would have put in place to address a sensitive topic in a face-to-face workshop. Are you able to provide the same level of care in a digital workshop? Or do you need to consider alternative approaches for this topic, such as 1-1 phone calls?
- It's vital that the content of the workshop or event is appropriate for the audience it's aimed at, particularly when working with vulnerable young people. It's worth having a good think about the group that you will be working with, and considering ways to ensure the content is age appropriate, avoids any triggering content where possible, and is accessible.
- Organising individual check-in's with each young person before the workshop is a great way to understand how you can best support each young person to engage in a way that works for them. Use this as an opportunity to ask young people if there are any 'no-go areas' that they would really prefer not to talk about. This way you can review the session plan to ensure that these areas are not discussed or focussed on too much, if at all.
- Carefully review any content that is planned to be sent or shown to young people (e.g. if you ask young people to review something ahead of the workshop) in order to look out for any potentially triggering content. If the young people in the workshop are currently quite unwell, it might be best to avoid prompting any content about detailed mental health issues.
- If a young person, or their family, discloses that they have found something triggering, it is important to follow this up. Ask them if there is anything you can do (such as follow up with them again in a few days, not asking for their feedback on this discussion point) or if there is anyone

**Your organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures were likely developed for a face-to-face setting. If you are facilitating digitally, consider how you can adapt these for digital delivery**

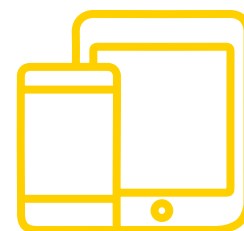
they can go to for support (e.g. having a catch up with someone during or after the meeting or contacting a certain person).

- Inform young people that they can take breaks during the session if and when they need to, for example if they are finding a topic particularly difficult or triggering. Encourage participants to turn their camera off and mute their microphone if they do decide they need a short break.

## Accessible

All participation activities need to be accessible for those you are delivering to. Consider ways in which you can ensure everything you do is accessible for neurodiverse participants, and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), disabilities, mental health problems and people who may have limited access to resources. Some additional steps you can take to improve accessibility are outlined below.

- Arrange a catch up with young people prior to the workshop to address any concerns and ensure you understand any additional support needs.
- Make sure young people have the necessary equipment and resources to take part in the workshop, such as headphones, a laptop, phone or tablet, internet access, and a comfortable place to sit. If the young person does not have something, this alone should not be a barrier to them taking part in the engagement activity – think of other ways that you can engage them, such as through a phone call, a survey or by emailing or posting them the questions from the session. It is useful to consider having a budget available to support young people in accessing necessary equipment if this is a barrier for the people you want to engage.
- Bear in mind that some young people may not always be able to join the digital workshop in a quiet and comfortable environment. Think about whether there is anything you might need to know about where they will be whilst taking part, e.g. will anyone else be present in the room with them? Is there anything you can do to support them in feeling more comfortable to join? Encourage participants to make use of the chat box to convey messages and ideas if they don't feel comfortable speaking. If young people are currently in supported living accommodation, perhaps a nurse, youth worker (or equivalent) might be present for support.
- Be mindful of how you are communicating content. Outline the key points, and then expand through discussions, activities, pictures or videos. Regardless of who is attending the digital engagement, it's good to ensure the number of slides and the amount of writing in slides is kept to a minimum. Incorporating visual stimulus and activities into your engagement will be hugely beneficial in engaging with young people with complex needs.



**Consider having a budget available to support young people in accessing necessary equipment if this is a barrier for the people you want to engage**

- Research has shown that young people with complex needs are able to retain information given in audio or visual form in chunks of 20 minutes before needing a break (even if it's a very short break or energiser). Therefore having short bursts of activities with quick breaks and sufficient time for energisers is likely to work better for any young people with complex needs. Some suggestions for energisers can be found in Section 7.
- If a young person is in an inpatient unit or care home and is age 16 or under and they haven't participated in a digital workshop before, it's important for a facilitator to speak with their support worker or nurse beforehand to explain the plan for the workshop. This is also a good time to mention to the support worker or nurse that being in a quiet space is important when taking part in the workshop.

## Engaging

There are a variety of ways to ensure the workshops you deliver are equally as participatory and interactive as they would be in face-to-face settings.

- Ensure that your workshop incorporates a variety of:
  - Whole group work, small group or pair work, and independent activities
  - Communication methods, such as presentations, videos, images, virtual whiteboards, and music
  - Activities, such as polls, drawing exercises, go-arounds, and energisers.
- Ensuring there are regular breaks and time for energisers allows young people to stay engaged. In general, digital engagement workshops should be no longer than 1.5-2 hours. If there is more content that you need to cover, think about having two or more sessions, over a number of days or a week.
- Facilitating icebreakers and encouraging young people to participate with some creative activities at the beginning of a workshop can significantly help to ease any anxiety or awkwardness that young people may experience, as well as make your workshop more engaging.



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# Technology

There are many different platforms available for digital delivery. It's worth exploring the different options and consider which might work best for you and your team.



Below is a table of the different platforms that you could choose to use and some of the different functions they offer.

| FEATURE   | PLATFORM |       |                 |       |       |            |       |
|---|----------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|------------|-------|
|   | Zoom     | Teams | Google Hangouts | Skype | Slack | Mentimeter | Mural |
| Free to use   | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     | ✓          |       |
| Pay to use functions  | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     | ✓          | ✓     |
| One-to-one and group  | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     | ✓          | ✓     |
| Calling function  | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     |            |       |
| Video calling function                                      | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     |            |       |
| Messaging function  | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     |            |       |
| File sharing  | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     |            |       |
| Interactive function<br>screen-sharing, polling, whiteboard | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     | ✓          | ✓     |
| Breakout function   | ✓        | ✓     |                 |       |       |            |       |
| Mobile compatible   | ✓        | ✓     | ✓               | ✓     | ✓     | ✓          |       |
| Require account sign-up from participants                   |          |       |                 |       | ✓     |            |       |

Technology changes rapidly, especially when demand for it is high. While this summary highlights some of the platforms and features that might be useful to you now, it's worth keeping up to date with what's available. New innovations might mean that something is developed in the future that better meets your needs. It's worth bearing in mind that many of the digital platforms have premium options that have associated costs.

At YoungMinds we only use platforms that do not require participants to create new accounts, and that agree to several new data protection policies. These platforms can simply be accessed by following a link. We would not recommend trying to use more than two platforms during a session as it can get too complicated for both facilitators and participants.

Below we have outlined some tips on using some of these platforms when delivering workshops digitally.

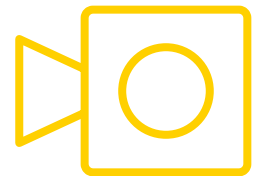
## Video conferencing platforms (eg. Zoom, Microsoft Teams)

Online video conferencing software applications can be used for virtual meetings, events, webinars, workshops, training and social catch-ups. There is usually a video and chat function which allows for flexibility of communication. Video conferencing platforms have been hugely successful since the COVID-19 pandemic and there are a great selection of features available to support the delivery of digital engagement. Many of them are free for anyone to sign-up to, however there is sometimes a limit on meeting times. If you want to deliver content longer than this, organise unlimited meetings or make recordings, you may want to consider a paid account.

We have put together some tips on using video conferencing platforms and how to get the most out of using them when delivering your workshop.

- Choose a platform that allows you to create a password and personal link for your meetings. This ensures only your invited participants can join the meeting.
- On many platforms there is a waiting room function that enables you to have control as to when you allow participants into the meeting, and to let certain participants in at different times
- Most video conferencing platforms provide the option of 'screen sharing', that allows facilitators to give a presentation to participants, show a video or use another tool such as an online whiteboard. Make sure that both facilitators are made co-hosts and only facilitators can share their screens.
- It is a good idea to encourage participants to familiarise themselves with the chat function as this can be a useful way for them to comment or ask questions without having to interrupt the workshop.

**Technology changes rapidly, especially when demand for it is high... it's worth keeping up to date with what's available**



- Make sure participants can send messages to the group and directly to both facilitators but not directly to each other. This is important when you have several young people participating in a workshop who do not know each other.
- Zoom and Teams allow the facilitator to divide participants into breakout rooms, usually up to a maximum of 100-200 participants, depending on what platform you are on and whether you have a paid account. Breakout rooms are particularly useful to enable small group discussions and activities. You can also set breakout rooms in advance and either organise or randomly allocate the rooms.
- Ask participants to mute unless they are talking, to avoid any background noise interfering with the workshop.
- On a number of platforms there is an option to record meetings if you have a paid account. If you are recording a meeting, make sure you get consent from participants beforehand.



## Online whiteboards

(eg. Mural, Miro, Flinga or Google Jamboard)

Online whiteboards are digital workspaces used for collaborative working. You can create workshop material ahead of time to use during your digital delivery and they are great for facilitating engaging activities, enabling visual collaboration and problem solving in groups. Available features and ease of use can vary between platforms but as an example, Mural provides interactive whiteboards, diagrams, pictures, polls and more, that allow you to create beautiful and interactive digital sessions. Pricing and features vary between platforms but you can usually get a basic version or trial period for free to help you decide if it works for you before you to pay for usage.

At YoungMinds we regularly use Mural to create digital engagement content, alongside a video conferencing platform. Below are some tips about using online whiteboards in your practice.

- We have found Mural useful because participants do not need to give any personal details or have an account to use it during a workshop. You can simply send a link and participants will be able to easily access the platform. When they do this, each participant will be given a 'visiting animal' to identify themselves. They can choose whether to add their name to their assigned animal or leave it blank. This means participants can add content anonymously if they prefer. Once participants have their animal, they are able to start adding notes, comments and pictures.
- It is useful to briefly talk your participants through how you will be using the whiteboard during your workshop, for example how participants can



add notes, pictures and comments. It can be useful to create a practice whiteboard to send to participants before the session so they can familiarise themselves with how to use it.

- In Mural, you can lock certain areas of your whiteboard, to make sure that participants cannot edit these areas. We recommend you do this, otherwise it is very easy to accidentally move things around!
- We would encourage participants to join any online platform from a laptop or tablet as much as possible because using a mobile device often means they have reduced access to available features and the platform is more difficult to use. This is especially true when using an online whiteboard. If a young person has difficulty accessing the whiteboard during the workshop, you can share your screen through zoom so that they are still able to see what is happening. The participant can directly message the co-facilitator their ideas and contributions using the chat function. The co-facilitator can then transfer the content onto the whiteboard.

## Internet connection

Issues with internet connections can be difficult for you to manage and control. However there are a few things you can do prior to the workshop to reduce the chances of these happening:

- There are websites where you can quickly check the speed of your internet connection such as [fast.com](https://www.fast.com).
- If your internet connection is particularly weak, you can buy devices to improve and boost the connectivity and speed.
- You could try joining and testing a video call with someone before a session to check connectivity.
- Encourage participants to join the workshop from somewhere with a reasonably reliable internet connection where possible.

As you can imagine, things can still go wrong and the internet might let you or your participants down! Therefore we would always recommend adding an extra 10-15 minutes to your session plan to allow for flexibility in case something does go wrong.



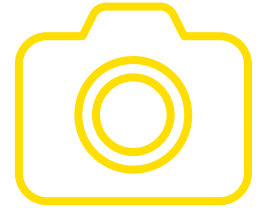
**Issues with internet connections can be difficult for you to manage and control. However there are a few things you can do prior to the workshop to reduce the chances of these happening**

## Camera

One key benefit of facilitating remote workshops is that it gives participants the option to choose whether to have their camera on or off. This is particularly beneficial for young people to still feel able to take part, perhaps more confidently than they would have done in person, particularly for those who may feel self-conscious. However, it's important to bear in mind that it can also invoke more anxiety for some people.

There are several steps you can take to ensure that you are doing everything to support those young people on your workshop.

- Encourage all young people to turn their cameras on if they feel comfortable to do so. Equally, appreciate that some people may not feel comfortable to do this and it's important to respect this. Instead of saying this out loud you could also write it in the chat box.
- When you speak to each participant prior to the workshop, talk to them about how comfortable they feel having their camera on or off and understand the reasons behind this, where possible.
- Inform participants of the option to create a virtual background or blur out their background if they are concerned about something being visible in the background.
- Suggest that participants only turn their camera on for certain points if they feel comfortable to do so, such as break-out rooms or when they want to say something, instead of for the whole workshop.
- Using the chat box function, acknowledge to the group that some people have their cameras turned off which is completely fine. Addressing this first-hand can really help to alleviate any anxiety or general awkwardness.
- On some platforms, participants can turn their cameras off just for themselves, to avoid the feeling of looking at themselves in front of a mirror, but they can still be seen by others in the group.



**Encourage all young people to turn their cameras on if they feel comfortable to do so. Equally, appreciate that some people may not feel comfortable to do this and it's important to respect this**

# Digital session on participation in governance

## What?

We worked with the Amplified Youth and Parent/Carer Advisors and with NHS England to think about the benefits of participation, and what they thought participation in governance should look like.

## Who?

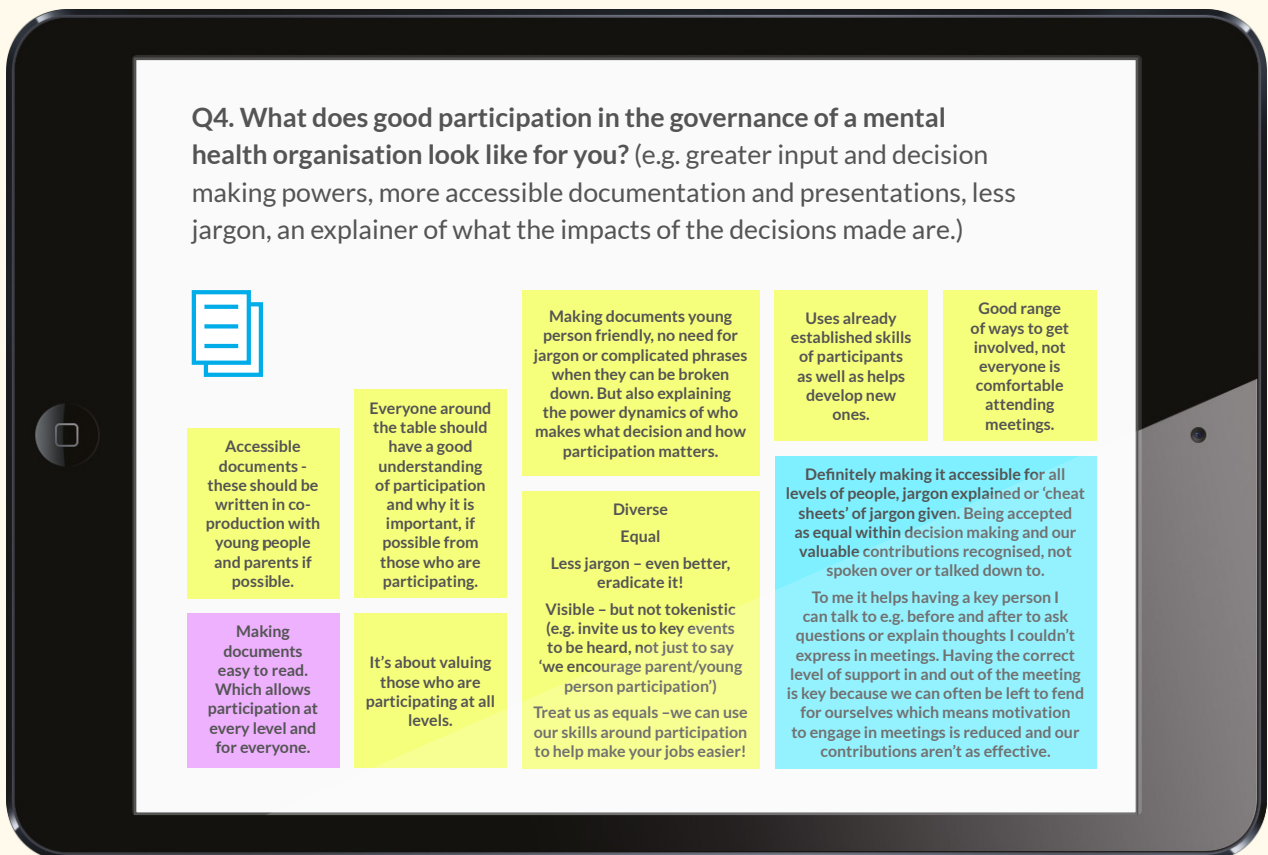
We had two Parent/Carer Advisors and three Youth Advisors who joined a live online session, as well as one Parent/Carer and one Youth Advisor who took part after the session.

## How?

Before the session, we created an online interactive whiteboard using Mural. It contained the questions we wanted to explore with the Advisors.

We shared this during a Zoom meeting. We used both Mural and Zoom (video call and chat function) to gather responses. Using both tools in tandem allowed us to cater for different learning styles and also enabled participants to give either attributed or anonymous feedback in response to our questions.

The Zoom call lasted for 1.5 hours and the Mural remained open and accessible after the call. This allowed us to capture responses that participants thought of after the session was over and meant that those who were unable to attend or did not feel comfortable taking part in the call were still able to contribute.



An example of one of the questions on Mural



# Safeguarding

Safeguarding is an essential consideration when delivering workshops face-to-face or digitally. Bear in mind that many of your organisation's policies and procedures may have been developed primarily for face-to-face delivery, so will need to be reviewed and updated for digital delivery.



All of your organisation's standard safeguarding principles and procedures for face-to-face workshops still apply, therefore in this section we will primarily provide tips for safeguarding considerations specific to digital delivery.

Below are some safeguarding tips to implement in your work.

- It's really helpful for one facilitator to monitor the chat function throughout the workshop, to keep an eye out for any concerning comments or disclosures and follow these up promptly.
- Some young people may feel more inclined to make a disclosure when taking part in a digital workshop, particularly if they don't have their cameras on or if they are using a pseudonym. This is also referred to as 'social disinhibition'. Always refer to your organisations safeguarding policies and procedures when responding to any safeguarding disclosures.
- It's important to remember that many young people may be participating digitally from at home or in communal spaces where family members, carers, friends, housemates or colleagues may also be present. This is also true for facilitators! Offer a variety of ways that participants can contribute to the session if this is a concern for them. Encourage young people to use headphones to help ensure that conversations are only heard by those on the call.

**Always refer to your organisations safeguarding policies and procedures when responding to any safeguarding disclosures**

- In order to avoid young people having to create new accounts on online platforms and having to agree to data protection policies, at YoungMinds we only use platforms that do not require young people to create accounts, instead these can simply be accessed by following a link, e.g. Zoom and Mural.
- Consider the space that you are facilitating from, and ensure there is nothing in your background that is personally identifiable, such as an address or phone number. If you're unsure, you can always edit or blur your virtual background. You can suggest participants use a virtual background as well.
- Consider how many staff are present in your session. We would always advise having at least one co-facilitator present, potentially more if you are addressing a difficult topic or working with young people with complex needs.
- Colleagues, commissioners and other staff may wish to join your digital session. Consider the implications on anonymity as others being present will require their commitment to safeguarding and data protection policies and procedures. It is also good practice to explain to participants who will be in the session, and obtain consent for the presence of any additional observers. Having too many people joining may result in participants not feeling able to speak freely and reduce the quality of the session.
- Similarly to if you were organising and facilitating an in-person session with young people, it's vital that young people consent to the use of their information for the particular project or workshop. It's important to be clear about what you plan to use the information for, and if the digital session is being recorded, young people and parents or carers are sent a consent form and data protection information. Some considerations to think about and to include on the consent form include:
  - What information will you be collecting and why?
  - Who will be able to see the information?
  - What is the purpose of you taking a recording (if applicable)?
  - Where will the recording be saved?
  - How long will it be saved for?
  - Will the recording be published anywhere?
  - When will the recording be deleted?
  - What are their rights in terms of withdrawing their data?

# Tips for delivery

Whether you're facilitating face-to-face or digitally, there's lots of things to consider when organising and facilitating a workshop. It's important to make plans well in advance in order to ensure the session runs as smoothly as possible.



We have outlined some tips below to help you confidently prepare and deliver your workshop.

## Before the workshop

- Arrange a 1-1 catch up with young people prior to the workshop or event, particularly if that young person hasn't engaged with your organisation before or is new to digital engagement. Meeting with young people beforehand gives you an opportunity to understand and address any technical difficulties or barriers each young person may be experiencing (e.g. if they haven't used Zoom before), and allows them to ask any other questions they might have. Doing this before the session will reduce the chance of having to manage these issues on the day or during the workshop.

**Meeting with young people beforehand gives you an opportunity to understand and address any technical difficulties or barriers each young person may be experiencing**



- Create a clear and engaging session plan and ensure each facilitator understands their role. Invite participants to join the session 5-10 minutes early to ensure you can start the workshop on time and be sure to factor in time to address any technical issues.
- When planning your session, aim for roughly 90 minutes. Young people have told us that 90 minutes is the perfect length of time for a digital workshop, and 2 hours would be okay at a push.
- Have regular breaks in order for participants to refresh, stretch, make a drink and move around. This will help participants stay engaged throughout the session. Energisers can also be useful in keeping everyone active and involved. You can see some suggestions for energisers in Section 7.
- Young people and colleagues at [Ambitious About Autism](#) also told us that smaller group sizes, of about 6-10 participants, is best. Make sure you have enough facilitators to support the activities but avoid having more people in the session than is necessary so everyone feels able to have their say.
- Familiarise yourself with the session plan and the digital resources you will be using. It's useful to structure your session plan to allow an extra 10-15 minutes, just in case anything does go wrong, such as time taken to address any technical issues or participants arriving late.
- When designing a workshop session plan, the organisation [deep:black](#) offer an image of a burger to structure your workshop plan. The top and bottom bun would be a bit dry on their own but are essential to hold the meal together. In the context of a workshop they are the intro and outro activities. The main meal is the burger filling in the middle, in the context of a workshop these are the planned activities that will achieve the outcomes.

## Facilitation burger

Developed by [deep:black](#)

### Top bun: the beginning

Setting up the space for participants to be ready to learn and work together through welcome, introductions, ground rules, ice breakers etc

### Filling: the middle

The activities you're planning in order to address the topic or to reach your desired outcome.

### Bottom bun: the end

Closing the workshop and tying up any loose ends through wrapping up, clarifying next steps, evaluation, some closing activity etc.





## Technical Troubleshooting

- Ensure one facilitator has a sound knowledge of troubleshooting issues for the platforms you are using so that they can provide basic advice to participants if they run into any problems.
- Familiarise yourself with the different areas of the online platform you will be using and ensure you feel confident using these as much as possible (e.g. how to organise break-out rooms).
- Check your internet connection is stable and test the technology you are using beforehand.
- Similar to when delivering a workshop face-to-face, ensure you are comfortable with the content of the workshop and feel confident delivering the workshop digitally so you can facilitate with authority.



## During the workshop

### Introductions and group agreement

- At the beginning of the workshop, facilitating a go-around is a great way for everyone to introduce themselves and to slowly ease the group into the workshop. Invite participants to introduce themselves by saying their name, job role (if applicable to professionals) and pronouns. Inform participants that they can choose to write their pronouns in the chat box if they prefer.
- After the initial introductions, introduce a group agreement. This is a proposal of ways in which you plan to work together during the workshop. This can include things such as listening whilst others speak and respecting others opinions. The group agreement is an important step in creating a safe online space for participants, especially when discussing difficult topics. Ask everyone if they are happy with the group agreement and offer participants the opportunity to add anything that they feel is relevant or important. We have shared the group agreement used at YoungMinds in the Appendix of this document.



## Delivering the workshop

- When delivering an online workshop, it is important to do some ‘virtual housekeeping’ at the beginning. This can include:
  - Asking all participants to mute their microphones (unless speaking) in order to avoid background noise interfering.
  - Introducing the ‘reactions’ function, and show participants how to put their virtual hand up, or give a thumbs up or thumbs down response.
  - Encouraging people to add any thoughts, suggestions and ideas into the chat box throughout the session. Reiterate this during the workshop if you need to move on from an activity but participants still have something to add.
  - Reassuring participants that if they feel uncomfortable at any point and want to chat to someone, or if they are experiencing any technical issues, they can send a direct message through the chat-box to one of the facilitators.
  - Reminding everyone at the beginning that you are recording the meeting (if you are doing this) and checking you have consent to do so.
- Ensure one facilitator is keeping track of time, and can gently prompt when you need to move on from an activity.
- Make sure the co-facilitator is continuously monitoring the chat box and their email or phone (if this information has been given to participants), to make sure they can respond promptly to any participants who message them directly.
- If you notice that a participant has left or fallen out of the workshop without prior warning, drop them a message or give them a quick call to make sure they are okay.
- Provide a brief overview of the project or purpose of the workshop and let participants know there will be breaks.

**Make sure the co-facilitator is continuously monitoring the chat box and their email or phone to make sure they can respond promptly to any participants who message them directly**

## Ending the workshop

- If you have used an online whiteboard platform during the workshop, giving participants the option to continue adding their thoughts and ideas to it is a great idea, particularly if you felt you had run out of time facilitating certain activities. Ensure that you set a clear timeframe for how long people will be able to do this for.
- Doing a closing go-around at the end of the workshop is a great way to finish and is a good way to ensure participants feel safe at the end of a session. Closing go-arounds help to leave participants on a positive and reflective note. This is particularly important to do if you have delivered a workshop or training session where difficult conversations might have taken place. There are some suggestions for closing go-arounds in Section 7 that you might find helpful to implement in your practice.
- Thank participants for taking the time to participate and if applicable, ensure that they know what impact their participation will have on the project. Explain how and when they can expect to hear from you.
- Inform participants that evaluation forms will be circulated and briefly explain why it's important to collect feedback (e.g. to ensure you are continuously making improvements to the quality of the workshop or training provided).

**Doing a closing go-around at the end of the workshop is a great way to end and is a good way to ensure participants feel safe at the end of a session**

## After the workshop

- Send anonymous evaluation forms, inviting participants to provide feedback. Use this feedback to think about what worked and what didn't, so you can improve any future sessions.
- Follow up with participants by sending a thank you email and a copy of the slides or other resources used in the workshop.
- If you agreed to share next steps with participants or keep them updated with the impact their input has had, make sure you do this. Letting participants know how their contribution has led to meaningful change enables them to see participation as a valuable use of their time and means they are more likely to get involved again in the future.

**Letting participants know how their contribution has led to meaningful change enables them to see participation as a valuable use of their time and means they are more likely to get involved again in the future**



# Glossary of games and activities

# Glossary of games and activities

## Pre-tasks



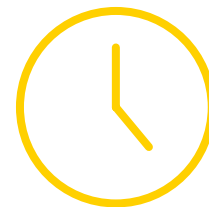
- Pre-workshop tasks are a great opportunity to encourage participants to start thinking about the subject area so they can come to the workshop feeling more confident, focussed and prepared. It can also help participants to start thinking of ideas and things they want to discuss or feed back on during the workshop itself.
- Pre-workshop tasks can also be useful for you as a facilitator to gather insights from participants prior to the workshop, allowing you to delve into conversations and discussions more quickly. This is particularly helpful if you have a busy session plan.
- If you decide to ask participants to complete a pre-task, ensure this is sent to participants **one week** before the workshop to allow enough time for participants to complete this, and to offer any additional support that may be required.
- You can be creative about what you do as a pre-task for the workshop. At YoungMinds we like to get participants using online whiteboards to start adding sticky notes of their ideas and insights. This is also a great way to encourage participants to become familiar with the platform before the workshop.
- You can also send participants reading, drawing or finding an item tasks (where you ask participants to find an item which represents how they feel about something) to get them thinking and focussing on the topic ahead of the workshop.



## Opportunity to speak

### The Clock

- The clock is a great way to make sure that everyone in the workshop has an equal opportunity to speak if they want to.
- The clock works best with 8-12 participants.
- At the beginning of the workshop, ask everyone to grab a piece of paper and a pen and draw a clock face.
- Depending on the number of people in the workshop, for example if there are 10 people in total, ask everyone to add numbers 1 to 10 on the clock face. If there are more than 12 people you can add half times such as 10.30.
- Once everyone has drafted their clock, ask each participant to shout out a number and their name, or go around and call each person's name and ask them to say what number they would like to be on the clock. Write the person's name next to the corresponding number on the clock.
- To save time, you can choose to draw the clock yourself and assign numbers to the group instead of asking participants to do this as well.
- Once everyone is assigned a place on the clock, throughout the workshop you can start at a certain time on the clock or ask someone to volunteer to go first, and ask that person whether they would like to go clockwise or anti-clockwise.
- Each person will then be given the opportunity to speak when it gets to their number on the clock.
- If someone doesn't want to say anything when it's their turn, they can simply pass onto the next person.



### Popcorn style

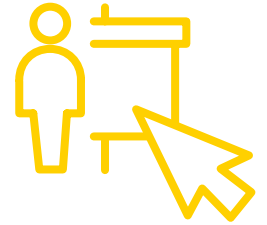
Another way to ensure each person has the opportunity to contribute is to pass along your turn using 'popcorn style'. Whoever's turn it is to speak or whoever has volunteered to speak first, would then choose someone else on the screen who they are passing their turn on to. It is important for the facilitator to make sure everyone has had their name called.



## Icebreakers

### Online whiteboards

- If the whiteboard has an image search function, ask the group a question and ask each participant to choose an image from the image library that reflects their answer.
- Invite participants to explain their answers in turn. A question could be as simple as: if you were an ice-cream, what flavour would you be? Or, what would your spirit animal be?
- You could also use this opportunity to think of an icebreaker that links to the topic of the session. For example, if your session was about social media, you could ask participants to choose a picture that represents how they feel about social media.
- You can also enable a drawing space and invite participants to draw their neighbour, or another image, in 1 minute. Once time is up, ask participants to guess who or what each person's drawing refers to.



### Video conferencing

- You can use these to facilitate simple question and answer icebreakers.
- If it has a whiteboard function, you can also use this to invite participants to draw an image or type a word on the whiteboard.
- There is an option on Zoom to 'Annotate'. This gives participants the option to add stamps (such as hearts or ticks) or drawings to a PowerPoint slide. You can be really creative with the icebreakers here and it could be as simple as asking participants to rate on a scale how they are feeling about the workshop, or how they feel about digital participation. You could also come back to the annotate rule at the closing round to see how participants ideas or understandings of a topic may have changed over the course of the workshop.
- The 'Polls' tool on Zoom is a great way of asking general questions to the group throughout the session. As an Icebreaker idea you could even do a short quiz!



## Energisers

### Find an item

- During the break, invite participants to find something in their surroundings that represents mental health to them.
- This is a good opportunity to link the energiser to the topic being discussed. For example, if discussing social media, you could ask people to bring back an item that represents how they feel about social media.
- Ask each person to share the item with the group, if they feel comfortable to do so, and briefly explain why they chose it.



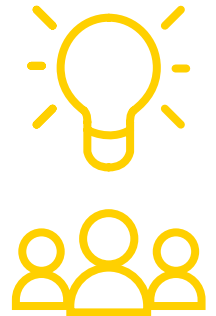


## Activities

It can sometimes feel daunting when brainstorming ideas for facilitating activities digitally, and can feel as though there are less options for facilitating in a fun and engaging way. However there are still plenty of ways to be creative with the activities you deliver.

### Group work

- Break-out rooms are a great way to facilitate group working and discussions.
- You can choose to organise the break-out rooms into pairs, threes or larger groups. You have the option to assign people randomly, or you can create groups based on those who would work well together or have interesting discussions.
- During a workshop you could give each group a couple of questions to discuss, then come back as a wider group to discuss these.
- You could also give different questions to your different groups then ask each group to present and feed back to the wider group.
- It's important to let participants know how long they have in their groups and to time this. Participants will receive a 60 second warning when the break-out rooms are about to end.



### Whip Round

- This is a go-around where you name a specific question or topic and write it on a slide, online whiteboard, or in the chat box. Ask each participant to share what they think about the topic or question.
- Other participants should listen and not comment or interrupt, but just ask questions when the person whose turn it is has finished speaking.
- This activity is focussed on including everyone's view.
- Facilitators can take part but should be aware of their different role and therefore not directly share their opinion but simply observe or appreciate the conversations.



### Where do you stand?

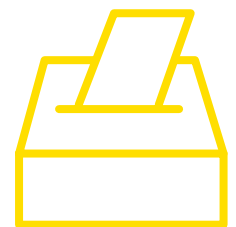
- Using an 'Annotate' tool create a scale.
- Add titles to different areas on the scale, for example 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', about a specific topic or question.



- The facilitator can ask questions and encourage participants to add a stamp or comment on where they stand on the scale.
- You can create several different scales for different questions, or ask participants to use a different stamp or colour of writing for each new question they respond to.
- Do a go-around to ask each participant why they chose this area of the scale and to explain their reasoning for this, if they feel comfortable to do so.
- Take note or a screenshot of where participants have positioned themselves on the scale.

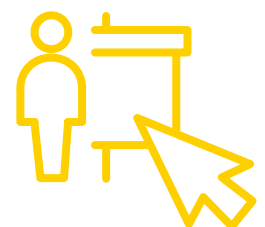
## Dot-voting

- If during an activity the group has generated a large number of ideas or responses on an online whiteboard or other document, and you want to narrow these down, dot-voting is a great way to do this.
- If there are lots of ideas written up, it can be a good idea to write these up succinctly into a few words each during a break.
- After the break, ask participants to choose their top 3, 5 or 7 responses from the list.
- Offer participants a specific number of sticky notes to use (e.g. 10 sticky notes for choosing their top 5 answers).
- Participants can distribute their stickers as they wish, e.g. all on one answer, or more evenly, depending on how strongly they feel about each answer.
- Time this activity and once everyone is done, ask a few volunteers to count up the stickers behind each answer and announce the top answers.



## Online whiteboards

- There are a whole range of activities you can facilitate on whiteboards which are really engaging and visual.
- There are options for participants to add text to different coloured sticky notes and to add these to certain areas on the page.
- Participants can choose from a wide range of gifs and images from the image library.
- There is a poll option for you to ask questions to participants during the workshop.



## Closing go-arounds

Facilitating a closing go-around is a great way to end and close the workshop. It usually leaves participants ending on a reflective and positive note. Some suggestions for closing go-arounds include inviting each person to:

- Describe how they're feeling after the workshop in one word.
- Say one thing they're going to do for self-care after the workshop.
- Share one key thing that they will take away from the workshop.
- Share a TV programme or book recommendation.



# Summary

Facilitating workshops digitally can sometimes feel daunting and intimidating, particularly if you are so accustomed to delivering workshops face-to-face.

Making that first transition of moving from face-to-face delivery to digital can be tricky. Exploring what techniques and activities work for you as a facilitator, and for the workshop participants is really important, as well as bearing in mind that different approaches work for different facilitators, topics and participants. It's vital to always be flexible and creative in your approach and find your own facilitation style which works for you.

We hope that this guide will have provided you with some useful advice and tips about how to deliver safe and engaging digital workshops to a high standard.

Remember that digital delivery is an opportunity for you to get creative, obtain new skills and explore new ways of engaging with participants, and is hugely beneficial not just during a pandemic, but for improving inclusivity, exploring new techniques and bringing people together.





# Appendix

Group Agreement created by YoungMinds Youth Panel

Keep what  
we discuss  
confidential

Listen to all sides,  
and be open minded

It's okay if you  
don't understand  
something

Voice your opinion –  
it's okay to disagree

Look after yourself,  
and take time out if  
you need it

Be friendly,  
nice, and kind

Don't talk over  
each other

Treat others  
with respect







## About Amplified

This toolkit was created as part of the Amplified project run by YoungMinds and commissioned by NHS England. Amplified is a programme that aims to support the participation of children, young people and their families at every level of the mental health system. We support providers and commissioners to excel in participation by showcasing good practice across the system and promoting access to resources that support in four areas:

- Promoting and championing participation
- Strategic participation of children, young people and their families
- Promoting young people's access to and their voice within services
- Supporting the collaboration of young people and their families in care and treatment.



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