

# Amplified Trailblazer: Case Study



As part of YoungMinds Amplified support, a partnership was developed with Solihull MBC and Solihull Action Through Advocacy. The aim was to pilot ways of working with young people with learning difficulties to establish a meaningful pathway for mental health participation.

*“Often we develop groups and have find that we are consulting with the same individuals and not always getting the views of those who are less likely to want to get involved. (We hope) ...to develop a process for participation of CYP with learning disabilities that we can then maintain and ensure that they have opportunities to influence service developments and delivery.”*

- Julie Hackett, Commissioner, Strategic Commissioner, Solihull MBC

The overall aim was to deliver insights into what mental health services in Solihull should look like for young people with learning disabilities, and to establish a mechanism for future consultation.

We interviewed Rebecca Fellows and Lynn Tonks from Solihull Action Through Advocacy:

**YMs: Tell us about what motivated this project / campaign**

“To have the young people represented because they do get overlooked – they have a lot to say, and they often have the most important experiences. It may be that they struggle to express how they feel, but it doesn’t make their experience any less valid

We know there is a huge lack of services, especially for young people with a disability and mental health – this is an opportunity to raise that awareness and get something done about it.”

**YMs: What were key barriers to it being successful?**

“A lack of educational or consultancy resources geared towards young people with learning difficulties and autism – there’s a lot out there aimed at young people, but we’ve had to adapt everything. It would be better to see their needs reflected in the resources out there.”

**YMs: What expertise or skills did you have in your team/organisation, what did you need to bring in from outside? Whose buy-in was important and how was it demonstrated?**

“Patience! Being very accepting of difference – our young people were very honest, more so than you get in mainstream. Empathy is vital. We’ve been figuring it out along the way – it’s ok not to know everything. We learned from the young people, they’ve shown us how we need to treat them. They lead the way.”

**YMs: What did you learn along the journey about co-production and participation?**

We can never assume what we think these young people know! Initially we thought we knew exactly what we’d do each session, but it never goes exactly that way.



---

**YMs: What are your Top Tips to other organisations wanting to develop a participation project with a group like this?**

“Go in with an open mind. Don’t think you’re the one with the power just because you’re leading the session. It’s the other way round; the young people are in charge, not you. They’re the ones doing the work!

Be prepared to be asked anything, but don’t think you have to have all the answers. Know that you might have to find out the answer though; you have that responsibility.”

**YMs: What impact have you had? What impact do you hope to have?**

“We’d like to think that we’ve given young people the opportunity to share how they feel, to be heard and respected.

Young people knew more about how to get help when they needed it; they gained lots of options.

I think working within a group meant we had a bigger impact - peer support made it easier for them, it allowed them to feel less alone.”

**YMs: What comes next for your project?**

“We’re hoping to keep building the work, and involve the young people from these consultations in further discussions around services, hopefully at a commissioning level”

[www.youngminds.org.uk/amplified](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/amplified)



#TeamAmplified



/YoungMindsUK