

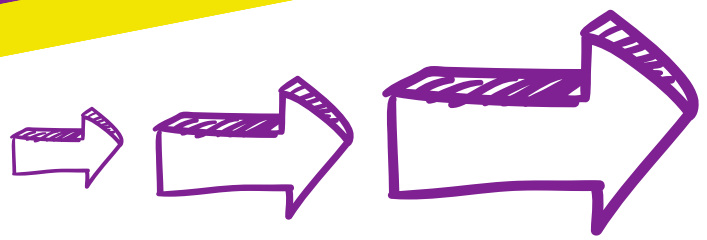


OUR MINDS **OUR FUTURE**

Engaging young people in mental health service design and delivery

**A how to guide for practitioners
and service providers**





Introduction

This resource has been written by young people involved in the Our Minds Our Future project in Scotland, to help mental health practitioners and service providers ensure that young people are meaningfully involved in designing and delivering your service or project.

To create this resource, we consulted with young people involved in youth groups, and practitioners working in community based mental health services in Scotland. 36 young people aged between 14 - 25 year participated in the consultation: 22 took part in focus groups, and 14 completed an online survey. Through this consultation, young people shared their ideas on what they want practitioners to consider when meaningfully engaging them around design and delivery.

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About Our Minds Our Future

The Our Minds Our Future project is a UK-wide project involving young people in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The project in Scotland was led by the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) and SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health).

Our Minds Our Future aims to put the voices of young people at the centre of mental health service design and delivery. Since October 2019, it has brought young people, mental health professionals, and policymakers together to ensure young people are meaningfully involved in the design and development of community based mental health services for young people.

The Our Minds Our Future delivery group in Scotland has developed eight recommendations calling on decision makers and service providers to take a human rights-based approach to the design and delivery of community based mental health services for young people. These recommendations are available on the Our Minds Our Future website.

More information about Our Minds Our Future is available at
www.ourmindsourfuture.uk/scotland

Why is meaningful participation important?

All young people have the right, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to have a say in the services or support they receive.

Our Minds Our Future in Scotland calls on decision makers and service providers to take a human rights-based approach to the design and delivery of community based mental health services for young people.

A human rights based approach ensures services are:

Available: Mental health services must be available to everyone who needs them.

Accessible: Mental health services should be physically and economically accessible to all young people, and must not discriminate against young people.

Acceptable: Mental health services must respect young people's rights and meet the needs of individual young people.

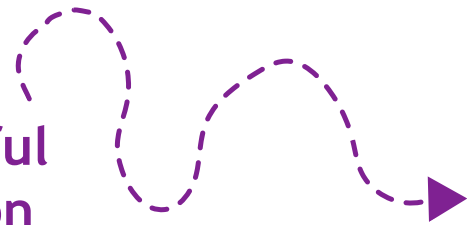
Quality: Mental health services should treat young people as individuals and provide the support and care they need to enable them to participate in society.

Participative: Young people should be meaningfully and actively involved in decisions about the mental health support they receive.

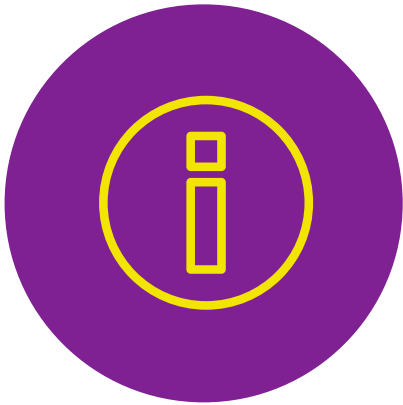
Meaningful participation is about more than a one-off consultation or survey. It is an ongoing process which recognises the important role young people play in shaping and influencing things that affect them. Through meaningful participation, young people are able to individually or collectively express their own opinions, and influence decisions that affect them and their wider community. This not only benefits the young person but allows practitioners to ensure young people have had a say in the support they receive and how the support is delivered, as well as how they feel it has benefitted them. Feedback gathered from young people also allows practitioners to understand how support and services could be improved.



Our top tips for meaningful participation: Preparation



During our consultation young people told us that receiving information and having development time can help them to feel prepared for participation. It's important to carefully consider and discuss with them what they need to help them engage and feel prepared. The types of information they may want to know are:



Programme information

- The purpose of the engagement and its aims
- What will be discussed - include a schedule for sessions if you can
- Who will be present
- What your expectations are in relation to how they will be involved e.g. time commitment
- What you are going to do with the information that they share, and how you will manage confidentiality
- Any prior reading or work the young people should do
- How you will feedback the impact of their engagement to them afterwards

Practical information

- How you will support them to participate
- Who young people should contact if they have any questions
- Where the engagement is going to take place, and any travel directions - public transport instructions can be helpful
- If engaging online what equipment they require - can they use their phone or do they require access to a tablet or laptop
- Start and finish times, and whether there will be a break
- What the young people should bring with them to the session
- How young people can claim expenses

Our top tips for meaningful participation: Preparation



Make it accessible

Information should be shared in an easy-to-read format, which uses language appropriate for the young people that you are engaging with. We would also recommend that you keep this information as brief and concise as possible, as young people told us that being faced with pages and pages of writing can feel overwhelming. If you need to share a lot of information, you could put a summary of what is included at the top, and use bullet points, infographics, or tables to break up the information into easily understandable chunks. You should also avoid using jargon and explain any acronyms.

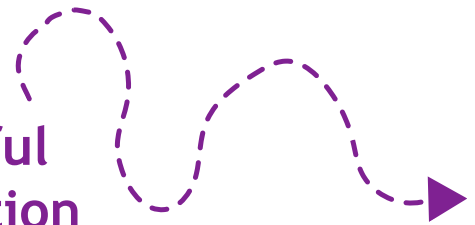


Getting ready for engagement

Depending on the type of engagement you are planning to carry out with young people, you might want to think about running training or development activities before the engagement, to help young people to prepare. A survey at the start of your engagement can help you find out how young people rate their knowledge and skills relating to the topic, so you can plan specific training accordingly. Training and development opportunities are a great way to improve skills and confidence. Participating in decision-making also looks great on a CV or UCAS form. These sessions also help young people get to know the wider group. Development sessions and training could include topics like mental health awareness, communicating with others, public speaking etc. Young people should feel confident and ready for their role.



Our top tips for meaningful participation: Communication



Clear communication is important for young people to feel ready to participate and be fully aware of what is expected of them. It can help you if you take time to build a positive relationship with the young people you are working with, and help them to feel part of a team.



Be flexible and willing to adapt

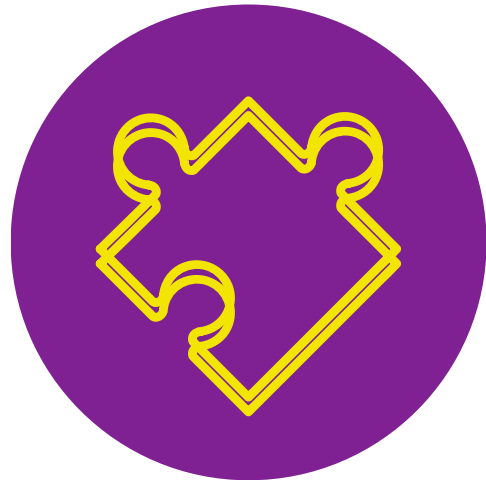
Participation can be stressful for some young people, particularly in group settings or with adults who they don't know. Therefore, it is important that young people are aware of the different ways that they can communicate. For example, during online meetings you could encourage young people to use the chat function if they don't want to or feel unable to talk. At in-person sessions, you could have post-it notes, paper and pens available, and ask participants to draw or write their ideas instead of speaking aloud.

Keep in touch

After the engagement let young people know how you will keep in touch with them and how they can contact you if they have any other queries, ideas or suggestions. It can be helpful to contact them a couple of days after the engagement to thank them for taking part, to give positive feedback, and offer any support to enable them to feel even more engaged next time. You should also follow up to let them know how their participation has influenced changes and to let them know about other upcoming opportunities.

Our top tips for meaningful participation: Building Relationships

Young people may be nervous about participating, so taking time to build relationships between the young people and the adults supporting them will help them to feel comfortable and better able to fully participate.



Getting to know the young person

Spend time getting to know a young person by asking them about their interests, hobbies or what they study. This will help break the ice and help them feel appreciated as a person. Even though this might not be the main goal for participation, taking time to make connections and find common ground can help build trust and help young people to feel confident that their views will be taken seriously.

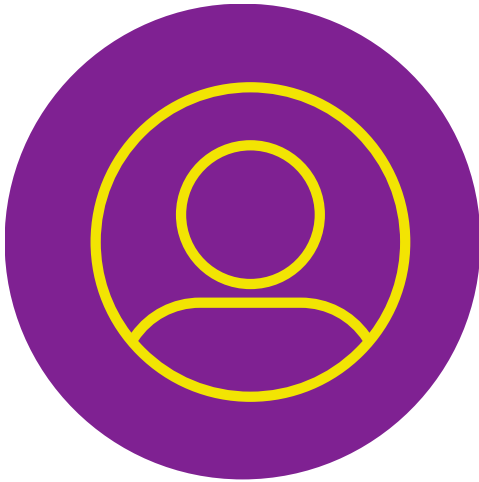
Team-building

If you are working with a group of young people, it is important for them to feel comfortable with each other, as well as the adults involved. You should ensure there is time for ice breakers and team-building activities at the start of each session. Social spaces are also important for young people to get to know each other and to make connections with each other in a more relaxed way.



Our top tips for meaningful participation: Support

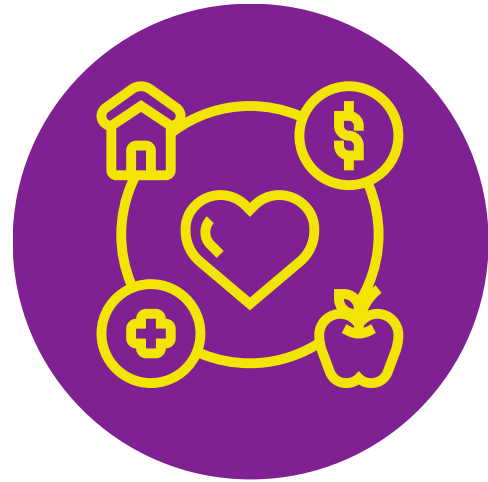
Young people told us that they want to know what support they will receive when participating in design and delivery.



Designated staff

It can take time for young people to build trust in adults, so designating a specific person to be their main point of contact will help them to feel more comfortable participating.

This person should contact the young person before their engagement to introduce themselves, to discuss any worries or questions that the young person has about taking part, and any support needs that are important to know.



Wellbeing support

It is also important to share wellbeing resources with young people. This could include leaflets or information about self-care.

We would also advise that you share mental health helplines (including crisis support) as well as information about any additional support available from your organisation, either during or after the engagement. There is a list of useful weblinks to share with young people on page 11 of this guide.

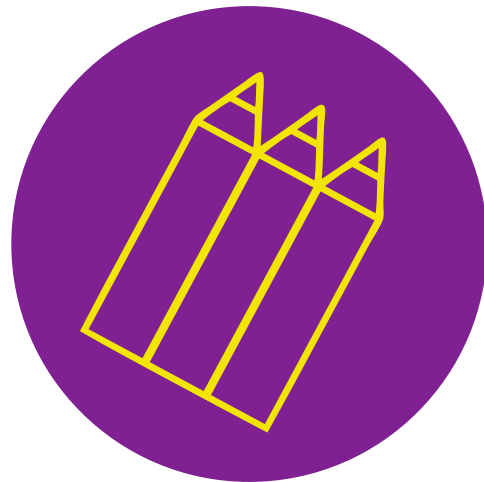
Our top tips for meaningful participation: Safe Spaces

A safe space is somewhere young people feel calm and comfortable, so it is important to think about the way any room is laid out. It should be relaxed, not too clinical or similar to a classroom, and have comfortable places to sit.



Where to meet

In person meetings can allow young people to feel more engaged and connected, and sometimes makes it easier for them to work with their peers. However, although many young people told us they prefer to meet in person, meeting online can help to engage a wider group of young people. When planning your engagement try, where possible, to give young people a choice of how to meet.



Resources

Fidget toys and colouring sheets can help young people to relax, and a quiet room is useful for any young people who need some time out. If your engagement is taking place online, you could post them a wellbeing kit with resources to support their mental health and wellbeing.

Breaks

Ensure break times are built in and ensure young people know when they will be, and what time the sessions will finish. Providing refreshments can also help to make sessions more enjoyable!



Our top tips for meaningful participation: Incentives

Young people who participate in design and delivery are often volunteers, and they will probably be balancing a lot of different responsibilities including family life, education, work, clubs, and other activities. You might not be able to pay young people for their participation, but you should think about how you will incentivise their involvement.



Travel and other expenses

Young people should never be out of pocket for volunteering their time. Where possible, we recommend you pay up front for young people's travel and any other expenses (such as accommodation or meals). If you're meeting online, consider whether young people need to pay for extra internet data in order to participate, and offer to cover this cost for them.



Refreshments

Young people are most active with a happy stomach! If you are meeting in person, food and drinks are certainly a good incentive - but ensure you ask about any allergies, and what young people would like to eat or drink.

Other incentives

There are a wide range of incentives you could consider when planning participation activities.

For example, vouchers, resources, trips and social activities, these all help young people to feel valued.

Mental health helplines and crisis support

The following information was correct at June 2023

Childline provides help and advice to children and young people, under the age of 19. Tel: 0800 1111 (freephone 24/7) Web: www.childline.org.uk

Beat offers information on eating disorders and runs a supportive online community. Also provides a directory of support services.

Helpline: 0808 801 0432 (available 365 days, Mon - Fri 9am to midnight & Sat - Sun (and bank holidays) 4pm to midnight) Web: www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk
Web: www.helpfinder.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Breathing Space (Scotland) delivers telephone support to anyone, over the age of 16 years, who is feeling low, anxious or depressed. Tel: 0800 83 85 87 (Freephone Mon - Thurs 6pm to 2am and from Fri 6pm to Mon 6am) Web: www.breathingspace.scot

NHS 24 is a 24-hour health service for Scotland. Tel: 111 Web: www.nhs24.scot (telephone 999 if immediate danger)

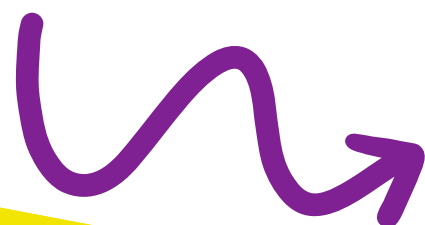
Papyrus Hopeline UK is a 24 -hour support and advice service for children and young people (under the age of 35) experiencing thoughts of suicide and anyone concerned that a young person could be thinking about suicide. Tel: 0800 068 4141 (freephone) Text: 07860039967 Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org Web: www.papyrus-uk.org/help-advice

Samaritans offers emotional support to anyone feeling down or struggling to cope. Tel: 116 123 (Freephone 24/7) Email: jo@samaritans.org Web: www.samaritans.org

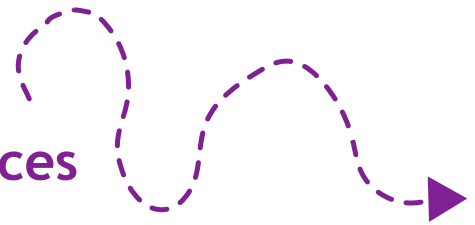
Self-Injury Support supports girls and women affected by self-injury or self-harm. Web: www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk

The Mix offers support to anyone up to the age of 25 years. Tel: 0808 808 4994 (4pm - 11pm 365 days) Email: www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team/email-us

You can find more information on mental health and wellbeing support services, along with lots of other useful information by visiting:
www.young.scot/get-informed/who-to-contact-for-mental-health-support



Other participation resources



Organisations have developed resources to help practitioners involve young people in decision-making. The following resources include more hints and tips you might be interested in.

Scottish Youth Parliament - The Right Way to meaningful participation:

<https://www.therightway.scot/>

Children and Young People's Commissioner - 7 Golden rules for participation:

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/get-help/teachers/golden-rules/>

Unicef - The Right to Participation:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/the-right-to-participation/>

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health - Rights Matter - what the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child means to us:

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/rights-matter-what-un-convention-rights-child-means-us>

European Commission - The Lundy model of child participation:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/lundy_model_of_participation.pdf

Children in Scotland - Meaningful Participation and Engagement of Children and Young People - Children in Scotland's Principles & Guidelines:

<https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/CiS-Participation-2019.pdf>

