

## How can people with lived experience of mental health problems influence your Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund project over the next 12 months?

We are all facing a huge amount of upheaval during these unprecedented times. This means we are trying to manage these challenges and adapt to new ways of working.

Mind wants to support you to enable people with lived experience of mental health problems to advise, shape and guide your Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund project.

This document has been created to help you to support people who want to be involved in influencing your work. We use the term 'Influence and Participation' (I&P) throughout. Your organisation may call this by another name, which may include service user involvement, co-production, lived experience leadership, or co-design.

You can find more information, including tools and videos, explaining Influence and Participation in our [online toolkit](#). We've included an [animation](#) explaining the process as well. Traditionally this work takes place face to face in groups, interviews and meetings. Right now, this isn't possible but people can still influence your project and participate in its delivery.

### Planning Influence & Participation for your project:

- **What projects are you currently running that involve people with lived experience?** This could include steering/advisory/focus groups, research, service user forums and one-off projects. How have they continued to involve people? Can you use some of these approaches?

We've found online platforms like Zoom and Slack very helpful to bring people together and get work done. Some mobile phones are able to join multiple calls together and work in the same way teleconference services do for little extra cost.

- **Who should be involved?** Think about who needs to be involved and who would like to be involved. Who is your project aimed at? Do they already use your services and can you reach out and see if they would like to be involved in shaping this project? What communities do you want to reach? If you are not connected already, who will you speak with to help you?

Understanding your community is key to reaching out and getting the right people involved in shaping your project. Try to reach out to people beyond those who have been involved before, many more people than usual are struggling at the moment. It's important to understand the bigger picture and involve people who have not previously engaged in this way in decision making too.

- **Have you considered people's knowledge of and access to the right resources, technology and digital platforms to stay connected?**

Remember that not everybody has access to mobile phones, Wi-Fi and other equipment so asking people their preferred way of communicating and working is

essential. Try to find a method of connecting and communicating everyone is able to access. You might need to talk people through accessing different systems individually so when you all come together there are fewer technological difficulties. Some conference call services offer free phone numbers so participants don't have to foot the bill of taking part, look out for these as joining conference call services can be costly.

- **Create a plan together.** Think about what you want to achieve and what you need to achieve. Set goals and actions everyone is comfortable with.

A project plan or online project management tool like [Monday](#) or [Asana](#) is helpful to keep track of ideas and work and ensures everyone involved knows and can see what they are responsible for.

## Communicating with I&P participants

- People who are influencing your work need to know what's happening, when and where. Ask them what the best way to do this is.

Don't assume its via e-mail. [Slack](#) offers an online space where everyone involved can post comments, ask questions and share files. WhatsApp's group chat facility means you can send a quick message to multiple people easily. Make sure you are GDPR compliant and have relevant safe guarding process in place when using platforms like these.

- If you need to pause any of your I&P work, how will you keep in touch with those people who have been involved to date?

It is very important to maintain consistent contact and provide clear information during potentially stressful times. Explain to participants why those decisions were made and if possible ask for their input about this. It is essential that these relationships be maintained in some way to sustain engagement for when the work restarts. Do let people know how frequently you will be in contact while the work is paused, it doesn't need to be often just consistent.

- If you are involving people who have influenced your organisation in other ways, have you been in touch with them to find out if they are happy to be involved on the new project? What are their preferences for ways of working? For some people their capacity to stay involved may have changed in the present circumstances.

Always give people the option to step back, this should be led by them and may be indefinitely or just for a few weeks. The situation is changing rapidly so keep checking that people want to remain involved. This helps maintain the relationship and builds trust even when they need to withdraw.

### Some questions you may want to ask participants:

- What is the best way to communicate with you - email / phone / other?

- What support do you need to continue with this work? You could offer examples of potential ways you could do this.
- How do you want to be involved in this work going forward? You could offer possible examples of how they could stay involved.

**Where you are using digital approaches** - have you allowed yourself enough time to test technology and digital platforms prior to the activity / meetings / interviews taking place? This includes any additional functionality that you may use (e.g. the breakout rooms feature on a paid Zoom account).

- Have a trial run in a team meeting or small group to practice using the different functions. It helps to have a few people confident in using different digital platforms to assist with supporting others.
- Consider offering participants the opportunity to test out the technology / digital platform prior to the activity, particularly if they have not used it before. This helps build confidence and reduces barriers to getting involved in the actual project.

**Where you are using non-digital approaches** to promote your project & involvement

- Have you ensured your activity is compliant with the latest government guidance regarding Coronavirus? How will you communicate the information about your activity to ensure people can take part?

Posters and leaflets are a usual method of doing this. You may still want to put posters in windows as people out on walks and exercising will be able to see them. Can you connect to neighborhood groups that have set up as result of the pandemic and ask them to spread the word? Who else can help - Think about community services where people might look or seek help e.g. GP practice, Health visitor team, Mental Health services, Faith groups, Women's refuge, Domestic Violence services, LGBTQ+ services etc. Pass on information that's clear and concise they can share on your behalf.

**Influence & Participation payments**

- Ensure you are aware of your organisation's policy on paying people to influence your work. We know it's not always possible to do this. If you wish to refer to Mind's payment structure, you can find it in our [policy](#).
- Be clear to all participants if payment is available for their participation, if not how will you show you value their involvement?

Always say thank you, you can't say this too much! Can you offer training related to the project they wouldn't be able to access otherwise? This will support their involvement and benefit them long term.

- How will payment be made and what is the timeframe?

Electronic payments are straight forward and don't require cash to change hands. If you are paying people can your finance department accommodate this? People should be paid promptly for their time and must not be left out of pocket when taking part.

## Policies

- Does your organisation have a policy that relates to Influence and Participation / Service User involvement? If it does, make sure you've read it! A policy sets the ethos of your I&P work as well as the parameters in which you'll need to work.

Mind's [policy](#) is available in our toolkit, scroll to the bottom of the page to download a copy.

- If you are working on a remote platform, it is important to continue to follow your organisation's policies including GDPR, Compliance and Safeguarding.

If your ways of working are changing and you are working with sensitive data you may have some questions or concerns that you may want to discuss. Ensure you are aware of all safeguarding procedures, especially any changes that may have been made as a result of covid-19 or online working.

For support please contact [LivedExp@mind.org.uk](mailto:LivedExp@mind.org.uk) referencing CMHRF in the subject line