

Abstract white lines, including a large circle and a diagonal line, drawn with a chalk-like texture across the blue background.

A guide to help you lead or chair meetings

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☞ Enjoy it! Every experience of chairing is different but welcome it with open arms and be ready to jump right in! ☞

- Chairperson with lived experience

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About this guide and looking after your wellbeing



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About this guide and looking after your wellbeing

A quick guide to language

There are a few terms we use throughout this guide it might be useful to explain.

Accessibility

Steps you can take to make sure everyone can take part fully in a meeting. This could be things like making sure there's wheelchair access to your room or using subtitles on Zoom.

Agenda

A list of items to be discussed at a meeting.

Attendees

The people who come to a meeting.

Chair/Chairperson

The person who leads and runs a meeting.

Facilitation

The process of running a meeting. This covers everything from keeping to time to helping everyone work well together.

In-person meetings

Meetings that happen with everyone in the same room.

Lived experience

The knowledge and understanding you get when you have lived through something. In this guide, lived experience means people's lived experience of mental health problems.

Lived experience involvement

When people use their lived experience to shape an organisation's work.

Mental health

Something we all have, just like we all have physical health. It can range from good mental wellbeing through to severe mental health problems.

Minutes

Typed or handwritten notes that record key points from a meeting, including actions and decisions.

Note taker

The person who makes minutes or notes.

Online meetings

Meetings that happen on conference calls or using technology like Zoom and Teams.

Staff member

In this guide, staff member means someone who works for a local Mind or mental health organisation and can support people with lived experience.

Who is this guide for?

We've created this guide to help people with lived experience of mental health problems lead meetings.

At Mind, we're always looking for ways for people to use their experiences, get their views heard and improve mental health support. Leading meetings can be a great way of doing that.

How to use this guide

We recommend that people with lived experience and staff members read through this guide together before leading meetings. It can help you think about roles and responsibilities and any support that might be needed.

We hope it will help you feel more confident too.

**There's plenty of space for you to make notes.
And the guide is split into two sections:**

1. Information to help people with lived experience lead meetings **Pages 14-52**

2. Information to help Mind staff support those people **Page 54-57**

How we made this guide

It was created by 3 people with lived experience of mental health problems and 2 members of the lived experience team at Mind.

We worked together in workshops to develop and draft the guide. 7 more people with lived experience and 3 young people then reviewed it which helped to improve the content.



This is just one of the resources available to help local Minds involve people with lived experience in their work.

To find out more, email:
livedexp@mind.org.uk

First things first Looking after your wellbeing

Before we look at what's involved in leading a meeting, we want to say one thing. Make sure you're supported and look after yourself. You might not know exactly what you need to start with. But the tips below should be useful starters.

✓ Is this the right time to take on this role?

Do you have enough time? It's great that you're passionate about mental health and want to support others. But make sure you're not taking on too much. And remember to focus on your wellbeing too.

✓ What could help you feel more confident?

Do you want to practise chairing with a friend or a local Mind staff member first? Is there any technology you want to try out?

✓ Is there someone who can mentor you or offer advice?

If you know someone who has chaired a lot of

meetings before, could you chat to them?

✓ What support might you need?

Can you have a deputy chairperson who can cover any meetings you can't make? How will you let people know if you're unwell and not able to lead a meeting?

✓ Remember what motivated you.

Lots of people lead meetings to make changes to mental health services and help others. Why not write down your motivation and reflect on this from time to time? It can give you a big boost when you're learning about being a chairperson.

Remember it's not all on you. You can always ask for help and support – and it's important to do that.

- Chairperson with lived experience



Find more tips for supporting your everyday wellbeing.



www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/wellbeing/wellbeing/

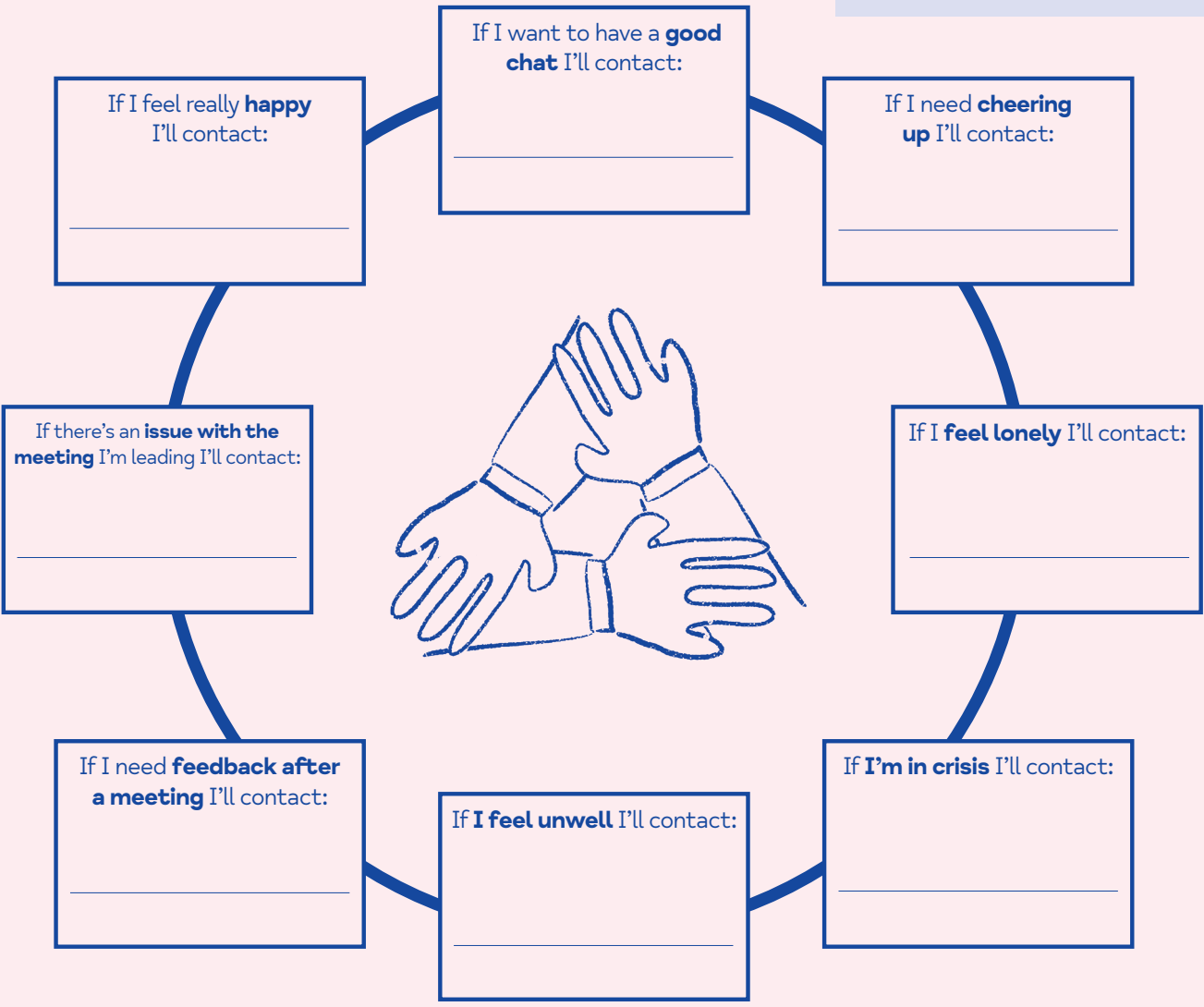
Use your support circle

This support circle can help you think about who to contact in different situations. Try to fill in each section.

It's a useful way to think about all the different emotions you might experience, and what the best response might be. It also helps you see how much support you have around you.



For each section, think about who you would **contact**. You might want to include Mind staff, friends, family, local organisations and support services. It's fine to include more than one person and to put people in more than one section. Make sure you have contact details for everyone. And if you're struggling to fill in any sections, why not talk it through with a member of staff?



What helps your self-care?



For more wellbeing tips, head to mind.org.uk/wellbeing

Write your ideas here – and try to take time before and after meetings to do these things.

“I have learned that walking and exercise are good for my self-care. Yoga has helped me with my mental health, and having ‘me time’ – which was kind of difficult to understand at first – in the long run helped in my recovery.”

- Chairperson with lived experience



Leading a meeting.

An introduction



Mind A guide to help you lead or chair meetings
Leading a meeting. An introduction

Leading a meeting.

An introduction

We know being a chair can sound like a very formal role, but don't let that put you off! It's just the name for anyone who leads and runs a meeting.

When you lead a meeting, you might:

- ✓ Help set the agenda of what to discuss
- ✓ Help everyone understand why you're all there and what's on the agenda
- ✓ Let everyone know how to join in – for example, whether you need to raise your hand to speak
- ✓ Make sure you're following the agenda and keeping to time
- ✓ Help everyone feel involved and comfortable
- ✓ Make sure people know if they need to take actions after a meeting.

The benefits of leading a meeting

What people told us

“Being able to ensure that everyone in a meeting gets an opportunity to speak and all contributions are valued”

“I found it empowering; I feel like people trust me to lead on a subject matter”

“Feeling like we have achieved something if it goes well”

“Helping everyone to have a voice”

“Meeting new people, learning, sharing ideas and building confidence and experience”



Who's who?

An **A-Z** of tasks people could do which might help with your meetings.
(You might not need all of them.)



Agenda setting team

People who work with the chairperson beforehand to decide what needs to be discussed.



Chat owl

A person who keeps an eye on the chat in online meetings to make sure nothing is missed.



Co-chair

If 2 people work together to lead a meeting, they are both co-chairs. They usually share out roles, like leading different agenda items. It can be a good way to start out with leading meetings.



Deputy/vice-chair

A person who steps in if the chairperson is unwell or can't make a meeting.



Note taker/ minute taker

A person who writes down important points – like actions and who's responsible for them. Read our guide for note takers (page 23)



Presenter/speaker

A person who usually joins you for one session to talk about a particular topic.



Tech

A person who helps with things like letting people into Zoom/Teams calls and organising breakout rooms for online meetings.



Timekeeper

A person who keeps an eye on the clock and helps everything run to time.



Wellbeing check-in

A person who makes sure people are OK, especially if they need to step out of the room or go offline. Often a vice-chair or staff member.

What kind of meeting is this?

There are many types of meetings you might be asked to chair. They can be called different things in different organisations.

But common ones include:

Board meetings

A meeting of a charity's trustee board. Trustees help charities achieve their objectives and work legally.

Executive meetings

A meeting of senior leaders from across an organisation.

Workshops

Meetings where people work together to come up with ideas.



Handy questions to ask before a meeting

- Is it formal or informal?
- What should I wear?
- Is it online or in person?
- How often do these meetings take place?
- Who usually joins the meeting?
- What is the point of the meeting?
- What will my role be?



Leading a meeting. Before, during and after



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Leading a meeting. Before, during and after

Leading a meeting. Before, during and after

This section takes you through practical tasks to help you lead a meeting. We've included a checklist on page 28 to help you stay on top of everything.

Want to build up to leading a meeting? Try these 3 steps.

If you want to work up to chairing a meeting, why not let a staff member know? Talk to them about what support you need and ask questions if you're not sure about anything. These 3 steps can help.

Step 1

Meet with the staff member to talk about the meeting you'd like to help with. You could start by taking on a supporting role, like welcoming people to meetings.

Step 2

As you become more confident, take on a role like vice-chair or timekeeper. You could also lead sections of the meeting, but not the whole thing.

Step 3

Lead a meeting with support from a staff member on any tasks you're not comfortable with yet. You could help to draw up the agenda. Or you could co-chair together.



Remember

The main thing is that you're comfortable with your tasks and have the support you need. Staff support is always available, and it might help to chat with a staff member to decide who's doing what.

Before your meeting

Ask how your staff member can support you.

Are there training or resources they can give you? Who will invite people and send out the time, date and location/joining details?

Find out if you can join a meeting before leading it.

If the meetings are already running, can you go along to find out more? Or are there old agendas or minutes you can look at?

Find out if anyone has previously led the meeting.

It might help to meet them to hear about their approach and to find out any tasks you might have missed.

Set roles and responsibilities with the staff member supporting you.

They will usually send out invitations, set up the room and sort out any tech. The chairperson usually facilitates the meeting. But make sure you both know the plan beforehand.

Ask people for any help you might need.

You don't need to do everything yourself. See some of the roles you could ask for help with.

If it's a new meeting, create a group agreement.

That's an agreement that makes sure everyone feels safe. [See our tool for creating a group agreement.](#) Page 35



Trigger warnings

If you might deal with sensitive topics around mental health that could be triggering for people, it can be helpful to put a trigger warning on the agenda. You can let people know that the conversation might be triggering on the day too. That gives people the chance to step away from the meeting.

You can ask staff at local Mind for any guidance or policies on trigger warnings.

Something like this could work well:

Please note this item could be triggering for some people. We might discuss... If you are at all worried, please feel free to leave the meeting during this item.

Writing an agenda

It's really important to spend time putting an agenda together. It lets everyone see what you will talk about and why, with time frames. It can help to write yours with a staff member or people who go to the meeting regularly.

You might want to:

- ✓ Talk to staff or a previous chairperson about why you're having the meeting and if the meeting group needs to make any decisions.
- ✓ Find out if there are any items that are always on the agenda (if it's a regular meeting). Do any actions from the last meeting need to be followed up?
- ✓ Ask people attending the meeting if they want to add anything to the agenda, before it's sent out.
- ✓ Plan out how much time to spend on each agenda item.
- ✓ Note who will introduce each item (the chairperson, an external speaker or a the person who asked for an item to be included).
- ✓ Schedule any guest speakers early in the agenda, so they have plenty of time.
- ✓ Schedule in breaks. One every hour is ideal.
- ✓ Plan when you will send the agenda and any reading material. We recommend doing it at least a week before your meeting.
- ✓ Clearly let people know if they need to take any actions before your meeting.
- ✓ Explain how any decisions made will be shared with your local Mind.



Top tips

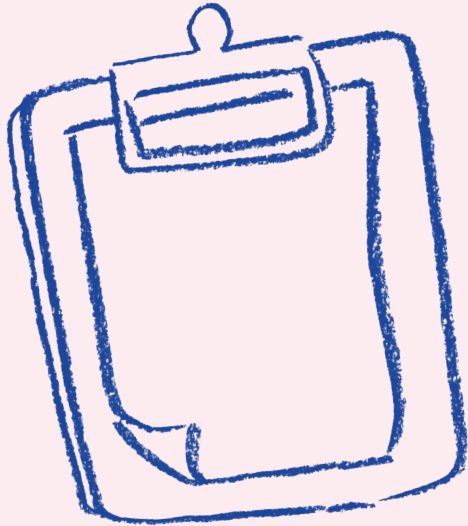
Put the scheduled start and finish times on the agenda, along with the total meeting time. This helps everyone be mindful of how much time there is for discussion.

If you can, try and build in 10-15 minutes in the agenda for discussions running over. That way, if items do take longer than planned, you can still finish on time.

Example agenda items

You might want to include:

- ✓ Introductions and check ins
- ✓ Updates on any actions from past meetings
- ✓ Items you will discuss together
- ✓ Time after each topic to check on what actions people will take and who's responsible
- ✓ Any other business (AOB) that people want to raise



“ Try not to be too ambitious about topics and avoid a rushed meeting. You want sufficient time and opportunity to go through the agenda, but also to allow the attendees to speak.”

“ Don't be afraid to ask for a co-chair who could ensure everyone who wants to speak is invited to. Or perhaps they could be responsible for the admin or tech issues in an online meeting.”

“ Make sure someone else takes notes or minutes – you'll struggle to chair and take notes!”

Example agenda

This is an example agenda of what the first meeting of a group could look like. In this instance two people Carina and Mohammed are co chairing the meeting.

Time	Agenda item	Actions	Tasks to do in advance	Who is leading this section
12.00-12.10 (10 mins)	Introductions	A chance for you to introduce yourself and let people know why you're here	No	Carina
12.15-12.25 (10 mins)	Warm up exercise	What is an activity you enjoy doing?	Yes – please think about this before the meeting	Mohammed
12.25-13.00	Creating a group agreement	Together we can decide on a few guidelines for our meetings.	No	Carina
13.00-13.10 (10 mins)	Break			Mohammed will introduce the break
13.10-13.40 (30 mins)	Talking about our aims and focus	A chance to agree what we hope to achieve	No	Mohammed
13.40-13.55 (15 mins)	Any other business	Your chance to discuss anything not on the agenda	No	Carina
13.55-14.00 (5 mins)	End of meeting	Check out. Agree any actions and the next meeting time.		Mohammed





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Leading a meeting. Before, during and after

During your meeting

There are lots of things you can do to help your meeting go well. For starters, it's a good idea to open the meeting up early. It gives people a chance to settle in and ask questions. You can do this for online meetings too, by letting people know you will log on a few minutes before the start time.

Introductions

- If it's a new meeting or new people have come along, you should start with introductions.
- Ask people for their name and pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them). Online, people can add their pronouns to their name on screen. It's a good idea to give people the option to introduce themselves by speaking or using chat.
- Make sure each person introduces themselves.
- You could ask for more information too. Like people's jobs or roles, where they are based and why they are in the meeting.

If people are late

- This can happen. It's fine to start without people and to explain you're doing this so you have time to cover everything.
- If people do arrive late, try to pause to welcome them and let them know where you are in the agenda. You could also ask them to give a quick introduction if people haven't met before.



Top tip

The **#MyNameIs** campaign helps people find the best spelling of their name so others can pronounce it correctly. Before online meetings, you could ask everyone to visit <https://www.raceequalitymatters.com/my-name-is> and include this spelling next to their name.

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Helping people take part and feel comfortable

- Online, give people the option to have their cameras on or not.
- Let people know how they can tell you they want to speak. Online this might mean using the raise hand function.
- Make time for people to check in and say how they are today. [Read our tips](#). Page 43
- Offer different ways for people to take part in discussions. [Read our tips](#). Page 37
- Makes sure you take scheduled breaks.

Supporting people to move through the agenda

- Keep people focused on the agreed issues. Try to avoid topics not on the agenda.
- Agree any actions that come out of your discussion. It's great if there's a person responsible for each action, and a deadline.

🔗 **Be organised, set your agenda and make it clear from the outset so it sets expectations for the group and avoids going off in the wrong direction.** 🔗

- Chairperson with lived experience

Keeping to time

- Have a watch, clock or phone you can use to keep an eye on the time. Or ask someone to let you know if you are running out of time on an agenda item.
- Let people know when time is running out in a way that's sensitive to their wellbeing.

Use moving-on phrases like:

Thanks, that was really useful but we need to move on now. Or We can put this in any other business to pick up later.

[See more time keeping tips](#) Page 32

Ending a meeting

- Thank everyone for coming and taking part
- Ask the note taker to sum up any main actions and decisions. This helps people see what's been achieved.
- Remind people of the time and date of the next meeting. And ask them to let the staff member know if they can't make it.



Top tips

It can help to have post-it notes with you so you can write down any key points.



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Leading a meeting. Before, during and after

How to write minutes or notes

It's difficult to note down everything people say, so don't feel like you need to. Instead, it's helpful for the chair and the note taker to discuss what's important beforehand.

What are the main points that should be written down?

It can help individuals in the meeting feel valued to see they have been heard. Think about how everyone's voice can be represented in the notes. You can check with people if they would like to be referred to by their initials in the notes.

And it's useful for your minutes to relate to your agenda. You can add your agenda section headings into the minutes template below. It'll help you (or another chairperson) create the next agenda.

Actions

- In the notes, bold any actions that need to be followed up. They can then be easily picked up in future meetings.
- Note down what the action is, who is doing it and when. One or two people for each action usually works best.
- Clarify the list of actions at the end of the meeting, so everyone agrees who's doing what.

Decisions

- If you've made decisions in the meeting, log them in the notes. Maybe you've agreed how long meetings should be or to have a suggestion box at reception. Writing these things down helps them stick. You might also use a decision log during your meeting. You can find templates if you search for decision logs online.

What not to include

- Don't include any personal details. If people talk about any diagnosis they've been given or about their lived experience, this shouldn't be written down.



Top tip

It's a good idea for the same person to take notes over several meetings. It helps them become part of the meeting group and get used to how people talk and the language used.

🔗 **I didn't feel very qualified to do this role with no formal training but I have grown into the role and have improved my skills along the way with the help of the chair and staff lead. A learning session was organised with the staff minute taker too.** 🔗

- Chris, Note taker with lived experience



A template to help you lead or chair meetings

Minutes

Date of Meeting	Note taker
Attendees present	Attendees absent
(Use initials for people's names)	(use initials for people's names)
Actions from last meeting	
(If there were any) 1.Do this	
Agenda item 1:	
Agenda item 2:	
Agenda item 3:	



Any other business

(Include any topics that need to be included in the next meeting, or decisions that need to be made)

Actions for the next meeting		
Action:	Who will do this:	Deadline:
Action:	Who will do this:	Deadline:
Action:	Who will do this:	Deadline:
Action:	Who will do this:	Deadline:

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

What I want to work on for next time?

Meeting checklist

Complete this checklist to make sure you're prepared for your meeting. There's space to add in anything else you feel would help or you want to make sure you remember.

Before your meeting

- ☐ Agree meeting time and date
- ☐ Agree with staff member when you will create the agenda together
- ☐ Ask people who attend the meeting for agenda ideas
- ☐ Create the agenda
- ☐ Check with staff member that they have sent the agenda and all meeting details (time, date, location or online link)
- ☐ Ask for any support you need in the meeting
- ☐ Arrange a note taker
- ☐ Do a test run of any tech (if needed)

Equipment checklist

- ☐ Pen/paper to write notes for yourself
- ☐ Watch/clock/phone to keep track of time
- ☐ Agenda (printed or on screen)
- ☐ Tea, coffee and water for people attending
- ☐ Is there anything else that could support your wellbeing and help you do your best?

After your meeting

- ☐ Write down what went well and anything you want to work on for next time
- ☐ Make sure a summary email is sent as soon as possible after your meeting.

Other Checks

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Tools and techniques for leading meetings



Tools and techniques for leading meetings

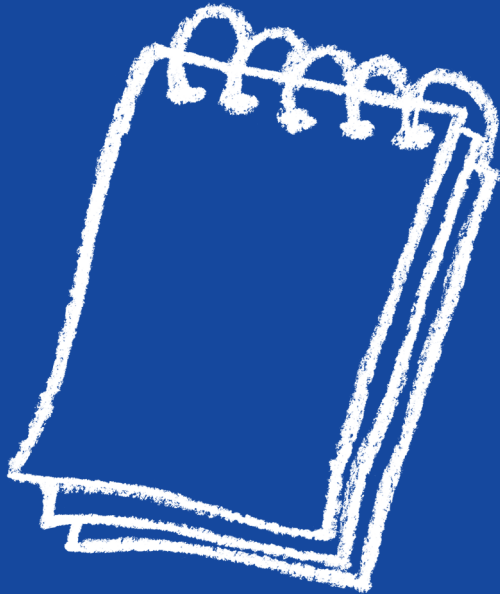
In this section, we'll cover some things you can do to have a successful meeting.

What can you bring to the role?

Let's start by thinking about your strengths. Everyone brings their own personality and skills to leading a meeting.

How will you do it?

- Think about what you can bring to the role to make it yours
- Think about your personality
- Think about your skills
- Think about what you value
- Think about other experiences, including in meetings. What have you found helpful that a chairperson did or didn't do?
- Think about interests you have that could be relevant to the meeting. Are you interested in technology, for example, or supporting others to share experiences?



What I can bring to the role?

Helpful skills for leading meetings

Lots of skills can come in helpful when you're chairing a meeting. Don't worry – you don't need to be great at them all. And remember, everyone is learning all the time.

We've listed a few helpful skills here, but you may have others you can bring to the role. There's a task on page 30 to help you think about your unique skills.

Listening

It's important everyone feels listened to. When you're leading a meeting, you can set an example so people feel heard, encouraged and valued by you and the other people in the meeting.

- ✓ At the start of the meeting, write down everyone's names. It makes it easier to talk to people directly.
 - ✓ During in-person meetings, try to focus on the person speaking in a way that feels comfortable to you. It can be useful to let people know how you listen. By doodling, for example, or making eye contact.
 - ✓ Thank people for speaking and let them know you've heard what they said.
- Phrases like this are handy: Thank you, that's a really good idea. Would anyone like to follow up on that?**
- ✓ You could summarise one or two points group members make. This helps people feel heard and makes sure they've been understood. It highlights key points for others too. Having a pen and paper handy can help with this.
 - ✓ If an action is agreed, clarify what it is, who's doing it and by when. This helps the note taker and makes sure everyone knows the plan.



Top tip

Have a pen and paper so you can write down the names of who wants to speak next. When you invite the next person to speak, you can also acknowledge that you have seen any others who have their hands up.

For example, saying: We have a few people waiting to speak, so we'll go to Sam first then I believe Sandeep was next and then Sally.

Paying attention to the whole group

As well as listening to the people speaking, it's helpful to acknowledge the rest of the group.

- ✓ Try to keep an eye out to see if anyone has raised their hand.
- ✓ If someone hasn't spoken at all, you could sensitively ask them if they want to join the conversation.

For example, saying: I know you haven't had a chance to speak yet and wanted to check in if you'd like to add anything.

Timekeeping

It's part of your role to make sure the meeting runs to time and everything is discussed. It can feel difficult to stop a discussion or move things on when everyone is really interested. But trust that people respect your role and understand you're doing your job. No one wants the meeting to run over!

- ✓ It can help to let everyone know you've only got a few minutes left on a topic. Explain you'll need to move on shortly or after the next person has spoken.
- ✓ If lots of people want to speak but time is running out, try to give people options. You could acknowledge you may not get to everyone but offer other ways for people to share their views. Like via the chat if you're online. Or via post-it notes or email.
- ✓ If something is raised that isn't on the agenda, say you'll add it to any other business (AOB). If you don't have time to come back to it, make a note to add it to the agenda for the next meeting.
- ✓ If a topic feels important and like it needs more time, you could shift other items to the next meeting or say you'll continue the topic next time.



Top tips – ideas board

Often people come up with great ideas, suggestions or questions that aren't related to the agenda.

Having an ideas board to note these down helps move the conversation on. It also makes sure people feel listened to.

In person, this could be a big sheet of paper or whiteboard. People can add to this with pens or post-its.

Online, you could use a Google Jamboard or the chat function.

If people go off topic, thank them for their contribution and remind them about the ideas board. You might want to remind people about the remit of the meeting too.

It's a good idea to read out the ideas board at the end of the meeting. It helps everyone feel acknowledged and valued.

And after the meeting, you could add ideas to the next agenda or pass them on to the staff member to follow up.

Handy phrases to keep to time

Thanks. That was really useful but we need to move on now.

**That's a great idea.
Can you add it to the
ideas board so
we don't lose it?**

We can put this in any other business to pick up later.

Can you think of any others?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Creating a group agreement

A group agreement helps everyone feel safe, included and heard. It's a place to list a few guidelines for everyone to follow during meetings. You could put 'creating a group agreement' as the first agenda item if your group is new or doesn't have one already.

Together, everyone decides on the guidelines you want to follow. Make sure someone notes these down. They are often about things like respecting each other's ideas, using simple language and speaking one at a time.

It's important that everyone agrees the guidelines. You could ask everyone to raise their hands (physically or virtually).

It can help to remind people of the agreement before each meeting. And make sure it's easy for people to access. You could email it to everyone and share it with new people who join your meetings.

Set out group agreements around respecting each other and keeping things confidential, as well as setting expectations around work between meetings and the timing of meetings. For example, when will there be breaks and how should people look after themselves if they need more breaks or need to leave a meeting?

- Chairperson with lived experience



Creating a group agreement

How will you create a safe space for people taking part?

Why use this tool

A group agreement helps everyone taking part feel safe, included and heard within group discussions.

This tool can be used to facilitate a discussion, and to record the agreed outcome. A group agreement can be used regularly at meetings, or for one-off discussions.

Step-by-step

1. Print the template in A3 or copy it onto a flip chart, have sticky notes to hand. If working online make sure someone is taking notes and everyone in the group has a chance to review the agreement before it is finalised.
2. Explain the benefits of a group agreement; agreeing how everyone will communicate and behave within the meeting or discussion space will help create a safe atmosphere where people feel free to speak their minds and be heard without fear of judgement.
3. Ask the group to think about good guidelines for communication and note ideas down on sticky notes. If working online you could ask people to contribute via the chat. Discuss with the group why they like these guidelines, and which of the suggestions they'd like to commit to. Write these down on your template.

4. Ask the group to think about how they would like people to behave in the meeting or discussion space, and write these down or share them with the group. Discuss with the group what types of behaviour would and wouldn't be helpful during meetings. Suggestions might include ensuring mobile phones are on silent during the meeting, agreeing that members may take a break from the meeting if they feel overwhelmed, and that everyone's opinion should be respected. Ask the group which of the suggestions they'd like to commit to, and add these to your template.

5. If you are using the agreement for more than one meeting ask everyone to write their name underneath to show their commitment to the agreement. If you were working on a flip chart take a photo and share it with all members. You could also type up the group agreement and email it to the group or print out copies. It's important to ensure all members and any new members have a copy and agree to it.



Top tips - Remember

It is the groups responsibility to stick to the agreement. Any member can refer back to the agreement if they feel unsafe, or that any part of it is not being respected.

Please print this out or type in the text boxes available.





Creating a group agreement

Date of Agreement	Name of Meeting
Attendees present	Date to review
(Use initials for people's names)	
As a group we agree to:	
I agree to this agreement	
(Ask people to sign or add initials here. If new people join you can ask them to sign here too)	

Supporting everyone to take part in meetings

People might want to join in with your meetings in different ways. It can help to think about how you can support this, so the meeting is accessible for everyone.

People might find it difficult to respond in the moment.
To help with this, you could send information out before the meeting. And you can let people how to send ideas for you to include in your summary email or in the next agenda. Remember people might prefer their points to be anonymous.

Check ins
Checking in with people can be a good way to start a meeting. It helps people let each other know how they are doing. And it shows how important everyone's wellbeing is.

Check in ideas
1. Use a traffic light system. Red is not great. Amber is in the middle. Green is good.
2. Ask people where they are on a scale of 1 to 10. 1 is not great. 10 is amazing.
3. Online, ask everyone to use an emoji to sum up their day or how they're feeling.



Remember
Some people might not feel like checking in. That's fine too. It can be a good idea to ask people to check in if they want to or feel comfortable doing so. You could start by letting people know how you're feeling. But it's also important to let people know if you don't feel up to sharing.

Warm-up activities
Fun warm-up activities are used to help people get to know each other better. They can help people relax and get used to speaking in a meeting. This can be especially useful if people haven't worked together before.

Questions to ask for a warm up
1. What item would you take to a desert island, and why?
2. What's your favourite thing to do to relax, and why?
3. What's your favourite place to visit, and why?



Think about different ways you can present information so everyone feels engaged.

This might be through a PowerPoint or images.
Or you could invite a guest speaker.

Try to have different ways for people to understand what you're covering.

If there's a PowerPoint, can you email it out beforehand with speaker notes? Can you sum up what you're covering in bullet points?

In person, you can use post-it notes and pens to give people an alternative to speaking out loud.

You can use coloured cards for group votes too.
Green is yes. Red is no. Amber is not sure.

Try using a mix of individual and group tasks.

People like to learn and get involved in different ways.
This makes it more likely that everyone will feel heard.

Sensitively involve people in different ways.

Some people may take time to feel comfortable.
Because you're leading the meeting, you can give them that time. You can also ask if people want to add anything before moving on from an agenda item. And you can invite people who haven't spoken yet to speak first about the next topic.

Top tips for online meetings

- ✓ Check the sound before you start.
Make sure people can hear you and you can hear them.
- ✓ Ask people to use the mute function when others are speaking.
- ✓ Let people know they can use the chat as well as speaking. You or the person keeping an eye on the chat can then read comments out loud.
- ✓ On Zoom, you can use the closed caption function. This transcribes what everyone says so people can see subtitles or a full transcription.
- ✓ Some apps, like Zoom, have breakout rooms. This can help you have smaller group discussions, so everyone has a chance to take part. If you do use breakout rooms, make sure one person in every group takes notes. They can then summarise the conversation to the group afterwards.



Handy resources for running online meetings

[How to run an online activity](#)

[Online platforms and accessibility](#)



Inspiring people to come up with ideas

This can feel daunting but there are lots of ways to help people feel creative.

In person, you can put different questions or prompts on each table, along with pens and paper.

Ask people to go around the tables and write their thoughts down. If they agree with what someone else has written, they can put a tick next to this. This is sometimes called a World Café.

Online, if people are happy to do so, you could use tools like Google Jamboard.

They help people share ideas and collaborate online.



Handy resources for generating ideas

[The Mind Influence and Participation Toolkit](#) has lots of creative ways to involve people in meetings



Managing different points of view

**Sometimes people may disagree or have different points of view.
To help everyone work through this, you could:**

- ✓ Acknowledge and sum up the different points of view
- ✓ Possibly add the subject to the next agenda so people can keep talking about it
- ✓ If a decision is needed, arrange an anonymous vote during the meeting or afterwards
- ✓ Refer to the group agreement

Helpful phrases to manage different viewpoints

We're running out of time and it doesn't look like we'll get this decided today. I'll put it on the agenda for next time.

I can hear there are strong arguments on both sides.

Can you think of any others?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Making decisions together

It's important to decide how you'll make decisions in the meeting. If you're leading an existing meeting, ask the staff member or previous chairperson how it's been done before.

You could ask:

- ✓ Why you're having the meeting and if the meeting group needs to make any decisions.
- ✓ How many people are needed to carry out a vote?
- ✓ How many people need to vote the same way for it to pass?
- ✓ Does the group vote by raising hands, voting anonymously on paper or using an online poll?
- ✓ Is the voting process covered in a group agreement?
[Read more about writing a group agreement.](#) Page 34
- ✓ Does the group make any decisions on a regular basis?



Managing your own opinions

Sometimes we feel passionate about a topic discussed in meeting. That can be particularly true if it relates to our lived experience. It's important to think about how you'll manage this when you're leading the conversation.

- ✓ You can give your input on any topic. But make sure everyone else feels supported to take part in the discussion too.
- ✓ Even if you have personal feelings, you need to remain open to different views. Make sure these are heard before any decisions are made.
- ✓ If you feel managing your opinions will be difficult or you're too close to an agenda item, you could ask someone else to lead that section.



Supporting people's wellbeing

Everyone in the meeting should put their wellbeing first. If anyone needs to step away or is struggling, Mind staff members should be there to offer support.

And, when you're leading meetings, there are important things you can do to help people feel comfortable.

For example:

- ✓ Saying at the start that it's fine for people to step away at any point.
- ✓ Letting people know they can take part however feels best for them that day. Online, that might mean switching their camera off or putting their thoughts in the chat.
- ✓ Check in at the start of a meeting. This helps people understand how others are feeling. ([Find check in exercises on page 37](#))
- ✓ Speaking to a Mind staff member to agree who you should talk to if someone isn't well or if something happens you're worried about.
- ✓ Including in the group agreement that people should only share what they feel comfortable about their lived experience. You can encourage people to be mindful that their experiences could be triggering for others, too.

“Everyone wants you to do well and support you. I have grown in confidence in my own abilities.”

- Chairperson with lived experience



Celebrating success

It's important to reflect on what the meeting group has achieved over time and celebrate your time together.

Here's an exercise that works well:

Exercise: 1 positive thing

Every 3 or 6 months, why not take it in turns to celebrate success? Finish your meeting by asking 1 person to talk about 1 positive thing they enjoyed or think went well. You could even do this every meeting. It can help you review your progress over time and think about what you want to keep improving.

Don't be afraid to try

You won't know everything there is to know about leading meetings – and no one expects you to. When you first start, you might not feel you have all the skills you need. But remember that every chairperson chaired a meeting for the first time once. There's no better way to learn than by trying while making sure you have the support you need.

“I've grown in confidence a lot, particularly as I've often chaired meetings where I'm the youngest by about 10 years! I've learnt to ask for support more, like getting someone else to take minutes, and telling people my access needs, like speaking one person at a time and using the hands up function so I can manage conversations.”

- Chairperson with lived experience



Kayla's story

Kayla leads the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion co-production panel at West Sussex Mind. She explains what she has learned and what the experience means to her.

My responsibilities include setting meeting agendas, managing the meeting time, facilitating discussions, ensuring all panel members have an equal opportunity to participate, representing the panel in external meetings and at events, and encouraging the active participation of all panel members.

It is important to remain on task during meetings and often discussions can steer the conversation away from the main goals of the meeting. Being able to recognise when this happens and gently steer the conversation back on topic is an important skill to have. However, it is equally as important to recognise when there is value in moving off topic by making a note to discuss at a later date or determining if the topic is worth exploring there and then.

We involved every member of the group in creating group guidelines to create a safe and relaxed environment in which every member would feel comfortable and able to express themselves. Within those guidelines, we included a traffic light system in which attendees can share how comfortable they are discussing a topic.

Check ins give us the opportunity to find out how everyone is feeling and if there are topics that could be upsetting or triggering. A warning can then be given and any member can opt out of those types of discussions if they wish to. That gives the Chair a heads up on how to broach these subjects.

We use project management software to create boards and actions and to share resources and agendas. This is so the history of the meeting is accessible to everyone and open to everyone.



“The best part of the role is enabling all members of the panel to have their voice heard, to demonstrate the impact they have on each project and to ensure their contributions are recognised in the panel and to external groups and organisations.”

Louisa's story

Louisa is a staff member at West Sussex Mind, where she supported Kayla to thrive in her role. These are Louisa's tips for success.



When introducing new people to the panel we make sure to provide them with links to our engagement pages. These include our member biography pages. We also provide the option for new attendees to speak to the chair, deputy chair or community and inclusion manager before and after the meeting. This allows us the chance to provide a new member with the chance to settle in, to ask questions and go over any documentation needed for the meeting.

It's important to think about how you can reduce stress of activities for people attending. For example, you can provide help with technology, equipment, and getting agendas and information out in time. You need to make sure everyone can access what they need, and you might need to lend people resources and equipment if they are joining digitally.

We need to set up people to succeed, in terms of making sure they have resources and making sure we're following a 'do no harm' approach. Following our values is vital. We also need to be ambitious to harness the power and the insight of members as a serious and authentic part of our service delivery, and equally we need to harness the power of our organisation, making sure it has the structure and resources to go the extra mile.

“The best part of working with this group as a staff member has been seeing how my core values have been realised as a worker in an organisation and by working together with the group to turn awareness into action.”

How would you deal with these situations?



How would you deal with these situations?

In this section we look at a few scenarios and how you might respond to them.

We recommend you look at this together with a staff member. It's a good chance to reflect and think about what might work for you and your local Mind.



Example 1: Involving everyone

You've asked everyone for their favourite book, film or music as a warm-up task. Everyone has spoken except for 2 people. How could you get them more involved without putting pressure on?

Possible solutions for now

- Ask the 2 people if they want to share, but let them know it's OK not to.
- Let people know they can use the chat to answer if you're online and they'd rather not speak.

Possible solutions for next time

- Let people know what questions they will be asked beforehand. This gives people time to think about their answers.

Example 2: The meeting is lacking energy

The meeting you're running has been going for 20 minutes. There are 2 hours to go but people are looking a bit tired. It's half an hour until the next scheduled break. How can you increase everyone's energy?

Possible solutions for now

- Ask if people want to take a break now.
- Ask if there's an agenda item they want to move on to and get done before the break.

Possible solutions for next time

- Do a quick exercise to boost people's energy. You could ask everyone to do a stretch (standing or seated). You could all take a few breaths together. Or you could do another warm-up exercise.

Example 3: Staying on task

You're leading a discussion about helping more people get involved with Mind's work. It's a subject you're very passionate about. But you've spoken about it for 10 minutes, so there are only 2 minutes left for everyone else to speak.

Possible solutions for now

- If this is an important item, you could review the meeting agenda. Is there another item you can move to the next meeting so you can have this conversation for longer?
- You could move this discussion to the next meeting agenda, and ask people to send their thoughts before that meeting.

Possible solutions for next time

- When planning the next agenda, add time to introduce each item.
- Consider the agenda order. You could put subjects you are passionate about at the end. This will make it less likely you run over.
- Practise your introductions beforehand and time yourself.
- Work out the main points you want to say in advance. Write these down and stick to them.
- Ask your co-chair or a timekeeper to let you know if you run over.
- Use a clock that shows how much time you have left. This can be very handy if you struggle with timekeeping.
- Ask another person to lead agenda sections you are very passionate about.

Example 4: Staying on topic

You're having a discussion about a peer support service in your local Mind. But someone has been talking for 5 minutes about their long wait for mental health treatment. You need to move on. What do you do?

Possible solutions

- Thank the person for their input.
- Bring everyone back to the topic you're discussing.
- Ask if anyone has anything to share on that topic.
- Suggest adding waiting lists to a future agenda (if this is relevant to your meetings).
- If appropriate, suggest coming back to waiting times during any other business.
- Remind everyone that you have a lot to get through and time is tight.
- Online, rather than interrupting, you could put a time warning on the chat.

Example 5: If someone is unwell

Someone in the meeting is acting differently to normal. But they have said previously that the meetings help their wellbeing. How can you support them?

Possible solutions

- If you have any concerns, start by speaking to the staff member. They are there to support the meetings. They can speak to the person separately to ask if they need any help.
- You can let them know they're free to contribute or not contribute. And you can let them know they can step out of the meeting at any time.
- Try not to make assumptions about someone who is unwell. This can be very unhelpful and even discriminatory. Remember being at the meeting could be part of their recovery or support their wellbeing.



Example 6: If someone doesn't follow the group agreement

You're halfway through a meeting and one person keeps interrupting and raising their voice. What should you do?

Possible solutions for now

- Emphasise that everyone needs to have a chance to speak and should respect each other. It might help to refer to the group agreement.
- Thank the person for their contribution and ask others for their thoughts.
- If those steps don't work and you don't feel comfortable, ask a Mind staff member for support. They are there to deal with discriminatory or abusive behaviour.

Possible solutions for next time

- Relook at the group agreement together. You could think about what you want to happen if someone is struggling to follow the agreement. You could then add this to the agreement, so everyone is aware of the boundaries.
- Talk to a staff member to reflect on anything you might do differently next time. Is there anything that might help avoid a similar situation?

Helpful phrases

Thank you for those points. I'm aware of time and just wanted to check if anyone else would like to speak on this topic.

Can you think of more?

Write down your ideas

- Other challenges that could come up
- My response

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Info for Mind staff



Info for Mind staff Supporting people to lead or chair meetings

Staff members have an important role to play in this process. We can support and empower people with lived experience to take on lead roles in meetings.

Lived experience is at the heart of our work and central to Mind's strategy. It ensures we understand the needs of young people, people from racialised communities and people in poverty. And it means we can respond to those needs effectively.

Many of us have our own lived experience of mental health problems. We use it to inform our work every day. But it's also important we invite others to share their experiences, insights and skills with us. This helps us think and work differently. It means we're held to account and do what we say we'll do. It makes us better.

So it's not enough for people with lived experience to only be asked along to any meetings where decisions are made that could affect them. They should be offered the chance to lead or chair the meetings. That's a vital step in creating an equal power balance in the room, between Mind staff and the people with lived experience we exist to support.



Top tip

Try to ensure there are at least 2 people with lived experience in every meeting, ideally more. Otherwise, the power balance with staff will be unequal. Having more than 1 person involved helps peer support happen too.

Getting the first steps right

When you set up a meeting, ask if anyone would be interested in chairing or co-chairing meetings.

Make sure people know this is optional and they will be given plenty of support.

If a few people are interested, arrange a schedule so everyone can take part.

It's useful to allow each person to lead a few meetings in a row. That gives them a chance to develop their skills.

Think about how you will value everyone's contributions.

Do you have a lived experience policy that covers this? How can you show people your appreciation for their work? How do people claim back expenses?



Organising effective inductions

It's a good idea to meet new people before they join a meeting. It means you can let them know what to expect and support them with any concerns. You could also give them an induction pack.

This could cover:

- ✓ The purpose of the meeting. Why should people get involved and what impact could they have? Give examples of previous decisions the meeting group has made.
- ✓ The structure of the meeting. Is it online, in person or both? How formal is it?
- ✓ Who comes to the meeting. How many people? What are their roles?
- ✓ The main point of contact. This should be a staff member who can answer any questions.
- ✓ How to claim expenses. What do people need to claim back travel costs?
- ✓ Relevant information. Do you have a lived experience policy or strategy people could read?

It's also a good idea to check in with people after their first meeting. You can make sure they felt heard and able to join in. And you can ask if they need support with future meetings.

Top tip

Make sure everyone involved in the meeting knows the aims of the meeting group and how the local Mind will use their input.

Will the meeting group make decisions or contribute to them? How will they interact with other decision maker groups like the trustees or management team in the Local Mind? Feedback should be given to the group on any recommendations they put forward and whether these are acted upon or not and why.



Supporting someone to lead a meeting for the first time

- Discuss what usually helps their wellbeing. Do they need any extra support to carry out the role?
- If someone has never led a meeting, it might help for them to share responsibilities to start with. See how this can work.
- Have a call before the meeting to agree an agenda together.
- Agree who will run each section, and who will do things like timekeeping and seeing whose turn it is to speak.
- Make sure the person leading the meeting has everything they need. Like a printout of the agenda and internet access.
- If the meeting is online, try to test the tech with the chairperson beforehand.
- Check in with them the day before to ensure they have the meeting details and everything they need.
- Arrange to meet up or log on early. It means you can both check you have everything and talk through any questions.
- After the meeting, check in and get feedback on what went well and anything they want to work on.

Tasks for you to do

- Send a calendar invite to the session. Remember to include a Zoom or Teams link, or the address if the session is in person. Include a contact so people know who to call with any problems.
- Send a follow-up reminder a week before the meeting. Include the time, date, location/online link and agenda. Include any preparation materials. Sending as much information in advance as possible can be helpful to support people who need time to digest it.
- Email everyone a couple of weeks before the meeting, asking if they have any items to add. Ask for answers by a date that gives you enough time to then put the agenda together.
- Support the chairperson to create the agenda.
- Share good examples from across your organisation. Are there examples of how people do wellbeing check ins or use Google Jamboard?
- Book in half an hour before and after your meeting to check in with the chairperson and note taker.
- After the chairperson's time in the role has ended, give them a chance to reflect on what they have learned and achieved.
- Book a quiet room that people can go to if they need time away from meetings.
- If someone misses a meeting or needs to take time away, check in to see if they want to stay involved. Could you send the agenda or meet up to get their input before a meeting?

Supporting people during the meeting

- The person leading the meeting should know they can contact you (or another staff member) if they have any issues during the meeting.
- If possible, try to allow extra time for people to arrive and get comfortable. You could start a conversation about things like hobbies and interests. It helps people connect with the meeting.
- You should be on hand to deal with any wellbeing or safeguarding issues.
- Have standard signposting phone numbers to hand, so you can help people get support during or after the meeting.
- Be ready to support with any other tasks you agree with the chairperson.
- Follow your local Mind policies if there are any incidents during the meeting.

Making meetings accessible and welcoming

- Ask beforehand if anyone has any accessibility requirements. If they do, make arrangement for these and let the chairperson know.
- Think about digital accessibility. Can you provide any resources or support to help people? If it's a chairperson's first meeting, can you give them guidance before or help them log into Zoom or Teams?
- Think about your environment. Highly stimulating environments can be difficult for people with autism.
- Think about how to make people comfortable. Will refreshments be available? Can you help with travel arrangements and expenses?
- Give people options on how to meet up. If anyone feels unable to meet in person, can you give them the option to join online?
- Avoid jargon. If there are acronyms or jargon that might be used, have a sheet prepared that people can use to understand what's being discussed.



Top tips

Top tips from Louisa, West Sussex Mind

- Make sure to invest enough time to build the group. There is a lot of work to do before the group starts.
- The more we grow the group, the more we can support each other and take on more things
- A sudden handover doesn't work. It's a partnership between staff and the group.
- This is more work not less work but the value of the work is immense.



Resources & Tools



Agenda template for meetings | [Page 20](#)

Creating a group agreement | [Creating Group Agreement](#)

Google Jamboard | <https://jamboard.google.com/>

Influence and Participation Toolkit

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/>

**Information on different online platforms
and things to consider for accessibility**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/how/methods/remote-influence-and-participation/online-and-offline-platforms/>

Project management tools:

[Trello](#) [Asana](#) [Slack](#)

Meeting checklist | [Page 28](#)

Running an online activity

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/how/methods/remote-influence-and-participation/running-an-activity/>

Ideas tree exercise

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/how/methods/creativity/>

Lived experience on trustee boards resource for Local Minds

World Café

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/how/methods/organic-methods/>

Last of all, enjoy it!

Leading meetings can be a brilliant way to fight for mental health. We hope you love using your skills and experience as a chairperson.

Good luck!

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Got questions? Get in touch:

Livedexp@mind.org.uk

Call to speak to our Supporter Care team
on 020 8215 2243

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