



Rewarding Participation

YOUNGMINDS

Transforming participation across young people's mental health

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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Introduction

The participation of young people and carers in the development and improvement of young people's mental health services brings numerous benefits, including increased satisfaction and lower levels of complaints amongst service users, carers and staff. It is essential that services find a way to recognise this contribution and ensure that people who are actively engaged in participation feel that their commitment is valued.

For many young people and carers the feeling that their actions are making a difference is a reward in itself, but taking part in participation activities should not have a financial cost to the individual. As a basic principle, expenses such as travel costs should be covered as standard. Participation requires hearing from the widest range of perspectives, so organisations need to ensure that processes for making these payments do not mean the voices of certain groups are excluded from the conversation.

There are a range of ways you can reward people who participate in your organisation. The type of reward should correspond to what is being asked of the participant and ideally they should be involved in the decision about what type of reward is most appropriate, for the role and their individual circumstances.

This guide will start by highlighting the issues your organisation might need to consider when developing policies and practices around how you reward young people and carers, before offering some practical ideas about how people can be rewarded for their participation and the contribution they make to your organisation.

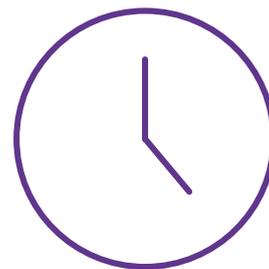


Valued participants are more likely to remain engaged with your project and regard what they are doing as meaningful.

What do we need to consider when deciding on how to reward participation?

What is being asked of the participant?

Before deciding on a reward, it is important to be clear of what the role is, the value it adds to the service and what is required of the person who fulfils it. How much time will the participant be expected to contribute? What level of commitment does the role require? You should know the answers to these questions before deciding what kind of reward or remuneration would be appropriate. Is this a role which, in other circumstances, would be filled by a paid member of staff or consultant? If so, a participant should be rewarded as such and a volunteer should not be used to reduce costs.



What is the budget for rewarding participants?

The budget should be agreed beforehand and built into the funding for any participation project. This may require agreement from the organisation about how this is monitored and recorded. The budget should be sufficient to reward all participants for the entire duration of the project, as well as reimbursing any out of pocket expenses incurred. Participants must understand systems of reimbursement and reward so they are aware of what they need to do and when they can expect to receive any payment.



Is the reward inclusive to all participants?

Are all participants rewarded equally? Is there anything about the reward which excludes certain groups of people from being able to participate? For some people, payment for their participation may affect certain welfare benefits they are entitled to and they may prefer to have their contribution recognised in a different way. Asking participants at the start of the project how they would like to be rewarded helps to ensure that the process is as inclusive as possible.



How will the reward be reviewed?

It is important to think about how and when you are going to review the effectiveness of your reward. There may be unforeseen consequences to what is offered, or the appeal of a reward may decrease over time. If the role of the participant changes during the project, how do you ensure this is reflected in the reward provided? Planning a point in the process where these questions can be openly discussed with participants can ensure that people remain engaged throughout the project.



Costs and expenses

An individual who chooses to give their time to participate in the development of Children and Young People's Mental Health Services should not be left out of pocket for doing this. When considering rewarding people for being a part of your project, the basic starting point should be reimbursement of costs incurred.

Costs incurred include, but are not limited to:

- **Travel expenses to and from the activity**
- **Accommodation required for any overnight stays**
- **Meals required while taking part in activity**
- **Carer support**
- **Childcare costs**
- **Lost earnings (if someone needs to miss work to participate in an activity)**

It will be necessary to set reasonable limits with your participants beforehand to make sure they are fully informed. Some examples of this might include which meals in the day are covered and how much can be claimed for them, or whether taxis will be paid for if required. It is advisable that your organization has an accessible yet clear policy available on what is and is not covered for people participating in service design or feedback activities. It should be flexible enough to support the needs of any participant, including those with additional needs or disabilities. Some people may require the use of a taxi to be able to take part, so in order to ensure your participation is inclusive you will need to support participants to feel comfortable approaching you to discuss any adjustments needed.

You cannot assume that your participants will be able to pay the upfront costs of their expenses or wait for long periods of time to be reimbursed.

Young people may also not have bank accounts that money can be paid into. Issues such as these can create systemic barriers to participation for some of the people it is most important to hear from. As much as possible, your organisation should pre-book travel and accommodation so the costs are not an issue for the participant. Pre-booking travel tickets also means that you can often get cheaper fares which will keep costs down for your project.

Costs incurred should be reimbursed as soon as possible, preferably on the day via a petty

cash scheme. This can be an issue with NHS organisations as they do not always have the capability for this. NHS England and NHS Improvement requires that participants use the Patient and Public Voice (PPV) Policy. This requires claim forms to be brought to meetings/ events, as well as be available via email. Claims must be accompanied by a receipt and received within three months of costs being incurred. They will be paid within two weeks. The situation may be different within some local NHS trusts so it is worth checking the situation in your organisation to see what forms of reimbursement are possible.

If you are partnering with another organisation for your participation project, for example to support the inclusion of specific hard to reach groups, it may be that the other organisation has a more flexible petty cash policy and arrangements could be made for them to cover the initial payment of costs incurred to ensure the widest range of people are able to participate. Payments should always cover the exact amount spent by the participant. Any extra given above what is owed can be counted as income and may be liable for tax or affect benefit entitlement.

Whatever arrangements are decided for the payment of expenses, it is important that this is clearly explained to participants ahead of time so they understand what is expected of them and when they can expect to receive any money they are due.

How can a participant be rewarded?

There are a variety of ways your organisation can reward participants for their participation and express the value of their contributions.

These are summarised in the table below ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾:

TYPE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
INCENTIVE	Something that encourages people's involvement.	Learning new skills, food, transport, having a voice, building confidence, making new friends.
RECOGNITION	Showing that people's involvement is valued and appreciated.	Thank you letters, certificates, feedback on how young people's input has influenced decisions, providing references.
ACCREDITATION	Giving people the opportunity to certify the skills they have developed.	AQA Unit Schemes, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Children's University.
REWARD	Giving something tangible that is of value to a person.	Vouchers, tickets to events, meals out, competitions and prizes.
REMUNERATION	Payment received by a person for their participation.	BACS.

Participants should be involved in the decision about how they are rewarded. Groups can be given a range of options and supported to come to an agreement about what would be the most appropriate. Giving people the choice in how they are rewarded ensures that it is relevant to individual circumstances and makes it more meaningful for them. Rewards for very young children should also be agreed with their guardians.

Incentive

An incentive to participate in your project is something which makes taking part more appealing. This could take many forms including the opportunity to make new friends, learn new skills, or influence decisions. It could also include free food, childcare or other benefits which make taking part in your participation activities easier or more attractive.

¹ Encouraging and Recognising Young People's Active Involvement in Connexions, December, Participation and Volunteering Team, Connexions Service National Unit, 2002

² Recognition – Incentives, Rewards, Remuneration and Accreditation for Children and Young People's Participation, Participation Unit, Save the Children, 2013

How can a participant be rewarded?

Recognition

Recognising a person's contribution to your organisation or project may seem like a basic step but often it is one of the most effective ways of rewarding participants. Many of those who get involved in participation are motivated by reasons other than reward.

Talking about the role of participants in reports or other forms of positive publicity can also recognise the contribution they have made. Other ways of rewarding participation could include organising a celebration event to say thank you, nominating them for a reward, either internally or externally, or presenting them with a certificate of achievement.

You may also want to consider providing a reference which evidences the skills and experiences they have gained through participating in your organisation. This is particularly useful for young people who may be trying to build up their CV's before entering employment. Keeping a record of the activities that each participant takes part in can help ensure these are accurate. Regardless of any other ways you reward participation, you should always include some form of recognition to show participants that you appreciate their input.

Acknowledging how the work people have done has contributed towards a positive change often makes their involvement feel worth the time and effort.

Accreditation

In addition to recognising the skills participants have gained in the form of a certificate or reference, it is also possible to reward participation through an official accreditation scheme. This can be a more complicated option because it can mean becoming a recognised provider or accreditation centre but the benefits to participants of gaining this type of recognition for their efforts can be very rewarding and help people to progress career wise.

The amount of input accreditation schemes require can vary. Young people may wish to use their participation to contribute to their [Duke of Edinburgh](#) award scheme. Recording this is as simple as completing a report on an online portal.

[ASDAN](#) is an organisation that offers flexible learning opportunities for children and young people. It aims to tackle barriers to learning by offering a wide range of courses including volunteering, citizenship and an extended project qualification. Depending on the nature of your participation project and the skills required for it, young people may be able to work towards one of these awards. As an organisation you would need to [register as an ASDAN centre](#) to offer this option.

Similarly, the [AQA Unit Award Scheme](#) could also offer relevant recognition of short pieces of work, particularly around its citizenship courses.



How can a participant be rewarded?

Reward

If you are able to offer a tangible reward for participating but not one which involves payment, providing a reward may be the solution. Rewards could include vouchers for goods or services, as well as experiences such as meals out or tickets. It could also include entry into a competition for the chance to win a prize. This type of reward should not create any issues with benefits, tax or other employment and should be appropriate to personal circumstances. For this reason, it is always good practice to double check with participants before you make a final decision. There are also a number of volunteer recognition schemes which allow volunteers to claim discounts at local businesses in exchange for the time they give volunteering.



Remuneration

Paying people to be involved in participation indicates that you are taking their contribution seriously and value their input as experts. It could also mean that people take part in an activity to get paid, rather than because they have a genuine interest, or payment may influence the responses given.

If you want to financially reward people for taking part in your project, you need to be clear about how it will work. Is a contract of employment required? Will they be paid an hourly rate or a one-off payment? Will they be paid for time spent preparing for an activity or just the time spent taking part in it? How will this payment be received and when? If regular payments are made, or payment is received for the completion of an agreed task, it can count as employment and affect tax and benefit status.

Changes to IR35 rules for off-payroll workers shift the responsibility for defining whether a person is a worker, self-employed or employed by the organisation from the individual to the company receiving the service. These guidelines are designed to end hidden employment and ensure equal tax, national insurance and workers' rights, but they have an effect on some paid participation roles. It is a good idea to run the role through the HMRC's online [Checking Employment Status for Tax \(CEST\)](#) tool to ensure you are compliant.

There are additional implications if it is a young person who is being 'employed'. Depending on their age, this can be subject to laws around the employment of children. Children under 13 are prohibited from working and there are restrictions on 13-16 year olds. Under 16's are not eligible to pay national insurance and are only subject to tax if their earnings are above their personal allowance threshold. This is only likely to become an issue if they have another substantial source of income in addition to any participation role. Participants can refuse payment for participating if they wish and other rewards may be offered instead.

Make sure you check with your HR and Finance department to ensure you have a safe, accessible process and can answer any questions or offer adequate support to your participants if needed. Remember for some this may be their first experience of employment or a return to paid work so do not assume they are confident dealing with the complexity of tax and employment systems.

Paying people to be involved in participation indicates that you are taking their contribution seriously and value their input as experts.

Rewarding participation – tax and benefits

You need to consider how any reward or remuneration given to your participants could affect their financial status so there are no unseen consequences. You will not be able to comment on individual circumstances but it is useful for you to have a working knowledge of how any reward fits with tax, national insurance, benefits and employment legislation so that you are able to explain it to participants in an accessible way. This is especially relevant when rewarding young people who may have less experience of navigating these systems.

The reimbursement of expenses to participants does not affect either their tax status or their entitlement to benefits. If this is the only financial payment received, their contribution is considered volunteering. Volunteering is supported if they are receiving benefits, although they will need to tell their work coach or the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) that they are doing it and continue to meet any existing conditions of receiving their payment.

If benefits are received for health reasons, voluntary participation activities should not lead to any change in the requirement to look for work or trigger a Work Capability Assessment. If the participant is claiming Job Seekers Allowance, it may be possible for the time spent volunteering to count for up to 50 per cent of the allocated job search time, although this will need to be agreed with their Work Coach in advance ⁽³⁾.

When payment is received above what can be counted as expenses, it becomes liable for tax and national insurance. If participants are in receipt of any benefits, it may also have an impact on eligibility for these. Some benefits have an allowance for permitted work within them but it is essential that you advise your participants to check the impact of their prospective role and reward on their circumstances before they start.

If participants receiving benefits need further advice about how the activities they take part in could affect their entitlement, Bedford Citizen's Advice runs a national confidential advice service about the subject. The service charges organisations to be able to refer people, but NHS England involvement activities are covered, and it is worth either checking if your organisation is too or considering making this service available to your participants. The service, available to organisations across England and Wales, can be contacted by email at involve@bedfordcab.org.uk or by calling 01234 330604.

It's really important to make sure this point is fully explored by all participants.



Having benefits or other payments negatively affected will reduce the likelihood of people participating in the future.

³ Guidance: Volunteering and Claiming Benefits. Department of Work and Pensions. 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits>

Key points to remember

- **Involve participants in deciding on the reward they receive, to ensure it is appropriate and meaningful for them**
- **Expenses should be covered as a minimum**
- **Rewards should reflect the responsibility and commitment required for the role**
- **Consider the effects of any reward on tax and/or benefits status**
- **Make sure participants (and their guardians, where necessary) know how and when they will receive reimbursement of expenses or other payments**

Further information on rewarding and remunerating participants can be accessed here:

Guidance for the Recognition and Reward of Participation Activities. Office of the Children's Commissioner. 2013

<https://youngminds.org.uk/media/2158/reward-and-recognition-guidance-final.pdf>

Patient and Public Participation Policy. NHS England. 2017

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ppp-policy.pdf>

Recognition – Incentives, Rewards, Remuneration and Accreditation for Children and Young People's Participation. Participation Unit, Save the Children, 2013

<https://youngminds.org.uk/media/2159/stc-e-blast-off-guide-10.pdf>

What You Need to Know About Payment: An Introductory Guide for Members of the Public who are Considering Active Involvement in NHS, Public Health or Social Care Research. Involve, National Institute for Health Research. 2016

http://www.invo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/INVOLVE_payment_document_v4-NOV16.pdf

Working with our Patient and Public Voice (PPV) Partners – Reimbursing expenses and paying involvement payments. NHS England. 2017

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/patient-and-public-voice-partners-expenses-policy-oct-17.pdf>



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