

Partners in Progress



BUILDING WORKSHOPS

For Lived Experience Collaborations



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GLOSSARY



Lived Experience (LE): Personal and first-hand knowledge of living with a physical or mental health condition or distress.

Collaboration: The process of LE experts and researchers working together to share their knowledge, help plan, and understand research.

Learning Moments: Brief topic or task overviews before breakout sessions. These moments foster shared understanding and support confident, meaningful participation.

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI), the Global Mental Health Peer Network (GMHPN), and individual lived experience and academic consultants are working together on a Wellcome-funded research project to better understand how, why, and under what conditions lived experience (LE) collaborations have impact in mental health research.

As part of this project, we are hosting partner consultation workshops with lived experience experts outside our funded team. These workshops inform several parts of our research—including a rapid review, document analysis, survey and interview question development—while also refining our collaborative processes and best practices for meaningful LE engagement. This contributes to our broader goal: developing a Theory of Impact for lived experience collaboration in mental health research.

We're sharing these learnings to contribute to the growing knowledge on lived experience collaboration. We hope this practical guidance supports others developing workshops or engagement processes that centre lived experience meaningfully and respectfully. This living document reflects lessons learned so far and serves as a tool to support more inclusive, collaborative practice in CEI's future group discussions and participatory work.

This document captures what we learned from co-developing and running our first partner consultation workshop together.

HOW WE COLLABORATED

We worked together across all stages of workshop development—from planning and design to delivery and reflection. Over May and June, we met regularly (via Microsoft Teams) for 1–2-hour sessions to co-create the workshop.

Pre-Workshop

Early meetings focused on setting the agenda, clarifying the workshop's aims, and identifying how the session would support our wider research goals. Together, we developed an inclusive recruitment process and application form, selected participants, and decided on a fair and transparent remuneration structure, which included compensation for workshop hours and, on reflection, additional payment for pre-reading tasks.

We also co-created pre-briefing materials in slide format to help participants understand their roles, the aims of the workshop, and the flow of the session. We used plain language to explain key research terms and asked about accessibility and engagement preferences as part of the application process.

While our short timeline limited how much time we had for recruitment and application review, we reflected that building in more time would have made this process more accessible and collaborative—especially for team members

HOW WE COLLABORATED

During the Workshop

During the workshop, our LE team members—Amander, Edwin, Stephen, and Claudia—played key facilitation roles, led breakout discussions, and helped summarise key takeaways. We opened the session with a clear overview of goals and concepts and included some initial learning moments. Icebreaker activities, such as a "Where in the world are you?" map and light-hearted check-in questions, also helped set a welcoming tone and build a sense of connection among participants joining from around the globe.

However, we realised in retrospect that incorporating additional brief learning moments throughout the session—especially when introducing new research activities—could have helped make technical content more accessible. We also noted that using predefined tasks (such as selecting from a list of key search terms) may have limited opportunities for lived experience experts to shape the discussion. In future, we aim to allow more space for open dialogue—inviting participants to generate their own ideas and questions based on their lived expertise.

HOW WE COLLABORATED

Post-Workshop

After the workshop, the team reviewed feedback, interpreted insights, and co-created outputs—including an accessible summary of the session and this list of best practices. While we did not use a transcription tool during this first session, we later recognised that having a transcript would have supported collaborative analysis and reflection.

We ensured fair compensation for all contributors and built time for collective reflection on what went well and what could be improved. Through this process, we deepened our shared understanding of what meaningful, equitable collaboration looks like in practice—and identified concrete ways to strengthen this work in future sessions.

5 Key Practices

1. Make Materials Accessible



2. Clarify Purpose & Expectations
Early



3. Build Confidence Through Learning



4. Offer Flexible & Inclusive Participation
Options



5. Stay Grounded in Lived Experience,
Not Just Research Tasks



Translating Best Practices into Action

Pre-Workshop

Prepare Accessible Materials

- Create materials specifically for the workshop and share them in advance to give participants time to review.
- Use **multiple formats** (e.g., slides, visuals, simplified summaries, videos) to make content more accessible and engaging.
- Format review materials (e.g., spreadsheets) for accessibility.

Support Orientation

- Provide **introductory opportunities** for participants (e.g., Q&A session).
- Offer **plain-language definitions** of key research terms.
- Ensure participants understand why they are there, how their contributions will shape the work, and what the workshop aims to achieve.

Translating Best Practices into Action

Pre-Workshop

Plan for Inclusion

- Include questions about **accessibility needs** and preferred **engagement styles** in the application or onboarding process.
- Use simple, **familiar tech platforms** (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet) and offer optional IT support.
- Ensure recruitment timelines are long enough.
- Offer **optional* training** for facilitators.

**Depending on resources, time, and previous experience of facilitators with the research topic*

Translating Best Practices into Action

During the Workshop

Foster Understanding & Engagement

- Facilitate **short learning moments** (e.g., mini-explanations before breakout sessions or group tasks).
- Provide **regular breaks** to support energy, access needs, and wellbeing.

Encourage Participation

- Ensure lived experience experts lead or co-facilitate discussions, and allow multiple ways for participants to contribute (e.g., responding in the chatbox)
- Encourage **open dialogue** and allow participants to shape how topics are framed—not just respond to pre-set tasks.

Translating Best Practices into Action

Post-Workshop

Document & Share Outcomes

- Use transcription tools (e.g., Otter.ai, Microsoft Teams transcription) to **efficiently capture insights** and enable collaborative reflection.
- Co-create an accessible summary of outcomes, decisions, and next steps—for example, a plain-language document or slide deck shared with both participants and applicants.

Maintain Transparency & Learning

- Ensure **transparent and fair remuneration** aligned with time, roles, and contributions (including any pre-workshop reading or activities).
- Offer **space for reflection and feedback** (for example, by creating a short survey for participants to complete after the workshop), and integrate this learning into future sessions.

Acknowledgments & Project Information



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Authors

Sarah Dolaty
Edwin Mutura
Amander Wellings
Claudia Sartor
Stephen Jeffreys

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