

Staying Connected

As the pandemic continued it became apparent that our 7th annual involvement conference normally held in October would not be able to go ahead. Together we realised that it was more imperative than ever to find innovative ways to connect.

In order to ensure virtual connection was meaningful we realised we needed to upskill the individuals we support to use virtual channels effectively, step forward to the Zoom meetings project.

Relevant support staff were asked to print off some communication cards for each group member so they could tell the meeting facilitator when they would like to talk, or when they wanted a person to slow down, speak up, etc. A 'How to use Zoom' instruction sheet and an Easy Read Guide for Using Zoom were shared by the facilitator to promote full participation from the individuals we support.

All four regional involvement groups then came together virtually and facilitated by Toni Vyse, Southern Facilitator, shared with each other an object to illustrate their activities during lockdown which others could also then try.

Based on the success of virtual meetings it was agreed to develop a newsletter. The members of the involvement groups learned how to use the voting function on Zoom to select three topics they thought would be of most interest to their chosen audience. As the editorial process progressed the individuals we support developed skills in:

- researching their chosen topics
- making choices and having opinions
- listening and speaking out
- editing and proof reading
- thinking about how others would see the work
- learning about hosting an online event
- giving constructive feedback
- leading to confidence building for members through showcasing co-production and inclusion during an online event launching the newsletter to a wider audience which received great feedback.