

**Thank you to all the facilitators from across the DEEP network that contributed to this project, either through participating in a virtual meeting, attending our gathering or through email and phone conversations. Special thanks to Kindred Spirits - Alzheimer's Support who shared their ground rules and outcomes workshop photographs with us.**

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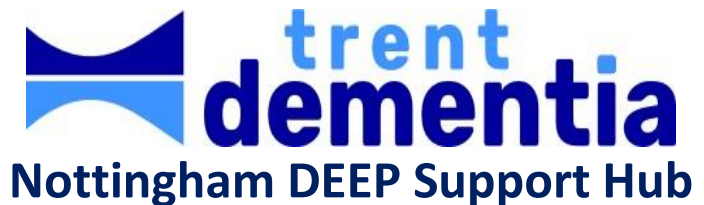
For more information about the DEEP network:

<https://www.dementivoices.org.uk/>



The UK Network  
of Dementia Voices

# **VIRTUAL PEER SUPPORT PILOT**



# The Pilot

## Virtual Peer Support for Facilitators



The aim of the pilot was to discuss the support needs of DEEP facilitators and test a virtual platform (ZOOM) as a way of supporting each other with shared challenges and learning from each other.

## How did we do it?



We called out to facilitators through the Dementia Voices website, Twitter and Email.

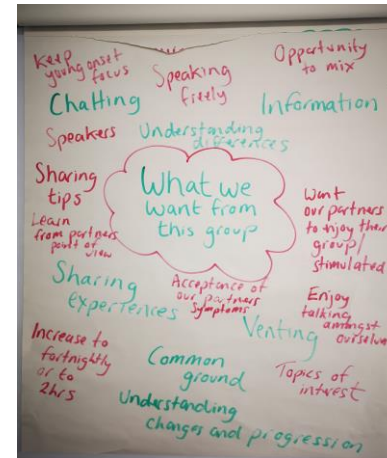
We offered 8 sessions across the summer on Thursday afternoons and a 'meet up' at the end of the pilot to discuss our learning.



## Who are we?



Nottingham DEEP Support Hub is hosted by Trent Dementia and aims to offer practical support to people who want to establish a DEEP group in the East Midlands. We also host a core advisory group whose members are living with dementia and they design events and activities which they also deliver.



Kindred Spirits thought about outcomes for their group. This work followed a facilitators discussion about being clear about outcomes in DEEP groups.

## **What did we learn?**

We asked 7 questions during the pilot and these are the conclusions we reached.

### **1 - Should meetings be open or closed groups, or a mix of both?**

There should be opportunities to join closed groups where relationships can develop. It can take time to build meaningful relationships. There should also be regular open groups so people can try out meeting online

### **2 - How often should meetings be held?**

This is for each group to decide but, we felt every 2 – 4 weeks would help relationships to develop

### **3 - Should the meetings be thematic?**

Any facilitator could propose a themed meeting which would be open to any facilitator in the DEEP network. This might be a call out for help around a specific challenge or a call to work collaboratively. During the pilot we discussed opportunities to work together on funding applications.

### **4 - Should we produce a 'getting to know me' introduction sheet or similar**

This would be useful when starting a new group. The facilitator could circulate a group email collecting everyone's details, including details of how they want to be contacted. This should include individual wishes regarding contact on personal social media channels for example: Facebook, as well as communication more generally.

### **5 - What do we understand about boundaries and how can we support each other in maintaining these?**

It is important to gain a mutual understanding about the aims of the group. We agreed on offering peer support for challenging issues in our roles as facilitators and sharing our learning throughout the DEEP network. It was also considered important to talk about social media, for example: Facebook and professional profiles. Some facilitators will wish to keep these separate and maintain personal boundaries.

## 6 - What are the basic conditions / guidelines for maintaining a safe, confidential peer support space.

Establishing ground rules for the meeting should be the first task, these should always include:

Confidentiality, Respect, Kindness & Patience

It is important that people consider how to maintain confidentiality, using headphones, not sharing the details of the meeting with anyone outside of the meeting and being in a space alone if possible. Using the mute button when not speaking and being mindful about paying attention to the speaker and not completing other tasks. Carving out space to fully participate is important.

Ground rules should be re-visited regularly, and new members should be invited to contribute their own ideas to be added to the established ground rules.

## 7 - Do virtual support groups need facilitation?

The groups do need facilitation, to organise, keep time and help everyone have the chance to join in with the conversation. This doesn't have to be the same person everytime. People could take turns or take different responsibilities, for example: someone might set up the meetings and let everyone know, someone else may facilitate each meeting.

### Who participated

13 Facilitators from the network took part in the pilot, DEEP in Deeside, Nottingham's 'Friends for Life – Ey Up Me Duck'. Beth Johnson Foundation, Kindred Spirits – Alzheimer's & Dementia Support Services. YODA, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, Together Dementia Support, York Minds & Voices, For Brian CiC and Dandelion CiC.

