How to guide:
Running live virtual
SOLIHULL APPROACH
groups

INTRODUCTION

This guide pulls together practitioners' experiences of running face-to-face Solihull Approach groups for parents as live virtual groups.

Although live virtual groups are different from face-to-face groups and need a bit of tweaking, in many ways they are also the same!

As a facilitator, your role stays the same:

- To support parents
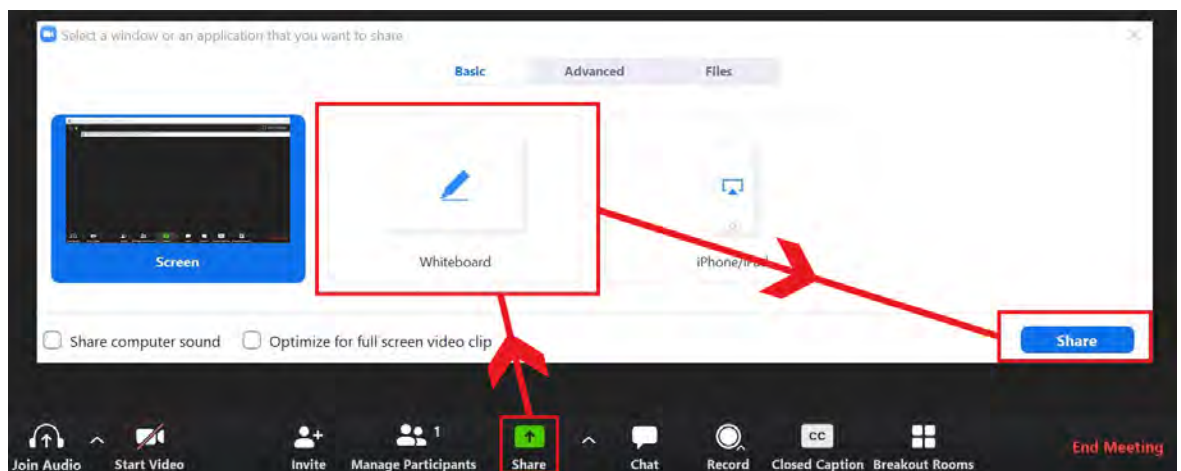- To understand
- To change

You help them to settle into the group, share experiences, and learn together. You follow the Facilitators' Manual and run the activities.
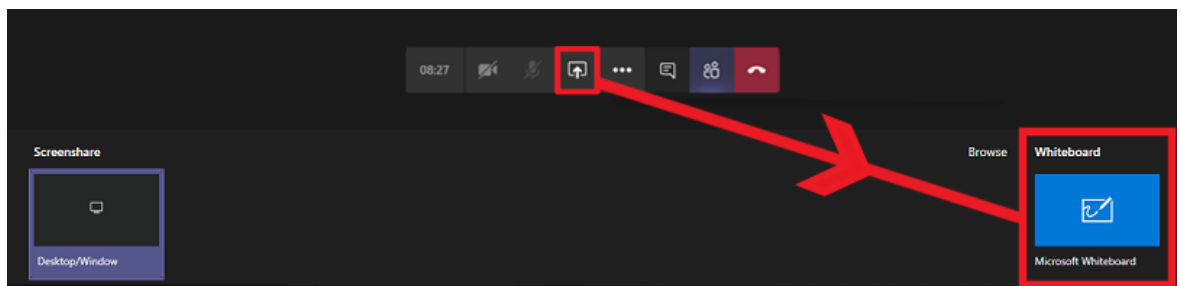
Technology Solutions

The Solihull Approach groups for parents (Antenatal, Postnatal, Understanding your child's behaviour) are all designed to include parents with low literacy levels, so when you write on a flipchart you read it out at the same time. Some virtual web conference platforms (such as Zoom or Teams) provide a whiteboard.
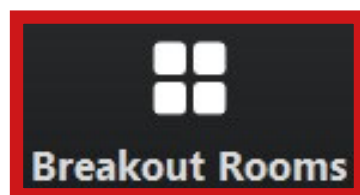

» **Fig. 1: How to find the Whiteboard feature in Zoom.**

» **Fig. 2: How to find the Whiteboard feature in Microsoft Teams.**

You can run activities in pairs or in small groups, as well as in the large group, using 'breakout rooms' in your digital platform. So, technology provides some solutions for running live virtual groups.

» **Fig. 3: Breakout room icon for Zoom, left - Breakout room icon for Teams*, right.**

*Note: Breakout rooms for Microsoft Teams availiable late 2020.

PowerPoints

You shouldn't need PowerPoints to structure the groups as the activities are the vehicle for learning, not an information giving exercise on PowerPoint. It is also nice to look at human faces rather than words on a screen!

Having said that, in the Antenatal group there is some key information you might want to read out on PowerPoint rather than from the Manual, and we are providing a very small set of PowerPoints for this. However, if you are confident to present the information from the Manual then you do not need the PowerPoints.

Security

All sessions should be password protected.

Zoom

To enable passcode settings for a group of users:

1. Sign into the Zoom web portal as the owner or admin and click on **User Management** then **Group Management**.
2. Click the applicable **Group Name** from the list, then click the **Settings** tab.
3. In the **Security** section, verify that the passcode settings you would like to use for this group are enabled.

   If the setting is disabled, click the toggle to enable it. If a verification dialog displays, choose **Turn On** to verify the change.
4. (Optional) If you want to make this setting mandatory for all users in this group, click the lock icon, and then click **Lock** to confirm the setting. If this setting is not locked, users can disable it in their personal settings.

Before the Group

Professionals have spoken to parents before the meeting to establish if there are any issues with:

- Shared space
- Confidentiality
- Feeling comfortable sharing their home environment
- Being confident with digital platform and the device they are using, (if they are using a phone or tablet, they may not be able to see everyone's face)

Some practitioners asked the group if they could contact them between sessions if necessary, but mainly they didn't need to.

One area dropped off a small pack of tea and biscuits to each parent's house, which was remarkable and only possible because they had the staff, funding and time to do it.

Another area was able to provide phone data to parents. Again, remarkable and another example of using creativity to overcome potential barriers!

Running the Group: Some Experiences

"Adding in short look-a-ways of 5 minutes around every 30 minutes in addition to any scheduled breaks was helpful."

"The content of the group remained largely the same. There were adjustments to the programme for timing, but that often happens in the face-to-face groups as well."

"Facilitators used breakout rooms for group activities where necessary. Facilitators joined parents in the rooms."

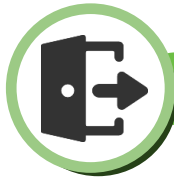"Parents liked the whiteboard if there were any activities involving writing."

We love hearing your feedback: **solihull.approach@heartofengland.nhs.uk**

Structure of the Group

This should remain similar to the face-to-face group. In other words, if the group is designed to be run over 10 x 2-hour sessions, this needs to be similar on a virtual platform. This should then provide enough time to process the activities and the shared learning in the group.

Beginnings and Endings

Rather than setting up a virtual waiting room and letting in everyone at the same time, it is a better experience for parents if they can join in as they would with a face-to-face group. You could open the 'room' earlier and play some relaxing music on your phone or other device while parents join the session.

Similarly, as with the Dance of Reciprocity, you can wind down gently by ending the session, playing some relaxing music and let parents leave at their own pace, rather than an abrupt finish at the end.

In one area practitioners kept the session open for 30 minutes after the session finished in case anyone wanted to speak to them.

Here's a playlist from the **Solihull Approach** team you are welcome to use.

To listen on Spotify*, scan the QR code using your mobile phone camera.

Alternativley, click on the following links (highlighted in blue) to listen on **Spotify** or **YouTube**.

SCAN ME

* Requires creation of free account.

Webinars

You can hear practitioners talking about their experiences of supporting parents virtually on our website: **www.solihullapproachparenting.com**.

There is also a webinar about using digital platforms for running training, where many of the issues are similar to running a parenting group.

The Virtual World

We live in challenging times. Moving to include virtual groups is new to most people. Anecdotal evidence suggests there are pluses as well as minuses to the experience. One area found that some parents prefer joining virtually. That face to face is more difficult for some parents. Another area found that parents tended to share more quickly in a virtual group. You will have your own experiences and will build your own expertise in running live virtual groups.