

Putting Life In Years (PLINY): Telephone friendship groups research study

Community Network Facilitator Handbook



FACILITATOR'S HANDBOOK[©]

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groups research study





PLINY Facilitator's Handbook

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1. SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Facilitation literally means 'making things easy'. A facilitator makes it easy for the group to achieve what it sets out to do. That means that your job as a facilitator is to:

- Be clear about the purpose of your group
- Have the skills to help them achieve their purpose
- Have the tools to help effectively
- Understand how groups work
- Work in a way that makes it easy for them

The training is designed to help you practise some of the tools and skills you will need many of which you are likely to have already. In this handbook we offer some extra material that will help you to reflect and build on your existing skills as well as to reinforce what is covered in the training.

Section Two explores the role of the facilitator and the different elements of the role that a facilitator may use during the group sessions. There is also some information on the different styles you may adopt as a facilitator.

Section Three explains how groups work and how they develop. You will find this useful to refer to as the group changes during the time you are working with them.

Section Four concentrates on three of the core skills you will use as a facilitator: listening, questioning and responding to difficult behaviour. There is also a skills checklist for you to assess your own skills against.

Section Five is very practical and will provide useful information about how to prepare for your first session, how to run a session and how to close off.

Section Six contains additional material that you may find helpful. Before you begin the training you may find it helpful to assess how ready you feel for the role. There is a brief questionnaire to help you do this in this section. There is also another questionnaire for you to complete after the training. This will help you to assess how far the training has prepared you for the role.

2. SECTION TWO: THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

1.1 The Role

The facilitator is there to ensure that the group session is effective and achieves what its members set out to do. Your job might range from helping the group members to find common ground for discussion, to share common experience, to discuss the latest world events or bestselling book or just to enjoy each other's company.

The role of the facilitator therefore is to ensure that the group works as a constructive and cohesive unit to a common purpose. The facilitator has a role within the group which combines the three following elements:

As a **Leader** the facilitator will:

- **FOCUS** To provide a focus for the group's cohesion and discussion
- **STIMULATE** To encourage constructive debate between group members.
- **SUPPORT** To bring out information from introverted members of the group and to allow new ideas to be submitted.
- **PARTICIPATE** When the group is interacting poorly or in the wrong direction the facilitator must be willing to promote new discussion.
- **TEAM BUILD** To form a cohesive, interactive, motivated and productive group.

As a **Referee** the facilitator will:

- **REGULATE** To maintain order of the group discussion, discouraging participants from talking at the same time, or dominating the floor.
- **PROTECT MEMBERS** To ensure that all contributions to the discussion are treated equally and that no-one is rebuffed for their input.
- **DEAL WITH PROBLEMS** To control problem people within the group allowing everyone to participate freely.
- **ACT AS TIMEKEEPER** To adhere to the meeting timetable thus ensuring completion of the agenda.

As a **Mediator** the facilitator will:

- **BE NEUTRAL** The facilitator must be neutral in the discussion, taking a pragmatic view of all points raised. This frees the facilitator to concentrate on the group rather than the content of the discussion so that they can ask pertinent and stimulating questions.
- **BE PRAGMATIC** To take a detached look at the discussion viewing each point on its merits.
- **ENCOURAGE FEEDBACK** To promote discussion of each point raised, by all members of the group.

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE THERE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

Beware of feeling that your role is to provide answers or solutions to problems. Others may have suggestions or signpost people to organisations. Remember you are neutral and your role is to facilitate, not to provide answers.

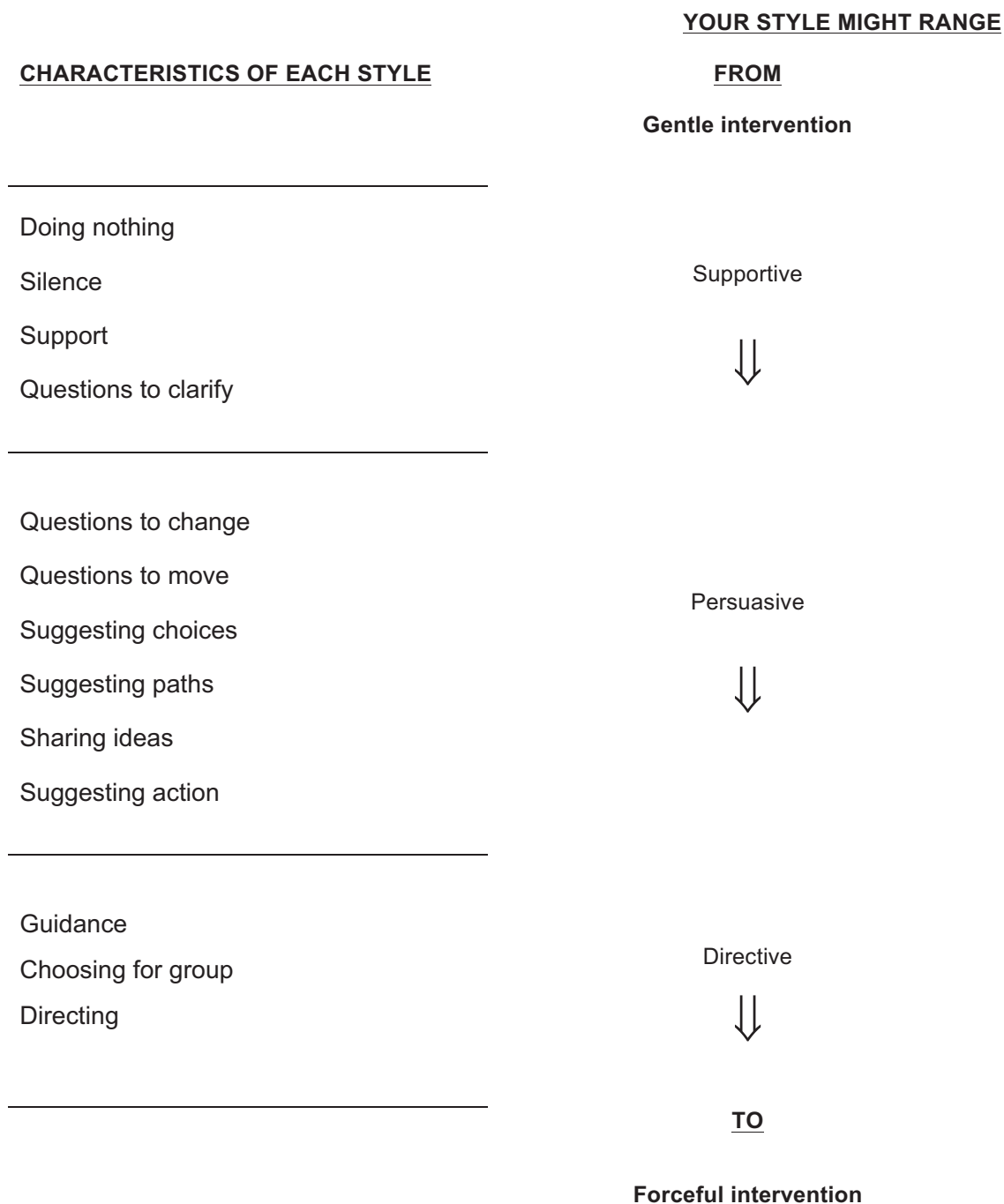
1.2 Four Facilitation Styles

A facilitator will not play a single role throughout any facilitation process. Instead, she or he will change their style according to the circumstances. Below are four of the most common styles you might use and the kinds of situations each one is best suited to. Health warning: no two groups are the same and you may find that you use different styles in the same circumstances. Your primary role is to be alert to the dynamics of the group and the demands of the task and to alter your role and style accordingly.

LEADING	BEING PART OF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the group lacks direction • When the group dries up • When the subject is technical • Where there is a lot of dispute in the group • Where you need a definite outcome • If the group lacks experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of the subject/process • of working as a group • Where they don't know each other very well • At the beginning of a course • At the conclusion of facilitation • To ensure that a decision is made - if needed • Where the subject is contentious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting started • If the group is hostile • If there are sensitive issues (you do not wish to overemphasise your ownership) • When you have expert knowledge (also acting as adviser) • When developing skills in the group • When the group is on a roll • When there are guest speakers • When one of the participants is presenting to the group • When the group are not communicating/gelling
MONITORING	ABSENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a settling in period • To provide clarification - ensure task is understood • To capture ideas for later use • If you are facilitating as an outsider • If you need to follow progress without being involved • Full time 'fly on the wall' • To be available for use as a resource • To assess the climate of the group • As a co-facilitator (supportive) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When group discussion is flowing • After task has been given and initial discussion takes place • When your presence is not required by group (at their request) • Informal setting/meeting • Central co-ordination • When the group needs to establish own identity first • After confrontation • When own opinion may be a hindrance

1.3 The Facilitation Spectrum

Your style will range along the following spectrum according to the circumstances.



3. SECTION THREE: ABOUT GROUPS

3.1 Purpose of the Group

As noted above, your job is to help the group achieve its purpose so it is important to be clear about this from the start. The group may want to think about the group's purpose in the first session.

- Are you sharing experiences and learning from each other?
- Are you offering social contact and emotional support?
- Are you building a network where people can get in touch with each other again?

Sometimes groups change their purpose as they evolve. If that is the case you need to check with the group and clarify it for them.

3.2 How Groups Work

All groups of people who work together tend to go through different stages. The sequence is not always the same nor is the time that different groups might spend at each stage. In fact groups may go back to earlier stages when a group has been apart for a while or someone new joins, for example. Groups can 'meet' in a room together or over the telephone. The circumstances and the way the group works may vary slightly depending on the purpose of the group and the chosen format. The most typical sequence is as follows:

Stage 1. CONFUSION

When the group first comes together there is an initial period of confusion. Individuals may be unsure as to where they stand in relation to others or they may be uncertain about what is required. Typical emotions include anxiety and excitement. Typical behaviours include tentativeness, superficial politeness, questions about what will happen and when, and either holding back or searching for someone to talk with. The group are generally looking for a structure or a framework of authority in which to function.

Useful action for facilitators at this stage is to be welcoming, to set the right tone, to clarify the programme or agenda, to agree any ground rules, to get people talking to each other and to encourage everyone to speak in the group early on. Too much freedom too soon can exaggerate or extend the period of confusion unless it is managed very well.

Stage 2. DEPENDENCE

Individuals are reliant on the facilitator and they seek to stay within their comfort zone. For some it is still too early to take big risks at their own choosing; the trust has not built up enough yet. People stick to their strengths, their roles and even their chairs. Authority may be embodied in the facilitator (personal), a set of rules or procedures (structural), or in a task that has been set (external). In the group the pursuance of, and reliance on, this authority may overshadow the needs and opinions of individuals.

Facilitators need to be aware of their power at this stage and not encourage the group to become overly dependent on them. Weaning the group off this dependence may require gentleness and firmness. Encouraging and demonstrating support, clarity in delegating tasks and empowering individuals may help.

Stage 3. FIGHT/FLIGHT

At its inception this stage can be about bids for power. However, it is also where the group recognises other problems or opportunities but is not ready to deal with them. Instead, it may either attack or withdraw from the situation. Individuals may mentally, or physically leave. Alternatively, they may challenge the programme, the facilitator or others in the group. Sometimes this quickly transforms itself into high energy, creativity, collaboration and direction. Unfortunately, it can sometimes result in “an atmosphere”, unhealthy competition and misdirected anger.

There can be a temptation for facilitators to ignore what is happening so they do not have to deal with what is happening. Alternatively, as part of the group, they may be drawn into the maelstrom and attempt to deal with the issues at face value.

Generally speaking it is best to plan in activities that are likely to promote stimulation, support and success. Where there are difficulties, it is generally better to surface them and deal with them calmly, maturely and openly; encourage listening and feedback, without blame or guilt, and respond positively by taking action (or encouraging the group to take action) based on the expressed needs of individuals and the group as a whole.

Stage 4. PAIRING

People by now are beginning to get to know each other. Individuals are making choices, including who they like and want to spend time with. Friendliness with one another can lead fairly quickly to the formation of sub-groups. The appearance of pairing is frequently a signal that the group culture is crystallising. At its worst this can mean the emergence of exclusive cliques, more positively it can mean the development of fluid, permeable sub-groups that work (or socialise) closely and intensively for periods of time. Group norms that emerge may be enabling or they may be limiting.

Working on tasks of a more personal nature, disclosure, collaboration and coming down off your pedestal are all useful options. Avoid your own preferences turning into favouritism. Where group norms are limiting or oppressive they may need to be challenged.

Stage 5. MATURITY

This is where the group is more adult. As well as working together effectively, they are able to handle difficult problems, including emotional ones, without threatening the group's stability. Confusion, dependence and conflict may continue from time to time but in a more healthy and controlled manner. There is a cohesive culture and a spirit in the group. It is now working as a team: there is high morale, group loyalty and individuals are accepted for what they are. Individuals may find it hard to leave the group and when the group dissolves there can be a period of readjustment and even mourning.

At this stage the group can be virtually autonomous if required. The facilitator is regarded more as an equal than as a formal leader. The role may now have changed to one of being a resource to the group, an observer/interpreter, a consultant, or being just one of the group. However, as the group reaches the time for disbanding they may mentally start the process of leaving. This may mean that the facilitator needs to once again pick up the reins and prepare people for departure.

4. SECTION FOUR: FACILITATION SKILLS

You will already be aware of the range of skills that a facilitator needs. As you know these include:

- **Communication**
The ability to put over points using all the techniques available both verbal and non-verbal, receptive listening is also an important tool.
- **Planning**
To arrange the discussion and to set it up in such a way that all barriers are removed between facilitator and participants. The time allocation to the meeting has to include time for discussions and feedback sessions.
- **Leadership**
To forge a co-operative group of individuals through motivation and empowerment of the individuals - knowing when to stand back and let the group members take the initiative
- **Problem Identification**
Knowing that there is a problem is not enough you have to be able to get to its root cause and use your skills to solve it.

Three of the key **communication** skills that we will be practising during the training are:

- Listening
- Questioning
- Responding to difficult behaviour

4.1 Active listening

When you listen actively, you will:

- **Listen For The Total Meaning**

Any message usually consists of two components

- a) The content of the message
- b) The feeling or attitude underlying this content

It is the total meaning of the message that we must try to understand.

e.g. "I've fixed that appointment"

"Well, I've finally got that wretched appointment"

Although the content is the same, the total message has changed. Extra sensitivity to the total meaning can transform an average working climate into a good one.

- **Respond To Feelings**

In some instances, the content is far less important than the feeling which underlies it. Each time the listener must ask

"What is she trying to tell me?"

"What does this mean to him?"

"How does she see this situation?"

- **Note All Clues**

Active and sensitive listening requires us to be aware of all aspects of communication. Hesitation in speaking, the inflection of a person's voice, the points

that are stressed, are all clues about how the person is feeling. We should also note expressions, hand and eye movements.

- **What We Communicate by Listening**

By constantly listening to the speaker, you are conveying the idea that you are interested in him as a person and that what he feels is important; that you respect his ideas; that you want him to know he can talk openly and honestly without being snubbed.

- **Testing For Understanding**

It is important to constantly test your ability to see things in the same way the speaker sees them. You can do this by reflecting in your own words what the speaker seems to mean by her words and actions. Her response will tell you whether or not you have understood.

Active listening is not an easy skill to acquire, it demands practice. Perhaps more importantly, it may require changes in our attitude and behaviour towards each other.

We are also very good at putting up **barriers to our own listening**. Nine of the most common barriers are listed below. How many do you recognise?

(1) Scoring Points

Relating everything you hear to your own experience.

- Saying“Oh that’s nothing, you should have seen what happened to me last week”
- Thinking.... “Mm! My kids are so much more intelligent than that!”

(2) Mind Reading

Predicting what the other person is really thinking.

- Saying to yourself.... “I bet that’s not the real reason he left that company”

(3) Rehearsing

Practising your next lines in your head.

- Preparing your next “clever” remark or question and missing what the other person is saying.

(4) Cherry Picking

Listening for a key piece of information - then switching off.

- Checking that an interviewee has had particular experience in a particular field but not listening to the proof.
- Listening out for a trigger for you to tell your side of things rather than hearing them out.

(5) Daydreaming

- You can think 4 - 6 times faster than people can talk. The temptation is to use the “spare” time to daydream.

(6) Labelling

Putting the other person into a category before hearing all the evidence.

- Quickly dubbing someone as a “typical” accountant/salesperson etc.
- Not listening to someone you have decided is a rambler etc.

(7) Counselling

Being unable to resist interrupting and giving advice.

- Saying... “Why don’t you try....” or “In my experience, the best

(8) Duelling

Continually countering any remarks with parries and thrusts of your own.

- Saying ... “Well at least I am never in debt”
- Saying ... “You won’t find people in *my* group acting like that!”

(9) Side stepping sentiment

Countering expressions of emotion with jokes or hollow cliches.

- Saying.... “Well it’s not the end of the world is it ?”
- Saying.... “Stiff upper lip. Tomorrow’s another day!”

4.2 The Power of Questions

As you probably know, there are two types of questions:

- **Open** Questions – those which are genuinely exploratory and curious
- **Closed** Questions – those which expect a one-word answer

Generally speaking, open questions are more useful than closed questions. Typically open questions start with words such as:

- How...?
- What...?
- When...?
- Where...?
- Why...?

Closed questions are useful for checking for understanding or agreement and summarising. However they often close off a discussion so use them carefully.

Asking questions can:

- Open new possibilities
- Gather information
- Build new relationships
- Help you think objectively
- Create innovations
- Resolve breakdowns
- Support you in making decisions
- Help you and your group learn and develop
- Support you to manage change in the group
- Make unprecedented things happen

Questions cause new opening for thought and discussion whereas statements and opinions may not.

4.3 Responding to difficult behaviour

From time to time you may find that members of the group behave in ways that you find difficult. This may depend on the stage that the group is at (see section two) as well as

the particular dynamic within the group or how an individual is feeling on the day. Whatever the cause you need to be able to respond effectively. Below are a few examples of behaviour that you might find challenging along with some ideas on how to respond.

Calming down a heated discussion

If the discussion is getting heated or contributions are overlong be prepared to step in and curtail it. Be polite but firm. For example:

- *“Hold on – there are several people speaking at once! Right John first, then Sue.”*

Negative attitude

- For example, a team member who always points out difficulties
- Ask them to suggest a solution to the difficulty they have identified
- View them as a resource against whom to bounce ideas and suggestions
- Be prepared for the negative – and use it to improve an idea
- Regard the statement of difficulty as an invitation to build, not as an obstacle

An “expert”

- Don't react defensively – respect what they can offer
- Use the person's expertise – but set limits
- Encourage the expert to listen
- Invite the expert to present formally
- Give the expert an official role in answering people's questions

The cynic (“I've heard it all before”)

- Don't get defensive or angry
- Find some merit in what they are saying
- Encourage them to concentrate on the positive
- Use the rest of the group to give different viewpoints
- If you feel their behaviour is disrupting the group you may want to have a word with them, outside the group, to find out if anything is upsetting or annoying them. • You can also talk to the [service provider] Co-ordinator if you are concerned.

Conflict between two team members

- Don't intervene too early
- Emphasise points of agreement, minimise points of disagreement
- Direct the individual's attention to the objectives of the meeting
- Park the issue for the moment
- Draw others into the discussion to reduce the one-to-one element
- Depersonalise the issue from the individuals

There are some situations that may arise which are not appropriate to discuss as a group. If this happens, you might like to suggest to the person concerned that you will speak to the [service provider] Co-ordinator for advice. If it is a very emotional situation, you may wish to deal with it instantly by talking to the participant alone. You and the participant can be taken out of the group, by a Community Network operator, to discuss the problem privately and then be returned to the group.

4.5 Self Assessment

Evaluate and assess your own facilitation skills (score yourself)

Score yourself 1 to 5: 5=Good 1=Poor

- I am able to defuse emotionally charged situations
- I am sensitive to the emotional 'undercurrents' within a group
- I am able to use a range of questions to promote open discussion and clarify issues
- I am able to summarise and reflect back what's being said accurately
- I use active listening effectively
- I can communicate instructions and requirements clearly and confidently to the group
- I am able to introduce a session effectively and establish a positive climate right from the beginning
- I am aware of the different facilitation styles and am able to adapt my style to suit the occasion
- I can close effectively
- I can use a range of tools/techniques to maintain pace and introduce variety
- I can give good quality feedback to individuals and the group
- I can deal with disruptive or over-talkative members of the group
- I am able to draw out quieter members of the group
- I can handle conflict between the members of group effectively

5. SECTION FIVE: THE FACILITATION PROCESS

5.1 Before You Start

There are several things to consider when you are preparing to facilitate a new group.

- Time and date of calls - You will have arranged the first group session with participants during the one-to-one calls. It is preferable to arrange the weekly group calls for the same time and day each week.
- Purpose of the group - The group has been established as part of the research study examining whether telephone friendship groups improve wellbeing for people aged 75 and over. This is not the purpose of the individual group but it is important that participants are aware they can leave the study at any time. The purpose of the group is to bring older people together, via telephone, to share experiences and talk about hobbies and interests. The group can decide if they would like to focus on a specific subject (e.g current affairs, local history, music) or agree topic/s to be discussed each week.

Each telephone friendship group should include approximately 6 to 8 participants. The call should last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. The ideal length of time is 1 hour to allow for everyone to contribute to the discussion.

Using the Group calls register you will need to make a note of the date and time of each session and note the participants who join the call. If someone does not join a session and you know the reason why, write this on the Group calls register

The Community Network Operator will call you first; and 'connect' each participant into the same telephone call. You need to check the following before you start:

- Do participants know the date and time of the session?
- Have you filled in each participant's name in the Group calls register
- Do you have everyone's contact details?

Ensure your participants understand what a telephone conference is and what the benefits are in taking part. **Written information will be available to participants (see Section Six).**

Take your telephone conference in a quiet room and have your Group calls register in front of you.

It is a good idea to have something to lean on to make it easier to take notes during the call. The Group calls register should be used to record the name of the participants who are part of the group and who joined the group as planned. The form can also be used to note your summary of the session and any observations, for example, what were the positives?; were any topics agreed for next week? etc.

5.2 During the Conference

Getting going

As a facilitator, you will be called first so that you can greet each member of the group as they join.

Provided everyone is by his or her phone, it will only take a few minutes to get everyone on line. It is a good idea to make a little small talk while waiting for everyone to be connected.

Once the group is all together and you have welcomed everyone, spend a little time introducing yourself, and then ask everyone in turn to say a little bit about themselves. Confirm with them the future times and dates of the next meetings.

If there are any questions about the research, inform the participant that you will feed this back to the volunteer co-ordinator (who will contact the research team).

Encourage participants to introduce topics and interests to the group, to be discussed over the 12 weeks. You may want to try an icebreaker to help the group feel more settled. Examples include: describe what you can see out of your window; name two famous people you would like to invite to tea; or what essential items you would bring to a desert island. From these simple questions, you will find out a great deal about your group's interests and activities.

Keep the Community Network page (see Section Six) to hand when you are facilitating to remind you how to call the operator, or how participants can increase the ear volume etc.

Week 2 – Week 10

- Remind participants of basic ground rules
- Encourage the group to recap on the previous conversation
- Encourage participants to make suggestions for that day's and following weeks' discussions; to share information; contribute to the discussion
- Invite participants to comment on the week that has passed; have they initiated calls outside the group conversation, taken part in some external activity, requested information about for example becoming a volunteer.

Week 11

- Continue facilitating the group as in weeks 2 – 10 (above)
- In addition, remind participants that this is week 11 (of 12) and the following week is the last conversation.
- Encourage participants to think about what they plan to do following the end of these conversations.

Week 12

Continue facilitating the group as in weeks 2 – 10 (above) however, place more emphasis on participants discussing their plans following the end of the group conversations.

The facilitator concludes the discussion, giving everyone a chance to say goodbye

DATA PROTECTION

Beware of circulating telephone numbers unless participants have agreed this beforehand or you will be breaking the Data Protection Act.

Ensure ALL participants get a chance to speak

Remember to **ask each person to say their first name before they start speaking** as this helps you build up a picture of participants' contributions. Complete the Group Calls Register after each session to keep a record of the participants who joined the

conversation. You can use the Group calls register to monitor who is contributing to the conversation.

Explain that if someone wishes to interrupt or get a point over they should say their name i.e. 'this is Janet. I think...'. After a time the group will be able to recognise each other's voices and this won't be necessary. But to begin with you will need to know who is talking.

During the conference you may want to direct a question or bring in a participant who has not been involved much, but don't put people on the spot. This way you can make sure that everyone has had a chance to contribute and bring people into the discussion if they have not had a chance to speak, but you must also remember that some people simply want to listen to what others have to say.

It is important to emphasise the fact that this time is for the participants to air their views and to raise important points that they feel need discussing. It is their time.

Remember:

- Do they know how to contact you if their circumstances change and they cannot take part?

Avoid focussing on individual issues

It is easy to get drawn into a discussion with an individual about their own personal issues. Of course, feel free to talk to each person individually but try not to get into too much of an in-depth conversation.

- Take control constructively
- Thank the individual, restate pertinent points and move on

Examples

- *"I understand there are issues here but we need to give John a chance to air his views too."*
- *"Does anyone else have something they would like to contribute to the discussion."*

Make sure there are no distractions

- Ask your group (if possible) to take their telephone conference in a quiet room. Any background noises will be played to the rest of the meeting.
- Ask someone to speak up if they are becoming faint.
- Ask participants to put their hand over the mouthpiece if you can hear background noises.

Keep the discussion going

If the discussion dries up try bringing in a question for participants and encourage those who are not speaking much but don't put pressure on the participant. Instead:

- Acknowledge their contributions every time they speak
- Ask them if they agree with what's being said
- Capitalise on their knowledge and personality

Examples

- *"There are several people who have not had a chance to say something."*
- *"Tell me how you are feeling at this moment."*
- *"Why have you always done it this way...?"*
- *"What if you were to...?"*

- Ask for any other issues relating to the topic people want to talk about (It is useful to prepare a number of questions in advance in case this happens. Equally, making a note of who has made good points can help to remind you of who to bring in to the discussion and when.)

Examples

- “I think we need to give Kate’s point more consideration”
- “Building on John’s idea, what if we were to...?”

Body language. As there is no body language to see on the phone, it is necessary for people to say whom they are when interrupting, etc. Look out for those participants who have not said very much. Try to bring them into the conference. Initially it can be useful to put a tick by the name of those who have spoken, to help monitor the conversational flow. You can use the Group Calls Register but ensure the record of attendance and comments are legible.

Silences. These can feel awkward, but sometimes it may be necessary for reflection. Have a number of potential topics written down, which could be used to restart conversations that have stopped.

Things to remember

- Keep the discussion informal and friendly – put people at ease
- Tell them it is *their hour* to talk about the issues they feel are important or interesting
- Use first names and introduce everyone but ask them to say hello and one thing about themselves so that each person can hear each other
- Read out who is there
- Can they hear you OK?
- Keep a pen and the Group Calls Register handy so you can tick who is speaking and note down any topics/ observations.
- Remember your introduction (i.e. some calls may be recorded – in this case there will be an automated message, the SOS number etc.) Let people speak when they want to – don’t be too forceful at the beginning
- Don’t precede questions with participants’ names to avoid ‘putting people on the spot’
- Use Community Network facilities if you need to (calling operator, line problems, disconnection, background noise)

5.3 FINISHING UP

Summing Up and drawing things to a close

Keep your eye on the clock – telephone conferences usually last for one hour and the operator will interrupt you when you have five minutes left. Allow time for yourself to make some summing up comments, and/or you can ask the group for some final thoughts and remind them of the next scheduled date.

Examples

- “We have talked about some interesting issues but need to draw things to a close now.”
- “We have to draw the discussion to a close but perhaps the group would like to pick up this discussion at next week’s session?”

In the first few sessions, you may feel it would be helpful to ask participants their views on how they find the group discussion over the telephone.

- It may help the group to share their expectations and experience of the group
- Did other participants have a different experience of the first session?

Saying Goodbye

Bring the discussion to a close and allow everyone time to say a GROUP 'goodbye' – it helps to synchronise a farewell and then hang up the phone. Sometimes the phone lines are tied up for a short while after the conference whilst the digital link is disconnected. It is worth mentioning this before everyone says goodbye so that there is no confusion.

Remember to fill in your **Group Calls Register** for the week's session.

Evaluate the experience from the participants' point of view

Use the last 5 minutes to sum up and find out what people thought of the session.

If time permits, ask

- *Are there subjects you would like to talk about in the future – will you tell others about this experience?*

Learn from it and make changes.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

- Help.** If you need to attract an operator press **#** on your handset. This will take you out of the conference and you will be able to speak directly to a Community Network operator.
- Self-Mute.** If there is an unavoidable noise (for example, building work, a chiming clock, etc.) coming from one of the lines, ask the participant to press ***1**, which will mute the line. This will allow the participant to listen without the rest of the group hearing the noise! Explain that by pressing ***1** again this will un-mute their line.

Please see the 'Top Tips' guide from Community Network for the full list of function keys. Please be aware that most of these functions are for more business type meetings so you will be unlikely to need or use them.

DOCUMENTATION:

Group Calls Register

Fill in the **Group Calls Register** with the names of the participants in the group. Each week ensure you record the participants who joined the conversation and any reason for a participants' non-attendance (e.g. sickness, family etc). A space for your comments is provided to note any problems that have occurred with participants or points you may want to check later. Make a note of any observations, positive experiences and topics, suggested by the group, for next week's discussion.

A brief information sheet with all the relevant information regarding the group will be sent it to each participant by [service provider]. It includes:

- ✓ Contact number for the [service provider] co-ordinator to let them know if they cannot take part;
- ✓ The operator number for during the conference, if they are disconnected or late for the meeting they can dial back into the conference. This number will be [telephone number];
- ✓ All the dates/times of the group meetings (or space for this to be added)
- ✓ Space for the first names of the other participants should they want to make note. Ask the participants to keep it near their phone as it also may act as a reminder.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The Volunteer Co-ordinator may also ask facilitators that host a group to sign a confidentiality bond: ensure that what is said in the group remains in the group. It may also be necessary in relation to the organisation/project's objectives. All Community Network employees sign a confidentiality agreement as a term of their employment.

Continuing contact after the group has finished ...

Some people wish to stay in touch with some members of the group. It is for the participants to decide if they wish to share their telephone number with one or more members of the group. If they do this they will need to sign a consent form to comply with Data Protection requirements.

Remember: you must not give out telephone numbers, as this could be a breach of confidentiality.

5.4 TOP TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

1. Demystify your role, explain what you are doing and why.
2. Reflect back to the group their need to take responsibility wherever this is practical or helpful.
3. Don't use your power to fulfil your own needs.
4. Don't manipulate the group, however subtly, with charm. A charming manipulator, especially those that are friendly and well-meaning, can get away with far more than an aggressive forceful leader. Remember you are not there to manipulate.
5. Don't try and be a psychotherapist. Some people reach out, either directly or indirectly, with their emotional needs. This is more a commentary on people's problems than a compliment to your skills.
6. Don't expect to meet your emotional needs when facilitating (e.g. your needs for attention, respect, power, making friends, finding lovers). Pursue this in your own time.

7. Be clear about the purpose of the group and don't confuse it with your own goals.
8. Negotiate any ground rules or boundaries with the group. If any are mandatory (such as confidentiality or respect for each other), state them at the outset.
9. Model the behaviours you hope to see displayed by the group.
10. Listen to what is really happening in the group.
11. Generally trust your intuition - but remember it is fallible.
12. Encourage feedback. Receive criticism and praise with equal gratitude. Give feedback to the group as well as to individuals.
13. Don't panic. Fear will de-skill you more than any problem.
14. Act simply. Complex theory often masks simple solutions.
15. Be supportive. In particular support those with strong feelings, including anger.
16. Laugh with the group. Inoffensive humour brings people together, engenders warmth and dissipates anxiety.
17. Encourage equality.
18. Remember the culture and the organisational environment you are working in. Aspire to be practical and people oriented.

SECTION SIX: ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

- Pre-Training Questionnaire
- Post-Training Questionnaire
- Checklist: Facilitating a telephone friendship group
- Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions
- Confidentiality bond
- Group calls register (weekly)

The Pre-Training Questionnaire

In this section we would like you to reflect on your own experiences as part of or running a group and assess how ready you feel you are to become a facilitator. We have designed a number of questions to elicit your views and feelings.

Taking in question in turn, work your way through the questionnaire, drawing on your own experiences. What you write is for your eyes only. **You don't have to write a lot, and there are no "right answers" - the most important part is the thinking.**

Q1. What kind of groups have you been part of? What were you best at in each?

Groups I have been part of	My strengths in the group

Q2. Do you have any experience of managing or leading groups?

Yes

No

If *yes*, go to question 3. If *no*, go to question 4.

Q3. What kind of groups have you led? What were you best at in each?

Groups I have been part of	My strengths in the group

Q4. What skills do you think a facilitator needs? How would you rate yourself for each?
Give yourself a rating out of 10.

Skills a facilitator needs	Rating (out of 10)

Q5. What areas do you want to focus on in the training workshop?

The section below is intended to you to summarise your thoughts and identify your key priorities for the training so that you can make the most of it.

My objectives for the training:

My concerns:

The skills/knowledge/abilities I would most like to develop:

POST TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1. What skills do you think a facilitator needs? How would you rate yourself for each?
Give yourself a rating out of 10.

Skills a facilitator needs	Rating (out of 10)

Q2. What aspects of facilitating a group are you likely to find most easy or difficult and most or least satisfying?

Easiest aspects:	Most difficult aspects:
Most satisfying aspects?	Least satisfying aspects

Q3. What makes you feel ready to be a facilitator?

Q4. What do you feel unprepared for?

Q5. What are your hopes for the programme?

Q6. What do you personally hope to gain from it?

Q7. What could you do to make sure that you achieve your hopes?

Q8. What anxieties do you have about it?

Q9. What could you do to prevent these fears being realised?

CHECKLIST

FACILITATING A TELEPHONE FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Use this list when you are facilitating a telephone friendship group. Have your Group calls register ready. Fill in the, date, time and list of those who are in the group. Record any absence with reasons if known.

Before the telephone friendship group begins

- Welcome everyone to the group
- Ask if anyone has problems hearing clearly
- Tell everyone the SOS number [telephone number]
- Introduce Yourself
- Mention the conference is being taped (if it is their will be an automated message) and reason (that it is for training and monitoring purposes as part of the research study).
- Ask participants to introduce themselves (reassure that first names are fine)
- Following the guidance in section 5 for the weekly sessions, open the discussion to everyone.

At the end – around 5 minutes before the end (there will be a time check by the operator)

- Remind everyone there is 5 minutes left
- Offer an opportunity for any last burning issues
- Thank everyone for their contributions
- Remind people about the day and time of the next telephone group discussion
- Remind people the line might be unavailable for a few seconds
- Group goodbye

MENTION THIS:

Press # on your keypad to attract the operator's attention – the operator is NOT listening in throughout the conference.

Press *1 to mute out background noise (you need to press it again to speak otherwise no-one will hear you)

Keep the telephone keypad function list to hand about other facilities that are available to participants during the conference.



Confidentiality bond

COMMUNITY NETWORK | [SERVICE PROVIDER] | UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

CONFIDENTIALITY BOND

As a 'host' of a **Community Network** telephone group I agree that:

- I accept and understand the scope of my role as a host in accordance with the training given.
- I recognise that I am not acting as a counsellor or therapist and will not seek to offer such opinions.
- I will not reveal the identity of any caller to anyone outside Community Network without the express permission from the Community Network Chief Executive, Social Inclusion Project Officer or a senior staff member of [service provider].
- I will not reveal details of any conference session to anyone outside the conference or Community Network without express permission from the Community Network Chief Executive, Social Inclusion Project Officer or a senior staff member of [service provider].
- I will not arrange to meet with any caller without the express permission from the Community Network Chief Executive, Social Inclusion Project Officer or a senior staff member of [service provider].
- I will not record any of the conference sessions without prior permission of the Community Network Chief Executive, Social Inclusion Project Officer, or a senior staff member of [service provider].
- I will accept the instructions and guidance of the Community Network Chief Executive, Social Inclusion Project Officer or a senior staff member of [service provider] in relation to my role as a 'host' of a telephone group.
- I understand that a number of telephone conferences will be recorded and that staff at Community Network will have access to the digital audio files; and, will pass on the files to the PLINY study team for research purposes. Consent has been obtained from participants as part of them agreeing to take part in the study.

Name (Please Print) _____

Signed _____

Dated _____

Please read, sign, date & return this form to.

[service provider]

Group calls register



Intervention

PHR 06/8004/01

Group calls register (weekly)

Week number of

Date and time of call

d d m m y y y y h h m m

Facilitator name

Do you normally facilitate this group? Yes No, I am standing in for the usual facilitator

#	Participant ID	Participant name	Call successful?	Reason for unsuccessful call*
1	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
2	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
3	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
4	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
5	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
6	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
7	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
8	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	

*Reason for unsuccessful call:
 1 Not answered (or line engaged / not working)[§]
 2 Partial call
 3 Unable to join the call (e.g. visitor, busy, unwell)
 4 No longer wants to participate in telephone calls/discussion[§]
 5 Deceased[§]
 6 Other, specify
[§]Inform the volunteer co-ordinator

Facilitator Summary

(Please record your summary of the session; what were the positives?; were any topics agreed for next week?)

Training session content (sessions 1-4)

SESSION ONE

Topic	Content	Time: min
Welcome & Introduction	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Overview of the course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workbook has some theory; course will be practical and experiential • Opportunity to practice; will ask each of you to facilitate a short session • Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Session one: Role and Listening Skills ○ Session two: Groups and Using Questions ○ Session three: Handling Conflict ○ Session four: Practical, Professional and Ethical issues <p>Groundrules for these sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say your name first • Join in – listen, contribute, ask questions (no question is stupid) • Stop when I ask • Respect for each other <p>Introductions – name and whether you've run groups before over the phone or face-to-face – any similar experiences</p>	10
Role of the Facilitator	<p>Definition: to make the group's work easy (from the latin)</p> <p>Flexible role – many different aspects depending on the changing needs of the group</p> <p>Discussion (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role(s) might a facilitator inhabit? If participants struggle with this, ask 'What might a facilitator do'? • <i>Some examples:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Leader</i> ○ <i>Neutral</i> ○ <i>Monitor</i> ○ <i>Referee</i> ○ <i>Stimulator</i> ○ <i>Summarise</i> ○ <i>Signpost (to help/advice/support/information etc.)</i> ○ <i>Problem solver</i> ○ <i>Validator and supporter of the group</i> ○ <i>Providing boundaries and safety</i> ○ <i>Guardian of the groundrules</i> ○ <i>(Very rarely) expert or adviser – challenge this</i> <p>Discussion (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go through each aspect of the role – when might you use this one? • <i>For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Directive at the beginning or if the group is in trouble/needs structure</i> ○ <i>Monitoring – when the group is working well</i> <p>Emphasise that the facilitator's main task is to respond to the group NOT to lead it.</p>	30
Listening	<p>Listening is key to good facilitation.</p> <p>Discussion: 'What makes a good listener? E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Be interested/curious</i> • <i>Concentration</i> • <i>No distractions</i> • <i>Attention to tone of voice, hesitations and silences as well as the words</i> 	15

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>React to what you've heard</i> • <i>Check understanding</i> • <i>Validate/acknowledge</i> • <i>Reflect/repeat</i> • <i>Don't interrupt</i> • <i>Don't plan what you're going to say next</i> • <i>Allow silence</i> <p>Stress two key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good listening depends on having your attention on the speaker • Listening gets blocked by assumptions/preconceptions – check your assumptions <p>Exercise (if time)</p> <p>(a) Give the group a topic to discuss. At various points the trainer says stop at which point the next one in line must continue the last delegate's sentence, starting with their last few words. Once they've got the hang of it, then you can begin to name people out of sequence, forcing them to listen all the time rather than just to the person before them.</p> <p>(b) Play 'Just a minute'. Give the participants a topic to discuss and one person starts. If they repeat, hesitate or go off the topic, then someone else can interrupt and have a go. The person speaking at the end of the minute is the 'winner'.</p>	
Finish	<p>Any questions/thoughts? Thing(s) you most remember from this session?</p>	5

SESSION TWO

Select 1 participant to facilitate part of the discussion. Set up the task, hand over to the facilitator and monitor their performance. After 5 – 10 minutes, stop the discussion and offer feedback. Suitable topics:

- **Groups: ‘what kind of group maintenance practices?’**

Topic	Content	Time: min
Recap	Welcome Recap of Session 1	10
Groups: how they work	<p>Understanding the Group Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any group has three levels of need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Task needs ○ Group maintenance needs ○ Individual needs • All three functions must be balanced in any group <p>Discussion exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of a group of friends dining out together. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is their task? e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>To share experiences</i> ▪ <i>To share food/drink</i> ▪ <i>To catch up and reinforce/develop friendship</i> ○ What kind of group maintenance practices might they need to keep the group together? e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Inclusion</i> ▪ <i>Communication</i> ▪ <i>Reaching out</i> ▪ <i>Protecting</i> ▪ <i>Sharing food/drink</i> ▪ <i>Bonding & friendship</i> ▪ <i>Boundaries</i> ▪ <i>Safe environment</i> ▪ <i>Practical stuff (time to meet, transport, etc. etc.)</i> ▪ <i>Respect & courtesy</i> ▪ <i>Relaxation</i> ▪ <i>Time to think</i> ○ What kind of individual needs might the group be expected to meet? • A facilitator must always be attentive to the three levels of need; continually striking a continuing balance between the needs of the task, the needs of the group and the needs of the individuals within it. 	25
Groups: how they develop	<p>Give a brief overview of the stages that a group may go through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming (group is new; uncertain, even suspicious, wary and very polite) • Norming (boundaries and conventions are formed, both explicit (such as the groundrules) or implicit) • Storming (the group begin to test the norms and ‘act out’ – like an adolescent – this is a sign the group is beginning to mature) • Performing (group is mature and gets on with what is formed to do while treating each other with respect) <p>The group may pass through these very quickly or slowly. They may also go through them out of order or return to earlier stages (for example when someone new joins the group. It is useful for the facilitator to be aware of what stage their group is in and help them if they get stuck. Also be aware that this development is normal and natural and not to hold themselves responsible or to blame (for example in storming stage). Keep a sense of perspective and help the group to move on.</p> <p>Discussion:</p>	10

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you help a group which had got stuck in a particular stage. 	
Using Questions	<p>Explain that there are two types of questions. Ask the group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define the difference between 'open' and 'closed' questions. • give examples of each. • discuss when you might use them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Open questions – use these most frequently to open things up and explore/deepen issues. Being with 'who'; 'what'; 'where'; when' and 'why'. Use 'why' questions sparingly as they can sound interrogative and focus on the past.</i> ○ <i>Closed questions – use rarely to confirm something.</i> <p>Stress that good facilitators use questions rather than statements and prefer open questions to closed.</p> <p>Other examples of other types of questions to avoid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple questions • Leading questions 	10
Finish	<p>Any questions/thoughts? Thing(s) you most remember from this session?</p>	5

SESSION THREE

Select 1 – 2 participants to facilitate part of the discussion. Set up the task, hand over to the facilitator and monitor their performance. After 5 – 10 minutes, stop the discussion and offer feedback. Suitable topics:

- Signs that conflict is developing
- How would you intervene?
- Conflict exercise

Topic	Content	Time: min
Recap	Welcome Recap of Session 2	10
Handling Conflict	<p>Discussion: What signs might suggest that the group is moving towards conflict?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Constant disagreement</i> • <i>Raised voices</i> • <i>Increasing lack of respect</i> • <i>Pregnant silences</i> • <i>Negative public statements</i> • <i>Over-generalisations</i> • <i>Lack of honesty</i> • <i>Poor communication</i> • <i>Hanging up/disappearing</i> <p>Explain that conflict can healthy unless the group gets stuck in it. There are four key triggers when a facilitator will need to intervene:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the group is splintering and a sub-group or just two participants are engaged in a debate/conflict • If the debate has become personal • If the groundrules are being broken • If the group is stuck in the same old argument <p>Discussion: If you do decide to intervene, how would you do it?</p> <p>Trainer Input: Explain that there is no hard and fast rule to how to resolve conflict but there are some guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be honest ○ Notice it's getting heated • If the groundrules have been broken, remind the group of the relevant one(s) • Acknowledge everyone's contributions (without agreeing/disagreeing with anyone) • Get the group to take responsibility for resolving the issue ('how can we resolve this?' 'how shall we move forward?') • Keep everyone involved <p>Ultimately you want to give the group some breathing space and then give the issue back to the group and trust them to resolve it with your support. Importantly,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't make it personal – focus on the issues not the person • If necessary, try and give the group some distance on it (questions such as 'how would you feel about this in 5 years' time?' 'what would you think about it if you were in Australia right now?') • Help the group to stand in each other's shoes (ask individuals to consider the benefits or disadvantages of the notion they are proposing) 	35

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try and understand the underlying motivations of someone who is continually provoking conflict (do they have needs that aren't being met by the group? How can you handle that?) • Be aware of your own tolerance for conflict – are you intervening when you feel uncomfortable rather than when the group needs support? • It can be healthy to disagree. <p>Finally, remind everyone of the groundrules. Managing conflict does not necessarily mean resolving it. There are many situations which cannot be easily or immediately resolved. Conflict can even be constructive, if handled correctly; it can result in the clarification of important issues and lead to better communication. It can build greater communication, co-operation and understanding between team members who will learn more about each other through the conflict resolution process. In addition, it can help individuals within the team to enhance their communication and leadership skills. Remember that conflict can develop because of poor communication, lack of openness and weak leadership/facilitation. Facilitators need to be self-aware as to whether there is anything they are (not) doing which is contributing to the situation.</p>	
	<p>Exercise: Role Play (5 mins) 2 group members begin to argue and speak disrespectfully Choose a volunteer to act as facilitator to manage the situation</p> <p>Give feedback on the exercise. (5 mins)</p>	10
Finish	<p>Any questions/thoughts? Thing(s) you most remember from this session?</p>	5

SESSION FOUR

Select 1 – 2 participants to facilitate part of the discussion. Set up the task, hand over to the facilitator and monitor their performance. After 5 – 10 minutes, stop the discussion and offer feedback. Suitable topics:

- **Equal Opportunities**

Topic	Content	Time: min
Recap	Welcome Recap of Session 3	5
Professional and ethical practice	<p>Explain that there are a number of key practical and ethical issues that arise from facilitating telephone groups. There are also two areas of legislation that touch on our work. As this is the final session there will also be plenty of time to answer any questions or issues that anyone is concerned about.</p> <p>The first statutory area is Data Protection and the related ethical issue of confidentiality.</p> <p>Discussion: How might data protection and confidentiality affect our work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data Protection</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Group members must not share personal information or contact details without giving written permission</i> ○ <i>If they do want to, seek guidance from the [service provider] Co-ordinator who will provide a consent form</i> ○ <i>Do not allow sharing of information until consent form is signed by everyone.</i> ○ <i>It is not recommended practice</i> ○ <i>CN/[Service provider] complies with legal requirements including all civil rights legislation and guidance, therefore facilitators must comply</i> ○ <i>If group wants to record their teleconference or do anything else extra they must again get written consent</i> • <i>Confidentiality</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Make it one of the groundrules</i> ○ <i>Allow plenty of discussion as to what it means</i> ○ <i>Be realistic – it is easy for a group to leak unintentionally</i> ○ <i>If very personal or sensitive information is disclosed during a session, remind group of the groundrule.</i> <p>The second statutory area is Equal Opportunities</p> <p>Discussion: How might Equal Opportunities affect our work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treat everyone with respect and courtesy</i> • <i>Make sure everyone is included</i> • <i>Stay neutral</i> • <i>Check your own assumptions and preconceptions</i> • <i>Inclusion issues might include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Ensuring that everyone can hold a handset for the whole length of the session or is provided with a headset.</i> <p>A more practical issue is record keeping and notetaking.</p> <p>Discussion: What do you feel about record keeping and notetaking given everything we've said so far?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Record keeping</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>All our projects are sponsored and sponsors may require records to be kept.</i> 	40

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>This project is part of a research study which also requires records to be kept regarding attendance (call registers).</i> ○ <i>Participants will be informed that you will make a note of calls and topics discussed etc. for research purposes.</i> ○ <i>Use the Calls register to record the participants that joined the telephone call. Use the space provided to provide a summary of the session. e.g. Did anyone do something which they wouldn't have done a few weeks ago?; What topics were discussed?; Did anyone suggest a topic for next week? etc.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Note-keeping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>This is for yourself only.</i> ○ <i>Be cautious about taking notes during the session as it will distract from your listening.</i> ○ Suggested format: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 levels of need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>What task was the group engaged in?</i> ● <i>How did the group perform as a group?</i> ● <i>Any particular individual needs?</i> ▪ <i>Self-assessment of your performance as a facilitator (WW/WD/DD)</i> <p>Finally, timekeeping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow time beforehand to clear your mind and time afterwards to write up your notes ● During the session, make sure you can see a clock/watch so that you always know how much time is left ● Ensure that contribution time is balanced – curtail those who are hogging the airtime ● There will always be a 5 minute warning – keep this time for tying off loose ends, reminding everyone of the next session and saying goodbye. <p>Exercise Discuss, experiment and agree ways of giving a time check whilst a participant is talking.</p>	
Q&A	<p>Allow time for questions If there are none, <i>either:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask the group to compile a list of tips for a teleconference facilitator, <i>or</i> ● Ask the group to list the benefits and difficulties of facilitating teleconferences and how they might overcome these. 	10
Finish	<p>The most important thing you will take away from this training. Farewells and next steps.</p>	5

Putting Life IN Years (PLINY): Telephone friendship groups research study

Introduction to telephone friendship groups

As you know, the purpose of the research is trying to find out whether telephone friendship groups can be beneficial for older people aged 75 and over and if so, how. You have been allocated at random to take part in telephone friendship groups. A trained [REDACTED] volunteer will be contacting you by telephone. We have talked to you about what happens during the study however, we have provided some additional information below to help answer some questions you may have about the one-to-one and group telephone calls.

We have provided you will a sheet at the end which you might like to use to make a note of the name of your [REDACTED] volunteer/facilitator. You can also note down the times when they have arranged to call you.

About the telephone conversions

The [REDACTED] volunteer will contact you using the telephone number you provided. They will chat to you for about 20 minutes each week for up to six weeks. You can talk with the volunteer about anything you like. They will tell you more about the group telephone discussions and arrange future dates/ times for them to call you. During the one-to-one calls the volunteer will establish the date/time of the group telephone conversations. It is better if these are held at the same time each week.

The group will join together on the telephone for about one hour for 12 weeks. An Operator from a charity we are working with, called Community Network, will connect you to others by your usual telephone at home. This is sometimes called a teleconference.

The [REDACTED] volunteer is trained to facilitate group telephone discussions and they will make sure everyone has a turn. The volunteer will keep a note of the date/time of the telephone calls with all participants and note some of the topics discussed. This will be used to inform the research study.

Q What happens if I have not heard from a volunteer?

A It can take several weeks for the one-to-one calls to start. A volunteer will contact you as soon as possible.

Q What happens if I do not answer when the volunteer facilitator phones me at the prearranged time?

A The [redacted] volunteer (your group facilitator) will inform the [redacted] Volunteer Co-ordinator that they were unable to make contact with you at the time arranged. The Co-ordinator will try to contact you by telephone to make sure that you are okay.

Q What should I do if I am unable to participate in one of the group conversations?

A If you know in advance, please tell the volunteer facilitator that you will not be available on that day. You can tell them at the start or end of the group discussion. If you are unwell or your circumstances have changed please telephone [telephone number] to let Community Network know you will not be participating in this week's group conversation.

Q Can I make my own calls, to other members of the group, in between group telephone discussions?

A We do not recommend sharing your telephone number during group conversations. If you do want to share your telephone number to make calls outside the group, the volunteer facilitator will refer you to [redacted]'s Volunteer Co-ordinator who will ask you to give written permission to share your telephone number with another participant.

The volunteer facilitator will remind all participants that sharing personal information is for each individual to decide. They will also remind participants that any calls outside of the group telephone discussions are not part of the research study i.e. you will have to pay for such calls yourself.

[redacted] and Community Network will not pass on your telephone number to anyone else without your express permission

Q What happens if I need help with my health?

A You are free to talk about anything you like in the group; however, the group is a friendship group and not able to offer medical advice. If you are worried about your health you should contact your GP.

Q What happens if I am accidentally disconnected or have to leave for part of the telephone conversation?

A The volunteer facilitator will let alert the Community Network Operator who will call you back. If you have any problems you can dial [telephone number] and press the '#' (hash) key on your telephone keypad. The Community Network Operator will help return you to the group call.

Q Can I increase the volume?

A Yes! Press *6 on your telephone keypad to increase the volume of the earpiece. A list of other telephone keypad options is provided below. You may find these helpful as you become more familiar with the calls. If you have any problems speak to your facilitator or press '#' (hash) to speak to the Community Network Operator.



Q Will I have to speak and make a contribution?

A Everyone gets an opportunity to speak, but you can simply listen until you feel ready to talk.

Q I like the idea, but am a bit worried about taking part.

A Telephone friendship groups are very informal. Most people will be taking part for the first time. The volunteer facilitator (Chairperson) will try to make everyone feel welcome and at ease.

Q Surely everyone will be talking over each other?

A Perhaps surprisingly, this doesn't happen. People usually wait for a natural pause before talking. The volunteer facilitator will help to advise who is speaking and let everyone have a chance to take part.

Q Who do I ring to link me into the call?

A You don't. Community Network will call you on the phone number you have provided. We pay for the prearranged calls.**Q What can you discuss in a telephone friendship group?**

A Anything! The choice of subject is up to you. Once you've started, the facilitator will help everyone to keep to the agreed topic and help the group think about other topics to discuss.

Q Will group telephone conversations be confidential?

A It is up to you to decide how much information you tell people about yourself. You do not have to tell people anything about you that you do not want them to know. The volunteer facilitator will abide by [REDACTED] policies and procedures for maintaining confidentiality. This means they will not talk about the group conversations outside the group.

Q What if the group call is being recorded?

A We will record a small number of group calls. We are recording the calls for research purposes to make sure that the volunteers run the groups in the way that they have been trained to. You will hear an automated message at the start of the call if it is being recorded.

Q Can I stop taking part in a telephone friendship group?

A Yes, you can decide to withdraw at any time and, if necessary, let the research team know if you no longer want to be contacted. If you do wish to drop out, you do not have to give a reason. Please tell the volunteer facilitator or contact the research team.

Key contacts

Community Network Operator: [telephone number] (remember we will call you)
[SERVICE PROVIDER Volunteer Co-ordinator]

PLINY Research Team (University of Sheffield):
[RESEARCH ASSISTANT]; or,
[RESEARCH ASSISTANT]