

Amplify: regional voice in practise

Icebreaker toolkit

Amplify peer
researchers

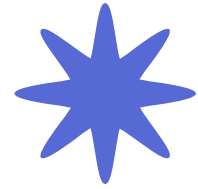


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About this toolkit

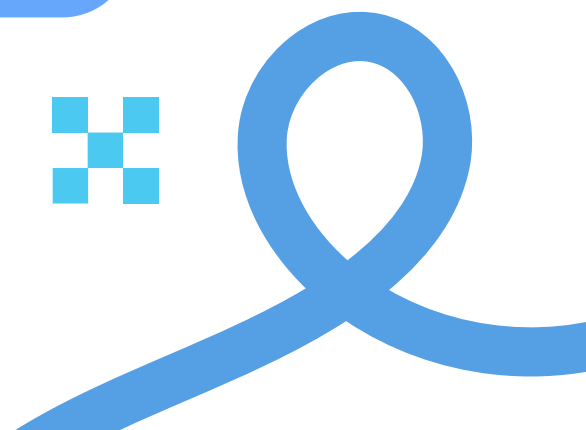
Amplify: regional voices in practise, aims to build an inclusive and equitable approach to youth voice and youth engagement.

The project has a particular focus on ensuring the most marginalised and under-represented young people have their voices heard and acted upon across the nine English regions.

Through Amplify, we will build a consistent approach, increasing the impact on services designed with, and, for young people. You can find out more about our project and our other resources by clicking this [link here](#).

These activities were co-designed with young people as part of the Amplify programme. They are practical, flexible, and ready to use , whether you're running a first session or bringing back an established group. Activities are ordered by time needed, shortest first.

Look for tips and
recommendations
throughout this toolkit!



How to choose the right icebreaker

Use these questions to find the best fit for your group. Where possible, offer young people a choice and invite them to vote or share their opinion on which icebreaker to use.

How big is your group?

Under 5 people:

String Game, Guess Who, Two Truths One Lie, Imposter

5–15 people:

Personality Bingo, Desert Island, Rollercoaster Check-In, Would You Rather

15+ people:

Moving Would You Rather, Weekly Emojis, Virtual Background Contest, Describe a Movie in Emojis

How well do participants know each other?

Complete strangers:

Personality Bingo, String Game, Weekly Emojis

Met once or twice:

Two Truths One Lie, Guess Who, Weekly Emojis

Know each other well:

Wink Murder, Splat, Controversial Opinions, Imposter

What energy level do you want to create?

Calm and reflective:

Rollercoaster Check-In, Weekly Emojis, Would You Rather

Moderate energy and engaging:

Two Truths One Lie, Desert Island, Controversial Opinions

High energy and fun:

Splat, Wink Murder, ABC Hunt, Open Mic



Face to face only

Activities that work best when you're in the same room

Under 5 minutes

Splat

A fast-paced circle game where players must react quickly or they're out.

1. One person stands in the middle with finger 'guns'.
2. They point and shout 'splat!', that person must duck.
3. The two people either side turn and splat each other, slowest is out.
4. Last two stand back to back and splat on cue.

Good for bringing up energy

Moving would you rather

Participants vote with their feet on either/or questions.

1. Facilitator asks a 'would you rather' question.
2. Designate each side of the room as one answer.
3. Players move to the side that matches their choice.

Good for first time sessions

5–10 minutes

Wink murder

Players sit in a circle. A secret murderer kills by winking. The detective watches and guesses who the murderer is.

1. Everyone closes their eyes while the facilitator taps the murderer and announces the detective.
2. The murderer winks at players to 'kill' them
3. The detective guesses before everyone is dead

Good for bigger groups

Guess Who

Provide a shared question and let people answer anonymously. Can they guess who gave each answer?

1. Facilitator asks everyone a question (e.g. 'describe yourself in one word').
2. Players write their answer, fold it up and put it in a hat.
3. Facilitator picks answers one by one and everyone guesses who wrote each.

Good for established and new groups



Face to face only



04

Activities that work best when you're in the same room

5–10 minutes

Alphabet chain

Players build a chain of words or phrases on a theme, going through the alphabet in order, each person must remember everything said before them.

1. The first person says a word beginning with A.
2. Go around the group — each person repeats the chain and adds the next letter.
3. If someone forgets or gets stuck, the chain resets.

Good for established groups

Business elevator pitch

Participants have 30 seconds to pitch a ridiculous made-up business idea to the group.

1. Give everyone 1 minute to think of a bizarre business idea.
2. Each person stands up and has exactly 30 seconds to pitch it.
3. The group can react, ask one question, or just applaud.

Good for established groups

10–15 minutes

Personality bingo

Bingo cards with personal traits instead of numbers, first to complete their card wins.

1. Create bingo cards with traits (e.g. 'has a pet', 'has visited another country').
2. Everyone walks around asking each other questions to fill their card.
3. First to cross off all squares wins.

Requires prep ahead of the session

String game

Everyone introduces themselves and connects via a web of string when they share something in common.

1. Facilitator speaks about their interests, holding a ball of string and unravelling it.
2. If someone shares an interest, they shout 'connect!' and take a piece of string.
3. Continue until everyone holds a piece, a web pattern forms

Good for first time sessions



Online only

These activities are designed specifically for video calls. They use cameras, chat boxes and screen-sharing tools to create connection across screens

Under 5 minutes

ABC hunt

Participants find objects in their room beginning with a given letter.

1. Facilitator calls out a letter A–Z.
2. Participants find and show an item starting with that letter.
3. First to show wins.

Good for getting cameras on!

Virtual background contest

Participants change their video background to match a given theme

1. Facilitator announces a theme (e.g. "somewhere you'd love to go", "your mood today", "a film scene").
2. Everyone turns their camera off and changes their virtual background.
3. Cameras back on, take a moment to look at everyone's choices.
4. Group votes for their favourite (thumbs up, chat, or a quick show of hands).

Check for digital literacy first

10-15 minutes

Change 3 things

Everyone changes 3 things about their appearance or background, the group spots the differences.

1. Ask everyone to observe each other closely for 1 minute.
2. Cameras off, change 3 things about your appearance or background.
3. Cameras back on, can the group spot all the changes?

Great for smaller groups



Flexible activities



06



These activities work in any format, face to face or online, ordered shortest to longest

Under 5 minutes

Would You Rather

Participants vote on either/or questions, no wrong answers!

1. Facilitator reads out a 'would you rather' question.
2. Participants vote: hands up, chat, or call out their answer.
3. Invite a few people to share why they chose what they did.

Good for first time groups

Weekly Emojis

Participants pick 3 emojis that sum up their week and share why.

1. Ask everyone to pick 3 emojis, from their phone keyboard or a shared screen.
2. Each person shares their emojis and explains what they represent.

Good for any group

5–10 minutes

Two truths one lie

Two true facts, one lie: can the group guess which is which?

1. Everyone thinks of two true facts and one lie about themselves.
2. Each person shares all three, in any order.
3. The group votes or guesses which one is the lie.

Good for first time groups, brings up energy

Rollercoaster Check-In

Participants place their feeling on a rollercoaster image: ups, downs and loops.

1. Show or describe a rollercoaster image with different sections (peak, dip, loop).
2. Each person says where they'd place themselves today and why.
3. One sentence each is enough.

Creates reflective space



Flexible activities

07

These activities work in any format, face to face or online, ordered shortest to longest

5–10 minutes

Imposter

One person doesn't know the word, can the group catch them out?

1. Facilitator secretly assigns a word to most players and a different one to the imposter.
2. Everyone describes their word without saying it.
3. Group votes on who the imposter is, imposter wins if they're not caught.

Good for established groups

Controversial Opinions

Anonymous opinions are read out

1. Everyone writes a mildly controversial opinion anonymously.
2. Facilitator reads them out one by one.
3. Group guesses who wrote it and that person defends their view.

Before starting, set clear ground rules and give examples of the level of 'controversial' that is appropriate (e.g. pineapple on pizza, not political or personal topics).

Describe a movie in emojis

Participants describe a favourite film using only emojis and others try to guess the title.

1. Give everyone a minute to think of a film and translate it into emojis.
2. Each person shares their emoji sequence, no words, no hints.
3. Everyone else guesses the film. The person reveals it and explains their emoji choices.

Good for established groups

Open mic

Participants race to sing the first song they can think of containing a given word.

1. Facilitator calls out a word (e.g. "rain", "fire", "home", "blue").
2. Everyone races to think of a song containing that word.
3. First person to start singing it clearly wins the round.

This activity may not suit quieter or more anxious groups. Adapt so everyone can write down a song for each word and share at the end, with a point for each correct answer.



Flexible activities

08

These activities work in any format, face to face or online, ordered shortest to longest

10–15 minutes

Desert Island

Pick survival items, a storm and a pirate reduce your list each round.

1. Everyone picks 10 items they'd take to a desert island.
2. A storm hits: remove 3 items. A pirate arrives: remove 3 more.
3. Share what you kept and why! Great for sparking conversation.

Creates reflective space

Rollercoaster Check-In (extended)

A deeper version: use as a group reflection or closing activity.

1. Draw or show a rollercoaster with labelled sections.
2. Ask participants to place a moment from their week or project on the ride.
3. Each person shares and the group responds with curiosity, not advice.

Good for any group

Tips on accessibility and adaptations

09

These tips will help you make icebreakers more inclusive and accessible for neurodivergent, disabled, and SEND young people.

Where possible, always offer young people multiple icebreakers to choose from so they can pick the one that suits their needs and energy level.

Provide visual or written instructions alongside verbal ones, this helps young people with memory or processing difficulties

Use clear, specific instructions and avoid vague or open-ended framing. A visual timer can help create a sense of structure and safety

Normalise different levels of movement and engagement, not everyone will participate in the same way

Allow extra processing time when giving instructions or asking questions

Encourage multiple forms of communication: speaking, typing, writing, or gesturing are all valid

If working online, cameras and mics should always be optional. Don't pressure young people to explain why their camera is off

Actively monitor and respond to the chat in online sessions. Some young people will communicate this way rather than speaking

Avoid sudden breakout rooms, always give clear written or visual instructions before splitting into groups, and check in to make sure everyone understands

Have a quiet space or low-stimulation option available for young people who become overwhelmed at any point during the session

For dyslexic young people, offering a green overlay or printing any written materials on coloured paper (green, yellow, or pastel tones) can make text significantly easier to read.

Tips on accessibility and adaptations

09

Many activities in this toolkit can be adapted to be more suited for you young people. Below are suggestions for specific activities

Splat

Can be challenging due to quick reaction times and movements. Allow everyone to be seated; agree a simple gesture (e.g. thumbs up, hand raise) instead of ducking. For the final round, sit two players facing each other and listen for a target word rather than racing physically. This is also a loud game, offer a quieter alternative and let young people choose.

Moving would you rather

Moving across the room may not be possible for all. Alternative: assign a colour to each option and have young people hold up a coloured pen, lollipop stick, or card. Or write their answer on a whiteboard.

Wink murder

Winking can be hard to spot for some neurodivergent young people. Adapt by using a more obvious cue like a nod or double blink. Allow all players to remain seated and signal being 'dead' with a gesture rather than sitting on the floor.

Guess Who

This is already very accessible. For SEND or neurodivergent groups, allow extra time for processing and answering the shared question..

Alphabet chain

Adapt by removing the memory element: each person just adds the next letter without repeating the chain. If someone can't think of a word, they're out or it passes on.

Elevator pitch

Allow young people to stay seated and give additional response time. If speaking aloud is a challenge, let them write or type their pitch and have the facilitator display or read it out.

Tips on accessibility and adaptations

09

Personality bingo

If walking around the room is a barrier, everyone stays seated and crosses out traits that apply to them. Shuffle the cards and have the group guess whose is whose using hints.

String game

Do this seated and have the facilitator pass the string gently to anyone who shouts 'connect!' rather than throwing it. Throwing and catching can be challenging for people with motor coordination difficulties.

ABC hunt

Quick movement around the room can be tricky. Alternative: participants say or type an item with the given letter rather than fetching one. Or use emojis in chat to represent each letter.

Change 3 things

Inform participants in advance so they can prepare. Always check whether young people are comfortable with cameras on, and offer a camera-free alternative.