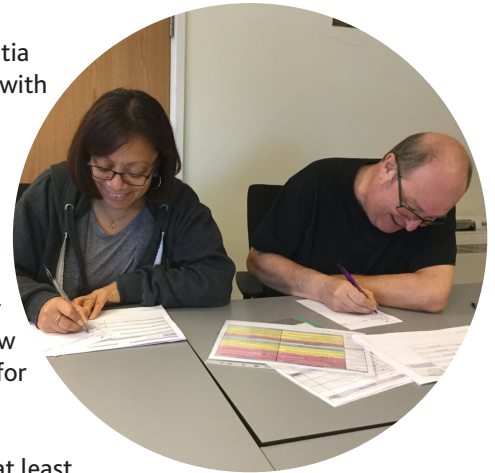


Roundtables: Best Practice Guide

What is a roundtable?

Our roundtable format was originally developed by MacIntyre's Dementia Project team as a way of bringing staff together in regional locations, with pre-chosen topics, to provide peer support for each other within an informal learning environment.



Each roundtable is facilitated by our external Dementia Project consultant, Beth Britton, supported by our internal Dementia Project Officer, Nicola Payne. Beth uses her expertise to lead the conversations in the roundtable and ensure that key learning points are communicated clearly, allowing for plenty of discussion, and Nicola backs this up by providing additional knowledge about how the Project can support services further, and by picking up any themes that are important for the Project or wider organisational objectives.

Topics are pre-chosen from our Wellbeing for Life toolkit. This means that every topic has at least one corresponding e-learning module that, ideally, staff complete before the roundtable, or failing that, complete after the roundtable to reinforce what they've learnt.

The greatest benefit of the roundtable approach is the peer-to-peer learning it provides. Prior to roundtables, Beth and Nicola visited individual services to provide expert support, often sharing information about what other services were doing or had done. It was clear that learning from other services and colleagues was as beneficial as having one-to-one time with an expert consultant, and so the roundtable format was created to harness the best of both worlds.

Roundtables usually run for 3 hours. They cover 2 topics (or one topic if the content is extensive), with a comfort break in-between (refreshments should be available).

Roundtables are co-facilitated by a topic expert who leads and ensures a comprehensive learning experience, and an internal member of staff who is knowledgeable about the topic and the organisation they work for.

A roundtable could be arranged around almost any topic that multiple staff have experience of, or interest in. During the Dementia Project we have run roundtables on: Life story work, Treatments (pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments for dementia), Eating and drinking, Validation and Reality orientation, and Changed behaviour.

Arranging a roundtable

When arranging a roundtable, think about:

- Finding a suitable venue that is roughly equal distance between services in any one region.
- Set topic(s) that you know staff are interested in so that they will be motivated to attend.
- Set the date for a roundtable well in advance of holding it, publicise this date and send regular reminders.
- When setting a date, be mindful of other commitments staff have to ensure as high a turnout as possible. Don't book a roundtable on the date of mandatory training!
- Try to encourage a wide-range of staff to attend, from regional management through to care workers on the frontline. This will increase the range of experience and expertise in the room, and show that your organisation values everyone's contribution equally.
- Keep track of who is attending to ensure that all the services you want to access the roundtable are sending at least one member of staff.
- If staff need to do any pre-reading, complete any learning materials, or bring notes specific to the people they are supporting, make this clear when you publicise the roundtable.

A few things to remember:

- Good time management is important for the successful running of a roundtable, especially if you need to be strict about when you finish.
- Beware of any staff members who are too dominant in the conversation, which possibly may make other staff feel excluded. Likewise, whilst discussion about a particular person who is being supported can provide useful learning for everyone, don't allow too much time to be devoted to one person if this is going to mean the issues affecting other people being supported aren't heard or if the conversation is in danger of becoming irrelevant to staff from other services.

Preparing for a roundtable

Good preparation is key to a successful roundtable.

- The topic expert and the internal member of staff should liaise in the earliest stages of the planning process to choose suitable topic(s).
- The session should be planned out to allow for as much staff interaction as possible. It should not be a monologue from the facilitators!
 - Avoid using PowerPoint or too many formal 'props' – ideally a roundtable should allow for conversation to flow, which may include in directions that are a little off topic but those are sometimes the discussions that produce the most useful learning.
- If previous roundtables have been held, a short follow-up to share outcomes or best practice examples is helpful IF a majority of staff in the room attended the previous roundtable(s) you are referencing.
- The topic expert should ensure that they note any key learning points that must be communicated to the group during the roundtable. It's also important that where there needs to be a consistent message communicated to staff (which may be something specific to your organisation or may be something related to legislation) that this isn't lost in the flow of informal conversation.
- If you have additional resources to share on your topic, or can source some prior to the roundtable, then having handouts for each topic will help consolidate staff learning. (See templates)



A successful roundtable format

1. Introductions (and handout of activity document if you are giving this to staff).
2. Follow up (when there has been previous roundtable(s)), and a bring-and-share of any resources that have been created as a result of previous roundtable(s) (for example life story resources).
3. Ice-breaker for the first topic. This is usually a question posed to staff – For example: "What treatments are available for people with a type of dementia?" Or, "What is the one thing you would want included in your life story?" Answers can be conversational and/or written down (if they are written down, you might want to collect these on post-it notes that you can stick to flip-chart paper).
4. Use the ice-breaker answers to guide the conversation on the topic. If staff have written down their contribution during the ice-breaker, each written note should be discussed.
5. The topic expert who is facilitating should ensure key points relating to the topic are interspersed in the conversation.
6. Do a final "Any questions?" to check everyone has had an opportunity to air their issues/concerns.
7. If any question cannot be answered, note this for a follow up with this staff member/service to provide the answer.
8. Handout any additional resources relating to this topic.
9. Comfort break.
10. Repeat steps 3 to 8 for the next topic.
11. Thank you to everyone.
12. Ask staff to complete a short feedback form.
13. Close the roundtable.

Our 5 top tips:

1. Topic, topic, topic! Pick the topics that are of most interest to staff, and when running a series of roundtables, try to ensure some correlation/overlap between topics to help everything to flow together and feel joined up. For example, one of our roundtable topics was Eating and drinking – this then led onto discussions about food life stories and even dysphagia.

2. Make sure your expert knows their stuff! Whilst the whole idea of roundtables is primarily for staff to share their experiences and what they've learnt with their peers, your expert needs to know the topic to ensure they communicate key learning points, correct any misinformation and are able to answer the questions that staff have. They also need to be confident with 'off-topic' discussions, so don't engage a topic expert who is so niche they aren't able to provide this additional support for staff.

3. If possible, back up the topics discussed at roundtables with additional learning materials. These might be online materials accessed before or after the roundtable, or they could be handouts/booklets/information sources that are given out on the day of the roundtable(s). Most staff like to feel they've been 'given' something extra, and if the topic is a complex one, some additional materials will be needed to reinforce the post-roundtable learning.

4. Keep roundtables informal! The best roundtables are open and non-judgmental, providing an atmosphere where staff can be honest, share successes and failures, feel relaxed, ask anything they need to, and feel that their time has been used productively and that their employer has invested in them by giving them this opportunity. Yes, you need some structure, but roundtables must allow the voices of everyone in the room to be heard equally.

5. Learn from your roundtables. Capture what staff have said and act in a timely way where follow-up is needed. If you fail to do this, your staff will feel that nothing changes for them as a result of attending a roundtable.



Delivering Better Dementia Care for People with a Learning Disability

Roundtable topic:.....

Date:.....

Geographical area/services present:.....

People present:.....

<p><i>(Organiser to replace this text with the 1st topic)</i> Themes from discussions, actions identified</p>

<p><i>(Organiser to replace this text with the 2nd topic)</i> Themes from discussions, actions identified</p>

<p>Other issues discussed</p>

<p>Any good practice to highlight?</p>

Delivering Better Dementia Care for People with a Learning Disability

Roundtable topic:.....

Date:.....

Form completed by: (name and role)

<p><i>(Organiser to replace this text with the 1st topic)</i> What have I learnt? What am I pleased about? What am I concerned about?</p>
<p><i>(Organiser to replace this text with the 1st topic)</i> My actions</p>
<p><i>(Organiser to replace this text with what the 2nd topic is)</i> What have I learnt? What am I pleased about? What am I concerned about?</p>
<p><i>(Organiser to replace this text with the 2nd topic)</i> My actions</p>