

## Reimagining help

Why do we need to Reimagine Help?

An evidenced-based approach to 'help'

Experiencing Good and Bad Help

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Mayday Trust

GoodGym

FanFit

NHS Lothian Cardiac Rehabilitation Service

Macmillan Primary Care Home

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# Social connections

## Why is this important?

Organisations that draw, and build, on the social value of people's relationships and communities will tap into wider sources of emotional and practical support which cannot be provided by practitioners alone.

## What do we mean by social connections?

Social connections can be any meaningful contact with another - for example, friends, family, neighbours and community members or new people with shared experiences. When it comes to changing behaviour it can be particularly helpful to meet others with similar goals and experiences; realising you're not alone in your experience and believing that things can change can be an important source of motivation.

Taking part in social activities can improve health and wellbeing through learning from others - for example, sharing health information, practising new behaviours and supporting each other's successes (see [Celebrating success](#)). Social connections can be harnessed to help people move towards their goals - for example, by creating shared goals with friends or by asking family and friends not to tempt them away from their goals.

If social activities are being offered, they should be delivered in a way that feels inclusive and safe enough for anyone to take part (whether face to face or virtually), recognising not everyone has the same amount of time, money or confidence in social situations.



This guide is interactive.

The side menu and the underlined content can take you to different sections of the document and external sources.

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## Social connections



### What is the behaviour change theory and evidence?

Social connections:

- Increase **opportunities** for behaviour change by exposing people to a range of behaviours modelled by others in similar situations. Role-modelling provides people with examples to try out or aspire to, and helps to establish new norms for helpful behaviours within a community.
- Increase **motivation** for behaviour change because goals set within the context of a person's relationships and families are likely to be consistent with their belief system, identity and culture. Seeing others successfully change can increase people's confidence (a key element of motivation) to make changes in their own lives. Social connections also create opportunities for feedback and positive reinforcement (Celebrating success), which is critical to the process of changing behaviour.
- Increase **capability** through the exchange of knowledge and skills via interpersonal learning (learning from others).

### Examples

- Club Soda runs social events for people trying to stop or reduce their alcohol intake. These events role-model socialising without alcohol, enabling people to make friends with others with similar goals, in an environment that has a great social atmosphere (as you would find in a pub!) and interesting non-alcoholic options available (see Enabling environments).
- GoodGym is a community of runners that combine getting fit with doing social good. They harness social connections by providing opportunities for people to come together and work on a shared goal - for example, planting trees in a community garden. This sense of shared interest and peer support helps people stay motivated and build exercise into their regular routines (see case study for more detail).
- Peer-support platforms that match people to others with similar health conditions, interests and ambitions, and virtual events which help people connect with and learn from each other about living with particular experiences. For instance, TeenHeart is a peer support programme facilitated by the British Heart Foundation for young people with congenital heart conditions; and Grapevine's Teenvine Plus is a programme for young people with autism or learning disabilities which focuses on developing friendships, confidence and skills to achieve their ambitions.



### Generate ideas

Using the information above, start to brainstorm ideas to try out in your organisation or community. Think about how to co-design ideas with other practitioners and people in the local community who could benefit from Good Help.

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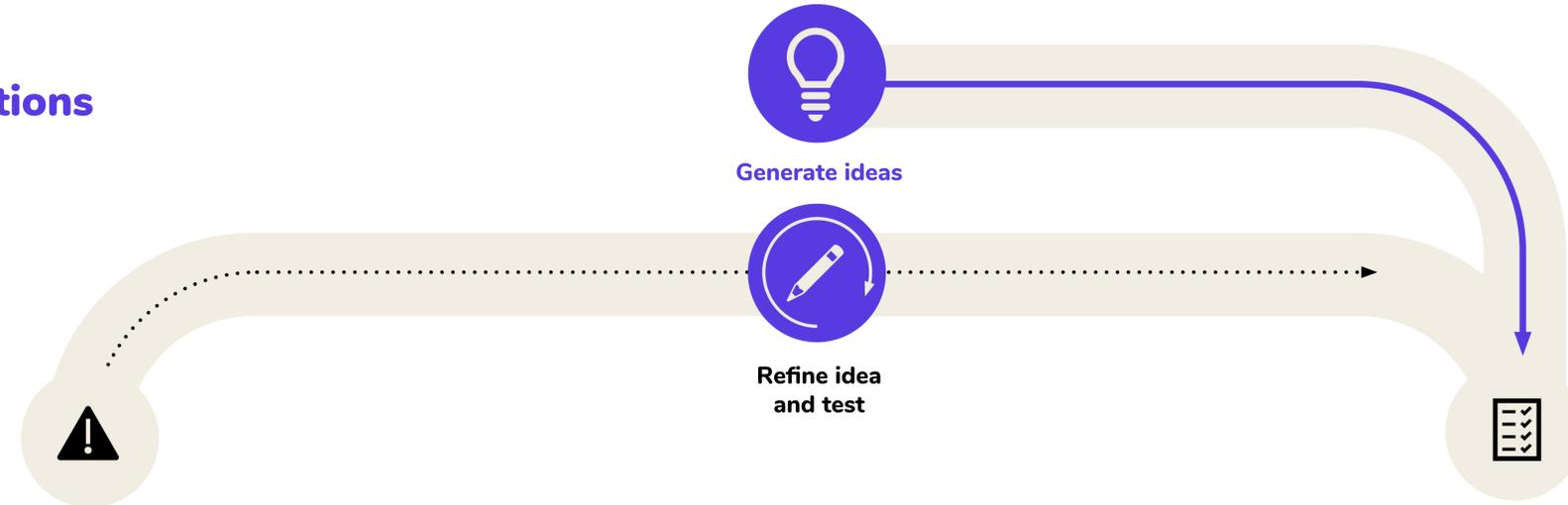
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### Common pitfalls

- Signposting people to a support group without first exploring with them what their needs are and whether it will be met by this kind of group.
- Asking someone to make a plan for reaching their goals without acknowledging their wider lives: home life, relationships, work, time and money.
- Setting up a support group in a way that disadvantages some more than others - for example, people with learning difficulties or people whose first language isn't English, or that does not provide support for people to access the group if barriers are present.

### Check in with the evidence

1. How will your idea enable people to connect with others with similar experiences?
2. How will you support the person to draw on their social networks when developing individual or shared goals?
3. How does your idea provide opportunities for people to receive positive reinforcement and feedback? And how will this be achieved?
4. How does your idea support people to practice new behaviours and develop new skills through opportunities for interpersonal learning?
5. How will you enable a diverse range of people to access and engage with the idea? Are there things you can put in place to make it as equitable and inclusive as possible?

Use these questions to assess whether your idea includes the core components of this characteristic.

