



Activities

All the activities in the toolkit are intended to be used as flexibly as possible. There is a rough estimate about length of time required, but this is just a guide. Some groups may take a few sessions to work through some of the activities and this is fine. Be as flexible as possible to get the most out of the chosen activity.

There is no age specific detail on the activities but the toolkit is intended for use with ages 12 – 18 years. Look through the activity and adapt to suit age of participants, some suggestions have been given for using with a younger or older age range where appropriate.

Size of groups really depends on your own judgement. Ideally 10 – 12 participants is a good number, however you know your groups and what works and what doesn't so use your judgment.

Discuss the aims of the topics before agreeing to do some mental health work and it might be worth considering calling the sessions something different, such as “Keeping a Healthy Mind” or something that does not directly refer to mental health as some young carers may be put off by discussing mental health and think they are going to be talking about illness.

It is worth remembering that whatever activity you are doing with young carers you can always promote good mental health. Just by encouraging and being positive (if appropriate) you can help reinforce self-esteem. If a young person is behaving unacceptably, or has done something wrong, then this can also be used to enhance self-esteem by working with them to look at what has gone wrong/why something was not acceptable, and how can the person learn from it and not repeat the same mistake or act in the same way as before.

There is no evaluation sheets included in this toolkit and it is advised that workers create their own tools for evaluating impact of activities. If you are using some of these activities as part of a structured programme of managing wellbeing then it might be good idea to get a picture of where/how young carers see themselves as they start the programme, and then compare that with where/how they see themselves after the programme. This can be used to show impact of activities.

Try and be creative when using the toolkit. All activities are merely suggestions. Most of them can be adapted and used in a variety of ways. For instance, activities around dealing with anger could involve making some stress balloons by filling up balloons with flour or pieces of paper. These can then be thrown around from person to person and discussion takes place about how the person feels, what makes them angry, how they can deal with it etc. Quizzes and game show style quizzes are also an alternative way of encouraging discussion.