

# KidsTime Southwark Evaluation

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## Brief: Recommended facilitator characteristics and suggestions

The aim of this brief was to summarise suggested qualities and characteristics that a KidsTime facilitators should possess, as identified by families in the programme and current facilitators.

### Family perspectives

*Welcoming and inclusive.* Families felt the facilitators were warm, welcoming, approachable, friendly, nice, and importantly, non-judgmental. Treating everyone equally and non-judgmentally may have helped to create a "safe space" and "community". Facilitators tried to include everyone in activities while respecting someone's preference to sit out. "They treat you as if they've known you for years [...] they make sure everyone participates in everything".

*Sensitive.* Families felt the facilitators had strong compassion and empathy. This may have played a role in families noting that communication with facilitators felt comfortable, and that they were able to create a "deeper, more authentic connection". Families also valued a facilitator's ability to be sensitive to their needs. They illustrated facilitators "meeting people where they are" in terms of giving them the choice to participate instead of pressuring them. They also managed the delicate balance of keeping people engaged but also pulling the conversations back on track when they went off tangent.

*Supportive.* Facilitators were frequently described as good listeners: "They'd always make sure that you were heard and you were listened to". Families described feeling valued, supported, and listened to. Facilitators were also described as encouraging and offered families praise, positive reinforcement, and advice.

*Child-friendly.* Parents and carers appreciated the facilitators' ability to connect with and understand children. They liked that facilitators could

explain things in an accessible way for children. One parent particularly valued the facilitator being "*in touch with their [...] child-self*".

*Positive personality.* Families had particularly positive ways to describe their facilitators. Facilitators were often described as engaging and positive, others described them as enthusiastic, energetic, happy, joyful, funny, polite, patient, and open-minded. It is clear families value these characteristics, such characteristics may have contributed to families feeling welcome, comfortable, accepted, and engaged, and safe.

### **Staff perspectives**

*Inclusive/supportive.* Like the families, the facilitators felt that it would be important for future facilitators to be welcoming and non-judgmental. They wanted to make families feel seen and heard, which included showing an interest in and support for families' ideas. Facilitators should also be able to build trusting relationships with people from different backgrounds and across all age groups, touching on the facilitators' ability to be child-friendly. Lastly, the facilitators' communicativeness with families was considered important, so that families understood the aims of the programme and benefits of taking part.

*Flexible/adaptable.* The ability to be flexible or adaptable was a major theme in current facilitators' suggested characteristics. Examples of this included: adapting topics that resonated with families; adapting content for large age ranges and needs (e.g., neurodiversity); and adapting language to be age-appropriate. They noted the importance of being easygoing, which could mean being flexible with the mix of activities in the sessions and allowing time to go off schedule. This could mean that some sessions included more socialization than discussion of sensitive topics or more games than psychoeducation. Facilitators also spoke about flexibility in the sense of encouraging participation and building families' confidence while also giving people the choice to participate, which was also repeated by families.

*Knowledgeable.* Facilitators felt that knowledge or previous relevant experience would be a useful quality in future facilitators. Particularly, this was discussed in the context of facilitating online groups, where engagement and relationship-building may be more challenging, although it was felt that this could be improved with practice. Facilitators felt it would be good to have experience with delivering psychoeducational material as well as knowledge of other services for signposting to further support. Such skills would ensure the programme aims are being met and that families are better supported.