



## Setting up MyTime groups

Facilitators play a big role in making groups welcoming and practical. From choosing a venue to setting up the room, small decisions can make a big difference to how parents experience MyTime.

## Choosing a venue

Depending on the area, the available options for a suitable MyTime venue will vary. A good venue feels safe, comfortable, and accessible. Look for spaces that:

- are easy to access (no physical barriers, accessible bathrooms, nearby and accessible parking or public transport)
- offer privacy and quiet so members feel comfortable sharing
- have enough space for parents, carers, and children to move freely
- include features that make sessions easier, like a kitchen, baby change facilities, outdoor play space or toys for young children.

Community halls, schools, childcare centres, libraries, and health centres are often good options. Venues that serve alcohol, or cafes and restaurants, are not suitable for ongoing groups.

Work with your coordinator to assess whether a venue is right, and to complete any risk assessments your organisation requires.

**TIP:** Refer to the Inclusive Principle Guide in the Guiding Principles Handbook for ideas about creating a warm, welcoming and accessible environment.

## Accommodating children

Although children may be present, MyTime groups are not playgroups. The group should be parent-focused, with parents participating primarily in conversations and activities alongside their peers. If preschool-aged children attend, make sure:

- a play leader is present
- there is a safe space for play leaders to facilitate play and activities



- children can access their parents easily, while parents still have privacy for conversations
- parents can still supervise their children (either in the same room or separated by a glass door)
- members are able to participate in group discussions without children overhearing or regularly interrupting the group.

**Remember:** MyTime is parent-focused. Even with a play leader, parents are always responsible for their children.

Work with your coordinator and play leader to decide on venue suitability. Ensure you undertake a venue risk assessment that meets your organisation's requirements.

## Setting up the room

Arrive early to prepare the space. A welcoming room can help members feel comfortable from the moment they arrive. Essentials include:

- comfortable seating arranged for conversation
- tea and coffee facilities
- toys or activities for preschool-aged children (if a play leader is present)
- name tags and pens
- tissues and hand sanitiser.

Check equipment (such as heating, cooling or AV for guest speakers), and boil the kettle before members arrive.

## Growing and promoting your group

Facilitators also play a role in promotion and recruitment, alongside PRC and partner agencies. Promotion happens on three levels:

- **National:** PRC builds MyTime's profile as a trusted, recognisable program and is responsible for branding and high-level marketing.
- **Regional:** Partner agencies and coordinators promote the program through networks to increase program referrals. Regional opportunities include promoting MyTime to potential new members. Ask your coordinator about how your agency promotes MyTime



in your region.

- **Local:** Facilitators promote and introduce their group/s to local services and parents.

It's important you take time to connect with local referrers and promote your group to potential members. Promotion can include:

- talking with referrers like schools, health services, councils and community organisations – this may be the only way these groups hear about MyTime
- sharing flyers, posters, or term plans with community groups or in community spaces – templates available on the MyTime website, adapt these resources to your local needs
- attending local events or expos
- encouraging word of mouth from existing members – ask the group for ideas, for example, host a 'bring a friend' day
- contacting local media – ensure you seek permission from your coordinator before you speak to local radio or newspapers.

Social media can be a valuable tool for raising awareness of your group by highlighting the benefits of MyTime and giving potential members a sense of what to expect. With your coordinator's approval, you might set up or maintain a page, share posts, or include photos and testimonials from members (with their permission). Always follow your organisation's policies, and remember that moderating comments or chats is not part of your role unless your coordinator has asked you to do this. Any social media activity should be managed during your paid hours – if you find yourself needing to respond outside of work time, speak with your coordinator.

## What to say about MyTime

How you talk about MyTime matters. Using positive, empowering language helps parents feel welcome and confident about attending.

When talking about MyTime, use positive, clear messages. For example:

“MyTime runs free, facilitated peer support groups for parents and carers of children with additional needs. Our groups give parents a chance to take a break and connect with others who understand. There's no need for a diagnosis or referral, and preschool-aged children are welcome. We're always open to new



parents.”

## Recruitment

Responding quickly and warmly to new enquiries is a key part of your role. Ideally, reply within a week – the sooner the better. Your response should include:

- when and where the group meets
- eligibility requirements
- whether children can attend
- what to expect at the first session
- a short introduction about yourself.

If you don't hear back, follow up up to three times using different methods (e.g. email, then phone or text).

Each provider agency has its own process for responding to enquiries, but it's important that potential members hear back quickly so they feel welcome and supported – check with your coordinator about specific processes. To make this easier, prioritise checking emails at the start of each shift and use automatic replies when you're away. You could also prepare a standard response that includes key information about your group.

## Welcoming new members

The first session can feel daunting. Small touches like greeting members at the door, explaining how the group works, and introducing them to others will help new members feel at ease. Refer to 'I am inclusive' and 'I create a safe space' in the Guiding Principles Handbook for practical ideas on inclusion and creating safe spaces.