

How to write an abstract for conference submission



Together for Short Lives 2027 National Conference

An abstract is a short summary of your work. It helps the conference review panel understand what you did, why you did it, what you learned and why it matters. You do not need to be an academic researcher to submit an abstract: valuable work can include research, service or quality improvement, audits, education, new ways of working, evaluations and learning from practice.

Your work may be complete or still in progress, but you should be able to explain what you have done so far and share some learning. The aim is to give reviewers a clear picture of your work within a short word limit.

1. Understand the conference themes

Before you start writing, read the conference themes and choose the one that best fits your work. The 2027 themes are:

1. Inclusion: Going beyond borders to deliver equitable care for every family.

Share examples of how you're tackling inequalities, reducing variation and improving the coordination of care for children and families.

2. Excellence: Empowering the people, communities and services that families depend on.

Tell us how you're strengthening services by supporting the workforce, building communities or creating innovative models of care that enhance the quality of support offered to children and families.

3. Sustainability: Building resilient services fit for the future.

Showcase innovative approaches that are helping services respond to challenges around funding, commissioning, workforce capacity and rising demand, ensuring children and families can rely on support now and in the future.

2. Structure your abstract

Use the following headings to organise your abstract. It should be between 250 and 300 words. Include enough detail in each section for reviewers to understand and assess your work.

Title – Choose a clear, specific title that tells the reader what your work is about. For example, a title should tell the reader what service, approach, group or issue the abstract explores.

Background – Explain the background in a few sentences. What issue, need or problem led to this work? Why is it important? You might mention a gap in support, a challenge faced by families or professionals, or a reason a service wanted to make a change.

Aims – State what you wanted to find out, change, test or achieve. Try to make the aim specific. What question were you trying to answer, or what improvement were you hoping to make?

Methods – Explain what you did and how. Include the approach you used, who or what was involved, and how you gathered information or feedback where relevant. For a service improvement project, describe the change you introduced. For an evaluation, explain how you assessed it. For work in progress, say what you have done so far.

Findings – Share what you found or learned. Use specific findings where you can, such as numbers, feedback, changes or themes that emerged. Avoid simply saying the project was successful without explaining what showed this. If the work is ongoing, include initial findings or learning available so far.

Conclusions – Explain why the findings matter and what could happen next. What have you learned? How might this influence practice, services, education or support for families? If the work is ongoing, explain the potential implications and next steps.

3. Keep it concise and focused

Stick to the word count: Check the limit and leave time to edit. Every sentence should help explain the background, aim, approach, findings or importance of the work.

Use plain English: Write for a mixed audience of professionals, families and people from different services. Explain abbreviations the first time you use them and avoid jargon where possible.

Be specific: Tell the reader what you actually did and what you learned. Concrete details are more helpful than general statements.

Keep the story connected: Make sure the aim matches the methods, the results respond to the aim, and the conclusion follows from the results.

Be original and clear about progress: Check the conference rules about work that has been presented or published elsewhere. If the project is ongoing, explain its current stage and include learning already available.

Think about anonymity: Do not identify yourself, your colleagues or your organisation in the title or abstract text. Follow the 2027 submission instructions on this point.

4. Review and edit

Check each heading: Make sure each section contains enough information for a reviewer to understand and assess it. Do not leave a section blank unless the submission guidance says this is acceptable.

Proofread: Check spelling, grammar, word count and that names or abbreviations are explained. Read the abstract aloud to see whether it is easy to follow.

Ask someone to read it: A colleague who was not closely involved in the work can help identify anything unclear or missing.

Check permissions and approvals: Where relevant, confirm that any required ethical approval was obtained and that your organisation is happy for the work to be shared or published. Acknowledge funding or potential conflicts of interest if requested in the submission form.

Use examples carefully: Looking at published conference abstracts can help you understand the format, but your submission should describe your own work and learning.

5. Submission

Follow the instructions: Complete every required field in the online submission form and check the word count, headings, deadline and any rules about references or attachments.

Presentation preference: Indicate which format you would prefer to be considered for:

- Oral presentation
- Display poster
- No preference

Submission deadline: Friday 18 December 2026.

Review period: Reviewers are expected to begin reviewing abstracts from Monday 4 January 2027, for around three weeks.

Submission platform: Oxford Abstracts – the 2027 submission link will be provided on the conference website.

After submitting: Look out for the confirmation message from Oxford Abstracts. Keep a copy of your abstract and any confirmation for your records.

Questions: conference@togetherforshortlives.org.uk

Good luck!