

Shetland Partnership

Methods and Techniques



Focus Groups

A Focus Group is a small group of people who get together to talk about a specific topic.

A moderator leads the discussion, asking questions and encourages everyone to share their thoughts and opinions. This helps researchers understand what people think and feel about the topic.

Suitable for:

A Focus Group is useful when you need to explore complex issues, understand social dynamics, or gather diverse viewpoints. They can be useful for creating new ideas, understanding why people think or act a certain way, and allowing participants to discuss and build on each other's ideas. They are useful when detailed feedback is needed.



Type of engagement:



Consult



| Involve

How to do it:

- Develop questions to guide a semi-structured conversation.
- Choose a comfortable venue.
- Ensure accessibility by providing equal communication opportunities for everyone, including language interpreters and accommodations for those with speech or hearing impairments.
- Inform participants what is expected of them and what they can expect from the facilitator (either verbally, or through a written information document).
- Make sure all participants give informed written consent.
- Ensure all participants agree on how the data will be recorded (e.g., notetaking, audio or video recording) and include agreement in signed consent.
- An ice breaker can be useful.
- Allow enough time for discussion of each question.
- Summarise the feedback for each question before moving on to confirm you have understood participants correctly, as well as at the end of the session.

- Provide opportunities for any other comments for those who may not feel comfortable speaking in front of everyone.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Groups allow for thorough conversations and detailed information • They allow ideas to be explored more than surveys • They allow the inclusion of different perspectives • Group discussions can generate new ideas that participants might not come up with individually. • They are flexible, you can change the questions to suit • They allow for immediate feedback and follow up questions can be asked if needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising focus groups and analysing results can take a lot of time • Opinions of a small group may not accurately represent the larger population • Some participants may dominate the discussion or influence others • Participants might not feel comfortable sharing honest opinions, especially on sensitive topics • Coordinating focus groups, across different locations or demographics can be complex.

Further information:

More information on carrying out Focus Groups will be available via a search engine which may be useful to look at.

Case study:

Focus Groups with People Representing Protected Characteristics in Shetland

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/protected-characteristics-focus-groups>)