

Shetland Partnership

Methods and Techniques



Conferences

A formal meeting of people with a shared interest, where people can discuss issues and ideas relating to a specific topic.

Suitable for:

Conferences are suitable for large groups and face-to-face meetings. They are designed to achieve various goals, such as providing a better understanding of a topic, clarifying preferences for proposals, reviewing current service delivery, and gathering suggestions for improvement.



Type of engagement:



[Inform](#) | [Consult](#) | [Involve](#)

How to do it:

- Conferences usually take place over a full day or a half-day.
- A common format is to have sessions with all participants, as well as smaller workshops.
- Spread experts across different groups so everyone gets a chance to engage with them. For smaller group work and workshops, it is helpful to have facilitators for each group.
- For larger conferences with multiple topics, allow participants to sign up for specific workshops or break-out groups ahead of the event.
- Ensure the location is accessible to all, and that everyone can join in to any discussions or questions.
- Provide tools like accessible communication formats, audio/visual aids, and varied engagement methods.
- Adapt the format to the audience, such as using shorter presentations and more discussions.
- Schedule the event at a time suitable for attendees.

★ Advantages	⚠ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows participants to hear from a variety of people • Good for knowledge sharing and networking • Strengthens relationships between attendees • Listening to speakers and participating in discussions can inspire new ideas and motivate attendees to implement changes • Presenting at a conference can increase visibility for some organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may be expensive to organise, depending on venue and logistics • Participants can lose focus if a presentation is too long • There may be unexpected questions which come up • Bear in mind that technology can fail, and so have a plan if the slides or audio do not work • There may be unforeseen issues, such as a last-minute speaker cancellation or weather disruption.

Further information:

Online search engines should show different organisations' guidance on carrying out a conference which may be useful to look at.

Case study:

Community Justice Conference – Shetland Partnership

(see online at: <https://www.shetlandpartnership.org/examples-community-participation/community-justice-conference>)