

Inclusive Focus Group Guidance

This is a guidance document to assist school staff in running an Inclusive Focus Group for young people, including those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND); to ensure that practitioners can ascertain the views of all students within their schools, in a meaningful manner.

Planning a Focus Group:

1. Consent: When running focus groups with students under the age of 18 it is essential that informed consent is given by parents and guardians. Easy Read or Makaton formats can be utilised to assist the understanding of information and ensure informed consent for students.

Key Areas to cover in the consent form

- Break down of the session
- What is expected of the student/What is expected from the practitioner
- How will you keep their information safe/ whether names will be used
- How participants can leave the session

2. Participants: Number of participants- no more than 10 participants per session. **Friendship groups** - Focus groups are more effective when participants or team mates are friends. This can increase confidence and reduce anxiety.

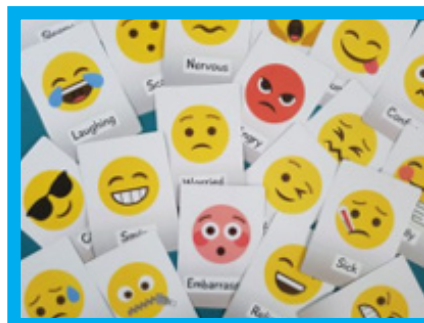
3. Time: Keeping sessions short ensures that students can fully concentrate on the whole session. This is important for younger students and students with SEND. A recommendation would be:

- 30mins total: 20 mins questioning, 10 mins for off topic and follow up questions

4. Environment: If possible; use an environment which is well known by the students, as this can reduce student's anxiety. For example: A quiet classroom environment with a table and circular seating. This should be set up before the focus group participants arrive.

5. Equipment:

Chateez Cards - Chateez emoji cards can be utilised for ice breaker activities and to start conversations. This can encourage students who are nervous and can create a sense of individual ownership, within the session. Chateez cards can be used in a range of ways. Please separate handout for ideas.



Prompt Cards - For broad questions; help narrow the topic and provide examples through using prompt cards. This helps to provide ideas on the area you are wishing to explore.

Example Question: What skills have you learnt through this project? Prompt cards: responsibility, organisation, leadership, team work.

Dictaphone/Phone - Recording the focus group ensures the reliability and validity of the session; research suggests that when asked to recollect interactions, 10% of people gave erroneous accounts compared to the recording. Please ensure that all students are happy to be recorded.

Introducing the Focus Group:

The beginning of your focus group and first few questions will be critical in putting your participants at ease and encouraging discussion. Before you ask any questions, welcome the group and introduce yourself and your team. Check that all participants have completed the consent forms. Cover any practical points, for example where the fire exits and toilets are, and then begin by recapping the purpose of the research and the objective for the session (be careful not to give too much away as that could influence responses). Much of the success of group interviewing can be attributed to the development of this open environment (Krueger, 2002; Citizens Advice, 2015).

Hello and welcome to our session.

Thank you for taking the time to join us to talk about..... My name is [insert name] and assisting me is [insert name].

We are doing a research project called..... to get some information from young people about what sport and physical activity you want to participate in and why. We want to know what you like, what you don't like, and how you might be able to attend and participate in sport and physical activity more.

- There are no wrong answers; everyone has their own opinions and points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what other people have said.
- Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments; negative comments can even be the most helpful.
- You've probably noticed the microphone. We're tape recording/videoing this session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down.
- We will be using our first names to talk to each other today, but we won't use any of your names in our reports. Everything you say will be kept confidential and we ask you not to share what we talk about outside of this session.
- The information collected today will go towards a report on how to improve sport and physical activity for young people in schools.
- You can leave at any time if you no longer want to take part in this focus group.

Does everything make sense so far? Does anyone have any questions?

Focus Group Structure:

| | |
|---|---|
| Open-ended questions with an option of a closed reply. | Open questions provide the opportunity for detailed discussion on a topic Example: "How do you feel about sports" Students with additional support needs can find open questions with an expected open answer challenging to answer. Therefore, open questions; which can have a closed or open reply too, are preferred Example: "do you feel you have taken part in more sport through being a part of this programme" |
| Use "think back" questions. | Take people back to an experience |
| Adaptability | Every focus group is different; some questions will work with one group but will not work with another. Therefore, it is important to prepare different versions of your questions, to ensure everyone can meaningfully contribute to the session. |
| Silence | Don't be afraid of silence...some students need more time to process information. |



| Question | Description |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Opening question | Simple question to encourage students to talk and feel comfortable in the session. Ice breaker activities or Chateez cards, can be used to encourage conversation. These questions are not usually analysed. |
| Example | "Tell me your name and what are your hobbies?" |
| Transition | Transition questions should be simple questions which focus participants to the related topic. These questions provide a greater depth in answer compared to opening question. |
| Example | "So how do you feel about your project", "What has gone well so far", "How would you have changed...?" |
| Key question | Main areas which you are exploring. You will need to spend the most time around these questions. It is important to explore the answers given by participants using prompt and follow up questions |
| Example | "Why do you think sport is important for all young people to take part in" |
| Ending question | Main areas which you are exploring. You will need to spend the most time around these questions. It is important to explore the answers given by participants using prompt and follow up questions |
| Example | Do you feel we have we missed anything in our session today or is there anything else you would like to add? |
| Prompt/ Follow up Questions | To be able to gain in-depth information; it is important to prompt students to clarify the meaning behind key answers and allows students to share situations fully. Prompt questions can also be used to encourage students who struggle with communication. |
| Example | "Would you be able to tell me a bit more about that?" |

Recording and Analysing Focus Group Data

1. Record and type up all responses
2. Clean up transcripts by stripping out non-essential words
3. Open an excel database spreadsheet and create a new sheet for each question.
4. Label 2 columns on each sheet, one for responses and one for coding
5. Enter each response on a separate line
6. Analyse each response for a possible theme
7. Look for each theme and assign a number code
8. Assign the number code which best fits each response on the sheet
9. Use the Excel 'Sort' function to group entries by the categories you have assigned to them
10. Arrange categories from those with the largest number of entries to those with the smallest
11. Write a short paragraph summarizing findings for each category
12. Illustrate with powerful quotes

Useful links

- This paper provides step by step advice in designing your focus group questions- Richard A. Krueger, Mary Anne Casey. (2015). Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research. Book 5.
- This paper talks through different methods of analysing your data- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3 (2). pp. 77-101. ISSN 1478-0887
- Chateez Cards – <http://chateez.co.uk/shop>