

Running a focus group: putting Communication Support Principles into practice

Go to end of this document for details of each Communication Support Principle

Before the event

1. Identify the target audience



Communication Support Principle 1

2. Select recruiters



Communication Support Principle 1

Brief recruiters to recognise and meet communication support needs.

3. Book the venue



Communication Support Principle 5

Choose a suitable venue. Think about communication accessibility as well as physical accessibility.

4. Develop an agenda



Communication Support Principle 3



Communication Support Principle 4



Communication Support Principle 5

Consider how long the session will last and the type of activities it will include. If you change the timetable it can make the difference between some people being able to take part or not.

Are you planning to include interactive events? When you design them, ask yourself: “If I had a problem with understanding or expressing myself, could I take part?”

5. Agree a budget



Communication Support Principle 5

The budget will be influenced by decisions about adapting timing. For example organising two shorter focus group meetings rather than one longer one.

6. Invite participants and explain the purpose of the event



Communication Support Principle 5

The method you choose to invite people might affect who agrees to come. You may need to have a face to face meeting to explain about the focus group.

Appointment letter example can be printed from Resources section of toolkit.

7. Organise the booking process



Communication Support Principle 2



Communication Support Principle 5

The way you ask people to book can affect who comes. Some people may not be able to phone up or complete a tear off slip.

Use the booking process to identify people's communication support needs.

Booking form template can be printed from Resources section of toolkit.

8. Prepare joining instructions and background information



Communication Support Principle 3



Communication Support Principle 5

Confirm any verbal arrangements you have made with a written confirmation.

Follow basic good practice in all printed information. This will make it easier for everyone. Some people may need the information to be adapted further or presented in alternative formats.

Supply information far enough in advance so people with communication support needs have time to think and prepare what they want to say. For some people, this can mean the difference between taking part in the discussion and not taking part at all.

Ask whether people would like you to remind them nearer the date, by telephone call, email or text. This may improve attendance.

During the event

1. Finding the venue



Communication Support Principle 1



Communication Support Principle 3



Communication Support Principle 5

Supply a clear map.

Make sure there is clear signage at the venue.

2. Reception and registration



Communication Support Principle 1

Brief reception staff on the communication support needs of all participants.

3. Refreshments



Communication Support Principle 5

Brief caterers to reduce any distractions as they are preparing refreshments.

4. Facilitation



Communication Support Principle 3



Communication Support Principle 4



Communication Support Principle 5

Brief all facilitators to follow the Communication Support Principles.

5. Obtain consent



Communication Support Principle 3

Use an accessible consent form if you need to obtain formal consent from participants. This will be easier for everyone to complete.

Consent form example and Consent form template can be printed from Resources section of toolkit.

6. Introductions



Communication Support Principle 3



Communication Support Principle 4



Communication Support Principle 5

From the beginning to the end of the focus group follow the Communication Support Principles.

Consider different ways of people introducing themselves. A verbal introduction is not easy for all. Some people may need to prepare before introducing themselves. For example: someone who needs to programme their communication aid.

7. Set ground rules



Communication Support Principle 4

Discuss and produce ground rules in a way that everyone can understand. Include in the ground rules ways that everyone can use to show they want to make a point. For example in some groups people will hold up a piece of coloured card. This method will not suit everyone.

Agreeing ground rules and keeping to them may make the difference between some people being able to participate or not.

Ground rules example can be printed from Resources section of toolkit.

8. Presentations



Communication Support Principle 3



Communication Support Principle 5

Brief all presenters to follow Principle 3 and Principle 5.

9. Handouts



Communication Support Principle 3

Follow basic good practice principles when producing handouts. This will make them easier for many people to understand. Other participants may need materials to be adapted further.

10. Discussions and other interactive activities



Communication Support Principle 3



Communication Support Principle 4



Communication Support Principle 5



Communication Support Principle 6

Make sure that everyone can take part. Recognise all the ways that people communicate and give sufficient time for everyone to respond.

Ask yourself: 'If I had a problem with understanding or expressing myself, could I take part?'

11. Evaluation



Communication Support Principle 3

Include questions about communication access in your evaluation. For example: How easy was it to take part? Is there anything that could be done differently?

If you are going to use a printed evaluation form produce it in an accessible format. Offer assistance to complete it. Give enough time. Think about other ways of gathering feedback.

Evaluation form template can be printed from Resources section of toolkit.

12. Completing expenses forms



Communication Support Principle 3

Develop an accessible expenses form that you use all the time. This will be easier for everyone to complete.

After the event

1. Pay expenses



Communication Support Principle 3

All correspondence after an event should continue to meet communication support needs.

2. Circulate the report



Communication Support Principle 3

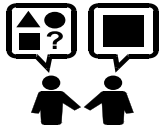
Everyone needs to know what has happened as a result of the discussions.

6 Communication Support Principles



Principle 1:

Recognise that every community or group may include people with communication support needs



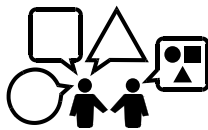
Principle 2:

Find out what support is required



Principle 3:

Match the way you communicate to the ways people understand



Principle 4:

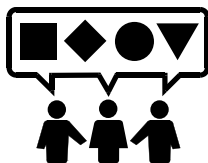
Respond sensitively to all the ways an individual uses to express themselves



Principle 5:

Give people the opportunity to communicate to the best of their abilities

- Adapt the environment
- Adapt the timing
- Adapt the methods of communication
- Adopt a positive communication style
- Adapt the budget



Principle 6:

Keep trying

For detailed practical advice print out Communication Support Principles section from toolkit.