

NEW COMMUNITIES PROJECT

Organising Focus Groups

The practical organisation of focus groups

- Organising focus group interviews usually requires more planning than other types of interviewing
- Arranging venue
- Organise participants
- Organise setting
- Equipment
- Organise yourself

Venue

- Focus group meetings can be held in a variety of places, for example, people's homes, in rented facilities, or where the participants hold their regular meetings if they are a pre-existing group.
- Neutral locations can be helpful for avoiding either negative or positive associations with a particular site or building
- Try to avoid noisy settings or places where you might be interrupted
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Participants

- It is not always easy to identify the most appropriate participants
- Try to strike a balance between 'similarity' and 'difference'
- Participants need to feel comfortable with each other. Meeting with others whom they think of as possessing similar characteristics or levels of understanding about a given topic, will be more appealing than meeting with those who are perceived to be different
- Try to avoid friendship groups or 'cliques'

Setting

- Try to arrange the venue to be as informal and relaxing as possible for participants
- Arrange seating in a circle *before* people arrive
- Place your recording device in a central position (e.g a low table in the centre of the circle)
- Test your recording device *before* people arrive to find the best position

Equipment

- Voice recorder
- Notepad and pen
- Sticky labels (for name tags)
- Spare paper/pens
- Familiarize yourself with your recording device *before* the group starts
- Test your recording device *before* people arrive

Organising Yourself

- Prepare a script to introduce yourself, explain the work you're doing, deal with issues of confidentiality, toilets and fire escapes
- Rehearse it!
- Keep all your focus group materials together at all times.
- If possible, have a 'focus group bag' or folder and put everything into it
- Arrive at least 30 minutes before the time you asked participants to attend