

Making Involvement Happen Resources

ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES

Approach	Explanation	Benefits	Pitfalls
Engagement events	<p>An event based in the local community with 15-30 participants. Participants tend to work in small groups on set discussion topics, although whole group discussions can also be used. An excellent way to generate broad discussions with a wide range of people.</p> <p>1 or 2 lead facilitators required, with extra support for facilitating table discussions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will hear from a wide range of people, which will generate lots of discussion and lots of ideas You can use a range of activities within this including individual reflection, pair work, small group work, whole group discussions. Where appropriate, you can also use techniques such as a world café. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people are less comfortable speaking out in large groups Whoever shouts the loudest gets heard! Reliant on good facilitation otherwise subgroups may appear and individuals dominate Can be difficult to capture really detailed notes. Often reliant on participants to capture discussions.
Focus groups	<p>Small groups of 8-12 people, focusing on a specific issue or topic.</p> <p>Can be helpful for speaking to hard-to-reach groups if you are struggling to engage with them at wider community events.</p> <p>1 lead facilitator and a note taker required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can generate very detailed discussions and allows for detailed note capturing Allows everyone the chance to have their say and be heard Opportunity to hear from a range of individuals with diverse experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dominant characters can take over if not managed well Allows people to be influenced by the opinions of others

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Interviews	A one-to-one meeting (or a very small group discussion) designed for a specific objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for building rapport • Easier to obtain individual perspectives and ensure everyone gets a chance to have their say • Some people are more comfortable sharing their opinions in a one-to-one setting than a group setting • Can generate very detailed feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time intensive to capture the views of lots of different people
User/Reference Groups	User or Reference Groups are ongoing advisory groups of a selected small group that meet over a period of time for the purpose of achieving specific objectives – and should link into decision making groups. A relatively formal recruitment process is usually used and the membership is selected to represent different elements of the local population. Requires ongoing staff commitment to support, facilitate and administer the group. Good facilitation is important.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps build a sense of partnership and gives people a sense of ownership • Creates the opportunity for ongoing, meaningful involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role suits a certain type of person • Involves a high level of commitment and time from both participants and staff managing the group
Patient Representatives	Two or three service users are selected to be representatives of the larger population. They sit on decision-making groups alongside professionals. Requires ongoing support and training, if necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds a service user perspective right where decisions are made • Encourages partnership working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role suits a certain type of person. They will need some familiarity of attending formal meetings and have the confidence to share their views • Can be seen as tokenistic by both professionals and service users

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Online networks	A network of people who are willing to be engaged with in an ad-hoc way, mainly via email. These people can also be invited along to focus groups etc. as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An efficient and cost-free way of keeping in regular contact with people and maintaining relationships with those who want to be engaged in an ongoing way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excludes those who are not comfortable using computers • Can be tokenistic, should not be used as the only approach to engaging service users
Questionnaire	Gathering feedback via survey – either online or on paper. Questions can also be asked in person or over the phone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful for accessing/collecting larger amounts of feedback • Data is often easier to analyse • Online surveys can be cost free • Can be a quicker form of engagement – both for service provider and service user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually information gathered is not very detailed • Involvement can be more passive than other methods • Feedback rather than dialogue can mean that it is harder for the method to influence decisions