

Making Involvement Happen Resources

ENGAGEMENT EVENTS – BEFORE YOU RECRUIT

The following suggestions are important to consider during the initial planning of an engagement event, they may be obvious but will help to ensure that your event runs smoothly! Think about each section in the context of your objectives and the profile of people you want to come to your event; for example if you're trying to speak to people of a working age, don't organise an event for the middle of the day on a week day.

VENUES

It is often helpful if it is somewhere that will be familiar to people, for example, a local community centre or library. Churches and other religious centres often have suitable halls; however, think carefully about who you are trying to get to come along. Will they be put off? Some hospitals and other NHS buildings have very affordable rooms for hire, but again think about whether people will be put off by having to come into a hospital which they may have negative associations with.

The room itself may need to have the space to move tables around, especially if you want to do some breakout sessions. Plenty of natural light is also important. Also bear in mind that people may be hard of hearing so check out the acoustics prior to the event and make sure you book it for at least 30 minutes before and after to set up and clear up.

The venue should also be fully accessible by public transport and, if possible, have parking available. It also needs to be fully accessible for disabled people or people with mobility issues, you should be particularly aware of this if you are running an event in relation to access, for example foot care.

TIMINGS

Consider how long it will take participants to travel to and from the venue. It is best if participants do not have to travel in rush hour, so think about starting the event late morning and finishing by mid-afternoon. It's also worthwhile considering a Saturday session as we have found these to be well attended, though be conscious not to take up their whole weekend! You will also need to think about how your start and finish times will affect who is able to attend the session. For example clashes with school-run times may affect parents; sessions during the day will mean less people of a working age being able to attend. If you are planning on holding more than one session you should try and vary the times and days of them to allow different groups to engage and give people a choice.

The length of the event will depend on what you want to get out of it and the kind of event you are running. For example, you shouldn't hold a focus group for longer than a couple of hours as they can be intense. For an engagement event, on the other hand, allow yourself enough time to get through what you need to without rushing – things will take longer than you expect! Ensure there are comfort breaks built in. However, long sessions may put people off so try and strike the right balance. Also be aware that people with diabetes may need to have set meal times so be wary of holding meetings over meal times - if you do make sure you provide appropriate food and that people are aware that you will be providing it.

INCENTIVES

It is worth considering if you can provide some kind of incentive for people to attend, which you can highlight when asking people to come. This doesn't need to be monetary, though offering vouchers or to

cover travel expenses can be persuasive – but even simple things such as refreshments and leaflets can motivate people to attend. Generally people really appreciate being given information so provide relevant literature where possible (you can order some for free from shop.diabetes.org.uk).

ONGOING USER GROUPS

Depending on the type of activity you are arranging, you may also need to prepare some additional materials. For example if you are trying to establish an ongoing user group, then you should consider putting in place role descriptions for its members and terms of reference for the group as a whole to ensure the group fits your needs.