

‘Focus on Us’

Inclusive Focus Group Guidance



Introduction:

This guidance document aims to support the running of inclusive focus groups to ensure that we can ascertain the real authentic views of all young people about their lived experiences in and through physical activity or physical inactivity.

*This has been developed
and adapted from the
Youth Sport Trust 'Focus
on Me' guidance
<https://bit.ly/2YTgLSa>*

Inequalities in physical activity exist and we need to take the time to understand the needs of young people and run meaningful consultation before and during the planning, delivery, and implementation of our physical activity interventions.

Choosing a focus group to get this understanding can have many advantages as it will not discriminate against people who need support with reading and/or writing, languages or numericity. Focus groups can encourage participation from those hesitant to be interviewed on their own or who feel they have nothing to say or don't have the verbal

skills to articulate (Kitzinger, 1995).

"Consultation is a big one.

You know, if you're not consulting with the young people and you're not having that voice, then how are you going to adapt your services to be more reflective of the young people?"

Experiencing inequality in and through physical activity does not label that individual or what they do. Therefore, it is very important that we find practical and useful ways to gain meaningful

awareness and understanding on the views, opinions and experiences of all young people, including those additional communication support needs. Creative inclusive focus groups can make richer, more in-depth data and promote a more empowering, engaging type of research - giving voice to those who are feeling excluded or marginalised (Cross

& Warwick-Booth, 2016).

“Focus on Us” is an inclusive focus group approach that includes visual communication aids to help us collect information direct from people to ensure that we are getting their definite genuine views, wishes and feelings related to physical activity/inactivity (inclusive of individuals with a range of different needs and communication support).

This is designed to be led and delivered by young people who resonate as role models to their peers. These role models can

“People really resonate with peers....word of mouth from those individuals is probably a lot stronger than word of mouth from us. It is about relevant lived experience that resonates”

positively influence levels of physical activity and wider health benefits related to this (Babey et al., 2016). Role models are effective in helping young people to understand the benefits of being physically active. Having ‘people like me’ leading these sessions can help to gain richer, more honest insight related to inequalities/unfairness in physical activity and solutions to overcome them.

Focus on Us includes various inclusive communication tools such as visual aids, symbols, tapes/videos, simple words and clear questions, and story technique. These can help all participants to communicate effectively utilising their preferred communicative modes (Owens, 2007; Kroll, 2011).

Start with why?

Why is your focus group important?

Why is it important to design and deliver an inclusive focus group?

How can we ensure that all your peers can understand the questions and feel comfortable to share their thought with you?

What do you want to ask in your focus group? Try and have a go at thinking about some of the questions you could ask?

Focus Group Question Examples:

Depending on your focus group topic, these questions can all be adapted.

<p>Opening Questions:</p>	<p>Simple question to encourage people 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.</p> <p><i>“Tell me your name and what are your hobbies?” “Go to the emoji or picture card that best represents how you feel about physical activity?” People can draw theirs also, remember to ask why people have chosen a specific card or drawn what they have).</i></p>
<p>Transition Questions:</p>	<p>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.</p> <p><i>“So how do you feel about physical activity”, “What has gone</i></p>

	<i>well so far with the sessions you've attended", "How would you have changed...?"</i>
Key Questions:	<p>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.</p> <p><i>"Do you think it is important for people to take part in physical activity?" "What do you think about physical activity and health?" "Have you experienced any inequalities (unfairness) related physical activity?" Have you always been able to find information you need to take part in physical activity?"</i></p>
Ending questions:	<p>Briefly summarise what has been covered during the session to ensure your participants shared all that they want to share. Try to ask this question before you finish:</p> <p><i>"Do you feel we have we missed anything in our session today or is there anything else you would like to add?"</i></p>
Prompt/ Follow up Questions:	<p>To be able to gain the best information; it is important to prompt people to explain the meaning behind their answers as this allows people to share their thoughts fully. Prompt questions can also be used to encourage anyone who struggles with their communication.</p> <p><i>"Would you be able to tell me a bit more about that please?"</i></p>

Planning your Focus Group:

Consent:	<p>Obtain informed consent and ensure people understand what is required of them and what you will do with their data. 'Easy read' or 'simple English' can be used to inclusivize this process by ensuring informed consent can be understood by all.</p> <p><i>Key areas to cover in the consent form</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break down of the session • What is expected of the participant/the practitioner • How will you keep their information safe/will names be used? • How participants can leave the session
Participants:	<p>Number of participants: no more than 6 participants per session</p> <p>Acquaintance groups: Focus groups are more effective when participants know each other. This can increase confidence and reduce anxiety.</p>
Time:	<p>Keeping sessions short to ensure that people can fully concentrate. A recommendation would be 30 minutes total: 20 minutes questioning with 10 minutes for off topic and follow up questions.</p>
Environment:	<p>Use an environment that is quiet with no distractions, which is well known to the participants, as this can reduce anxiety.</p> <p>An online focus group can be conducted with the discussion taking place via the web, video, chat, or mobile telephone device (follow your organisation polices for this).</p> <p>Ensure your participants have access, directions and instructions related to the environment chosen (face to face or online).</p>
Equipment:	<p>Dictaphone/phone/video: Recording the focus group ensures the reliability and validity; research suggests that when asked to recollect interactions, 10% of people gave inaccurate accounts compared to the recording. Please ensure that everyone agrees to be recorded.</p>

Activities that can help to improve Inclusivity in your Focus Group:

There are many advantages to using photographs, images, text, symbols, and props in your focus groups. They can inspire interest; provide fun; engage participants; trigger responses; keep participants on task (non-verbal cues); be used as tools to explore; provide different ways to communicate and participate; give participants some security and help to re-shape the dynamic by empowering the participants to communicate how they feel comfortable.

Some ideas of activities could be:

- **Chateez Cards:** These emoji cards have been found to be great for ice breaker activities and to start or enhance conversations. You can encourage people who are nervous within the session and can create a sense of individual ownership. *Example Question: Go to the card that best represents how you feel about the weekend? (ask why people have chosen the card).*
- **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 a wishing to explore. *Example Question: What skills have you learnt through physical activity? Prompt cards: responsibility, organisation, leadership, teamwork.*
- **Picture Cards/Photos:** For people who are visual learners and communicators the use of pictures and/or photos can provide a better way to gaining information and understanding. *Example Question: Please pick a picture of something you enjoy doing? (ask people why). Pictures/photos may be of different physical activities (walking, gardening, tennis, golf) and photos of physical inactivity also.*

- **Poster Design:** A theme related to physical activity or inactivity can be presented. Participants can be given materials such as pens, markers, magazines, newspapers, flyers, computer tablet, pictures, etc. Individually or in groups they can prepare their ideas related to this using any of the materials and their own words and drawings and present the resulting poster to the group for comments and discussions.
- **Story Boards:** Inviting participants to create a story/narrative, or story board by adding pictures around a topic can uncover attitudes toward the chosen topic and find possible solutions.
- **Role Play:** With an activity-oriented question, one or two participants can act out a certain situation related to inequalities in physical activity. The rest of the group can observe this and then share their observations and reactions to this (Krueger, Morgan & King; 1998). Can link this activity to Chateez cards.
- **Online Focus Groups:** You can choose to offer an online focus group offer which may help you reach more people who will not be able to attend a face-to-face focus group (transport, support, timings, money etc). An online focus group can be conducted via telephone (for those who are don't have technology) or via an online focus group via the web, video, chat, or your mobile device.

Choosing people for your Focus Group:

If I only ever listen to the people who take part in physical activity, we will never understand what we can do to persuade, inspire, or help the people who don't.

Try to talk to young people who enjoy physical activity and those that do not. If we want

more people taking part in physical activity, we need to understand why some people love it and some do not.

Introducing your Focus Group:

The beginning of your focus group and first few questions will be important 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 focus groups can be linked to this open safe 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 project called..... to get some information from people about what physical activity you do and do not 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 participate in more physical activity.
- 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 (video, phone). We are 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 access to and deliver of physical activity for people in your area.
- 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 Top Tips:

Open-ended questions (with an option of a closed reply)	<p>Open questions provide the opportunity for detailed discussion on a topic</p> <p><i>Example: "How do you feel about physical activity"</i></p> <p>Individuals with additional support needs can find open questions with an expected open answer challenging to answer.</p> <p>Therefore, open questions, which can have a closed or</p>
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	<p>open reply too, can be used.</p> <p><i>Example: “Do you feel you have taken part in more physical activity by being a part of this programme”</i></p>
Reflective questions	<p>Take people back to an experience.</p> <p><i>Example: “Think back over the physical activities that you have attended. What went well?”</i></p>
Participant involvement	<p>Use examples, choices, rating scales, drawings, story boards, pictures etc.</p>
Adaptability	<p>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.</p>
Silence	<p>Don't be afraid of silence...some people need more time to process the questions and information. Also remember that some people are more active listeners. Have a plan in place to help make sure everyone can use their voice and communicate in the group.</p>

Analysing your Focus Group Data:

1. Look through all the responses in the focus groups (verbal, text, drawings, photos).
2. Organise similar answers or comments into themes, e.g., concerns, strengths, weaknesses, similar experiences, suggestions for change etc.
3. Label the themes and write up what you find under each theme.
4. Identify any patterns in the themes, e.g., most people were aware of..., some of the people had concerns about...etc.
5. Write a short paragraph summarising finding for each category.
6. Illustrate your findings with powerful quotes and photos/drawings.

Adapted from (Dolan, 2015)

Conclusion:

Focus groups help to reflect the ideas of a society through gathering a group of individuals with a common ground together (Gaskell, 2020). Focus groups are very flexible, allowing for adaption and creativity to suit the needs of both the organiser and participants. We need to continue to improve the ways we collect information from people. We must make this more inclusive and adaptable to make sure all young people feel heard and listened to regarding their lived experience in and through physical activity.

We can do this by finding ways to be more inclusive in how we ask questions and how we receive people's responses. We need to look at all ways people communicate, so they can feel heard, supported, and valued. We need to welcome and support more relatable young role models to lead these focus groups. This will help us to do more useful research and collect more honest insight related to their needs in physical activity. It is critical to learn more ways of conducting inclusive and accessible focus

groups which can enable young people with a wide range of communication needs to participate meaningfully, be at the heart of the process, and contribute to this insight which impacts our physical activity programmes.



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