

### 2.9) Delivering a focus group



#### **Introduction**

The following section provides advice, as well as some top tips on how to deliver a focus group. Included is information and links to the Leith anti-sectarianism Project's focus groups that were delivered over the course of their project.

#### **Making use of focus groups**

Focus groups can be a fantastic way of facilitating discussion on sectarianism in a purposeful and open way. Focus groups can also be a

great way of ensuring everyone taking part has an opportunity to engage.

Before developing a focus group however, it is important to define what constitutes a *focus group*:

Focus groups can range in number but typically work best with 8-10 participants, who have been selected depending on specific criteria such as age, gender and interests and then interviewed together on a specific subject.

Usually a focus group will last between 1 ½ to 2 hours depending on breaks and what is covered.

It is important to know the difference between *interviews* and *focus groups* as they collect different types of data. *Interviews* focus on individuals, whereas focus groups centre on groups and are more interactive and discursive. They are also useful for finding out what groups of people think, rather than capturing a detailed understanding of individuals' experiences.

As a result, you should keep this in mind when deciding whether a focus group is the best approach for what you want to achieve.

### **Top tips for delivering a Focus Group**

1. First things first, before starting to plan your focus group, make sure you have a clear aim of what you want to achieve. This will help you have a clear focus throughout the planning and delivery of your focus group.

In turn, this will make it easier for you to both sell and run your focus group, to your target audience.

2. Ensure you have a suitable space for the size and needs of your group. If for example your group has any disabilities or additional

support needs, it's fundamental your space matches their requirements. Euan's Guide is a useful tool if you are looking for suitable locations with disabled access:

<http://www.euansguide.com/>

3. It may seem obvious, but if you are looking to target local people, make sure to stage your focus group in the local community.

When advertising your focus group, make use of both physical flyers and social media to maximise your exposure. Remember not everyone you will be targeting will necessarily come across your focus group online, so take the time to get out and talking with potential participants.

4. Once you have agreed on your space you will be using, pay attention to how you lay out the room. A well-designed floor plan of where everyone will be sitting can have a big impact on how easily your group can talk with each other.

Pay particular attention to this if you are working with any people who are hard of hearing. If you have the space, spread out your participants across the room.

5. Ensure you have plenty of snacks and refreshments for your participants, as this can act as an incentive and thank you for those taking part.
6. Welcome your participants as they arrive and help them with any forms that need to be completed. Prior to discussing the aims of the focus group, you should also do a short icebreaker to allow everyone to introduce themselves. Name labels can also be useful for each participant.
7. The beginning of your session is the best time to go over any ground rules and manage housekeeping. This is also the best

point to emphasise confidentiality and how any data gathered from your focus group will be used.

8. Start with easier questions first to help your group warm up. You can then introduce more challenging questions as your group becomes more confident and group dynamics and rapport are established.

9. As facilitator make sure to stay neutral in discussions and do not give a say on where you stand on issues.

Ask simple, straightforward, open-ended questions to ensure the conversation remains non-leading. You should also avoid getting locked in conversation with one person and try and encourage *all* members of the group to share their opinions.

10. Throughout your focus group, listen carefully and make sure to maintain your concentration. Make sure you also pay attention to non-verbal signals from your participants and always end on a positive/constructive note.

Remember you are in control of your focus group and how you conduct yourself will have a big impact on how engaged your participants are. If you're comfortable your group will be too!

### **Leith anti-sectarianism Project – Example focus groups**



### Sectarianism in Football - Focus Group

Delivered in partnership with Supporters Direct Scotland.

Targeted local Leith residents.

Captured views on sectarianism in Scottish football.

Prior to focus group taking place, questionnaires were undertaken with Hibs fans at Easter Road.

Alongside local residents, partnering organisations: SCDC, Youthlink Scotland and Edinburgh University attended.

### Hibs Disabled Supporters Association - Focus Group



Targeted Hibs fans from the Hibs Disabled Supporters Association.

Delivered at Easter Road - where the participants felt comfortable and at ease in discussing sectarianism.

Staff were flexible in working around when the group was free to take part.

Due to time constraints the session was kept to 30 minutes.

Additional support needs were considered - discussion based format taken, as many in group had difficulty writing.

### Hearts fans from Leith - Focus Group

Delivered in partnership with Supporters Direct Scotland.

Delivered following request from local Hearts fans from Leith, for their own specific focus group.

Bovril and pies provided to act as incentive for taking part.

Participants worked in small groups to answer questions.

Importance of environment - it was clear all of the Hearts fans were more comfortable in sharing their own experiences of sectarianism in this setting.



#### FOCUS GROUP : TASK 3

Do you believe sectarianism exists in Leith? If so, in what ways does it manifest itself?