Focus Group Planning Checklist

This checklist is designed to help you with the planning and smooth running of a focus group.

# Step 1: Decide how you will use the focus group

# Step 2: Plan your focus groups

* Determine who will be invited, how many to invite, who will do the recruiting and how you will do it.
* Recruit 10-12 potential participants for each focus group, and expect 6-10 to attend.
* Allow at least 3 weeks for the recruitment process.

# Step 3: Prepare consent (if necessary)

* Determine the need for consent for your focus group based on what you will do with the information you are asking from participants (ie if you are planning to publish your work, use patient’s exact words in your report or if you are going to take photographs and share them in the report or on social media you will need consent to do this)
* Prepare the consent using Trust logo and include the information that is relevant to your focus group.
* If children are involved consider if you need parental consent
* Make two copies of the participant consent form per person in group. Participants keep one copy and sign and return one copy to the facilitator.

# Step 4: Develop the questions for your focus group

Include the 7 essential elements:

* Welcome
* Participant consent
* Group agreements (confidentiality, allowing time for all to speak etc)
* Introductions
* Opening questions
* Main questions
* Closing

# Step 5: Organise logistics for the focus groups

* Choose a location that is easy to get to for participants - prepare a map
* Reserve room for 30 minutes before and after session
* Choose a space that has enough room for people to sit comfortably.
* Determine funding for snacks and drinks.
* Decide who will be the facilitator and note taker. It is best if the facilitator is a neutral person, not necessarily connected to the aspect of your work that you are exploring in the focus group.
* Facilitator and note taker should familiarise themselves with the focus group questions before the focus group.
* It is strongly recommended that you record the focus group in addition to having a note taker. If you do this don’t forget to tell participants that you are doing this, and why.

# Step 6: Detail to finalise before the focus groups

* Confirm the location and time with your focus group participants the day before, and answer any outstanding questions.
* If conducting your group in an off-site location (such as a school), find out if there are special rules about checking in at the office, rules about where to park, and procedures for getting participants to the assigned room.
* Confirm that the food/snack/drinks are ready for delivery or pick-up.
* Create signs with directions to the focus group location.

# Step 7: Supplies to take to the focus group:

* Focus group questions and note taking template (bring two sets of each in case you need to split the group into two groups)
* Digital voice recorder (fully charged)
* Extension cord/spare batteries
* Pens and markers
* Blue tac
* Post-it notes
* Name tags (stickers)
* Clip board (can be used as writing surface for note taker)
* Clock/watch
* Flip chart (may be used if generating ideas/lists)
* Sign-in sheet
* Location and directions signs
* Incentives (if providing) eg car parking tickets, gift tokens
* Water/snacks (plates/napkins).
* If needed - copies of participant consent forms (make 2 copies per person in group. Participants keep one copy and sign and return one copy to facilitator.)