

Information and guidance to help you conduct focus groups involving CYP and young people

Focus Groups

Traditional Focus Group

In **traditional focus groups**, a group of respondents who fit into a certain profile relating to SU will meet together in an informal meeting place. Traditional focus groups usually have about 6-10 respondents in the group and the session will last between 1-2 hours but this can be adapted depending on the situation. The person leading the focus group (moderator) will then question the young people regarding various strands of SU. The discussion will then be loosely structured with a few pre-prepared questions in case the discussion does not progress naturally. The aim is to initiate open ended discussions and to react to the flow of the responses with relevant probing questions. The focus group can be recorded and analysed at a later date or hand written notes can be taken by a separate individual to record the group's responses.

Positives

- Allow interviewers to study CYP in a more natural setting than a one-to-one interview.
- Focus groups can be tailored to its audience so in terms of CYP the group can be fun and create in a suitable environment for natural free flowing responses.
- Focus groups have a high apparent validity as the questions can be explained to CYP so the results can be better interpreted.
- They can increase the sample size of the data by talking with several people at once.

Negatives

- The researcher has less control over a group than a one-on-one interview.
- The data is difficult to analyse because the talking is in reaction to the comments of other group members.
- The number of members of a focus group is not large enough to be a representative sample.
- CYP may be influenced by others in the group including the researcher and therefore responses may not represent their own opinion.

Other Types of Focus Groups to consider

Dual moderator focus group - one moderator ensures the session progresses smoothly, while another ensures that all the topics are covered.

Mini focus groups - groups are composed of four or five members rather than 8 to 12.

Guidance for conducting Focus Groups

It is widely recognised that consultation with children and young people (CYP) is a key aspect of the process of improving and developing services for them. The principle of consultation is stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 of the Convention is concerned with respecting and acting upon CYP's views and opinions. It is about respecting the child's view in all matters affecting the child and giving CYP the opportunity to be heard.

The Government's agenda requires adults to be much clearer about understanding the needs of CYP and taking into account their views in the planning and delivery of services. Consultation with CYP and is therefore essential when planning sports and physical activity and should become a key activity for all those involved in either planning:

- There are many forums where young people's voices are being heard at a local and national level including school councils, youth councils, youth advisory groups etc.
- It is considered good practice for providers of positive activities to be constantly consulting with CYP at a local level to ensure we stay up to date in providing these activities – one way is by holding focus groups or forums to speak directly with CYP.

In undertaking consultancies with CYP and it is important to recognise the following principles and when holding these groups there are minimum standards we would advise are in place;

- Those responsible for supervising or managing the consultation should have undertaken the appropriate level of CRB checks and training in working with CYP. If the consultation is being undertaken by a third party responsibility for this would fall to that organisation and not Sport England.
- Appropriate adult to CYP ratios should be followed. Where the consultation involves over 11's, where there are no special needs of the participants the ratio and the setting has no additional hazards then a ratio of 1: x should be adopted. Where under 11's are to be involved or the setting may have identified risks then a lower ratio should be adopted.
- Consideration should be given to the appropriate methods used. There are many methods of consulting with CYP and it is likely that a combination of different methods will work best. Consider involving CYPs in aspects of the planning for the consultation. Start with CYP's agendas. Most participative work tends to be reactive to adult agendas so whenever possible ask young people what they want to work on.