

It can be valuable to collect information in small groups. Focus groups allow us to collect more detailed information than say, a questionnaire, and get into the reasons why people hold their opinions. In the context of community development they can also be great for building relationships.

## Step by step guide



Step 1: Agree in advance the key questions you want to ask in order to gather the information around a particular issue, eg graffiti, after school clubs, housing and the elderly.



Step 2: At the beginning of the meeting explain the purpose and value of this meeting.



Step 3: Use a question to get the group writing down their responses in pairs so that everybody is involved at the beginning.



Step 4: The feedback from this can be managed in a number of different ways; either written on to a flipchart or individual ideas written on separate pieces of paper or card (one thought or idea per card)



Step 5: Get the group to prioritise their responses, either by ranking the list on the flip chart or grouping the individual cards into common themes.



Step 6: Once the ideas/issues have been prioritised, you can deepen the discussion by asking more open questions and in particular, asking why certain things are the way they are and looking for the causes and effects.

# List of useful questions

**The following questions are good for starting a conversation:**

- What are the main challenges in this community?
- What are the barriers to developing this community?
- What are the opportunities for improving this community? • What would you most like to do to help this community?
- What gives you most energy for improving the community?

**The following questions are good for prioritising or ranking people's answers of the above questions:**

- What should be the top 3 priorities?
- Which challenges or problems have we the capacity to address?
- Which top three areas do we have most energy and interest for?
- Which of these challenges can be grouped according to theme?
- Which of these challenges are specific to young people, the elderly and parents or guardians?