



How to.... Run Forums & Meetings

Regular forums and meetings, whether 'open forum' or thematic, can be relatively easy to facilitate and an effective means of service user involvement. For example, they might be residents meetings, or they might be weekly or monthly meetings on issues or themes raised by service users through other types of involvement. As with all service user involvement work forums/meetings will be most successful if the 25 Good Practice Indicators (template 1) are considered for both planning and facilitation.

	Involvement you can achieve with this Technique:		Level of Impact Best Suited for:		Level of Resources Needed:	
	Informing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Person	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Consulting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Medium	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Shared Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Perception	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Full Power	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

How to do it:

- Agendas should be set jointly with service users and should be checked for accessibility (no acronyms etc).
- Agendas should follow normal standards - Welcome and Introduction (and apologies), Matters arising and no more than 3 discussion points raised per meeting (particularly in initial or early meetings). There should also be ample time made for any other business and service user feedback and comment. Next meeting dates should be advertised at the end of the agenda.
- The first meeting should ideally begin with an icebreaker and the group agreeing ground rules that ensure everyone feels safe and comfortable within the meeting.
- Introductions should also begin with outlining agenda items so people know in advance when there are opportunities to discuss various issues and when comfort breaks or lunch will be. The introduction should also state clearly what the intended outcome of the meeting is and when people will receive feedback. If possible, ensure that people are aware of what the meeting will potentially influence (generate no false promises!)
- Meetings should be facilitated by a skilled and confident chairperson and a note/minute taker. Notes should be sent out as soon as possible after the meeting in whatever format is easiest for the participant to receive them (i.e. delivered by staff member, email, by post). See also focus group, tool # 8 for more.





Pros

- Forums or meetings often generate more feedback as members opinions can be triggered by discussion points raised by others.
- Forums or meetings can give service providers an opportunity to invite external agencies to the table for discussion.
- Meetings can also be linked to training.

Cons

- Meetings/forums may only uncover a small piece of service user feelings as attendance to these groups is nearly always self selecting. Organisations should be aware of this and try to use other methods to gather service users' opinions.
- There should be a 1:1 option for people not comfortable speaking in groups or in front of other people.
- The group format, particularly as staff are present, may prevent service users from speaking as candidly as they would like.
- Forums and meetings may not be accessible for people who speak other languages

Resource Considerations:

- Comfortable meeting room - with disabled access
- Agendas
- Minutes of previous meetings
- Staff time
- Hospitality and expenses

Further Reading:

www.meetingwizard.org/meetings/1.1.cfm
www.howtodothings.com/business/how-to-plan-a-meeting
www.wikihow.com/Prepare-for-a-Meeting

