



Resource M- Facilitation tips¹

Effective facilitation of the workshops is vital. Successful group facilitation requires a high degree of skill and experience. Some key tips for less experienced facilitators, and links to additional resources, are provided below.

Key elements of successful group facilitation

- remain neutral at all times
- put people at ease
- manage expectations - clarify the boundaries of what can and cannot be achieved in a workshop
- get conversations started and keep them going throughout the activities
- encourage everyone to contribute. If someone is not participating, ask them specifically whether the discussed topic is something that has come up in their experience or role, or how their organisation would view the issue
- prevent any one individual or viewpoint from dominating the discussion
- help people stay focused on the activities to achieve the workshop's objectives
- ensure everyone is clear what they are meant to be doing in each activity and how long is allocated
- encourage workshop participants to come up with their own ideas and responses. There is no one right answer and this should be reiterated throughout the workshops
- encourage people throughout. Even if the conversation is flowing and participants are on the right lines, it is helpful to give people encouragement. This will be a new approach to many people and they may find it beneficial to have encouragement they are doing it right
- identify and tackle challenges that arise - watch out for disputes and tensions. The role of the facilitator is not to adjudicate, but to enable the groups to come to their own conclusions

¹ This resource is part of Public Health England's wider whole systems approach to obesity programme. Please search to find the main guide and additional resources.

Tips to manage potential disputes or tensions include:

- reiterate that there is no one right answer
- stress that everyone's perspective is valid
- if dispute arises, give participants the chance to explain their thinking further – there may be an underlying point that is meaningful. Ask what others think to enable them to voice their thoughts. If disagreement or lack of consensus persists around an issue you could propose that issue is designated “agree to disagree” and put in a ‘parking lot’ for outstanding or unresolved issues and then move on to something else. Later, go back to the stuck issue(s)

Additional resources to support facilitation

Open university (free course): [Facilitating group discussions](#)

Office of Quality Improvement: [Facilitator Tool Kit](#)

Free Management Library: [All About Facilitation, Group Skills and Group Performance Management](#)