

Community Works Conference Thursday 22nd March 2018

Facilitation Skills for Small Group Leaders

preparation - before the meeting & on the day of the meeting

- facilitator(s) and participants make time to plan and get clear about why the meeting been called and what are the aims of the meeting
- be clear about the research you will do to find out as much as possible about the wider context of the meeting, the likely questions and issues that may be raised. Be clear about who the key note speakers are and how they will engage with the participants. Be clear about how the ideas, reflections and recommendations gathered at the meeting will be used?
- which venue? where is it? who's venue is it? how accessible is the venue? what does the space look like? how can it be improved?
- arrive early so you have time to tune in to yourself as well as the aims and plans for the meeting

the start of the meeting – maximising the potential of the meeting

- welcoming participants – be clear about how and who will do this, have a plan for how the room is organised as well as what refreshments and who will arrange these
- making time for participants to check in with each other and developing a group agreement that includes – welcoming all contributions; acknowledging that there will be differences and these are welcome, listening well and being respectful of each other, open to learning something and willingness to work with complexity and tricky issues
- clarity about how recommendations will be actioned, who will do what and be clear about plans for reporting back and reflecting at subsequent meetings

facilitating the meeting and wrapping up the meeting

- throughout the meeting ensuring all the voices are welcomed, encouraging everyone to contribute and making this as comfortable as possible – pairs or small group dialogue, being creative about using drawing, models, making something, being outside, using images, quotes or poems to generate dialogue. Ensuring that these are relevant to the aims of the meeting
- staying alert to the energies and feelings of the participants and respond accordingly – take a break, suggest participants take a walk in pairs and consider a key question
- making sure that assumptions are surfaced and explored
- staying clear of your role and approach as facilitator managing the process, being open to ideas whilst keeping mindful of the aims of the meeting and the time available
- checking in, reflecting back, sharing summaries of what has been addressed and helping to prioritise next steps and ensure the gathering ends with clear actions and next steps and that members feel ownership for these

managing differences of opinion and approach

- staying steady as the facilitator - refer to the aims of meeting and group agreement to ensure there is a common approach. Differences are ok; they can point in the direction of possible ways forward or changes that are needed. Acknowledge hotspots and be specific in naming them and exploring possible ways forward. Take a long view - issues won't necessarily be sorted in one meeting and time to reflect can be helpful.