

Community Engagement Communications Guide

For Research Teams

Four key principles:

Clarity, Accessibility, Respect, and Language (C.A.R.L)

Co-created with the AIMS-2-TRIALS A-Reps and Communications & Community Engagement Team



CLARITY

- Prepare an agenda and any supporting materials, and share them in advance to ensure meeting is accessible.
- Offer information sources such as links to specific websites or published work.
- Provide clear instructions, explain the topic of the activity, and outline its aims. Be open about the work involved and the possible outcomes.
- Word questions clearly and be as specific as possible.
- Consider any training needs in a new group. For example, do you need to provide background on the research topic or particular research or analysis techniques?



ACCESSIBILITY

- Consider sensory needs and try to reduce background noise, loud noises, strong smells, and flickering lights where possible.
- Use plain and accessible language and take time to explain information clearly.
- Be aware of different processing speeds, and account for additional time and/or someone who needs additional support
- Provide meeting materials in advance such as slides
- Use an active voice when asking questions. For example: Active voice: "What are you working on?". Passive voice: "What is being worked on by you?" The active voice is typically more direct and engaging
- Summarise and check for clarity
- Introduce ideas or questions one at a time to avoid confusion.
- When creating presentations, videos and written resources, avoid use of unnecessary animations and graphics that will cause confusion and overcomplication.
- When asking questions, try to clearly express what you're asking and the reason behind it.
- Use written materials, photos and visuals for those who find it helpful, including those with learning disabilities. E.g. see easy read formats and flow charts as accessibility aids
- Avoid using acronyms without definitions, explanations or a reason.
- Avoid using double negatives.



RESPECT

- Ensure to stick to agreed timings and agendas as close as possible.
- Avoid making assumptions, and ask questions when possible.
- Be sure to treat others with kindness and respect, and try to avoid sounding rude or condescending.
- Consider cultural differences
- Keep in mind that community members may have varying levels of familiarity with your area of research, some may be more knowledgeable, while others might be new to the topic.
- Consider different communication styles in mixed neurotype groups, E.g. double empathy.*



LANGUAGE

- Keep wording clear, understandable and succinct. Avoid scientific jargon.
- Do not use medicalised and pathology related terminology that may have negative connotations and harmful historical use
- Avoid slang and colloquial terms and expressions, as these can be confusing or misunderstood by the community and non-native English speakers.



*more information on double empathy can be found here: www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/double-empathy

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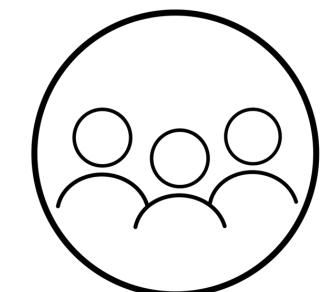
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FOCUS GROUP MEETING TIPS



- Make the topic and content of the meeting clear in advance and again at the start of the meeting.
- Co-create a group agreement, including developing a meeting guidance summary slide to remind all present of expectations and responsibilities at the start of meetings.
- Give people different ways to give feedback, for example during a meeting or over email afterwards and allow processing time.
- Consider training on mediation and community engagement
- Create an environment where people feel safe and respected so they can share their experiences.
- Validate people's experiences or feelings
- Consider that people may have different communication styles or may have a certain reaction based on a previous negative experience
- You may hear negative feedback about your work, consider how you would react to this.
- Aim to focus on listening rather than defending. Take time to understand people's concerns and think about possible responses, you don't need to reply straight away.
- Use visuals in your slides to keep people engaged, but avoid adding too much visual noise.
- Co-creation based projects can help build relationships and trust with autistic people. Treat autistic people as colleagues and consider the balance of power in decision making.

TOP TIPS



- Not everyone is the same, so think about who is participating and adapt your approach accordingly.
- Invite people to take part in discussions and participate. Reassure them that it's okay to ask questions.
- Find ways to include everyone by inviting input from all attendees, while being mindful not to put anyone on the spot if they are uncomfortable.
- As some people may prefer written communication, consider using online forums or messaging platforms where discussions can take place (e.g. Teams and/or Zoom with the comments & messaging function active).
- If working on research papers collaboratively, providing details of how the process of academic papers works.