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Innovations for select committee engagement

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This guide outlines a range of face-to-face engagement methods that select committees could use to engage the public and stakeholders in their inquiries and other work.

Written by *Involve* for the Outreach and Engagement Service at the Houses of Parliament, the guide has three sections. Sections One and Two provide best practice advice and tips about how to:

- Choose the right engagement method to deliver the impact and information a committee needs;
- Make the method a success from the perspective of everyone involved, including both the committee and participants.

Section Three, the guide's main component, is a method library of nine engagement techniques committees could use to involve the public and stakeholders in their work. It includes method descriptions, top tips and facts, and case studies.

We hope the Outreach and Engagement Service finds this guide useful in planning and delivering their work with select committees.

SECTION ONE: CHOOSING THE RIGHT METHOD

One of the key determinants of how well engagement work will deliver committees' desired results and impacts is method choice. The right method, or combination of methods, for a committee's needs will depend on factors such as what questions it wants to answer, who it wants to engage and how quickly it needs the results.

By using the eleven questions outlined below, committees can develop a clear specification for the engagement they wish to undertake. This will enable them to choose the right method(s) to meet their requirements.

The eleven questions

Question	Notes
1. **What is the engagement intended to inform (e.g. an inquiry, a scrutiny session with a Minister)? What level of influence is the committee offering participants?**	The first part of this question is very straightforward. The second part around levels of influence refers to whether, for example, participants are being offered the opportunity to co-determine an inquiry's findings with committee members, or simply to influence them by providing an additional viewpoint or information. The answer to this question may be very obvious to the committee itself, but it is likely to be less clear to participants and should be made explicit. Please see 'Managing participant expectations' in Section 2.
2. **What is the desired scope of the engagement work (i.e. which policy areas or issues would the committee like the engagement to cover)?**	For engagement work around an inquiry, this may be all, or just part, of the inquiry's terms of reference.

3. **What does the committee want to learn from the engagement?**	A helpful way to think about this question is to ask: 'what can members of the public or other stakeholders tell a committee that the committee can only find out from them?' For example, only someone who has accessed mental health services can really tell a committee what it is like to use them. In this case, what a committee may wish to find out through the engagement is therefore 'What do mental health service users think about mental health services in the UK at the moment?' If the committee is ready to, then it also useful to outline here the sorts of topline questions the committee may be interested in exploring. To continue the above example, it might want to know what service users think works well, where they think services could improve, and any ideas they have for what that improvement could look like. The sort of questions a committee is interested in asking will affect which method is most appropriate.
4. **Is there anything else that the committee would like the engagement to achieve?**	Secondary aim(s) could include, for example, increasing participants' understanding of Parliament, the committee or the role of an MP.
5. **Will Members be directly involved in the engagement?**	When choosing between methods, it is important to know whether or not Members will attend. Engagement work tends to have more impact when Members hear participants' views, stories and ideas firsthand. However, Members' busy schedules mean this will not always be possible. To reflect this, the Method Library (Section Three) includes some methods where Members' presence is essential, many where it is optional, and a few that are official-led.
6. **How should information and findings from the engagement be presented (e.g. in a report, in a short film, orally)?**	There are two key considerations here: • **If some or all Members cannot take part in the engagement, how can its results be made to feel as real to them as possible?** For example, the Outreach and Engagement Service could support the committee to make a short film of the engagement activity and its findings to be shown to Members either at, or outside of, a formal evidence session. In addition or alternatively, the officials or external facilitators who led the engagement (and a small number

	of participants[1]) could present its results as part of a formal evidence session. • **What will the results be used for and does that have any implications for how they are presented?** For example, if the committee wants the engagement findings to be submitted as formal evidence, will they need to be in any particular format?
7. Who needs to take part in the engagement for the committee to achieve its answers to questions 2-4?	In particular, it is important here to think about who the committee would need to reach to achieve its answer to question 3. Areas to consider include: • **What types of people does the committee want to hear from?** This could well include people with direct experience of an issue or service, or who are directly affected by the policies in question.[2] So to continue with the example of an inquiry into mental health services, the committee may want to hear from service users and frontline staff, not just policy professionals. • **Does the engagement need to include everyone a committee wants to hear from over the course of an inquiry?** Or should it focus on those who are unlikely to submit written evidence or appear as witnesses in oral evidence sessions? • **Is there likely to be any difference in experience by geography or demographic?** Is it, for example, important to hear from service users and staff in more than one area of the country? Is it important to hear from a range of age, ethnic or other demographic groups? • **Does the committee want to bring different types of people together to discuss their views and produce jointly agreed evidence for the committee?** Or does it want to engage them separately?

[1] This may not be suitable for all participants, particularly those who may feel intimated, exposed or anxious in this setting.

[2] The House of Commons Library has a research paper on political disengagement which the Outreach and Engagement Service may find useful in thinking about people who are directly affected by the issues an inquiry covers but are least likely to participate.

8. How much budget and staff time is available to support the engagement?	Some methods are more expensive and time-consuming than others. The committee will need to think about how much time and budget it has available for the work, and ask the Outreach and Engagement Service how much capacity it has to support the project. Areas where costs might be incurred include venue hire, refreshments, travel and subsistence (for Members, officials and participants), materials, film and photography, and items that would fall under the accessibility budget such as interpretation and translation services or support with childcare costs. It is important to clarify early on which budgets are being used to cover this expenditure. As the resources available for engagement are often limited, it is advisable for committees to focus on conducting engagement where it is likely to have most impact.
9. By what date does the committee need the engagement's results?	As some methods need a longer lead in time and take longer to deliver than others, it is important to be clear about when the committee needs the results. When deciding on timescales, committees may also want to consider the points raised under 'When to run engagement activities?' in Section Two.
10. When will the committee consider the findings of the engagement and feedback to participants about what happened as a result or their involvement?	Participants can often feel that nothing happened as a result of their engagement, not because this is true, but because no one ever told them what impact it had. This can put participants off engaging again. It is therefore important for a committee to: • Be clear about when it will consider the engagement results - for example, when it is aiming to publish an inquiry report; • Allow for time to contact participants to let them know what the committee concluded and how that was influenced by the results of the engagement; • Consider providing incremental updates to participants during the lifetime of an inquiry. This might be feedback on impact, if for example, the results of engagement activities have influenced questions for oral witness sessions. Alternatively, it might simply be keeping participants up-to-date with the inquiry's progress. Participants are also likely to welcome hearing about any impact that results from the committee's work, for example a government response or press

	coverage. Most fundamentally, committees should not undertake engagement work if they are not committed to taking heed of what they've heard and trying their very best to reflect it in their work – be that their questioning of witnesses in formal evidence sessions and/or the inquiry's report and recommendations.
11. How will the engagement be evaluated?	It is good practice to evaluate engagement activities to capture relevant learning about the engagement process and help assess the value derived for the committee and participants. It can also help with feedback to participants about the impact of their involvement. The committee should decide early on who will evaluate the engagement so that the necessary evaluation mechanisms are built into the activity from the start.

Top tips for using the eleven questions

- ✓ **The eleven questions are not linear.** Treating them in a linear fashion risks, for example, agreeing on the answers to questions 1 - 7, then finding that the budget and timescales do not allow for the scale of work envisaged. Instead, it is better to consider all of the eleven questions in one meeting, starting linearly but then going backwards and forwards between the questions and making any necessary adjustments until they make a workable whole.

- ✓ **The eleven questions can help achieve buy-in to committees' work.** While Committee Office staff can theoretically work through the eleven questions by themselves, involving internal and external stakeholders in the process has significant advantages. From an internal point of view, this will enable the committee to tap into existing internal expertise on engagement. It will also flag the upcoming project early to relevant teams, ensuring that they reserve the necessary time to support the work. From an external perspective, it could help ensure the buy-in of civil society organisations who can help with participant recruitment and engagement planning (please see the first three headings in Section Two).[3]

- ✓ **It is useful to get Members input early in the engagement design process.** While Members are unlikely to engage with the level of detail present in the eleven questions, it is important to get a very early steer from them about who they want to talk to and the sort of questions they want to explore. A draft engagement design can then be worked up and presented to the committee's Chair or wider membership for sign off.

3 External stakeholders can also be engaged slightly later in the process – for example, in commenting on a draft engagement plan, rather than helping to shape it in its earliest stages.

- ✓ **The eleven questions focus solely on design questions.** They do not include more operational areas that the Outreach and Engagement Service and Committee Office will need to discuss and agree. Most obviously these include: the respective roles of the two teams before, after and during the engagement process – including who will be the main point of contact for participants and any partners; the date, time and location of the engagement activity; and publicity plans. Other points to think about are whether the committee has any contacts that need to be notified before the general public, and if the committee would like to vet attendees or capture any specific information about them.

SECTION TWO: MAKING YOUR METHOD A SUCCESS

Choosing the right method, or methods, is not the only step to ensuring engagement is successful. This section contains key tips on seven important areas. Thinking through these topics will help to make the engagement experience a positive one for both committees and participants alike.

Reaching beyond those most likely to take part

A key way for committees to reach people from whom they may not normally hear is through existing organisations and networks. For example, if a committee wanted to hear from homeless people, a good place to start would be contacting organisations that work directly with homeless individuals and families. These organisations are likely to be able to provide valuable advice on the 'Making engagement activities accessible' and 'Framing engagement questions' headings below, including on the types of activities with which potential participants are likely to best engage. They are also well-placed to help with participant recruitment.

When forming partnerships with external organisations, it is important that committees think carefully about who they work with, and are open about their choices and reasons for them. This will help avoid perceptions of bias.

Making engagement activities accessible

Making engagement activities accessible includes both logistical and design considerations. Logistical considerations will vary depending on method choice and who is attending. Relevant questions may include whether:

- The venue needs to be wheelchair accessible, reachable by public transport, have a hearing loop, have a car park or parking nearby;[4]
- A translator or DSL/BSL interpreter is needed;
- Event materials need to be produced in braille or large print, Easy-read, or be largely pictorial;
- Participants are likely to need help with costs (for transport, respite care, childcare etc.) to be able to attend. How and when these expenses are paid may also be important.

If the engagement activity is happening outside of Parliament, it will be important to have a clear list of accessibility and facilities requirements when finding and booking a venue.

4 The Outreach and Engagement Service has *Best practice guidance for venue booking.* This is available from SPIRE:\Fileplan\PUBLIC RELATIONS\ EVENT ADMINISTRATION\HC-DIS\HC-DIS-OEG\RESOURCES\Templates

Design considerations are equally key. They include:

- **Where the activity takes place:** Holding an event in Parliament can be a significant barrier to people's engagement - for example, participants may find it intimidating, or simply be unable to get there. For vulnerable or time-poor individuals in particular, it is important to go to them. So, for example, if a committee wanted to engage homeless people as mentioned above, it would be best running its activities somewhere like a homeless shelter. Similarly, to engage parents of young children, it might be best to go to pre-existing events such as parents and toddler groups. Section Three contains several case studies where committees have gone to participants.

- **When the activity is held:** It is worth considering what days of the week and times of day participants are most likely to be able to take part. For example, normal office hours may not be possible for people who work 9am-5pm themselves and whose involvement is not part of their job. The committee may also wish to consider whether to repeat an engagement activity at different times, or on different days, to facilitate participation. This problem of timing is avoided by running engagement activities at pre-existing meetings that participants already attend.

- **Length of activity:** It is important to be realistic about the amount of time participants are likely to be able to dedicate to taking part.

- **Method choice:** Many of the methods listed in Section Three involve bringing groups of people together to discuss an issue. However if an issue is particularly sensitive, or if participants are exceptionally time-poor (meaning bringing them together is very difficult), it may be more appropriate to use a structured interview technique so that participants can take part individually. Structured interview methods are also covered in Section Three. Another option for dealing with sensitive issues, could be to use vignettes. This involves presenting participants with a scenario where A and B happened to Person X and then asking them for their opinions and reactions. This avoids asking participants directly about their own experiences.

- **Breaking the ice and building confidence:** Meeting MPs and participating in events can be a daunting experience, particularly for vulnerable groups. It can therefore be a good idea to run warm-up or preparation activities with them, either directly before the event or in advance. It can be important that this takes place in the same room where the event will be held so that participants become comfortable in the space. Where a committee is working with an external organisation they might be able to support this activity.

- **What to wear:** Particularly when engaging with vulnerable groups, MPs are likely to find they are seen as more approachable – and therefore have richer discussions with participants – when they avoid wearing suits and dress casually. Similarly, if police officers need to accompany the MPs, it is better if they are not in uniform and keep a low profile. The presence of police officers should be explained and agreed with the host organisation (where applicable) or participants in advance.

As noted above, committees can check that their engagement activities are accessible by running their plans past organisations already working with the intended participants. If organisations feel actively consulted and listened to, this has the added benefit of making them more likely to help with participant recruitment and other aspects of the project.

Framing engagement questions

Question 3 of the eleven questions outlined in the previous section talked about the need to focus on participants' own areas of experience and knowledge. This is also true of the questions asked at engagement events. So, for example, it is not a good idea to ask homeless people which of two complex policy options for tackling homelessness would work better. Instead committees can talk to participants about the relevant parts of their own experience – this might be, for example, about how they became homeless, or the support currently available to them. Later on in an event, it may also be possible to ask participants about the practical implications of policy changes – for example, 'if this service was less available would that have any impact on you?' Committees can use all this information to help them reach their own conclusions about the policy options.

One key indicator that an engagement event is not framed well is if long presentations, or lots of written materials, are required to enable participants to answer the questions. This suggests that committees are not asking participants about their own areas of expertise.

Managing participant expectations

One of the most common causes of problems in engagement projects is neglecting to manage participants' expectations. It is a good idea for committees to communicate the answers to questions 1, 2, 3 and 10 (from the eleven questions outlined in Section One) to participants at the point they are invited to take part. This will avoid a situation where participants arrive at the engagement activity expecting a level or scope of influence that was never intended. This can leave participants feeling disappointed, disillusioned and even angry. For similar reasons, committees will need to be clear about the extent and limits of their own powers to create change.

When to plan and run engagement activities

In theory, engagement activities can be held at any point – as long as it is in time to inform work they are intended to influence. However, for inquiries specifically, there is growing evidence from the National Assembly for Wales and elsewhere that it is most useful to committees to run the engagement early in the inquiry process. Where committees have done this they have often found the engagement's results informative in deciding on, for example, the direction of the inquiry, or the questions to be asked of witnesses during formal evidence sessions.

Whether engagement is to take place at the start or end of an inquiry process, it is critical that planning work starts as soon as possible. Ideally, it should begin as soon as a committee knows it is likely to run an inquiry with an engagement element.

Safeguarding

Where engagement processes involve vulnerable participants appropriate safeguarding measures will need to be put in place. Contact the Chambers and Committees Team safeguarding practitioner who will be able to provide advice and guidance. Where relevant, committees may also want to consider providing participants with information about where to seek further help and support. See Method 8 in Section Three for a case study where a committee signposted participants to a national helpline.

Capturing discussions

The methods listed in Section Three involve several different ways to capture the findings of engagement events. Whichever a committee decides to use, it is important to bear in mind the need to:

- **Ask participants' permission in advance.** Participants should be told before they attend an activity that notes (or an equivalent) will be taken, what the purpose of this is, and how the information collected will be used. This needs to be done sensitively - including for example giving appropriate reassurances about anonymity, or notes being restricted to general themes - so that it does not affect participants' willingness to take part.

- **Sharing outputs with participants before publication.** All participants should be given a chance to see how their feedback has been captured and to request changes before it is made public. It needs to be clear that this is about inaccuracies, major omissions or compromising information, rather than about word-smithing. As well as being a matter of courtesy, knowing that they will have this opportunity can be very reassuring to participants.

SECTION THREE: ENGAGEMENT METHOD LIBRARY

This section contains details of nine face-to-face engagement methods, which select committees can use to engage the public and stakeholders in their work.

Member involvement

Most of the methods leave it to committees' discretion whether Members attend the events in person, or not. There are three methods (3, 4 & 7) where Members' attendance would be difficult or inappropriate. There are two methods (8 & 9) where Members' attendance is essential for at least part of the process.

Where Members do attend events, they may wish to:

- **Host:** It can make the event feel more important to participants if Members welcome them at the start of the event and explain why they want to hear participants' views. Members thanking participants at the end of the event can help participants feel that their time has been appreciated.

- **Observe**: Where methods do not allow for Members to participate directly in discussions, they can observe them. This can be powerful in enabling Members to hear participants' views first hand. It also provides Members with an opportunity to reflect back to participants at the end of the event what they have heard and learnt. This can be an important way to signal to participants that their contributions have been understood and valued.

- **Play an active role:** Some methods offer Members the option to play a more active role. Where this is the case, more detail is given on the relevant library page.

To facilitate Members' involvement it may sometimes be appropriate to consider holding select committee engagement activities in committee members' constituencies. The case study for Method Eight gives an example of where this has been tried.

Setting up an event

What is said to participants at the beginning of an event can affect how well they are able to engage. Participants should always be given the following information at the start of an event:

- **The purpose of the event:** Who is running it and why?
- **What is the topic or area under discussion?**
- **Event aims:** What is the event aiming to achieve?
- **The agenda:** What will happen during the event?
- **What happens next:** What will the findings of the event be used for and when will participants hear back about what happens?

- **Housekeeping:** Location of fire escapes, toilets etc. Availability of a hearing loop, translators or interpreters, if relevant.

It is also a good idea to set groundrules (or 'values' or 'principles', if preferred) for the event. These may include areas like respecting others' views, talking less if you tend to talk a lot and more if you tend to stay silent, and so on. This makes it easier to ask people to change their behavior later on, if necessary.

There should also be an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves to one another. This is often done in small groups – rather than every participant introducing themselves to everyone else - so that it does not take up too much time and is not too intimidating.

Some of the library pages contain method-specific advice about how to start events. This does not override the above: it is still important that this information is communicated.

Method One: Deliberative Workshop

Method description:

A deliberative workshop is a form of facilitated group discussion. It provides participants with the opportunity to exchange views, ideas and experiences, and absorb new information. It also enables them to consider an issue in depth.

Deliberative workshops do not have a set structure. They are designed to fit the particular issue in question, aims of the event, and the participants who will be attending. The workshops usually employ a variety of facilitation techniques and exercises to keep the workshop engaging for participants and make the issue accessible for them to discuss. Techniques may see participants working all together, in small groups, in pairs, or individually. Activities can be movement based or focused around drawing, writing or talking. They may involve capturing views, deciding on priorities, or making recommendations, among other possible goals.

Deliberative workshops can be structured so that participants capture their own key learnings and decisions as part of each exercise. This work can then be collected and form the basis of the event report.

Participants (how many and who):

Anywhere from ten participants upwards.

Deliberative workshops are suitable for a wide range of participants. Where participants are extremely vulnerable then a more informal method may be more suitable.

Type of question it can address:

Deliberative workshops can be used to address many different types of issues and questions because of the flexibility in their design. They are particularly good at exploring and capturing *why* participants have the views they do, not just what those views are.

Top tips for delivery:

- ✓ Participants can be asked a few short questions about the topic to be discussed when they sign up for the event. This can help inform the event design and the facilitator's preparation.
- ✓ Where participants have a disability or special need it is very important that these are taken into account in the workshop design, as certain exercises and materials may be more or less accessible to them.

Length of event:

Anywhere from 1 ½ hours upwards.

Member involvement:

Member attendance is optional. Where they do attend, Members can do any combination of host, observe, or take part in the discussions.

Case study:	Lead in time required:
On Wednesday 20 January 2016, forty-nine young people from across London's boroughs took part in a deliberative workshop in Parliament on political education. Run by Bite the Ballot and Involve on behalf of the Democratic Participation APPG, the workshop was set-up to feed into the Education Select Committee's inquiry on the purpose of education. The workshop enabled the young people to explore and put forward their views and experiences on topics including: • Where political education happens; • The current quality of political education; • Whether political education is important; • What political education should cover. On the event evaluation form, participants' strongly agreed with the statement: *Parliament and its committees should use workshops like this more often to get young people's views on issues they are considering.* They scored it an average of 4.7 out of 5, where 5 was strongly agree and 1 was strongly disagree. When asked for the reasons for their answers, participants suggested that workshops like this are good ways for MPs to find out young people's views, motivate and engage young people, and give young people a say.	4-6 weeks. **Sources and further information:** The report from the workshop includes details of its design, as well as the workshops findings.

Method Two: Open Space

Method description:

Open Space – or 'Open Space Technology' as it is also known – is a way of enabling participants to discuss the issues they think are most important under a broad theme set by the commissioning organisation (in this case a select committee). This can add an additional level of insight for the committee, not just because it tells them what participants see as key, but also because it may highlight issues of which the committee was not aware.

Open Space events are led by a facilitator. The facilitator will start by setting up the event (see page 14), including introducing the event's theme. They will then ask participants to suggest key topics for discussion. Participants with a topic idea come to the front and very briefly outline to the rest of the group what they would like to discuss. The facilitator summarises their idea on a card and displays it for all participants to see. Once all the ideas are collected, the facilitator will ask participants if they think any topic ideas are very similar and should be combined. After this is resolved, each remaining topic will be allocated a location and time slot for discussion. Depending on the length of the event and the number of topics suggested, there may be just one round of discussions, or two, or more.

For each topic, the participant who suggested it is responsible for hosting the relevant discussion and for making sure notes are taken of the points raised. They can either do the latter themselves or ask for a volunteer from amongst those who take part.

Before the discussions begin the facilitator outlines the principles of Open Space. These include:

Participants (how many and who):

At least twenty participants are usually needed to make Open Space work. In terms of an upper limit, the method has been used successfully with groups of several hundred.

Putting forward topics for discussion in front of a room full of people can be daunting. For this reason, Open Space is generally less suited to working with vulnerable participants.

Type of question it can address:

The event's theme should be broad, for example 'How can alcohol and substance misuse be reduced?' After that the topics discussed are chosen by participants.

Length of event:

Anywhere from 2 hours upwards.

• **Whoever comes are the right people:** No matter whether fifty or five people choose to join a discussion, they are the right people to discuss that topic. • **Whatever happens is the only thing that could have:** The discussion might not go exactly how the person who suggested it planned or its participants imagined. That's fine. The key is to listen, participate and learn. • **When it is over, it is over:** The discussion may not take the whole of the timeslot allocated to it. This is fine too. Participants can take a break or join another discussion. • **'Law of two feet':** Some participants will prefer to stay in the same discussion throughout the timeslot. Others will prefer to move around between discussions. Both of these options are perfectly legitimate choices. Open Space events usually end with all participants coming to together to hear, or read about (from feedback sheets), what each of the discussion groups concluded.	**Member involvement:** Member attendance is optional. Where they do attend, Members can do any combination of host, observe, or take part in the discussions. **Lead in time required:** 4-6 weeks .
Top tips for delivery: ✓ Provide feedback sheets to help those leading discussions to capture key information – for example, the sheets could ask for the topic discussed, who took part, the key issues raised, and the three points the group would most like the committee to take away from the discussion. ✓ Where participants are less familiar with this sort of event, and if capacity allows, each group could be provided with its own facilitator/note taker to make sure discussions are valuable and properly captured. ✓ Where participants are less familiar with this sort of event, the committee may want to encourage them to think about discussion topics in advance. This could include working with any partner organisations involved to run preparation activities for participants, as suggested in Section Two. This is most likely to be feasible where the organisation already meets with participants on a regular basis.	**Sources and further information:** http://openspaceworld.org/ Involve's report *People and Participation*, page 90.

Case study:

In 2002, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust held an Open Space event to establish priorities for improving health services in Nottinghamshire. The event was attended by 120 people, including service users, carers and health staff. By using Open Space the discussion was kept open and flexible, allowing participants to come up with their own ideas of topics that should be covered.

The event facilitator begun the event by familiarising participants with how Open Space works. Participants then put forward a diverse range of issues for debate. These ranged from alternative therapies to acute admission. Throughout the rest of the day, participants met in groups to discuss the topics they had chosen. Feedback from each discussion - consisting of the key points raised, what action was required and who was responsible for taking it - was posted in the main room for everyone to read.

At the end of the day, each participant was given three red stars to stick on the three topics that they thought should be prioritised for action. The most frequently chosen options included research on alternatives to acute admission, providing funding for assisted transport, and a cultural review of services and service delivery. The funding for assisted transport was one of the first changes implemented after the event, along with the establishment of a users' and carers' resource centre.

Method Three: Filmed Evidence via Semi-Structured Interviews

Method description:

Semi-structured interviews provide an excellent way for committees to hear from participants who are very time-poor. They can also be a good method choice for engagement around particularly sensitive issues. Members of the Outreach and Engagement Service – or Committee Office, if preferred – go to where participants are to conduct the interviews, and see them individually rather then needing to bring participants together.

The interviews themselves should be made up of around five to ten open questions agreed by the committee. Where relevant these can be informed by the initial scoping research conducted around a potential inquiry, or responses to a call for written evidence.

The first question in any interview should be very broad, giving participants a chance to talk around the topic. Questions can then become gradually more specific. It is important that questions are not leading.

Although interviews are not an event as such, it is still important to cover the information, other than housekeeping, listed on page 14 under 'Setting-up an event'. Participants should be asked in advance whether or not they are happy to be filmed.

In terms of feeding back interview results to committee Members, it is usually unrealistic for Members to watch all the interviews in full. Interviewees also often repeat points and become more concise in what they say as interviews continue (see 'Top tips for delivery' below). Where committees have used this method, interview films have therefore been edited down to one 20 minute film (depending on the number of interviewees), which clearly conveys to Members the key points raised during the interviews. Participant packs can be given to Members when they watch the video so they have a brief explanation about who the participants are and key background information. If so desired, interviews can also be transcribed so that Members can

Participants (how many and who):

In theory there is no limit on the number of people who could be interviewed. To keep the method manageable for parliamentary staff, however, somewhere between seven and fifteen interviews is probably realistic.

Interviews are a suitable method for engaging a wide range of participants.

Type of question it can address:

Unless interviewees are policy specialists or equivalents, interviews tend to be best focussed on interviewees' own experiences and resulting views. As the interview continues, it may also be possible to ask participants how they think specific proposed changes might affect them.

Length of event:

Interviews are usually designed to last anywhere between 30mins to 1 hour each.

access full interview transcripts. It is normal for officials who conduct the interviews to be present when the film is shown to Members. This means both that they can introduce it, and that they can answer any questions Members have. Watching filmed interviews, as opposed to reading written reports of them, can help bring home to Members the reality of participants' lives and experiences.	**Member involvement:** Members are not directly involved in the interviews.
Top tips for delivery: ✓ A little bit of small talk with interviewees before the interview begins is recommended to help put interviewees at their ease. ✓ Some participants may not feel comfortable being filmed. Where this is the case, participants could be offered a telephone or non-filmed in person interview instead. Quotes for their interview can then be incorporated in written form into the film. ✓ Depending on the number of interview questions, it can be a good idea to ask participants' permission to repeat some of them at the end of the interview. By this stage participants will have got into their stride and are likely to summarise their points more succinctly, in a way that is easier to include in the film. ✓ Experience has shown that Members are less likely to engage with the film if they are sent a link to it by email. It is better to play it to them in a private or public committee meeting. ✓ It is important to achieve a balance in the film between getting key points across succinctly and effectively and ensuring each participant is featured for a reasonable amount of time so that they feel their participation has been worthwhile and valued.	**Lead in time required:** 4-6 weeks. However, this can vary depending on who is doing the editing of the interviews into a film and how long they need to do this. It is advisable find out the answer to this question early on in planning the engagement. **Sources and further information:** This library page was informed by an interview with Kevin Davies, Engagement Manager, National Assembly for Wales, on 21 October 2016.

Case study:

In 2015, the National Assembly for Wales' Environment and Sustainability Committee undertook an inquiry into the general principles of the Environment (Wales) Bill. The committee was keen to hear from the fishing industry. However, the inquiry took place over the summer (the prime season for shellfisheries) making it difficult for fishermen to take part.

To resolve this problem, members of the National Assembly for Wales's Outreach Team went out with the fishermen on their boats, carrying out interviews with them and filming their responses. The evidence collected covered their opinions on licensing, regulating orders and the Bill's relation to the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

Once back in Cardiff, the Outreach Team did an initial edit of the interview films, taking out footage of the questions being asked and any significant repetition within individual interviews. They then showed it to the committee's clerks and researchers to get their views on further cuts. Following this discussion, interviewees' comments were grouped by theme, with like remarks appearing next to each other in the film. As well as presenting points clearly, this had the added advantage of making the film shorter as the context for similar comments only needed to be included once.

The final film was presented during the committee's meeting on Thursday 16 July 2015. Committee Members reported finding this new source of evidence valuable, as it provided insights important to the Inquiry that they had not got from other witnesses and consultation responses. Seven out of ten of the committee's final recommendations were noted as partially attributable to the contributions made by interviewees. In total participants were referenced thirteen times in the inquiry report.

Since this successful first use of the film interview method, National Assembly for Wales committees – in conjunction with the Assembly's Outreach Team – have gone on to use this method on several more occasions. These include inquiries into job opportunities for young people, business rates and youth entrepreneurship. On all these occasions, committees found that the interviews provided valuable additional insights to evidence they had received from other sources.

Method Four: Photographic Evidence via Semi-Structured Interviews

Method description:	Participants (how many and who):
The basic method here is the same as for method three. It involves members of the Outreach and Engagement Service – or Committee Office, if preferred – going to where participants are to conduct interviews. The interviews themselves should be made up of around five to ten open questions agreed by the committee. Where relevant these can be informed by the initial scoping research conducted around a potential inquiry, or responses to a call for written evidence. The first question in any interview should be very broad, giving participants a chance to talk around the topic. Questions can then become gradually more specific. It is important that questions are not leading. Although interviews are not an event as such, it is still important to cover the information, other than housekeeping, listed on page 14 under 'Setting-up an event'. Participants should be asked in advance whether or not they are happy to be photographed and, if desired, for their interviews to be audio recorded. The difference between this method and method three is how the information collected during the interviews is presented to the committee. This time instead of being filmed, participants are photographed. The issues raised in the interviews are then presented back to Members as a photobook showing pictures of participants next to summaries of the key issues raised during their interview. If preferred and interviews are audio recorded, interviews can also be transcribed so that Members can access full interview transcripts.	In theory there is no limit on the number of people who could be interviewed. To keep the method manageable for Parliamentary staff, however, somewhere between seven and fifteen interviews is probably realistic. Interviews are a suitable method for engaging a wide range of participants. **Type of question it can address:** Unless interviewees are policy specialists or equivalents, interviews tend to be best focussed on interviewees' own experiences and resulting views. As the interview continues, it may also be possible to ask participants how they think specific proposed changes might affect them. **Length of event:** Interviews are usually designed to last anywhere between 30mins to 1 hour each.

It is normal for officials who conduct the interviews to be present when Members discuss the photobook. This means that they can answer any questions Members have. Adding photographs to written evidence can help bring home to Members the reality of participants' lives and experiences.	**Member involvement:** Members are not directly involved in the interviews.
Top tips for delivery: ✓ A little bit of small talk with interviewees before the interview begins is recommended to help put interviewees at their ease. ✓ Some participants may not feel comfortable being photographed. This should be established in advance of the interview day and participants' wishes should be respected. It may also be possible to explore alternative options, for example a purposely blurred photo or a photo of a significant place or item. ✓ Participants are likely to be more at ease if they are photographed at the end of the interview. ✓ A cheaper and easier alternative to recording the interviews (where a transcript is not required) is for the interviewers to keep a note of key points raised during the interview and then to check these back with the participant at the interview's end. When key points for inclusion in the photobook are decided at a later date, participants should be given the chance to agree/amend them to ensure they feel they are an accurate reflection of the interview. ✓ Where an external photographer is used, the committee may wish to provide them with guidelines for the type of photographs sought.	**Lead in time required:** 4-6 weeks. **Sources and further information:** This blog post.

Case study:

Using photographs to help capture information for a select committee is a new idea. But using photographs to give MPs access to others' viewpoints and perspectives is not.

In 2016, the Crick Centre and the World Photography Organisation ran a competition for photographers-in-training. Under the theme of 'everyday politics', participants were encouraged to take photographs that expressed their views and experiences. A selection of the best entries was displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall of the House of Commons.

Whilst preparing the exhibition in Parliament, Dr Holly Eva Ryan (Associate Fellow at the Crick Centre) was frequently approached by MPs asking her to tell them more about the exhibition. Dr Ryan notes the power of photographs "to transport us to a different place or time and to see contemporary issues framed according to the standpoints and positions of others." Relatedly she recognises the potential of photography to help people explain to others the issues that have the biggest impact on their lives.

Method Five: Conversation Café

Method description:

Conversations Cafés are designed to gather participants' thoughts on a single topic or question. This topic can be very specific or reasonably broad.

The room is set up cabaret style (chairs around small tables), with each table seating around 8-10 people. There is a facilitator at each table.

On each table, the facilitator begins by describing six principles of a good conversation:

- **Open-mindedness:** Listen to and respect all points of view.
- **Acceptance:** Suspend judgment as best you can.
- **Curiosity:** Seek to understand rather than persuade.
- **Discovery:** Question assumptions, look for new insights.
- **Sincerity:** Speak what has personal heart and meaning.
- **Brevity:** Go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.

Participants are asked to agree to adhere to these principles.

The facilitator then describes the process the event is going to follow (see below) and introduces the 'Talking Object'. The Talking Object can be any item, for example a book, ball or trophy. The facilitator explains that participants can only speak when they are holding the object and encourages them to listen actively when others are speaking.

The Café itself works by participants passing the Talking Object round the table for introductions and three further rounds:

- **Introductions:** Participants introduce themselves to the group.

- **1st Round:** Participants are invited to share brief initial thoughts on the topic under discussion.

- **2nd Round:** Participants explain their initial comments

Participants (how many and who):

The original copyrighted methodology, suggests Conversations Cafés are suitable for 8-10 people. However this assumes there is just one table. For select committees' purposes, the Conversations Café process could be run on more than one table simultaneously, allowing for many more people to take part in the event.

Conversations Cafés were originally designed to bring together very different types of participants – for example, members of the public, policy specialists and academics – at the same event. When the method is used in this way, facilitators need to take particular care to ensure all participants are heard.

Whilst not their original use, select committees could equally employ Conversations Cafés to hear from less diverse groups.

The method is not ideal for vulnerable participants, unless they already know and are comfortable around the other people taking part.

in detail and add any new thoughts or ideas that have since occurred to them.

- **Open discussion:** The facilitator opens the floor to free dialogue. Use of the Talking Object is suspended for the open discussion and only reintroduced if needed, for example, to stop someone dominating the conversation or to control contention.
- **3rd Round:** The Talking Object is reintroduced and each person has the opportunity to share reflections and state how prior thoughts have been changed, refined or strengthened. This final round is usually around 5-10 minutes in length.

It is important to make sure participants have a pen and paper to jot down thoughts as others are speaking. It is also fine if someone chooses not to speak when it is their turn with the Talking Object, especially in Round One.

Conversation Cafés are so-called because they are often held in a café or room set-up like a café. While this is done to help participants relax and feel comfortable, it is not essential to the method which can be used anywhere.

Type of question it can address:

Conversations Cafés are designed to gather participants' thoughts on a single topic or question. This topic can be very specific or reasonably broad.

While not likely to be a focus for committees' work, the Cafés can also help create shared understanding between participants.

Length of event:

1 hour – 1 ½ hours

However, Conversationcafe.org details a Café Lite model with 3-6 people per table, and a total length of 30-60mins. It suggests timings for this shorter event would work as follows:

"Take 10 to 12 minutes for the two opening rounds; with six people that's one minute per person—but with focus you can say a lot in a minute. Keep the open conversation going until three to five minutes before the end and ask everyone to say one word or sentence—no more!—about their experience of the conversation."

Top tips for delivery:

- ✓ Clearly define the topic to be discussed. Where there is more than one table, it may help to ask if anyone has any questions about the topic from the front of the room before people start working in their table groups.
- ✓ Create a friendly and welcoming environment to encourage trust and openness
- ✓ Don't be afraid to hold people to the six principles. The principles could be displayed on a screen at the front during the event, but this is very much optional.
- ✓ To capture the discussion, either audio record the conversation at each table and have it transcribed, or have a note taker at each table noting down anonymised key points. In the latter case, the note-taker should check these notes back with participants at the end of the event.

Member involvement:

Member attendance is optional. Where they do attend, it is advisable for Members to observe discussions rather than directly taking part.

Lead in time required:

4-6 weeks.

Sources and further information:

Converstioncafe.org

Participedia.net

Participationcompass.org

Case study:

In 2006, the British Science Association ran a project called Community X-Change. It aimed to find robust solutions to climate change that had the support of a variety of stakeholders. Conversation Cafés were held in Norwich and Liverpool, bringing together a diverse group of participants – members of the public, scientists and decision-makers. Through the cafes, the groups concluded that climate change could only be tackled if technical solutions were integrated with ways to address the social challenges facing communities. The safe, constructive space provided by the Cafés allowed for effective communication between citizens, scientists and decision-makers and enhanced understanding on all sides.

Method Six: World Café

Method description:

World Café enables participants to explore a question, topic or issue that can be narrow or broad depending on the time available. The method is intended to allow participants to build on the ideas of one another, thereby exploring issues deeply. It can also be used to reach a shared set of conclusions about the topic in question.

As with a Conversation Café, the room is set up cabaret-style (with participants seated around small tables). Usually there are 4-5 participants plus a facilitator (or 'table host') at each table. Although it is not essential, World Café events often use writeable table-cloths and coloured pens to enable participants to draw or write down their thoughts during the events. A Talking Object (see Conversation Café method) can also be used by facilitators if desired.

Once the event has been set-up (please see page 14), World Cafés tend to operate as follows:

- **Small Group Rounds:** Participants have a 20 minute conversation at their table. At the end of the 20 minutes, each person at the table moves to a different, new table. The table host stays behind to welcome the next group and briefly fill them in on what has been discussed so far. This process is repeated at least 3 times.
- **Questions**: The Small Group Rounds just described do not tackle the event topic as a whole. Instead each round has a specific question tables are asked to discuss. The same question is usually kept for at least 2 rounds before being changed, so that participants get to discuss it with different groups.
- **Harvest**: After the Small Group Rounds, all participants are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the whole group. These results are captured at the front of the room, for example on flipcharts. In some versions of World Café this session is facilitated in such a way as to enable participants to

Participants (how many and who):

The World Café method has been used for groups as small as ten people, and as large as 1000 people. The bigger the group, the more carefully the 'harvest' phase of the method needs thinking through.

The methodology is most suitable for participants who are comfortable meeting, and talking to, a large number of new people. It is often used with mixed groups of participants – for example, members of the public, front line professionals, policy staff and academics. Where members of the public are included, table hosts may need to take particular care that they feel comfortable and confident to express their views.

Type of question it can address:

World Café is designed to gather participants' thoughts on a single topic or question. This topic can be very broad, if so desired.

Length of event:

Anywhere from 2 hours (where there are three Small Group Rounds) upwards.

reach agreement on the event's findings – for example, the key points arising from the event. This is not however essential. The copyrighted World Café methodology stresses the importance of holding the event in a café or room set-up like a café. This is done to help participants relax and feel comfortable, and can create a fun and informal atmosphere. For committees' purposes, however, this is not essential – although if possible, it is a good idea.	
Top tips for delivery: ✓ Make sure the overall topic and question for each round are clearly explained. It may help to talk these through from the front of the room and ask if anyone has any questions before the start of the relevant rounds. It can also be a good to get feedback on the proposed topic and questions from some of the intended participants in advance. ✓ Make the question for the first round one on which everyone is likely to find it easy to contribute. ✓ Create a friendly and welcoming environment to encourage trust and openness. ✓ To capture the discussion, either audio record the conversations and have them transcribed, or ask the facilitator at each table to note down anonymised key points. This will also help the facilitator report on each round of conversation to their next group. The facilitator could check their notes back with participants at their table at the end of each round.	**Member involvement:** Member attendance is optional. Where they do attend, Members can do any combination of host, observe, or take part in the discussions. **Lead in time required:** 4-6 weeks . **Sources and further information:** Theworldcafe.com Participedia.net Participationcompass.org

Case study:

The following is an extract from specialist website Particepedia.net:

"There are many success stories involving World Cafes, here is just one example: The Financial Planning Association in Australia has so far hosted fifteen World Cafes to guide the growth of their new organization which is a result of a merger in January 2000 between two organizations. The merger presented the opportunity to design a new organization, structurally and philosophically. The cafes, which have ranged in size anywhere from 250 to 4000 people, have been successful at supporting this cultural shift as well as generating goals and steps toward making the new organization a success.

World Café meetings have also been used: in California among mediators of the judicial system; in Australia among government representatives, citizens, and business leaders; ... and by Wells Fargo bank to discuss a new technology plan for one bank division."

Method Seven: Distributed Dialogue

Method description:

Distributed Dialogue is a way for bodies undertaking engagement (in this case committees) to reach a large and/or diverse range of participants without having to run all the engagement activities themselves.

It involves creating a dialogue pack, which existing organisations and networks[5] can use to get feedback from the people with whom they work. Dialogue packs usually take the form of easy-to-implement event designs, accompanying guidance around facilitation, and a simple feedback form or equivalent for organisations to record their results. Having a standard feedback mechanism makes it easier for parliamentary officials to analyse the information collected during the engagement and determine its results.

Participants (how many and who):

Any.

Type of question it can address:

Distributed Dialogues are best used to ask participants about their own experiences and resulting views and ideas. They are less good for highly complex, technical topics.

Top tips for delivery:

- ✓ The simplest and quickest way for committees to run a Distributed Dialogue would be to work with one or two big organisations or networks – and to start talking to them very early in the process of planning the engagement. This means buy-in to the Dialogue is built in from the start and the organisations have the maximum possible lead-in time to facilitate the participation of the people with whom they work. See method nine for a case study of how a parliamentary committee partnered with Macmillan.

Length of event:

30mins to 1 hour is usually a realistic amount of time for pre-existing groups to spend on a Distributed Dialogue event.

5 In theory, Distributed Dialogue processes can also involve individual members of the public self-organising into groups to take part. However, this would require a much longer lead in time and also significantly more capacity and promotional activity on the part of committees.

Without this sort of partnership, it will take committees very significant time and effort to promote taking part in the Dialogue.

- ✓ Engaging organisations and networks from the start enables them to feed into, or feedback on, an early draft of the dialogue pack. This will help make sure it's as helpful and suitable as possible, both for those who will be running the events and for the people who will be taking part.

Member involvement:

With sufficient notice, Members could potentially visit a Distributed Dialogue event. However more usually this would be a method in which Members did not participate.

Lead in time required:

Minimum 8 weeks. The more organisations that are involved, the more time is likely to be required.

Sources and further information:

Participationcompass.org

Case study:

In 2012, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) ran the Bioenergy Dialogue. It aimed to help design a strategy for bioenergy that was responsive to public opinion, and to develop an on-going, embedded discussion around bioenergy research that would engage a larger number of researchers and members of the public than previous BBSRC activities. In collaboration with academics, science communicators and the New Economics Foundation, BBSRC developed a toolkit of resources to be used by researchers and other interested groups to run the Distributed Dialogue events. Feedback was collected via evaluation forms, and included the views and opinions of participants about bioenergy, demographic information about participants, and participants' feedback on the event itself.

Method Eight: Go-To Democracy

Method description:

Go-to Democracy refers to a process where committee Members go to where participants already are. Depending on the topic, this could include, for example, going to a community centre lunch, AA or youth group meeting, or school fete. This reduces barriers to participants taking part, for example by:

- Removing the need for additional travel or childcare/respite care arrangements;
- Holding engagement in an environment where participants feel comfortable;
- For vulnerable participants in particular, enabling professionals who they already know and trust to facilitate their engagement.

The engagement itself is usually informal or semi-informal. Committee Members chat to participants, bearing in mind a list of topics or questions that the committee has agreed to explore in advance. Where necessary the committee Member can steer the conversation to ensure they've heard participants' views on all the pre-agreed areas.

It is also possible to combine the Go-to principle of Go-to Democracy with other methods from this library – for example, Deliberative Workshops, or Conversation Cafés - enabling Members to get a deeper insight into participants' views while they are with them.

Participants (how many and who):

For all participants to have a chance to talk properly to Members, the ratio of participants to Members probably should not be greater than 5:1.

Type of question it can address:

Go-to Democracy events are best for asking participants about their own stories and experiences, and their resulting views and ideas.

Length of event:

Depending on the number of participants and Members, around 45 minutes is usually enough for a good discussion.

Where another method from this library is being used as part of the event, please see the relevant library page.

Top tips for delivery:

✓ Some participants may find committee Members intimidating. Where this is likely to be the case, it may be possible for a professional to help participants prepare for

Member involvement:

Yes.

the event. For example, a youth worker may be able to support their youth group to have an initial discussion of the engagement topic and note down key thoughts to share with Members when they arrive. This can help generate a fuller and more equal conversation. This sort of preparation activity is often most effective when it takes place in the same room where participants will meet committee Members, so that it helps them feel at ease in the space.

✓ Unless combined with one of the other methods in this library, findings from Go-To Democracy events are often not formally captured. This means they cannot be submitted as formal evidence to an inquiry. It also makes it harder for committee Members to share insights with one another where they've spoken to different groups or individuals. This lack of capture does not, however, need to be the case. For example:

  - ✓ Parliamentary officials can accompany Members to the events and take notes;
  - ✓ Members can be given feedback forms to complete with participants;
  - ✓ A graphic artist can attend the event to create a visual record of the discussion.

Lead in time required:

2-4 weeks depending on how often the groups being visited meet.

Sources and further information:

This library page was informed by:

- An interview with Kevin Davies, Engagement Manager, National Assembly for Wales, on 21 October 2016;
- Email correspondence with Helen Finlayson and Llinos Madeley, respectively Second Clerk and Clerk to the Health and Social Care Committee, National Assembly for Wales, at the time of engagement work described.

Note on safeguarding:
For the inquiry into new psychoactive substances, the Health and Social Care committee partnered with the *dan 24/7* help service. With the service's permission, all literature linked to the inquiry – including materials used at engagement events - featured DAN 24/7's contact numbers and information on where to get further information and support.

Case studies:

Health and Social Care Committee, National Assembly for Wales: Inquiry into new psychoactive substances (often known as "legal highs")

The committee decided at the inquiry's scoping stage to build engagement activity into its evidence gathering process. It agreed on a list of questions to explore, then split into two groups according to AMs' constituency locations. Half of the AMs visited organisations in North Wales, half visited organisations in South Wales.

The AMs who represented constituencies or regions in South Wales made two visits. They talked to adults undergoing drug rehabilitation treatment at the charity Drug Aid's café in Caerphilly. They then went on to meet a youth group called Forsythia at their local youth club in Merthyr Tydfil. The youth group had just produced a film to encourage young people not to take new psychoactive substances. Members watched the film with the young people and then talked to them about what the film aimed to say and achieve, as well as more generally about their experiences in the local area.

After their relevant visits, both sets of AMs went on to additional separate focus group events with front line health, education, criminal justice, housing and social care staff. As with the visits described above, these events were organised jointly by the Assembly's Outreach and Clerking Teams. In total, AMs were away from Cardiff and their consistencies or regions for a day.

In advance of the visits and focus group events, permission was sought from all participants for anonymised notes of discussions to be produced. Prior to publication, these notes were circulated to all participants to check for any factual inaccuracies. The notes were heavily drawn upon in the body of the committee's final report and recommendations. A summary report was also produced and shared with those who participated in the visits and focus groups to illustrate how the information they had provided was used.

The notes from the visits and focus groups referred to in this case study, as well as that inquiry's full report and summary report are available online.

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, National Assembly for Wales: Inquiry into poverty

At the start of their Inquiry into poverty, Committee Members were keen to hear from a range of directly affected individuals. Before going out to visit groups Members agreed on the key areas about which they would ask. AMs then visited groups – for example, of women and asylum seekers - in their own constituencies or regions. They were accompanied by a member of parliamentary staff whose role was to take notes. These notes were written up and submitted to the inquiry as formal evidence.

Method Nine: Pyramid Events

Method description:

The term 'Pyramid Events' refers to a structure of events rather than a particular engagement method.

It involves using one of the other methods from this library to run events in different geographical locations around the country, or with different groups of participants (e.g. service users, professionals with different specialisms). These are known as 'Initial Events'. This is valuable where the experiences or viewpoints of participants are likely to differ according to where they live or work. While Members can attend these events if they wish to, they can also be official-led.

Following the Initial Events, a Final Event is held in the Houses of Parliament. This event brings together a small number of participants from each of the Initial Events with committee Members.

The Final Event's design is informed by the findings of the Initial Events. It provides Members with the opportunity to ask participants about these findings and explore their views and the reasons for them in more detail. Participants are briefed in advance that their role is to speak on behalf of all the people who attended their Initial Event, rather than just for themselves.

Participants (how many and who):

Any, as it is up to committees how many Initial Events they hold.

At the final event with committee Members the ratio of participants to Members should not be more than about 6:1.

Type of question it can address:

Pyramid Events can be used to address a wide variety of questions because of the flexibility in their design.

Length of event:

Both the Initial Events and Final Event last for 1-2 hours

Top tips for delivery:

✓ Members need to be well-briefed on the results of the Initial Events, before participants meet them in Westminster.

✓ It can be helpful to send participants attending the final event some questions in advance so they can think about what they want to get across.

✓ Participants attending the Westminster events in particular may well need help with their travel, accommodation and

Member involvement:

Yes, but only at the Final Event at Westminster.

Lead in time required:

8-12 weeks.

subsistence costs. They may also need help with expenses such as additional childcare and respite care.

- ✓ Participants may be travelling a long way to attend the Final Event. It may enhance their experience if, for example, they can also go on a tour of Parliament during their visit.
- ✓ It is important to remember to feedback what happens at the Final Event to all those who attended the Initial Events.
- ✓ It is a good idea to use one of the methods in this guide for the Final Event – not just the Initial Events - to facilitate an enjoyable and useful conversation for both committee Members and participants.

Sources and further information:

This library page was informed by: (1) an interview with Kevin Davies, Engagement Manager, National Assembly for Wales, on 21 October 2016; (2) email correspondence with Helen Finlayson and Llinos Madeley, respectively Second Clerk and Clerk to the Health and Social Care Committee, National Assembly for Wales, at the time of the engagement work described; (3) an unpublished document from the University of Edinburgh's School of Social and Political Science, which explored the efforts of Scottish Parliamentary Committees to engage 'unusual suspects' in their work.

Case studies:

Health and Social Care Committee, National Assembly for Wales: Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Cancer Delivery Plan

For this inquiry, the committee wanted to hear directly from people with experience of cancer services – both patients and their families - including those living in different parts of Wales.

To achieve this ambition, the committee partnered with Macmillan. This assisted the committee to identify and reach out to existing groups of potential participants, for example Macmillan's Cancer Patient Forums. To maximise the number of people who were able to participate, Members agreed that the Assembly's Outreach and Engagement Service would meet with five groups in different parts of Wales. Before each meeting, participants were provided with a briefing pack which included information about the inquiry and key questions agreed by the committee. The questions were based on written evidence received in response to the call for evidence. At the meetings, the Outreach Team explained a little about the Assembly and the context of the inquiry, then used deliberative workshop techniques to find out what the participants thought. With the permission of the participants, the Outreach team took notes of the discussions, which were later collated and published. They also recorded short video clips with participants.

Alongside this, the Outreach Team worked in close collaboration with the committee, the clerking team and the committee's subject-specialist research staff to design a Final Event in Cardiff. This Final Event was attended by committee Members and twenty of the participants. Before the event, Members and participants received a written briefing on the outcomes from the Initial Events, and a list of key themes for discussion. At the start of the Final Event, a compilation of the videos from the Initial Events was shown.

At the Final Event, committee Members facilitated roundtable discussions at which they asked participants about the key issues raised during the Initial Events. Members then fed back to the whole group about what they were hearing. An official was present on each table to take notes, which were later collated and published. Before publication, the notes were shared with the participants.

The whole Pyramid Event process took place after the call for written evidence but before the oral evidence sessions. The personal testimonies from individuals were very powerful, and helped to illustrate the formal written evidence. Members drew on what they had heard to inform their questioning during oral sessions, and the notes were drawn upon in the committee's final report.

The Outreach Team kept the participants in the Initial and Final Events informed of progress throughout the inquiry. An event was held at the Assembly to launch the report, to which each Initial Event group was invited to send representatives. A summary report was published alongside the main report which highlighted the link between the evidence from the engagement activity, the Minister's views and the committee's recommendations.

Education and Culture Committee, Scottish Parliament: Inquiry into decision making on whether to take children into care

For this Inquiry, the Committee wanted to hear directly from looked after children. To do this, it worked closely with the charity Who Cares? Scotland. WC?S facilitated two private meetings for Committee Members with young people in Glasgow and Edinburgh. They made a strong impression on MSPs.

Towards the end of the Inquiry, the Committee then organised a conference-style event at Parliament. It invited the young people, as well as a range of professionals involved in social work and care. Some of the young people opened the event by performing a short play based on their experiences of being in care; this was uncomfortable to watch for some, but ultimately enabled deliberation and learning. Following this, group discussions were held to develop policy recommendations.