

Strengths of Different Data Collection Techniques		
METHOD	STRENGTHS	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Response cards Comments cards Comments books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are a flexible way of engaging with the public • Can be used as part of a display and other people can be encouraged to read them - it can be made "fun" and interactive to catch attention • Need minimal administration as people can complete the card or write in a comments book themselves • Can encourage people to write, draw or record their comments in their own way and take into account different levels of ability • Can target people engaged in particular activities depending upon where the response cards or comment books are placed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posing questions in a comments book or on a card will improve the quality of the comments • Provide good quality pens and paper to indicate to people that their comments are being taken seriously • Place comments cards so that everyone can see them and are encouraged to share their views
Questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are good for large-scale collection of evidence where broad information is required rather than in-depth exploration • Are flexible and can be used in a variety of formats - on-site, by email or post • Can include closed or multiple-choice questions as well as open-ended ones • Can be used flexibly - they can be self-completion or administered by deliverers who can help explain questions that may not be straightforward for some people • Collect demographic information for comparison across age / gender • Have the potential to collect information from participants over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions need careful phrasing to reflect age, language and ability levels of your targeted public group • The 'look' of the questionnaire is important and good design is crucial • Be aware of questionnaire 'overload' - is this method suitable for the public you are trying to reach? • It can be difficult to control who completes self-completion questionnaires • Make them manageable so that users are not put off by (perceived) length or difficulty of questions • It is essential to develop skills in using spreadsheets to analyse information especially for large-scale collection of questionnaires
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can take place face to face or on the telephone • Conducted by peers • Used one to one, can provide good information about learning, attitudes, feelings, opinions and behaviour • Have the potential to collect information from participants over time about their experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find ways of setting participants at ease - they need to feel comfortable about sharing their experiences with the interviewer • If language is an issue use a translator or peer interviews where one person could translate for the other • Plan how you will analyse the data in advance – an interview may produce a large amount of evidence that may be time-consuming to analyse unless the interview is structured (then answers may be more predictable)
Graffiti Walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are interactive as comments can be made to look attractive as part of a display - people can read others' comments and may be encouraged to add their own • POST IT notes can be used as a colourful / cheap way of getting people to share their comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments need to be fixed strongly to the wall or they might be lost • Provide a posting box for people wanting to keep their comments anonymous
Drawings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are useful when writing skills are limited and may be more "fun" or engaging • Can be used in combination with written comments to aid analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are challenging to interpret without questioning and mediation
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation can work well if participants "talk out loud" about their experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need to be combined with interviews or questionnaires

	while the observer walks around with them - an accompanied experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If people know they are being observed their behaviour may be affected
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an appealing alternative to traditional comments cards - may be more fun and engaging for some users than writing comments • Is potentially a powerful tool for gathering evidence for advocacy purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of video may be time-consuming with too much material e.g. from a discussion • Needs to be edited properly • Not easy to set this up unless integrated into the design of a space
Role play\acting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may stimulate people's memories by asking them to re-live it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some participants may be reluctant to act out their experiences so you need to introduce the idea of role-play carefully • Requires a skilled moderator
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can elicit in-depth information from participants about their views and experiences • May encourage people to share their attitudes, beliefs and experiences more openly through group interaction • Are a good way of collecting and reinforcing evidence of learning from groups participating in the activity/project • Enable you to collect different perspectives of the same experience or at different time periods if focus groups are carried out at different stages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitator needs to be skilled in leading the discussion and keeping the group focused. He/she needs to ensure that everybody feels comfortable about sharing their experiences and opinions equally • Make practical arrangements clear for all involved including location, maps, furniture and refreshments • You may need to pay for participants attending a focus group or provide an incentive • It may not be easy to extract the individual's experiences from the group's • You will need to take notes (which may require a second moderator) or record the discussion
Photographs/Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can act as a memory aid to people • Can be used by people to convey their experiences creatively • Can be used with speech bubbles in a display to convey experiences to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to analyse if the context for the photograph is unknown
Artwork/Sculpture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used in conjunction with other methods e.g. interviews and focus groups to obtain the context and help articulate the learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to interpret and analyse if the context is not known
Letters/Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters and emails can show evidence of outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable and ad hoc source of outcomes • Analysis may be time-consuming
Case studies/Vignettes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be used as a stimulus to present different experiences to people in interviews or focus groups • Explore people's perceptions, beliefs and experiences in relation to a specific situation • Get people talking and to present a broader view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vignettes need to be chosen carefully so that people can relate to the experience • Not used in isolation as it may only give views about the experience contained within it rather than a reflection of their own experiences