

Barriers to participation activity

This activity is useful when reviewing a situation where there has been a low turnout to an event or a meeting or lack of take up of an opportunity to participate. When a group are facing what they fear is general apathy it is sometimes useful explore in more detail why this is. This activity allows them to walk in the shoes of others and is participative and can be fun. (It has been delivered outside in a car park or on the grass when weather has permitted – making for some interested and amused passers-by!!!!) It allows those involved to explore the real barriers some people have to face when asked to participate in a consultation exercise or community event and can then lead them on to think about what changes they may need to make to be more inclusive.

The example given can be adapted to suit the situation you are reviewing and the group you are working with to make it relevant to their situation. All you have to do is amend the statement and the role cards, the method stays the same.

Facilitators notes:

Prior to the activity print/laminate and cut out role cards.

After discussion and agreeing the need for a review with the group, at the meeting. You should distribute the role card. Ask participants to think about who they are and where they live as stated on their card. Now ask people to stand at one end of the room keeping in mind their character role. Ask participants to stand with their backs to the wall and use the full length of the room. (If it is possible, and weather suitable! You can move this exercise out to the car park or outdoors).

Explain that you are going to call out statements. After each statement is read, they must take a giant step, a baby step, or stay where they are depending on how easy it would be for them to participate in the event/consultation. Take a big step if you can participate quite easily; take a baby step if you can do it with difficulty. Don't move at all if you cannot participate.

Emphasise that the aim of the exercise is to try and experience what life is like in character – it is not about reaching the end first.

Now call out the first statement. Once everyone has responded, choose more statements from the list, read them out and allow participants to make their move.

When all the statements are read out start the debriefing (add more statements if required).

This exercise works well in a larger area, as the differential between the participants is more obvious. Take it outside if it is reasonable weather.

During the activity, after a short period of time, ask the players at the back how they are feeling – ask the same of the people at the front. Either when time runs out or when one person reaches the finish line ask the same question again. Either in the position they are in or back together as a group ask the participants to read out their role cards and lead a short discussion around the following points.

- Who got the furthest along? Why?
- What were you feeling towards the people ahead of you/the people behind you?
- How did you feel when you could not move?
- How did you feel when you were moving faster than other people?
- Who moved the shortest distance? Why?

There are a couple of ways to take this to the next stage if you want to begin to develop a plan of action of sorts.

List barriers identified on a flip chart. – as a full group or in small groups discuss and record “solutions” – how can these barriers can be decreased or removed, what needs to happen, who needs to be involved in doing this?

Or - choose one or two characters relevant to the make-up of the local community and discuss what could be done in context to allow them to participate more fully. Note down suggestions.

Barriers to Participation

(Facilitators statement sheet)

(You can add or change any of these questions to suit the group/ situation.)

Statements: Can you participate?

- A questionnaire is sent round primary and secondary schools about health issues – can you participate?
- There is a meeting at the local library on Tuesday evening at 6pm about leisure facilities for young people – can you participate?
- A survey is sent through the post for young people to express their views about drugs and alcohol – can you participate?
- There is a workshop at the local college about transport in the area and it is based on photography – can you participate?
- A drama company are touring schools and running workshops about ‘education is fun’ – can you participate?
- There is a meeting about the Scottish Youth Parliament – can you participate?
- A questionnaire on issues that young people are concerned about is put on the web by the Scottish Executive – can you participate?
- You are asked in the street about your views on the health service – can you participate?
- You are invited to a focus group between 7-9pm next Thursday evening about services available and needed for children in the area – can you participate?
- There is a large consultation event in Glasgow about children’s rights – can you participate?
- You are asked to read a summary paper on education from the government and write down your responses – can you participate?
- A graffiti wall is drawn in your local library on young people’s views on the area – can you participate?

Barriers to Participation – Role Cards

Jane: You have two young children and you are a single parent. Your mother helps you out a lot with the children but she does not like babysitting at night because she does not feel safe walking to your flat in the dark. You plan to go to college when your youngest child starts school.

Paul: You are living in local authority care at the moment. You are interested in reading and playing football. You would like to get a computer but you do not have one now. You attend school and your favourite subjects are music and drama.

Ellie: You live on farm with your family on the Orkney Isles in the north of Scotland. It is very expensive to travel to Glasgow or Edinburgh and you have only visited these cities once in your lifetime. You do have a computer and access to the Internet.

Patrick: You live with your family who are travellers in a caravan on the edge of a town. You have been to four primary schools, each in a different town. You like your current school best and you have met new friends in the area. You would like to get linked up to the Internet at home but you do not think that it will be possible.

Angaila: You have recently moved to Scotland as a refugee with your parents and you can speak a little English but you cannot read it very well. You are very shy and you do not like going to large meetings.

Sue: You do not like school and you often do not go but hang out with your friends instead. At night you go down town and hang about and you are looking forward to being eighteen as there is nothing for young people to do.

Soon Lee: You are 15 and live with your family in what is known as a fairly

“troubled” community. Your parents are very strict, they will not let you travel alone on public transport and as they run a local restaurant work very unsocial hours. They want you to go to university so when you are not helping in family business you are expected to sit quietly in the restaurant and study.



Falak: You are 17 and stay with your mum, dad and younger sister & brother. Your family are devout Muslim and adhere strictly to all the religious observances. You attend a local all-girls school and wear your traditional “burga” which means that you sometimes get teased and bullied. You don’t meet up with friends from school and only attend social events with your parents.

Gerry: You have been excluded from school for a period of three months. This caused a big argument at home and you are staying with your elderly grandmother. It’s ok but she is a bit old fashioned in her thinking and she goes to bed every night at 8.30pm. She doesn’t like leaving the door open for you so expects you to be in by then. She also asks you to keep the TV volume down as it disturbs her. She doesn’t have a computer or even a Freeview box so you are getting bored!

Ross: You are a member of a local gang who have a reputation in the area for causing trouble. You all tend to hang out at the leisure centre and harass people as they go in and out. The police are always moving you on and you have all been barred from using the centre or the adjoining swimming pool. Last week they wouldn’t even let you in to your mate’s party even though they said you could attend.

Padma: You live with your parents, your two brothers and sister in Edinburgh. You are planning to go to university next year and you would like to study computer science. You speak English at school but not at home.

Cameron: You live in the Western Isles of Scotland and have slight visual-impairment. Your computer is adapted so that you can read text that is sent to you via email but you cannot read standard text very well.

Tom: You are fifteen and you live with your mother and younger sister. Your Mum is a single parent and works during the evenings. When you get home from school you look after your sister until your Mum gets home from work at



about 7pm. You have a Saturday job to earn money for CDs and going out.

Dan: You are involved in the Scottish Youth Parliament and enjoy going to meetings and discussing issues that affect young people. You have access to the Internet and are about to take your higher exams.

Marie: You live with your mother and sister in Glasgow and you are fourteen. You have dyslexia and find it difficult to read and complete forms. You are very creative and enjoy photography and art-based activities.

Andy: You had polio as a baby and you now need a wheelchair to get about. You like reading but the local library has steps and you cannot get in without help. You do not like going out when it is dark because the street lighting is not good in your area and it makes it difficult for you to get about.

