

How to Set Up a Peer Research Group Workbook



How to use this book

This workbook goes with part 1 of the manual “setting up a peer research group”. Each of the guiding questions from that section are in this book, with space to give your answers, brainstorm and track your progress, along with key points and quotes from the manual to help prompt your thinking.

We developed this companion work book based on feedback from the groups who worked with us and tested version one of the manual. We hope you will find it useful on your journey into peer research!

Preparing and Planning

A key consideration when starting a peer research project is to think about what your motivations might be for doing so.

Are you looking to gain new insights, collaborate on a shared problem, empower your participants or work more collaboratively?

Will this lead to unique insights that couldn't be heard otherwise, and what purpose does gaining these serve?

Prompting thought from the manual....

"Is what you're getting worth the time / energy / emotion / resource commitment. Is there a safer, more thorough way? Do you have to trade some of these things off for others?"

Why do you want to carry out peer research?

What will peer research bring to what you are trying to achieve that non-peer research will not?

THE BASICS – CHECKLIST

Much of the below list will be familiar to you if you have run workshops or group work before, but some things are specific to running a peer research project. You may want to add to the list depending on your particular situation; this is just a starting point.

- ☐ Focus: A general idea of the area of research and who you want to work with.
- ☐ Budget: In addition to staff and venue costs, peers and participants should be reimbursed for their time, as well as having a budget for basic stationery resources, IT equipment and snacks.
- ☐ Time: Time to give to the group learning and process, and to provide support to the people involved in your project. Some conversations can't be rushed; everyone must be on board with every step of the process.
- ☐ People: At least two facilitators to run the peer research group sessions. One person should always be on hand to step out and provide support if a peer needs private support. Depending on the topic, the sessions may be difficult for some (e.g. triggering traumatic responses). Facilitators with research and facilitation skills are recommended.
- ☐ Policies: You will need the relevant safeguarding policies and guidelines on research ethics. Also, see Appendix B for our lived experience reward policy.
- ☐ Do you have the resources to carry out peer research? This includes money and time, but also the ability to ensure it is a safe experience for the peers.

Recruitment

When planning peer research, it's vital to ensure meaningful collaboration. Recruitment should be transparent, with clear expectations, and the value of lived experience should be recognised, as it brings authentic perspectives to the project. These questions will guide you through this process.

Who do you want to be involved? If you can, get specific (ie. if you already know individuals who will be involved!)

Which demographics are you aiming to work with, and why?

Which organisations or community groups might be involved?

How many peers/participants are you planning to form your peer research group?

What might be barriers for the people you hope to work with?

Which of these barriers can you dismantle for the people you hope to work with, and how?

Will peer researchers be involved in co-design from the start, or purely as participants?

Will people be involved in just one aspect like gathering data, or analysis and dissemination, too?

With all the above in mind, consider who will do what on the project? Include everyone, from organisational admin to the peer researchers themselves. We've given you some extra space to bring all the elements together here!

Expenses

Expenses refer to any reasonable costs incurred while participating in involvement work, which must be directly related to the tasks performed. Organisations should clearly outline which expenses will be covered and communicate this to participants.

How will you pay or reimburse your peers and participants, and have you allocated a budget specifically for these payments, including potential expenses? What is that budget?

Examples of reasonable expenses from the manual...

- Public transport and fuel
- Parking and taxi costs
- Childcare and personal assistance
- Translation or interpretation services
- Meals, subsistence, and accommodation for overnight stays
- Equipment costs

Being Wise with Time

When people come together as a group of peers to discuss potentially challenging topics, they not only bring experience but also emotions. A gradual process allows people to get to know each other and build trust. Having adequate time encourages a sense of openness and psychological safety

Are you planning to take days, weeks or months with your training?

How will you use your time and resources to structure meetings in a way that builds trust, accommodates different learning styles, and ensures psychological safety while preventing burnout?

How will you make the most of the time you've got to build in time for reflection and space, as well as bonding and connection?

How will you ensure the facilitators and organisational partners are part of the reflection process?

Accessibility

Accessibility is more than simply physically accessing a space. We feel that accessibility is about logistics as well as making everyone feel comfortable and included. While developing this manual, we discovered the following five types of accessibility that are important to consider:

use this space to brainstorm what each of these mean to you, and if there's anything you would add.

- Logistical
- Physical
- Sensory
- Psychological
- Digital

What kind of accessibility needs might there be in the group (peers, participants and facilitators)?

Consider the previous page above, and write anything you know for sure (i.e. if you already have members recruited). If the peers have not been recruited yet, consider how you can include these questions as part of your recruitment.

Support and Safety

Conducting peer research involves navigating potentially difficult and triggering conversations, making it essential to prioritise support and safety.

What might be difficult topics for your peers and participants in this project?

What kind of support will you realistically be able to offer peers and participants? E.g., one-to-ones, signposting, or just in-session pastoral care?

How will you build space and time for reflection for facilitators into your project? Think about bringing it into the sessions, time outside of the sessions and the reflective practice and support your facilitators will engage in.

***Prompting thought
from the manual....***

"we planned to have built-in safety nets—swap out with peers and facilitators if someone needs to take a break; support is available. Opt in and out."

Knowledge exchange – non-extractive research

Peer research thrives on conversations and relationships where there is a bit of give and take, rather than being authoritative or extractive. This collaborative dynamic mirrors the essence of storytelling and creativity, where everyone involved contributes meaningfully to the process.

What's in it for your peers and participants? What will they gain from their involvement?

Think about what your output aims are. How will you credit your peers and participants or involve them at this stage?

***Prompting thought
from the manual....***

Research is done with the participant,
and not to the participant. Walk
alongside the participant."

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