



LINKS



Summary of qualitative methods of evaluation

Method	Description	What this method will give you	Limitations
Interviews	<p>An interview is a conversation with a purpose Usually initiated by the interviewer to get specific and relevant information from the interviewee The questions asked will be informed by purpose of the interview and the intention of the intervention. A topic guide needs to be developed which contains those questions.</p>	<p>Flexible and adaptable way of finding things out amend language; ask follow up questions Get lots of rich data.</p>	<p>Interviewers need to be skilled & need to practice using the topic guide with others (piloting really) May be less reliable than surveys – open questions allow people to say all sorts of things. Risk of bias – both in terms of who opts to participate – who considers it a very important thing for example and who thinks this is a waste of time but have been instructed by their manager to participate and how they answer the questions. Expertise is needed to analyse them– open questions can lead to a variety of answers which may cover a range of themes. Time consuming – both to conduct and to analyse.</p>
Focus groups	<p>Focus groups are often used in market research where products and their packaging are tested. Also used by political parties</p>	<p>More efficient than individual interviews</p>	<p>Negative group dynamics may hinder some participants and prevent them from responding honestly. Needs skilful facilitation and ideally 2 people – one to facilitate and one to record.</p>

	<p>when they are testing manifesto messages or policy positions. Strictly speaking a focus group is a group discussion, facilitated by a researcher which allows for the group to lead the discussion once a topic has been introduced. However, often the way these are run, really resembles a group interview with the conversation being directed by the members of the group answering a number of pre-determined questions (though there is room for flexibility in the discussion).</p>	<p>Maybe more enjoyable for some participants than an individual interview May generate more data as participants' memories are stimulated by each other</p>	<p>Audio recording can be difficult if people talk over each other</p>
<p>Participant and non-participant observation</p>	<p>Participant and non-participant observation means looking for changes in behavior.</p> <p>Realistically no-one here who is working on a NLCF project is going to be a 'participant' in the sense that you are not going to be pretending to be young people (like a secret shopper!). But you may be a participant in that you routinely work with the young people in say a group, so they are used to you being there.</p>	<p>It is direct – no need to ask anybody what they think, feel etc – you can see what they do and say AND how they behave and say things. So non-verbal communication here is just as important as verbal. The language that people use is important too. Complements and allows for comparison with other methods, e.g. often in interviews or surveys people say what they think the researcher/evaluator wants to hear but they may behave differently. Observation can</p>	<p>An observer may disturb the situation – and people may behave differently because they know they are being observed (e.g. children's behaviour during school inspections!)</p> <p>Possible to overcome this if a) people don't know they are being observed (though this is not really ethical) or b) the participants are so used to being observed that they don't really notice. This might be the case for you as project workers, especially if you co-work sessions. One person can facilitate, and the other observe while being part of the group and the roles can change around between the workers as the session progresses. Then both workers can debrief and write up notes on what was or was not observed. In schools this sometimes happens with 'trusted colleagues' who observe in each other's classrooms. They don't observe the teacher, they observe the children/young people</p>

	<p>A non-participant might be another member of staff who 'visits' the group on an occasional basis – they are not there all of the time and do not really undertake the kind of facilitation role that you might (e.g. anyone who is inspected by ETI or other bodies may have had experience of external observers). Other non-participants in the group might be parents or carers, teachers or other relevant adults in the child's life.</p> <p>Examples of behavior change include both positive or negative, changes: calmer; not as angry or a more appropriate expression of that anger or emotion; better routines, e.g. going to bed at a decent time so that s/he can get up on time for school/work/training Skills, e.g. communication skills – verbal and non-verbal Knowledge, e.g. how to use a bus timetable; where to look for info; how to boil an egg (life skills)</p>	<p>cut through this so that, for example, in a discussion on prejudice or confidence in communicating, what is said by the participant can be corroborated or refuted by what is observed.</p> <p>So 'real life' is observed as it happens – it is not artificial. For example, young people's communication skills can be observed first hand – their language, eye contact, non-verbal behaviour will all testify as to whether this is improving or not over the course of a project.</p>	<p>and how they respond to what is being taught in a particular way.</p> <p>There is the potential for bias where observers see what they want to see or where changes in behaviour are open to interpretation.</p> <p>Observation is time consuming.</p>
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<p>Case studies</p>	<p>There are several different kinds of case studies – group; individual; community; events or organisations but for our purposes we will think of individual case studies as this is what grant holders often use to illustrate the impact of their work.</p> <p>An individual case study is a detailed account of one person. Such case studies tend to focus on the context within which the young person came to be involved in the project; circumstances or events that were experienced prior to their involvement in it; the issues/problems that were being addressed with the young person and the outcome that was being worked towards (in other words the aim of the work). Case studies such as this are used to explore causes, influencing factors, processes, experiences etc. So they will look at not only whether the outcome was achieved or not but will also examine HOW this was achieved (or not) and WHY. It will also allow for other unintended outcomes to be</p>	<p>Can tell a whole story, placing the participant and activities of a project in context.</p> <p>An effective way to document and report good practice.</p>	<p>Cannot be generalised to a wider population</p> <p>May be dismissed as ‘anecdotal’</p> <p>May be time consuming to write up</p>
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	documented (negative or positive).		
Free text questions in surveys	<p>Open questions in surveys - can generate qualitative data which can be collected alongside quantitative data.</p> <p>Questions can include for example, asking why do you say that? Please give a reason for your answer</p> <p>Do you have any other comments to make?</p>	<p>Allows survey respondents space to give their opinions and explain their answers.</p> <p>Can result in some rich and valuable data giving more insight into and complementing the quantitative data</p>	<p>If handwritten, writing may be difficult to read.</p> <p>Respondents may write irrelevant information or use the space to vent anger or tell jokes</p>