

The CCC-CATAPULT Toolkit



Tool 6: Focus Group Guide

The CCC-CATAPULT research project

The CCC-CATAPULT research project aimed to examine young people's experiences of, and learning about, the climate crisis through co-working with young people as researchers in four city regions within Europe: Bristol, UK; Galway, Ireland; Tampere, Finland; and Genoa, Italy. In this tool, we focus on 10 key findings from our research, which includes a survey of 1,879 young people (15-18-year-olds) across the four different city regions, as well as interviews, focus groups and narrative workshops with young people and educators. The findings explore young people's perspectives of the climate crisis. For more information about the project, please see www.ccc-catapult.org

This focus group guide

This guide lays out the principles and guidelines that we developed over the course of the project for running focus groups with young people. The guide is split into the following four sections:

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1. Objective of the focus group

As a research team, you will need to define your own objectives for running focus groups. As an example, for the CCC-CATAPULT research project, we defined our objectives as follows:

- Providing an opportunity for young people to discuss their thoughts and behaviours in relation to climate change issues.
- Provide an opportunity to explore young people's perspectives on climate literacy, sense making of climate issues in their lives, worldviews, and intercultural education.
- The discussions are premised on principles of co-production with themes and topics informed by emerging survey findings; YAP reflection and feedback and the project proposal.

The aim is not to conduct a serial interview, but rather start a discussion on the topics outlined below. Thus, the analysis will focus on issues where participants agree or have contrasting views, rather than on recording each participant's specific routines. We do want to hear from everyone, but not necessarily on every individual item.

2. General guidelines for organizing the focus group

Organizing Principles:

- Ideally, focus group discussions will involve 6 - 8 young people, recruited primarily, though not exclusively, through schools. There is an opportunity to include groups of young people recruited from outside formal education settings also.
- We agreed on a minimum of 5 focus groups in each case study location.
- We agreed on a minimum of 32 young people participating across the focus group series in each case study location.
- Each focus group should take 50 minutes.
- Young people will sit around a table or in chairs arranged in a circular shape (in an attempt to disrupt a sense of classroom if discussion is happening in a school context) with at least one member of the research team acting as moderator and note-taker.
- If focus group is taking place in a school try to arrange for the discussion to happen outside of a designated classroom (e.g. the school canteen or library, or similar, outside of busy footfall times). The discussion around focus group venue should happen well in advance of the focus group.
- The discussion should be audio-recorded.
- Each focus group will reflect the agreed format (developed through emerging survey findings, YAP discussions and proposal aims and objectives).
- For those new to focus group discussion methodologies, Annex 1 includes suggested health and safety guidelines (for both researcher and research participant). These are for your information and broadly represent good ethical practice while in the field.

3. Guidelines for moderating the focus group

Before the Focus Group:

- (Re-)Familiarize yourself with the project's aims and objectives and any emerging findings to date (for example anything emerging from the survey that may be mentioned below). Also, ensure you are equipped to answer questions on YAPs.
- (Re-)Familiarize yourself with the focus group discussion guide and ensure you have any supporting resources to hand and are confident in how these are to be used. The group discussion will need to be efficient (given the time limits) and this will only be possible if you are very familiar with the guide and questions.
- Ensure you are familiar with the focus group timings per section - you will need to steer the conversation along in the allotted time.
- Remember to bring everything you need with you.

Establishing Relations of Trust and Empathy:

- Be neither judgemental nor intrusive:
 - There is no right or wrong answer

- All viewpoints are welcome and people do not have to agree with each other
- Tread carefully - there may be some in the group experiencing anxiety and lacking confidence in their capacity to contribute
- Remember: you are not the expert present to impart a lesson, but are there to listen and understand; we aim to embody empathy as a research posture
- Show respect for participants' time, space and perspective
- Be encouraging and reassuring, while creating a balance between politeness and informality

Tips for the Focus Group Discussion Process:

- Know your questions. Try not to be overly reliant on the discussion guide.
- Be aware in advance of the topics you want to cover before meeting participating young people, as well as the key messages; be very familiar with how questions are organized topically; prepare any supporting materials in advance.
- Avoid locking the focus group into a rigid sequence of topics and questions. Rather, use the discussion guide as a checklist to check that each topic has been discussed.
- Keep in mind the analysis process - if you think participating young people make a particularly interesting comment or insight, make a note of this and record the time when it was voiced as possible (this will facilitate finding the verbatim citation in your recording).
- Make notes of any major agreements or disagreement, points of particular interest etc.

Starting the Focus Group:

- Welcome the group of young people and thank them for being there.
- Allow participants to complete the Demographic record sheet (if they have not already done so in advance of the focus group).
- Explain the study
- Explain that the focus group will take XX minutes and give a brief overview of the topics to be covered (this will also help keep you to time)
- Explain the format: an informal discussion with no right or wrong answers. Explain to the young people that the aim is not necessarily to reach consensus, but to find as many new viewpoints as possible - 'Everyone's contribution is important.'
- Ask permission to record the interview; ensure every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Inform the young people of their rights (to not answer and to withdraw at any stage without recourse) and make sure you have consent to participate and audio-record from each individual.
- Explain that any participant can choose not to respond to a question if they do not want to.
- Explain again that all data will be rendered anonymous and will not be shared outside the research team.

Starting the Discussion:

- Ask participating young people to write their names on a folded piece of cardboard so you and they (though they will probably know each other already) can easily see everyone's names.
- Start with a game of 'Would you rather....' (For those who are unfamiliar with the game see below for how to play)

During the Discussion:

- Make sure everyone gets to speak. Draw in the silent people by asking them their opinion; for example: 'has anyone had a different experience to this?' or 'does anyone have a different opinion or idea on this topic?' You can usually refocus the discussion by avoiding looking at the most talkative person. Alternatively, you can address your next question explicitly to someone who has not been speaking very much. If nothing else helps, you could simply say: 'It is important that we hear from everyone, so let's give the word now to XYZ.'
- Bring people back to a topic smoothly ('we seem to have strayed a bit from the question - let's come back to what we originally asked again....').
- Diffuse debates (if necessary) by saying 'It is great to have differing viewpoints; we have made a note of everything you said.' Then move onto the next topic.
- Avoid hijacking the conversation by talking too much or being directive.
- Avoid anticipating answers or interrupting the flow of the narration.
- Taking notes during the interview is useful (failure of the recording device, loss of data, reminder to look for a direct quote, noting a future question, noting (the time of) a particularly insightful citation).

After the Discussion:

A big thank you for their time! However, your work is not over yet:

- Let participants know what is happening next with data collection for the project
- Write down any further points of interest following the focus group. Note down any key statements that should be translated as a quote from respondents.
- Note down any misunderstandings; highly positive feelings; negative emotions; moments of agreement or disagreement; confusion or need for further clarification; requests for further information etc.
- Note any facial expressions or other body movements (comfort, discomfort) that say something about the interview.
- What was not said can be as important as what was said (especially as you complete a number of focus groups, this can be more apparent). This is also important in the context of the project's aims and objectives (hence re-familiarizing yourself with these can be hugely useful in informing

4. A model focus group template - the CCC-CATAPULT model

This template is the version that was used for the focus groups on the CCC-CATAPULT project. We have left our questions and prompts as examples (see the grey shaded boxes), of course for your project, you will need to develop your own questions. Timings will also need to be adapted as required.

Activity Question	Content	Timing
• Introduction to the project • Participation and consent explained and recorded (as necessary and as approved by partner Institutional Research Ethics Committees) • Demographic capture (using the same record sheet across all groups)	Project introduction Consent forms and demographic recording sheets to be completed	5 minutes
Icebreaker: Participants play a brief game of 'Would you rather...' Sample questions (can be adapted by partners) • Would you rather visit the top of Everest or the wreck of Titanic? • Would you rather give you showering or give up meat? • Would you rather the weather be super-hot or super cold? • Would you rather plant 200 trees or rear 200 cows? • Would you rather discover a new plant or discover a new animal? • Would you rather live on a deserted island or the heart of a busy city? • Would you rather have wings to fly or gills to breathe under water? • Would you rather be able to talk to animals or speak 10 different human languages? • Would you rather be invisible or be able to fly? • Would you rather visit a volcano or a rainforest? • Would you rather visit a city or a tropical island? • Would you rather wear the same clothes for a year or wear the same shoes for a year? • Would you rather live without a television or without the internet?	Participants introduce themselves (names on cardboard) and play a short game 'Would you rather...' Questions should be asked in rapid succession for the best response. Again, there is no wrong answer - encourage young people to 'go with their gut'. More examples of icebreaker questions are available here.	3 minutes

<u>Thematic question: Trust and intergenerational influence</u> Question 1. Of the 1132 young people surveyed so far, 78% of those who answered that question disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I trust older generations to tackle Climate Change” Why do you think this is the case? Question 2. Who would you trust to tackle climate change? Question 3. What is your role in informing older and/or younger generations on issues relating to climate change?	Participants indicated that they do not trust older generations to tackle climate change Stats: I trust older generations to tackle Climate Change: Disagree/Strongly Disagree: 77.8% of valid responses (44.2% Disagree; 33.6% Strongly Disagree)	7-8 minutes
<u>Thematic question: Understanding the value action gap</u> Question 4. A high percentage of young people in our survey felt that climate change is a really important issue for society, but very few young people surveyed are involved and/or are active in climate actions. Why might this be the case? - Have you any ideas on how we might tackle climate crisis? - Students might also mention here any actions they are currently involved with that address climate crisis. -	I consider climate change to be: Important/Very Important: 77.6% of valid responses (42.3% Very important; 35.3% Important); only 4.3% said it was not important and 18.1% somewhat important	5-6 minutes
<u>Theme: Transformative futures addressing the Value action Gap</u> Question 5. Have you any ideas for how society can support young people who might want to become (more) active on climate change issues? Prompts - If these themes haven't been mentioned please ask: Q6. What are your experiences of climate education in school? Q7. What role do you see schools playing teaching young people about climate change in the future? Q8. How do you think climate change education should be taught in the future? (May	Prompts might include answers from survey e.g.: Support for helping them to get involved in climate action: 8.2% Easy access to information about climate change is not at all important; 70.7% said it is important/very important 17.7% workshops and training are not at all important; 55.9% said it was important/very important 12.8% climate change lessons, classes activities in school not at all important; 63.8% said it	15-18 minutes

also ask prompt if it has not emerged already from the conversation: What can teachers do to support climate change education?) Q9. Thinking about people and places outside of your school/college, where else do you experience opportunities to learn more about climate change? (e.g. home, extra-curricular activities, hobbies, religious groups, other affiliations outside schools) Prompts around climate literacy Q10. How confident do you feel about your knowledge of climate change? Q11. Thinking of future generations how do we ensure young people become climate literate? Prompt 3 Eco-anxiety Q12 How do we make sure this does not become too much for young people?	was important/very important 56.7% disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement that they don't need support	
Bringing it all together: time at the end for young people to raise anything they feel hasn't been discussed or anything the researcher feels more information is needed on	Keep this part open for the young people to raise anything additional that they think is relevant. This would also be a good time to check if there is anything that a participant has said that you were not sure what they meant and would like to seek clarification.	5-10 minutes



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For more information about
the project, please go to the
CCC-CATAPULT website:

