## Strengths of Different Data Collection Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>THINGS TO CONSIDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Response cards Comments cards Comments books | • 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 | • 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                  | • 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 | • 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                      | • 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 | • 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                  | • 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 | • 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                        | • 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 | • These are challenging to interpret without questioning and mediation |
| Observation                     | • Observation can work well if participants "talk out loud" about their experiences while the observer walks around with them - an accompanied experience | • May need to be combined with interviews or questionnaires  
• If people know they are being observed their behaviour may be affected |

Based on the Research Methods, Inspiring Learning For All, MLA [http://inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/export/sites/inspiringlearning/resources/repository/Methods_-_strengths_and_we.pdf](http://inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/export/sites/inspiringlearning/resources/repository/Methods_-_strengths_and_we.pdf)
### Strengths of Different Data Collection Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Video</strong></th>
<th><strong>Role play/acting</strong></th>
<th><strong>Photographs/Images</strong></th>
<th><strong>Artwork/Sculpture</strong></th>
<th><strong>Letters/Email</strong></th>
<th><strong>Case studies/Vignettes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Focus Groups</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Is an appealing alternative to traditional comments cards - may be more fun and engaging for some users than writing comments &lt;br&gt; - Is potentially a powerful tool for gathering evidence for advocacy purposes</td>
<td>- It may stimulate people's memories by asking them to re-live it</td>
<td>- Can act as a memory aid to people &lt;br&gt; - Can be used by people to convey their experiences creatively &lt;br&gt; - Can be used with speech bubbles in a display to convey experiences to others</td>
<td>- Can be used in conjunction with other methods e.g. interviews and focus groups to obtain the context and help articulate the learning</td>
<td>- Letters and emails can show evidence of outcomes</td>
<td>- Could be used as a stimulus to present different experiences to people in interviews or focus groups &lt;br&gt; - Explore people's perceptions, beliefs and experiences in relation to a specific situation &lt;br&gt; - Get people talking and to present a broader view</td>
<td>- Can elicit in-depth information from participants about their views and experiences &lt;br&gt; - May encourage people to share their attitudes, beliefs and experiences more openly through group interaction &lt;br&gt; - Are a good way of collecting and reinforcing evidence of learning from groups participating in the activity/project &lt;br&gt; - Enable you to collect different perspectives of the same experience or at different time periods if focus groups are carried out at different stages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the *Research Methods*, Inspiring Learning For All, MLA [http://inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/export/sites/inspiringlearning/resources/repository/Methods___strengths_and_we.pdf](http://inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/export/sites/inspiringlearning/resources/repository/Methods___strengths_and_we.pdf)