



What are the values of facilitation?

Values are the deeply held beliefs about what is right that guide behaviour. Core facilitation values are statements of ideals that are made operational through conscious effort over many years.

(Dorothy Strachan, 2007, p.31)

Various people and organisations have determined for themselves which values are central to the ways in which they facilitate, but running through all of them are respect, empowerment, participation, inclusiveness and professional responsibility. There is a continuity between these themes and many current policies and initiatives relating to social services in Scotland including the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers, the Shared Vision and Strategy for Social Services in Scotland 2015-2020, the Agenda for Integration of Health and Social Care, Health and Social Care Standards and Enhancing leadership capability: The strategy for enhancing the leadership capability of Scotland's social services: Delivery plan 2017-2020, all of which aim for professional and empowering engagement with people to support their best outcomes.

What does a facilitator do?

Facilitating is similar to managing a project in that the facilitator has responsibility for a range of tasks and must use his or her skills and knowledge to deliver on these tasks. The fundamental tasks below can be used as a check list of 'facilitation fundamental' rules.

- **Planning –**
- **Be prepared.** Being prepared is crucial for good facilitation. Not only does it ensure you're aiming for the desired outcomes, it enables you to put your energy into the complex task of meeting the needs of all the stakeholders, including the sponsor(s), the group and those who will be impacted by the work of the group.
- **Know your sponsor.** Who has commissioned the facilitation and what do they want you to achieve? How clear is the outcome they are looking for and how achievable is it? Taking time to get clarity around these questions is an important stage to make sure everyone involved will be aiming for the same thing.
- **Know your audience.** Who is attending and why? What is their role? Where possible it is helpful to get an idea of what attendees expect and hope to get out of the event. This might result in a need to make sponsors aware of significant differences in both parties' understanding and may result in the outcomes being further clarified. If the audience's views can't be discerned beforehand it should be covered early in a session.
- **Aims and outcomes.** Be sure of the desired outcome. What does the sponsor want to be different as a result of having the session(s)? What do the attendees hope will be different by the end? Ensure you cover the outcomes at the start of facilitated sessions and use this as a measure at the end to see what has been achieved.
- **Design great content.** What you do in sessions doesn't have to be complicated but it does need to be engaging and designed to achieve the outcomes. Knowing your audience and the outcomes provides the basis for your design. Ask yourself 'What will offer enough challenge to this group that they will grow without being overwhelmed?'

Consider adult learning styles, engaging ways to deliver content using storytelling, interactive activity, seated mixed with some physical activity. Use materials that can spark imagination and encourage diversity in thinking including pictures, film and tactile materials. Pay attention to the balance between delivering content (if this is part of your task) and the audience participation.

- **Delivery:**
- **Create a safe space.** When a group and the individuals in it feel safe there is a good chance they will take risks in order to grow. The conditions needed for this range from person to person but often involve feeling able to have faith in the integrity of the facilitator and their group peers. Using key facilitation skills of listening, questioning and exercising presence/being present, help a facilitator to engender this (see below). Specific activities in the agenda also support the learning space. Creating a working agreement with the group helps people's specific wants to be stated and agreed upon. This can include a variety of points and often includes issues like being open to others' perspectives, respecting confidentiality and giving people time to speak.
- **Manage time well** – Time is a precious commodity. Work efficiently with your eye on the progress of sessions. This may involve managing group discussions to keep them on track whilst balancing any needs to shift direction according to the energy of the group.
- **Support all group members to contribute.** Create the space for everyone's contribution to be made. Make sure the most vocal don't always have the floor. Employing techniques like working in pairs and small groups and adding thoughts/opinions and ideas anonymously can help alongside specifically asking different people for their perspective on something.
- **Manage conflict constructively.** When differences of opinion become heated, the facilitator's role is to support both sides to be heard in ways that are respectful of the group's working agreement and in service of the outcomes. It is important to be mindful of people's feeling of security while also attending to the development of the individuals and the group.
- **Recording.** Making records of points of interest, agreements and actions is an important way to support group members' feelings of contribution while having formal notes to refer to for follow up. The group should be able to see what is being written to ensure accuracy.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should be considered alongside the outcomes. When you know what you are seeking to achieve you can set parameters to evaluate how well this has been done. Sponsors and participants can be included in determining evaluation criteria and should be included in the actual evaluation.

What are the fundamental skills of facilitation?

To do the above effectively, facilitators need the fundamental skills of listening, questioning and being 'present'. Each of these skills lies at the heart of great facilitation. When used collectively they are a powerful enabler for trust, empathy, empowerment and meaningful outcomes, and reflect the Common Core of skills, knowledge and values for working with Scotland's people as developed by the Scottish Government:



'have self-awareness, build trust, promote dignity and fairness and engage people.'

(<http://www.sssc.uk.com/workforce-development/supporting-your-development/common-core>)

Of equal importance is recognising that you need to remain impartial to enable groups to think for themselves. Useful interventions can be offered, often by way of a well formed question, to support the group to explore and come up with solutions/outcomes but the facilitator must be in touch with why they offer an intervention and check that it serves the purpose of the session/group.

Listening

Often we confuse hearing with listening but there is a distinction and it makes a noticeable difference to the outcome of dialogue.

We can 'hear' the noise made by someone or something when the sound reaches us or the actions that convey meaning are seen. To truly 'listen' when someone is communicating, we need to be focussed on that person, their words, body language, intonation and other cues. Doing this as a facilitator benefits the development of trust in the group.

This crucial ingredient contributes to people feeling seen, included and valued. Laura Whitworth et al (2007 p.31) describe the impact of such listening beautifully:

'To be listened to is a striking experience, partly because it is so rare. When another person is totally with you leaning in, interested in every word, eager to empathise - you feel known and understood. People open up when they know they're being listened to; they expand; they have more presence. They feel safer and more secure as well and trust grows.'

Listening of this calibre can be described as 'active' when it employs a range of skills to support the listening, namely:

- **attending** – focusing your full attention on the other
- **paraphrasing** – saying back, using your words, what the other said
- **repeating** – repeating back using the speaker's words
- **clarifying** – checking out the meaning of something that isn't clear
- **summarising** – bringing together the main themes and ideas conveyed by someone.

The Kinharvie Institute describes an active listener as 'relaxed and detached. Their focus is on the other person's concerns and interests. They follow what he or she wants to talk about and respond to the speaker's concerns without adding their own opinions or views. Active listeners 'listen between the lines', attending to the non-verbal information (tone, volume, facial expressions) as well as the words. They keep the whole picture in mind whilst seeking to understand what the facts add up to. They ask themselves – what are the key ideas/issues/themes that bind all these facts together.'

Pause for reflection: Exercise 2

Organise a conversation with someone. Take turns to be the listener and the speaker. Conversation round one: The speaker talks about his or her work or home life, expanding on what energises and drains them. The listener should offer thoughts, opinions and ideas when they occur. Do this for ten minutes and then swap over. Share with one another how it felt to be listened to in this way.

Conversation round two: With the speaker using the same topic of conversation, the listener should focus on listening actively by focusing his or her full attention on the speaker. The point is to mainly listen attentively but if it feels useful, interject to clarify, paraphrase or use another feature of active listening. Again, swap over roles after ten minutes. Share with one another how it felt to be listened to actively.

How did round one compare with round two?

What is the main piece of learning you are taking from this exercise?

Blocks to listening

We all get distracted from listening fully to people. The causes of this are many, from our minds wandering, to being bored or too busy. The things that get in the way of listening actively are often attributed to experiencing 'interference' or 'blocks'. The following list details ten common listening blocks which have been adapted from the work of McKay, Fanning and Harbinger:

Ten common listening blocks

Rehearsing

It may appear that you're listening but you're actually planning what you're going to say next. When you're thinking about your own point or story you can't fully listen to someone else. In the context of facilitation this can often occur when you're building up to the next part of the agenda.

Mind reading

You're trying to work out what the speaker is 'really thinking or feeling' instead of actually being attentive. This often leads to making assumptions about people.

Comparing

When comparing, you're basically judging your situation against the speakers and wondering who is more able, more justified, has it harder etc. Thinking of how you are in relation to another leaves little space to hear the other person.

Identifying

What the speaker says reminds you of something in your own experience. This results in you thinking about your own story and sometimes biding your time so you can recount what happened to you.

**Advising**

Before someone is able to explain and explore for themselves, you jump in with solutions and advice.

Sparring

Sometimes we listen only to hear points we can disagree with.

Filtering

You listen to some things and not to others. You pay attention to hear only the things you think you need to hear. After that your attention drifts. Sometimes this is done to avoid things you don't want to hear eg criticism.

Judging

This involves prejudging someone because of who they are or what they think. You've already decided that what they have to say isn't really worth listening to so you don't.

Dreaming

The speaker's words trigger a private thought which then spirals into a chain. You may suddenly hear the speaker's words again and realise your mind had wandered and you heard nothing or little of what they said.

Placating

You go along with what people are saying and appear supportive but you aren't listening that well. People may often behave this way with children and older people.

(adapted from Mathew McKay et al, 1995).

Pause for reflection: Exercise 3

Listening Blocks Self Assessment

1. Which do you recognise as your most common listening blocks?
 - a. Rehearsing
 - b. Mind Reading
 - c. Comparing
 - d. Identifying
 - e. Advising
 - f. Sparring
 - g. Filtering
 - h. Judging
 - i. Dreaming
 - j. Placating
2. What activates these listening blocks for you, especially in the context of facilitating?
3. Do certain blocks arise predictably with certain people/groups of people?
4. How will you become aware that your listening has become blocked?
5. What strategies will you use to return to listening actively when you recognise your listening is blocked?

Questioning

One of the most effective ways to engage a group and seek their involvement is to ask questions.

Doing this alongside a genuine sense of curiosity whilst being focussed on the present moment elevates this practice to a powerful intervention which can shift an individual or group into awareness and action. Ingrid Bens describes facilitation as being 'essentially a questioning activity', and questions as crucial to encouraging participation and broader thinking.

(Ingrid Bens, 2012, p.25)

When asking a question, it should always be purposeful, with the intention of achieving a particular outcome. This helps the facilitator to stay focussed on the needs of the task and the group. Phrasing it in a concise and understandable way helps group members to feel included and to participate. Open-ended questions encourage independent thought more than closed questions.

Question Dos and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Ask clear, concise questions covering a single issue.	Ask rambling, ambiguous questions that cover multiple issues.
Ask challenging questions that will stimulate thought.	Ask questions that don't provide an opportunity for thought.
Ask reasonable questions based on what people know.	Ask questions that most people can't answer.
Ask honest and relevant questions.	Ask trick questions designed to fool them.

For examples of questions that aim for different outcomes, see appendix one.

Pause for reflection: Exercise 4

The next time you are part of a group conversation, pay attention to the kinds of questions that you and others are asking.

1. What is the balance between people asking questions and just responding to what has been said?
2. What happens when few questions are asked?
3. What impact do the questions have on a. the group, and b. the outcome of the discussion?
4. What were your intentions or purpose around any questions you asked?

(Julie Starr, 2008, pp.71-72)



Being present and exercising presence

There are various schools of thought about presence. For the purpose of this resource we will consider it as having two parts: being present and exercising presence. The former relates to being aware in the moment and the latter to knowing and using the best of your own knowledge, skills and personality. These are connected and are more impactful when both are in play.

Being present

'All learning integrates thinking and doing. All learning is about how we interact in the world and the types of capacities that develop from our interactions. What differs is the depth of the awareness and the consequent source of action.'

(Senge et al, 2012, pp.11-12)

How in tune are you with what is going on in your mind, your body and your environment at any given moment? 'Psychologists estimate that we each spend an average of 46.9 per cent of every waking day in a distracted, mind-wandering state.' (Claire Bridges, 2017, p.91). Much of the time our attention can be scattered by the many demands of modern life.

In facilitation, being present to ourselves, others, and what is arising in the moment, provides the underlying condition for other useful skills. It supports us to be aware of our own prejudices and ego, how they might impact on a situation, and to practise instead from a non-judgemental, open, curious and inclusive stance. Being present doesn't always come naturally and it can take effort to be present and to call upon it when needed.

Developing your ability to be in the moment

'When we are present, we are maximally resourceful and responsive to what our circumstances require of us.'

(Doug Silsbee, 2008, p.3)

Have you ever found yourself finishing a biscuit and realised you hadn't really tasted it? How often, when driving, have you become aware that you don't remember passing through an area on your journey? When was the last time you had a conversation and missed something that was said because you had wandered, even briefly, into your own thoughts? Developing our ability to be alert to the current moment can have benefits for our focus, memory retention, observations and ability to tap into our reservoir of skills and knowledge when most needed.

Practising mindfulness is an increasingly popular way to develop being present and has a growing scientific basis to its beneficial claims.

The ways in which we can practice and be mindful are numerous and range from daily meditation to activities such as knitting. The important message to hear is that whichever way you choose to practice. It is the doing and repeating of the method that will build up your ability to be present when you need/want to be.

Pause for reflection: Exercise 5

The following basic mindfulness exercise is taken from 'get some Headspace' by Andy Puddicombe. It offers a simple structure that takes 10 minutes to complete. To fully appreciate how the exercise works and what you can do to get the best out of it, it may be worth reading the accompanying pages in the book or having a look at the Headspace app, website or the many other resources available to support being mindful.

Getting ready

- 1 Find a place to sit down comfortably, keeping a straight back.
- 2 Ensure you'll be left undisturbed during your meditation (switch off your mobile).
- 3 Set the timer for 10 minutes.

Checking in

- 1 Take five deep breaths, breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth and then gently close your eyes.
- 2 Focus on the physical sensation of the body on the chair and the feet on the floor.
- 3 Scan down through the body and notice which parts feel uncomfortable and tense.
- 4 Notice how you're feeling – ie what sort of mood you're in right now.

Focusing the mind

- 1 Notice where you feel the rising and falling sensation of the breath most strongly.
- 2 Notice how each breath feels, the rhythm of it – whether it's long or short, deep or shallow, rough or smooth.
- 3 Gently count the breaths as you focus on the rising and falling sensation – one with the rise and two with the fall, upwards to a count of 10ten.
- 4 Repeat this cycle between five and 10 times, or for as long as you have time available.

Finishing off

- 1 Let go of any focus at all, allowing the mind to be as busy or as still as it wants to be for about 20 seconds.
- 2 Bring the mind back to the sensation of the body on the chair and the feet on the floor.
- 3 Gently open your eyes and stand up when you feel ready.

(Andy Puddicombe, 2011, pp.91-92)



Exercising presence

What is it?

When we exercise our presence, we are bringing forth our own qualities for the purpose of connecting and making an impact.

John Leary-Joyce speaks of having a 'signature' presence which is defined by:

- understanding the context you're in and interacting appropriately
 - communicating with passion and conviction via our tone, posture, language and attitude
 - being capable and credible by commitment to our own professional development and having confidence in ourselves and our own worth.
- (John Leary Joyce, 2014, p.210-227)

Why use it?

Exercising your presence can help create the conditions for the values of facilitation to develop in a group. Empowerment, collaboration and trust can all be more easily achieved when people get a real sense of you and others will often, in turn, offer a real sense of themselves, too.

'As leaders and as practitioners in any endeavour focused on human development, our quality of presence is central to our professional efficacy.'

(Doug Silsbee, 2008, p.3)

How to develop it?

Again, the benefits of a mindfulness practice can support the expression of your own presence. The more present we are when we need to call on exercising our presence, the more able we will be to access our ability to connect with our environment through our communication, knowledge/skills, and personal confidence.

Whilst being present and having presence are concerned with being in the moment and responding to that accordingly, planning and practising will help you to be in command of your brief. From this comes confidence and the ability to more easily relax into the business of working with the energy and direction of any particular group.

Equally important is your self-awareness. What are your vulnerabilities? What kind of circumstances do you react to without thinking about? On which occasions do you find yourself feeling certain emotions? When might your own judgements and prejudices come into play? Having a deep awareness of yourself and the impact you have on others can help you to recognise when you're in danger of slipping out of presence and into autopilot.

Pause for reflection: Exercise 6

Everyday there are opportunities to develop our self awareness.

1. Keep a regular record of your thoughts and reflections in a journal or learning log. Look back over your reflections and notice the patterns.
2. When you have experienced a strong emotion (eg anger, frustration, rejection, disappointment), take the time to pause and explore what happened for you in that situation. Remember that you can always choose your reaction to a situation.
3. Remember to reflect on your positive emotional reactions too (eg joy, happiness, a sense of belonging), notice the patterns and explore the cause.

Pause for reflection

Reflection tool

360 reflection is a powerful way to learn about the impact we have on others whilst allowing ourselves to develop through being vulnerable. In 360 we assess ourselves against a set of measures and ask others who know us to do the same. The SSSC has developed a 360 tool as part of the Step into Leadership resource which can be found here. <http://www.stepintoleadership.info/>



Open Badges

You can use Open Badges to demonstrate not only that you have completed some form of learning, but that you understand what you learned and improved your practice because of it.

Badges are issued by thousands of organisations around the world and the Scottish Social Services Council is using them too. They are a digital record of learning that is tied to criteria and evidence. Unlike traditional certificates, badges are information-rich, meaning each badge awarded to you includes important data about:

- what the badge is for
- what you had to do to earn the badge
- who awarded you the badge
- links to evidence of the work you did to get the badge
- the date you were awarded the badge and whether it will expire.

Show evidence of your learning with Open Badges

The fundamentals of facilitation open badge will be awarded to people who demonstrate their understanding of what facilitation is and how good facilitation allows all participants in a group to feel connected, engaged, fulfilled, and responsible for successful outcomes.

All you need to get started is an email address. Find out more and apply for your first badge today at <https://badges.sssc.uk.com>.

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Appendix one

This list has been adapted from the SSSC Coaching Learning Resource (<http://www.stepintoleadership.info/assets/pdf/SSSC%20Coaching%20section%20six.pdf>). These can be used to facilitate insight with the whole group or individuals within the group and can be easily adapted to meet your own context.

Questions for focus

- What is your biggest concern?
- What are you most proud of at the moment?
- What matters most to you at the moment?
- What is frustrating you most right now?
- What issue do you think others would like to resolve?
- What are you finding most difficult to resolve?
- What opportunities might you be missing?
- If you could change one thing today, what would it be?

Questions for framing the issue

- How would you summarise the issue in one sentence?
- Who and what is involved?
- What is the specific dilemma?
- What has prevented you sorting out this dilemma before now?
- What is stopping you getting on with something you know to be important?
- What is your gut instinct telling you to do about it?
- What is the main thing stopping you making progress?
- What is your motivation?
- What are the assumptions you are making?

Questions to analyse implications

- How does this matter to you?
- What is the current impact (on you, on others)?
- What is at stake?
- How does this fit into the big picture?
- What happens if you don't resolve it?
- What are the forces at play in this issue?
- What lies behind each of these forces?
- How might you have contributed to this issue?
- How does this fit with your values?

Question to facilitate insight

- What are your responsibilities in this?
- What have you been avoiding?
- What do you want to happen? For what reason?
- What would someone you trust and respect suggest?
- What is the question no one wants to ask or be asked?
- What do you know now?
- What patterns are familiar to you?



Questions to support reframing

- How do you now see the issue differently?
- What precisely has changed in your perception of the issue?
- Who do you now think owns this issue?
- Who has the power/responsibility to resolve it?
- What is important now?
- What do you now understand/not understand?
- What are the opportunities open to you?

Questions to stimulate creating options

- If you had no limitations on you, what would you do?
- What is the worst thing you could do?
- What is the best thing you could do?
- What would be most motivating for you?
- Who else could help you resolve this issue?
- If you could focus all of your energy on this, what would you do first?
- Where could you start?
- What needs to be resolved and how quickly or completely?

Questions to stimulate action

- What are you going to do about it?
- When do you want to achieve this?
- When and how will you get started?
- How committed are you to what needs to be done?
- How much courage do you need?
- Who can provide you with support and encouragement?
- How will you feel once you have resolved the issue?
- What obstacles do you foresee and how will you overcome them?
- What one action or decision would free you up to get on with this?
- What deadlines do you want to set?
- How will you measure progress towards this goal?

