



# Interview kit

A guide to interviewing for empathy

Created by



# Making it happen



Creating the right environment for your interview



# Engage & empower

## Why this is important

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Generally the public sector can be hesitant to reach out to stakeholders and end users as it can be considered as high risk. It increases the chances of causing harm on individuals through many variables such as evoking past traumas to being unable to deliver on citizens expectations.

This is why the approach and set up to interviewing is so important, we must aim to create an empowering experience for everyone involved. The next few pages detail tips and techniques for setting up an empathy interview process.

## Our checklist -

1. **Contacting the field**
2. **Seeking consent**
3. **Reducing harm**



# 1. Contacting the field

## Ask yourself

Is there a need for reciprocity?  
Do you reward someone for the exchange of information? (i.e. shout them a coffee, bring along some biscuits or fruit, pay them a flat fee for their time)

Enter the space with curiosity and respect to those you wish to engage with

## Tips

- Be honest and transparent about your interest in their experiences
- Keep the jargon to a minimum, and keep solutions or directions out of your invitation
- Have a short blurb ready to introduce yourself to people



## 2. Seeking consent

### Ask yourself

What you will do with people who are interested in participating further? (i.e. want to join the design team, want to do some further interviews on your behalf, want to participate in solution development)

Invite people in and offer a gift for contribution if appropriate

### Tips

- Be prepared for 'NO' and receive it with respect
- A verbal 'YES' is considered consent, and people don't need to sign anything unless you are going to keep their personal information or identify them in any way
- Prepare a post-interview flyer that thanks and informs people about your work and what you will do with their input. You may also need to include information on local support services
- Reassure interviewees about their privacy, anything they say can be 'off the record' or anonymous



# 3. Reducing harm

## Ask yourself

What's the capacity for harm?  
If you are exploring a problem that may relate to sensitive or traumatic lived experience identify some local services that can help and be prepared to direct people to where they can get support if they need it

Ask yourself and others if there is capacity for harm and seek to reduce this in anyway you can

## Tips

- Be aware of your position of power and work to minimize it
- Consider if you are the best person to do the interview or whether some else is more appropriate
- Be willing to move away from the topic area if the interviewee is uncomfortable



# Interview for empathy



Be human.  
Seek stories.  
Talk about feelings.  
- IDEO



# Holding the space

## Why this is important

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Empathy work is uncomfortable, it requires us to be vulnerable, to suspend judgement, and to sit in the emotion of the person or people who are sharing their experience. One of the most challenging parts of the discovery phase is to lean in to the discomfort rather than trying to change the subject, be sympathetic or even fix it with strategizing or solving. The next few pages detail tips and techniques to support you in conducting your empathy interviews.

## Our checklist for your interview -

1. **Before: Preparing**
2. **During: Suspending**
3. **After: Debrief**



# 1. Before: Preparing

## Mindsets/ behaviours

- Invite, don't influence
- Come from a space of curiosity and interest about understanding the problem
- Be aware of your position of power and work to minimize it (shifting power play video link)

## Techniques

No more than three team members should attend any single interview so as to not overwhelm the participant or crowd the location. Each team member should have a clear role (i.e. interviewer, note-taker, photographer etc)



## 2. During: Suspending

### Mindsets/ behaviours

- Practice your beginner's mindset
- Suspend judgement to be an objective observer
- Be curious and genuinely interested
- Go Deep
- Fight the urge to fix or solve

### Techniques

- Ask why
- Have themes to explore, not questions to answer
- Invite stories and follow the interviewee where they want to take you, rather than staying 'on topic'
- Ask questions you might already know the answer to, the response may surprise you
- Pay attention to body language and respond as necessary
- Don't be caught up in capturing every word! Record the conversation or make minimal notes so that you can maintain rapport
- Don't be afraid of silence. If you allow for silence, a person can reflect on what they've just said and may reveal something deeper.



# 3. After: Debrief

## Techniques

- Thank your interviewees and leave them with relevant information about your work, including your contact details
- Provide them with links to local support services if relevant

## Debrief with your team, use this as a guide to do so -

- Describe the setting
- Describe the person you interviewed
- Describe their body language during the interview
- Ask yourself:
  - What stood out for you? This is a great way to draw out key insights instead of worrying about having captured responses word for word
- How have your pre-interview assumptions been challenged?
- What do you notice about yourself before during and after the interview?
- Complete an empathy map to draw out more detailed information