5 - Focus group guide documentation

5.1: Focus group guide for case study schools staff

Learning Together STAFF focus group

This focus group should include 3 or 4 staff who are directly involved in the Learning Together programme and 2 or 3 staff who are not directly involved. Duration: 60 minutes.

Steps	Prompts	Research relevance
Consent forms and procedures (5 minutes)	Introduce yourself and the research project. Emphasise that this is a discussion, not a Q&A session – there's no right or wrong answers to anything we're going to talk about today. We're trying to find out staff views of the school and LT intervention in general, so anything you say, whatever your opinions are, will be really useful for us. Emphasise that what they say will be kept private. Ask staff to read and sign consent forms. Check everyone has signed it. Discuss some 'ground rules': ▪ respect for other's views ▪ try not to talk over each other (audio-recording) ▪ confidentiality and anonymity – discuss personal disclosures in group settings; pseudonyms Any questions before we start? Remind can ask questions at any point during as well.	Ethics

Introductions **(2 minutes)**	Start off with everyone just saying their name (for the audio recording); and their job title. *One researcher to write down names and allocate each participant a number.*	For the audio recording/ transcribing

The Learning Together intervention **(10 min)**	Are you aware of an intervention/programme happening at your school? Do you know what it's called? Tell me about it. What is the intervention trying to do? What is it for? (Prompt them if they don't know: intervention focused on improving relationships, improving a sense of community at their school, and reducing bullying and aggressive behaviour) Do you know of any changes at your school as a result of the intervention? What do you think will be achieved by these changes (i.e. what difference will they make in the school)? Are rules and policies (concerned with bullying and aggressive behaviour) being revised at your school? What's being changed? Are you aware of the Learning Together social and emotional curriculum? What is it for? What has been taught to students? How was it received by students – did they enjoy it? How do you feel about the intervention being delivered at your school?	Intervention reach/acceptability
How are incidents' of aggressive behaviour handled at the school?	Take a moment and think about the types of bullying and aggressive behaviour that happens at this school between students. What are they? Can you give an example of when you've encountered one of these behaviours from students and tell me how you went about addressing it?	Mechanisms/ Regulatory order

(15 min)	What are some challenges in dealing with incidents' of aggressive behaviour from students at the school? How do you think these can be overcome? Do you feel students know about the school rules and procedures for dealing with problem behaviour? Are certain students in your school repeatedly isolated from other students in response to misbehaviour?	
Restorative and punitive approaches (10 min)	What is restorative practice? Have you been trained using restorative practices with students? When did you receive training (part of the Learning Together programme)? What did you learn in restorative practice training about punitive versus restorative approaches to resolving misbehaviour? Do you agree with this? Has your approach to managing problem behaviours from students changed as a result of the training provided? Have you ever used restorative practices to address an incident of misbehaviour by a student or between students (low level disruption and/or more serious problems)? Give me an example of a case when you used it. What did you do? Was it useful? What were the challenges? In what circumstances do you think using restorative approaches is useful (e.g. severity of incidents; boys v girls; history of student; time of day)? Are there circumstances where you don't think it would be useful? Give me an example.	Mechanisms/ Regulatory order

Relationships with students **(10 min)**	Do teachers spend time with students outside of the classroom (e.g. extracurricular activities; lunch; break)? Do teachers intervene in student disputes outside the classroom? Do students have opportunities to communicate to teachers openly about learning issues? Do students have opportunities to communicate to teachers openly about their social or emotional issues? Do teachers at this school focus on the students who have the potential to do well in exams?	Mechanisms of action: boundaries and framing
School context **(5 min)**	What are the over-arching priorities for you/the head/senior management team at the moment?	School context
Wrap-up/de-brief	Do you have any questions? (about the group interview, project, or what happens next) Check participants understand anonymity and confidentiality procedures e.g. recap on pseudonyms	Ethics

5.2: Focus group guide for case study students involved in intervention activities

Learning Together Student ACTION GROUP focus group

This focus groups should involve 4-6 student who have been directly involved in Learning Together (e.g. action group members) – Duration: 60 minutes

Steps	Prompts	Research relevance
Consent forms and procedures (5 minutes)	Introduce yourself and the research project. Explain: what is a focus group. Emphasise that this is a discussion, not a Q&A session – there's no right or wrong answers to anything we're going to talk about today. We're trying to find out young people's views and so anything you say, whatever your opinions are, will be really useful for us. Emphasise that what they say will be kept private. We will not tell the school or their parents. Ask students to read and sign consent forms. Check everyone has signed it. Discuss some 'ground rules': ▪ respect for other's views ▪ try not to talk over each other (audio-recording) ▪ confidentiality and anonymity – discuss personal disclosures in group settings; pseudonyms Any questions before we start? Remind can ask questions at any point during as well.	Ethics

Introductions **(2 minutes)**	Start off with everyone just saying their name (for the audio recording); and what year they're in. *One researcher to write down names and allocate each participant a number.*	For the audio recording/ transcribing
Learning Together intervention **(5 min)**	Do you know about an intervention/programme happening at your school? What is it called? What do you think the (Learning Together) programme is trying to do? What is it for? What do you think about it overall?	Reach/acceptability
What is your experience of being an action group member? **(10 min)**	How did you get involved in the action group? Why did you join? Are your friends on the action group? What did your friends say about you getting involved on the action group? Who else is on the action group? Do you think the students in the action group represent all the pupils in the school? Are there students in the school that are not represented on the action group? Do other people in your year group or school know about the action group? How many action group meetings did you attend? What happens in an action group meeting? (e.g. what time of day is it held; who usually chairs the meeting; what is discussed; do you have to prepare for the meetings) Do you feel you had your say on the group? Were you listened to by staff? What is good about the action group? What is not good about the action group?	Fidelity of function (are locally developed action groups consistent with the theory of change) Reach/ Acceptability

What did you decide on the action group? (10 min)	What decisions have the action group made? Give me some examples. Give me an example of something in your school that has changed or is going to change as a result of a decision on the action group. What changes have been made/are being discussed about the school rules or policies? Are you happy with the changes being made? Do you think these changes will make your life at the school better? What will be improved? Do you think these changes are important to your classmates or friends?	Fidelity of function (are locally decided actions consistent with the theory of change)
Schools' response to aggressive behaviours (15 min)	Take a moment and think about the types of bullying and aggressive behaviour that happens at this school (among friends, classmates or even with teachers). What are they? How do teachers respond when an incident happens? How are incidents' of bullying or aggressive behaviour dealt with by the school? What do the school rules say about them? Do you think the way they are dealt with is fair? What would you change? Do you know what restorative practice is? Do you or teachers use restorative practices at your school? (prompt them if they don't know: teachers focusing on building relationships with them; resolving conflicts by having a chat with people involved about it)	Commitment to regulatory order
Social and emotional curriculum	Have you had lessons at school about: Trust? How to talk about your feelings and emotions? Respect? (these are in unit 1 of LT curriculum) When did you learn about this? What did you learn? What did you think of it?	Reach/ acceptability Student centred framing

(5 min)		

School context **(5 min)**	Do you feel safe at school? What makes you feel safe? Do you have an adult you can trust at school?	School context
Wrap-up/de-brief	How did you find the discussion? Do you have any questions? (about the group interview, project, or what happens next) Check participants understand anonymity and confidentiality procedures e.g. recap on pseudonyms Give info on further info/advice sources if necessary e.g. Childline etc.	Ethics

5.3: Focus group guide for case study students not involved in intervention activities

Learning Together Student GENERAL focus group

This focus group should involve 4-6 students who are NOT involved in Learning Together directly (duration: 60 minutes)

Steps	Prompts	Research relevance
Consent forms and procedures **(3 minutes)**	**Introduce** yourself and the research project (**don't say too much about the intervention though**) Explain: what is a **focus group**. Emphasise that this is a discussion, **not a Q&A session** – there's no right or wrong answers to anything we're going to talk about today. We're trying to find out young people's **views** and so anything you say, whatever your opinions are, will be really useful for us. Emphasise that what they say will be kept **private**. We will not tell the school or their parents. Ask students to read and sign **consent forms**. Check everyone has signed it. Discuss some 'ground rules': ▪ **respect** for other's views ▪ try not to talk **over each other** (audio-recording) ▪ **confidentiality** and anonymity – discuss personal disclosures in group settings; pseudonyms Any **questions** before we start? Remind can ask questions at any point during as well.	Ethics

Introductions **(2 minutes)**	Start off with everyone just saying their **name** (for the audio recording); and what **year** they're in. *One researcher to write down names and allocate each participant a **number**.*	For the audio recording/ transcribing

This school **(5 min)**	**Describe this school** in your own words.	
What is your relationship like with your teachers and other staff at the school? **(5 min)**	Do you get along with **teachers** and other staff in this school? Which staff? Do you feel they are **supportive**? Do you have opportunities to **talk to teachers** about any concerns related to learning? Do you spend time with any teachers **outside of the classroom** (e.g. extracurricular activities; lunch; break)? What are the **barriers to getting along** with staff at the school?	Mechanisms of action: staff-student boundaries Mechanisms of action: student-centred framing Commitment to instructional order
Your friends and relationships at the school **(10 min)**	Do you think **students in the school get along well**? Between year groups; classes? Are there different **'cliques'** of students that are friends?	Mechanisms of action: Student-student boundaries
Rules and codes of behaviour **(10-15 min)**	Take a moment and think about all the **types of bullying and aggressive behaviour** that happens at this school (among friends, classmates or even with teachers). What are they? What **happens if there is an incident** of bullying, aggressive behaviour or violence between friendship groups or within a friendship group? Can you give	Mechanisms of action: commitment to regulatory order

	me an **example** an incident when this happened (without naming names)? How do **teachers respond** when an incident happens? How are incidents' of bullying or aggressive behaviour dealt with by the school? What are the **school rules** around bullying and aggressive behaviour? Is this different from how **teachers actually respond**? Do you think the school rules on bullying and aggressive behaviour (formal and informal procedures) are **fair**? Do you know what **restorative practice** is? Do you or teachers **use** restorative practices at your school? (*prompt* them if they don't know: teachers focusing on **building relationships** with them; **resolving conflicts** by having a chat with people involved about it) Do students tend to follow the school rules on bullying and aggressive behaviour? Which ones. Why do you follow them? Why don't you? Are there 'rules' (i.e. **informal codes**, norms of behaviour) within your friendship group or among your year group? What are they? (e.g. one to one fight rule; wearing a certain item of clothing)	
Learning Together intervention **(5 min)**	Are you aware of a **programme or project** happening at your school? Do you know what it's **called**? Tell me about it. What is the intervention trying to **do**? Have you noticed any **changes** at your school recently?	Intervention reach/ acceptability

	Have you had lessons at school about **getting along with other students** or about **managing how you feel**? When did you learn about this? What did you learn? What did you **think of it**? Has the **school asked students** about their view on the school more lately? If yes to any of the above, **what do you think** about the programme overall?	
School and neighbourhood life **(Only if time permits: 10 min)**	Is this school located near where you live? What do your parents/families, neighbours and other people in your community think about your school? What is your community like where you live? Do you know your neighbours? Do your friends live nearby? Is it safe? Are you happy there? What are the rules in your home about violence, bullying and aggressive behaviour (low level disruptive behaviour; and more serious misbehaviour)? If there's been an incident of bullying or violence that you were involved in, how would your parents react? Do you feel safe at school? What makes you feel safe? Do you have an adult you can trust at school?	Mechanisms of action: school-community boundaries
Wrap-up/de-brief	Do you have **any questions**? (about the group interview, project, or what happens next) Check participants understand **anonymity and confidentiality** procedures e.g. recap on pseudonyms	Ethics

	If any students have raised issues relating to **abuse** raise this with the school liaison and notify Anne or Chris immediately.	

Information Sheet for students

We are researchers working at your school. As part of our research we would like to invite you to take part in a focus group. Please read this sheet. If you're willing to take part then you can sign that you understand what this involves and are happy with this.

What is a Focus Group?

A focus group is an interview involving several people at the same time, discussing things together. This will take 1 hour. If you agree to take part you will be asked by a researcher about your experiences of life at this school and your views on aggressive behaviours.

What will we do with the information?

We would like to audio-record the interview and then produce a written record of what was said. This record will not have anyone's name on it. No-one else such as parents or guardians, teachers or the police will be told what was said. We will write a report about what we find but it will not include the names of anyone that took part. Anything said in the focus group must be kept confidential to those who took part.

If you tell us that you or someone else is at risk of very serious harm we will need to respond. If this happens, we will first discuss it with you.

If you're happy to take part, please fill in the box below.

Name .....

I have read the information above.

I understand that I can choose to take part or not.

I understand that I can stop taking part at any time.

I agree to take part in this focus group.

Signed ..... **Date** .....

Information Sheet for School Staff

We are researchers working at your school. As part of our evaluation of the Learning Together project we would like you to take part in a focus group. Please read this sheet. If you agree to take part then you can sign that you understand what this involves and are happy with this.

What is a Focus Group?

A focus group is an interview involving several people at the same time, discussing things together. This should take about 60 minutes. If you agree to take part you will be asked by a researcher about your views on the Learning Together project, your experiences of life at this school and your views on aggressive behaviours.

What will we do with the information?

We would like to audio-record the interview and then produce a written record of what was said. This record will not have anyone's name on it. No-one else such as students, parents, school management or the police will be told what was said. We will write a report about what we find. It will not include the names of anyone that took part. Anything said in the focus group must be kept confidential to those who took part.

If you tell us that you or someone else is at risk of very serious harm we will need to respond. If this happens, we will first discuss it with you.

<u>If you're happy to take part, please fill in the box below</u>.

Name ……

I have read the information above.

I understand that I can choose to take part or not.

I understand that I can stop taking part at any time.

<u>I agree to take part in this focus group</u>

Signed …… Date ……

Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians

We are researchers from the Institute of Education working at your child's school to evaluate the Learning Together project. This is a new project which is being implemented in some schools in England this year and aims to improve relationships between students in school and reduce bullying and aggression.

As part of this research we are inviting some students to take part in focus groups. A focus group is an interview involving several people at the same time, discussing things together. These focus groups will take 1 hour. If your child agrees to take part they will be asked to discuss their views of the Learning Together project and life at their school, including their views on aggressive behaviours such as bullying and violence. Your child will receive information about the focus group. They will be able to ask questions before they decide whether to take part or not.

What young people tell us will be used to try and improve schools and young people's health, and the information will be confidential. When we write reports based on the research, your child will not be named or in any way be identified.

We hope you are happy for your child to participate. If you are, you do NOT need to do anything. If you are not happy or have any questions, please contact Farah Jamal (telephone: [redacted] or email: [redacted]). Alternatively, you can tell the school directly that you do not want your child to participate.

Many thanks for your time,

Farah Jamal

Research Officer

[redacted]