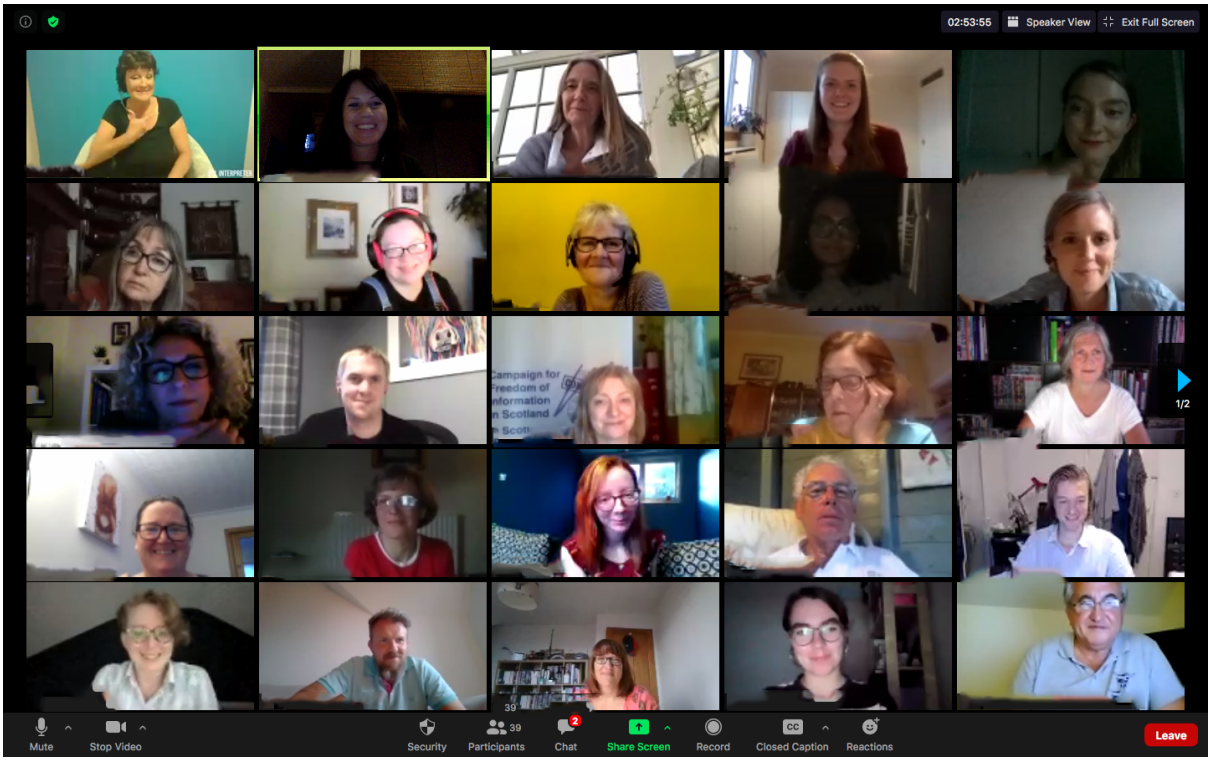
Scotland Open Government National Action Plan - Participation & democracy

August 2021



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1. Introduction

1.1 Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the active presence of **44 participants** for bringing their insights, knowledge, experience and contribution for the Scottish Open Government National Action Plan in a fruitful, constructive and open exchange of perceptions, opinions and ideas about participation and democracy.

We would like to acknowledge the organizing team, consisting of Doreen Grove, Amy Watson, and Maddie Fleming of Open Government Scotland, Anthony Zacharzewski - director of Democratic Society and Annie Cook, Jana Deschepper, Sophie Kiesouw, Alex Zur-Clark and Ola Zietek of Democratic Society, as facilitators team that contributed along the organisation, implementation, selection of participants and carrying out of the workshops.

We are thankful for all the help from every individual and organisations that supported us in preparing and reaching out to participants.

We would like to give a special thanks and gratitude to all participants of the workshops, for their time, contribution, ideas and inspiration.

1.2 Context & Purpose Scotland Open Government National Action Plan

The Scottish Government is working with civil society to write a new National Action Plan for Open Government. In five 'idea generation workshops' in July 2021, a broadly representative group of volunteers will help shape the new plan with their ideas and ambitions on open government.
The input will lead to making Scottish Government more open, transparent and accountable to its citizens and communities.

The workshops are happening online via a Zoom video conference call and take about 2.5 hours. Part of the workshops have been organized in the morning, part of them in the evening to ensure people have other commitments during daytime could make it to the evening sessions.

Workshop dates

- Health & social care: 20 July, 9.30 - 12.00, all ages welcome

- Climate: 20 July, 18.30 - 21.00, all ages welcome
- Financial Transparency: 29 July, 9.30 - 12.00, all ages welcome
- Citizen participation & democracy: 29 July, 18.30 - 21.00, all ages welcome
- Digital & Data: 30 July, 9.30 - 12.00, all ages welcome
- Special event for young people under 18, all 5 themes: 2nd August, 18.00-19.30

1.3 Agenda and questions of the workshops

Agenda for the workshop

18:40 Scotland Open Government introduction

18:50 Introduction in break out rooms

19:00 Citizen participation: what has happened & what could we do (Learning)

19:15 Q&A - clarifying questions

19:25 Snack/tea/coffee break

19:40 Idea generation round one (30 min)

20:15 Idea feedback/cross fertilisation (10 min)

20:25 Idea generation second round (25 min)

20.50 Next steps, how to stay involved

Framing questions

1.What do you think 'good' participation looks like for you, your community? How can you be more effectively involved in government decisions?

2. We are looking for ways to improve participation through Open Government, what do you think we need to do FIRST? Considering what you've heard and discussed so far, what would be the most important ideas for you to take forward in Scotland's new Open Government National Action Plan?

2. Outcomes

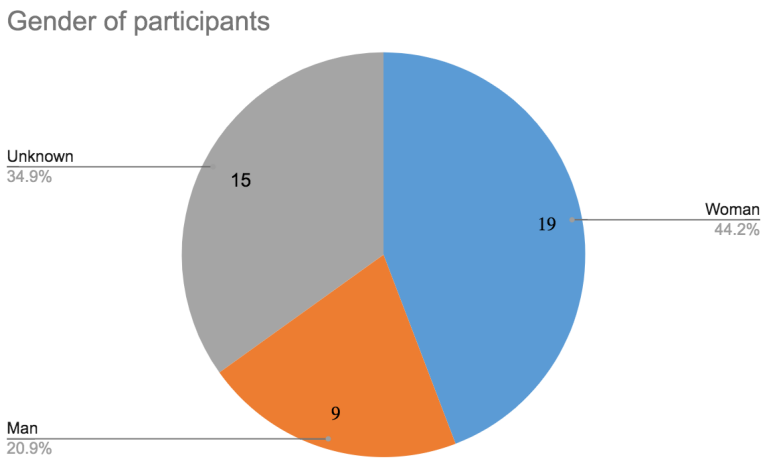
2.1 Description of Participants and Selection criteria

A total number of **81 participants** have registered to the participation workshop, among the total number of participants, **44** participated in the event plus **4 BSL/transcriptors**.

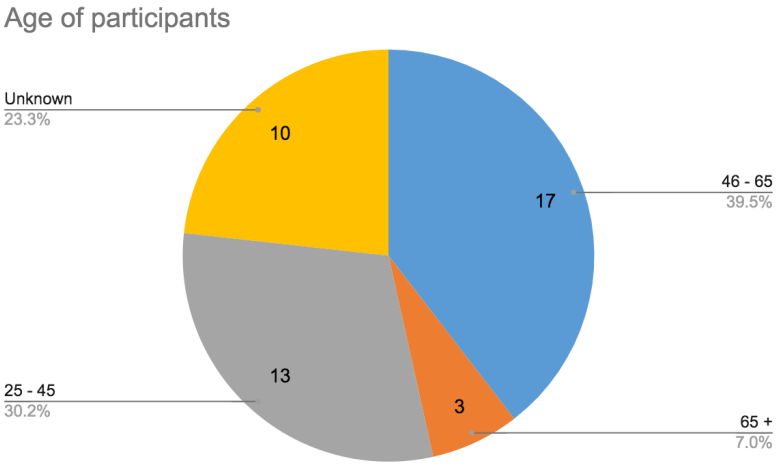
Participants were recruited through promoting the events on social media through Democratic Society's channels, as well as through direct mailing done by Open Government Scotland and Democratic Society.

Participants were located in, amongst others, the following areas: Tweedsdale, Avoch Ross-shire, Renfrewshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Edinburgh (6), Forfar, Scottish Borders (3), Larbert, Arbroath, Angus, Aberdeen, South Queensferry, Sutherland, Glasgow, Orkney, Isle of Arran, East Kilbride, Prestwick, Meigle, Perthshire.

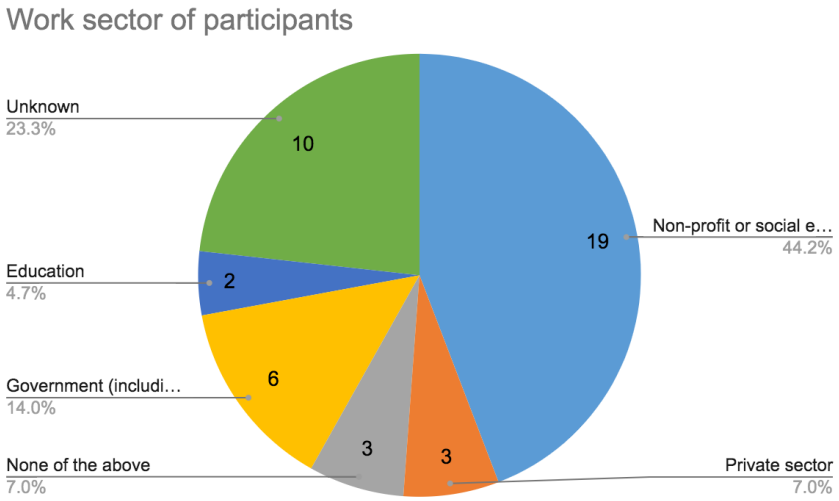
In terms of ethnicity the majority of participants was white (33 participants), one participant was African, the rest was unknown/undeclared.



The gender split of participants was 19 women and 9 men participating. The gender of fifteen participants was unknown.



The largest age group of participants were between 46 - 65 years old (39%); the second largest age group was 25 - 45 years old (30%). Three participants were over the age of 65 and the age of ten participants was unknown.



The majority of participants work in the non-profit or social enterprise sector (44%), six participants work for the government (14%), three in the private sector, two in education. The sector of other participants (13) was either none of the above or unknown.

What do citizen participation participants know about Open Government?

We asked participants at the beginning of the workshop "*What do you know about Open Government?*" of **44** participants, **24** completed the sli-do activity with the majority saying they "*knew a wee bit*"

2.2 Outcomes discussions and notes

Citizen Participation & Democracy Summary Overview

Participants had a variety of interesting questions and discussions. The next paragraphs will summarize these discussions, while the raw data of the break-out room discussions can be found on the jamboards (see Appendix).

Overall, participants felt the most important ideas to take forward in Scotland's Open Government National Action Plan around **citizen participation** were that Scottish Government should create **more opportunities for people to take part** in decision making and policy making but doing so in a range of flexible different ways that are relevant, comfortable (which helps encourage people to participate), accessible and meaningful for people. Opportunities to build confidence and encourage participation could be done through these **tailored, personalised spaces that suit them**. Participants called for a **culture of participation** to be built, which means embedding participation right from the beginning through **children learning** and practicing it in education settings, **working better together at national and local levels**, to **evidence based policy making** with people at the heart of it.

There is a recognition that **both Government officials and the public can be seen as enemies** to each other when in actuality if there were **better working-relationships** this could be solved; this could be done through

Scottish Government embracing Open Government principles of openness, transparency and accountability as weaknesses in the policy cycle need to be addressed. **Skills training around dialogue, deliberation and listening** that can teach both civil servants how to effectively engage with the public and have meaningful conversations as well as training opportunities for people to effectively get across their points to be productive and solution-driven, without it turning into a passionate rant.

People currently have a lot of **disconnect and apathy** with the Scottish Government and this could be addressed through finding ways for the Government to talk to people about what is meaningful and important to them; there needs to be a more **holistic approach that supports people** in a safe, welcoming environment to get involved. Participants also felt that the Government could be reaching out to people through communities, charities, organisations that work on the issues rather than broadcasting to people. There is currently a **lack of trust** with the Government and participants mentioned consultations that do happen can feel extractive, where they don't give anything back or get the feeling they have been heard. Open Government could create an **accountability mechanism for all decision-making** where there is a **meaningful feedback loop** that returns to people that have been consulted on what action or what response has been taken and why, particularly when there are clear power dynamics.

Related to trust is the recognition that **expectation setting** from the start in any public engagement or participation activity is really important, not making false promises and setting out what their voice is likely to achieve as well as **inclusive design, using right languages and accessible communication** that has this included from the outset and **welcoming facilitators** that will ensure spaces are not dominated by individuals.

Q&A

- **Q:** When should we expect a formal response from the Scottish Government on the citizen assembly report?
  A: It is coming in October. It was delayed because of the General Election you are right to keep pressing, keep doing so.
- **Q:** You mentioned a citizen assembly and one for under 16s. Will it be set up the same way as the main Citizens Assembly and pick random people from across society?
  A: Yes, done by randomisation, often weighted in order to make sure we are looking at the right democracy and geography for the subject issued.

But that is not the only engagement that will happen. One ambition is that no-one is described as being hard to reach.

- **Q:** It feels like ambition is not matched by capability and capacity and in some cases professionals struggle to get basics right?
  A: We have got to get a lot better, really quite a big stretch which is why we are looking at 4 years to try and embed the ideas of this. We are trying to do this in line with mainstreaming of equalities. What we are trying to do is think systemically with Parliament and Local Authorities right through the system. We won't get it all right now, but our aim is to build. Now we think about involvement of people's lived experience and valuing it as evidence and how we think about making sure that engagement work and participation work we do is fit for purpose. Need for skills and capacity. Having honest conversations and people having shared understanding of issues.
- **Q:** Are we considering just the Scottish Government or including other public services like health boards etc?
  A: The event tonight is about helping us shape work for the next 4 years. We don't have representatives from those organisations with us, but we hope the work we do will influence the system right out of public services from Parliament outwards. The energy around this and Local Authorities have already under community empowerment act responsibilities around engagement but shifting that and helping build on that is important.
- **Q:** Deafscotland asks what plans are there to encourage participation for people who are deaf: Is there a minimum requirement in place?
  A: The BSL Advisory Board put some requirements in place. As we develop the standards around participation framework involvement from organisations like Deaf Scotland to help us know where we need requirements and legislation. If you would like to get in touch with us please do and we would involve you as we begin to develop how we roll out the participation framework.Culture change in government won't change overnight. The purpose of open Government is that we are challenging and people in civil society groups regularly get in touch. This is something we need to do together and we need to have mechanisms to challenge that are not scaring the horses too much.

Discussions in Breakout groups

Creating opportunities for people to participate & relevance to them

- There needs to be both **variety and tailored/personalised participation options** for people that meet their needs to make it work for them, removing barriers of space and time, creating spaces that are comfortable, user-friendly and safe spaces for people to be in that don't make them feel put down because they don't understand things. People would feel closer to Government if there were opportunities that were simpler and there is a range of engagement activities that might suit different groups of people.
- **Information needs to be very clear** so people know what is going on and what is available to them to participate. A lot of consultation is done without the general public knowling about it. There needs to be communication about how people can get involved and be supported in these processes.
- **Opportunities in decision-making should be relevant** to people, what they care about, are interested in and have meaning in their lives. Government has to start from where people are, rather than with their own agendas and themes. There are opportunities here to use requests for information submitted by people to understand what issues are important to them and build engagement from there.
- Create **open, flexible, quality conversational spaces** where time is taken with people to tell Scottish Government what is going on and what they care about rather than specific questions. Scottish Government should proactively reach out, going to where people are and consider doing 1-2-1 conversations with a representative sample. There could be a focus on a set of geographical areas, age groups, seldom heard groups using a trained facilitator to conduct the conversations.
- **Utilise National Standards for engagement** and existing engagement processes to guide more successful engagement.
- In order **to communicate and reach more people,** use social media, news media, TV, traditional methods such as letters through the post, go to people directly, use story-telling about why they should contribute, don't rely only on existing groups and use an Asset Based Approach which can map communities (geographical and thematic). Mapping can be useful to ensure the maximisation of engagement. **Utilise 'boundary spanners'**- voices that sit in-between (powerful people- i.e sit in between local authorities or power or community spaces and they know lots of people in local areas).

- There could be **opportunities created to build confidence and support to encourage participation** such as offering a taster session on what people should expect, training and support offered to people to encourage engagement. There is a challenge that until people see that there are people similar to themselves they won't feel confident. There are assumptions that everyone knows how to raise their issues, but some people would benefit with some sort of mediator, to help explain how something happened - a friend, a listener, or someone who understands what is going on.

Importance of expectation setting, design & facilitation

- There is **value of facilitation**- welcoming people, making them feel comfortable, included, in their own spaces and having control over the discussion and that it is not dominated by the person facilitating or in a way that is more comfortable for the government.
- **Expectation setting at the start.** interesting to look at idea forums in SG - keyboard warrior opportunities but no feedback or information on how it's taken into account. Can lead to apathy/negativity. There needs to be a focus- otherwise can lead to ranting. Be honest and respect/trust participants. Need to be careful of raising people's expectations. i.e funding applications can take hours/days and if not getting feedback can be heartbreaking. Be clear about what are the limits of the power and influence to ensure people know exactly what their voice is likely to achieve. Ensuring that it is made clear from the beginning what can and can't be done. Don't make promises you know you can't keep. Honesty is the best policy.
- **Design of process, time & space** to meet as many of these needs as possible including language. **Time** - not everyone works out what they want to say on a subject quickly. Everything we've been saying about accessible communication. E.g. People living with dementia - online discussion forums are often designed around people who think quickly on their feet. Need the ability to go away and think about things.

Participatory budgeting (PB)

- **Adding deliberation** into mainstreaming participatory budgeting in Scotland (large sums of money which creates opportunities for everyone in influencing services), however PB right now is still targeted at grant-making which can be a vicious cycle that can create more problems than it solves. This could be **strengthened** by moving away from "small-grants" approaches to involving people in important resource

decisions - making real choices about things that really matter - but it needs to be deliberative and not participative.
- **Give young people budgets** that they can choose how to spend to get them practice at PB.

Culture of participation, creating better solutions

- There is no culture of participation. Long-term issue and we need to embed it in practices. e.g. If children and young people experience participation as an integral part of their initial education they will carry that forward.
    - Embed genuine participation and engagement in our **initial education system** - children and young people involved, engaged and making decisions. Initiating this in the short term is about delivering long-term cultural change.
- People avoid it- there's **fear** with these conversations. **Culture change** is needed. "what if public ask me not to do it"- but it's a failure of imagination. So many are scared of asking the public. Just need to tell them about the project.
- Failure of evidence-based policy making. **Begin with evidence** and then get people who know how it works to help with ideas/solutions.
- Introducing **ethical boundaries** could help with participation. If people are making a complaint there is a way to handle it (document to hand over with facts, rather than ranting)
- **Training** people to present their **arguments**- frustrations/anger.
- Is there something about universal basic income and the freedom it might provide to be a more active civic participant?
- Civil servants work under extreme pressure. Participation helps to make better decisions, too often feels like a nuisance for decision makers.
- Affects confidence- trying to work together, good attitude with good solutions, falling on deaf ears. Cultural and **attitude shifts** are number one. E.g. in care homes, when the family is interested in family members- seen as a problem. In government when constantly asking questions stop being seen as an activist and start being seen as a community terrorist.
- **Transferring power** to those who're actually affected by decisions.
- People in public service have become masters of appearing to do public engagement - we need this to be **genuine**. But on the other hand, the threat of external scrutiny isn't going to help create cultural change. We need something other than a stick!
- Overcome people's reluctance to change. **Embrace changes** - **digital inclusion** so important.

- For ScotGov to show how they are making changes based on the output of the two Citizens Assemblies. And make this really **high profile - highly visible**.
- Government, local authority staff will need to feel supported to engage successfully with the public and be trusted - the culture of government has to be committed to this change.
- **Policy process** in SG is not ready for Open Government / participative democracy. SG needs to work on creating a **culture and structure** to policy making which is **evidence based**, rights based, transparent and accountable first. Weaknesses in policy cycle need to be addressed.
- Engagement (in all its form) is all about **leadership** and **humble inquiry**. You have to want to do it, believe it will improve things and be prepared to land somewhere new.
- Can we get participatory approaches in bigger decisions as well?
- Solutions get binned (i.e changed to jargon or too opportunistic, too expensive)
- Too much information- how the results have been communicated/taken on board? Same things/themes coming up. SG acknowledges issues but not done collaboratively.
- Uncensored access to stakeholders.
- Limited opportunities for collaboration i.e race equality- connects in every single policy area.
- Childhood- Adulthood. Engaging young people in ways they've never been engaged before, important for cultural change and how people expect to participate and know how to do it.

Deliberation & active listening

- **Deliberation is important**. Whatever the approach taken, we need to create genuine dialogue between people from different backgrounds and who have different values and perspectives.
- People talk to each other but don't **listen**- they don't create new learning or new views. **Design** is important to make it constructive. Conflict of ideas is good if it's properly managed.
- Active listening and **responding**, people feel they've been listened to and can accept the answer.
- Engaging with people to understand problems from different perspectives - through appreciative enquiry and dialogue - is fundamental to finding the right policies and solutions.

- There is a specific place for structured dialogue between **different generations**, as distinct from including people from different generations in a process.
- We always have to recognise that everyone in the system does not share the same value base. It will always be difficult to "impose" a way of approaching policy and service planning on people who fundamentally don't believe in it!

Disconnect and apathy from Government

- Disconnect- SG forget very quickly with who they've spoken to. Promises that community members will get feedback on their input or will have more opportunities to stay involved are regularly broken by SG - putting the **reputation** (of organisations like ours) **at risk** when we help to facilitate contact / engagement.
- There's a certain amount of fear, (in taking certain decisions) and if they actually asked people they might find that fear is unfounded.
- Find a way to talk to people across people's lives. People don't live in policy areas. There needs to be a more **holistic approach** and/or mechanisms for moving information, solutions, and challenges **across portfolios**.
- Don't need to reach people directly- go out to communities, charities, organisations that work on the issues rather than broadcast with people.
- Need **support mechanisms** for participation for example, community councils. Anger, bullying must not be tolerated. Anyone can say anything, nothing in place to protect people- support needed. **Personal attacks can be damaging.**
- Copy and paste of some content from the recent review of race equality policy CRER undertook on behalf of SG, regarding **stakeholder involvement** - Involvement and partnership working are important to identify appropriate solutions, and can create a valuable sense of ownership of actions if the right partners are around the table.
- Ensure two different government bodies: local and national are compatible - need resources.
- A revising and launching chamber - looking at policy and how that's delivered, they need to be above the power and processes.
- Look across party groups - find the MSPs who're most likely to take up your cause.
- There shouldn't be hidden committees - way of fixing / rigging things outside of Parliament.

- Participation - those who're hard to reach are often written off e.g. only 5 MSPs identify as disabled but 25% of the population of Scotland is.
- Superficially, we have upteen organisations devoted to public engagement. We've been 'Westminsterised', in the way successive governments have been run. It's a question of being honest with the public and genuinely trying to help them.
- The policy process isn't ready for engagement - need more stability of staffing and policy loops based on evidence.
- Despite all the solutions they've tried to give us that don't fix, you could come and tell them what was happening, photo evidence- it didn't work. Councillors say 'that's a different area' - which just creates problems but as part of the community if they were engaged before there could be **preventative measures for problems**.

Building mutual respect; both Government & public can be seen as the enemy

- **Government and public officials could feel seen as the enemy and this goes both ways** with the public feeling that way too. People have a lot on their minds and can sometimes appear aggressive. For people on the other side of the desk it can be hard to calm people down and get the facts from them; i.e the person doing the complaining is seen then as the enemy.
- **Mutual respect, education and understanding** of all our roles and responsibilities should be built upon to make better decisions. It should not be that attack & defend because we're all in this together and the public services are being paid for by the public.

Digital inclusion

- There is a need for **digital representation, digital inclusion needs met to have real voices and authority**. Currently there are concerns on digital involvement of citizens and there are barriers which are excluding many. Digital inclusion is important in ensuring inclusivity across generations and abilities.
- There is a need for **multiple ways to engage- face-to-face and digital.**
- **Scottish Government could utilise digital** to hear some of the voices that tend to get left out, for instance, people just getting on with their lives, who might not know how or why to make their voice heard or about Open Government's approach.

Accountability, meaningful feedback and action

- Consultations can feel extractive. After a consultation or process there needs to be a **meaningful feedback loop** with what has been done with the information provided by people and what actions have been taken as people need to see positive outcomes. Feedback loops create understanding what impact their voice had. Feedback is vitally important even if nothing has happened. Feedback in a way that is best for that particular group. Also where possible engage them continuously through the process and future activities. Finding ways to stratify responses in a way that reflects the proximity of the decision being made to the individual or community consulted.
- **An accountability mechanism is missing, particularly when there are clear power dynamics.** Having a summary of key changes that resulted from consultation responses and communication on what will be done with any input is key.
- There should be **standards that hold the Government and organisations to account**, for example, we do have National Standards for Community Engagement but they are voluntary and maybe could be added to legislation in the review of the Community Empowerment Act.
- Informed debate of the issues which leads to policy and strategy. A stop to the numerous experiences of being asked to validate something already agreed.
- Need for link between gov, councils and ordinary people - councils are too concerned with what's in the books - mechanism which integrates better.
- No consequences for ignoring the public by gov - **need for consequences**, too voluntary.
- We need to understand the business of the government - the private sector is involved, NGOs are doing business with the government.
- Need for policy teams in government to coordinate their engagement better.
- We've been having these kinds of conversations for decades, there's a need for OG for civil servants.
- We, the public, need to demand "listening" from elected members. We should expect them to campaign on a platform of open gov / PB and then deliver it.
- Engagement would work particularly well in our deaf community, e.g. organising around Bills.
- Accountability - ministers need to hold Health Boards to account, and if they aren't they're colluding to letting them get away with not engaging. Anyone who's accountable to the electorate should have to report on how they've engaged the public.

- Digital participation's role - deliberation by text or after the event has ended.
- Show what has changed with an action plan in real life - **show what's working**/ success. Bright spots: when it works and the input generates a positive result, shout it to the skies so people are inspired and learn.
- Many open ended consultation, need for more concrete actions, citizen assemblies are popular but overlooked to good design and path to change.
- Accountability - tools for the public to help build a culture of building consensus, gathering those who aren't as forthcoming and opinionated. But also making education part of this.

Building trust

- Creating the trust needed for participants to believe that they will actually be heard.
- It all comes down to trust. Build up trust by being honest and transparent. Needs to be continuous and listening and agree on the approach and process together. It's fundamentally about relationships.
- **Local liaison officers from the government** may be beneficial as a point of contact.

Diversity of decision-makers & policy-makers

- Wide representation which includes those who are seldom heard. People making decisions need to be more diverse.
- Somehow - hearing the voices of the **wide group** of society who never get involved and are not part of a specific group/agenda - Citizen Assemblies or similar with a randomly selected panel can maybe contribute a bit in this direction.
- It would be good if there were **more diversity** with regards to **race and ethnicity and disability,** mostly white people participating at the moment.
- Often top-down approach: same gender, tendency for white, middle aged men and reality is there needs to be more people conducting in the process.
- How do you ensure a wide diversity of **representation**? E.g. Even this process includes those who have the power to be here. Those who haven't been heard or included in the past lose trust in the process.
- Inclusive - open to everyone where possible and not dictated by theme.
- Gathering the opinions of the **less-interested** (often vested interests make themselves heard) so that a wide range of opinions are gathered, not just the opinions of the opinionated!

- Communities should be able to decide **what issues are raised**.
- Lack of accountability in health. **Democratization of health** is way behind - policy area health should be top of the list!
- Some government health meetings have been private since covid, they need to be open for public.
- Authorities talk the talk but councils and government aren't always in accord or follow through. Needs to be a link between ordinary people, local authorities' and the central government. A mechanism which could integrate things better.
- Glasgow context - hugely diverse geographies and urban-rural areas with diverse needs. There's nothing local about local government in Scotland. One solution might be to **put Community Councils on more of a statutory footing**, with funding, staff and clear statutory responsibilities.
- When you're in a public session - this is different because it's relaxed and people can share their views - things get delayed and people feel uncomfortable in public sessions. In the future I'd hope that young people understand democracy and participation. As a deaf person, for me to join a government body or panel I'd be the minority, there would be lots of different people - we need **intersectionality** rather than expecting, for example, one deaf person to **represent** all deaf people.
- Make sure that the opinions and values of citizens aren't crowded out in policymaking by those who are well-connected and well-resourced.
- Remember the difference between urban and rural communities, rural communities exist.
- We aren't reaching those we need to, esp. hard to reach groups. Go where people are, e.g. shopping centres and pubs. Do it in the cafe, not a separate room in the back. Make people comfortable - at the moment consultations are tick-boxes, not spaces for your own free thought. The questions have been decided, it's not open.

Education

- Where in the curriculum is **civic society** included/**embedded**? Education is where we need to start. Need a fundamental basis of inclusion.
- Start at education, a way of informing young people - **civic schooling curriculum**. **Embedding tools for participation in schools**. With correct policies in place SG gets into the schools and
have a generation who know the Govt wants to listen - and understand citizenship.
- Young people with disabilities gave input, but never heard back what happened with input.

- Needs to be moved away from some topical conversation, one offs. Need for culture change.
- We need to **understand** the **differences between consultation and engagement**. Consultation is often a one-way process. If we want participative governance and government, we need ongoing engagement to work out what people want. The things that are really actionable often local issues, e.g. bench in park - and a by-product of consultation.
- Sometimes less-interested people don't really understand an issue so make assumptions and are not engaged enough to do the required research.
- Invest in building the capacity to participate - in schools, communities etc. If people haven't experienced it or don't have the confidence to engage, they won't.

Inclusive language & accessible communication

- Good communication and **language support**, subtitles or captions, interpreters, hearing loops and microphones, acoustics. Making conversations **accessible**. Easy to read info.
- Many Community Councils are not accessible or inclusive, not able to **provide BSL** / English interpretation support or Electronic Note-taking support. They don't have a budget; ask the Local Authority for support to cover costs, many of them say no it's not their responsibility or don't have money. Many **deaf people give up volunteering** and participating in public life.
- Community Councils - ongoing question around their statutory role in local democracy and their power.
- Concerns over **expectations of Community Councils** - we're volunteers but what we get on many occasions both from Central and Local Government doesn't translate easily for someone running a Community Council. E.g. Edinburgh, 18 page documents. People won't look at it. The Councils have lost a mass of expertise with payoffs etc., so how do you deal with Councils who haven't got the support person there any more? We have to have a local, legal, say in what's going on.
- Fully inclusive communication- make sure all the participants are included- BSL & **language**, English isn't the first language. A lot of consultations are put out in English and we have to wait 4-5 weeks later for a BSL translation.
- Dissemination & digestion of information & how people use their networks. Some ideas might not be fully formed but that's ok. Piece of the puzzle.

- Language accessibility, budgets aren't a good excuse- i.e documents need to be translated in English, **respecting both languages**: **BSL** 4th official language, **Gaelic** & **Welsh** as well.
- Big question is- should you include other languages? BSL gets held back because of no budget for it to be translated. Scottish Government should do this.
- Communication & engagement are fundamental to engagement processes. Some people have preference to verbal/oral but engagement processes are better- consultation has a set agenda. Engagement can bring in a more diverse background/language/cultures.
- Include population in Scotland doesn't speak english- Polish, Bulgarian etc. These should be considered and if not potentially excluding a lot of non-native speakers into the process.
- Big orgs tend to use twitter but other folk are on Facebook- look at how you communicate.
- Look at how the media does it. BBC in Scotland are holding the lead making sure info is getting out there, but sometimes sign language interpreters are on twitter feed- miss targets i.e on website/made to be bigger/accessible.
- **Don't use abbreviations**, such as FOI, unless you are in the field. Accessible language, be clear about what you want to engage on, **without using jargon**.
- Make the government website easier to navigate and in **plain English** so that more people feel they can use it and find what they are looking for.

Ambassadors of participation

- We should be ambassadors of participation but what tangible outcomes are there to participate? People will invest their time in things that will make a difference. They're not acting selfishly- need to sell the idea of participation.

Building skills & training

- Little time spent on **training how to be consulted**, how you can participate in a consultation - **removing jargon**.
- Opening up tools that we use. E.g. upskilling civil servants, using different spaces and tools to enable more people to participate, remove barriers and see what prevents participation.
- Who's responsible for organising these events, that lead to them being for a certain time, in a certain format. That's down to the skills of the people

in our civil service - there's a huge **skills gap** - as well as civil servants needing to be permissioned.
- Trained facilitators or staff with training are very important.

Recognition that Open Government can't solve all the problems

- Open Government can't tidy up all the problems. Freedom of information- people writing to councillors and getting ignored. "what is the point in engaging if even not getting responded to by councillors?".
- We have to be realistic about what can be done in Open Government.

Working better together nationally & locally

- How do we get more public officials to engage with the public? Case studies & stories on both sides (public & public servants).
- Couldn't tell you if anyone in the local community knows about Open Government- get more information, engage with local networks to disseminate info, loads of stuff local people don't know about. They don't understand/don't see it, it's not in their mail or facebook.
- Public Bodies & Oversight Committee - everything possible needs to be reported to the Scottish Parliament, there's a **poor public understanding** of the division between **parliament and SG**. Reporting to parliament, using as a platform for accountability and the public petitions (Petitions & Participation Committee) system to raise issues and create debates.
- Issue is power over people; one of the recommendations of the Scottish Citizens' Assembly was a **secondary chamber**, made up of ordinary citizens to flip politics on its head, where the people of Scotland could block laws being passed. Democratise Holyrood - inclusion, standards, policies. We need to pass information to the public and ask their view. Doing Politics Differently report.
- A better connection between the national and the local to ensure that national engagement is carried through locally. Conversations between local gov and local authorities.

3. Feedback by participants

To conclude the workshop we asked participants through sli-do *"Any learning or reflections from this workshop and thoughts on how you would like to stay involved?".*

About **16 participants** completed the sli-do whilst **12 participants** left some feedback in the chat.

About the workshop itself

- Really enjoyed different perspectives
    - Good to hear others opinions. Would like to be included in the future and online meetings like this work for me
    - Mainly people representing specific organisations/interests
    - Wide-ranging
- Definitely want to attend again
    - It's a huge task that is ahead of everyone! Best of luck! Good to know this is all being thought about deeply. Would like to stay involved
    - Useful and constructive discussion. GWT would be very interested in remaining connected and exploring ways in which we can help to explore how intergenerational dialogues can add value
- There's clearly a of different components and the *what to do first question* was tough - seems like some 'systems work' is needed
- We still have a long way to go
- Despite the challenges I feel positive
- Nice to see participation embedded

Staying involved (& getting others involved)

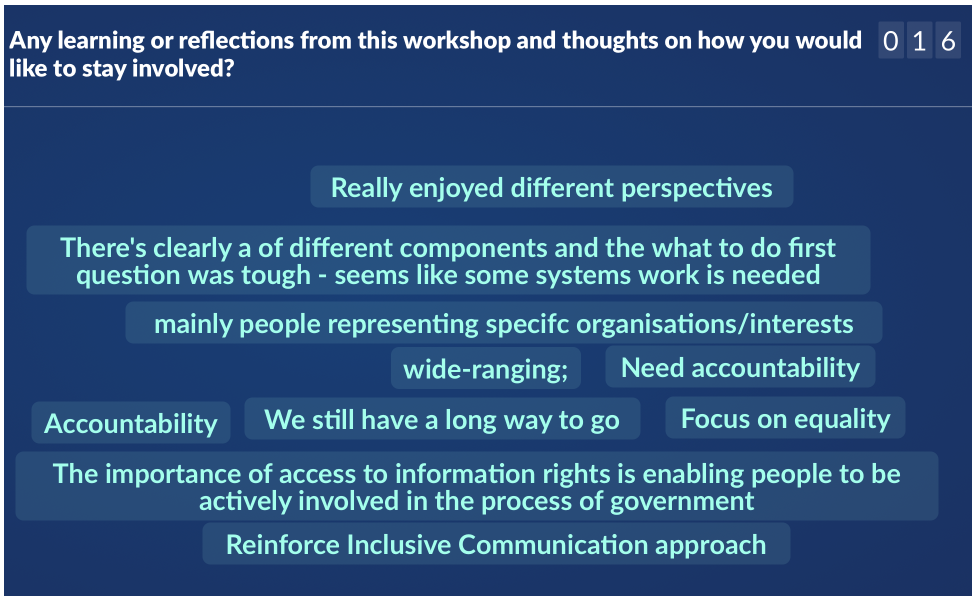
- Have more regular and diverse meetings
    - Reach out to more individuals and groups
    - Need more opportunities to become involved
    - SG think very creatively about how to engage with individuals (not part of orgs) as an element of the process - not saying organisational views are not essential too
- Interested in seeing the process through - tracking discussion to the final action plan and its implementation.
- More information about Open Government & how to become more involved
    - How to stay involved - I would attend again as the process continues if invited
    - I'm not able to access slido but want to remain involved

Reflections & learning

- Need for accountability

- Make sure the word participation is clear and what it means
- Ensure all resources and accessible and inclusive
- The importance of access to information rights is enabling people to be actively involved in the process of government

- Different generations in the space, how we don't separate these out
  - Learn from young people
  - Increase capacity for people to participate
- Focus on equality
  - Reinforce Inclusive Communication approach
- The promise of Open Government was much more involvement in grand government decisions about things like how the budget is set, but that hasn't been the case yet
  - Interested in the buy in from power holders, ie elected members - would love an open chat with them
  - Intentions here are great but SG policy making process not ready for it - happy to stay involved and give perspectives
- Culture change needed
  - It seems that everyone has a similar comment, the government consults us too late, we should be heard at a much earlier stage



After the workshop participants gave feedback through a feedback questionnaire. See the input below.

Positive:

- Helpful introduction to open government to focus the conversations. Space for group discussion and to hear different views. Well facilitated.
- Good amount of opportunity to participate.
- Variety of people and ideas, structure, some great contributions.
- Everyone was given their chance to speak and their comments were acknowledged.
- Space for dialogue and opportunity to contribute.
- The opportunity to hear about the OG listen to others and contribute!
- Range of people and perspectives, enough time to explore issues and hear from people
- Great interaction, knowledge and expertise in the room. Well facilitated.
- I liked that everyone was listened to any got the opportunity to speak.
- It was a nice idea to open up the discussion and formulation of the next Action Plan, the format worked reasonably well as an online alternative to an in-person session, and Annie did a good job of facilitating the breakouts - both overseeing the discussion and filling the jam board. It was also good to see the efforts being made to meet accessibility needs.
- Well organised, open discussion, and considerate moderators.

Points for improvement:

- Found the second question about what to prioritise first difficult to reach consensus on as a group in the time available - we all had different experiences and perspectives - but great to have the space to share individual reflections and responses.
- Time spent on introductions could maybe have been better devoted to breakout sessions.
- It just felt slightly "less good" than the other two, I was very tired by the end of the day.
- Evenings will add to accessibility for some so I do appreciate the need.
- Main people had similar comments to make, which gave the impression you were with the right group, but also people were able to expand to other people's comments, strengthening comments and adding to people's own opinions and awareness of other people's situations.
- Unable to see jam-board or other applications while on zoom. Severely limiting communications and frustrating as using too many apps. Bearing in mind ordinary citizens on mobiles etc. have limited size screens and are often not familiar with these applications (digitally excluded is one way to put it).

- Difficult for a facilitator to watch people wanting to contribute and do the notes on a jamboard - would have been better to split the roles or have someone backing up for notes.
- The discussion topics were very high-level and conceptual, and didn't seem to be very practical or action focused - ideas that have long been talked about but not implemented.

4. Appendix

Group A Jamboards

Open Government Partnership

OGP LOCAL Scotland

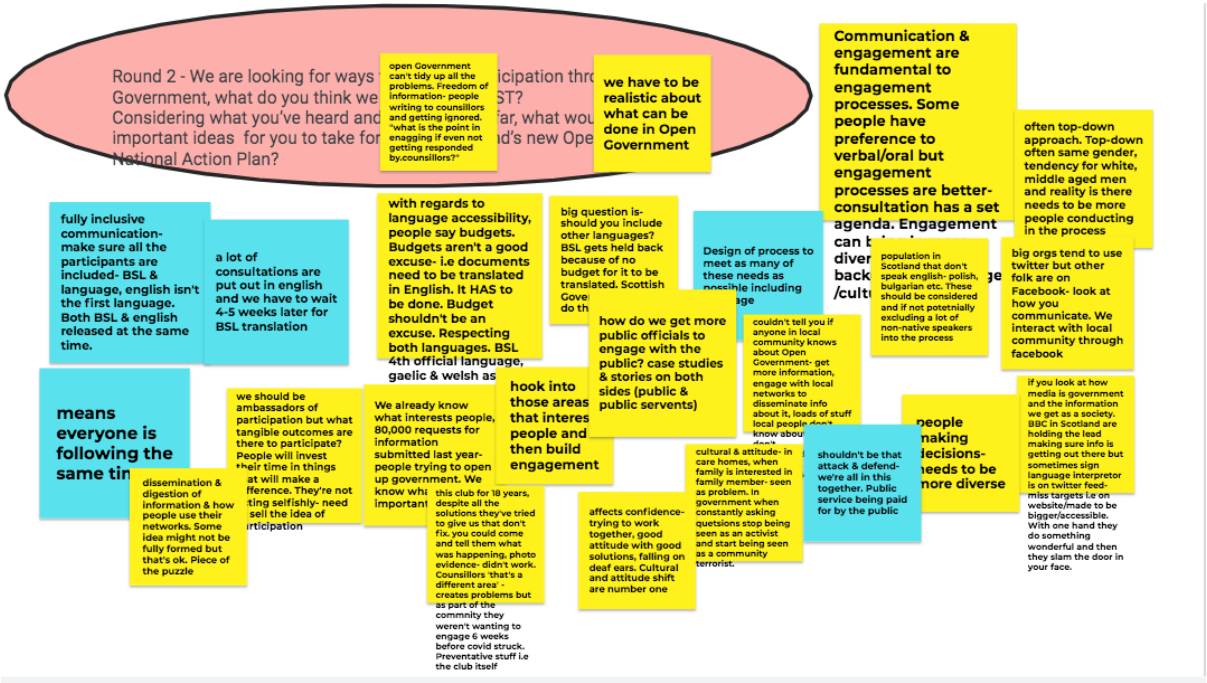
democratic society

introducing ethical boundaries could help with participation but difficult when people want to have a rant at you. This needs to be foster. Could be long-term project but could help

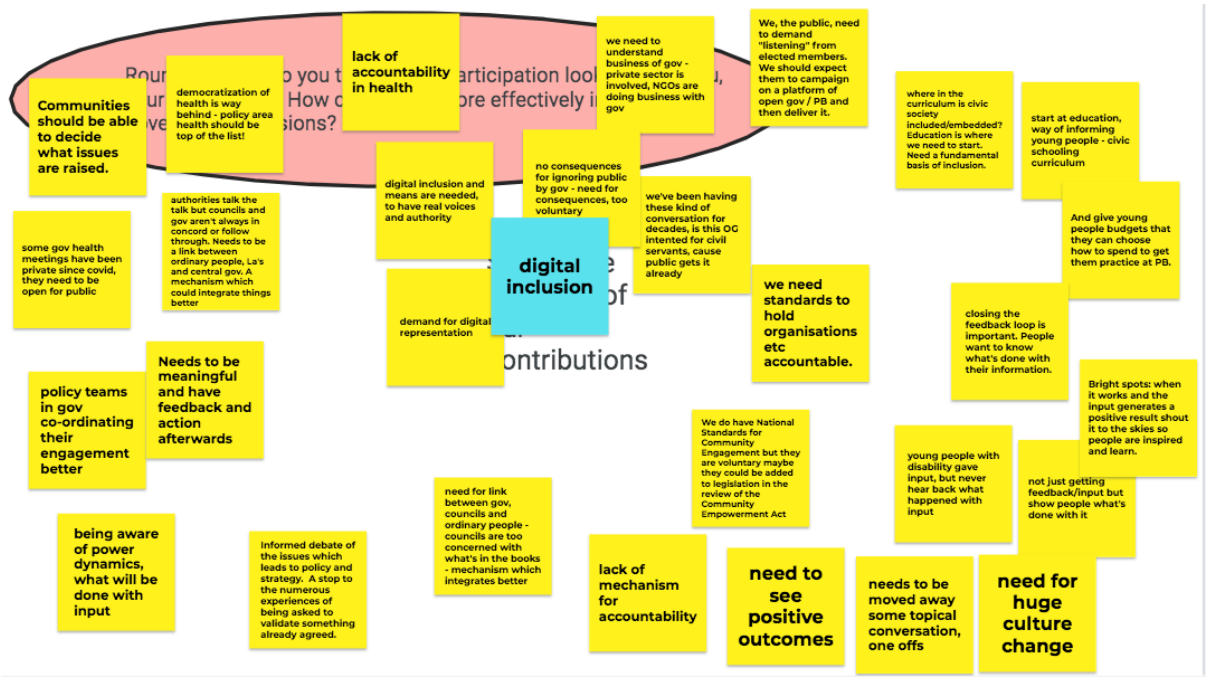
training people to present their arguments- frustrations/anger

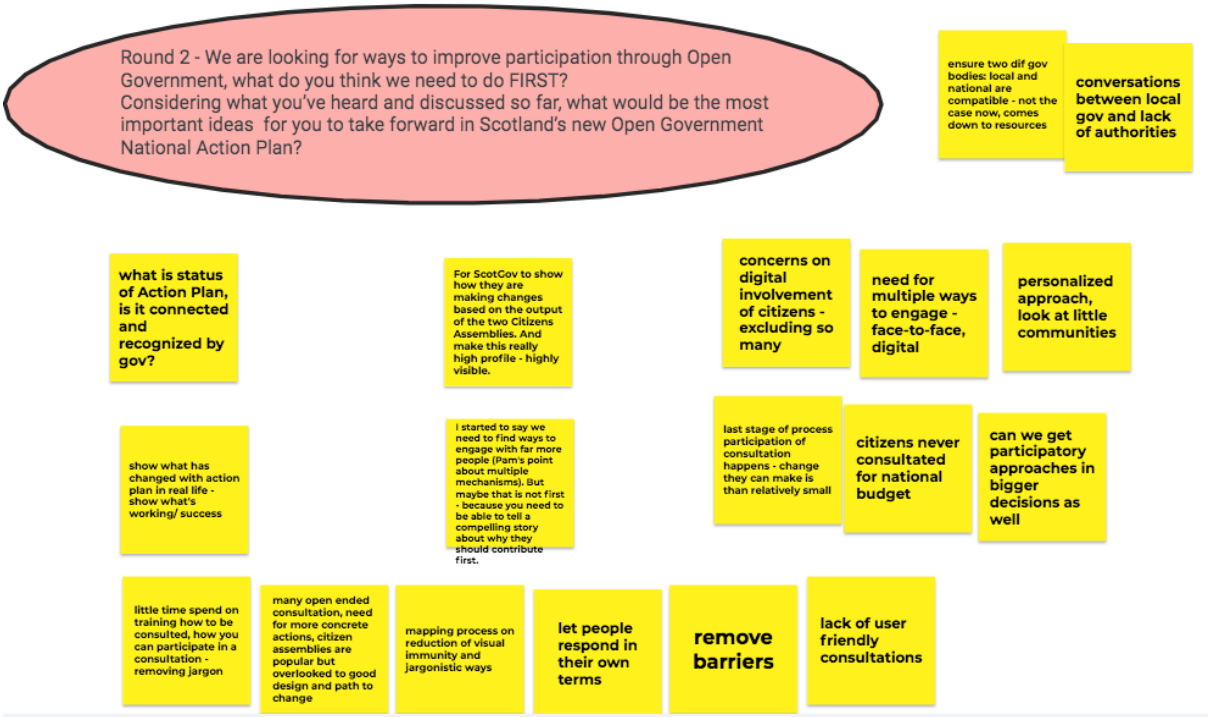
if people are making a complaint there is a way to handle it (document to hand over with facts that want address rather than ranting or having a good conversation)

civil servants work under extreme pressure



Group B Jamboards





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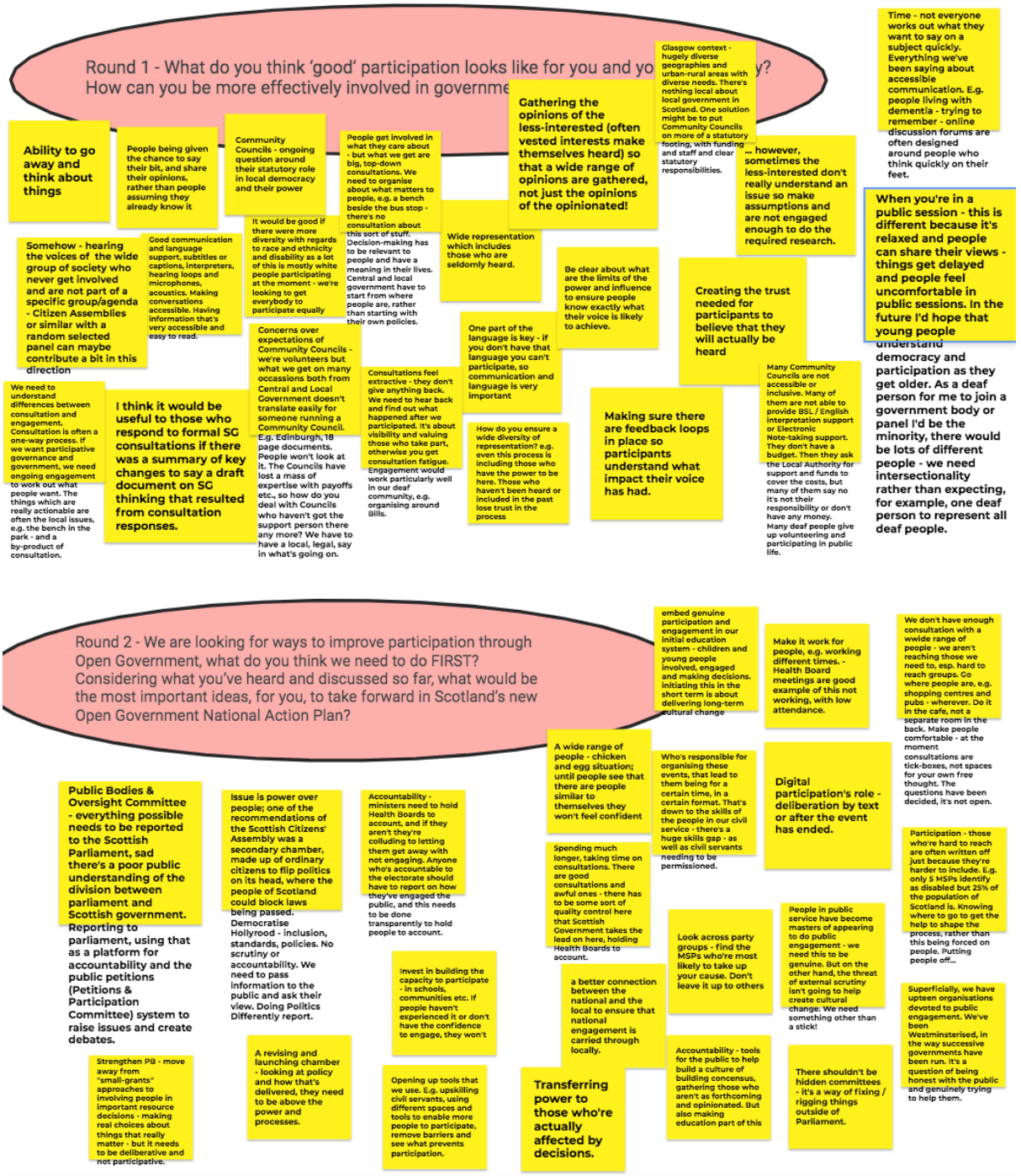
Group C Jamboards



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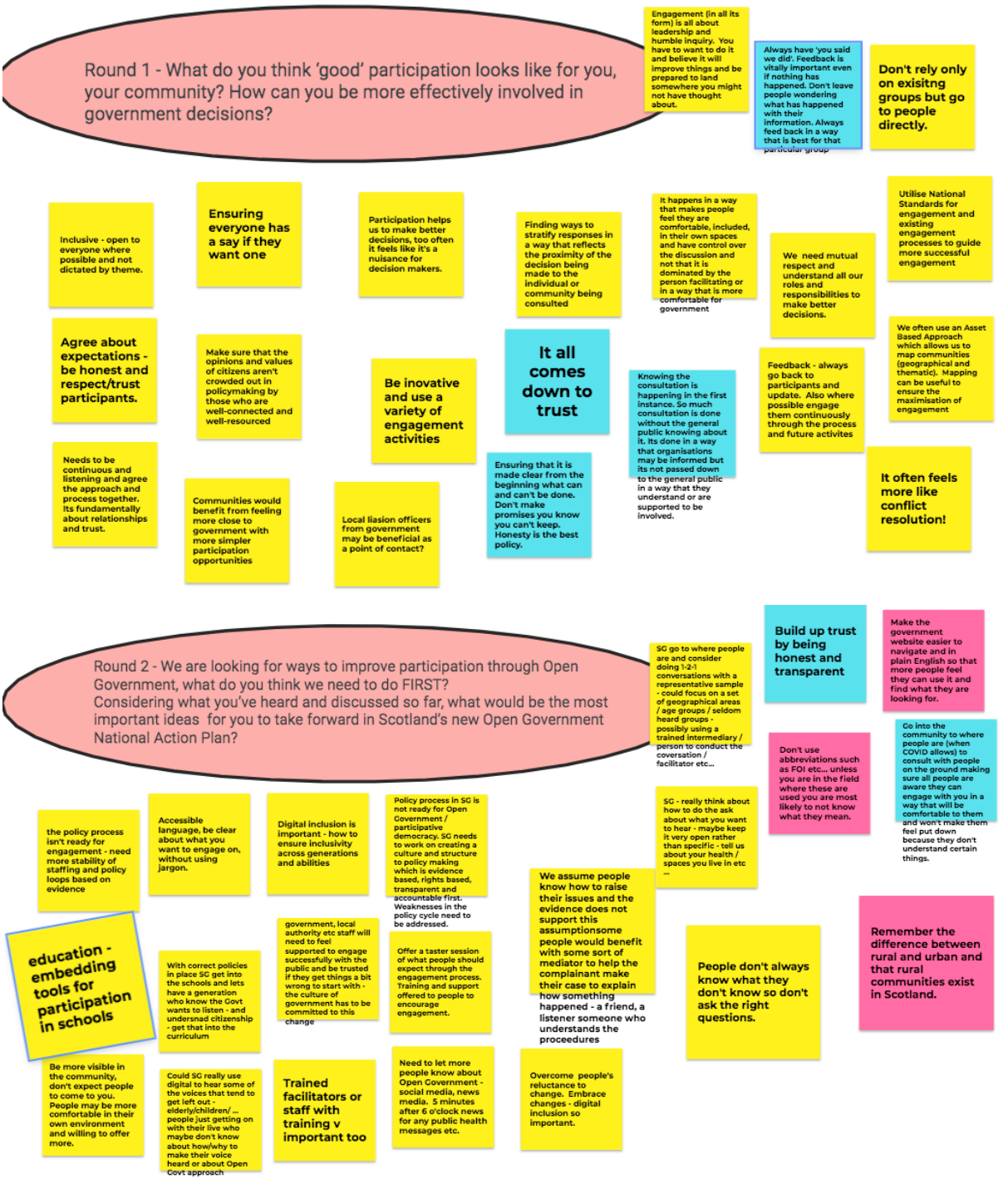
Group D Jamboards