**Open Space Technology**

**What is it?**

Open Space Technology (OST) is a method of engaging with diverse groups of people and is ideal for use when research questions carry some urgency. Despite its name, it does not require any technology!

**Advantages**

* Can be organised quickly, with little cost and preparation
* Good for addressing difficult issues, with large numbers of attendees
* There is usually no fixed agenda, therefore attendees can take ownership of the process

**Disadvantages**

* If not managed properly, some people may not be able to get their views across
* May not be useful if you wish to capture specific feedback

**How to use**

1. To begin, attendees are seated on chairs in a circle. The facilitator will set a topic, or broad open question e.g. “what matters to you about…”. Anyone who wishes can write something relevant to the research question on a card or note and attach to a bulletin board (this can be a wall, floor etc).
2. When this is done, cards or notes are grouped into sub-groups or themes. Each sub-group or theme is placed in a different area of the room, together with flip chart paper and pens.
3. Attendees move freely around the room, discussing the sub-groups or themes and writing key points on the flip chart paper. Aim for around 30-45 minutes for each discussion. New cards, notes, sub-topics or themes can be produced at every stage.
4. Once everyone has had their say, the process is complete.

Examples and guides for Open Space Technology can be found on the companion website: <https://bit.ly/2UXC2Xk>