

Working with citizens' juries

What this involves

A [Citizens' Jury](#) is a mechanism of [participatory action research](#) that draws on the symbolism, and some of the practices, of a legal trial by [jury](#). It generally includes two main elements:

The "jury" is made up of people who are usually selected "at random" from a local or national population, with the selection process open to outside scrutiny.

The jurors cross-question expert "witnesses" — specialists they have called to provide different perspectives on the topic — and collectively produce a summary of their conclusions, typically in a short report.

The whole process is supervised by an advisory panel composed of a range of people with relevant knowledge and a possible interest in the outcome. They take no direct part in facilitating the citizens' jury. Members of this group subsequently decide whether to respond to, or act on, elements of this report.

What are the benefits of working with citizens' juries?

Rather than giving the sort of results you may get from a public survey the advantage is that you will get responses from members of the public who are cognisant of the key issues and can enter into an informed debate.

The introductory session can be used to highlight the topics for expert witnesses to present on, so that the jury is able to direct its own 'learning & development'.

When this might be a useful/appropriate approach:

Citizens' juries emphasise the importance of listening to divergent views and so are appropriate for engaging members of the public in developing solutions to controversial health problems that require the consideration of both values and evidence.

How can you work with citizens' juries?

They are commonly used in situations where prioritising is required.

What are the drawbacks of this approach?

Involves a lot of work to set up and run

It is a big time commitment for the jurors and the expert witnesses and facilitators

In a discursive process, power imbalances can become more evident

Resources:

- 'Citizens juries in planning research priorities: process, engagement and outcome' Gooberman-Hill, Horwood, Calnan, [Health Expectations 2008](#),
- '[Engaging the public in priority-setting for health technology assessment: findings from a citizens' jury](#)' Menon, Stafinski, [Health Expectations 2008](#),
- '[Influencing health policy through public deliberation: Lessons learned from two decades of Citizens'/community juries](#)' Chris Degeling, et al Social Science & Medicine April 2017
- [Buckinghamshire Citizen's Jury Learning and Outcomes Report Dementia Services](#) in 2011. Buckinghamshire Commissioning Consortia were awarded a grant of £50k and chose to set up a six month project to demonstrate local participation in a Citizen's Jury. More than 80 people applied for the 12 places and it was agreed that a ballot should be drawn to pick the 12. In order to ensure a cross section of the population the ballot was divided into groups and drawn to ensure a selection of ages, geographical location, gender, ethnicity and educational attainment. The Jury sat from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon