

Tool 4.6: Analysing the qualitative data

What is meant by analysis?

Analysis of the focus group data aims to describe, summarise and begin drawing conclusions from responses. Broadly, this entails looking for patterns or themes across the focus groups, while considering their frequency and how intensely they are expressed. In doing this, it may be possible to identify relationships between themes and relate ideas or behaviours to elements of the organisational culture. The themes appearing in the focus groups can also be cross-referenced with results from other tools, highlighting consistencies and discrepancies across the organisation.

Having completed the analysis, you will have a set of key themes which form the basis of the final report.

Tips for analysing the data

There are a number of methods for the analysis of qualitative data and there is no prescribed method for doing this. It may be that members of your change team have previous experience of particular approaches, and would prefer to apply these.

There are, however, a number of general tips which may help you analyse your data and ensure accuracy and consistency:

- Try to ensure the facilitator is involved in the analysis – they will be able to give a sense of the ‘tone’ of the answers, and offer a unique insight into the intended meaning.
- Have at least two people look at each answer – this should help with consistency, and avoid the potential bias of one person conducting all the analysis.
- If a number of people are conducting the analysis, allocate each person the same few questions across all the focus groups, rather than a few whole focus group sessions. This allows one person to start to see the common themes occurring across the focus groups.



Note

When analysing staff and patient information please ensure you are adhering to your organisation’s information governance policy and treating information in line with the Data Protection Act and the Caldicott principles. If in doubt, seek the advice of your Data Protection Officer, information governance team, or Caldicott guardian as necessary.

- Do not guess what respondents mean – if answers don't make sense and there is no clarification, do not include it in the analysis. Alternatively, consider following up after the focus group with individual participants to understand what they intended by their answer. Either way in the interests of transparency, these statements could be recorded in a separate section.
- If you are not sure which category to place a theme in, or whether it is positive or negative, double check with a colleague.
- Consider keeping a record of statements that would make good quotations in the final report – this is a lot easier than going back and trying to find them at a later date.
- Bear in mind the risk of bias and reading into statements – try to be as objective as possible.

A suggested process for analysing the data

If your change team does not have previous experience of qualitative analysis, the following is a possible approach:

Step 1: collating the data

- Collect all of the raw data sources from the focus groups, eg audio recordings, detailed notes, etc.
- If using audio recordings, listen through to the end and make either detailed notes or verbatim transcriptions.
- Anonymise or redact the transcripts in line with the confidentiality agreement with the participants.
- Effective anonymisation ensures no individually identifiable information is gathered or retained and, where names are given in anecdote, these are removed and replaced with pseudonyms, replacement terms or elusive descriptors.

Step 2: read the data for a 'general sense'

- Read through transcripts or notes to gain a sense of the tone and major themes emerging.

Step 3: re-read interviews to identify individual themes

- Re-read the interviews, concentrating this time on the detail of what is being said.
- For each answer to each question record the key statements or parts of statements.
- For each statement group it under one of the five different cultural elements or levels of collective leadership and identify the key theme being discussed.
- Record the theme in a column next to each statement (see example below).
- If a single statement refers to multiple themes, break it down into its component themes and list these. For example 'Senior leadership communicates a clear vision that keeps everyone aligned around our organisation's goals' could break down into the themes of 'Senior leadership', 'Clarity of vision' and 'Alignment of goals'.
- Although the questions are intended to deal with one particular cultural element, there will inevitably be some cross-over and answers may address multiple cultural elements.
- Similarly, some statements and themes may themselves cross different cultural elements. If this is the case, either list them under all the relevant elements, or chose the one cultural element that seems most appropriate.
- If a statement or theme does not neatly fall under one of the five cultural elements, list it under 'Other'.
- This whole process could be done on a spreadsheet, using post-it notes or on a flipchart.

Example:

Is there effective team, inter-team and cross-boundary working in the organisation and with other organisations?

So, I think that overall we are pretty good in the trust at working within teams. One thing I have seen is really good co-operation across the different professional boundaries, and everyone is happy to listen to everyone else's opinions. This means that people feel respected and aren't afraid to offer up their point of view, and feel supported to do so. What it also means is that we can learn from each other, and through this we are able to innovate and improve our care. The only thing I would say though, is that sometimes we fail to communicate our decisions properly and that can lead to slip-ups. Basically it seems that there is an assumption that everyone knows what is going on and that's when mistakes happen.

Cultural element	Theme	Statement
Support and compassion	Speaking up	People aren't afraid to offer up their point of view, and feel supported to do so
	Respecting different opinions	Good co-operation across the different professional boundaries and everyone is happy to listen to everyone else's opinions
Learning and innovation	Sharing ideas	We can learn from each other, and through this we are able to innovate and improve our care
Teamwork	Inter-professional working	I have seen really good co-operation across the different professional boundaries
	Communication in teams	Sometimes we fail to communicate our decisions properly and this can lead to slip-ups

Step 4: classify the statements as positive, negative or neutral

- Having now themed all of the statements and listed them under the different cultural elements, you should assess whether the tone is positive, negative or neutral and mark this next to each statement (see example below).
- There is inevitably a subjective element to this process. It is therefore highly recommended that two people assess the statements independently to avoid bias and ensure consistency.

Example:

Cultural element	Theme	Statement	positive	neutral	negative
Support and compassion	Speaking up	People aren't afraid to offer up their point of view, and feel supported to do so	☑		
	Respecting different opinions	Good co-operation across the different professional boundaries and everyone is happy to listen to everyone else's opinions	☑		
Learning and innovation	Sharing ideas	We can learn from each other, and through this we are able to innovate and improve our care	☑		
Teamwork	Inter-professional working	I have seen really good co-operation across the different professional boundaries	☑		
	Communication in teams	Sometimes we fail to communicate our decisions properly and this can lead to slip-ups			☑

Step 5: repeat above steps for each question and each interview

- Go through each interview and question and continue to build your spreadsheet, post-it notes or flipchart.
- List statements under existing themes, or create new themes if they have not been mentioned before.
- Listing statements under themes and recording whether the statements are positive or negative will allow you to assess how often a particular theme is mentioned, and whether interviewees are predominantly positive or negative about it (see example below, with an answer from a different interviewee).
- If you are finding the data set is becoming too large, you may want to split it, eg a separate spreadsheet for each cultural element, three separate spreadsheets for positive, negative and neutral comments, etc.

Example:

Q12: Is there effective team, inter-team and cross-boundary working in the organisation and with other organisations?

“As someone who is new to the trust, I was really surprised by how people worked within teams. From what I’ve seen on the wards, often the juniors feel intimidated by their senior colleagues and I’m not sure they would be able to signal an issue if they saw one. Also, for me effective team working is about having really clear shared goals, and I feel like we have a lot of teams where no one really knows what the objective is.”

Cultural element	Theme	Statement	positive	neutral	negative
Goals and performance	Clarity of goals	I feel like we have a lot of teams where no one really knows what the objective is			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Support and compassion	Speaking up	People aren’t afraid to offer up their point of view, and feel supported to do so	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Juniors feel intimidated by their senior colleagues and I’m not sure they would be able to signal an issue if they saw one.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Respecting different opinions	Good co-operation across the different professional boundaries and everyone is happy to listen to everyone else’s opinions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Learning and innovation	Sharing ideas	We can learn from each other, and through this we are able to innovate and improve our care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Teamwork	Inter-professional working	I have seen really good co-operation across the different professional boundaries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Communication in teams	Sometimes we fail to communicate our decisions properly and this can lead to slip-ups			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>