



# Deliberative Mapping

CITIZENS AND SPECIALISTS INFORMING DECISIONS ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



## briefing 4 **Citizens' panels in Deliberative Mapping: a user guide**

**This briefing describes how citizens' panels are used in Deliberative Mapping. It focuses on how to run them, and the issues that facilitators and researchers need to address to ensure that the panels work well.**



## Introducing citizens' panels

Citizens' panels are a core part of Deliberative Mapping, a unique approach to decision making which combines assessments of a problem by citizens and specialists in the area under investigation (see Briefing 2 in this series).

Members of citizens' panels meet regularly over a specified time period to discuss the different aspects of a problem, appraise the options for the way forward and define criteria against which to measure these options. They then weight and rank the options to determine a 'map' of how each option performed based on the range of views in the group.

This process emphasises individual learning and group deliberation, and includes meeting with specialists. It is underwritten by a belief in the capacity of people to work together to find solutions to problems. The process enables a diverse range of citizens' views to be included in assessments of a problem, where they are supported by facilitators to work through the stages of a complex decision.

The one application of citizens' panels in Deliberative Mapping so far has been to the problem of the difference between the number of people waiting for kidney transplants, and the much lower number of donor kidneys available – the so-called 'kidney gap' (see Briefing 3 in this series). This process involved four citizens' panels from north London over a period of three months.

## How citizens' panels work

There are six panel sessions, and a joint workshop; each has a specific purpose which is described below.

### Session 1

Facilitators help to embed panellists in the process by exploring individuals' motivations for taking part in the study and their knowledge and values in relation to the problem at hand. The researchers introduce the problem and supply panellists with information about it.

### Session 2

The research team prepares a list of ways forward – or options – in advance using literature reviews and discussions with specialists. Panellists discuss these and are welcome to add additional options. They break into pairs to discuss what issues each option raises for them, and then share this with the whole group. Panellists then agree shared meanings of the options as far as possible.

### Session 3

Panellists negotiate and agree a set of criteria against which to appraise the options. They proceed through a process of working individually, in pairs and as a group to discuss and negotiate the criteria they consider important for assessment of the options.

### Session 4

Panellists make preliminary assessments of each option against each of their selected criteria to explore their understanding so far and identify further uncertainties. The Multi-Criteria Mapping (MCM) procedure is adapted so that panellists place individual scores on posters and can discuss the range of their views. The group then reviews their preliminary assessments and agrees

which issues they would like to raise at the joint workshop with specialists.

### **Joint workshop with specialists**

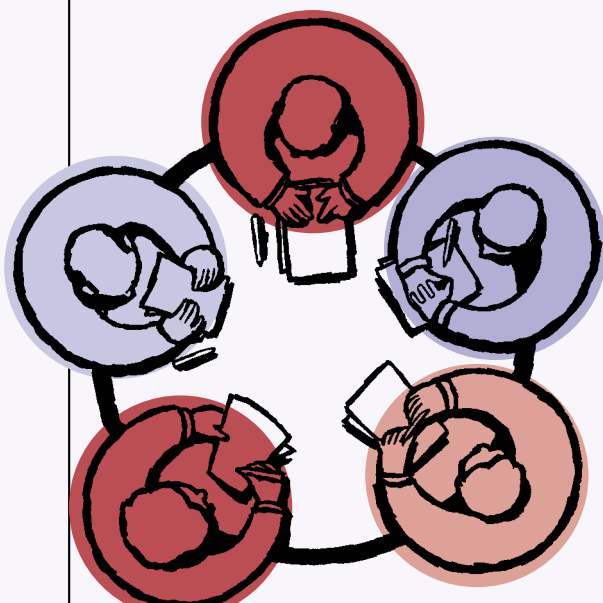
In the morning forum, representatives from each citizens' panel make a brief presentation on some of the questions on which they want the specialists to comment. This is followed by a facilitated discussion where specialists respond to the citizens' concerns. The afternoon session is a 'specialist fair'. Specialists make themselves available for informal contact with any panellist who wishes to talk with them.

### **Session 5**

Panellists discuss the workshop as a group and decide whether any of their judgements were challenged or changed by it. They then individually refine their preliminary MCM assessments and weight the criteria by allocating 100 points between all the criteria. This produces a set of final ranks for the options, which can be calculated for each individual and the group as a whole (see Briefing 5 in this series).

### **Session 6**

Panellists review the outcomes of the MCM, evaluate the whole process and provide feedback to the facilitation team.



## Issues to consider

### **Recruitment of panellists**

Researchers should use socioeconomic and demographic characteristics as the criteria for recruiting panel members, so as to ensure diversity of individual involvement. However they also need to be sensitive as to how best to divide citizens into the different panels. The key organising principle is to create a supportive environment within which panellists have the confidence to undertake the challenging assessment tasks set for them. In discussions of the 'kidney gap' (see Briefing 3 in this series) it was appropriate to divide panels by gender and socioeconomic background.

### **Understanding the perspective of panellists**

Facilitators of a citizens' panel process need to make it clear to participants that their input is important and will be treated with respect. This means:

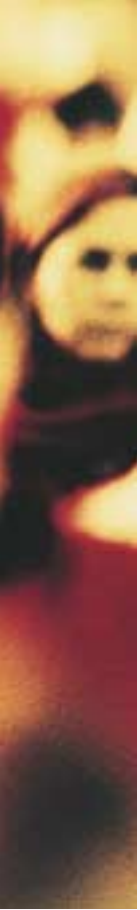
- valuing the opinions of panellists
- maintaining confidentiality
- sharing results of the study with participants
- paying them for their time.

If necessary they should also arrange for transport, a crèche and so on to ensure that panellists are able to attend all the meetings.

### **Providing quality information**

A key challenge for engaging citizens in decision making on complex issues is to find effective ways of providing large amounts of new and often complex information. As part of a citizens' panel process facilitators need to:

- supply participants with high quality written materials, for instance specially prepared booklets
- use panel meetings as an opportunity for issues to be explained and queries to be



- referred back to specialists for clarification
- ensure that the joint workshop provides an opportunity for face-to-face contact with specialists, and a forum in which citizen perspectives are valued.

#### **Quality and level of facilitation**

Citizens are being asked to undertake an intensive, rigorous and at times difficult process; the quality of the facilitation is therefore critical. There are three tasks that are particularly important for the success of the process:

- Supporting panel members: In all aspects of their interaction with the participants, facilitators need to demonstrate their care and competence to ensure that all members of the panels feel 'safe'. This may mean adopting different communication strategies to ensure all panellists understand their tasks fully, and working alongside individuals if it is evident that they are in difficulty.
- Enabling dialogue: Facilitators must ensure that all panellists are included in the process; they need to enable all panellists to speak if they wish, and to be heard.
- Supporting group development: Facilitators need to recognise and support the different needs of the group members during the life stages of the group. These include the 'introductory phase' when the group forms, the 'deepening phase' when the group seriously addresses the task it has been set, and the 'termination phase' when it faces the end of its life. Facilitators need to ensure that they provide 'closure' for the panellists who will have been through an intense process together.

#### **About the Deliberative Mapping briefing paper series**

This is one of five briefings which explain Deliberative Mapping. This is an approach designed to help specialists and members of the public weigh up evidence to reach a joint decision on a complex policy issue where there is no obvious way forward.

The five briefing papers are:

1. Opportunities and challenges for involving citizens in decision making
2. The Deliberative Mapping approach
3. Deliberative Mapping in practice: the 'kidney gap'
4. Citizens' panels in Deliberative Mapping: a user guide
5. Using the Multi-Criteria Mapping (MCM) technique.

#### **Further information**

These briefings are available to download at [www.deliberative-mapping.org](http://www.deliberative-mapping.org)

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The multi-disciplinary research team for Deliberative Mapping is based at SPRU (University of Sussex), ESRU (University College London) and the Policy Studies Institute (PSI). This research was funded by the Wellcome Trust under a programme to develop innovative methods for public engagement in the biosciences, Grant no. 064492.

March 2004

Prepared by Final Draft Consultancy and designed by Sign.