# Notes from EDS Session on Facilitation 29 June

Notes by Ben Clark.

## Status of the facilitator

* The facilitator ideally shouldn't take part in the discussion.
* Ideally, the facilitator should not also be the presenter of stimulus.
* The context of PIPs is different to some other uses of facilitation – i.e. quite different to a business meeting which is working towards something being decided.

## Things to do at the beginning of the session

* Making people relaxed - convivial
* Ask people for their names, perhaps say something about themselves.
* Novelty / ice breaker – e.g. pass the parcel
* Explain what the meeting is for and how it will proceed / terms of engagement (how people will get to speak, how you can interject, how turns will be taken, Talking stick etc. Is there a 2 or 3 minute limit?)
* Suggest people write points down so they don't forget – they might not be able to give their thoughts straight away
* Make sure new people have the opportunity to speak.
* Asks for first thoughts, giving everyone this chance.

## During the dialogue

* The facilitator should not take a tutor role (they should not be teaching or hobbyhorsing).
* The facilitator should listen carefully to what is being said.
* Facilitator should not comment after every comment.
* We should de-emphasise the role of the facilitator, managing by exception (when problems arise)
* Be sensitive to what's going on – who wants to speak etc.
* Balance of the loud and the quiet: Asking people who've spoken a lot to hold their thoughts so that someone else can have a turn.
* Asking new / quiet people to speak.
* Ask people to wait their turn if they are interrupting inappropriately.
* Avoid monologues, ask people to round up what they are saying if beyond 2-3 minutes.
* Avoid extensive two-person back-and-forth.
* Ask people to talk respectfully if necessary.
* Remind people of the rules of engagement
* Remind people of the aspirations about having a philosophical conversation
* Encourage focus if the comments drift away from the topic.
* Occasionally needs to direct / steer the conversation.
* Try to maintain the common ground.
* Periodically summarise points already made
* Deepen and widen the discussion.

## At the end

* Ask for topics for subsequent sessions
* Choice of topics – ask different members of the group to present the stimulus

## Misc ideas

* Use listening games
* Report back to the group what your partner said - get people to listen

## Developing Facilitators

* Facilitation is a skill which comes with practice. It is not something which you can just follow a set of instructions or bullet points to do.
* Nevertheless, there is theory and practice - and you need both.
* PIPs Facilitators are volunteers.
* Facilitators have to be able to experiment in order to learn and work out what works best.
* We have an aspiration to rotate the facilitation to avoid one person always being the facilitator (dominating, or being seen as 'the leader', not able to participate in the discussions).
* People need to learn somehow to facilitate and we want to give opportunities for other people to facilitate.
* How do you train people to be good facilitators?
* A list can't tell you which options to use and is not a substitute for experience. But a list might allow people to reflect on different skills that they might develop - things they might not have considered. A checklist might also help facilitators to remember things/techniques to do.
* Could we deliver training in facilitation?
* Ask for feedback at the end of a session: Judge afterwards how successful the session has been.
* Buddy with neighbouring groups to learn and feed back.