



RTP3 Focus Group Fieldworkers' Handbook

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1 Purpose of this Document

This document provides guidance and advice for fieldworkers involved in the RTP3 Focus Groups for the GCRF funded Centre for Sustainable, Healthy, and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC). Fieldworkers should carry this guide with them when conducting fieldwork as a reference.

Team members should also consult the **SHLC General Data Management Guide** which provides details of the general data management issues teams should consider – particularly in relation to data security and encryption. This is available at **Research > PoliciesAndProtocols**.

Please note, this is a living document. Please notify SHLC Glasgow of any omissions, errors, or sections that are unclear.

The precise protocols for undertaking fieldwork may vary across our partner countries, based on cultural and pragmatic reasons, and this guidance has tried to account for that where possible. We also have fieldworkers of varying experience, so we tried to reflect that in the guidance provided. However, where teams require further information or clarification not currently included in the document, please notify SHLC Glasgow of this so it can be added. Similarly, also notify SHLC Glasgow if any parts of the protocol may prove problematic in your country.

2 About SHLC

The GCRF Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC) is an international consortium of nine research partners aiming to strengthen capacity to address urban, health and education challenges in neighbourhoods across fast-growing cities in Africa and Asia. The partners are University of Glasgow, Human Sciences Research Council, Ifakara Health Institute, Khulna University, Nankai University, National Institute of Urban Affairs, University of Rwanda, University of the Philippines Diliman, University of the Witwatersrand.

SHLC is funded via UK Research and Innovation as part of the UK Government's Global Challenges Research Fund. Our aims are to strengthen research capacity to increase our understanding of, and ability to address, urban, health and education challenges in neighbourhoods across fast-growing cities in Africa and Asia.

Our international team of researchers are conducting a comparative study of urbanisation and differentiation of neighbourhoods in 14 different cities in both emerging economies and relatively poor countries in Africa and Asia, namely: Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa and Tanzania.

Rapid urbanisation and increased migration in Africa and Asia have helped drive sustainable development and created jobs for millions who call the city their home. But fast-growing cities like Dhaka and Delhi also face growing poverty and inequality.

For example, high-rise and high-density neighbourhoods have been constructed to accommodate a rapidly expanding population. But who is going to live there? Do they bring cars, or not? How will this affect congestion and pollution? Will there be learning opportunities nearby? How will living in high-density building impact well-being? Is the neighbourhood close to employment opportunities?

Through our international collaborative and comparative study, SHLC aims to strengthen capacity to understand and support sustainable, healthy and learning neighbourhood across fast-growing cities in Africa and Asia. Our research and capacity-strengthening activities will help support and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

3 About the Focus Groups

The RTP3 Focus Groups will provide us with a large international qualitative dataset that will allow cross-neighbourhood, cross-city and cross-country comparisons. Data collected from each focus group will cover views and opinions about neighbourhoods as well as health and educational needs, issues and problems.

Focus groups will be held in buildings accessible to residents of the neighbourhood and provide privacy to reassure participants of their confidentiality.

The purpose of the focus groups is to answer the research questions, including:

- Who lives in what types of neighbourhoods?
- What kind of social class structure can we identify in these neighbourhoods?
- What kind of health challenges are faced by residents in different types of communities and how are these exacerbated or ameliorated by neighbourhood and city form?
- What kind of education facilities and opportunities are provided to different groups of residents?

Through the focus groups we hope to get more detailed understandings of perspectives on these questions from the points of view of different stakeholders, and to understand the lived experiences of living in these different neighbourhoods. We are aiming for a minimum of 70 focus groups across all our partner countries. This equates to roughly 10 per country and 5 per city. However, it would be preferable to have around 10 focus groups per city. Exact numbers per will vary based on whether the in-country team decides to conduct more of the minimum number of focus groups. Country teams may also do additional focus groups with subsamples if they believe this will aid participation, such as focus groups with female residents only.

4 General Data Management

Full details of the general data management protocols for the project can be found in the **SHLC General Data Management Guide**. For the purposes of the Focus Groups, the key points include:

- All electronic devices used for fieldwork, where hardware/software allows, will be encrypted and have remote wipe functionality enabled.
- All passwords will be secure, being at least 8 characters long and include a mix of upper- and lower-case characters as well as digits and symbols.
- All mobile, tablet, and recording devices will have PINs or similar secure measures setup to unlock the device. Devices will be set to automatically lock whenever the screen is turned off. Devices will never be left unattended in the field.
- All physical copies of research data, will be stored in locked filing cabinets and in secure offices. All offices will be locked when empty, including during the day if away from the desk for longer than 10 minutes.
- All focus group recordings will be transferred at the earliest opportunity from recording devices to PCs.
- Contracted organisations will sign a non-disclosure agreement / have non-disclosure clauses included into the overall contract.
- **Important:** Any identifying information, such as recordings and non-anonymised versions of transcripts, will never be uploaded to the SHLC Microsoft Teams site. All data sent and received from contractors will be done via secure transfer services or similar secure protocols.

5 Workflow Overview

Below is a brief overview of the fieldwork workflow procedure. Further information for each section is provided in the following sections.

- All focus group materials – topic guide, safety and debriefing protocol, participant information sheet, consent form, and support and advice sheets- are to be prepared and translated, as appropriate. (Note: Teams should already have prepared a Safety and Debriefing Protocol and Support and Advice Organisation sheets for the Household Survey).
- For each neighbourhood a purposive sample of around 8 participants is to be selected. In all locations except China, this sample will be drawn from people who expressed in-principle interest whilst recruiting for the survey – with posters used in China instead. The sample will include a mix of residents, including men and women of different ages, to form each Focus Group. These can be split into multiple focus groups where it may be beneficial to conduct interviews with specific members of the neighbourhood separately.
- Fieldworkers are to check electronic and recording devices to make sure they are functional. Fieldworkers should also ensure their mobile phone is fully charged and take with them paper backups of the focus group schedule, water, ID badge, and this **RTP3 Focus Group Fieldworker Handbook**.
- At least two fieldworkers are to conduct each focus group. This can involve one focusing primarily on guiding discussion and the other taking notes.
- Informed consent (see Appendices 2-4) is gained from all respondents before conducting the focus group. Throughout maintain vigilance for any potential upset or distress and moderate any dominating or disrespectful participants. Where appropriate at the end of the focus group remind participants of the support and advice organisations available (Appendix 5).
- After the focus group, as soon as possible fill in the **Focus Group Report Form**. This includes a two-paragraph summary of the main discussion points and an indicator of whether it is worthwhile translating the transcript from the Focus Group into English.
- Transfer recordings and any paperwork to secure storage at the earliest opportunity.
- Carry out regular fieldworker debriefing sessions to discuss progress and any emerging issues.
- All focus group recordings are to be transcribed in the original language using the **Template Transcript Document** to ensure consistency.
- All transcripts are to be anonymised following the **Anonymization Protocol** (found in Section 12 – Data Management)

The SHLC Qualitative Theme Group is to review and select transcripts for translation into English.

- Selected focus groups are to be translated into English based on the anonymised transcripts.
- All anonymised and translated transcripts are to be uploaded to the SHLC Teams site.

6 Neighbourhood & Focus Group Sampling

Locations:

Focus Groups are to be carried within the same neighbourhoods as the SHLC Neighbourhood Survey, with there being at least one Focus Group in each of the 5 neighbourhood income bands, as defined in the SHLC neighbourhood selection proforma.

Therefore, there will be a minimum of 5 Focus Groups per city. However, it would be preferable for up to 10 Focus Groups to be carried out per city.

Research Participants:

In all locations other than China, Focus Group recruitment will be achieved through an additional enquiry made of respondents to the neighbourhood survey. The question/statement to be used is not a substitute for obtaining proper informed consent from Focus Group participants but rather to determine their in-principle interest. Before participation in any Focus Group, would-be participants are to be provided with a Participation Information Sheet and asked to formally give their consent (see below).

The following is the approved text to use when gathering interest during survey recruitment:

‘One final thing, we will be running a Focus Group to explore further with local people their experiences and their views about the neighbourhood. Would you be willing to come along to a Focus Group? It will be held locally and involve a small group of other residents as well as yourself’.*

‘If you would be happy to take part, could you please give me your first name and some contact details so that one of our team can contact you with an invitation’.

‘Also, do you mind if I note your age and gender from the survey alongside your name, as we are looking to involve a mix of women and men of all ages in the Focus Group?’

‘To be clear we will not link your name and contact details with answers to the survey, nor use your details for any other purpose, nor pass them to a third party. We will keep your contact details separate from the survey answers and use them only for the purpose of inviting you to the discussion group. Afterwards we will destroy them.’

It will not be necessary to ask every survey respondent if they are interested in taking part in a Focus Group. Rather respondents can be approached in a purposive way, that is to achieve the objective of bringing together a mix of local residents, including men and women of different ages, to form each Focus Group.

In China only, researchers will prepare posters as a means to recruit to the Neighbourhood Focus Group and distribute them in the neighbourhood. The posters will advise the aim, time, and venue. Those who respond will contact the researchers, who will take basic details. If there are more people who want to come than can be accommodated, they will be invited on the basis of their age and gender mix. As with recruitment through the survey, personal details will not be retained.

7 Fieldwork Preparation & Safety

This section contains details of what materials fieldworkers should take into the field with them each day and some basic safety considerations.

All in-country teams are expected to have a safety protocol already, based on the SHLC template provided in Appendix 1 of the **RTP3 Household Survey Data Management Guide**, as well as safety protocols for any expected issues within their neighbourhoods and for managing the risks around Covid-19. Fieldworkers are advised to always refer to those over the generic advice provided here.

Fieldwork Materials

Each day before heading out to conduct fieldwork, fieldworkers are to ensure they have recording devices, fieldwork materials, and appropriate items for health and safety. A checklist summary of these is provided in [Appendix 1 - Fieldwork Checklist](#).

The following additional items, as required:

- If traveling / staying away from home, fieldworkers are to ensure they have copies of **necessary travel tickets / accommodation booking confirmations**.
- A **map of the neighbourhood**, whether paper or stored off-line on their mobile phone.
- Where culturally appropriate, they will have an **ID badge** with lanyard stating their name, staff number, and institution.
- **Participants Information Leaflets** providing key information about the research and what participating in the research involves.
- **Support and Advice Services Contact Sheet** that list appropriate support and advice services for issues people in the neighbourhood may be dealing with. In some countries, these may be incorporated into the Participant Information Leaflet.
- **Consent Forms** that list what it is the participant is agreeing to by participating in the research.
***Important:** Paper notes and completed consent forms will always be securely stowed in a bag / backpack and transported to secure storage at the earliest opportunity. Recordings from recording devices will also be transferred to a secure password protected computer at the earliest opportunity.*
- **Water**
- **Weather appropriate clothing.**
- **PPE:** During the on-going Covid-19 pandemic fieldworkers are to also carry face masks and hand sanitizer and any other personal protective equipment as specified in the in-country Covid-19 safety protocol.
- **Refreshments for participants**

Fieldworker safety

The safety of fieldworkers is paramount. SHLC has a generic safety protocol that all in-country teams must adapt and provide details of for their fieldworkers.

Fieldwork Contacts

All fieldworkers when entering the field are to have an assigned Fieldwork Contact. This can be the Principal Investigator, a line manager, or another fieldworker who is easily contactable when fieldworkers are conducting the focus groups. Fieldworkers are to ensure they have the contact details for their Fieldwork Contact stored on their mobile phone.

The Fieldwork Contact is to know the focus group locations and the times when fieldworkers will be in the field. It is the responsibility of fieldworkers to notify their Fieldwork Contact of this information. If their contact is on annual leave, off ill, or otherwise unavailable, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure, *before* they undertake fieldwork, that they have an alternative Fieldwork Contact arranged.

Managing Risks

Below is general advice for managing risks fieldworkers may be presented with during fieldwork. However, fieldworkers are always to refer to any additional safety guidance produced by their in-country team.

Weather-related risks: Avoid fieldwork when weather-related risks are at their highest as advised by local environmental agencies. Take routine precautions related to hydration, suitable clothing, and various types of weather protection as required in the field.

Air pollution: Avoid fieldwork when pollution levels are dangerously high, as advised by local environmental agencies.

Traffic accidents: Travel between cities by air or using train services with a high level of security and by using accredited taxis of known repute or private chauffeur hire within cities.

Robbery / crime: Always stay in good quality hotels with good security when unable to travel home. Always use taxi companies or drivers of known repute. Avoid fieldwork after daylight hours. Work in teams or pairs. Notify your Fieldwork Contact whenever you have doubts about the security of a hotel or travel company used so they can be avoided in future.

Health: All fieldworkers are to have fully up to date vaccinations and in-country teams to heed advice issued by health ministries and international organisations such as WHO.

Political disturbances: Where appropriate, seek local advice about their prevalence and avoid fieldwork where and when risks are high.

Covid-19: Each country team will have their own procedures in place to manage the risks posed by covid-19 and fieldworkers will be provided a summary of these. Always follow in-country advice from government agencies, wear facemasks as appropriate, and use hand sanitizer when conducting fieldwork.

8 Arranging Focus Groups

Number and Mix of Participants

Focus Groups will have about 8 participants representing a cross section of local residents. Eight has been chosen as number which is manageable while still allowing for a diversity of participants. As far as possible there will be a mix of age and gender. Beyond this the make-up of Focus Groups is not closely specified, allowing teams to take a flexible approach to involving a cross section of residents.

Venues for Focus Groups

Local research teams have the responsibility of identifying suitable venues. All venues for Focus Groups will:

- permit discussions to take place that cannot be overheard or closely viewed by third parties. If indoors, they will be conducted in a private room that can be closed off from the rest of the building, if outdoors they will be held well away from other groups or passers-by.
- can be accessed safely and conveniently by invited participants.
- are locally regarded as neutral spaces where open discussion can be held and free from any potentially oppressive presence of officials or community leaders that may deter participation or free discussion.
- be capable of being made Covid-secure, according to official local requirements and any additional precautions proposed to manage infection risk, as ethically approved.
- not be in locations where excessive external noise (traffic, construction work, children playing etc.) will intrude in order to be able to obtain a high-quality audio record.
- ensure wherever possible that locations should be accessible to disabled participants.

Focus Groups will typically be held within or close to the neighbourhoods where research participants live. Venues such as community centres, local schools, offices of elected representatives, local government buildings and NGO offices will be used, provided they offer suitable accommodation. In such cases, locations will be identified with the help of people in each community that have good local knowledge.

Where there is a concern about breaches of confidentiality in neighbourhood venues (e.g. risks that the discussion may be overheard or there might be unwanted observation of those attending) or about the presence of officials or community leaders that may deter free participation, Focus Groups will be carried out away from the neighbourhood. Venues such as hotels or conference centres may be suitable, or university or research company offices. It will be necessary to provide transport (taxis, minibuses) for participants to get to the venues if they are beyond a short walking distance.

If it is not possible to convene in-person Focus Groups, in exceptional circumstances it may be permissible to arrange virtual Focus Groups. Such proposals will be discussed with the SHLC PI, Prof. Ya Ping Wang, and the SHLC Data Lead before making any arrangements.

9 Gaining Informed Consent

Fieldworkers are to ensure that all focus group participants give **informed consent** to participate. Informed consent means that the fieldworker has explained the purpose of the research and that participants understand what it is they are consenting to.

There are two broad ways in which informed consent can be gained before commencing the focus group:

1. Informed consent is gained from each participant individually as they arrive at the venue.
2. Wait until all participants have arrived before going through the participant information sheet in a group and asking participants to sign individual consent forms.

Important: *Where a potential respondent shows signs of intoxication, whether from alcohol or any other substance, then do not proceed with the participant in the focus group. A person cannot reasonably give informed consent when intoxicated.*

Participant Information Sheet

To aid informing potential respondents about the research we have prepared 'Participant Information Sheets' providing:

- key information about the overall research
- the time we expect the focus group to take
- that taking part is voluntary
- they are not obliged to answer any questions
- all information given is confidential
- how we plan to securely store and use the focus group data
- contact information

All potential participants are to be given a copy of the participant information sheet, provided adequate time to read through it, and given the opportunity to ask any questions. Participants are to be given a copy of the participant information sheet to keep.

Consent Form

Where participants agree to proceed, move next to the 'Consent Form'. This reiterates key clauses and allow participants to confirm that they are giving explicit consent before agreeing to take part in the survey. Participants are to be provided time to read through this with fieldworkers answering any questions and providing any further information requested. The form is then to be signed by both the respondent and the fieldworker.

Verbal Consent

Where literacy is weak, or a respondent has impairments, fieldworkers will read the participant information sheet and consent forms aloud using the same form as words as the written text and ensure it is understood before proceeding. Participants can then either make an appropriate mark in the signature box or the fieldworker can note that verbal consent was provided on the consent form or on a Focus Group logsheet.

Similarly, in South Africa and Bangladesh asking respondents to provide written consent may result in a high number of refusals to participate. Where that is anticipated to be the case, or proves so during fieldwork, then verbal consent can be sought instead. Where this is the case fieldworkers will read through the consent form and ask for verbal consent before proceeding.

Data Security

All signed consent forms must be safely stored in a bag during fieldwork and transferred to secure storage in an office at the earliest opportunity.

10 Conducting the Focus Groups

Before starting

Fieldworkers running the Focus Groups are to familiarise themselves with the focus group aims – including those for each section of the topic guide, guidance for handling the focus groups, and the overall workflow. Group training and running through / discussing the schedule together before fieldwork will aid researchers to use the Topic Guide and probe appropriately. Where feasible, it is also advantageous if fieldworkers are familiar with the neighbourhood from which the participants are drawn, e.g. from visits and /or participation in the RTP3 Neighbourhood Survey, access to Neighbourhood Survey data (where available), training sessions, or discussions with team members with experience.

Fieldwork training will ideally cover how to moderate focus group conversations, including encouraging silent members to contribute, keeping time, and carefully guiding the discussion to stay on track and moderate any unacceptable behaviours.

At least two fieldworkers will attend each focus group. Workload between them could be divided along the basis of one following the focus group topic guide whilst the other takes notes and contributes with additional probing questions.

The Focus Group discussions will be recorded as data for transcription, translation and sharing among the eight SHLC teams. Therefore audio-recordings will need to be of high quality. Some digital recorders have settings to calibrate recording for group contexts. Researchers will ensure that all equipment is suitable for the venue and size of group, using the most appropriate settings, and is properly tested.

Focus Group Ground Rules

Fieldworkers will implement the following ground rules to moderate discussion. They may wish to verbally cover these before starting the focus group – or introduce them as required:

- there are no right and wrong answers, just differing opinions and experiences
- one person speaking at a time
- no interrupting others
- listening to others respectfully even if they disagree
- avoiding dominating the discussion to allow everyone opportunity to speak
- mobile phone on silent (or if expecting an urgent call, ask them to take the call outside the focus group room)

Additional, ground rules can be included as required / culturally appropriate.

Starting Focus Groups

To encourage discussion, focus groups are to be physically arranged around a table or in a circle so all participants can see each other and the fieldworkers - and no one is excluded or marginalised. Focus Groups will start with brief overview of how the meeting will run, including a reminder of how the contributions to the discussion will be used as data, and introduce the fieldworkers. Before starting

the focus group and the recording ensure all participants have provided informed consent. On starting the focus group proper participants are to be asked to briefly introduce themselves. This could be through asking each participant to say how long they have lived in the neighbourhood, or similar. Whoever is taking notes should try to keep track of who spoke, to relate to the transcript.

Using the Topic Guide

The Topic Guide covers the main themes and issues to be discussed in the Focus Groups. Fieldworkers are to treat the questions flexibly, and probe with further questions as appropriate to guide discussion and elicit further information on emerging themes. Fieldworkers are to ensure a reasonable depth of coverage for each section. The Topic Guide has a given order. Fieldworkers, though, can direct discussion in a different order as appropriate – such as if the end of one section naturally flows into another.

The Topic Guide includes a short statement on the key themes for each section and suggested prompts to help facilitate coverage of the core key themes. The prompts are illustrative and it is highly unlikely all can be covered in each Focus Group. Each section is to be with broad questions and prompts drawn on as appropriate.

Fieldworkers are to probe further to encourage discussion and explore emerging issues that are raised, such as:

- “Can you tell us more about that?”
- “Can you give an example of that?”
- “I am not quite sure what you mean by ...”

Similarly, probes can be used to ask participants to make comparisons (“you said that has changed in recent years, what is different about that now compared to before?”) or to check whether an issue raised is the same for all participants (“has anyone else had similar difficulties?”).

Handling problems

Participant(s) Refuses to be Recorded

Where 1-3 participants refuse to participate with the focus group being recorded, apologise and remind them that if they do not wish to be recorded, they are unable to participate in the focus group. Reminders can be provided on how the data will be managed to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity. However, fieldworkers are to ensure that no participants who are uncomfortable being recorded feel obliged to go ahead with participating.

Where a significant number of participants are uncomfortable being recorded, it is preferable to instead rearrange the focus group with alternative participants. If refusal to participate due to recording is a persistent issue, please raise and discuss this with Prof. Ya Ping Wang. In exceptional cases, we may have to proceed without recording with fieldworkers taking more detailed notes. This is to be limited as far as possible, such as only

within specific neighbourhoods in the city, and a third fieldworker will attend to aid with note taking.

Involving all Participants

All participants are to have adequate opportunity to contribute to discussion. To ensure this, fieldworkers are to moderate discussion to encourage participation from everyone and avoid one or a few individuals dominating the discussion. This can be done through probing such as “Thank you, what do other people think?”, “Thank you, does anyone have something else to add to what was just said?”, “Does anyone who has not said anything on this topic want to add anything?”, and so on.

In exceptional circumstances where someone is talking for a significant amount of time without pause fieldworkers may also have to interject, such as “thank you, sorry to stop you there but we are short of time, does anyone else want to say something before we move onto the next section?”. Gentle reminders may also be necessary to keep conversation on topic.

Conflicts and Unacceptable Behaviours

If there is a conflict between participants this can be diffused in multiple ways, such as moving to the next topic or using a probe to shift discussion. In some cases where conflict persists fieldworker(s) may have to interject to remind participants of the ground rules. Where conflict continues despite changing topic and interjections from fieldworkers it may be necessary to end the focus group early.

Distress / Upset

Given the nature of the research, it is likely that participants in the Focus Groups will have experience of significant hardship and stress. This can range from difficulties with money, housing, welfare, education, and health. Participants may find discussing themes related to these issues difficult, leaving them concerned and upset about their situation.

Fieldworkers are to remain vigilant for any signs of upset and distress, for example where a participant is visibly upset, shaking, refusing to contribute, shifting in their seat, and so on. Where multiple participants appear upset or in distress, fieldworkers are to ask if the group wishes to pause or end the focus group. Additionally, if participants continue showing signs of significant distress the fieldworkers are to bring the focus group to a close rather than continue.

Where a single participant is upset or in distress, let them know they are free to take a break from the group and re-join when they feel comfortable – or if they do not wish to participate further remind them that taking part is voluntary and they can leave early.

Important: *Where focus groups stop or a participant wishes to leave early, fieldworkers are to clarify with participants whether they want the data collected so far to be deleted / destroyed.*

Support and Advice Services

All fieldworkers must take ‘Support and advice sheets’ with them into the field. If space allows, teams can also include this information on the reverse of the participant information sheet. When finishing the focus groups, remind participants that information for support

and advice services can be found on the sheet if they have any issues. If participants express any significant concerns about a specific issue any relevant services on the sheet are to be highlighted. Similarly, if a participant opts to leave the focus group early due to distress, they are to be notified of any relevant services on the sheet before they leave.

Important: Fieldworkers must **never** provide direct advice to participants as this poses significant ethical and legal issues. We are not, and cannot expect to be, experts on all areas covered by the research. Well-meaning advice that is inaccurate may worsen participants' difficulties.

Timing and Concluding

The Participant Information Sheet advises that the Focus Group will last up to 90 minutes. As participants are kindly providing us with their time it is important to keep to this limit. Keeping awareness of timings then is crucial to ensure good coverage of the topics covered by the topic guide.

Focus groups are to be closed within 90 minutes, even where everything in the Topic Guide has not been covered. Section H (Wrap Up / Concluding Question) will always be included to enable participants to raise any views or issues not covered in the rest of the focus group.

After closing the focus group, thank participants for their time and, where appropriate, highlight relevant organisations from the Support and Advice Sheet.

11 Post Focus Group

Focus Group Report Forms

At the earliest opportunity after completing each focus group, fieldworkers are to complete a **Focus Group Report Form**. A copy of the form can be found in the **Research > RTP3 > FocusGroups** folder on the SHLC Teams site.

This form includes crucial information about each focus group, such as details of the sample, summary of discussion, any problems or difficulties encountered, and whether the focus group is worth considering when selecting transcripts for translation.

Each focus group is to have a code. This takes the format -

[neighbourhood code]-[income band (1-5)]-[*optional* subsample]

The code for each neighbourhood is the same as used in the household survey and the income bands numbers are based on those used for the neighbourhood selection proforma (1 = richest neighbourhoods, 5 = poorest). For example, the focus group code for a focus group held in a very rich neighbourhood in Glasgow may take the form “uk01-1”.

Where focus groups have been split to encourage participation from marginalised groups or additional focus groups taken place to provide further data on specific groups, then a tag is to be added for this at the end. For example, if focus groups are been split into male and female groups given women may be reluctant to speak in mixed groups then the codes would be “uk01-1-male” and “uk01-1-female”. Where additional focus groups take place in the same neighbourhood using the same sampling frame just add a-z after the neighbourhood code, “uk01a-1”, “uk01b-1”, and so on.

The summary of discussion and key points for each focus group is also crucial for helping us put together documentation for data archiving at the end of the project. It is a requirement of our funder and good research practice to archive all research data and include adequate documentation to aid secondary analysis. For qualitative data this includes all transcripts and, where no English translations are available, short two paragraph summaries and key points for each focus group.

For sample details, fieldworkers are to record the gender profile of individual participants. In addition, teams are free to choose additional data to record, such as rough age bands of participants or any other important profile characteristics. This is especially important where teams decide to conduct focus groups for specific subsamples beyond those set out in this guidance.

Completed Focus Group Report Forms are to be uploaded to the “ReportForms” sub-folder of the **Research > RTP3 > Data > FocusGroups** folder on the SHLC Teams site.

Debriefing

It is advised that teams have regular team debriefing meetings for everyone involved in fieldwork to raise any questions and discuss issues.

Debriefing sessions can cover issues such as safety concerns, contacting participants, participant understanding of focus group questions, any challenges in arranging or conducting focus groups, and so on. This enables the early identification of any emerging issues, allows for discussion of how to manage them, and provides on-going training for fieldworkers.

Any serious safety concerns are to be raised with the in-country lead at the earliest opportunity.

Focus Group Recordings

As per the **SHLC General Data Management Guide**, focus group recordings are to be transferred from recording devices to password secure computers at the earliest opportunity. This is to minimise potential data exposure in the case that a recording device is lost or stolen. Recordings are to be stored in a “FG-Recordings” folder, further details of this are included in the next section.

12 Data Management

File and Folder Structure

Teams are to create five folders for storing files at different stages of the workflow. File names are to be based on the focus group codes. The table below is a summary of their purpose, and the format of the file names to be used.

Folder name	Purpose	Example file names
FG-Recordings	For raw audio recordings.	uk03-1.mp3
FG-Transcripts	For initial transcripts in the original language the focus group was conducted in.	uk03-1.doc
FG-AnonInProgress	For transcripts in the progress of anonymisation*.	uk03-1.doc
FG-Anon	For fully anonymised transcripts.	uk03-1_anon.doc
FG-Translated	For transcripts that have been translated in English.	uk03-1_anon_en.doc

Append your country's international two-letter code at the start of the folder names. For example, for the Glasgow team this would be 'UK-FG-Transcripts'.

*Partially anonymised transcripts are to be stored in a separate folder as an extra layer of security to avoid any data being accidentally being shared,

Focus Group Log

To monitor what stage of the workflow each focus group is at, teams are to maintain a focus group log. This log is to have three columns – focus group code, status, and selected for translation (Yes/No). Optionally, teams may wish to add an 'Assigned' column to denote who is assigned / currently working on a transcript. The below table includes a list of the status codes to use in the log.

Status
Awaiting transcription
Transcription in progress
Transcription complete

Anonymisation in progress
Anonymisation complete
Translation in progress
Anonymisation and translation complete

A template file 'fg_log_template.xls' is available on the SHLC Teams site in the **Research > RTP3 > FocusGroups** folder.

Transcription

All focus group recordings are to be transcribed in full in their original language. Within transcripts individual fieldworkers and participants are to be distinguished, along the lines of

-

Facilitator 1: And why is that an issue for people living here?

Participant 3: Well, whenever you're seriously ill you must travel to another town over 3 hours away

Participant 1: My son was so scared when he was in hospital for a week as we could not afford the train to go visit him every day

Participant 8: It's not even like there is a direct train or bus route there either

Facilitator 2: Is it only hard to access hospital treatment or do you find it hard to access other medical care as well?

Transcripts are to be stored in the **.doc file format**. To ensure consistent transcription, a template file 'transcript_template.doc' is available on the SHLC Teams site in the **Research > RTP3 > FocusGroups** folder.

For each recording:

1. Transcribers will mark the focus group status as 'Transcription in progress'
2. The transcriber will work through the transcript and store it in 'FG-Transcripts'
3. Mark the transcript in the log as 'Transcription complete'.

Note: Where transcriptions are being done by contractors, mark them as 'Transcription in progress' once sent to the transcriber, transcripts are stored in 'FG-Transcripts' on receipt, and then mark the status for them as 'Transcription complete'. Do similar for translation status if using contractors for translation.

Transcribers, including contractors, when transcribing should mark all potentially identifying information (names, places, company names, etc) with an asterisk (*).

Anonymisation Protocol

This protocol has been written primarily to aid the *consistent anonymisation* of RTP3 focus group transcripts. The general principles can also be used for anonymisation of any other qualitative data that will be shared across our country teams and included for archiving at the end of the project. Taking a shared consistent approach towards anonymisation will make sure that all identifying information is appropriately anonymised and handled in the same way across our countries.

Importance of Anonymisation

The general principle is that where the information, or information across the transcript when used together, create a likelihood that the participant, or others, may be identified that the information should be anonymised.

There are three key reasons why all qualitative data on the project is to be consistently anonymised –

1. We have an ethical duty to ensure participant confidentiality is maintained. Alongside data security measures for recordings and original transcriptions, to prevent exposure of identifying information, anonymisation of the transcripts helps prevent any identifying information being included within quotes selected for use in publications and other outputs.
2. It is a requirement of our funder, and good research practice, to archive all our data at the end of the project. All archived data must be fully anonymised.
3. Due to UK data protection regulations at no point can non-anonymised data be seen by University of Glasgow team members nor uploaded to the SHLC Microsoft Teams group.

What to Anonymise

All focus group and other qualitative data from the project are to be anonymised before translation, sharing any transcripts with other country partners, and analysis. This is to be achieved by removing all potentially identifying information. This includes personal names and anywhere where a participant provides a level of detail where a person reading the transcript could identify them. For example, if they mention that they live on a specific street and next door to a well-known shop.

Examples are provided below for common information that will need to be anonymised –

Names of people: describe according to significance to the respondent(s) [FRIEND NAME], [MOTHER NAME], [FATHER NAME], [TEACHER NAME], [NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICIAL], [DOCTOR], etc. When different individuals mentioned share a common descriptor numbers are assigned to differentiate them, [FRIEND 1], [FRIEND 2], etc.

Before: “Myself and Dave* were speaking to Mr Smith* about that just last week”

After: “Myself and [FRIEND NAME]* were speaking to [NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICIAL]* about that just last week”

Names of places: describe according to the significant of the place to the respondents' life [STREET THEY LIVE ON], [CITY THEY WERE BORN], and so on. In some circumstances, names of places can remain. It is only when the information provided would risk identifying the respondent that it needs to be anonymised. For example, if participants all complain about the level of crime happening on Main Street that would not need to be anonymised. However, if a participant says they live on Main Street anonymise it. Names of places should be changed according to their relevance. For example, the name of a new housing development may in some cases be changed to [NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT] but in another instance the same place may require a change which indicates its social significant – e.g. [WORKING CLASS NEIGHBOURHOOD].

Before: "I grew up in Whitburn* before moving here."

After: "I grew up in [SMALL TOWN]* before moving here."

Then later in the transcript -

Before: "The thing about Whitburn* compared to here is ..."

After: "The thing about [TOWN THEY WERE BORN]* compared to here is..."

Name of workplace: describe more generally, e.g. [FAST FOOD RESTAURANT], [TEXTILE FACTORY], [PUB], [SUPERMARKET], etc. How general the description should be depends on what is required to anonymise the participant. For example, if there is only one textile factory with few employees then change to [FACTORY] instead. When it comes to descriptions of departments in companies or sections of a workplace, use [DEPARTMENT] or [SECTION].

Before: "I worked part-time at the Royal* after school before getting a job at the Michelin*"

After: "I worked part-time at [PUB]* after school before getting a job at [FACTORY]*"

Name of school/college: Depending on the neighbourhood this information may also require anonymisation, especially

Before: "My daughter is in her fourth year at Kelvin High School*"

After: "My daughter is in her fourth year at [NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL]*"

Other details: are at the discretion of anonymisers. Some situations may require edits beyond the replacing of names. For example, if the name of the street a participant lives on is anonymised, it may remain identifiable if they refer to it as "the street with the fire station" or the "road by the bus stop". In such situations it may be decided to remove this sentence as well to maintain participant anonymity. Similarly, a participant may refer to their occupation, their parents' occupation, and belong to a religious minority in the neighbourhood. In combination those three pieces of information could be used to identify them and further care may be required to ensure the descriptors used to anonymise the transcript prevent that being a possibility.

Before: "I live on the road by the bus stop, you can tell which is my house as it's the only red-bricked one on the street"

After: "[TEXT REMOVED TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY]"

IMPORTANT: Wherever an anonymiser is unsure whether additional information should be anonymised they should flag this with the in-country lead or other senior member for discussion and help reach a decision.

Original	Example of possible change
Street names and names of local areas, places visited	Described as [LOCAL AREA] or [CITY CENTRE STREET], [HOUSING ESTATE], [HOUSING DEVELOPMENT]
School names	Changed to [LOCAL SECONDARY SCHOOL]
Specific businesses, places of work e.g. McDonalds	Changed to [FAST FOOD RESTAURANT]
Places travelled to/ visited/ worked in.	e.g. Italy change to [SOUTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY]
Names of family and friends	Referred to as [YOUNGER BROTHER NAME], [FRIEND NAME]

Anonymisation Format

All text which has been anonymised will appear within square brackets and in block capitals, with an asterisk following, such as [FATHER NAME]*. The asterisk is left in to enable people to easily search for any anonymised information in the transcript and important for doing final checks before confirming all information in the transcript has been appropriately anonymised.

Anonymisation Procedure

For each transcript, anonymisers will:

1. Open the focus group log and select their next assigned transcript for anonymisation. Marking it as 'Anonymisation in progress' on the list
2. Read through the transcript double-checking all text which should have an asterisk does
3. Copy the transcript from the 'FG-Transcripts' folder to 'FG-InProgress'.
4. Open the copy in 'FG-InProgress' and search for all asterisks
5. Work through the text appropriately anonymising all potentially identifying information.
6. Perform a final check, it may help if this is done by a second anonymiser, that any identifying information could not be deduced from the remaining text
7. Where additional text needs to be removed to guarantee participant anonymity replaced it with [TEXT REMOVED DUE TO CONFIDENTIALITY].
8. Once complete and double-checked, move the anonymised version of the transcript from 'FG-InProgress' to 'FG-Anon' and add '_anon' at the end of the filename (for example, "uko3-3_anon").

9. Mark the transcript in the list as 'Anonymisation complete'.

Translation

Following the completion of focus groups in each country, the SHLC Qualitative Theme Group will meet to discuss the focus groups that should be translated. For each country a minimum of 5 transcripts are to be translated covering each of the five income bands from the Neighbourhood Selection Proforma and across the two cities. In-country teams are to propose transcripts for translation and a selection will be agreed based on this and the information provided in the **Focus Group Report Forms**.

Selected focus groups are to be transcribed in full and using the same format as used for the original transcripts.

For each anonymised transcript selected for translation:

1. Translators are to work with the **anonymised** version of the transcript from the 'FG-Anon' folder and mark its status in the log as 'Translation in progress'.
2. Translated versions will then be stored in a folder named 'FG-Translated' and append '_en' to the end of the filename (so anonymised and translated transcripts will now end "_anon_en" such as "uk03-1_anon_en").
3. The transcript log is then to be marked as 'Anonymisation and translation complete'.

Uploading Anonymised and Translated Transcripts

After transcription, anonymisation, and translation are complete, only the transcripts from the 'FG-Anon' and 'FG-Translated' folders to the **Research > RTP3 > Data > FocusGroups** folder are to be uploaded to the SHLC Microsoft Teams site. Alternatively, where there are any issues accessing Teams, send the files to SHLC Glasgow using a secure transfer service. Transcripts must never be sent via e-mail.

IMPORTANT: *At no point will raw recordings and non-anonymised transcripts be shared across the project team or uploaded to the SHLC Teams site. The latter is crucial to avoid as it would violate UK data protection regulations.*

Contractors

As per the **SHLC General Data Management Guide** any contracted transcribers and translators must sign non-disclosure agreements and all data sent and received from them must be done through secure file transfer or similar secure protocols. Data is never to be sent via e-mail or other unsecured means.

Appendix 1 - Fieldwork Checklist

Each day before going out to conduct fieldwork ensure you have:

Fieldwork Contact

- ☐ - Notified Fieldwork Contact of fieldwork date/times
- ☐ - Fieldwork Contact number is stored on mobile phone

Fieldwork materials

- ☐ - ID badge [where appropriate in your country]
- ☐ - Bag / backpack with zip
- ☐ - Mobile phone (fully charged)
- ☐ - Copy of focus group schema
- ☐ - Recording device and microphone (fully charged – and, ideally, a backup device)
- ☐ - Paper & pen / electronic device for note-taking
- ☐ - Participant Information Leaflets
- ☐ - Support and advice services contact sheet
- ☐ - Consent Forms for each participant
- ☐ - Any travel tickets / accommodation booking confirmations
- ☐ - Copy of this Focus Group Fieldworker Handbook

Health & Safety

- ☐ - Water
- ☐ - Weather appropriate clothing
- ☐ - Face mask(s)
- ☐ - Hand sanitizer
- ☐ - Any other appropriate personal protective equipment

Appendix 2 - Consent Form

Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC)

Neighbourhood Focus Group: Consent Form

I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part at any point, without giving a reason.

I acknowledge that my name and address will not be retained nor entered into any data base, and that I will not be recognisable in any reports that are written about the survey, and that my participation in the survey will be kept confidential.

I understand that that other participants in the Focus Group may nevertheless still be able to recognise me if my words are quoted anonymously in reports of the research.

I understand that that confidentiality will be maintained unless during the Focus Group organisers become worried that someone might be in danger of harm, so that they might have to inform relevant agencies.

I acknowledge that Focus Group discussion will be audio recorded and later transcribed. All references to individuals will be removed from the transcripts before they are put into a database which will be kept securely until 2032 or later.

I understand that the data will be used to write reports and other publications which will appear in print and on the internet.

I understand that the transcripts may also be used by other accredited researchers who will preserve the confidentiality of the information.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix 3 - Participant Information Sheet

Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC)

Neighbourhood Focus Groups: Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you wish to take part or not.

You have been invited because you live in (*name of neighbourhood*) which is one of around 200 neighbourhoods in 14 cities across seven countries that are covered by the research project.

If you agree, we would ask you to take part in a Focus Group, that is a discussion group involving about eight other people from your neighbourhood, which will be run by members of our research team and last up to 90 minutes. The Focus Group is designed to better understand people's living conditions and everyday lives and local people's use of services in their neighbourhood. It will include topics concerned with health, education, employment and how your neighbourhood is run.

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to stop taking part at any point without giving a reason. With your permission we will audio-record the discussion in the Focus Group, and the recordings will be transcribed. We will also take notes on paper.

Your name and address and the fact that you took part in the Focus Group will not be divulged to anyone outside the research team and we will remove anything that could identify you from the transcripts. Therefore, you will not be identifiable in anything we write. Your name and contact details will be stored separately and we will destroy all personal details after the Focus Groups are finished.

Please note although we will maintain strict confidentiality, it is possible that you may be recognisable by other people who also took part in the same focus group from quotations within our research reports.

Please also note that confidentiality will be maintained unless during our conversation we hear anything which makes us worried that someone might be in danger of harm, so that we might have to inform relevant agencies.

All recordings and paper records will be held securely in locked filing cabinets and offices or held securely on a passworded computer. The transcripts of the Focus Group discussion will

be used by our team of researchers here in *(name of country)* to write reports and other publications that will appear in print and on the internet.

We will also let other researchers who are part of the same international project use the data. The data will be available to other interested researchers from 2024 be kept until at least 2032.

If you wish to see a summary of findings from the study, these will be available in 2022 from *(contact details of in-country research manager or PI)*.

(Where there is an ethics authority that has approved the work in the country where the survey is being carried out it will be mentioned here that the work has been approved and who by, with a contact name and email).

(In all cases a name and email address for the research participant to contact if they require further details (typically this will be the in-country PI or project manager) will be included as well as a more senior name plus email if the participant wishes to complain).

Appendix 4 - Participant Information Sheet – China

Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC) Neighbourhood Focus Groups: Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you wish to take part or not.

You have been invited because you live in (*name of neighbourhood*) which is one of the neighbourhoods in (Datong/ Chongqing) that are covered by the research project.

If you agree, we would ask you to take part in a Focus Group, that is a discussion group involving about eight other people from your neighbourhood, which will be run by members of our research team and last up to 90 minutes. The Focus Group is designed to better understand people's living conditions and everyday lives and local people's use of services in their neighbourhood. It will include topics concerned with health, education, employment and how your neighbourhood is run.

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to stop taking part at any point without giving a reason. With your permission we will audio-record the discussion in the Focus Group, and the recordings will be transcribed. We will also take notes on paper.

Your name and address and the fact that you took part in the Focus Group will not be divulged to anyone outside the research team and we will remove anything that could identify you from the transcripts. Therefore, you will not be identifiable in anything we write. Your name and contact details will be stored separately and we will destroy all personal details after the Focus Groups are finished.

Please note although we will maintain strict confidentiality, it is possible that you may be recognisable by other people who also took part in the same focus group from quotations within our research reports.

Please also note that confidentiality will be maintained unless during our conversation we hear anything which makes us worried that someone might be in danger of harm, so that we might have to inform relevant agencies.

All recordings and paper records will be held securely in locked filing cabinets and offices or held securely on a passworded computer. The transcripts of the Focus Group discussion will be used by our team of researchers here in (*name of country*) to write reports and other publications that will appear in print and on the internet.

We will also let other researchers use the data. The data will be available to other interested researchers from 2024 be kept until at least 2032.

If you wish to see a summary of findings from the study, these will be available in 2022 from *(contact details of in-country research manager or PI)*.

(Where there is an ethics authority that has approved the work in the country where the survey is being carried out it will be mentioned here that the work has been approved and who by, with a contact name and email).

(In all cases a name and email address for the research participant to contact if they require further details (typically this will be the in-country PI or project manager) will be included as well as a more senior name plus email if the participant wishes to complain).

Appendix 5 - Support and Advice Template (based on Scottish research – complete using local services)

If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in the research or feel you require further support or advice the following organisations can help:



Citizens Advice Service

A network of independent charities in the UK providing free, confidential information on money, legal, consumer, and other problems.

0808 800 9060

Available Monday – Friday 9am-6pm



Money Advice Service

Provides free and impartial advice on money and financial decisions.

0800 731 4722



Samaritans

Offers a safe place to talk at any time about whatever's getting to you.

116 123



Shelter Scotland

Providing housing advice whether you are experiencing homelessness, a tenant, or homeowner.

0808 800 4444