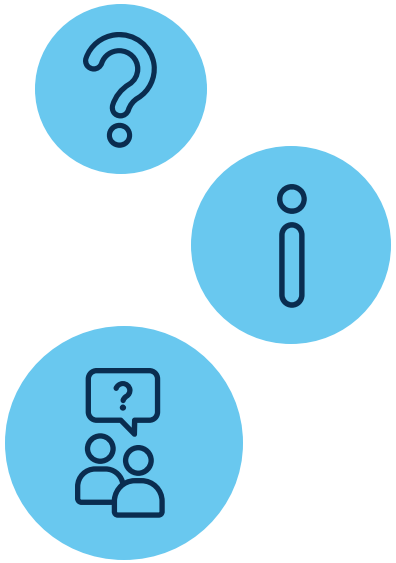
# Why are you asking me?

A guide to communicating your purpose and motives
for engaging people in your research

# Overview



Researchers are engaging the public in scientific research in greater numbers and at a wider range of points across the research cycle. Modes of engagement have shifted to include two-way conversations, consultations and co-creation.

When embarking on these activities, **you may encounter questions from people you seek to involve**.

People can be **humble** about what they can offer, **anxious** about being asked questions on unfamiliar subjects, or **suspicious** about the motives for engaging them. Sense about Science and others involved in public engagement encounter comments such as:

***'I don't really know anything'***

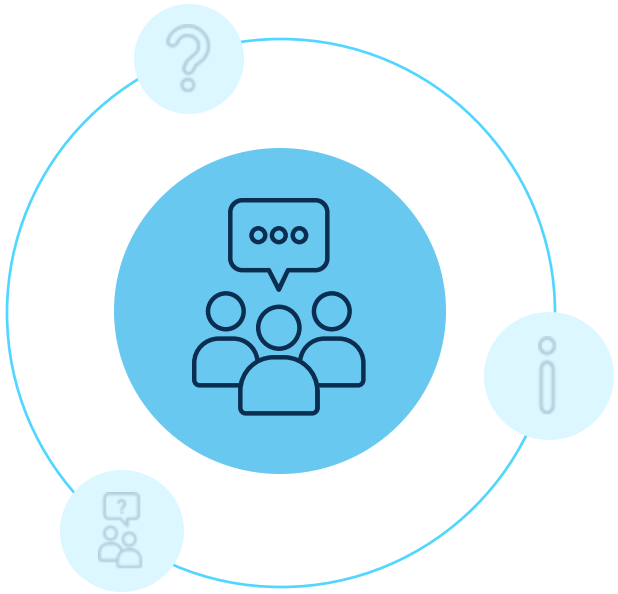
***'You probably won't like my views'***

***'Why are you asking me?'***

# Overview

In the context of increased suspicion about institutions and the motives of others, you may meet more of these questions about your purpose in engagement activities.

So, it's important to work out what your purpose is and be upfront with people from the outset.



**'Why are you asking me?'** is a prompted preparation of slides, drawn from experience of having conversations about motives in a range of research contexts. It helps you clarify what you hope to learn from the people you convene, and also how they might benefit from engaging with you.

# Use ‘Why are you asking me?’ to

**Plan your engagement** to be clear about the purpose of engaging the public with the research

**Reach out to people** in email invitations or adverts for engagement

**Hold one-to-one calls or meetings before your engagement activity** to respond to concerns or work out how to answer them, especially for those with low trust. This can help your session run more smoothly

**Run your engagement sessions, workshops and meetings** to explain why participants have been invited, and what they can expect. This helps create an open tone and encourages people to share their own aspirations for being involved

**Reflect on ambitions for continued engagement**

**Carry out wider communications** about the research and engagement, and to **inform evaluation**

# These slides cover

**1.**

General principles that may inform your decision to engage people

**2.**

Specific reasons why you believe the research can benefit from the engagement

**3.**

An invitation to participants to add their own reasons: promise to revisit this at the end of the session (when they will likely feel more able to respond to the invitation)

# Review the next slides to consider everything that might be part of your motive

- Examples given can be replaced with examples relevant to your area of research
- Be as specific as possible about the benefits and reasons for engaging
- Think about how people are likely to respond and the scope for misunderstanding. Your motive for involving people might be understood as something else
- Delete everything that is not strongly applicable. One reason is fine
- When presenting, consider retaining just the bold text and delivering the rest verbally

**Remember the purpose is to share your motives and reasoning sincerely.**
Experience shows that participants assume a motive: they're more at ease with being given a clear motive than being asked to believe they are there purely for their own good.

# Adapt the following slides

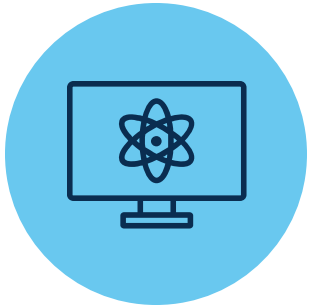
# Why are you asking me?

**Note to researchers:**
**Tailor these questions based on the notes in slides 2–6. Add your own examples and delete what doesn't apply.**



**To ask better questions.** Researchers focus on narrow subjects. Experience in many areas of research has shown that involving others can improve the way researchers investigate and result in more workable solutions.

*For example, patients and families involved in Parkinson's disease research highlighted that symptoms like sleep disturbances and fatigue were important to measure in drug trials, alongside the tremors that researchers had been focused on.*



**Openness**. We subscribe to the principle of Open Science – to make scientific research and its outcomes transparent and freely accessible to all parts of society**.** *This is a big goal and relies on a collective effort by researchers*.

# Why are you asking me?

**Note to researchers:**
**Tailor these questions based on the notes in slides 2–6. Add your own examples and delete what doesn't apply.**



**To be a good neighbour.** This research is taking place in your community, so it's right that we introduce ourselves and consider you and others around us.



**Nothing about us without us.** This research is in a subject that affects you. We want to be shaped not only by researchers, but also by the knowledge and perspectives of people with lived experience of the topic.

# Why are you asking me?

**Note to researchers:**
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**We think this research might benefit from your knowledge or observations** *in the following ways… Specifically, we are interested in finding out…*



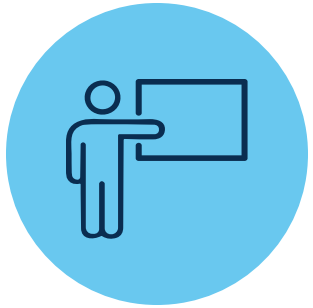
**To find out whether there is information that would help answer our question or whether our data could be used by others**. *For example, marine researchers found that yields from fishing could provide a second check on their own data and they also realised they could support local efforts to monitor water pollution, using samples they were already analysing as part of their research*.

# Why are you asking me?

**Note to researchers:**
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**We have an obligation/have made a commitment** to engage the public, for example as a condition of licensing, or our funding.



To **find out people's experiences and views** related to this work and test out acceptability, which will shape how we plan the research and what we progress.

# Why are you asking me?

**Note to researchers:**
**Tailor these questions based on the notes in slides 2–6. Add your own examples and delete what doesn't apply.**



**To help co-create a description of the research** or another means of engagement (e.g. website, infographic, video) that will make sense to a wider public audience and to understand what questions might come up.



**To understand if and how you want to be involved.** We need your help to guide what involvement activities need to come next.

Use this slide to start discussions with members of the public. Refer to the overview in slides 2–6.

# What are your reasons for engaging with us?
# What do you hope could come of our discussion?







# Trustworthy Communications

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