

Asking questions

The way in which questions are asked can result in a range of different responses from learners.

Listed below are some strategies which could be used when asking questions:

- ask one question at a time
- allow time for the learners to respond
- use strategies such as 'think, pair, share' to encourage thinking time
- make sure everyone in the group has a chance to make a contribution
- use visual aids or symbols to support understanding of your question
- choose questions carefully, bearing in mind that different types of questions have different outcomes (see table below)

Question type	Example	Useful for	Not useful for
Open	How well are you doing here? How can you improve...? What happens when...?	Most openings/starting points Exploring issues and gathering information	Learner with communication difficulty unless support is available
Closed	How many times a week do you have collective worship? Who do you talk to if you have problems?	Getting specific factual answers. Short time available for discussion Learner who finds it difficult to talk	Getting broad based information
Probing	Does anyone get treated unfairly? How have you been helped when things are difficult? What happens if you are unable to get here?	Establishing and checking details of events already known or arising from open question answers	Exploring emotionally charged topics

Hypothetical	What would you do if...? If you could change one thing about the provider what would it be? If you were in charge of the provider what would you do to make life better for everyone?	Encouraging wider thinking, about an area they are unfamiliar with	If the situation is outside the learners' experience
Multiple	A string of questions or statements.	Never useful	Never useful
Comparison	Do you prefer A or B?	Exploration of needs and values. Provides a starting point for discussion	Where alternatives are unrealistic, or where alternatives provide too great a guide to the direction of answer

Inspectors should ask a range of questions that take account of the different aspects of the inspection guidance and the type of provision made for the learners.