

# DIY DEMOCRACY

## HOW TO RUN A CITIZENS JURY



NEIGHBOURHOOD  
DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT



CITIZEN  
NETWORK

FOR A WORLD WHERE  
EVERYONE MATTERS

# BRIEF OVERVIEW

Citizens' juries, which can also be called "citizens' panels", are small groups of between 10 to 30 citizens who gather to think about an issue. The aim of a citizens' jury can be to influence policy or raise the profile of an issue, often engaging elected officials and other decision-makers. For a process to be considered as a citizens' jury it should:

- mirror the public in relevant ways;
- consider a broad range of evidence;
- enable thoughtful and respectful discussion;
- be an open and transparent process.

The steps of a citizens' jury are outlined below. Each step is then explored in more detail, with tips and tools. This document aims to support you in running a citizens' jury at low cost (see Annexe B) but with maximum impact.

- **Step #1 Planning and oversight.** Discuss in your group or organisation who is doing what and make sure you can commit the time needed to make this a positive process. See the example timeline in Annexe A. A stewarding committee, involving diverse "VIPs" and ordinary people, will support the legitimacy and impact of the jury. With the committee, plan out the different steps, from the how the issue will be framed right through to thinking about impact and how the citizens' jury will connect with wider processes.
- **Step #2 Recruiting the jury.** Recruiting the members of the citizens' jury is done through asking lots of people to take part. Those interested are then selected through a process called a 'democratic lottery', producing a citizens' jury that reflects the wider population. Those not selected can be approached to form a support team for the jury. The process should show care, addressing inequalities and checking-in on those taking part.

- **Step #3 Exploring phase.** The jury are supported to learn about the topic from different perspectives. This is done by supporting people to explore the topic both individually and as a group. During this phase, the citizens' jury engage with a range of evidence and views. They discuss the issue and learn from 'witnesses' and each other.
  
- **Step #4 Discussion phase.** Aided by a facilitator who aims to be impartial, the jury engages in small group face-to-face discussion. Here, they develop their ideas on the topic in the light of the evidence and testimonies from the learning phase, but also with respect to the arguments and experiences of their fellow jury members.
  
- **Step #5 Decision-making phase.** The previous steps enable the jury to deliberate on the issue - using considered judgement and informed decision-making. The jury might come to a particular recommendation, or a set of recommendations or decisions. These recommendations, alongside the reasons why they were chosen and key evidence supporting them, can be set out in the final report or statement.
  
- **Step #6 Public impact.** The impact desired at the end of the citizens' jury needs to be thought about right from the start. Ideally, the citizens' jury has already been in the 'public eye' from its launch. One way to ensure impact is to involve key public and media figures in the stewarding committee. In this final step, the outcomes and outputs of the citizens' jury should be shared with all relevant representatives, organisations, and media.

# STEP #1 PLANNING AND OVERSIGHT.

One of the biggest factors in the success of a citizens' jury is allowing enough time and having the time and resources to support it. If it looks like a citizens' jury would be too much to do, think about alternatives, such as a public meeting or a [peoples assembly](#).

**Key costs** will be publicity, venue hire, and a stipend for jurors - example costs are set out in Annexe B, with a link to a more detailed example. Think about who you know who could help reduce costs. Explore getting funding if needed, such as through applying for grants or setting up a crowdfunder.

**An example timeline** is given in Annex A. Sketch out your own timeline and think about where the report of the citizens' jury will go at the end. Are there consultations happening that it needs to feed into? How does the timescale work with key points such as holidays, elections, etc? Does it give enough time to set things up and for your jurists to consider the issue?

**There should be oversight** from a 'stewarding committee', which has members selected from groups of people who are seen to be capable, knowledgeable and independent. A citizens' jury needs to be seen to be fair and have a good standing. They need to include as wide a range of viewpoints on the issue as possible. Who is on the stewarding committee will also be vital in making sure of impact (see Step 5).

Keep the Stewarding Committee involved through the process. If committee members can't commit to regular online meetings, ensure they have email updates.

**Not everything will go to plan!** You may need to adapt and change things. Whatever happens, try to make sure jurors are well supported and find the experience a positive one.

# TIPS AND TOOLS

## Recruiting the Stewarding Committee:

- ❑ **Include people with different viewpoints.** Stress that they are not there to discuss the issue but to make sure that the process of a citizens' jury / assembly is fair and balanced. Note that if someone is on the stewarding committee they can't be a witness.
- ❑ **Include neutral members** who have some standing in the local community: for example a local teacher, a journalist, a social worker, a police officer.
- ❑ **Include people who can increase impact,** including politicians, senior people in public services, those working in the media or prominent in the media.

## Defining the jury process:

- ❑ **Set out a draft plan for the citizens' jury** to the stewarding committee, who ideally will have the opportunity to discuss and give their input, including on framing, evidence, and impact.
- ❑ **Consider how the issue is framed,** for example, “how do we best stop poverty?” would include more diverse viewpoints and encourage more open discussion than “how much should we increase benefits by?”
- ❑ **Consider sources of evidence,** including the materials presented and speakers invited. Who needs to be in the room to get a balance of different views?
- ❑ **Consider how the jury will have impact,** discussing how to best publicise recruitment, how to gain interest in the process of the jury from local networks and the wider public, and how to link the outputs of the jury to wider processes.

# STEP #2 RECRUITING THE JURY.

A citizens' jury is a kind of "mini-public", which means it is like the wider public in miniature. The people on the jury should broadly reflect the demographic makeup of the relevant area (a local authority, a town). If it's a divisive issue then the jury should also reflect different strengths of feeling and points of view. If the aim is to articulate only the views of people with direct experience of an issue, think about [enclave deliberation](#).

For a citizens' jury of 15 to 20 you need a 'pool' of 50 to 100 interested applicants. With a 'democratic lottery' you can then select people at random from the 'pool' in a way that aims to broadly reflect the mix of people in your area. This means you can say "the jury had a mix of people who reflect this town" or "the jury were randomly selected from local people."

## TIPS AND TOOLS

### Recruiting the citizens' jury pool:

- Use a mix of social media and on-street engagement. See [this invite to participate from Involve](#) as an example of what an invite looks like.
- Design posters [with a QR code](#) for shop windows, libraries, notice-boards.
- Reach out to marginal communities - door knock, use word of mouth, go to meetings of community groups.
- Talk about incentives and why people would want to do this. For example, "there will be free sandwiches and drinks", "you will get to meet different people", "you will influence this issue" (though don't over-promise).

### Conducting the 'democratic lottery':

- Use a Google Form that asks interested people for name, contact details, consent to take part, and includes questions about age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and other characteristics relevant to the issue ([see an example here](#)). Google forms are automatically linked to an online spreadsheet.

- ❑ **Get the relevant statistics** for the people within a relevant [local authority](#) or [other area](#) i.e. the proportions of people who are 18 to 30, 31 to 50, etc. National opinion polls might give you the balance of views on an issue.
- ❑ **Create your ‘category’ spreadsheet.** This has the number of people who should fall into a category. For example, if you have a jury of 10 people and 25% of the adults in your area are 18 to 30, then you want the lottery to select 2 to 3 people in that age range.
- ❑ **Adjust for minoritised groups.** For example, people who are black or brown can find it difficult being the only person selected from that category (and can be expected to speak for every black and brown person). Consider making the jury more diverse than aiming for an exact mirror. However, also note that jurists should not be expected to represent any group (see Step 4).
- ❑ **Use [Panelot](#) to conduct the democratic lottery,** following the guidance. [Panelot](#) has examples and allows you to test before conducting it properly.

## **Supporting the jurists and the process:**

- ❑ Once the jury is selected, an email letter is sent out to the successful candidates confirming they have been chosen to be part of the jury and for the others, an invite to support the jury.
- ❑ As well as caring about your citizens’ jury, try to make it a caring space. Make it clear at this stage who the jury members can talk to if they need some change to accommodate them, or if they feel unhappy about anything.
- ❑ Even if not selected, people who have applied might be interested in supporting the citizens’ jury. Invite unsuccessful applicants to a group meeting to explore how they could contribute and induct them into the process. Their role could be as an advocate, encouraging public debate; writing letters to councillors or MPs; welcoming; facilitating; note-taking; or being part of a media group (see Step #6). Extra time and energy will be needed to support and direct such a team. However, the more people from the area who can be involved in driving forward the success of the citizens’ jury, the more impact it will have.

# STEP #3 EXPLORING PHASE.

The jury needs to hear different views on the topic. Providing documents with information from a range of perspectives will help jury members explore and reflect on the issue in their own time. The jury should also be supported to develop their skills in considering evidence.

When the jury comes together, this will be an opportunity to hear from, and question, a wide range of people ('witnesses'). This should include specialists on the issue (such as academics, community groups), people directly affected by the issue (with 'lived experience'), and those who have influence over future actions (such as public service leaders, councillors, MPs). Jury members should prepare for sessions and be given the confidence not just to listen to speakers but to ask questions of and discuss with those present.

The stewarding committee is responsible for making sure the jury hears a range of evidence and views. Sometimes the committee will ask the jury who would be most useful to have speak, perhaps providing a list of options.

## TIPS AND TOOLS

### Preparation

- ❑ **Information brief:** this is information sent to jurists before the jury starts. This includes information about the jury along with simple factual background information with links to sources. For example, the Penzance Citizens Panel, which addressed housing and homelessness, contained basic facts on local homelessness, empty houses, house prices and earnings.
- ❑ **Critical thinking:** Encourage participants to develop their critical thinking skills. For example, link to the videos below on an online forum (see Step 4) and encourage jury members to reflect and comment:
  - [Critical thinking](#) Short 4 minute video setting out guidelines on critical thinking;



[Addressing unconscious bias](#) Short 3-minute video on how our thinking can be unhelpfully swayed without us knowing.

- **Session timings:** there are different options for sessions. For example, a two hour session with: three speakers each doing a 10 minute talk, followed by 30 minute Q&A; then a break; then 45 minutes for the jury to discuss. Or the jury could split into small groups, spending 20 minutes with each 'witness' (a [world cafe format](#)); followed by a break and jury discussion.

The sessions shouldn't feel overly formal and should encourage dialogue, see [photos from the Preston Climate Jury](#). Make sure to consider how this will be an enjoyable and positive experience for jurists, such as providing refreshments in the break and allowing jury members to move about.

## Speakers to the jury

- **Speakers/witnesses:** aim for a diverse range of knowledgeable speakers, including people with different viewpoints, and in different kinds of organisations or roles. Include people who have first-hand experience, for example: having been homeless; having been affected by a failing service.
- **Your MP/local councillor:** Use the opportunity to connect with elected representatives such as a local councillor or MP. Invite them to give a presentation on the issue. This will: raise the profile of the citizens' jury; enhance its impact through engaging elected representatives; and help reconnect interested constituents with those representatives.
- **Ideas on a topic:** participants will likely listen to 10-15 different speakers/witnesses throughout the duration of the citizens' jury. To avoid information overload, encourage speakers to set out one or two specific proposals that they believe will address the issue. This helps give concrete focus to discussions and for jury members to come up with their own ideas.
- **Ask speakers for their slides and notes** to be uploaded onto your website or blog. This can help create an ongoing public resource as well as help jurists refer back to information.

# STEP #4 DISCUSSION PHASE.

It is important for jurists to deliberate rather than debate. This means really listening to different points of view and experiences, and taking time to consider and discuss, reflecting and maybe changing views. See this guide on [moving from debate to dialogue and deliberation](#).

It helps to have people as facilitators and note-takers who do not take part in the discussions. Aided by facilitators, participants then engage in small group (between 5 and 9 people) face-to-face deliberation. Here they reconsider their initial ideas on the topic, in the light of the evidence and testimonies from the learning phase, but also with respect to the arguments and experiences of their fellow deliberators.

## TIPS AND TOOLS

- **Facilitation.** The role of the facilitator is not to offer views or knowledge, but to steer the conversation productively. This means encouraging people to really think about the issue and voice their reasons for what they are saying. See this [OU mini-course on facilitating group discussions](#) and this [library of facilitation exercises](#). Ideally, the discussion groups will be self-regulating and not need much facilitation.
- **Agree your ‘Ways of Working’:** Setting ground rules for how the jury will work together is vital. The first session should involve suggesting some conversational guidelines, for example:
  - Listen respectfully to those you disagree with;
  - Find common ground before moving on to address points of disagreement;
  - Be open to changing your mind based on what you learn;
  - Have a healthy self-doubt that you may be wrong.

Then have a discussion and agree the “Ways of Working” that will be restated by the chair / facilitator at the start of every session.

- **Tackling contentious issues:** It's much easier to find common ground and a shared way forwards on tricky issues if you separate the 'what' from the 'why'. The 'what' - solutions and policies - is where most disagreement takes place. The 'why' covers aims, needs, values, where there is much more common ground to be found. See [this four minute video](#) for more.
- **Representation vs. Selection:** A citizens' jury is selected so that the people involved are diverse. Jurists are not selected to represent any one group or standpoint. For example, a person who is visibly disabled may wish to relate that experience to the issue, but equally might approach it from another position, for example being Buddhist or having experienced motherhood. Personal experience can be illuminating but people should not be encouraged or asked to speak for a wider group.
- **Empathetic approach:** A citizens' jury tries to include a diverse range of viewpoints but can't include everyone. It may be useful for jury members to reflect on how other people would view the recommendations. For example, imagining themselves in the role of someone who has spoken to the jury. What would be their hopes and fears? What kind of evidence or reasons would they want to see? Could the recommendation be reframed to gain acceptance? This reflection could be a personal reflection or, if you were confident in facilitating a role-play, a small-group exercise.
- **Take notes from the discussion:** if people from the support team were keen to help at this stage then they could sit at the table and take notes. In any case, if the participants agree to being recorded then that can be a big help. Smartphone apps like Otter.AI and Google Recorder can transcribe discussions and even create summarised notes.
- **Create an online forum:** participants may want to continue discussion in between weekly group sessions, which can be facilitated by setting up a private [Google group](#) (discussion via email), Facebook page (discussion online) or WhatsApp group (discussion on a phone app). The same guidelines and facilitation that guides respectful and thoughtful discussion in-person need to apply to these online forums.

# STEP #5 DECISION-MAKING PHASE.

The citizens' jury will be working towards a recommendation, or set of recommendations. It is important that jury members feel their voice is included as much as reasonably possible, especially if their preferred recommendations aren't chosen. At this step it is also important that not just the view of the citizens' jury is recorded but the reasons for that view - "why we decided this". Including the recommendations, reasons and key evidence in the final report will help ordinary people follow the reasoning of the jury.

## TIPS AND TOOLS

### Making recommendations.

- **Think about different levels of recommendation.** From specific practical changes to what the local organisations could do - for example "the council should fund a debt advisor"; to changes in what wider society - for example "the media needs to change how it talks about debt"; to changes in how wider systems operate - for example "banks and government should discharge all debts after 50 years".
- **Prioritise if needed.** The decision-making phase may result in jury members having to mull over twenty recommendations or more that have formed part of the presentations and ensuing discussions. Consider prioritising the top seven or eight early in discussions, so that a few recommendations are considered in more depth.

### Coming to a decision.

- **Physical voting with dots.** Use a large board or sheet of paper with recommendations along with each person given a set of colour dot stickers. *The advantage* with putting stickers on a board to support recommendations is that people continue to discuss and deliberate as they are voting. The

*disadvantage* with this approach is that people sometimes only vote for options that have already got votes from others.

- ❑ **Online voting with dots.** To avoid this ‘herd effect’ the online dot voting tool enables you to turn your dot voting into a private vote, so that participants cannot see the votes of the other participants. See the [Online dot voting](#) (also known as ‘sticker voting’) tool to prioritise recommendations.
- ❑ **Feedback frames.** This is another tool for secret score voting on many options. Participants rate each idea by dropping a token in a range of slots that are hidden by a cover, with results later revealed as a visual graph of opinions that makes the results easy to grasp.

## **Reporting on the jury.**

- ❑ **Create a report on the citizens’ jury**, including an ‘Executive Summary’ of the recommendations. Have an overview of the process so people can see how the jury was formed and run. Have the recommendations alongside key relevant evidence and experiences that informed the jury’s decision.
- ❑ **Consider adding a ‘minority report’** when three or more members have a strong view about a recommendation but it does not gain support, or even conflicts with a preferred recommendation. The minority report can be in the form of a short statement summarising their view and their main reasons for it.

# STEP #6 PUBLIC IMPACT.

From the start, it is important to give the citizens' jury every chance to have an impact on the public debate and the thoughts of decision-makers and leaders. This includes: how the stewarding group is formed; the forming of a support group; and, making the best of all contacts and discussions in the process. This is all dependent on the people organising having time and commitment.

## TIPS AND TOOLS

### Preparation

- ❑ See the [KNOCA framework on impact evaluation](#), which can help you think about what kinds of impact you want when designing the citizens' jury - it's designed for mini-publics on the climate but is relevant for any issue.
- ❑ **Ideally the stewarding group will include** people who are well-connected, people who have a high profile, and people within the media (see Step #1).
- ❑ **Form a media group** from the citizens' jury support team (see Step #2) who can help to communicate with people about what is happening with the citizens' jury. This can include: photography of the jury proceedings; doing press releases; posting on social media platforms; communicating what the jury is doing creatively, including graphics, art, poetry, and so on!
- ❑ **Develop a simple website or blog** from the outset and use this to host the Information Brief along with presentations by expert speakers and expert witnesses. You can use [Google website builder \(free\)](#) to create a simple website, for example, using the 'Event template'. [Wordpress.com](#) is also fairly simple to use and costs between \$4 and 45 per month. [Google blogger](#) (free) is another option.
- ❑ **Make the process of the jury transparent** - using your website or blog to publicly record what is happening and why.

## The final report (and beyond)

- ❑ **Get good press!** Ask for a personal meeting with your MP or local authority leader and ensure you have a photographer with you, along with one or more members of the citizens' jury. Issue a covering press release with the photo and recommendations, and a copy of the citizens' jury report, and send to the media ([see this guide to writing a press release](#)).
- ❑ **Send to elected representatives** with a covering letter and suggestions for how they could support the recommendations (for example, a council motion in support).
- ❑ **Use the publication of the report** as an opportunity for a public meeting and launch event, including inviting all those involved in the jury. The meeting could be an opportunity to connect jury members and the support team with local organisations that are active around the issue.

## Further information

More detailed advice and information on running citizens assemblies and juries is available on the [Involve UK website](#). This [briefing from KNOCA](#) has lots of examples from citizens assemblies that might be useful. Also have a look at other citizens' juries, which can give you an idea about how they ran. While most of these had a lot of resources, the principles will be the same:

- ❑ [Cheshire East People's Panel](#)
- ❑ [Dudley People's Panel](#)
- ❑ [Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury](#)
- ❑ [Penzance Citizens Panel](#)
- ❑ [Preston Climate Jury](#)
- ❑ [Shipley Town Council Citizens' Jury](#)

# ANNEXE A – EXAMPLE TIMELINE

<b>Month 1</b>	In your community group or organisation, discuss the process and what is needed across all the steps. Agree who is doing what.
<b>Month 2</b>	Recruit to the stewarding committee. Agree how the jury is to be recruited with the committee.
<b>Month 3</b>	Launch publicity around the citizens' jury and start outreach. Agree who will be 'witnesses' and invite.
<b>Month 4</b>	Continue outreach. Agree support materials for jurors.
<b>Month 5</b>	Select the jury and recruit to the support team, launch the citizens' jury and induct the jurors.
<b>Month 6</b>	Run evidence meetings, update website and social media. Facilitate jury deliberations. Invite more speakers if requested by the jury.
<b>Month 7</b>	Run evidence meetings. Facilitate jury deliberations and draft recommendations.
<b>Month 8</b>	Facilitate jury deliberations and finalise recommendations.
<b>Month 9</b>	Draft report and publicity.
<b>Month 10</b>	Publish report and publicity, send to representatives and media, hold a public meeting.
<b>Post-jury</b>	Support those involved to continue activity. Continue linking recommendations to actions.



# ANNEXE B - COSTS

A common concern about citizen's assemblies is cost. A national citizens assembly may cost £150,000 to £250,000. One conducted by a local authority can cost around £60,000.

However, a local VCSE organisation in Penzance conducted a citizens panel of 15 people over 5 evening sessions (2hrs per session), the cost of which was just £1,500 approx. This included conducting a proper democratic lottery (or stratified random sortition) to get a representative sample of the Penzance population.

Roughly half of the £1,500 went towards an stipend of £50 for each citizen panel member in recognition of their role (£750 approx). All the other roles, including the facilitator and speakers, were voluntary and unpaid. The remaining half of the money went towards rent of a church hall, creating a website, marketing materials, and publishing several printed versions of the jury recommendations. See [the detailed costing sheet here](#), and a [blank version to copy here](#).

## TIPS AND TOOLS

### Reduce costs and raise money

**Ask in your networks** if appropriate meeting spaces could be got at a reduced cost, for example, a community room, a university or a church. Bear in mind the room should be accessible by public transport and have wheelchair access.

**Have meetings online**, preferably after an initial in-person meeting. Online discussions can be more accessible for parents and people who are disabled, though can present challenges to people less IT capable or literate. Google Meet is free for a 60 minute group meeting and another meeting can be set up for a second 60 minutes.

Consider applying for grants, setting up a crowdfunder, or just asking people for the money! It's important to have a good idea of your budget before recruiting the jury so costs can be planned for.

## Paying a stipend and expenses for jurors

A stipend can encourage participation. It is not so much a payment as a way of saying "this is important and we really value your time and commitment". If funds will allow, it would be good to provide some expenses for childcare, IT equipment or travel. The jurors should be the focus of the citizens' jury and making their participation easy and rewarding will help them engage.



This guide was written by Gavin Barker and Jason Leman. DIY Democracy guides are created by the Neighbourhood Democracy Movement, part of [Citizen Network](#).

If you are setting up a citizens' jury and want to discuss this guidance, get in touch with Gavin via [gavinbark@gmail.com](mailto:gavinbark@gmail.com)

We also recommend [the Democracy Network](#) for making connections with people who have run citizens juries and assemblies.

The guide draws on multiple sources and experiences, including 'Forms of mini-publics' by Dr Oliver Escobar. The authors thank members of the Democracy Network - Ciaran, James, Janet, Mel, and Perry - for their generous contributions and comments.

Published by Citizen Network

[www.citizen-network.org](http://www.citizen-network.org)

