Ground rules are very important when working with group discussions to ensure open, respectful dialogue, and maximum participation.

Ground rules should be agreed at the start of any session using the techniques in this toolkit to ensure everyone is happy that they are working in a safe environment able to discuss any issues. You can either spend a short time agreeing those ground rules with the group and displaying them somewhere visible during the event or give them a standard set of guidelines to follow.

Ground rules should include principles like:

- Everyone should actively participate.
- Everyone should have a chance to comment.
- People should speak from their own experiences.
- The review is a safe environment where people can be creative and share new ideas.
- It should not be used as an opportunity to apportion blame.
- Everyone has a duty to think critically about the issue or topic.
- Discussions should be constructive.
- Make the discussion detailed by thinking ‘Yes…and’ during the review.
- If appropriate, and possible, agree consensus but remember to listen to and explore all perspectives.
- There should be a commitment to take things forward and share lessons with the wider organisation.
- Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses - they can be as disrespectful as words.

You can print a copy of these ground rules (see page 2) and use them in your sessions or as a starting point for discussion and agreement.
Ground rules for the session

Everyone should read the following ground rules at the start of the event and, by signing below, agree to follow them.

Everyone should actively participate.

Everyone should have a chance to comment.

People should speak from their own experiences

The review is a safe environment where people can be creative and share new ideas.

It should not be used as an opportunity to apportion blame.

Everyone has a duty to think critically about the issue or topic.

Discussions should be constructive.

Make the discussion detailed by thinking 'Yes…and' during the review.

If appropriate, and possible, agree consensus but remember to listen to and explore all perspectives

There should be a commitment to take things forward and share lessons with the wider organisation.

Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses - they can be as disrespectful as words

Signed: _______________________________________________