# TIP SHEET

## Qualitative data analysis

This tip sheet describes the types of qualitative data and outlines ways you can collect and use it.

**LEARN**

**Qualitative data is evidence or information that is expressed in words. It is related to people's behaviours, opinions, concepts and values in a social context. Qualitative data 'describes' information whereas quantitative data 'defines' or 'measures' it.**

## Types of qualitative data

There are lots of different types of qualitative data, including:

- structured text such as writings, stories, survey comments, news articles
- unstructured text such as transcripts, interviews, focus groups, conversations
- audio recordings such as music and video recordings, graphics, art, pictures and visuals.

## Using qualitative data

Working with qualitative data can be depicted in three stages (see Figure 1):

1. Collecting things
2. Noticing things
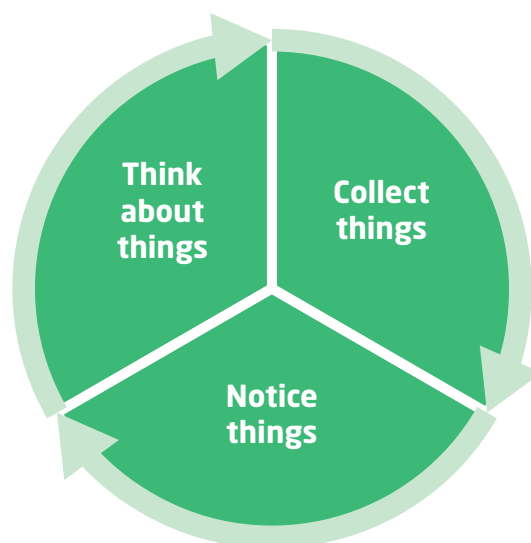3. Thinking about things



Figure 1. Noticing, collecting, thinking model
(Seidel, 1998)

## Data collection (collecting things)

When collecting qualitative data, it can be useful to consider the following questions as a partnership group:

- What methods are most appropriate for collecting qualitative information and who is best to do it?
- What are the benefits and potential risks of each method?
- How can we ensure we have heard the voices of those who are often unheard?
- In identifying the different kinds of data, how can we keep the experience of families and children alive?

## Data interpretation (noticing things)

When interpreting qualitative data, it is important to understand:

- context (economic, political, cultural, social and environmental factors)
- people (how people make sense of their experiences)
- interaction (how the various parties involved interact with each other).

## Types of qualitative data analysis

There are several ways to analyse qualitative data.

**Content analysis** involves categorising and summarising verbal and behavioural data. There are two types of content analysis: descriptive (what is the data?) and interpretive (what does the data mean?)

**Narrative analysis** involves analysing the narrative of an interview or observation. For example, summarising or re-telling stories presented by different people based on their experiences.

**Discourse analysis** involves focussing on how people use language to make sense of everyday life. For example, analysing whether the storyteller speaks in a vague or specific way.

**Framework analysis** involves identifying a thematic framework to sort and interpret data. This is primarily done using: coding (coding sections of text), charting (depicting themes in charts) or mapping data by patterns, concepts or explanations.

**Grounded theory** involves creating a hypothesis while examining and building on layers of information. The research framework then develops with the analysis, rather than before the analysis.

## Interpreting emerging themes (thinking about things)

When interpreting qualitative data, the following are some additional points to consider:

- What themes emerge from the data?
- How might we summarise these?
- What is the main message?
- What relevant context should be included?
- Does the content represent individual or group ideas?
- Does the content represent actual or hypothetical experiences?
- What are conclusions from parental feedback?

- Is the source of the sample data representative?
- How was the data collected? Who was involved?
- What other qualitative data might support the conclusions being drawn?
- What type of quantitative data might support these conclusions?
- What other data is needed need to support/challenge the conclusions we are making? Consider referring back to the Ecological model of child development.
- How can the data collected be presented back to all community stakeholders to help it make sense/lead to priorities for action?
- What are the next steps or priorities for action?

If your group requires additional support in analysing your qualitative data, consider reaching out through your networks to find a suitable expert. Research institutions such as universities are a great place to start when looking for a qualitative data expert.

## More information

For more information on data, refer to **Platforms Tip sheet: Quantitative data analysis** and **Platforms Tip sheet: Secondary data sources**.

**For more Platforms information, resources and support visit: www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms**
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