

OVERVIEW

This activity is carried out in groups. It enables volunteers and staff to discuss what dignity means both generally and in a particular community food context. It also provides a safe space for groups to build a shared understanding of what dignity means for their context and what this means in practice. As well as increasing people's awareness of dignity in practice, it helps to identify what could undermine someone's dignity.



AIM

To encourage volunteers and staff to share their thoughts about dignity and build a shared awareness of how a person's sense of dignity might be promoted or undermined in a community food context.

MATERIALS

- **Sheets of paper and pens to note outcomes of discussions for each group.**
- **A large sheet of paper to note comments at the front for everyone to see.**

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: What does dignity mean to you?

In pairs or small groups, ask people to take a couple of minutes to reflect on the word (s) that come to mind when they think of dignity, chat about what dignity means to them. Then get each participant to share and take notes of the words being mentioned. Once everyone has had their turn, read out loud the list of words.

Step 2: Has your dignity ever been undermined?

Ask participants to think about a time when perhaps their own dignity was undermined. Ask them to silently reflect on how this made them feel. If participants are comfortable to do so you can welcome

them to share any experience and/or feelings with the rest of the group. Make sure you do not put pressure on anyone to share anything. If you would like to share a personal experience yourself, you could do so as a way to start the conversation.

Step 3: What do we think dignity means as a group?

Bring everyone together and ask them to share what they have discussed.

Record what they say in a place where everyone can see. Make two columns: positive words that promote dignity, and negative words that undermine dignity. This list shows the extent to which people share similar definitions of dignity, bearing in mind there might be differences, considering their backgrounds and personal circumstances. You can emphasise the degree of similarity by drawing attention to words that come up more than once.

Optional: You may decide to follow this activity with the [Dignity is in the Detail-Dignity Spectrum activity](#).

Step 4: Summary and reflection

Take a few minutes to summarise and reinforce the idea that someone's experience and sense of dignity is affected by small detailed gestures that impact on how they feel. You can read the following quote:

"Putting dignity into practice requires us to think carefully about all of the factors that affect how someone feels when they visit a community food project. The decisions we make, small or large, as both staff and volunteers, will have an impact on how someone feels about the space, situation or the way they are treated. Therefore, it is important to recognise that dignity is in the detail."

You can also emphasise how from our own personal experiences we can see how the feelings generated when our dignity is undermined are something we never forget. Therefore, as community food providers we have a high responsibility to ensure the way we run the services does not undermine people's sense of dignity.