



HOW TO COLLECT A GOOD CASE STUDY

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What is a case study?

A strategy for research

It contains the essential information needed to present a situation and, if necessary, describes and analyses the solution.

A story

It is short, sweet and to the point. It is a detailed investigation of an individual or a group. A case study is the opposite to a survey - its not a mass study. It seeks depth, not breadth.

Detailed investigation

The information you get from a case study is a lot richer. For projects such as [Poverty Watch](#) and [Change for Children](#), it gives the statistics and figures a human face, a story which in itself is very powerful.

Elements of a good case study

A case study should be no more than two pages long. Unlike quantitative data, which asks questions such as *Who? What? Where? When?*, a case study will focus on qualitative data, such as *How?* and *Why?*

Tell the story

The main purpose of a case study is to tell the story. A good case study will help the reader to:

- identify with the situation
- will encourage the reader/listener to empathise with the situation
- describe the situation and encourage readers to recognise themselves in it

Build expectation

This is a key element of a good case study, build the suspense and tension.

Top Tip: Be conversational with your language. Write it as if you are speaking it!

Structuring your case study

Case studies can look, feel and sound similar, so it is essential to think about your framework so that you create a unique story every time.

You should use the same structure for every case study you do, and it needs to be consistent from start to finish. Think about your initial questions before you begin. The end result should have answered all these questions.

Your framework should look like this:

- What questions do you want to ask?
- What data is relevant?
- What sources do you want to use?
- What point are you trying to get across?

Create a template on paper, or in your mind

Top Tip: Keep jargon to a minimum and keep your audience in mind. Set the scene and tell the story - don't analyse it. The end of your case study should have the reader feeling, "So what can I do now?"

Types of data in case studies

You can use different data collection tools to get a good case study. You can choose one, or a combination, of the below – it is up to you.

- Documents
- Interviews
- Direct observation
- Participant observation
- Drop-in session
- A simple chat

Things to think about...

- Always think about how your subject is being portrayed
- There is a fine line between using a person's story for your aims and exploiting someone. Be careful with what you say and how you say it.
- Always leave your subject feeling empowered – remember they are telling you THEIR story.
- Is the case study ethical?
- If it is an anonymous case study – NEVER use their personal details, or make any references that could reveal their identity.

Why are case studies so important for Poverty Watch?

- They demonstrate the need for change
- They collect the data in a very creative way
- They are a powerful tool when talking to others
- They are great to add into reports
- They give the stats a human face
- They are an excellent way to give the Voluntary and Community sector, and the people, a voice

If you would like any further guidance on how to write a good case study, please contact;

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