

# Making better decisions in groups

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“By pooling diverse information and  
different areas of expertise, groups can  
make better decisions than individuals.”

Dr Dan Bang and Professor Chris Frith FBA FMedSci FRS,  
*Making better decisions in groups, Royal Society Open Science, 2017.*

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# Unfortunately, social dynamics can undermine this.

Committees can prevent this by:

## Being diverse in terms of their background and expertise

A wide range of views allows a group to explore a problem space fully.

## Avoiding the impact of social influence

Group decisions can be more valuable if members have independence from one another. If hierarchies exist, opinions may be more useful if collected anonymously.

## Recognising expertise

Judgement by an individual with relevant specialist knowledge should carry more weight than judgement by an individual without such knowledge.

## Finding hidden information

The sharing of information held by the minority, not just the majority, should be encouraged. This can prevent essential details from being overlooked.

## Looking beyond confidence

High confidence does not always imply greater knowledge. Less confident group members may be more knowledgeable. Consider fixed speaking times and no-interruption rules.

## Challenge the status quo

Standard practises often work well, but may not always deliver the best decisions. Be prepared to tackle problems in new ways.

## Establishing checks and balances

Committee chairs should ensure members agree on the nature of the problems they are addressing. Everyone should be encouraged to monitor for unconscious bias.



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