

COMMUNITY REPORTING

Changing the world, one story at a time



People's Voice Media
Connecting Communities



A VISION FOR AN EQUITABLE FUTURE

We live in an unequal world. These inequalities are pervasive throughout society - from health to education, employment to housing, access to democracy, to social status.

Recent interconnected issues of global significance such as the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-inequality crisis have exacerbated these issues further. The gap between those who have access to the power and resources they need to live fulfilling lives, and those who do not, is widening.

This is unfair. This is unjust. Things need to change.

THE POWER OF STORIES

Stories - whether visual, written or spoken - are important learning tools. They help us to make sense of our world, understand different perspectives, and provide nuanced insights into social issues. We believe that people's authentic stories can play a vital role in helping society address the challenges it faces and tackle deep-rooted inequalities.

People's Voice Media is a civil society organisation established in 1995, that uses storytelling as a tool for social change in the UK and across Europe. We are on a mission to use lived experience to inform services, research, and policy, and to change institutions, systems, and society for the better.

We want to create a just world in which people's lived experience is heard, valued, and has influence.



WHAT IS COMMUNITY REPORTING?

In 2007 we launched the Community Reporting movement and began to build the Community Reporter Network. Community Reporting is a peer-to-peer, digital storytelling method that supports people's participation in research, policy-making, service development, and decision-making processes. The Community Reporter Network now spans the UK and Europe. It has 50+ active partner organisations from different sectors in the arenas of policy, research and services, and has trained over 2,000 Community Reporters.

The Community Reporter network puts lived experience at the heart of service improvement, policy development, and research practices.

[Watch this animation to find out more!](#)

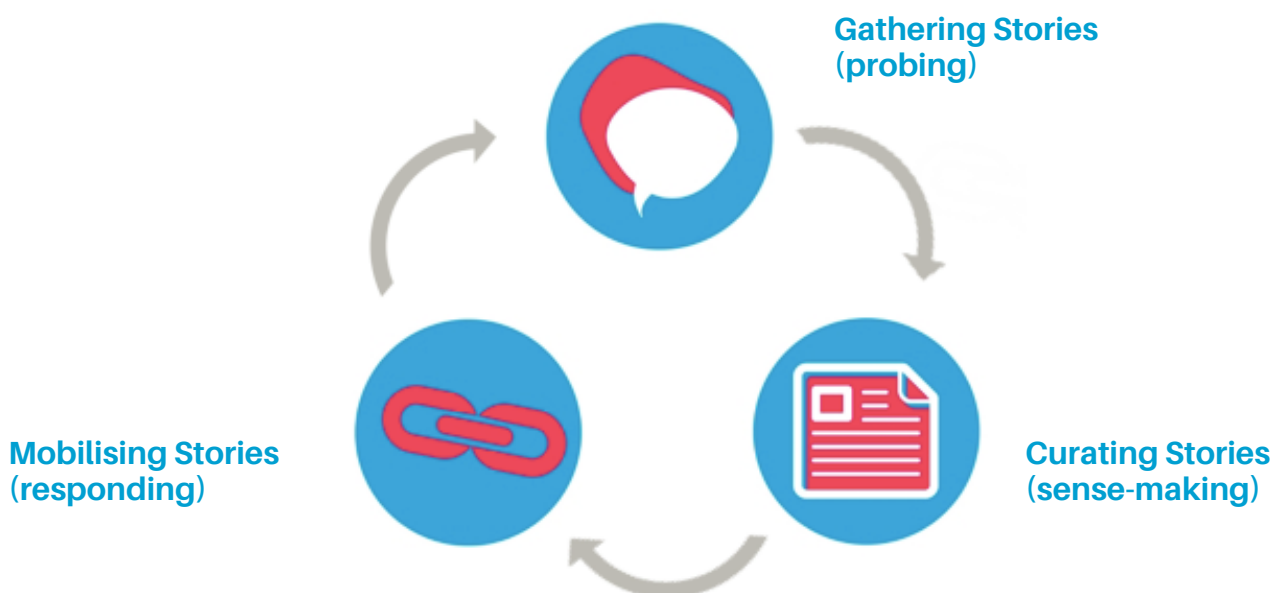


COMMUNITY REPORTING CYCLE

Community Reporting enables people to tell their own stories, in their own ways through text, photos, audio and video. It has three stages:

- Gathering Stories: Supporting people to share stories about topics that matter to them.
- Curating Stories: Identifying the key insights in a set of stories and packaging the findings.
- Mobilising Stories: Connecting the story insights with people in a position to make change.

This cycle is loosely based on the Cynefin framework for decision-making in complex environments (Snowden and Boone, 2008).



Community Reporting is a framework through which people's stories are transformed into real-world change.

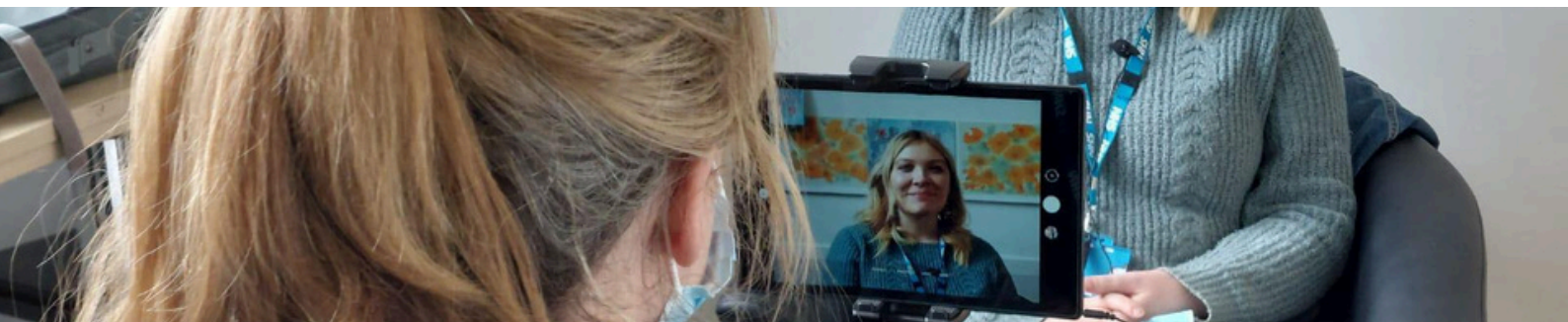
STORY GATHERING

Within Community Reporting there are three key Digital storytelling techniques that we adopted in our work. They provide frameworks for people to share their lived experiences of the world in reference to a broad theme, topic or area. The techniques are:

- **Snapshot stories:** This method aims to gather quick insights into the topic. An open question is asked and the storyteller responds to it based on their experience.
- **Dialogue interviews:** These stories take the format of peer-to-peer 'interviews' that do not have pre-determined questions. Instead, an opening question (i.e., a conversation starter) is asked which enables the storyteller to start to tell their story. The Community Reporter recording the story then asks any questions within this storytelling process that naturally occur to them. This technique supports the storyteller to set the agenda of the conversation.
- **Personal Monologues:** These stories are more 'free-form' ways of people talking about a particular topic, experience or life journey. We have a range of tools to help people plan what they want to share such as mind-maps, journey story maps, story element sheets and storyboards

To ensure a degree of consistency within the Community Reporting practice and how it is implemented, Responsible Storytelling is embedded into each Community Reporting activity. Responsible Storytelling accounts for the ethics and values of Community Reporting; ensures appropriate content; ensures the necessary permissions and consent are gained; and puts people's online and offline safety at the heart of the practice.

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STORY CURATION

Story curation helps us to identify and present the insights from people's stories.

Our approach borrows from established qualitative data analysis practices such as discourse analysis (Brown and Yule, 1983) and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Tummors and Karsten, 2012). Adopting elements of these methods, provides us with a framework through which hypotheses can emerge from the data rather than being imposed upon it. Furthermore, our approach is underpinned by Pierre Lévy's (1997) concept of 'collective intelligence' which purports that multiple people's knowledge is a greater than an individual's knowledge.

During story curation, we look at the topic, content and context of each individual story. This allows us to explore what people are talking about, their thoughts and feelings about the subject and their reasons behind this. We group these insights together to produce a set of findings. These findings are then communicated in a range of ways such as short films, reports, presentations, visualisations, and much more. Where possible, we curate the stories with Community Reporters and the storytellers as part of participatory workshops.



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STORY MOBILISATION

Story mobilisation describes processes that connect the learning from stories to people, groups and organisations who are in a position to use this knowledge to catalyse change. There are many ways in which we mobilise the findings from our stories and curated content, and we work with the Community Reporter network to co-create different ways of doing this. This can include both online and offline mobilisation approaches such as devising social media campaigns, delivering presentation of findings events and participatory workshops, presenting papers at conferences and symposiums, creating dissemination strategies for online distributions via websites and emails, adopting grassroots changemaking strategies and much more.

CONVERSATION OF CHANGE EVENTS

Conversation of Change events use stories and other data to prompt a dialogue between people that seeks to catalyse change. This dialogue enables people to share understandings, learning and ideas. Essentially, we are talking about a knowledge exchange process that can create new ways of thinking and new approaches to address injustice and inequalities. The events adopt facilitation techniques informed by aspects of Open Space Technologies, Brené Brown's (2012) vulnerability research and story dialogue techniques (adapted from Labonte and Feather, 1996). Through different activities, the stories stimulate conversations between people with different perspectives, supporting them to identify the real world changes they can take forward post-event.

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MAKING CHANGE

We are working towards four strategic goals:

1. Enhance Community Reporting's position as a research tool, and lived experience stories as a form of evidence
2. Embed Community Reporting and lived experience into service development and improvement
3. Use learning from the Community Reporter network to influence local, regional, and national policy change
4. Be actively anti-racist and use this as a lens through which we address structural inequalities

To achieve them we provide:

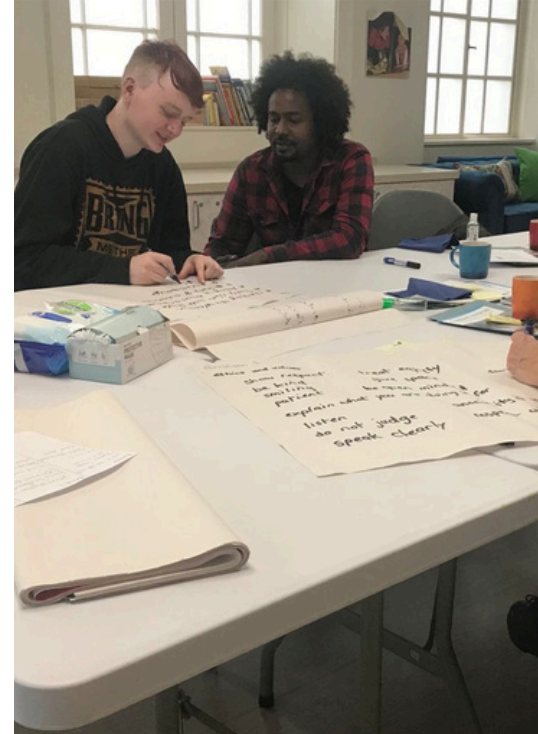
- **Research services:** We use Community Reporting as a method to work with lived experience as data, enable people's involvement in research, and set research agendas.
- **Training and capacity-building programmes:** We train individuals, communities, services, and organisations to use Community Reporting as a tool for positive social change within their own context.
- **Consultancy and bespoke projects:** We apply Community Reporting as a tool for for evaluation and learning to support service, community, and policy development.

A PARADIGM SHIFT

Community Reporting meets emerging trends and direction-changes in service development, policy-making, and research approaches. These sectors are keen to adopt more 'co-productive' techniques and to use lived experience as a form of evidence. The landscape of these arenas is changing to accommodate this shift in thinking and practice.

Community Reporting is a part of this change. As a method it is adaptable to different contexts. It can be integrated with other approaches such as future-thinking, co-production activities, impact evaluation and much more. It offers a viable, tried and tested solution to working responsibly with lived experience.

The time for stories is now.



BE A PART OF THE STORY

Visit: <https://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk>

Check out:
<https://communityreporter.net>

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