

# Scaling a social innovation? Measure your impact with... Lived Experience Storytelling



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# About the Author

## Dr. Hayley Trowbridge

Hayley is the CEO of [People's Voice Media](#). She is an experienced Project Manager and oversees the delivery of our UK and European research and innovation (H2020, Erasmus+, REC) and organisational/service development projects. In this role, she uses Community Reporting and digital storytelling practices to support individuals and groups to have a voice on the issues that are pertinent to them and equips people with the skills to use narratives of lived experiences to create social change.

Hayley supports the development of the organisation's strategic and methodological development within the arena of 'bottom-up' social change. She is currently WP Lead on the CoSIE H2020 project leading the work on 'citizen insight' to support the co-creation of public service across 10 European countries.

Hayley is also a trained facilitator and has over a decade of experience of using digital tools and creative methods in community and informal learning settings to enhance people's lives, develop skills and capacity (at both individual and organisational levels), and to address social and cultural inequalities. Hayley also has a PhD in the field of media convergence and film distribution, awarded by the University of Liverpool and has a number of publications.

## A word on impact measurement

The amount of impact measurement tools is vast, and their variety and concrete application have been well documented (see Avise, 2021; GECES Sub-group, 2014; European Commission & the OECD, 2015; Tuan, 2008). You may be aware of many others and you could choose to integrate those into your Learning As You Scale plan. Rather than repeating existing resources, we provide these three accessible tools and a number of strategic considerations that will help you decide which tools to use to measure impact.

It is well established that economic value creation may play a pronounced role in social innovations, which may therefore represent a substantial share of relevant key performance indicators (KPIs). Any activities that help prevent public transfers, such as work integration efforts, might be well covered and analysed with classic cost-benefit analyses that focus on how much the state has saved by the innovator succeeding to provide unemployed people with a job. However, as detailed in Section 1, it is essential to understand that a large share of social innovations will focus on the creation of other types of value or impact such as:

- **social** (questions about interpersonal relations and networks, people's lives etc.)
- **cultural** (questions about norms and values)
- **political** (questions about participation and engagement)
- **environmental** (questions about preserving our environment and limiting environmental degradation)

Assessing such effects demands a much higher degree of creativity and methodological complexity. There are a range of ways that this can be achieved. Social return on investment (SROI) methods is one approach that enables people to assess the value of their social innovations that are not usually assessed via traditional financial value measurement tools. However, this is not the only way of assessing the social, cultural and political value of social innovations and, as Section 4 explores, different decision-makers, gatekeepers and stakeholders can be influenced by different methods. Some will prefer more traditional data or quantitative evidence, whereas others are inclined to be persuaded by individual stories and data with richer qualitative details.

Since the Nobel Prize in Economics of 2019, experimental methods that make use of randomisation have been prominent. Such randomized controlled trials are perhaps viewed as the 'gold standard' for evidence and thus social innovators may assume that such methods should be what they use when measuring impact. However, it is important to note that while experimental methods, which are very resource-intensive, have their benefits in certain areas, they also have serious limitations.

Randomisation has its benefits when interventions represent 'easy fixes' to a problem, for example when a vaccination may prevent a disease. In such a case, the desired outcome or impact (higher immunization) equals or is close to the outputs produced (number of vaccinations performed). In instances like this, you can easily check the incidence of the disease in groups of people who received the vaccine versus groups that did not receive it in order to assess its effectiveness.

However, experimental methods are limited, if not unsuitable, for understanding multifaceted, organizational activities that seek to produce multifactorial changes. For many social innovations we will need detailed accounts of whether interventions enable new social relations, empowerment, or self-worth, or a combination of those effects. This requires contextual knowledge, from multiple data

sources, including qualitative information. This part of the toolbox will explore this more complex arenas in which social innovations are usually situated in more detail.

## Let's talk about... measuring impact

Take a look at these short videos from Gorgi Krlev from Heidelberg University. In them, Gorgi explores how you can move from methods to a strategic approach to social impact measurement, and some of the challenges you can come across when measuring impact.

From method to strategy - Watch here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHD4\\_Z781r0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHD4_Z781r0)

Challenges when measuring impact - Watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boJ8zgn3nOk>

## Why is it useful to measure your impact?

It is important to stress that impact measurement is not an exercise that social innovators only do for their funders or policy makers. It should also be undertaken so that the insights can be used for organisational learning. As a learning tool, it is useful for:

1. **Gathering information:** It can inform the 'standard activities' of social innovators by being a useful means through which data about these activities is gathered and understood.
2. **Navigating the direction of innovations:** It can help assess and steer the scaling of social innovations because it helps establish links between performed activities and impacts achieved. It informs the planning of the process as well as the process itself.
3. **Answering key critical questions:** An effective impact measurement and reporting system provides answers to questions like:
  - Where did we not see the impact that we were aiming to create?
    - What were the reasons for the impact not materializing?
    - How do we need to improve our activities? Or alternatively, how do we need to redefine our goals to better align with our actual impacts?
  - What kinds of impacts have we achieved that we did not expect?
  - Is what we are doing producing the greatest possible impact, or do we need to develop an entirely new approach?

You may also want to consider exploring questions regarding stakeholders through your impact measurement strategy, particularly those outside of the innovation who may be vital to scaling the innovation. Examples of such critical questions could be:

- How far did our own impact expectations and performance align with those of our stakeholders? Which impact dimensions were missing or seemed redundant to our stakeholders?
- Which of the impacts produced (or not) were most material to our stakeholders? What does that mean for our organizational strategy?

The following tool – lived experience storytelling - is a useful way of gathering evidence of impact and data that can support learning processes. It can be used individually or in conjunction with other insight gathering methods not included in this guide.

## Lived experience storytelling

There are different types of knowledge such as practical know-how, theoretical expertise and experiential understandings. Experiential knowledge – what we are referring to here as ‘lived experience’ – focuses on what we can learn from people’s lives and their experiences of different situations. Lived experience supports people’s participation in research, policy-making, service development, and decision-making processes and recent research has acknowledged the validity of lived experience and knowledge-based practice in these fields (see Durose et al, 2013; Glasby, 2011).

Conventional tools for using lived experience in social innovations include:

- surveys
- polls
- questionnaires
- focus groups
- comment cards

Such approaches are often used to gather feedback on social innovations and are valuable ways of understanding people’s experiences. The information from these approaches can support process tracing and other impact measurement activities.

In this part of the toolbox, we are going to focus specifically on how storytelling can help social innovators to use lived experience in both formal and informal ways to inform and assess social innovations as they scale. Through this, we will explore how the end beneficiaries of the social innovation can be actively involved in the learning process. We will examine how the people at the centre of the innovation - the beneficiaries - can have agency within the scaling process and the decision-making around the social innovation. This approach and the activities outlined in this section can be situated within the wider sphere of co-production - or what may be referred to as ‘co-creation’. As such, what we are delving into here is fundamental to changing systems. Through increasing the voice, agency and power of the beneficiaries of the innovation, we are seeking to actively disrupt the status quo of how services and organisations are traditionally run. For people working within these structures, the process and shift can be difficult, and this can manifest itself in resistance.

Despite this, stories can be powerful vehicles through which people can connect with one another, share understandings and build bridges between communities and different perspectives. They have a long history as a tool for learning, dialogue and creating change (Copeland and Moor, 2018) and as Durose et al (2013) argues, allows for the representation of “different voices and experiences in an accessible way”. However, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) discusses in her TED talk, storytelling can lead to dominant narratives - or as Adichie puts it, the danger of the single story. These single stories or dominant narratives can create stereotypes and thus allow “one story [to] become the only story”.

The activities within this section will explore how this and other ethical considerations can be addressed by social innovators wanting to work with lived experience in meaningful, inclusive and equitable ways. The activities will outline how lived experience can be used to:

- a) gather evidence to inform process tracing and impact measurement activities
- b) as a tool for dialogue between actors and stakeholders connected to social innovations
- c) to influence and inform decision-making and
- d) ultimately support social innovators to learn as they scale.

Embedded within these activities is guidance on some of the pitfalls and challenges that you may encounter when working with lived experience. Stories may sound 'soft and fluffy' but working alongside people in equitable ways, dismantling pre-existing power structures and dispelling pre-conditioned ideas about what real data is, is anything but.

## Let's talk about... lived experience

Take a look at this short video from Hayley Trowbridge from social enterprise People's Voice Media. In the video, Hayley answers some key questions that social innovators ask about working with lived experience and gives us some useful tips from the perspective of a practitioner in the field. <https://youtu.be/nXMDEBho43Y>

### Why is lived experience useful?

Lived experience can increase our understanding of problems that the social innovation seeks to address and the lives of the people the innovations seek to support. It is particularly useful for:

1. **Providing rich, qualitative understandings of how people experience the world:** People's experiences provide an understanding of how they feel and help social innovators to see situations from their perspectives. This is a valuable source of information as it identifies what is important to the people that social innovations are seeking to support.
2. **Interpreting other forms of data:** Lived experience can help to explain other forms of data and paint a fuller picture of how the social innovation is working on-the-ground. The experiences of people who are direct and indirect beneficiaries of the social innovation help social innovators to see the nuances of how their innovation is impacting on people's lives. It also helps to identify the potential contradictions between different people's experiences and the findings from different types of data.
3. **Influencing and informing decision-making:** Lived experience brings findings to life and makes the data real. It helps decision-makers to really see and understand the value of the social innovation, from the perspective of the people that directly and indirectly benefit from it. Stories are useful for helping us to see the individual people that more macro-level quantitative data represents.

Take a look at this short video from the pan-European InnoSI research and innovation project to see how lived experience storytelling can be a useful tool within the social innovation arena:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMHiKPS40cg>



### Find out more: Co-production as a value-led practice

Lived experience is a fundamental part of co-production. Without the active involvement of people who access services and innovations, you cannot really claim to be 'co-producing'. But what is co-production? Co-production is probably best thought about as a value-led practice rather than a process. What this means is that co-production is not a set of activities to be delivered in an structured sequence, but instead is a way of working, being and doing things that is governed and underpinned by a fundamental commitment to co-produce with those for whom the innovation is intended to benefit.

To delve a bit further into this, you may find this blog post interesting:

<https://cosie.turkuamk.fi/general/co-creation-as-a-value-led-practice/>

or look at the work of the Co-Production Collective to see how their core values underpin their activities: <https://www.coproductioncollective.co.uk/what-is-co-production/our-approach>.

### Find out more: Using stories to measure impact

Since 2017, Arts at the Old Fire Station has been using the storytelling methodology to evaluate the impact of its work. Based on their experiences, they have produced a guide with useful tips and techniques about how stories can be used to demonstrate the outcomes of social innovations.

You can download the guide here: <https://oldfirestation.org.uk/project/storytelling-evaluation-methodology/>

### How to... work with lived experience

There are many ways that social innovators can incorporate lived experience into their scaling and learning processes. The activity outlined below and supporting resources will help you to think through how you can do this in a way that is relevant to the context of the social innovation.

Activity 1 is core to this application, as it supports social innovators to develop a responsible practice for how they will work with lived experience. This activity can also be helpful for you to work out how to involve people with lived experience of the social innovation, or the issue the innovation is addressing, in your overall learning process and Community of Practice detailed in Section 2.

Activities 2 - 5 are different ways you may choose to work with lived experience and can be used independently of each other, or in any combination. Activity 2 focuses on how to gather lived experience stories. Activity 3 focuses on how to analyse lived experience stories in a systematic manner. Activity 4 focuses on creating a learning dialogue around lived experience stories that can help with determining changes to implementation of a scaling social innovation.

These activities are largely based on People's Voice Media's Community Reporting methodology. Originating in 2007, Community Reporting has been developed across Europe as a mixed methodological approach for enhancing citizen participation in research, policy-making, service development, and decision-making processes. You can find out more about this approach at <https://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk>

## Top Tips

1. **Be clear about why, where and how you are going to use lived experience:** Having clarity around the purpose for incorporating lived experience into your learning strategy will help you to know how to use this type of knowledge. This will help you to avoid using lived experience in a tokenistic way and it becoming a 'tick box' exercise.
2. **Think carefully about the ethics of how you will work with people and their lived experience:** We would recommend thinking about the 'values' that will underpin this work that helps to guide your decision-making and approach in this arena.
3. **Stay curious:** Be open to learning from people's experience and be prepared to have your own understanding (or the findings from other forms of data) to be challenged. Understand that different people's perspectives can be contradictory - it is these nuances and complexities that make lived experience rich material for learning processes.

### Activity 1: Responsible practice

Description	<p>This activity helps you to think through how you can involve people with lived experience in your learning process /or seek their input into the scaling process. Responsible practice asks us to think about the ethics and values of when we ask people to contribute their lived experience to a process, the content of those lived experience stories and how we can keep everyone safe (physically and emotionally) when doing these types of activities.</p> <p>Whilst this activity can be undertaken by a group of professionals working in the innovation, we recommend that you also involve in people with lived experience so that the outputs from it are co-produced.</p>
Resource Level	<p>Experience: Intermediate/Beginner Time: 2 - 3 hours Cost: Low</p>
Materials	Flipchart paper, post-it notes, marker pens, pens
Step-by-step guide	<b>Step 1:</b> Bring a group of people connected to the social innovation together for a participatory workshop. This group should really involve people with lived

experience of the social innovation, as well as frontline professionals and possibly management and any key external partners. We would recommend a group of between 6 - 12 people.

**Step 2:** Prepare four flipcharts that each have one of the following questions written onto them:

- a) The value of lived experience: Whose lived experiences do we want to hear and why? How are we planning to use these experiences in the social innovation/learning process?
- b) Ethics and consent: How should we treat people who share their lived experience with us? How would we want to be treated? What does informed consent look like?
- c) Content: Are there any topics and life experiences that we think people would not want to share? Where are our own boundaries when sharing our lived experience?
- d) Safety: How can you keep yourselves (and others) safe (physically and emotionally), when sharing our lived experience? How can we create welcoming and inclusive environments that provide a space for sharing lived experiences?

Put the flipcharts on the walls in four different locations around the room.

**Step 3:** Explain the questions on the flipcharts to the group and ensure that each everyone has post-it notes and a pen. Ask them to walk around the room in a carousel-like manner and add their ideas to the flipcharts via the post-it notes.

Alternatively, you could put the flipchart paper in the middle of a table and facilitate a discussion about each question, with one person writing down people's ideas on the flipchart paper.

**Step 4:** Review each question in turn and co-decide which ideas/suggestions are core to your responsible practice. You should document this in some way post-activity (for example, a written set of co-produced principles) and use these to govern how you work with lived experience in the social innovation.

**Adaptations:**

You may need to use more 'prompts' or 'visual aids' in the discussion parts of this activity if you are working with children and young people or people with learning disabilities. Flashcards or easy read statements with key concepts or examples on them would be useful.

## Useful resources

A free to use set of easy read images are available here:

<https://www.learningdisabilityservice-leeds.nhs.uk/easy-on-the-i/>

Whilst we feel it is important for you to involve the people for whom the social innovation is seeking to support in the learning process, it should be done with thought and care. It could be that you want to undertake some reflection with the team connected to the social innovation about how you work with people with lived experience before you do this responsible practice activity. To support this reflection, we recommend using this short, animated co-creation training resource produced on the CoSIE project, that supports reflective practice in terms of how services can work ethically with beneficiaries:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqk0F7PZHGI&t=320s>

## Activity 2: Getting lived experience stories

## Description

This activity helps you to think about how you will 'gather' lived experience stories during the scaling of the social innovation, and then practically implement it. We have proposed that you deliver the gathering activities in group settings, as participatory workshops, but you could adapt the ideas in this activity to be done on a one-to-one basis.

You may decide to use different gathering methods at different stages, depending on how you would like to use this experiential knowledge.

## Resource Level

Experience: Intermediate

Time: 2 - 3 hours

Cost: Medium / Low (depending on if you plan to digitally record the stories)

## Materials

Flipchart paper and post-it notes, pens and marker pens, consent forms (if applicable), recording devices (if applicable).

## Step-by-step guide

**Step 1:** First, you must be clear on how you are going to work with lived experience stories within your social innovation. Activity 1 helps you to do this. This thinking will help you to navigate the following questions before delivering the workshop activity outlined in the next steps:

- Who are the participants/attendees and how can we make the workshop inclusive, accessible and welcoming to them?
- How do we intend to use the lived experiences shared in the workshop in the social innovation? If you intend to systematically analyse them and use them as a form for 'data' (see Activity 3) or want to share them with others (see Activity 4) then you need to record them in some way.

- Logistics: What venue will we use to deliver the activity in? Have we prepared our resources and equipment? What expenses/payment/reimbursement/thank you gifts have we agreed? Who has the necessary skills to facilitate the workshop?

Use these answers to set-up the workshop and recruit participants.

**Step 2:** Use the Storytelling workshop plan to deliver the workshop. The Storytelling techniques resource will help you determine which storytelling approach is most suitable.

#### **Adaptation:**

Some groups may find this approach to storytelling (i.e., removing the structure and agenda) a bit more difficult than others. Therefore, we recommend using the Story mindmap resource to help people to think through the experience they want to share and to act as a prompt during the storytelling. This could be useful for working with groups for whom cognition and focus might be challenging.

You may want to adapt the prompting questions to suit the context of the storytelling, but we would recommend keeping the categories listed. For people with learning disabilities, the facilitator may be best to make notes on the mindmap for the person who is sharing their experience, or alternatively ask them to draw out their answers and explain what they are drawing to you.

#### Useful resources

Storytelling workshop plan  
Storytelling techniques  
Story mindmap

Alternatively, you may find storytelling approaches outlined in the “Our Voices” Digital Curator toolkit useful: <http://our-voices.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DigitalCuratorToolkitFinal.pdf> Translated resources in German, Swedish, Italian, Spanish and Polish can be found here: <http://our-voices.eu/resources/>

### **Activity 3: Analysing lived experience stories**

#### Description

This activity helps you to work with lived experience stories as a form of data and analyse them with a methodology rooted in traditional notions of discourse analysis and grounded theory. If you would like to find out more about these methods, take a look at the work of Brown and Yule (1983), Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Tummers and Karsten (2012).

The methodology is split into two phases:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phase 1 - Vertical analysis:</b> The person/people conducting the analysis reviews every individual story and identifies the topics, content and contextual elements within it.</li> <li>• <b>Phase 2 - Horizontal analysis:</b> Once each story has been analysed, the person/people conducting the analysis looks across them for trends and anomalies.</li> </ul> <p>This process results in the identification of a key set of trends and anomalies from a collection of stories that can be synthesised into a collective set of insights, without losing the individual voices in the stories. The bringing together of different stories to form a collective insight is generally informed by Pierre Lévy's (1997) concept of "collective intelligence" that presents the argument that the sum of multiple people's knowledge is always greater than an individual's own knowledge.</p> <p>This activity can be done by individuals or in teams/groups.</p>
Resource Level	<p>Experience: Intermediate</p> <p>Time: Determined by the number of stories you are analysing</p> <p>Cost: Medium / Low (the largest cost is people's time to conduct the analysis)</p>
Materials	<p>A set of recorded lived experience stories (8+), pens</p> <p>Story review sheet template</p> <p>Story review sheet worked example</p> <p>Identifying trends and anomalies worksheet</p>
Step-by-step guide	<p><b>Step 1:</b> Listen to or watch one of your lived experience stories. Use the Story review sheet template to write a summary of the story and identify key sections in it. We recommend that you listen to or watch the story once and make notes on a separate piece of paper, then listen to or watch it again to see if you missed anything before writing the summary. Try to be descriptive in the summary and do not include your own analysis or judgment of the story. You may want to listen to or watch the story for a third time once you have written your summary to identify the key quotes and check the summary is accurate. We find writing the summary in chronological order works best. Using the phrases/words/expressions that the storyteller uses helps to keep it accurate. You might find the Story review sheet worked example useful as a rough style guide.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Repeat Step 1 with each lived experience story you have collected.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> It is now time to look at the topics, content and context points in your story. This is the part that is rooted in traditional notions of discourse analysis. The Identifying trends and anomalies worksheet will be useful here. Look back at each review sheet in turn and identify the following from each story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topics (The What):</b> This stage is concerned with identifying the subject matter(s) in a story. This primary analysis phase is based on a basic textual</li> </ul>

analysis. Here you need to identify WHAT the person talks about in their story.

- **Content (The How):** This stage is concerned with outlining the way in which the subject matters are being described. This secondary analysis phase - the compositional level - is focused on explaining how the subject matters identified are spoken about to create meaning. This asks you to think about key emotions expressed, tone of voice, expressions on people's faces, and the relationships between the subject matters. It uses a more interpretative approach to situate the subject matters within the perspective they were told through looking at them in more detail.
- **Context (The Why):** This stage of analysis is concerned with explaining the wider context in which story is being told. This final analysis phase relates the trends to the wider circumstances that surround the story and places them within the environments in which they were told. This is the most interpretative level and some of this contextual knowledge may come from the story itself, but some of it you may know via other means. In your notes you should be clear which contextual knowledge you have taken directly from the story and which you know via other means.

**Step 4:** When you have done the above for each individual story, read through your notes and identify the following:

- Trends: The similarities you notice across the different experiences.
- Anomalies: The differences you notice across the various experiences.

List these in the space provided on the worksheet.

**Step 5:** Look at the trends and anomalies you have identified and think about the 'insights' or 'learning' that are emerging from it - this part is rooted in grounded theory. To help you do this, you may want to consider the following:

- What do we learn about the social innovation from the experiences?
- What do we learn about the lives of people that may be relevant to the social innovation from the experiences?
- How may we explain/understand the difference and similarities in experiences?

**Step 6:** You are now ready to think about how you will use this learning within or outside the social innovation. Section 4 contains more concrete ideas about how you can do this based on the people you are trying to connect the learning to. For example, some short extracts from the stories with some key learning points identified could win the hearts and minds of frontline practitioners, whereas an

	<p>insight briefing with concrete recommendations could be useful for strategic management. Whichever way you choose to share the learning, we recommend you use as much of the people's words and voice as possible. Although it may be tempting to translate what people have said into 'system speak', we find that this loses the impact of people's experiences. Instead, try to use people's own phrasings as much as possible and subtly connect them to relevant concepts, policies or initiatives in the system.</p> <p>This methodology is largely based on the Community Reporting approach to story curation. You may find this short animation that explains more about this way of analysing stories useful to watch before you begin your analysis:  <a href="https://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk/approach/curating/">https://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk/approach/curating/</a></p>
Useful resources	<p>Story review sheet template  Story review sheet worked example  Identifying trends and anomalies worksheet</p>
Case study example	<p>An evaluation into the impact of creative activities on mental health and wellbeing was funded by The Health Foundation and delivered by Creative Minds in partnership with the University of Huddersfield and People's Voice Media. The evaluation saw over 40 participants and staff being trained to become Community Reporters. They used digital tools including film and audio to capture authentic stories about their own lived mental health experience. In total, over 100 stories were gathered and these were analysed via a similar methodology outlined in this activity and were used to produce an evaluation report.</p> <p>Read more about this project here:  <a href="https://www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/creative-minds-news/evaluating-soft-and-fluffy-creative-activities-delivered-by-creative-minds/">https://www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/creative-minds-news/evaluating-soft-and-fluffy-creative-activities-delivered-by-creative-minds/</a></p>

#### Activity 4: Creating a learning dialogue from stories

Description	<p>This short activity uses 'story dialogue' and is designed to be embedded into larger workshops and events, team meetings, focus groups. It's a way of working with lived experience in a practical way as part of learning, development and reflection processes. This approach has been adapted from the work of Labonte and Feather (1996) and is designed to promote empathy and connection.</p>
Resource Level	<p>Experience: Intermediate / Beginner  Time: 30 minutes - 1 hour  Cost: Low</p>
Materials	<p>Lived experience story/stories (recorded as a photograph, audio or video), flipchart paper, post-it notes, marker pens, pens</p>
Step-by-step guide	<p><b>Step 1:</b> Explain what story dialogue is to the group. The text below will help:</p>



Story dialogue is a way of working with lived experience as a tool for learning and change in a practical way. It helps us to:

- Actively listen to people's experiences.
- Connect with them and connect them to our own experiences of the world.
- Think about what we have learned from the story and what future action it may provoke.

**Step 2:** Screen a lived experience story and ask people to identify:

- What are the key messages in the story?

Ask people to write them down on individual post-it notes and put them onto the group flipchart and facilitate a short group feedback.

**Step 3:** Ask people to reflect on how the story connects with their own experiences and emotions:

- How does the story resonate (or not) with our own experiences?

Ask people to write down their reflections on individual post-it notes and put them onto the group flipchart and facilitate a short group feedback.

**Step 4:** Ask people to think about one or more of the following questions:

- What is the key learning from the story for us/the social innovation?
- What changes/actions does the story prompt?

Ask people to write down their reflections on individual post-it notes and put them onto the group flipchart and facilitate a short group discussion.

**Step 5:** Discuss with participants what ideas for change are actionable immediately, in the medium term and in the long term. Prioritise, with the group, the actions and agree on next steps.

**Facilitator Notes:** Step 5 may be the most difficult if there is not consensus in the group. If this arises, you may want to ask everyone to state the one action that they think is key and why. List these actions on a piece of flipchart and then use an iterative voting method to whittle down the actions to the most important ones or a number that is manageable.

You could also extend this activity by looking at more than one lived experience story by repeating steps 2 - 4 a multitude of times before moving onto step 5.

## Lived experience in practice:

Lived experience helps us to understand social innovations from the perspectives of the people the innovations intend to support. Take a look at 'CoSIE project case study' here <https://cosie.turkuamk.fi/community-reporting/> to see how lived experience was used as a tool for co-creation, learning and evaluation in a range of public services across Europe.

This short video provides an overview of this work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YGg-OZpuww&t=226s>

## 'Our Voices' Digital Curator Toolkit

People's stories about their experiences provide useful insights into what is happening in their lives and communities. As part of the "Our Voices" project, a transnational partnership of organisations from the UK, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Italy and Poland worked together to better understand how lived experience can create positive change and impact within their communities.

If you are interested in gathering, curating and mobilising lived experience stories in a more general context, you will find the project's Digital Curator Toolkit useful. It contains a range of resources and practical guides for working with stories, some of which are adapted for different learning/access needs:

<http://our-voices.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DigitalCuratorToolkitFinal.pdf>

You can also find many of the resources from the toolkit translated into German, Spanish, Italian, Swedish and Polish on the project's resource bank: <http://our-voices.eu/resources/>

## Storytelling Workshop Plan

<b>Aim:</b>	This short workshop is designed to support a group of people to share their stories of lived experience about a particular topic.	
<b>Objectives:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect on progress made since previous sense-check.</li> <li>2. Review new data and identify the key learning from it.</li> <li>3. Determine core actions to take based on learning from data.</li> </ol>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Resources</b>
0 min	<b>Introduction to the workshop</b> Facilitator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome to the workshop (setting the context) and short introductions.</li> </ul>	N/A
10 min	<b>Icebreaker</b> Facilitator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a short icebreaker.</li> <li>• Example icebreaker:</li> <li>• Give everyone a post-it note</li> <li>• Ask them to quick draw something about their lives/world/them on it. This could be something about their family, work, hobbies/interests, how they are feeling etc. Stress that it should be something that they are comfortable with sharing about themselves.</li> <li>• Ask each person to share what they have drawn with a little explanation.</li> <li>• The facilitator should also participate in this.</li> </ul>	Post-it notes Pens
30 min	<b>Why lived experience matters</b> Facilitator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain why lived experience is important to the social innovation and how it will be used.</li> <li>• Write the central topic/question you would like to explore in the session and ask the group for the different topics/experiences they can think of that relate to it.</li> <li>• Write these ideas down on the flipchart.</li> </ul>	Flipchart Marker pens
50 min	<b>Storytelling activity</b> Facilitator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select one of the activities from the Storytelling techniques resources.</li> </ul>	Consent forms (if applicable) Recording devices (if applicable)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support participants to share their lived experience stories using that method.</li> </ul>	
1 hour 20 min	<p><b>What did we learn from each other?</b></p> <p>Facilitator to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask people to look at or think about the stories they have heard from each other and identify the key points in the stories on individual post-it notes.</li> <li>Put some flipchart paper down on a table and ask participants to put their post-it notes onto it and begin to group them. This grouping could be done by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groups that naturally emerge from the key messages</li> <li>SWOT framework <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengths: what are the positive elements of your experiences of the social innovation?</li> <li>Weaknesses: what are the negative elements of your experiences of the social innovation?</li> <li>Opportunities: what elements of your stories relate to future opportunities for the social innovation?</li> <li>Threat: what elements of your stories identify things that might stop the social innovation from working well?</li> </ol> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Flipchart</p> <p>Post-it note</p> <p>Pens</p>
1 hour 50 min	<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Facilitator to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank people for their contributions</li> <li>Explain what will happen next - how the stories will be used, expenses etc.</li> </ul>	N/A
2 hours	<b>End of sense-check session</b>	

**Note:** The workshop could be extended to include:

- more than one storytelling technique
- longer time on activities if needed by the participants
- a break.

## Storytelling techniques

All of the techniques below try to remove the 'agenda' of the social innovator or researcher as much as possible. Key to all the techniques is providing a space where people can share their experiences without them having to fit a specific mould or being framed by the wants and needs of the people and institutions wanting to work with their lived experience.

### Photo voice

Photo voice is a well-known qualitative participatory research method predominantly used in community settings. It uses photography as a tool through which people can present their perspectives.

*How to deliver a simple photo voice activity*

1. Ask participants to reflect on their experiences of the social innovation and note down any key words or emotions that come to mind.
2. Then provide people with a camera or tablet and ask them to take a few photographs that represent their experience. You may want to give some examples and explore how people can take more 'metaphorical' or 'symbolic images' to share their thoughts and feelings. For example, on a piece of work that explores personalisation in probation services, participants were keen to express that 'one size doesn't fit all' and therefore took a photograph of different shoes that were varied in size.
3. Provide a space for the participants to share back their photographs with you and the group and explain the meanings behind them. You may want to (a) record these conversations or (b) ask them to use them to 'caption' the photographs - either digitally on a simple photo editing app (e.g. Pixlr) or on a post-it note.

If you decided to run a longer workshop, this activity is good as a starter activity before progressing onto one of the other techniques.

Take a look at this overview of the Hidden and Hunted project led by Ideas Alliance for examples of how photo voice can work in practice: <https://ideas-alliance.org.uk/end-womens-homelessness-exhibition/>

### Snapshot stories

This is a simple approach to 'insight' storytelling developed by People's Voice Media within their Community Reporting methodology. It is loosely based on the notion of 'vox pops' but with a focus on experience rather than perception.

These stories gather people's experiences in a quick way. They only have one question, and can also be a good introductory storytelling activity. To do them you should:

1. Ask an open question based on the topic you are exploring in the workshop. For example:

- a) What has been your experience of <INSERT SOCIAL INNOVATION / SERVICE / PROJECT>
  - b) What has been your experience of <INSERT ISSUE TOPIC>
2. Either:
- a) Record the person's answer. This can either be as audio or video. When the person stops talking, stop the recording.
  - b) Sit down in a comfortable space, ask the question and simply listen to the person's response without interrupting or asking questions. Focus on really hearing what they are saying.

This activity works well when it's done peer-to-peer. Therefore, you should split the participants in the workshop into pairs and ask them to record or listen to one another's snapshot stories. Although there isn't a set length for these stories, they tend to be between 1 and 5 minutes.

### **Dialogue interviews**

This more nuanced approach to 'insight' storytelling developed by People's Voice Media within their Community Reporting methodology. It is designed to enable the storyteller to set the agenda of the storytelling and has some links to Empathy Interviewing.

Dialogue interviews don't have a list of questions. Instead, they are like conversations between two people. The conversation should be directed by the storyteller so that they are determining the direction of the conversation and are only sharing the information and experiences that they choose to. The person asking the questions is helping to facilitate the question through actively listening and picking up on key things that the storyteller is sharing.


To do a dialogue interview, you should:

1. Ask an opening question (a conversation starter). This enables the storyteller to start to tell their story. This question shouldn't be too leading and should be quite broad and open (like the snapshot story question).
2. The person asking the questions may then ask any questions within this storytelling process that naturally occur to them based on what the storyteller says. They should actively listen to the storyteller and pick out key things they are saying to explore further. A simple way of doing this is by asking 'Could you tell me more about that?', 'What happened next?' or 'How did that feel?'
3. When the conversation comes to a natural end, the interview ends.

Like snapshot stories, these interviews can be recorded as audio or video, or just done as conversations in which experiences are shared. Again, they tend to work best when they are done peer-to-peer. Although there isn't a set length of these stories, they tend to be 5 - 20 minutes, but some can be longer.

## Story Mindmap


Sometimes it can be hard to decide where to start when trying to tell others about your life. The aim of this activity is to explore the key elements of your story and your world and support you to map it out before you tell your story.



Events: What are the key things that have happened to you in your life? What challenges have you faced and how have you overcome them?



Message: What are the key points you want to make about your life? Why are these important to you?



People: Who are the key people, groups and organisations in your life? How do they support you?



Feelings: What positive and negative emotions have you felt and when? Why did you feel like this?



The Future: What are your plans or dreams for the future? How are you going to achieve them and what support do you need?

## Story review sheet

Reviewing stories helps us to identify the key messages in them. When we look at a set of reviews from different stories, we begin to see what key themes and trends emerge from across them. Use this template to review, summarise and identify the most important elements and quotations from the story.

Story (insert title/link to story):	
<p><b>Overview of Story:</b> Write a synthesis of the story that describes what the person says in their story. Try to give the overall picture of what they are describing, how they feel and any key opinions.</p>	
<p><b>Extract(s):</b> Select an extract/extracts from the story that highlights its key message(s)/point(s).</p>	
Key Quote What is said (2 - 4 sentences)	Timecode (if recorded) Minutes and Seconds



## Story review sheet (worked example)

Story (insert title/link to story): Life in Popowice	
<p><b>Overview of Story:</b> Write a synthesis of the story that describes what the person says in their story. Try to give the overall picture of what they are describing, how they feel and any key opinions.</p>	
<p>The storyteller shows great pride in being known as a resident of this particular area. When asked if she is a resident of Popowice, she replies 'Of course!' She describes how she has lived here for over 40 years and that she likes the area because of all the green spaces, however one of her concerns is over the flowers. She describes how she likes the area because there are a lot of parks and green spaces but expresses her disappointment with the residents who do not seem to care. She also talks about how she sees places nearby where there are big buildings and notices a difference there which shows that the residents do care.</p> <p>She has ideas about creating a small public garden but says that she doesn't know how to get permission for it. She is someone with a disability who uses a stick occasionally and thinks that it would be useful for others as well to have more benches and spaces where they are able to sit down to enjoy the green spaces. She comments on the fact that the old trees are well cared for and is happy about the fact that they are left to grow and says that we should look after our old trees because there is not room for new. Look after what we already have. She lives on the ground floor and knows all her neighbours on this level and up to level four. She doesn't know those above level four because that is as far as she is able to climb the stairs. She says very often, there are old women or those with disabilities on these floors rather than men because their life expectancy is different.</p> <p>The people who live in her building up to fourth floor (the people she knows) need to integrate themselves more, i.e., she knows them all, but feels that they don't know each other very well and they are all in a similar situation (older generation, single women etc.) She always helps people if she is able to, but feels that very often, older people do not ask for help.</p>	
<p><b>Extract(s):</b> Select an extract/extracts from the story that highlights its key message(s)/point(s).</p>	
Key Quote What is said (2 - 4 sentences)	Timecode (if recorded) Minutes and Seconds
I'd like to make a small garden for everyone but I don't know who to ask to make it. I also think benches and places to sit down would be good in the area. I know one person who uses a stick to walk sometimes, and for them, more benches would be good too.	2:11 - 2:45
Society needs to learn to speak together.	3.45 - 3.51
I try to always help if there is a problem, but not everyone is open and will ask for help	3.23 - 3.34

## Identifying trends and anomalies worksheet

<b>Story:</b> Title of story/file name.	<b>Topic:</b> WHAT is being talked about in the story? List the subject areas.	<b>Content:</b> HOW are the subjects being talked about? Summarise key emotions connected to the subject areas and also any connections between subject matters.	<b>Context:</b> WHY are the subject matters being spoken about in this way? Explain anything in the story (or what you know about the context of the story/storyteller) that adds more understanding to what they have experienced.

<b>Story:</b> Title of story/file name.	<b>Topic:</b> WHAT is being talked about in the story? List the subject areas.	<b>Content:</b> HOW are the subjects being talked about? Summarise key emotions connected to the subject areas and also any connections between subject matters.	<b>Context:</b> WHY are the subject matters being spoken about in this way? Explain anything in the story (or what you know about the context of the story/storyteller) that adds more understanding to what they have experienced.

**Trends:** Look across the stories, what key trends or themes are there? What are the similarities in people's experiences? List them in the box to the right.

**Anomalies:** Look across the stories, what key anomalies are there? What are the differences in people's experiences? List them in the box to the right.

**Insights:** From the trends and anomalies, what have you learned about the social innovation from the lived experience stories OR what have you learned that could be relevant to the social innovation? What could explain the trends and similarities of experiences? What may explain the anomalies and differences in experiences? Use the space to the right to synthesise this.