

A vision of 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.**

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 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.**

Who we are

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. As a team we:

- Learn and adapt
- Work collaboratively and equitably
- Act authentically and with integrity
- Come with optimism and joy

Our Board, team, and network of freelancers are a diverse group of people committed to working in this way to achieve our vision.

In 2007 we launched the Community Reporting methodology and began to build the Community Reporter Network. Community Reporting is a digital storytelling approach that supports people's participation in research, policy-making, service development, and decision-making processes. We know we cannot achieve our ambitions alone. 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 core objectives of our work are to:

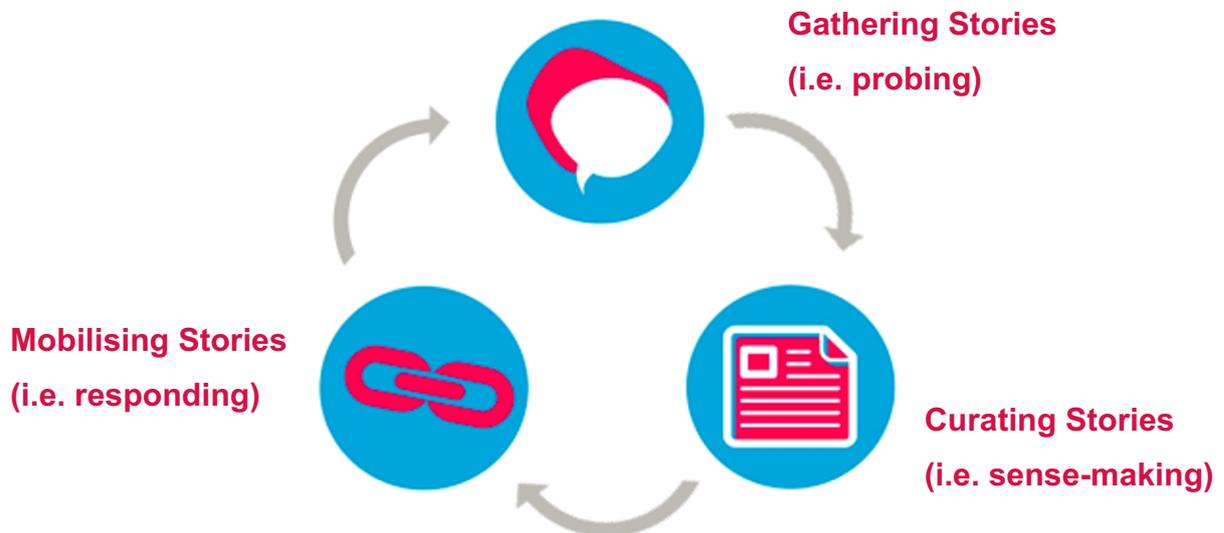
1. Enable people's lived experience to be heard, and provide platforms for marginalised voices

2. Support people, communities and organisations to use lived experience to address inequalities and injustices
3. Inform and influence services and policies so that they better meet people's needs and enable people to live well

Our work will put lived experience at the heart of service improvement, policy development, and research practices.

Our method and approach

This approach to lived experience storytelling as a changemaking tool has three phases, loosely based on the Cynefin framework for decision-making in complex environments (Snowden and Boone, 2008).



We apply Community Reporting in three key ways:

- **Research:** 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:** We train individuals, communities, services and institutions to use Community Reporting as a tool for positive social change within their own context.
- **Consultancy:** We apply Community Reporting as a tool for evaluation and learning to support service, community, and policy development.

We share what we learn and build capacity in individuals, communities, and organisations.

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

Making change happen

So, where are we now? Working on a project-to-project basis, we equip communities across the UK and Europe with the skills to both be heard and be agents of change. This work matters because it:

- Enables people to develop capacities and skills they can utilise in their communities to address the challenges they face
- Drives forward people-led change in service delivery, creating effective, relevant services
- Changes power dynamics, supporting institutions to develop 'bottom-up' processes for working with communities

We want to strategically scale this innovative work and connect learning from across communities and sectors to maximise the impact of people's individual stories.

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

Community Reporting is adaptable to different contexts. It can be integrated with other approaches such as foresight and impact evaluation. It offers a viable, tried and tested solution to working effectively with lived experience.

The time for stories is now.

Strategic direction

To play our role in this paradigm-shift, we have 4 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 and inform local, regional, and national policy change
4. Be actively anti-racist and use this as a lens through which we address structural inequalities

This will centralise lived experience in society and we will play our role in creating a just world.

To achieve our social objective of mainstreaming the use of lived experience as a tool for communities to address the challenges we face, we want to increase the number of (a) services who utilise Community Reporting as a development tool, (b) policies developed using Community Reporter stories, and (c) research projects that are using Community Reporting as a core methodology.

To reach this ambition, as an organisation we are reorientating our focus, income streams and project work to be centred on our vision and mission.

We will work beyond silos, focusing on long-term change.

Be a part of the story

We are looking for people, communities, and organisations to help us on our mission to create a fairer, more just world. If you'd like to be a part of this story, then get in touch and join our conversation of change.

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

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

Email: enquiries@peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk

conversation of change

