

People's Voice Media's

**ANNUAL
LEARNING
REPORT**

2023/24

<http://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk>



And I think it's been fascinating, personally, but also, I think it's really, really rewarding from a professional standpoint, to hear people saying things that resonate between each other's stories.

Project Partner

ABOUT PEOPLE'S VOICE MEDIA

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

Find out more at: <https://peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our organisation and the Community Reporter Network are committed to:

1. Enhancing the use of Community Reporting in research and lived experience stories as a form of evidence
2. Embedding Community Reporting and lived experience stories into service development and improvement
3. Influencing local, regional, and national policy change with lived experience stories
4. Becoming an actively anti-racist organisation and network

This annual learning report reflects on what we have learned from undertaking this mission between April 2023 and March 2024 and sets out our direction of travel for the coming year.

The Difference We Are Making

- We are creating brave spaces that are actively anti-racist, where people can learn about, and share, lived experience
- We are influencing individuals and organisations with our anti-racist, inclusive vision
- We are demonstrating the importance of lived experience in a variety of contexts
- We are helping organisations to use Community Reporting in their work and change the way they do things
- People are developing new skills
- We are providing platforms to people whose voices are often unheard or ignored
- We are helping to influence policy

Key Actions For The Year Ahead

- Update reporting practices so that we can present the insights from our stories in different ways so that they are viewed in the same light as other forms of data and knowledge.
- Update communications tools, guidelines and templates so that they are more strategically focused and more inclusive
- Secure multi-year core funding for the Community Reporter network
- Establish a bespoke Community Reporter project about racism that will support the delivery of our anti-racism vision

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INTRODUCTION

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.**

We equip communities across the UK and Europe with the skills to be agents of change - using storytelling as a tool for social justice. Our organisation and the Community Reporter Network are committed to:

1. Enhancing the use of Community Reporting in research and lived experience stories as a form of evidence
2. Embedding Community Reporting and lived experience stories into service development and improvement
3. Influencing local, regional, and national policy change with lived experience stories
4. Becoming an actively anti-racist organisation and network

This annual learning report reflects on what we have learned from undertaking this mission between April 2023 and March 2024 and sets out our direction of travel for the coming year. But first, let's take a look at how we have acted on our learnings from previous years.

Change Level	How We Have Acted On Learnings From Previous Years In 2023/24
Our People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Team and Board members have established individual anti-racism learning goals and are actively working towards these as part of their ongoing development. This - coupled with anti-racism learning being on every Team and Board meeting agenda - has created a mechanism through which we promote diversified learning on systemic racism across all layers of our organisation. • A mixed group of Team, Board, and Community Reporter Network members attended the 2023 Anti-Racism Summit in Cumbria and from this a session was held at a Team Working Day to share key learnings with the wider team.
Our Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We secured NCRM Innovation Fora funding to support our 2024 Community Reporter conference. This funding will enable the delivery of a hackathon-style event that will explore how we can enhance inclusivity and anti-racist practice in Community Reporting. From this a range of resources and training materials will be developed. • Our Team Working Day and Team Learning Day meeting/agenda structures have been updated to enable discussion and reflection on our work and support ongoing learning. • We've produced our own anti-racist language guidelines to support our organisation to use anti-oppressive and inclusive language in all areas of our work. • We delivered 5 workshops with members of the Community Reporter Network to identify concrete ways we can achieve our strategic goals. These actions and findings from our Annual Learning Reports are the basis of our Strategic Development Plan that enables us to transform our practice and processes.
Our Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We now embed financial support for access and inclusion into all proposals and funding bids to enable and widen participation in our activities. • Working with the Co-Production Collective we've established an anti-racism Community Reporter project that is exploring experiences of racism within co-production and research settings. • We've embedded our anti-racism strategic goal into all project proposals so that it is at the core of our work and enables us to influence the people we work with to see racism as a systemic issue.

METHOD

To compile this report, we predominantly used the Community Reporting methodology. Community Reporting is a qualitative research method which uses peer-to-peer approaches to gather, understand, and mobilise stories of lived experience to create change. Originating in 2007, Community Reporting has been developed across Europe as an approach for enhancing citizen participation in community development, research, policymaking, service development, evaluation and decision-making processes (Keresztély and Trowbridge, 2019; Geelhoed et al, 2021; Trowbridge and Willoughby, 2020). In-line with work such as Glasby (2011) and Durose et al (2013), this method emphasises validity of lived experience and knowledge-based practice in these fields. Community Reporting uses digital, portable technologies to support people to tell their own stories, in their own ways via peer-to-peer approaches. It then connects these stories with the people, groups and organisations who are in a position to use the insights within them to make positive social change. When used like this, storytelling, as Durose et al (2013) argues, allows for the representation of 'different voices and experiences in an accessible way'. Central to Community Reporting is the belief that people telling authentic stories about their own lived experience offers a valuable understanding of their lives.

Community Reporting has three distinct components – story gathering, story curation and story mobilisation – based around the Cynefin decision-making framework for complex environments (Snowden and Boone, 2007), as depicted in Diagram 1.

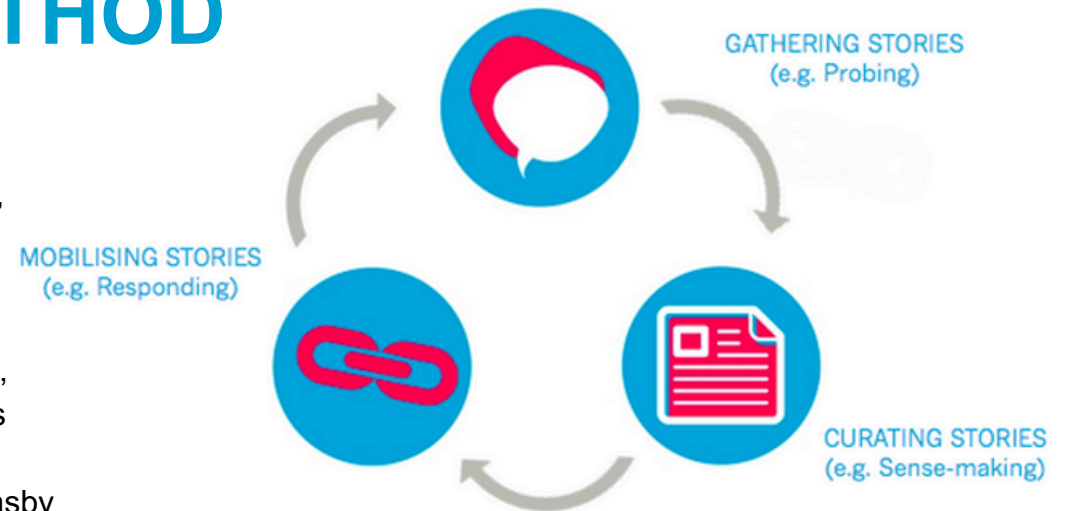


Diagram 1: Community Reporting Cycle

Over the course of the year, we collected 16 dialogue interviews which were then analysed by our team collectively at Team Learning Days, and individually. This data was combined with event feedback from project participants, and attendees, project feedback from partners, as well as additional evidence such as reports that our work has contributed to. We also collected quantitative data from our 109 workshops, trainings, and events, and our 12 new social change projects.

These data sets have been analysed to show the difference we are making and how this looks in our work. This has, in turn, been used to help establish development areas for the next 12 months, and actions we will take to work towards them.

IMPACT

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

1

annual conference hosted

1,907

people engaged in our activities

211

lived experience stories gathered



109

workshops, trainings, and events held

12

new social change projects



11,104

unique visits to the Community Reporter website



152

Community Reporters trained



22

new Community Reporter trainers



When the funding was first announced, People's Voice Media was my first thought as a potential partner and became an actual partner because I've known for quite a long time the work you do. I knew that to do that project well, we were going to need people's stories and people's experiences and I knew that People's Voice Media was particularly proficient at getting those.

Project Partner

THE DIFFERENCE WE ARE MAKING

The difference we are making	What this looks like in our work	How we know this
<p>We are creating brave spaces that are actively anti-racist, where people can learn about, and share, lived experience</p>	<p>People attending our annual conference in Liverpool on the power of lived experience in creating equitable futures</p>	<p>“Overall, it was an excellent day of conversations within a brave space that was bursting with stories to be told. The power of lived experience was evident, and I would challenge anyone who doesn’t believe in this work to come along to a People’s Voice Media event and see for themselves the power of stories and storytelling.” – 2023 Conference Attendee</p> <p>“It immediately felt a welcoming space and an accessible space.” – 2023 Conference Attendee</p> <p>“I mean, these days I don't go to conferences unless I really think there will be a value in them. And I know there'll be a value in that one. So I go.” – 2023 Conference Attendee</p>
	<p>People feel comfortable sharing their lived experience with Community Reporters</p>	<p>“I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to you personally. You made sharing the most intimate part of my life effortless because of your innate empathy. Please extend my gratitude to all involved in this project and the work involved to get so many different voices to highlight the ongoing challenges people continue to experience.” - Project Participant, Disability Rights UK Project</p>

The difference we are making	What this looks like in our work	How we know this
<p>We are influencing individuals and organisations with our anti-racist, inclusive vision</p>	<p>Our anti-racist language and culture is being adopted by those we work with</p>	<p>“I am embracing and passing on this language and culture.” – Future of the Communit Reporter Network Workshop Attendee</p>
	<p>We are helping our project partners engage a diverse range of voices in their work</p>	<p>“When you look at the people who've contributed to our project, initially to our chronic pain advisory group, they're all women, and they're all white women, and to be able to expand the reach to other populations to other diverse communities is actually really important. It's not that we don't want the voices of women obviously we do. But we also want other people to contribute ... We've been able to achieve that. But I know we wouldn't have been able to achieve that without involving People's Voice Media.” – Project Partner, CAPE project</p> <p>“Because we spread our net as wide as we could, but there was kind of a nucleus around a particular community group that really responded to it, and they themselves recognised that that wasn't fully representative of the community, so some moves to spread the model more widely through the train-the-trainer work, and that's already started I think.” – Project Partner, University of Warwick Project</p>

The difference we are making	What this looks like in our work	How we know this
<p>We are demonstrating the importance of lived experience in a variety of contexts</p>	<p>Our work is being used as a source in academic and/or research work to give insight not available in other forms of data</p>	<p>“I’ve read through the report and I love the care that went into this. A part of my thesis focused on COVID and I’ll be sure to reference to your great work in this!” - Project Participant, Disability Rights UK Project</p> <p>Feedback from a participant in our Disability Rights UK project to let us know the report would be referenced in their PhD thesis Our work with Curators of Change is cited in NHS research/advice on using co-production (NHS South East Clinical Senate [2024] Putting people at the heart of service change)</p> <p>“[T]o hear people saying things that resonate between each other[‘s] stories. And I think that that’s really impactful, because what it does is it takes these otherwise anecdotal conversations, and makes them much more meaningful, because they’re not, if you will, just the experience of one individual person, they’re kind of the joint experiences of people who are suffering from chronic pain.” – Project Partner, CAPE</p>
	<p>Lived experience gathered using Community Reporting is being used to highlight social issues and help begin the process of change</p>	<p>“These stories have incredible value. Not only because people have given their time, energy and a little piece of themselves to tell them. But because there is so much to learn, destigmatise and myth-bust about living in #Poverty.” – Conversation of Change event attendee, Equality Trust’s Poverty Project</p>

The difference we are making	What this looks like in our work	How we know this
<p>We are helping organisations to use Community Reporting in their work and change the way they do things</p>	<p>Providing capacity building training to individuals and teams within organisations so that they can increase their use of Community Reporting</p>	<p>“We have secured some funding to do some Community Reporting and other research work with young people gathering their views on the future of the social contract, which is exciting. This is building on work we did last year.” Capacity building training participant, Equality Trust</p> <p>“The group have already kind of started self-identifying themselves as the Tile Hill Community Reporters. ... I keep hearing stories that they’ve been in community meetings and volunteer meetings and things like that in the city and have started talking about themselves and introducing themselves as, you know, “I’m Trish and I’m a Community Reporter in Tile Hill”, and I think that’s really good because they’ve kind of made it their own thing and picked it up and run with it, so that’s already a change.” - Project Partner, The University of Warwick project</p>
	<p>Organisations are securing funding because of the work they do with us</p>	<p>Email feedback from Equality Trust to let us know they have secured more funding thanks to the increased Community Reporting work.</p> <p>“Longford Park/Trafford Council got their Lottery delivery grant after working with you guys on the Community Consultation bit, so that’s good!” Project Partner, Longford Park project</p>

The difference we are making	What this looks like in our work	How we know this
<p>People are developing new skills</p>	<p>People are developing digital skills around story gathering and filmmaking</p>	<p>“They worked fantastically well on planning the film and agreed to use their own equipment for filming - which means lower quality result but the film is theirs. I bring boxes of stuff for them but only to support them if they need anything. They are gaining confidence recording and we review what has been recorded by viewing clips and discussing together.” - Trainer feedback, Friends United Together project</p>
	<p>People are using the skills they develop in Community Reporter training to do other things</p>	<p>“And I think the excitement that it’s created with people thinking for themselves about how they could use it, I think. ... The group have already kind of started self-identifying themselves as the Tile Hill Community Reporters, which has been really good. ... I keep hearing stories that they’ve been in community meetings and volunteer meetings and things like that in the city and have started talking about themselves and introducing themselves as you know ‘I’m Trish and I’m a Community Reporter in Tile Hill’, and I think that’s really good because they’ve kind of made it their own thing and picked it up and run with it, so that’s already a change.” – Project Partner, University of Warwick project</p>

The difference we are making	What this looks like in our work	How we know this
We are providing platforms to people whose voices are often unheard or ignored	We use the Community Reporter website and other project outputs to mobilise lived experience stories	<p>“They [the participants] have all found the experience remarkably rewarding. I think, you know, sharing their stories, they don't get the opportunity to do that very much. Because, as you know, people are not always interested in hearing about other people's problems, and about other people's pain, it's very hard to appreciate somebody else's pain.” – Project partner, CAPE project</p>
	We lend our experience to organisations in order to recruit people from seldom heard communities to share their stories	<p>“I knew that between us we had a reach that was important. I knew that we would be able to capture voices of people who might not get heard otherwise. And that was a big part of it because I knew how seriously People’s Voice Media took that.” Project partner, Disability Rights UK project</p>
We are helping to influence policy	Policy recommendations produced using project findings are being shared with relevant organisations and services	<p>“Trafford Youth Council have used the [policy recommendations] to look at how they run their campaigns in schools and are looking at doing some campaigns looking at isolation, friendships and young people getting their heads out of their phones.” - Project Partner, CONTINUE project</p>



It immediately felt a welcoming space and an accessible space.

Conference Attendee

THE FUTURE

DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Development Area	Example actions to be taken in the next 12 months
<p>Enhancing the use of Community Reporting in research and lived experience stories as a form of evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update communications tools, guidelines and templates so that they are more strategically focused and more inclusive. • Share project results from relevant areas more actively with local authorities • Update reporting practices so that we can present the insights from our stories in different ways so that they are viewed in the same light as other forms of data and knowledge.
<p>Embedding Community Reporting and lived experience stories into service development and improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update communications tools, guidelines and templates so that they are more strategically focused and more inclusive. • Trial new recruitment and engagement methods on our projects, with a renewed emphasis on peer-to-peer approaches
<p>Influencing local, regional, and national policy change with lived experience stories</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share project results from relevant areas more actively with local authorities • Secure legacy funding to deepen/widen the impact of key strands of work • Secure multi-year core funding for the Community Reporter network
<p>Becoming an actively anti-racist organisation and network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a bespoke Community Reporter project about racism that will support the delivery of our anti-racism vision • Deliver an event to work on enhancing inclusiveness and anti-racist practice • Develop a growing bank of stories that platform the experiences of global majority communities

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX:

PROJECTS WE'VE WORKED ON IN 2023/24

Project Title	Description	Partners/Funder	Location	Duration
EUARENAS	Horizon 2020 funded project that explores cities as arenas of political innovation in the strengthening of deliberative and participatory democracy.	Horizon 2020, University of Eastern Finland, LUISS, SWPS, CRN, University of Gdańsk, Development Centre of Võru County, Eutropian, City of Gdańsk, Municipality of Reggio Emilia	Pan-European	3 years
Disability Rights UK	Partnership to bring together voices and experiences of Deaf and Disabled people to the current COVID inquiry.	Disability Rights UK, Disrupt Fund	UK-Wide	12 months

Project Title	Description	Partners/Funder	Location	Duration
HOME?	Heritage Lottery funded project which focuses on exploring the recent lived experiences of migrants in Northern England via stories and archive research.	Heritage Lottery Fund, Global Link Development Education Centre, Lancaster, Refugee Women Connect, Liverpool Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network Leeds The No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) Northumbria Methodist Asylum Project ("MAP") Middlesbrough The Dragons Voice, Manchester	Lancaster, Liverpool, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Leeds	2 years
CAPE	Research project examining whether exposure to adverse childhood experiences contributes to higher levels of chronic pain in adults.	Consortium Against Pain Inequalities (Dundee University), UKRI	UK-Wide	12 months

Project Title	Description	Partners/Funder	Location	Duration
Changing Futures	Community Reporter training for groups of people from across Greater Manchester - with a focus on gathering stories of people's lived experiences of multiple disadvantage.	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	Greater Manchester	6 months
Narratives of Impact	European partnership project that investigates storytelling as a tool for creating social change and as a tool for measuring the impact.	Erasmus+, CRN, COSV, INTRAS, SNDE	Pan-European	3 years

Project Title	Description	Partners/Funder	Location	Duration
Camerados	Learning partner work to support a social movement to use the lived experiences of its members to inform the direction and development of the movement.	Camerados	UK-Wide	1 year
Equality Trust SED Project	Project to design and deliver a proof-of-concept Community Reporter training programme to support the social economic duty work of The Equality Trust in Birmingham.	The Equality Trust	Birmingham	5 months
Racial Justice Project	Project to deliver Community Reporter training to racialized young people in order for them to share their lived experiences.	Lancaster University	Greater Manchester	2 months

Project Title	Description	Partners/Funder	Location	Duration
Co-occurring mental health and substance use issues in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan project	Project gathering and curating the stories of people in the Cardiff & Vale area with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues to feed into a wider report on the region's support services in order to advice on wider service improvement.	Ideas Alliance	Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan	4 months
The University of Warwick	Delivering Community Reporter training in the Tile Hill area with the University of Warwick Regional Community Engagement team, who wanted to learn more about the community.	The University of Warwick	Tile Hill	6 months

Project Title	Description	Partners/Funder	Location	Duration
Anti-Racism in Co-Production	A story gathering and curation project designed to document the lived experiences of racialized individuals involved in co-production and make recommendations for change.	Co-Production Collective	UK	4 months
Vision for Volunteering	Acting as a learning and evaluation partner for Vision for Volunteering, following an iterative learning structure in order to make sense of the complex environment in which the project is operating and trying to create change.	Vision for Volunteering, NCVO, Sport England, NAVCA, AVM, DCMS	UK	1 year

Project Title	Description	Partners/Funder	Location	Duration
Adult Social Care APPG	A project training adults with experiences of social care to be Community Reporters, share their own experiences and gather the experiences of others in order to influence the work of Adult Social Care APPG	Adult Social Care APPG, PLMR Healthcomms	UK	6 months
Halton TLAP Project	A project delivering Community Reporter training in Halton to better understand the co-production environment there, with focus on the lived experience of autistic people and those with learning disabilities.	TLAP and Halton Borough Council	Halton	3 months

Project Title	Description	Partners/Funder	Location	Duration
Stories For Change	Story gathering project, gathering professional-quality lived experience stories of inequality and create a series of branded clips and full stories for media release.	Structural Inequalities Alliance	Derby, Barrow-in-Furness, and London	3 months
Friends United Together	Using Community Reporting techniques to create a video story about Friends United Together Co-op so that it can be used to support the group's recruitment strategy.	Sheffield Hallam University, IMPACT, and Community Lives and Friends United Together	Swansea	6 months



Get in touch:

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