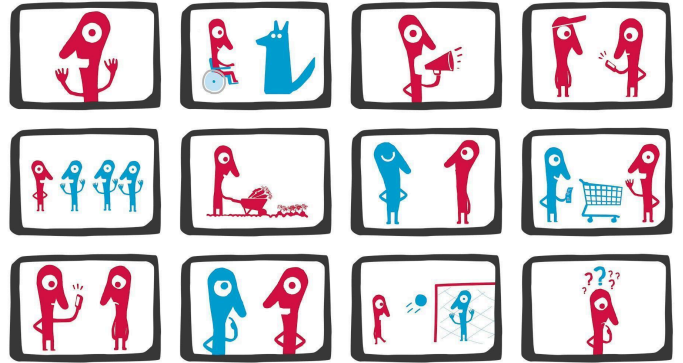


Lincolnshire Community Reporting Applied Learning Project



Developing Capacity for Sustainable Community Reporting in Lincolnshire's Health, Care, and Wellbeing Workforce

People's Voice Media
February 2026



“I think other people's stories are invaluable and important because when we can hear someone's story, understand someone's story, then actually that's when we begin to have empathy.”

In March 2025, People's Voice Media partnered with the Lincolnshire Voluntary Engagement Team (LVET) to support the roll-out of the Community Reporting Applied Learning Project. LVET is a collective of voluntary, community, faith-based and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations across Lincolnshire, who have a focus on health, care or wellbeing.

Lincolnshire is the second largest county in England after Yorkshire, and it's divided into three areas: Holland in the southeast, Kesteven in the southwest, and Lindsey in the north. The county features mostly flat landscapes, spanning from the fenland by the Wash on the North Sea coast all the way up to the Humber Estuary.

Lincolnshire's mix of geography and demographics creates distinct health challenges, especially in coastal regions where ageing populations, isolation, and deprivation overlap. These areas experience lower life expectancy and higher disease rates, as noted in the Chief Medical Officer's 2021 Report¹. Health issues vary across Greater Lincolnshire's coast, rural, and urban zones, so understanding differences in service access is vital to improving health and reducing inequalities. The primary aim of the project was to build the capacity of the Lincolnshire health, care, and wellbeing workforce to sustainably utilise Community Reporting as a tool for gathering insights and supporting co-production, with the goal of fostering ongoing improvements in local services and relationships.

To achieve the aim, 3 key objectives were put into action:

- To **develop the skills and knowledge** of the Lincolnshire health, care, and wellbeing workforce in effectively working with lived experience storytelling within relevant service settings.
- To **establish an 'insight engine'** that captures the lived experiences of residents on issues relevant to health, care, and wellbeing in Lincolnshire, and which is subsequently used by organisations, communities, and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to enhance service provision.

¹ [Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2021: health in coastal communities - gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94444/cmo-annual-report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities.pdf)

- To ensure that the **voices of residents** on topics pertinent to health, care, and wellbeing **are heard** and to catalyse meaningful, real-world change in Lincolnshire as part of an ongoing co-production dialogue connected to 'Our Shared Agreement'.

Our Shared Agreement² aims to support everyone in Lincolnshire at every stage of life. It brings together health, care, people, and communities to share knowledge, build skills, and strengthen relationships for better support and quality of life.

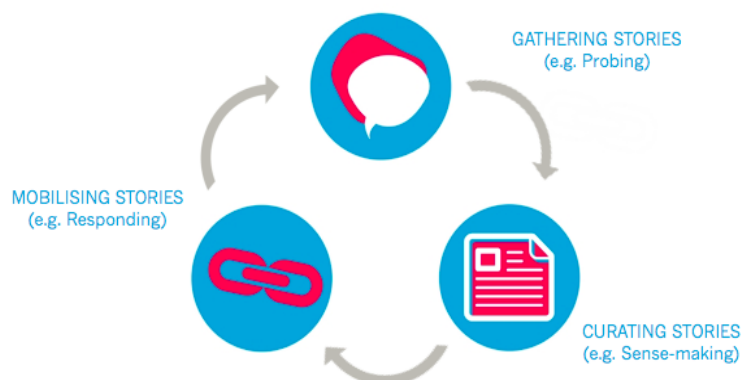
This report will summarise key insights and learning from the applied learning process, look at some of the findings from the stories and give recommendations for future direction in applying Community Reporting in Lincolnshire.

The key topic areas of this report are:

- How the training was applied
- Response to the training and implementation from participants
- Recommendations for future sustainable practice

Method

Originating in 2007, Community Reporting has been developed across Europe as a mixed methodological approach for enhancing citizen participation in research, policymaking, service development, and decision-making processes. It uses digital 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 can use the insights within them to make positive social change. 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).



² <https://www.itsallaboutpeople.info/its-all-about-people/osa>

The project was rolled out in 3 phases.

- Phase 1 with Community Reporting training - **story gathering** and safe and responsible practice in February 2025
- Phase 2 Community Reporting Training - **curating the stories** and making sense of the findings in April 2025
 - Conversation of Change Event – **mobilising the stories - showcasing the stories and making actions for change** in June 2025
- Phase 3 **Train the Trainer Training** – Training people up to deliver Community Reporting training from September 2025 – February 2026 and for future training. This was a capacity-building phase designed to implement Community Reporting to help the Lincolnshire health, care, and wellbeing workforce gather insights and support co-production, aiming for continuous improvement in local services and relationships.

Community Reporter Training

“It will enable us to start to look at what we aren't doing now and we're not doing well, or stuff that we are doing well and potentially look at identifying and plugging some of the gaps that we know we've got across those localities so that we can better support people.”

Phase 1: Community Reporting Training

Phase 1 of the project started in February 2025 with Community Reporting Training, delivered in person for people from a range of care, community and health settings. Trainees came from various voluntary, community, health and social care organisations.

This ‘in person’ training was a chance for them to develop the following skills:

1. Peer-to-peer storytelling
2. Story gathering using digital tools
3. Sensemaking and curation of the stories

12 people were trained to be able to gather stories in a safe and ethical way that will inform and help to improve services and develop skills in working with lived experience stories as a form of evidence to inform the work that they do. After the training, the participants arranged interviews

with people who used their organisations' services, from their networks, and their family members and friends. This involved engaging local communities to ask about:

- their health and wellbeing experiences,
- interactions with health care services,
- and specific topics of interest.

Phase 2: Community Reporting Training cont. – Sense-making and Mobilisation

In April 2025, after stories were gathered, Phase 2 of the process began with story curation, otherwise known as sense-making. This is a fundamental part of the Community Reporting method to look across the stories and identify key insights and learning. This data can then be used to inform and underpin evidence that can influence change.

During the session, key findings were highlighted by the participants, and the most relevant and impactful quotes were selected. Segments of individuals' stories were compiled into a video presented at the Conversation of Change Event in June 2025. This event provided a platform to share these experiences with a wider audience of relevant stakeholders, while subsequent action-planning activities facilitated participants to develop meaningful steps toward change.

The Community Reporter Network and Findings from the Stories

The Community Reporter website is an integral part of the Community Reporter Network, serving as a platform to share stories that highlight the impact of lived experiences. Anyone trained as a Community Reporter can use this site, which hosts thousands of such stories.

Lincolnshire has its own dedicated page on the site, where all local stories are uploaded and shared, helping to ensure that a variety of voices continue to play a role in shaping decisions. This platform collects residents' experiences on health, care, and wellbeing in Lincolnshire, offering qualitative evidence for organizations and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), and enabling actionable feedback to improve services and customer care.

The stories collected centred on health, caregiving, volunteering, and community support.

Health

Several individuals recount navigating challenging health conditions - such as Functional Neurological Disorder (FND), dementia, and premature birth - and in their stories they describe the emotional toll, lack of understanding from professionals, and systemic barriers encountered.

Despite feelings of frustration, fear, and loneliness, many emphasise the importance of hope, humour, resilience, and gratitude for supportive carers and healthcare staff.

Volunteering

Volunteering is described as highly rewarding, fostering social connections and wellbeing, while also highlighting logistical challenges in rural communities and the mutual benefits for both volunteers and those they serve.

Caregiving and family

Experiences of family life are also emphasised. One account discusses aging without children, highlighting the importance of alternative support networks and proactive planning. Additionally, a father's perspective explores both the challenges and benefits of parental involvement, emphasising the need for greater inclusion by healthcare and community services.

The stories reflected a mix of positive and negative sentiments about health and wellbeing in Lincolnshire. Some of the stories describe isolation and bureaucratic obstacles, while others are optimistic, and express admiration for support networks and individuals' strength.

Mobilisation - Conversation of Change Event

“Everybody was engaging with the process, and it wasn't fake engagement. There was a real buy-in to what they were seeing, what they were hearing.”

As part of the Community Reporting process, mobilisation plays a key part in creating impact. Conversation of Change events are designed to bring all stakeholders together, including storytellers and their peers, Community Reporters, any relevant organisations, local government, etc. to watch and listen to the stories gathered. They then collectively empathise, discuss and together make action plans for change.

A selection of the stories were shown at a Conversation of Change event on June 18th, 2025, in Lincoln. Here, members of the LVET, associated organisations and professionals, wider stakeholders and volunteers came together and explored the findings from the stories. They collaborated to identify key insights and trends from the stories and come up with practical actions in which the learning could be put into practice and shared with others. 29 people attended the event.

Key Themes Identified

Communication Challenges

Attendees highlighted that unclear presentation of information, or communication that does not align with expectations, can create significant obstacles for individuals seeking support. When communication is ambiguous or fails to address specific needs, it often leaves people uncertain about available options and next steps, impeding their ability to access necessary services.

Feeling Overwhelmed and Reluctant to Seek Help

A recurring theme centred around the desire not to be a nuisance, despite feeling overwhelmed by circumstances. Individuals may hesitate to ask for help or pursue further support because they do not wish to inconvenience others, even as their own challenges intensify.

Broader Impacts on Life

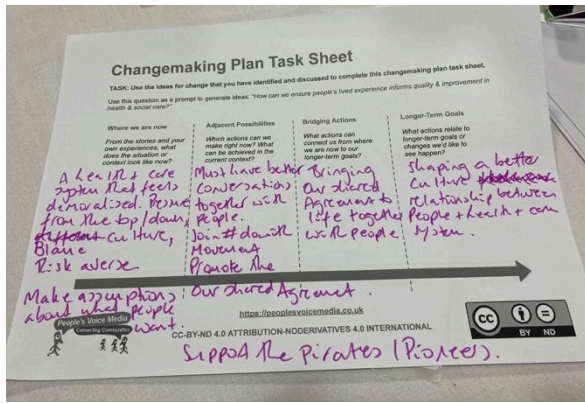
Attendees observed that when systems fail to function effectively, the repercussions extend beyond the immediate issue, affecting various aspects of an individual's life. Employment, family relationships, and physical and mental health can all suffer because of persistent system inefficiencies.

Stress from Continuous Advocacy

Having to repeatedly advocate for services and support was identified as a considerable source of stress and anxiety. The ongoing effort required to secure appropriate assistance can be exhausting, heightening emotional strain and negatively impacting overall wellbeing.

Changemaking Plans and 'What Can I Do?' Pledges Created by Attendees

Following the exploration of key themes, attendees moved forward to consider practical steps they could take within their own spheres of influence. Although dialogue about change is valuable, the concluding session of the day highlighted the progression from discussion to implementation, concentrating on strategies for converting ideas into tangible results and actions.



The attendees identified several practical strategies to drive positive change within their organisations and communities. They emphasised the importance of sharing stories that highlight hope and successful transformation, as these narratives can inspire others and demonstrate the potential for improvement.

Empowering staff was also highlighted as essential, encouraging individuals to take initiative and act differently when situations require it. Attendees recognised that involving people directly in designing and shaping services leads to more effective and responsive support. Furthermore, prioritising compassion and empathy over fear-driven or risk-averse approaches was seen as crucial to fostering a supportive environment. Promoting honesty, active listening, and better conversations within the workforce and with those seeking help were identified as key steps toward building trust and delivering higher quality care.

At the close of the Conversation of Change event attendees were asked to make a 'What Can I Do?' Pledge about what they can personally do to make positive change within their communities and organisations.

The pledges made by attendees focused on several actionable steps to drive positive change.

These included:

- disseminating information about Community Reporting and sharing real-life stories
- seeking greater flexibility in support for dementia patients and their caregivers
- questioning whether institutional requirements truly align with patient needs
- collaborating with churches and local organisations to make meeting times more accessible
- sharing impactful videos with decision-makers
- advocating for personalised approaches and shared agreements in public health discussions.

Train the Trainer Training

“A new tool that we can add to our toolkit to work with people across the community to capture lived experiences in a different way and be able to interpret that information and use that information to influence change wherever that change needs to be influenced.”

Phase 3: Train the Trainer Training

In September 2025, the third phase of the Community Reporting Applied Learning project was implemented with a capacity-building Train the Trainer course. Nine participants attended a comprehensive two-day course designed to develop the skills and expertise required for delivering Community Reporting training activities within Lincolnshire.

The course covered several key areas:

- **Community Reporting Values and Principles:** Participants explored the core values and guiding principles that underpin the Community Reporting methodology.
- **Equitable Storytelling Environments and Anti-Racist Practice:** The training emphasised the creation of inclusive spaces for storytelling and the importance of anti-racist approaches within community work.
- **Community Reporting Training Materials and Templates:** Attendees were introduced to essential training materials and templates that support structured learning and reporting processes.
- **Facilitation Skills and Training Programme Planning:** The course included practical guidance on facilitation techniques and strategies for planning effective training programmes.
- **Advanced Features on the Community Reporter Website:** Participants learned about advanced website functionalities to enhance their reporting and training capabilities.
- **Action Planning for the Future:** The training concluded with sessions focused on developing actionable plans to roll out Community Reporting practices in Lincolnshire and ensure the ongoing growth and sustainability.

This training was designed to give current Community Reporters in Lincolnshire the skills and understanding needed to become trainers themselves, encouraging the participants to facilitate their own Community Reporting training sessions to give the work longevity. The aim was to establish a Community of Practice around Community Reporting in Lincolnshire and strengthen capacity throughout the voluntary sector and the health, care, and wellbeing workforce so that

Community Reporting can be used sustainably across the county. By gathering insights and encouraging co-production, this approach seeks to drive continuous improvements in local services and relationships. With people from local health, wellbeing and voluntary organisations now trained as trainers in Community Reporting, further Community Reporting training was then able to be offered to more local people in November 2025 and in February 2026.

Trainee feedback

The Lincolnshire Community Reporting team held two, 2-day Community Reporter training events, one in November 2025 and another in February 2026. The sessions were highly successful, with trainees providing outstanding feedback. They found the training relevant and recognised its practical applications for their work. When asked how confident they felt about applying the knowledge from the training in activity in their day-to-day work, 80% of the trainees said that they were confident in applying the knowledge from the training in their work and the remaining 20% said they were 'fairly confident'.

“It opened up a whole new area for me that I didn't know existed. Everyone was very nice. The practical exercises were good as we got to practice but there was no pressure to share what we had done.”

When participants were asked to rate their understanding of how Community Reporting can be utilised to affect positive changes in healthcare, social care, or council services after the activity, 100% reported that their comprehension had improved following the training.

Following the training, all participants indicated that they had a better grasp of using lived experience storytelling to investigate specific subjects. They also reported an enhanced understanding of how such experiences can shape policies and influence decision-makers.

“Looking forward to finding and curating stories to report on from my community.”

The training inspired participants to confidently apply their newly acquired knowledge in their future roles. Many expressed that the practical exercises and supportive environment enabled them to see tangible ways in which Community Reporting techniques could enhance their day-to-day work. As a result, trainees left the course feeling equipped and motivated to integrate these practices, ultimately aiming to give people in their communities a stronger voice and to influence positive change within their organisations.

“I’ll use this in future engagement work to support people to have a voice that is listened to, heard and valued, and has influence.”

Key Recommendations for Community Reporting in Lincolnshire

“That’s what I’d like to see us build up a real, you know, zeitgeist movement, shall we say, of Community Reporters.”

The Community Reporting Applied Learning Project has proven to be highly effective, with participants gaining valuable skills that they are eager to implement in their respective roles. The overwhelmingly positive feedback highlights the relevance of the course content, alongside the supportive and practical learning environment. Trainees have demonstrated increased confidence in applying Community Reporting techniques, recognising the potential to foster meaningful change within their services and communities.

To build upon this achievement, it is advisable to ensure continual support as trainees go on to use their new skills in their roles, and facilitate collaborative opportunities for newly appointed Community Reporters. Instituting regular follow-up sessions and developing peer learning forums will contribute to sustained progress and reinforce the adoption of Community Reporting practices.

- Deliver **ongoing support** and **foster collaboration** for new Community Reporters.
- Implement consistent **follow-up sessions** to preserve momentum.
- Develop **peer learning forums** to strengthen Community Reporter practices.

Looking ahead, expanding the training to reach a broader audience and integrating feedback from participants will keep the programme responsive and impactful, supporting a growing movement of empowered Community Reporters across Lincolnshire and beyond.

People’s Voice Media has a post-project evaluation process in place to monitor impact and to support future Community Reporting work. This monitoring enables the organisation to understand how and why its work is effective, as well as to identify any areas where improvements could enhance impact. The insights gained through this approach will not only benefit the current initiative but also be applicable to similar projects in the future. At the same time, it will help to continually support the Lincolnshire Voluntary Engagement Team.

For further details about our work or this applied learning project:

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

Check out: <https://communityreporter.net/lincolnshire-cr-project>

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