



Engaging Lived Experience Research Workshop

Up for Yorkshire and York St John
University



21 November 2025



Introduction to the research project

- Up for Yorkshire secured community research grant from Institute for Social Justice at York St John University.
- Ambition to strengthen our organisation's lived experience engagement and support the wider VCSE sector to enhance the quality and consistency of engagement.
- We know there are limitations to the way that most VCSEs and public sector organisations currently approach engagement. Despite aspirations for coproduction and codesign, processes often rely on individuals coming forward to participate. This means the same voices being heard each time: many people simply never come forward to engage.
- We want to find more equitable and sustainable mechanisms to support organisations to better listen to and value lived experience . Better engagement should lead to higher quality and more appropriate services which better meet people's needs.
- This research is opportunity to understand what is already happening across the sector and areas of good practice, explore opportunities for change, and create tangible resources to embed long-term change.

Our research objectives

“How do we better listen to, capture and represent the voices of people with lived experience in order to have a meaningful impact on policy and the design of community services? How can we support those with lived experience to participate purposefully?”

- Stakeholder engagement – to understand current practice, strengths and weaknesses, potential for change and the likely consequences of change.
- Scoping review – lived experience engagement - desk based research
- Resident involvement – action research to explore learning – explore perspectives and possibilities
- Model development – can we produce a model/tools/an approach to support the VCSE sector self-assess and enhance the quality of lived experience engagement.

Year 1 delivery

- A steering group of local VCSE, statutory and academic partners, providing project oversight, feedback and connections across sectors.
- Stakeholder event:
 - a. What works?
 - b. What are the opportunities for change?
 - c. What are the challenges we should be aware of as the research progresses?
- An academic literature review examining best practice in lived experience engagement.
- A series of 'sense checking' focus group workshops to examine the findings from the literature review; exploring and considering its application and impact on individuals' and their organisation's daily activity/processes/ understanding.
- A facilitated Social Imagination Workshop held in Selby, inviting creative ideas and providing participants with the opportunity to view their current lived experience activity from a different perspective.
- Surveys distributed locally through UfY networks and nationally via NAVCA (the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action).

Year 1 – what we learnt

Research findings rooted in place

Strong enthusiasm and shared belief in value of lived experience engagement

Varying motivations to undertaking lived experience engagement and openness to learning and development

- Improving relevance and responsiveness of services
 - Understanding needs
 - Accountability
 - Empathy
 - Influencing policy
- Recognition of the challenges: stretched sector, funding cycles, time, financial impact, reliance on volunteers, risk of harm, confidence and skills, communication
 - The benefits of doing it well – for individuals; organisations and wider system

The benefits of doing it well

- For **Individuals** — it can be transformative and life-changing; offer hope for the future; provide inspiration and *meaning and purpose* in life; increased motivation and *confidence; agency*; and having a voice.
- For **Organisations** — authenticity; improved access to information; stronger support for innovation and change; greater knowledge and expertise; *valuable perspectives* that inform strategies; ensuring that services are *relevant and effective*; smart solutions to complex problem; communication and networking; evidence based; and *increased legitimacy*.
- For the **Wider System** — enables society to challenge the social systems, structures, and narratives that define people; *strengthen community wellbeing and resilience*; *combats stigma and discrimination*; increased participation in work, training and volunteering; *increased resilience and viability of community services*; savings to public budgets; *managing expectations and reducing inequalities*.

What good looks like

1. **Partnership** – Engagement is understood to be ongoing, not one-off.
2. **Clarity of purpose** from the outset – people know why their voice is being sought and what will happen next. This includes:
 - Explicit management of expectations
 - Clear boundaries and guidelines
 - Sufficient knowledge, skills, commitment and resources (especially funding and time) to see things through
3. **Safety and support** – participants are emotionally and practically supported. This includes:
 - Individual supervision and mentoring
 - Training and feedback for people with lived experience
 - Ensure language is accessible and not stigmatizing
4. **Reciprocity** – People see the value of their input and receive feedback. This includes:
 - Accountability and open feedback
5. **Fair reward** – This includes participation being recognised through payment or other meaningful benefit and considering whether staff may be working unpaid overtime.
6. **Representation** – Diversity and inclusion are actively sought and monitored.
7. **Learning culture** – Organisations and individuals reflect and adapt. This includes:
 - Sharing information and good practice
 - Demonstrating worth via comprehensive evaluation
 - Organisational culture in which people feel safe to discuss what happened when things go wrong.

Year 2 Plans

- Creating a Selby Lived Experience Group – Community Think Tank - 15 people with diverse lived experiences, who will explore key themes proposed by community and statutory partners.
- Based on our learning from phase one, members will receive training, support and payment for their contributions.
- Inviting partners to propose questions/topics for discussion
- Creation of an Evaluation and Research Group led by CERT to focus on evaluating and learning from the Lived Experience Group. Comprising members of Up for Yorkshire, CERT and VCSE community researchers, the Group will:
 - Co-design evaluation tools.
 - Develop shared measures of impact.
 - Train community members in participatory research.
 - Aim to produce accessible reports and learning resources for future dissemination.
- Sharing learning to maximise impact

The Community Think Tank

Join Selby's Lived Experience Group
Your Voice ~ Your Story ~ Your Community

→ What's involved? ←

- Share honest experiences about life in Selby
- Work with local organisations & services, creating positive impactful change
- Celebrate & represent Selby's diverse community
- Monthly meetings

November 2025 - June 2026

→ Why join? ←

- Make a difference
- Be heard in local decisions
- Meet new people & grow in confidence
- Gain skills & experiences
- Help create a fairer, more inclusive Selby
- Receive a £20 thank you voucher for each meeting attended

Interested? - It's easy to get involved!

Fill in a short Expression of Interest form or contact tom@upforyorkshire.org.uk for a friendly chat

Your voice matters - together we can make Selby a place where every experience counts

Visit our website: upforyorkshire.org.uk
01757 291111

UP FOR YORKSHIRE

Use the QR Code to complete the Expression of Interest Form →

Registered Charity No: 1146109
Company Ltd by Guarantee No: 07565045



Discussion

1. Reflections from the audience
2. Sharing experiences of lived experience engagement
3. Topics for discussion

How to get involved/Aims for Year 3

1. Inform the outputs of year 2
 - Pose a question/issue to the Community Think Tank
2. Few places available for VCSE groups to become part of the Evaluation and Research Group – increase confidence and capability in evaluating lived experience to inform own practice
3. Keep in touch – we'll be sharing progress
4. Help inform what comes next – we have aspirations for supporting a North Yorkshire Lived Experience Network to continue to build expertise and rollout meaningful and supportive lived experience engagement across the sector
 - What is needed, what would be valuable?
 - Are there people missing from the conversation to include?



**UP FOR
YORKSHIRE**

