

The image features a bright yellow background with a faint, stylized globe in the center. Two hands are depicted: one in the upper right and one in the lower left, both rendered in a dark brown color with white outlines. The hands are positioned as if they are about to clasp or are in the process of reaching towards each other. The text "LISTENING TO EACH OTHER" is written in a white, hand-drawn, sans-serif font, centered between the two hands.

LISTENING TO
EACH OTHER

'RADICAL LISTENING' IS THE WAY TO RADICAL CHANGE



By Karin Woodley

In our Listening to Each Other cell, we've been exploring the importance of listening, particularly to those least heard, as a means of finding out what's not working and discovering what will. Karin Woodley, our thought leader for this cell, has been making the case for a practice of 'radical listening', as she explains here.

I've come to realise that we're in a state of cognitive dissonance because we champion equality and social justice while clinging to a social change model that is largely philanthropic and rooted in paternalism. Our model is driven by social benevolence, funding availability and ballot box short-termism rather than respect for and the protection of people's fundamental human rights. As a result, it neither tackles the root causes of structural inequity nor gets to the crux of historic and systemic neglect.

Systems-disrupting change requires the collective humility and bravery to accept that there is a stark fault line in the knowledge we use to formulate policy and configure services. The pandemic has shone a spotlight on our failures and rising inflation, on-going Brexit uncertainties, global warming and the war in the Ukraine mean that more and more people are experiencing deteriorating living conditions

and inter-related social and economic disparities across multiple aspects of their lives. The need to transform is urgent!

While we fail to reach people who feel their voices are unheard, fail to create the conditions needed for them to meaningfully participate, and continue to filter what we hear from them with supposition, stereotypes and judgments, we cannot drive transformational social change. Only once we accept that our traditional knowledge collection methods are insufficient and partisan will we be able to recalibrate, reach beyond reaction to symptoms, and formulate concrete shared-power strategies that can successfully address the underlying causes of social inequity.

'Learning to listen' and 'listening to understand' are fundamental and radical components of this change path because

they help us understand how the way we work and our structures and systems enhance the status quo. It's imperative that we fill our knowledge gap by generating the experiential knowledge needed to tackle entrenched material and relational inequality.

Radical listening is a powerful tool on this journey because it nurtures relational social change. It is nuanced, empathetic, intentional and non-judgemental and focuses on building equitable and trusting relationships. By emphasising learning and flexibility, and enabling people to tell their real stories, share their real experiences and formulate their own solutions, radical listening captures the spirit and energy of the people our social structures exclude.

As a professional skill, radical listening pushes us to confront the way conceptually and pragmatically we communicate so that we can reposition ownership of the conversation to those we are listening to. It builds our capacity to tackle the listening bias created by embedded power imbalances between us and our philanthropically described 'beneficiaries'. We develop a new kind of attentiveness and self-control and build our capacity to listen for the content, meaning, and feeling in what people have to say.

Embracing this new skill is difficult (i.e. saying less) and extremely disciplined (i.e. being silent), but it can reap enormous rewards by improving the internal performance of our organisations through better trust, openness, decision-making, conflict resolution and problem-solving. It also helps us to be less defensive about the 'way we've always done things'. Cultivating curiosity and creating safe

and inclusive environments for exploring new ideas are tenets of good leadership and team working. Leaders and teams who are skilled at radical listening will be more human-centred in their interactions with each other and the people with whom they work. They will be more successful.

Nurturing relational change driven by people most affected by social inequity poses several significant challenges. We frequently talk about being 'mistrusted' – which in itself is victim blaming – but we have failed to tackle the institutional practices that have systematically prevented the recruitment and advancement of leaders and staff from diverse backgrounds and with diverse lived experiences without them being treated as a token minority. This failure means that we have allowed our organisations to replicate the power imbalances within society and create barriers between us and the people we need to 'hear', ignoring the benefits of shared experience for social perception, credibility, empathy and confidence.

Our ability to create safe and welcoming environments for radical listening activity will always be undermined by this lack of diversity. So, while we tackle this problem, we need to develop partnerships that ensure the people we need to listen to can be heard by others who share aspects of their culture and experiences. Radical listening is an intensely human interaction and as such the ability to ask sensitive questions that elicit and uncover unmet concerns is paramount.

We have a fairly rich arsenal of engagement, consultation and research formats including citizen assemblies, focus groups and participatory research that can provide

the frameworks for building trust, organic conversations and radical listening – provided we remember that we are not the centre of the activity and we are not defensive.

Fully embracing the fact that the people we need to hear are the experts, not us, is another challenge. We're not used to listening without trying to get to what we perceive to be important, without jumping to conclusions, without interrupting and interjecting with our own opinions, and without steering conversations so that they respond to questions raised by our funders. Yet when we hand over control, our categorisation of people's experience according to historic service definitions and silos becomes redundant. Most people share their needs, challenges and goals through a more holistic, complex and interrelated lens – people simply do not define themselves in the way we do.

In the end, we have to unlearn our current ways of working and embrace relational social change driven by experiential knowledge. As Stephen Hawking said, 'The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge'. It's time to shed the illusion of knowledge and the shackles of benevolence and paternalism. It's time to ditch the failing social protection mechanisms and safe and repetitive formulae we've spent such a long time designing and re-designing.

It's time for us to listen, reflect, bear witness and absorb.

Karin Woodley CBE is Chief Executive of Cambridge House and Chair of the Race Equality Foundation.



NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF REALLY LISTENING



By Samantha Abram

One conclusion from our Listening to Each Other cell is that we should set aside regular time and space to listen with an open mind, reach out to people who are not ‘in the room’, and act on what we hear. Here Samantha Abram reflects on her experience in Wigan of doing just that.

I still remember, vividly, one of the most poignant moments of my time as a PTS (Person-led, Transitional, Strength-based) coach. I had been coaching for around a year and if I’m honest I was beginning to wonder whether meeting people in a coffee shop for a chat had any real purpose.

The idea was to meet wherever the person chooses. Somewhere comfortable and familiar, so that coaching can take place as a real-world experience and become a way of working alongside people. In the first weeks the conversations would often be about the weather or trending Netflix shows. This did not feel work-related and at times I’d wonder if I was getting coaching right. But then there’d be infrequent glimmers, when something real and honest about a person would emerge.

I have known Jon for around three years. If his risk assessment were to land on your desk it would identify Jon as ‘high risk to staff and himself’. He is described in

professionals’ meetings as ‘complex’ and ‘a nuisance’ and as ‘an adult with capacity and no social care needs’. He ‘chooses’ to act in ‘self-destructive ways’ and ‘refuses to work with services’.

Thankfully, my task as a PTS Coach was to become familiar with Jon as a person, not with his risk assessment (which in any case bore no relation to his behaviour with me). The first year or so of meetings with Jon hardly scratched the surface and I learned quickly that he did not want to answer questions. And when he felt he was being questioned or judged, he would leave. Coaching is organic and allows for someone to come and go as they please. But he would always call the next week or the next month and ask me to meet him.

Eventually I found the confidence to stay restful and patient in the silence. One day I didn’t fall into a prescriptive spiel about Jon’s situation or say something professional to kill the awkward stillness

between sips of steaming tea. In that moment we both sat equally awkward and equally human. Jon snatched that moment of balanced power and a wave of feelings, thoughts, and emotions all spilled out. I just listened.

The most important lesson coaching has taught me is that listening empowers. Listening builds trust. My job is to listen and to empower people, and fulfilling this would not be possible if I too wasn't listened to. I am fortunate to work in an environment where listening is valued and enthusiastically put in place. An authentic voice is heard beyond coaching sessions.

At The Brick, we are working towards offering meaningful and valuable provision for people who are going through tough times. We are listening to people to be able to respond with action and create the changes, opportunities and support people tell us they want and need.

When people are truly heard, it becomes obvious that in so many instances the barriers that prevent someone from moving forward are systemic. The very services that are intended to help people who have struggles can be part of the problem. It is now being widely accepted that a 'fixing people' approach is at best demoralising and at worst dehumanising. If we want to move forward with a method of service delivery that allows people to

be in control of their choices and have autonomy over the changes they want to make, then listening is key. By listening to people as individuals with their own unique experiences of tough times and services, we can identify the systemic barriers and remove these by relinquishing the power the systems hold over people.

I listen to individuals, as others in support and similar roles do, but for people to be truly heard it takes more than public-facing staff to listen. It takes more than a charity to listen from the bottom up within its own walls. So much learning for me has come from the opportunities to share with and listen to others through networking, partnership working and social media platforms. I have no doubt that a collective voice is growing, calling for system change. A collective voice can be loud, but an authentic voice, one person's whisper is equally as powerful.

Samantha Abram has been working at The Brick in Wigan for 4 years as a PTS (Person-Led, Transitional, Strength-based) Coach, in partnership with the Mayday Trust. Before she was a coach, she was a Lecturer, teaching English in adult education, and currently she is studying for a Social Justice and Education MA at the University of Lancaster.

REFLECTING THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE



By Nasim Qureshi

We need to ensure staff, volunteers, trustees and advisers reflect the communities they serve, we've heard in our Listening to Each Other cell. And as Nasim Qureshi explains, organisations that operate in this way can achieve a great deal more.

From our beginnings a decade ago, Inspired Neighbourhoods has taken particular care to operate in a way that is fully a part of, not separate from, the Bradford communities in which we operate.

For example, we drew a set of circles with a two-mile radius from each of our centres, and then spent time identifying and learning about all the networks, local organisations and community associations within each circle.

A while ago, we alongside partners decided to establish a summer school service, in part to gain greater insights into how lives of children and young people have been changing in recent years. In the area selected for this service, we partnered with a large number of local community organisations, building on their strengths, and reaching people we were not otherwise in contact with. We also involved the police, schools and statutory bodies, and were able to influence the City-wide strategy, inviting

the Council Chief Executive and others into discussions with the young people, letting them speak for themselves.

Each of our centres has a community advisory board or committee, and these feed in to our main Board. So community voice travels continually up and down, and this produces a level of intelligence that could not be obtained from any number of surveys. There is no need to spend money on marketing and promotion to the community, because the connections are already in place.

Before any project is started, there is a period of co-design with the local communities. This type of activity can rarely be covered by grant funding, because most funders expect to see a full plan set out in advance when we submit a grant application. Yet, if we want to do things *with* people, rather than *to* them, that initial co-design phase is so important. For this reason, we try to generate as much income

as possible through our own trading efforts, and this independent income allows us to operate in ways which are very flexible and responsive to the things that matter most to the people we work with.

The process is not just about co-design, it is also about co-delivery. A wide range of people from within the various communities become volunteers, and volunteering is a foundation for substantial areas of our work. For example, the library service is entirely run by community volunteers. We take this very seriously, and our volunteers have written roles and responsibilities, and training opportunities. Because of this, volunteering has high status in our organisation, and can often become a route into paid work. In fact, most of our paid employees started off that way.

I have a simple principle: 'If we are sitting in a room, we are not working with the communities.' So I make sure we all spend most of our time out and about – 95 per cent of our workforce is peripatetic.

I don't like time sheets and we don't use them. Instead, our employees work the flexible hours that are needed to deliver services, often outside standard hours, responding to emergencies, while balancing their own childcare or other family needs. Nearly everyone works more than their 37 contracted hours, and turnover is very low.

There are now 75 employees and 32 volunteers. Many have lived experience of

the difficulties the organisation is seeking to address. We are a disability-friendly organisation, and a lot of attention is paid to mental well-being within the team. The Board composition too is over 90 per cent local.

And so, at every level, our teams have emerged from the local communities and remain part of them. Our organisation is able to listen and respond because of the people in our teams, the ways they work, and the informal conversations that happen all the time.

Over the last decade, operating in this way, Inspired Neighbourhoods has gone from strength to strength. We now provide a broad mix of services across four different communities within or close to Bradford. This includes, for example, mental health and physical health support, domiciliary care, employment advice, enterprise advice, community housing, a country park, and the community library, improving the lives of over 10,000 local residents, and supporting over 800 businesses. We've learned that, if we keep our feet on the ground, and build a workforce that remains rooted in and reflective of our communities, we don't lose touch, and can achieve a great deal.

Nasim Qureshi is CEO of the Inspired Neighbourhoods group, a social business and a community anchor across the Bradford district.

HOW TO BRING ABOUT PEOPLE-POWERED PLACES



By Rich Wilson

A key lesson from our Listening to Each Other cell is that we must let people shape the agenda, through informal everyday listening activities as well as in more formal exercises like citizens assemblies. How to do this is explored here by Rich Wilson.

If the pandemic taught us one thing it's that our everyday actions matter. Whether it's the pandemic, climate or cost of living crisis we, the people, play an absolutely critical role in the effectiveness of the response.

The importance of people power for communities and local government is particularly acute. We know local authorities barely have sufficient resources to cover the basics of social care, waste management and highways. Given the spiralling cost of social care, an ageing population and growing inflation, we should assume the situation will get worse before it gets better.

The problem is that transactional public services and top-down local politics systematically deactivate people, eroding what the academics call self-efficacy and collective-efficacy.

But you knew that already. What is new is the opportunity to do something about it.

In the last few years we've seen a rapid growth in citizens' assemblies and Good Help public services. They are however rarely seen as interdependent aspects of local people power systems, but they are, and when recognised as such hold a key to unlocking the civic energy we desperately need. Here's how.

Getting local citizens' assemblies right

In the last few years we've seen over 39 citizens' assemblies in the UK. These are fora where citizens are selected at random and are demographically representative of the local population. They are usually 40-100 people in size and deliberate on an issue like climate change or public spending, making recommendations to local decision-makers. They are very effective at generating good policy (i.e. that practically works and will address the issue), overcoming polarisation and activating participants to address the issue in question.

The problem is the number of people participating is too small for the recommendations to get real political traction and the number of assemblies are too few given the need to activate as many citizens as possible. The ‘tipping point’ for initiating cultural change is around 25 per cent of the population. So for a local authority size of around 100,000 we need around 25,000 people to start seeing themselves as active citizens and being invited to be part of governing the place.

For citizens’ assemblies to achieve their promise of becoming the beating heart of people powered places the following four changes need to happen:

1. Make them inclusive, so anyone can participate

The Global Citizens’ Assembly for COP26 was governed by two principles: that anyone on earth could be selected for the core assembly and anyone on earth could run their own Community Assembly. We provided a toolkit that enabled anyone anywhere to have the same resources as the core assembly members, run a high quality local workshop and upload the citizens’ proposals into the core system. We could invite every community group, school child, business or religious society into the citizens’ assembly, transforming the quality of the data available and the number of people participating.

1. Make them places for civic imagination
Citizens’ Assemblies work best when they support participants to engage

with the emotional reality of a situation (such as poverty or climate) and create the space to imagine new futures often outside what they thought was possible. This is especially critical now when we face unprecedented challenges that require transformative, not incremental responses. For example if your climate assembly is recommending more recycling or bus lanes you can be sure your process is insufficiently imaginative.

3. Make them political chambers in their own right

In a previous article, I explained how the French national climate Assembly was a powerful political chamber that sent shockwaves across the political system. Framing citizens’ assemblies as political chambers is not just important in terms of honouring civic voice, it’s also a true reflection of the significant power that citizens have, and the impossibility of even the most diligent politician to accurately represent them.

4. Raise their profile

The best citizens’ assemblies capture the imagination of the entire population. The Irish and French Assemblies both had awareness in the adult population well over 75 per cent; and their deliberations were followed closely by the populations. A high profile generates public debate about the recommendations, energising local civic life and meaning that any proposals will be carried by a wave of popular interest.

Mainstreaming Good Help Public Services

The 2018 Good and Bad Help report described a national movement of people and places, committed to making public services engines of civic confidence and action. The Good Help project did not start life as public service reform initiative, though; rather it was the conclusion of a post-Brexit inquiry into why growing numbers of people felt 'excluded', 'deactivated' and 'wanting to take back control'. It turns out that if you want to support people to take control of their lives, or as Jon Alexander's recent book *Citizens* argues, for people to be active citizens not passive consumers, public services can be key drivers for achieving this.

I became interested in this area having founded and run *Involve*, the democracy charity, and was struck by how initiatives such as citizens' assemblies were insufficient to address the 'deactivation' crisis; and indeed were in danger of exacerbating power inequalities, if the only people who participated were already activated.

The pandemic has seen a rapid growth of Good Help organisations as public service commissioners have started to wake up to their potential. *Clean Slate*, the employment support organisation, grew rapidly going from 15 to 53 staff in two years. They now record annual financial gains of £1.8 million for over 2,000 people,

nearly six times as many as before the pandemic. Organisations like *Grapevine*, *Long Table* and *Community Catalysts* can all tell a similar story. What has not yet happened, however, is for people to realise that if citizens' assemblies are the beating heart of people-powered places, then Good Help public services are the life blood, supplying the activated citizens to both rise to the challenges we face, and make the brave decisions we need.

This is not an argument for replacing politicians with citizens. It is, though, a practical plan for ensuring that people take their rightful place at the local governance table.

Rich is co-founder of the People Power Lab and Global Citizens' Assembly for COP26. In 2004 Rich founded the charity *Involve*, which under his leadership became a leading centre for public participation research, innovation and policy-making. He has been an adviser for the OECD, UNFCCC, WHO, UNDP, EU and many national and local governments. He has written over 100 policy reports, been a regular contributor to the *Guardian*, wrote the *Anti Hero* book, is a trustee of the Local Trust, a Clore Social Fellow and was deputy chair of *ScienceWise*.

MAKING SPACE IN RESEARCH AND POLICY FOR PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE



By Lucy Holmes

Bringing more people with lived experience into research and policy-making helps us listen, we've concluded in our Listening to Each Other cell. Lucy Holmes shares her experience of this in the homelessness sector.

The first time I accompanied a volunteer peer researcher to an interview, for a project I led at St Mungo's, I learned more about myself than anything else. As I sat in the corner of the room, biting my tongue and sitting on my hands, I reflected on how significant and challenging it is to make space for others to do the listening.

It was hard to watch someone conduct an interview in a way I thought wasn't perfect, wasn't the way I'd been trained to do it, wasn't *quite* the way I had trained her to do it, wasn't the way *I would have done it myself*.

The case for including citizens, patients and service users in designing the systems that govern our lives is well made. From organisations like Involve calling for citizen involvement in civil society to the NHS ambition to embed patient and the public involvement in all of its work, great strides have been made.

Yet properly involving people without professional training in areas of work that have historically been done by 'qualified' experts (like researchers with academic training or policy professionals with detailed technical knowledge) can be difficult and scary.

The charity I now work in, Groundswell, was created – and named – to give power and voice to people experiencing homelessness. To empower a groundswell of feeling, of opinion, of expertise, and to speak out! To speak truth to power. To disrupt and challenge and inspire.

In our earliest days, our Speakout events were a chance for 'people to communicate with and influence people and organisations who make decisions that affect their lives.' In September 2000 more than 2,000 homeless people and 250 support organisations took part in Speakouts.

Since then, Groundswell has grown (we now have staff and volunteers nationwide) but our ethos remains the same. We exist to enable people who have experience of homelessness to create solutions and move themselves out of homelessness – to the benefit of our whole society. Lived experience is central to everything we do, from our Listen Up! peer journalism hub to our national #HealthNow research, partnership and policy programme.

Around two-thirds of our staff team have personal experience of homelessness and around one-third started as volunteers before moving into paid roles. Some team members undergo intensive training. Our Homeless Health Peer Advocates receive several weeks of preparation to support their homeless clients to access healthcare services. We also train volunteers with personal experience of homelessness in research methods. These peer researchers then take the lead on all aspects of a research project. At Groundswell all our research is undertaken by people who have experienced homelessness.

As I sat in on my first peer research interview, silently berating myself and my ego, I missed the most important thing happening in the room. Only when I read the transcript did I realise how much the peer researcher had achieved. The fact that she shared her own experiences, memories and observations helped to elicit data from the participant I never would have got. And that's what matters. When professionals cede power, when organisations give the floor to people with expertise based on experience, the results might be different, but they can be better.

At the March Pathway conference 'Pathways from Homelessness', attended by esteemed clinicians, voluntary sector colleagues and government officials, Debs presented findings from a peer research project, as respected and listened to as any other speaker. Debs also described her experience as a Groundswell peer researcher:

'To be honest it's one of the most amazing experiences I've ever had. Just getting involved, meeting the other volunteers was great fun. [...] My favourite bit was asking people the questions. We did a lot of hours in a day centre and the people there – because I know them, because a lot of them are my friends – they were more willing to answer the questions, because I am one of them. They know I've been through homelessness. [...] They were more willing not just to answer the questions, but to be honest, to trust us researchers. To not just say what they thought we wanted to hear, to give us the real truth.'

Of course I still face dilemmas and questions. I wonder whether, by bringing people in, we're forcing them to mould themselves to a system we should, instead, be challenging or dismantling. Another essay in this collection by Jill Baker captures this neatly: 'I often go back to that question – who am I serving here? The people I am actually here to serve or the authority that oversees the systems?' One of the goals of our Listen Up! project is to support people who've been homeless to hold decision-makers to account. We're explicitly trying to challenge the system, not incorporate our reporters into it.

I also worry that if we pigeonhole people as 'experts by experience' we fail to see their other skills and perspectives. Just because you've been homeless doesn't mean you can't also have *professional* qualifications, expertise and standing. I perceive that in other areas of work (like dementia or mental health research) the lines between types of expertise are blurry and I'd like that to be true in homelessness and complex needs policy areas.

And we have to work hard every day to do the best by our peers, making sure we support them to progress, to develop. Some we help to prepare for paid roles. Others need training or equipment or travel cards to enable them to volunteer. And everyone needs and deserves good management, prompt and efficient work processes, suitable recognition and to understand what happens as a result of their hard work.

If I could impress just one point on anyone who's frightened of bringing people with lived experience into research and policy

roles it is this: there are people who are eager to help you get it right. Yes, it can be scary. Yes, it takes time and patience. Yes, it needs careful consideration before you leap in. But it will change your relationships, your organisation, your power base – for the better. Ask for support. Learn from others' mistakes and missteps. We're all so excited to see you succeed.

Lucy Holmes is Creating Change Director at Groundswell, a charity that works with people with experience of homelessness, offering opportunities to contribute to society and create solutions to homelessness. Groundswell's vision is of an equal and inclusive society, where the solutions to homelessness come from people with experience of homelessness. She previously worked at Alcohol Change UK, St Mungo's, Missing People and the University of Edinburgh.

LET'S THINK MORE LIKE SCIENTISTS, AND INCLUDE LIVED EXPERIENCE IN RESEARCH



By Liz Richardson

The involvement of people with lived experience in research and policymaking adds real value, we've concluded in our Listening to Each Other cell. Liz Richardson, a social scientist and academic, gives her thoughts on this here.

I would like to make a proposition: respect for people's experiential expertise could be strengthened if we thought more like scientists. When I talk to organisations about citizen participation, we often focus on thinking more like citizens. I would like to add that we should also focus on thinking more like scientists. I am a social scientist and academic, so perhaps I would say that! But there are some good reasons why this might be the case. I believe that thinking more like everyday scientists – or 'citizen scientists' – could mean better participation.

People are often instinctive scientists: they look for patterns and contrasts. They ask how context affects the effectiveness of a particular approach. They are concerned with definitions. These are all also excellent instincts for good policy-making. Many existing processes of policy and practice could be made more robust with a few tweaks towards an everyday science approach. After all, what distinguishes

research is that it is in a conversation with knowledge we already have, it tries to be systematic, and ideally comparative, we think carefully about biases in our data or sources, and we explain our definitions of terms.

So, imagine what this might mean for a participatory process. What might 'being in a conversation with existing knowledge' look like? In my academic work, this would be a literature review of academic papers. But, in other contexts, it might mean digging out the results of previous engagement exercises more thoroughly. Or talking to those affected about the history of a policy or place, and what the implications are of past legacies. Thinking carefully about bias in sources could lead to an effort to include more unheard voices. Being comparative means we try to take account of differences between groups or things (places, organisations, policies) in how they are treated.

One of the core principles underpinning these propositions is respect for different forms of expertise. Including lived experience or experiential expertise does not need to displace scientific, technical or bureaucratic expertise. Each issue needs to be assessed for what types of expertise are missing. Often this will be experiential expertise. But it may be that it is technical knowledge that is missing, or the input from people with a strategic vision.

Because each form of expertise is inherently partial, and limited, we need each other. Synergistic approaches are based on the idea that 'each has something the other needs'; we add, not substitute. Blending more lived experience and more science does not have to mean that our differences are somehow flattened out; respect for the unique value of each form of expertise remains. But it is also the case that these forms are often messy and integrated in reality anyway. Not all scientific expertise comes from professional scientists, for example; and citizens are not the only ones with lived experiences.

I have started to realise that my academic world is a lot more similar to non-academic worlds than it might initially appear. When people ask questions, they are potentially setting a research agenda. We need to think more like citizens yes, but there is untapped potential in thinking more like scientists.

Liz Richardson is a Professor of Public Administration at the University of Manchester.

She does research on urban governance, public policy, citizen participation, and is interested in participatory research methods.

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