

Over A Brew Session

26 FEBRUARY 2025

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES



**CURATORS
OF CHANGE**

directors of
adass
adult social services
eastern region
connecting innovating improving



Guide

Grab a brew



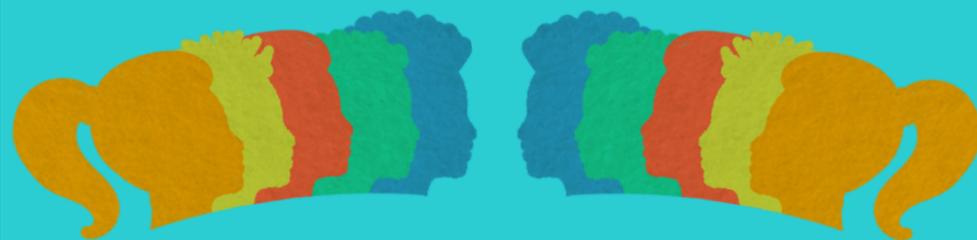
Once you have your brew, ask someone to be the timer

Reflect



Each person has time to think about the questions for ONE minute

Have your say



Each take it in turns to say your response (TWO mins each)



Use the rest of the time to reflect on what's been said (no fixing)

Still got some time?



Talk about:
What's not been said?
What are your lasting thoughts?

INFUSED WITH THE CAMERADOS PRINCIPLES

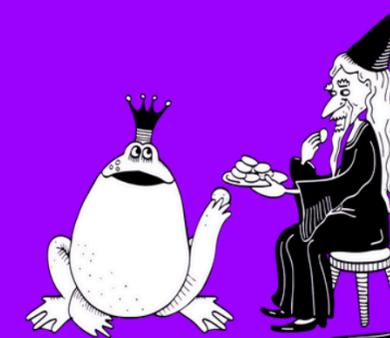
MIX WITH PEOPLE WHO
ARE NOT LIKE YOU



ASK SOMEONE WHO IS
STRUGGLING TO HELP YOU



NO FIXING - JUST BE
ALONGSIDE ONE ANOTHER



IT'S OK TO DISAGREE
RESPECTFULLY



IT'S OKAY TO BE A BIT
RUBBISH SOMETIMES



TO BE SILLY IS TO
BE HUMAN



INTRODUCTION

This Over A Brew focussed on the importance of connecting with communities in the context of coproduction. Why is this so important and exploring how we can better connect with people and communities.

The over-arching messages are about being more human with one another, meeting people where they are, and deeply listening. How we then share and apply what is learned is also key.

We also introduced the concept of Key Brew Indicators, inviting people to test them out and bring back the learning to the March OAB.

Around 35 people attended the session to share ideas, insights and views... Over a Brew



CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Community is always on my mind!

Relationships, connections, and creating synergy and opportunities for people particularly being mindful not to overlook traditionally 'marginalised' citizens.

Conversations, being together, getting out and about.

Makes me think about the differences in lifestyles of my two autistic sons, one of whom doesn't use words, so he communicates differently to his brother with local people.

Reaching people where they are not expecting them to come to us, not as easy in practice as I would like it to be!

Everyone coming together and supporting one another regardless of background or challenge

As people joined the session we asked them to tell us what connecting with communities means to them

Working together with community, making sure their voice is heard and reflects in commissioned services.

It's about doing everything in a community-led way.

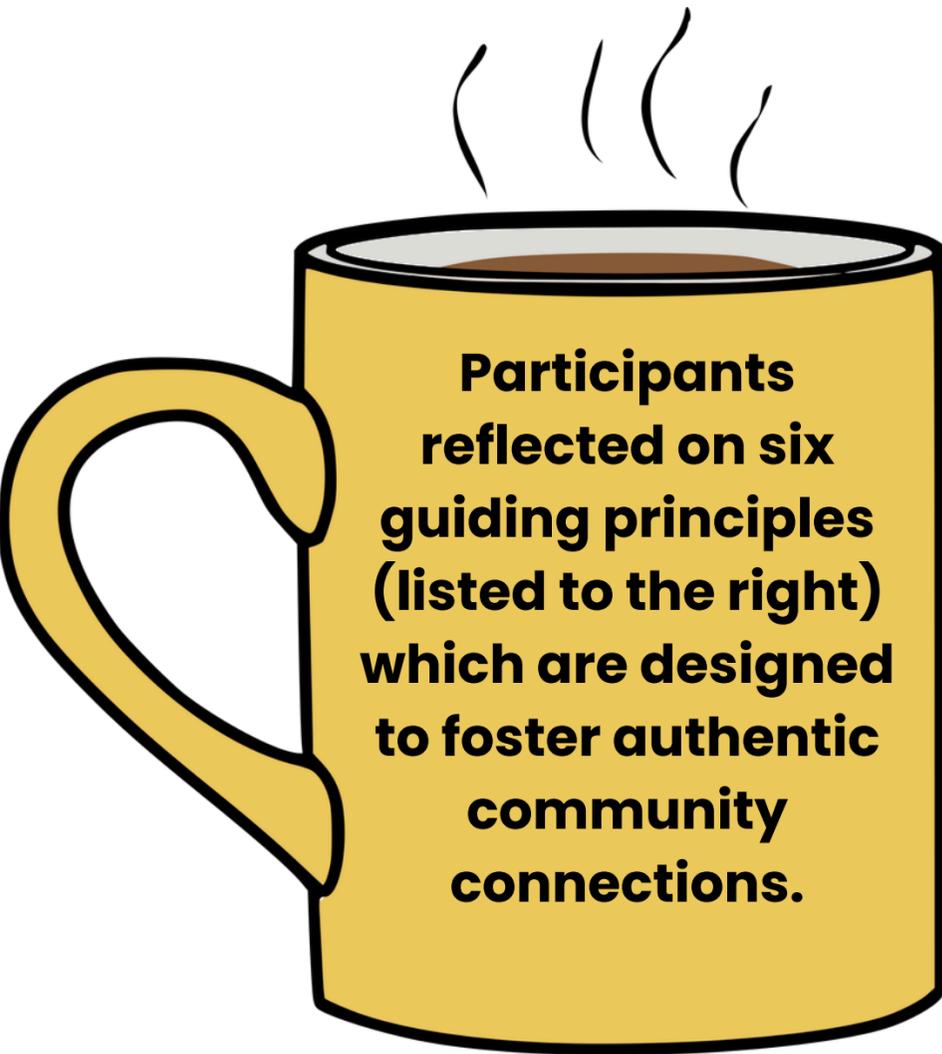
Listening to and working with our communities.

Community matters for my daughter - just being out and about with everyone else and being welcomed and people being happy to see her.

Connecting with the people that we provide services for and understanding how the wider community services can assist in our work and build new connections and value everyone.



REFLECTING ON COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES



1 - If we see someone struggling...we ask them to help us.

- This principle emphasizes the value of recognizing everyone's unique contributions.
- "Everybody has something to offer," highlighting the importance of building trust by seeking assistance from others.

2 - No fixing each other's lives...we are just alongside each other.

- This underscores the significance of companionship over intervention.
- "Be alongside, no fixing," suggesting that support involves presence rather than problem-solving.

3 - It's ok to be a bit rubbish...we share our failures without worrying.

- Embracing imperfections fosters a culture where vulnerability is accepted.
- "We are all rubbish sometimes, and that's OK," promoting an environment where individuals can openly discuss their shortcomings.

REFLECTING ON COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

4- We mix with people...who don't look and think like us.

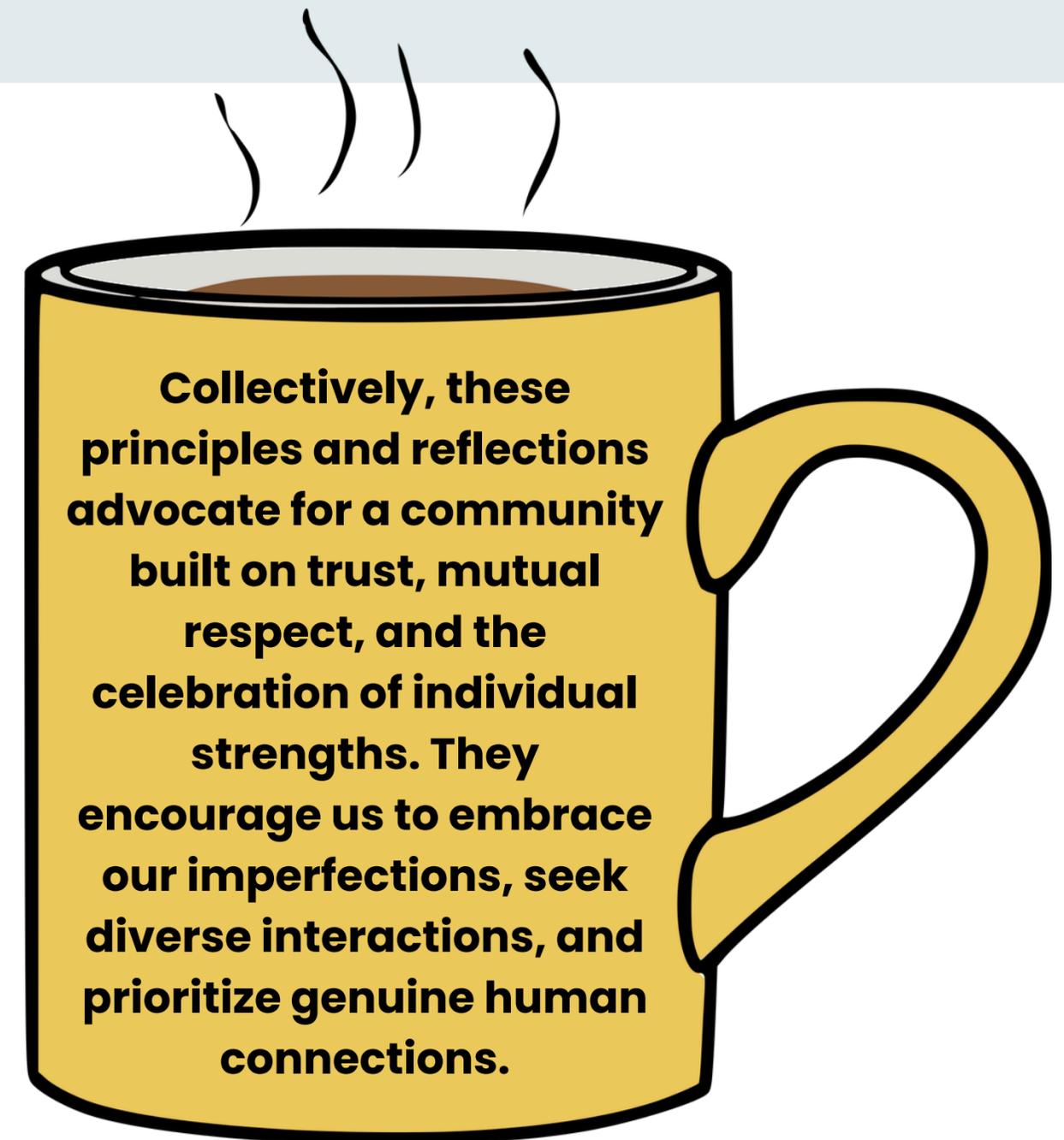
- Diversity enriches community experiences.
- "Mix with people who are not like you—everyone is different," encouraging engagement beyond familiar circles to broaden perspectives.

5 - Remember to have fun...it keeps things human.

- Joy and lightheartedness are vital for genuine human connections
- "Be silly—it's human," reminding us that shared laughter strengthens bonds.

6 - When we disagree...level with each other respectfully.

- Respectful dialogue during disagreements maintains unity.
- "Is anybody like me? Fear of offending. Who speaks first?" highlighting the need for open and considerate communication.



Listening to stories



Workshop participants listened to two people who work directly with people and communities describe their thoughts and experiences on connecting with communities. These stories were contrasting, and sparked some interesting learning....



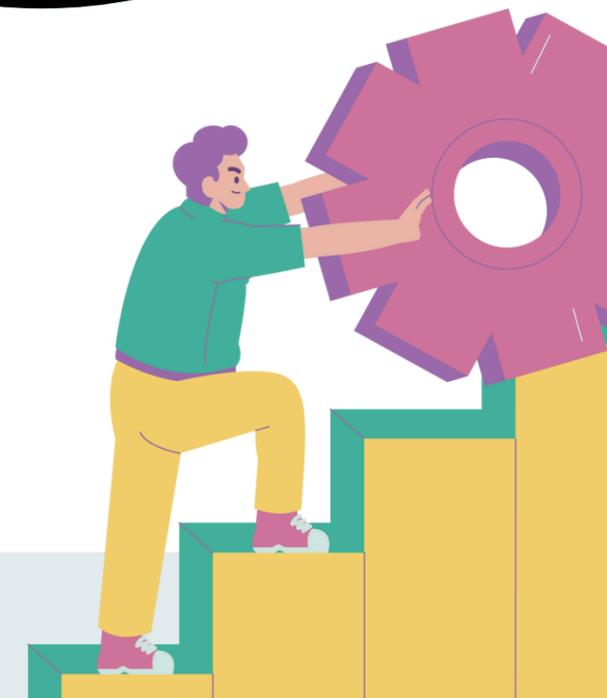
As they listened, we asked people:

- **What do you feel or experience?**
- **What do you relate to?**
- **Any learning for social workers?**

CHALLENGES PEOPLE RELATED TO IN THE VIDEO

- **Overemphasis on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):**
 - Focusing on KPIs that lack meaningful impact can create a "revolving door" effect, where services become difficult or confusing to access, and individuals feel pressured to conform to rigid expectations.
- **Rigid Service Structures:**
 - Expecting individuals to "fit in the right shape" overlooks the diverse needs of the community, leading to exclusion of those who don't conform to predefined criteria.
- **Ineffective Engagement Strategies:**
 - Attributing lack of participation to individuals not wanting to engage shifts responsibility away from service providers. Instead, it's crucial to "go to them [and] build trust" to facilitate meaningful connections.
- **Perception of Being 'Hard to Reach':**
 - Labeling communities as "hard to reach" ignores systemic barriers and implies fault on their part. In reality, many individuals are "not at the table because they don't feel they will be heard."
- **Excessive Bureaucracy:**
 - Cumbersome paperwork and administrative processes can deter individuals from seeking assistance, acting as significant blockers to accessing services.

Addressing these challenges involves prioritizing authentic engagement over rigid metrics, meeting communities where they are, actively listening, and co-creating solutions that resonate with their unique experiences and needs.



THE LEARNINGS FROM THE VIDEO ON SOCIAL WORK

Effective social work is built on relationships, trust, and a willingness to challenge established ways of working. Key lessons include:

- **Shift the mindset:** “ - Drop the us vs. them mentality.” Social work should be about collaboration, not division.
- **Listen deeply and trust what you hear.** - Listen. Believe people and trust what they are telling you.” People disengage when they feel unheard or unsupported.
- **Question and evolve** - Always be changing and growing (don’t set and forget).” Be open to learning from others and adapting to new ways of working.
- **Flexibility matters** - “Support people to engage in ways that work for them.” Systems should fit people, not the other way around.
- **Relationships are at the core** - “The job IS the relationship.” Building trust and understanding is as important as any formal process.
- **Recognize lived experience as expertise** - “Whose the expert?” Those who receive support have valuable insights that must shape services.
- **Stay curious and aware of gaps in knowledge** - “Become aware of our own ignorance—other people can fill these gaps.” Social workers must continually seek opportunities to hear what people want to share.



IDEAS ON HOW TO CONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

*LAs need to invest in
community
groups/orgs - they're at
risk now!*

*I don't think LAs can do
prevention/wellbeing
without help from
communities, vol orgs and
charities*

*More chatty tables in cafes
etc - need someone to sit
there intentionally perhaps
until it's known locally*

**What can we do to
better connect
people in the
community?**

*People have to be there, in
communities, to be part of
them. Support workers
must enable this.*

KEY REFLECTIONS ON CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Raising awareness is essential

**“Spreading awareness about disabilities is important.”
Understanding different experiences helps build a more inclusive society.**

Consistency and presence build trust

“Keep up connection and being a familiar face.” People feel more comfortable when they recognize and trust those engaging with them.

Navigating new spaces can be challenging

“Going out to different communities can feel strange, and it’s difficult to know what to say/where boundaries are.” Sensitivity and awareness are needed when engaging with unfamiliar groups.

Flexibility and creativity are needed within financial limits

“With the financial restrictions, you just have to be more creative with what you have available.” Despite constraints, small adaptations—such as solving everyday issues like transport—can have a big impact.



KEY REFLECTIONS ON CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Break down divisions

“Relax the boundaries – them and us mentality is not helpful.” True engagement happens when barriers between groups are removed.

Shared interests foster connection

“Commonalities and interests bring people together.” Finding common ground helps build relationships and understanding.

Accessibility challenges can create disconnection

“Accessibility makes us not be able to connect sometimes.” Ensuring inclusive spaces and communication is essential for meaningful engagement.

Be intentional about who you reach

“Who are the people we are trying to meet and what’s possible?” Thoughtful planning ensures engagement efforts reach the right people in the right way.



KEY REFLECTIONS ON CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Focus on quality over quantity

“Services (the offer) is massive – need to ensure quality over quantity and more targeting.” A well-targeted approach ensures meaningful impact rather than just broad coverage.



Value matters more than cost

Not always good to go with a cheaper price.” Cutting costs can compromise effectiveness—investment in quality services is crucial.

Showcase success to drive change

“Lack of evidence of amazing examples of what's happening – shout from the rooftop because it helps to extend/change services for the better (evidence, evidence, and evidence).” Sharing strong evidence of impact can influence future service development and investment.



KEY REFLECTIONS ON CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Cultural barriers and corporate constraints can be frustrating

“Sometimes people in the room (corporate) are not on the same page, and it can be restrictive, especially when it feels as though your voice in the room is a lone voice.” Navigating rigid systems and performance targets (KPIs) can make change difficult.

Listening on an individual level makes a difference

“When you go out to people on an individual level, people feel heard and as though they have a valid voice.” Taking the time to build trust ensures people feel less afraid and more willing to engage.

Bringing people with lived experience together is powerful

“Bringing lived experience together is great, it makes people feel engaged and invested in delivering change.” Involving people meaningfully leads to a sense of value, equality, and appreciation.

KEY REFLECTIONS ON CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Encourage participation and connection

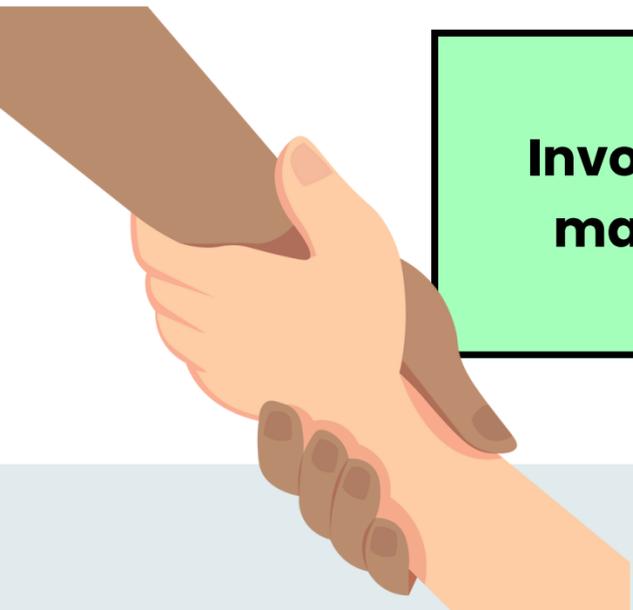
“Encourage people to take part in communities.” Creating opportunities for people to engage outside their usual groups fosters inclusivity.

Sustained engagement and accountability matter

“They are meeting the same people in 6 months to see what progress has been made and how things have changed—feedback and being clear about expectations is important.” Long-term commitment ensures voices are not just heard but also acted upon.

Involvement in decision-making is empowering

“People with lived experience were on the panels, helped create questions... they felt valued, enjoyed the process, felt equal and appreciated.” Involving people directly in recruitment, particularly for senior roles, was seen as uplifting and positive.



KEY REFLECTIONS ON CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

Accessibility is crucial

“Make sure interpreters are available, advocacy etc.—it makes a huge difference.”
Ensuring support for communication and advocacy removes barriers and enables full participation.

Real-life context makes an impact

“When someone comes to a house and sees real pictures—it brings things to life.” Seeing real experiences makes engagement more meaningful and relatable.

Passion and determination matter

“Have your heart in it, be determined.” Genuine commitment is key to making a difference.



FEEDBACK ON THE SESSION

Thank you for such an interesting session!



Thank you so much for such an interesting session, it was great to hear people's experiences and ideas.



This has been wonderful



I love the use of brave space instead of safe space!

Great session



Fantastic session as always - thank you so much all



Thank you, its been a great session again





**Thank
You!**



**Please join us for the next session on 26th
March 2025... to talk about
Communities and Self Reflection**