

# Over A Brew Session

29 October 2025

DIVERSE BY DESIGN

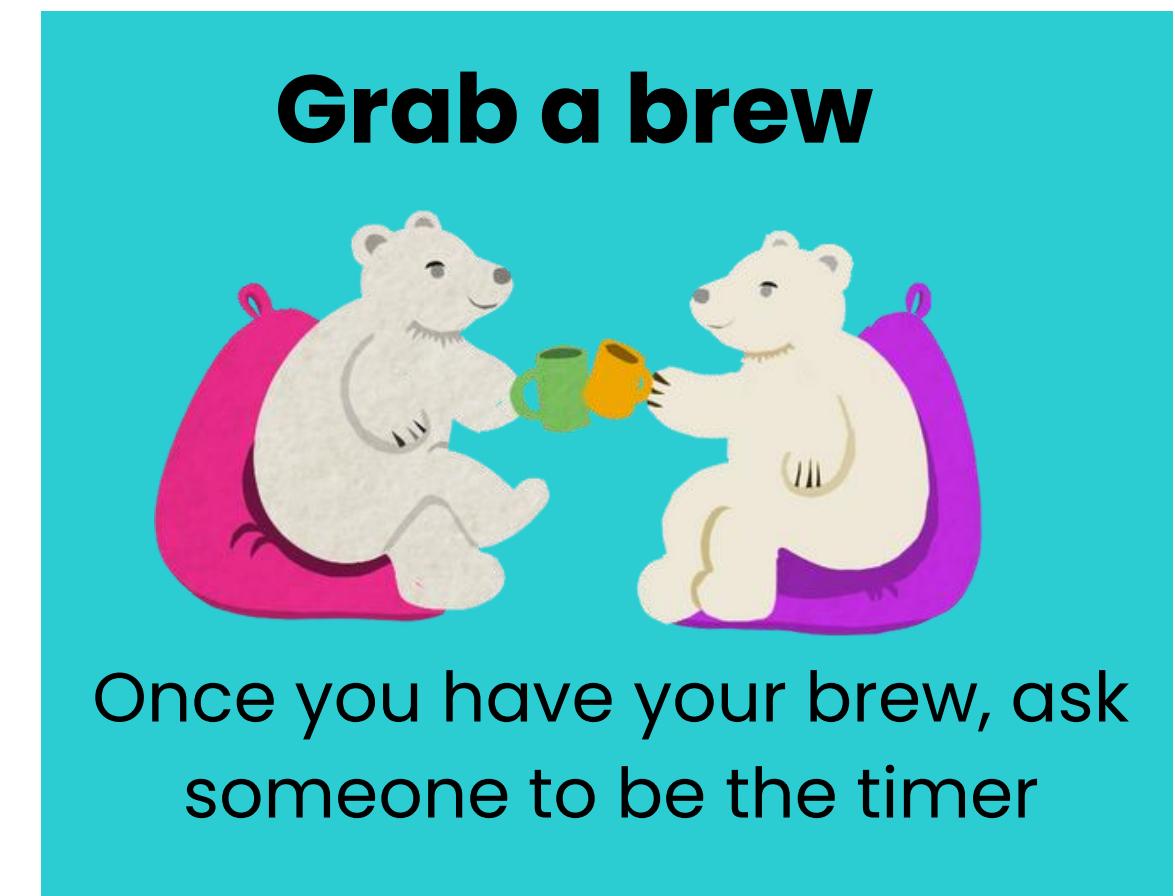
**CURATORS**  
OF CHANGE

directors of  
**adass**  
adult social services  
eastern region  
connecting innovating improving





## Guide



# 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

The conversation this time focused on what it really means to make care **human, person-centred, and inclusive**. Participants responded to powerful stories that highlighted the emotional weight carried by families: sadness, frustration, exhaustion, and isolation, but also resilience, empathy, and admiration for carers' strength. These lived experiences connected directly to wider system challenges – inflexible assessments, postcode lotteries, and services that too often feel mechanical rather than relational.

Breakout discussions reinforced recurring themes: **the need for advocacy, listening, and transparency; recognition of cultural and communication barriers; and the importance of intersectionality** in service design. Technology was seen as a useful enabler, but never a replacement for human connection. Above all, participants called for care that values people as individuals, supports whole families, and gives professionals the freedom to hold real conversations rather than tick boxes.

The session underlined a shared aspiration: **a future where social care listens, empathises, and acts with dignity, inclusivity, and fairness**. It was a reminder that change begins with human connection – and that carers, families, and practitioners alike want systems built around people, not processes.

**Around 38 people attended the session to share ideas, insights and views... Over a Brew**



# WHO ATTENDED THE SESSION

The group brought together a wide mix of voices from across adult social care and beyond. There were **frontline professionals** such as occupational therapists, practice leads, social workers, and vision rehabilitation specialists, alongside **service managers** and **commissioning leads** shaping strategy and delivery. Several councils were represented – Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Essex, Thurrock, Suffolk, Bedford Borough, Peterborough, Southend, showing a broad spread across the East of England and neighbouring areas.

We also had people working at a **national level through ADASS**, as well as those focused on workforce development and integration. Importantly, **lived experience** was present too: a parent carer from Warwickshire shared their perspective, reminding everyone of the human impact behind the systems. There was also input from the founder of Gobby, bringing in innovative approaches to qualitative feedback.

Together, the group reflected a **rich blend of roles** – from policy and commissioning to frontline practice and lived experience – all united by a commitment to improving adult social care, making it more person-centred, inclusive, and responsive.

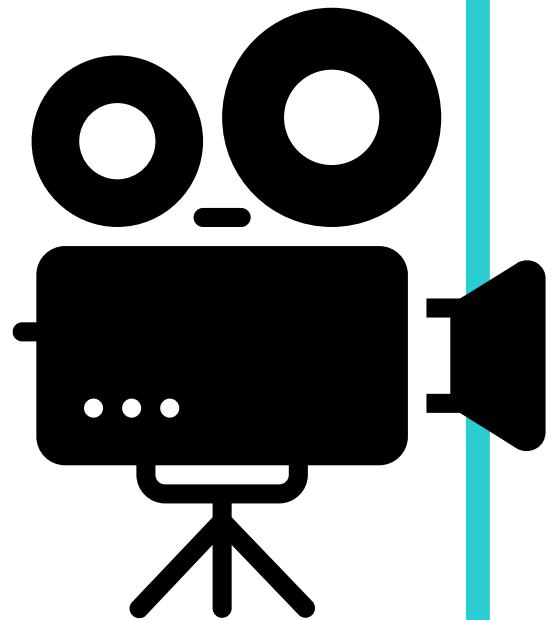


# STORY ACTIVITY



**We showed participants in the workshop a video and asked them to think about:**

- **How it made them feel**
- **What they connected with**
- **What they learned**



<https://vimeo.com/1137587869>

**In this video two carers from global majority communities share their experiences of care and support for their loved ones, and the challenges around language, sensory impairment, dementia, cultural needs, caring responsibilities and technology; how they all intersect, and the impact of this on those accessing care and support.**

**The following pages show a summary of what we heard from the people in the session...**

# STORY ACTIVITY – WHAT PEOPLE FELT

- People feel **sadness, grief, frustration, anger, helplessness, and exhaustion** when faced with the realities of care.
- Families experience **pressure, isolation, guilt, and anxiety**, often feeling unsupported and overwhelmed.
- Alongside the difficult emotions, there is also **empathy, admiration, and respect** for the resilience of carers and family members.

**Anxious – where do I start in terms of being able to support the family well.**

**Guilt from family members needing to request support services as family unable to manage directly**

**Support needs to be person centred**

**Pressure felt on families**

**Sad & frustrated for the family & system**

**Feelings of isolation**

**Empathy for their situation**

**Anger!! This is so preventable, it's like we have learnt nothing!!**

**Undignified and not person centered**



# STORY ACTIVITY – WHAT PEOPLE CONNECTED TO

- Many relate personally as **unpaid carers**, recognising the **immense pressures** and the “sandwich generation” reality of juggling multiple responsibilities.
- People connect with the **chaos, inequity, and complexity** of navigating care systems.
- There is strong recognition of the **lack of dignity, inflexibility, and inaccessibility** in current services.
- Carers identify with the **emotional toll** of balancing their own needs while supporting others, and the **risk of burnout**.
- The importance of **person-centred approaches, advocacy, and cultural sensitivity** resonates strongly.

*The reality of immediate care needs in a system which isn't as agile as a person's needs*

*Need for practitioners and professionals to understand what is important to someone's culture and what is not accepted or approved of in the culture.*

*Difficulties in navigating complex care systems increases pressure on family carers that feels inequitable and avoidable*

*Dealing with your own emotions amongst what is coming up for those you are caring for / also supporting*

*The importance of really getting to know people*

*The lack of dignity because care is inflexible.*

“

**Accessibility support not great**

**The isolation they must feel**

**Unpaid carers are the backbone of our system**

**Underestimate the impact on families and relationships**

# STORY ACTIVITY – THE LEARNING AND INSIGHTS

- **Listening and empathy** are missing in many services; care often feels mechanical and process-driven rather than human.
- **Person-centred, flexible, and family-focused approaches** are essential – one size does not fit all.
- **Communication and language barriers** (including sensory loss, non-English speakers, and lack of interpreting support) create additional layers of exclusion.
- **Intersectionality and cultural competence** must be embedded to ensure inclusivity.

*Support doesn't feel it has the person at the core, instead the system tries to fit each part of the puzzle together yet leaves gaps due to system restrictions*

*The importance of a whole family approach*

*Need to listen to what people are experiencing*

*You can put lots of care in but sometimes, it is just not flexible or person centred enough.*

*Understanding the offer of services and how this is acceptable to different cultures*

*How additionally disabling it is for someone trying to provide care when language and communication difficulties exist*

*Cultural-specific communications to the diverse cultures*

# STORY ACTIVITY – THE LEARNING AND INSIGHTS

- **Technology** can help (translation tools, accessible communication, digital solutions), **but it must be supplementary, not a replacement for human connection.**
- The assessment process is seen as overly rigid, repetitive, and disempowering – it needs to become a **supportive conversation** rather than a tick-box exercise.
- There is a need for **joined-up systems, timely responses, and proactive support** to reduce the “revolving door” effect and postcode lottery.
- **Mental health support, anticipatory grief, and planning for older age** are important but often overlooked.

*There is technology now that can translate in real time... how can this be applied to care call type technology?*

*How helpful is our assessment process in cases like this?*

*How do we create inclusive care, so that the barriers already experienced are not amplified even more*

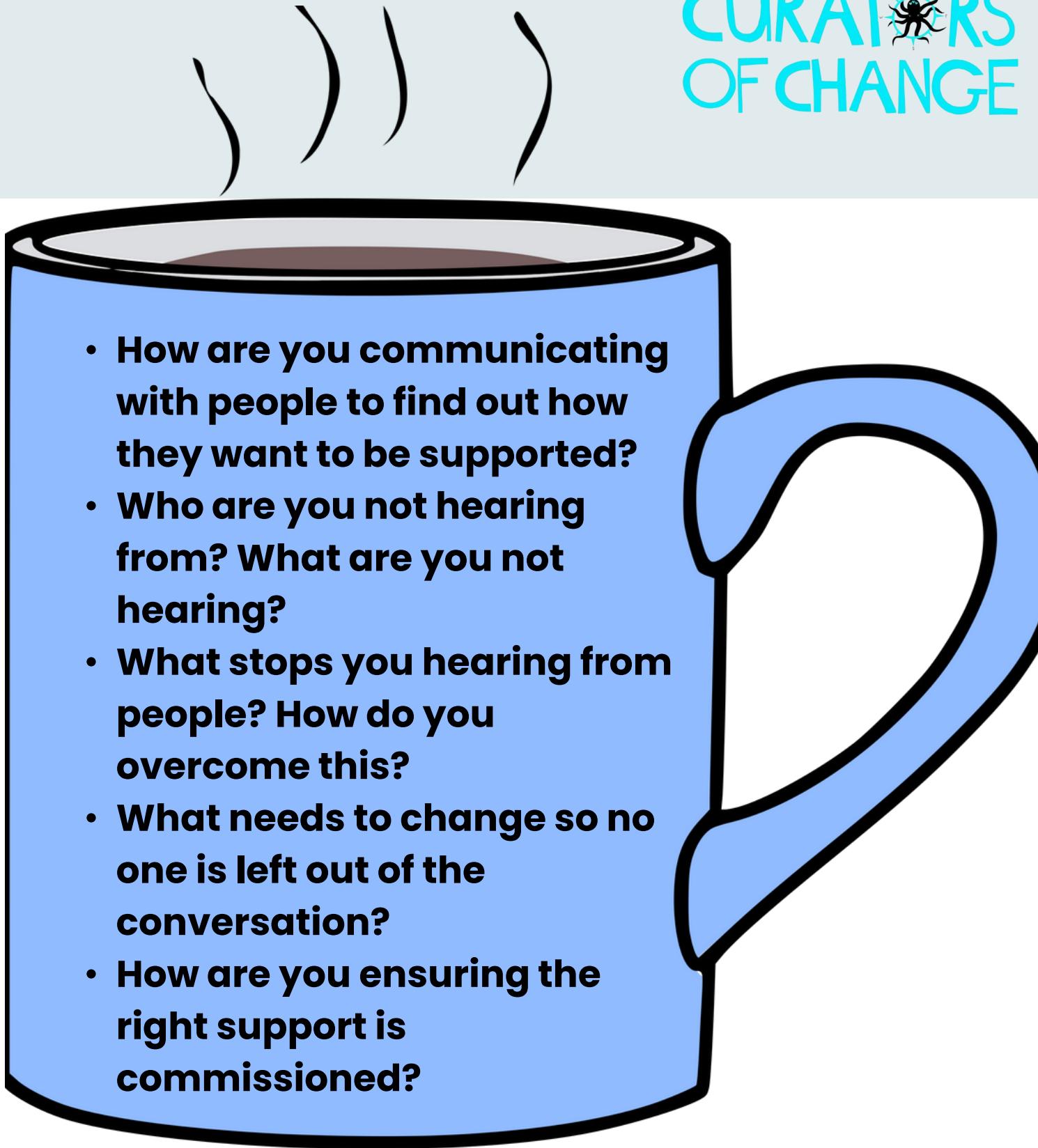
*Social care workers must fully review files to be able to fully support – people do not want to repeat their needs time & again to each support worker*

*Systems & people do not talk to each other in timely ways*

*Tech that would enable her to write to communicate*

*Mental health support for families and carers*

# BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY



The following pages are a summary of what we heard...

# BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY – WHAT WE HEARD FROM PEOPLE

## Families under pressure

**Caring responsibilities bring sadness, frustration, exhaustion, and isolation. Carers often feel overwhelmed and worn down**

- *“Spoke about pressures on families – importance of supporting unpaid carers. Paramount to see the struggles – you can't understand how much support is needed unless you have been through it. The grief for your own losses as a carer and for your family members...”*



## Carers' resilience and empathy

**Despite the strain, carers show strength, devotion, and compassion, but they need recognition and support in their own right.**

- *“Service gaps lead to putting reliance and even more pressure on to family”*
- *“Community support is not diverse enough – gaps in voluntary and community support”*

## System challenges

**Services are inconsistent, slow, and shaped by rigid, tick-box assessments. Support can feel mechanical, fragmented, and unfair, with a postcode lottery across regions.**

- *“The system has never been able to sort itself out in terms of assessment process”*
- *“It shouldn't be process driven”*
- *“It should feel like a supportive conversation, with the person as the expert, not just number crunching.”*

# BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY – WHAT WE HEARD FROM PEOPLE

## Listening and relationships

**People want to be heard properly, not just processed. Human conversations, trust, and empathy are at the heart of good care.**

- “Rehumanising the whole assessment – please – no just tick boxes. Come back to the human, listening to and supporting the human.”
- “We need to have a more human approach – across the board...”



## Person-centred approaches

**Support should be timely, flexible, and directed by the person, with a whole-family view that values strengths as well as needs.**

- “Not seeing individuals – how are we working with the whole family, and the wider communities – not just allocating a worker to an individual. Moving away from being 'service led' (or service centred!)”
- “If the first principle was a person centred approach we wouldn't be offering services that don't fit, not a list of services – more self determination.”

## Advocacy and transparency

**Carers and families need advocates to help navigate systems, and services should be honest about what can and cannot be delivered.**

- “The importance of having an advocate to help through advocacy services”
- “Advocacy services are not advocated by local councils very well”
- “The onus is on the service user to keep pushing for support – some service users are already exhausted so they need an advocate who will take that responsibility from them”

# BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY – WHAT WE HEARD FROM PEOPLE

## Cultural awareness and communication

**Language barriers, sensory loss, and lack of interpreting support exclude people. Services must be inclusive and culturally competent.**

- “Integrate inclusion and diversity”
- “Nationally there are issues on cultural and diversity awareness”
- “Example given that a person was expecting one call a day, but they couldn't communicate in English to the carer... we should be asking if this is the right support?”

## Technology as a complement

**Digital tools and AI can help with communication and innovation, but they must not replace human contact.**

- “Biggest concern is wanting more human contact, beyond AI... Balance of tech and humans.”
- “Are we too risk averse when it comes to embracing new tech that can help”
- “Sheffield doing great work - see here in relation to Direct Payments - simple tools being used to have great conversations - <https://adasseast.org.uk/download/3741/?tmstv=1758271289>

## Joined-up support

**Health, social care, and community services should work together so people don't have to repeat their stories and can get the right help at the right time.**

- “Importance of merging assessments and reducing pressure on professionals”
- “Cultural shift needed in attitudes of local authorities and health services – not just numbers on a list”



# FINAL THOUGHTS

Social care should work in a way that puts **people and families at the centre**. It should be flexible, timely, and built around what matters most to the individual, not just what fits the system. Support should **recognise strengths** as well as needs, and **connect people to their communities** so they don't feel isolated or overwhelmed.

It is clear from this and the many other Over A Brew Conversations that the role of the social worker and other social care practitioners is to **listen, build trust, and help people** navigate complex systems. They should act as advocates, making sure **voices are heard and rights respected**. Rather than focusing only on assessments and paperwork, social workers should have the freedom to hold real conversations, understand the whole family's situation, and co-create solutions. Their job is not to "fix" people, but to **work alongside them**—sharing power, offering guidance, and ensuring care is delivered with dignity, empathy, and respect.



# FEEDBACK AND TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SESSION

**Thank you for today,  
some really good  
discussions.**



**Lovely to meet those in our  
breakout room. Thank you for  
arranging this session 😊**



**Thank you. Hopefully see  
you all soon 🌟 lovely to  
hear from everyone  
today.**



**Thank you for sharing experiences. Great  
opportunity to attend and learn. All the best.**

**Great discussion  
in our breakout  
room.**



**Thank you for sharing  
experiences. Great  
opportunity to attend and  
learn. All the best.**

**It's been great, open and  
honest. I've felt happy that  
there are people around  
pushing change for things  
being done at a basic  
human level**



# FEEDBACK AND TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SESSION

***Thank you so much everyone – great to share this time together – it is making a difference!***



***Thank you I will be leaving...this is my first time...I have really enjoyed the safe space to learn...thank you all.***



***Thank you for the space to share. Take away for me is remembering person-centred work in a human 1:1 way – I am currently mentoring so I will put emphasis on this in discussions.***



***Thank you all great session***

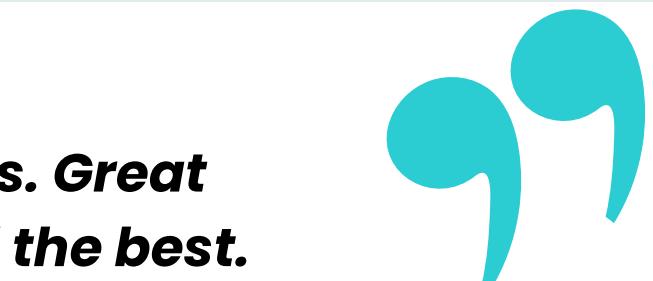


***Thank you all for the collaboration***

***Thank you for an insightful session!***



***Thank you for sharing experiences. Great opportunity to attend and learn. All the best.***



***Thank you, great space for reflection***

***Very proactive session today jo and cat great hosting***



# Thank You!



**Please join us for the next session  
on Wednesday 26th November 2025**

**[https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cu  
rators-of-change/t-moxmqke](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cu_rators-of-change/t-moxmqke)**