Over A Brew Session

26 November 2025

ARE WE THERE YET?

OVER A BREW

CURATORS OF CHANGE

directors of adass
adult social services
eastern region
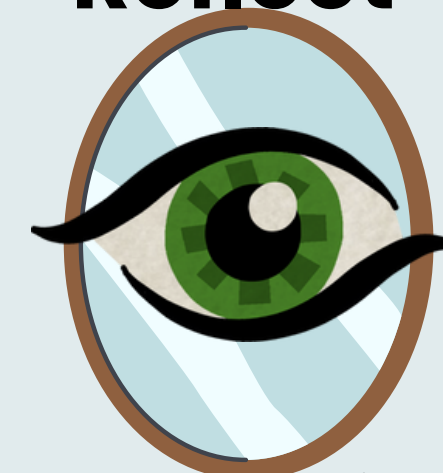connecting innovating improving
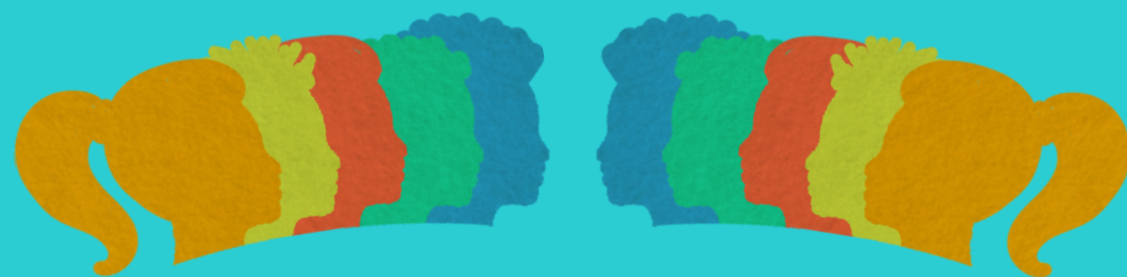
OVER A BREW

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?
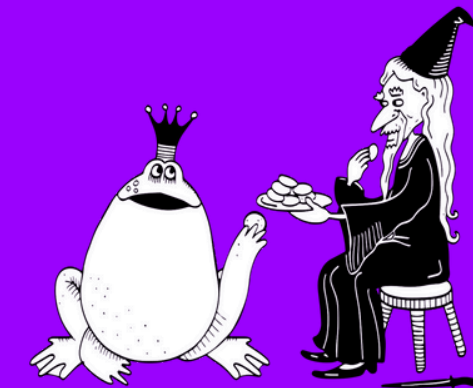
INFUSED WITH THE CAMERADOS PRINCIPLES

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

Less red tape, more real relationships: making change that people can feel."

In this, Over a Brew session the conversation highlighted the importance of **human connection:** people feel valued when support is personal, respectful, and based on **genuine relationships** rather than rigid processes.

Participants spoke about the need to **cut unnecessary bureaucracy**, improve accessibility in both digital and everyday systems, and **create safe space**s for authentic co-production.

Feedback must be easy to give and acted upon, with **clear accountability** so people can see what has changed. There was strong emphasis on finding ways to **record and measure ongoing conversations** and learning, possibly through "Key Brew Indicators", so that the impact of dialogue and trust is not lost. And how in the short term this may feel harder as we might hear more negative than postive things. People being comfortable to talk and practitioners **geuninely listenting is key.**

Overall, the session reinforced that lasting change comes from **trust, transparency, and collaboration**. By reducing red tape, listening deeply, and sharing responsibility, services can move beyond box-ticking to build relationships that make real difference possible.

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WHO ATTENDED THE SESSION

Participants at this Over a Brew session, represented a wide and **diverse range of roles, organisations, and lived experiences** from across the region.

Attendees included engagement, commissioning, development, and participation leads from numerous local authorities such as **Milton Keynes, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Bedford Borough, Norfolk, Peterborough, Luton, Lincolnshire, Central Bedfordshire, and Thurrock.** The group brought together social workers, team managers, workforce leads, telecare assessors, community and service development staff, and co-production coordinators, alongside representatives from Mobilise, ADASS East, Healthwatch Luton, Thinklusive, and Gobby.

Equally important were the voices of **carers and people with lived experience** from areas including **North Walsham, Norwich, and Central Bedfordshire,** whose personal insights—spanning caring for disabled children, parents with recent amputations, and adults with autism and mental health needs.

IF PEOPLE WERE HAPPY ABOUT SUPPORT...

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We asked people **WHO RECEIVE CARE AND SUPPORT** to think about what they would like to be able to say about the support they receive and the people who support them.

People want to feel **truly listened to and understood** when they receive support. They want their feedback to be **taken seriously** and used to make real improvements.

Many said they want support that makes a positive difference and comes from people who genuinely want to help, not from a system that feels like a battle. Being **treated with dignity and invited to share views** is important. People do not want to be forced to fit the system; they want services that **adapt to their individual needs**.

Regular follow-ups matter so they know someone cares enough to check how things are going. People prefer **contact that feels human** rather than routine or mechanical, with support reviewed at times that work for them. Finally, they want **openness** about what has been learned and how it has improved practice.

To be able to give feedback that is used.

"This is working. We will review it when you wish"

I was treated with dignity

I felt valued

To feel that people wanted to help and make a difference

Have learning shared for improvements openly and how that has affected practice and learning

To feel like the contact I get is not purely part of a mechanism eg. part of a process/routine

People come back to me to check everything is ok

To not feel placed in a box- fitting the system- instead system fits you!
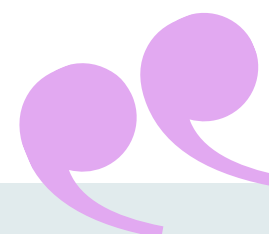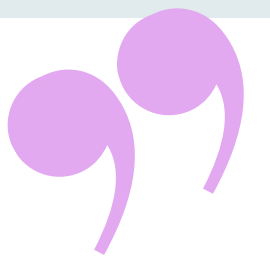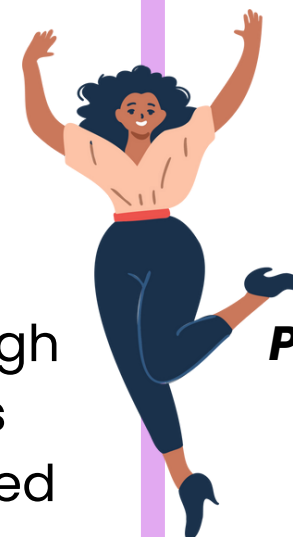
IF PEOPLE WERE HAPPY ABOUT SUPPORT...

We asked people **WHO PROVIDE CARE AND SUPPORT** to think about what they would like people to be able to say about the services they provide.

People want to be able to say that the support they provide **truly listens to people and treats them with respect, dignity, and kindness.** They hope people feel **valued, well-supported, and seen as whole individuals** with their own needs, preferences, and accessibility requirements.

They want services to be **safe, reliable, flexible, and person-centred,** helping people and their families feel happier, less lonely, and more independent. Providers want people to say the help was **quick, simple, and not stressful, with communication that suits them** and feels human rather than rushed or formal.

They want people to feel the support made a real difference and hope the experience is positive enough that people would return, recommend the service. Providers also value **honesty and transparency** about resources, aiming to improve the system so it adapts better and delivers meaningful change.

I was listened to

That the services were safe, person-centred, reliable

You treated me with respect

I will come back and recommend you

I didn't wait for help I needed for a long time

That the support was great

I was seen as a whole person not just my disability
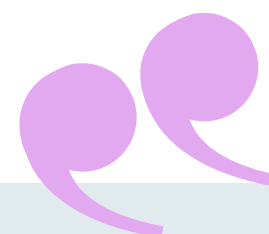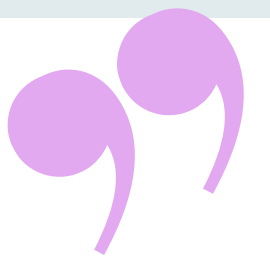
I am valued, respected and well supported

You were willing to be flexible to ensure I was supported in a way I wanted

People feel listened to and support reflects their individuality and what's important to them

That was solved quickly / simply

I am independent due to the support I receive.

STORY ACTIVITY

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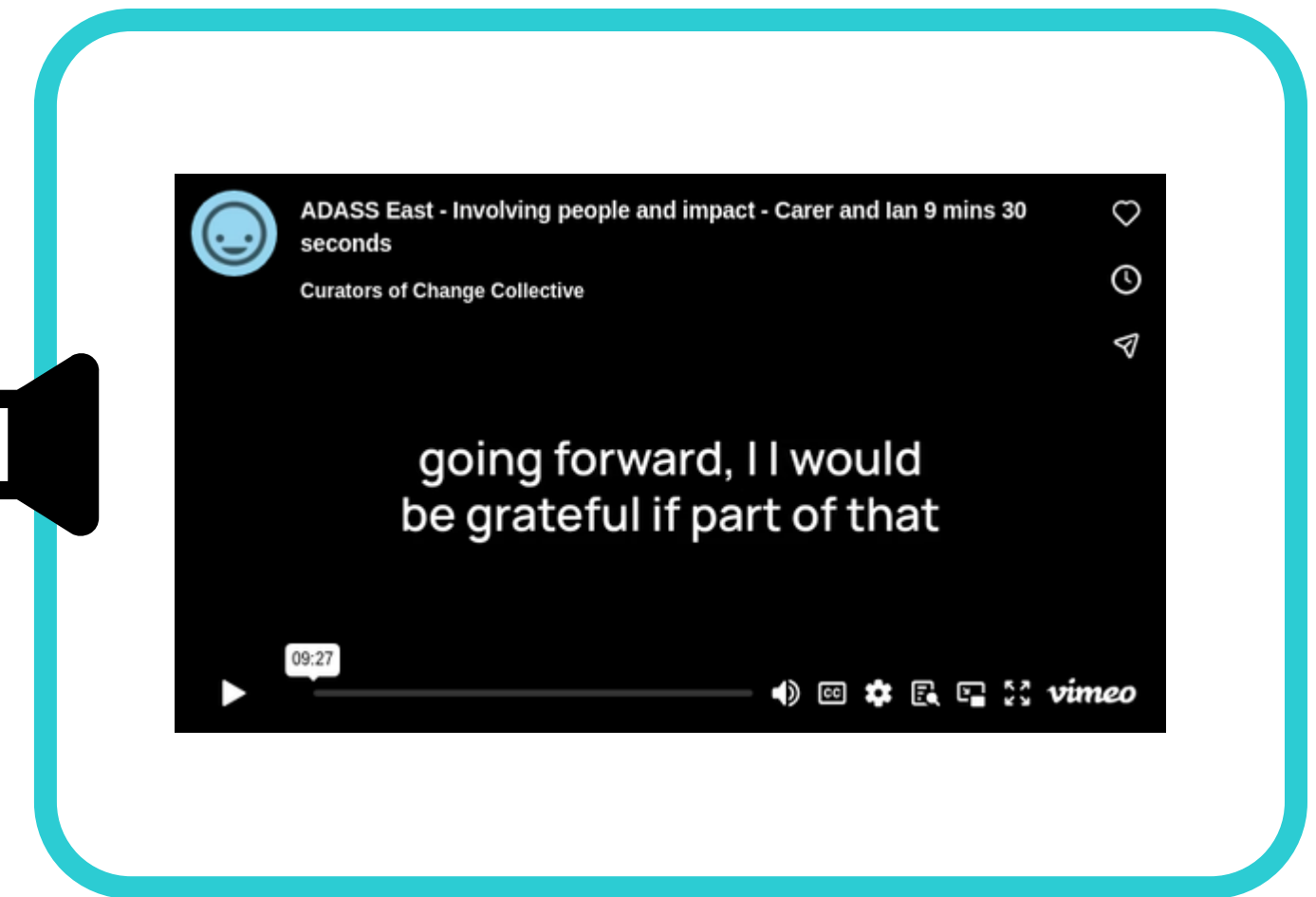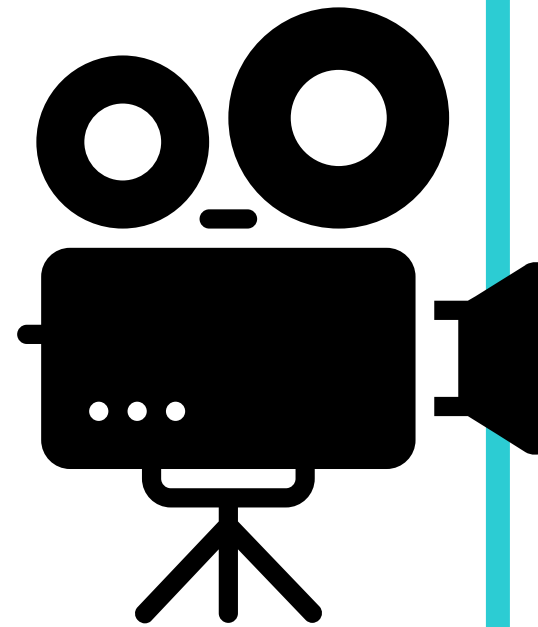We showed participants in the workshop a video and asked them to think about:

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

ADASS East - Involving people and impact - Carer and Ian 9 mins 30 seconds

Curators of Change Collective

going forward, I I would be grateful if part of that

09:27

vimeo

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

- ## WHAT PEOPLE FELT

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The video made people feel a mix of **sadness, frustration, and understanding.**

Many said they could feel the woman's anxiety and saw how her experience of being excluded is something many others face too.

People talked about how **the system often gets in the way** and how co-production is frequently mentioned but not done in a real or honest way. Some questioned how involvement can be genuine if people are not included in setting the agenda, and others pointed out that there is **little accountability** when things don't improve.

Several felt disappointed that ideas like being person-centred and strengths-based have been talked about for decades without much real change.

They said change needs to start with a **shift in culture that gives more power to practitioners and people with lived experience.**
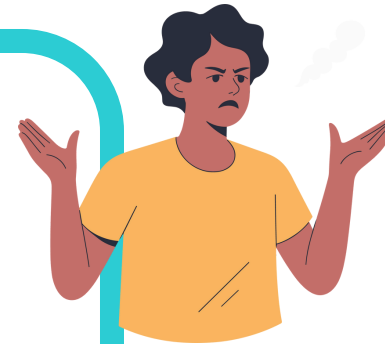
I can feel her anxiety

Frustration - she is so wise - yet so excluded

DOOM - it feels impossible to break away from the embedded way of measuring success

This is peoples jobs - they do not see they affect peoples lives

I feel that the LA's just want to pretend that they are doing coproduction, when in fact, they seem only to manage a talking shop that actually achieves nothing

Sad to hear the same things being said - about strengths based, person centred that have been said for more than 30 years now

- ## WHAT PEOPLE CONNECTED TO

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People connected strongly with the message that **nothing should change without involving those with real lived experience.**

Many felt that change is still too "top down," and that meetings often include too many professionals and not enough people who are directly affected. They highlighted the need for **true inclusivity, shared ownership of actions, and much more transparency.**

Several related to the frustration of **feeling unheard, undervalued,** and worried that speaking up could lead to negative consequences, especially for carers.

Others said progress is slow, with **too much focus on collecting information rather than acting on it.** People also connected to the call for moving towards more listening carefully to what individuals actually need.

There needs to be a shared ownership of next steps and actions

Change remains top down in many cases

Listen to people and what they need rather than trying to cram them into boxes

Things should happen quicker - in weeks or months - NOT years

EQUAL SPLIT of who is represented in the room - not top heavy with people with professional experience

Relate to this example as I feel that many carers are frightened of speaking out in case this is used against them in some way, for example they could lose their supported living for their child

It is always about the capturing of the information and nothing beyond that

STORY ACTIVITY
- ## LEARNINGS AND INSIGHTS

These reflections provided by people when listening to the stories, show that real change is a shared responsibility, built on **trust, clear actions, and good communication.**

People want **less talk and more follow-through,** with promises kept and support properly resourced. Progress feels slow, and many feel systems still expect people to fit into existing processes instead of being designed around individual needs.

To improve, we need **better communication channels, with modern methods, fewer processes, and clearer agendas** so everyone can prepare and be involved.

Creating **safe spaces for people to share experiences** is important, even if it feels hard at first. Strong relationships, everyday language, and community partnerships matter.

Stop trying to make people fit the existing systems and processes - design around the individuals

Less waffle, more action

ARE WE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?!?!

Being clear on actions and outcomes

Always put an agenda together so people can be prepared with their points and reflections

We need to create more space for people to openly share their experiences - it will feel harder to start with! But that is progress

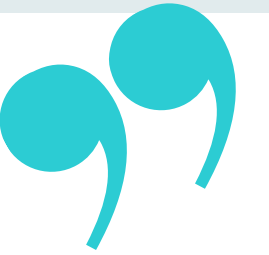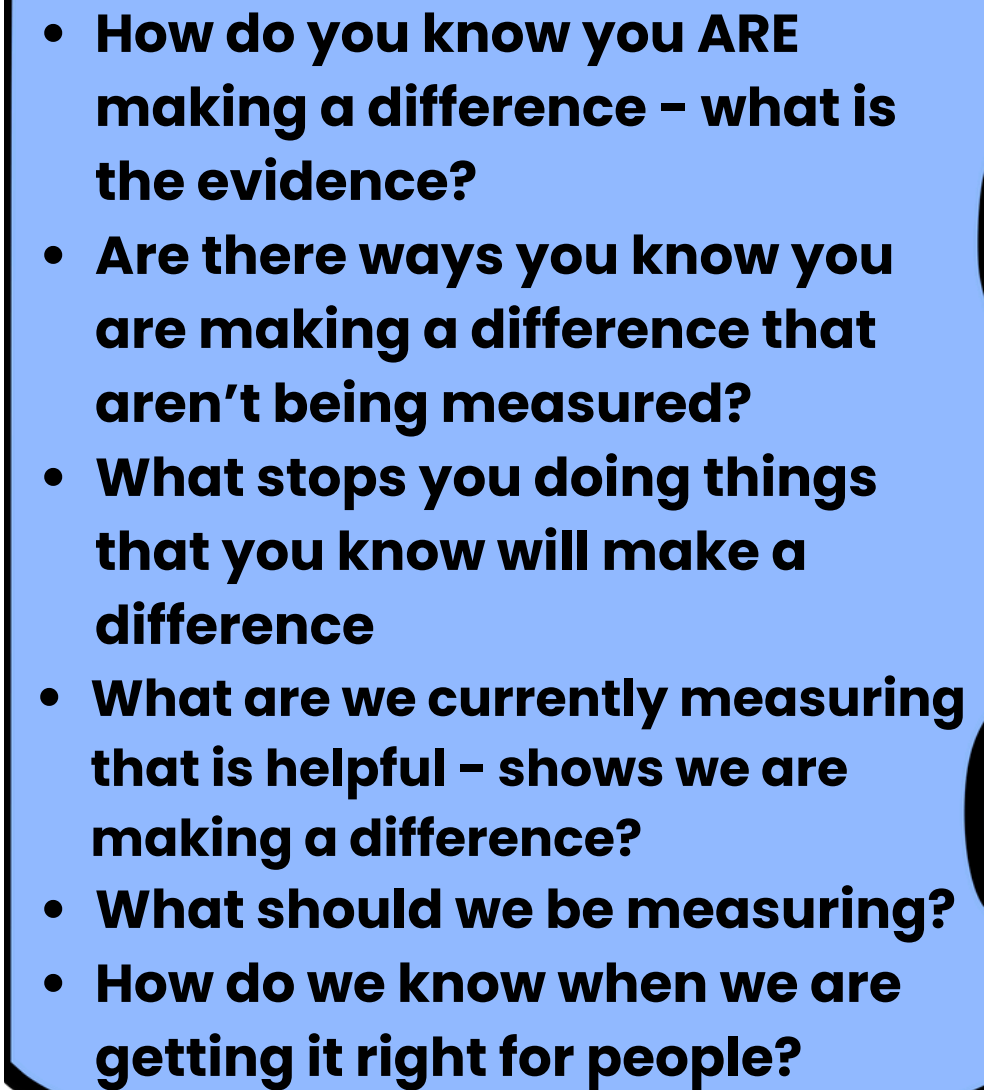*How are we making sure people are involved - and making sure we support and resource them to be involved?*

Less paperwork and processes

It is always about relationships

BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY

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We asked people to go into Breakout rooms to have discussions on the topic as a smaller group.
People used the following prompts to think about the topic.

- How do you know you ARE making a difference - what is the evidence?
- Are there ways you know you are making a difference that aren't being measured?
- What stops you doing things that you know will make a difference
- What are we currently measuring that is helpful - shows we are making a difference?
- What should we be measuring?
- How do we know when we are getting it right for people?

The following pages are ideas and insights from what we heard...

BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY
• IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FROM WHAT PEOPLE SAID

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1 - Strengthen personal, human relationships

- Give staff time and permission to focus on human connection, not just tasks.
- Encourage small personal touches (remembering events, following up).
- Recognise relationship-based practice as real work and celebrate it.
- Build "conversation first" into team culture and supervision.

2 - Reduce bureaucracy and simplify processes

- Review common processes (blue badges, renewals, night-time call changes) and redesign them to be quicker and simpler.
- Remove steps that do not add value to people's experiences.
- Involve people with lived experience in reviewing paperwork and procedures.
- Replace "tick-box" tasks with shorter, clearer checks where possible.

"We talked about the importance of relationships and allowing conversation to thrive"

"Spoke a lot around the art of conversation - that is where it needs to start"

"Making sure there is less bureaucracy – understand how it impacts people"

"Processes don't allow for simple renewals"

"We centred around relationships and red tape… there would be more time for interactions and human relationships"

"Frightening how hard it is to renew a blue badge because of bureaucracy"

"Less red tape, more time for relationship building"

- ## IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FROM WHAT PEOPLE SAID

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3 - Make accessibility standard, not optional

- Ensure websites, forms and digital tools meet accessibility standards (e.g., screen-reader friendly, remove blockers like hard-to-use cookie pop-ups and captchas).
- Offer alternatives to digital access by default.
- Test all tools with people who have access needs before launching changes.
- Include accessibility in staff training.

4 - Build genuine co-production and brave spaces to speak up

- Create ongoing groups co-chaired by leaders and people with lived experience
- Offer advocates for anyone who finds it hard to speak up.
- Use plain language, shared agendas and open conversations.
- Make sure people understand how their voice influences decisions.

"Truly accessible feedback forms / methods"

"Captcha things are preventing people accessing too."

"I do think accessibility in general remains an issue"

"Suggestion of Councils having a group chaired by senior leaders and people with lived experience..."

"Talked about ensuring people have a safe space to speak up - and if they can't make sure people have advocates. TRUE coproduction - open conversation."

"Example: changing the way that cookies are either accepted or rejected... led to person actually using the webpage for the first time"

"Be better at being more authentic in co-production"

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5 – Measure what matters, not just what's easy

- Focus on outcomes, experiences and personal goals—not just numbers.
- Add questions about people's experiences to areas that currently only track activity.
- Develop methods to record "invisible work" like conversations and relationship-building.

6 – Empower frontline staff

- Give staff freedom to tailor support to individual needs without waiting for multiple approvals.
- Provide clear guidance about what decisions front-line workers can make.
- Train and support staff in problem-solving and confident decision-making.
- Recognise and reward staff who take initiative to improve someone's experience.

"One of our performance leads pointed to the fact that a tickbox was being ticked... but the experience... wasn't good"

"Talked about outcomes not output - Show me what has changed."

"Small changes that lead to huge difference are important"

"Empower front line people to be able to respond and react to individual needs"

"This happens when we value what we can measure rather than value what matters"

"Less red tape... more time for relationship building"

BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY
- **IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FROM WHAT PEOPLE SAID**

7 – Capture and use learning for continuous improvement

- Create a simple way for staff to record insights, stories and learning from daily practice.
- Bring this learning into team meetings, training and policy updates.
- Make reflection part of the work—through supervision, learning sessions and team check-ins.

8 – Make feedback easy, varied and meaningful

- Offer multiple ways to give feedback: conversations, phone calls, text, short forms, drop-in sessions.
- Capture feedback naturally during interactions ("count the conversations").
- Reduce reliance on long feedback forms that people avoid.
- Act on feedback consistently and publicly share improvements.

"It should feed into practice, learning & development sessions"

"Where does the learning get captured?"

"and be used to refresh policies and procedures"

"Where does the learning get captured?"

"COUNT the conversations..."

"Receiving the positive feedback is one measure of making a difference"

"Finding a method to collect all the feedback we collect during interactions"

"How do we know we are making a difference - we should ask for feedback"

- ## IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FROM WHAT PEOPLE SAID

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9 – Build in more accountability to people and communities.

- Assign clear owners and deadlines for every action that comes from meetings or feedback.
- Share meeting notes early and follow them up consistently.
- Tell people what has changed as a result of their input—and what hasn't, and why.
- Build accountability into performance expectations for teams and leaders.

"Minutes should be sent well in advance so people can carry out the actions"

"Lack of accountability to people allows things to drop/drift"

"Same conversations but nothing about it is being addressed"

"Liked the onerous parts of it... ownership with a name and date"

"Give more beef to voices so that something can be done"

"Accountability - transparency and ownership - notes of meetings, saying what has changed and how."

FINAL THOUGHTS

The workshop focused on how we measure the real impact of care and support by looking beyond numbers and concentrating on **what truly matters to people.** Participants agreed that good measurement starts with **understanding what helps people live a good life**, using a strengths-based approach, and **focusing on outcomes rather than outputs.**

Strong relationships and community connections were seen as essential. When people have safe spaces, feel listened to, and can share power with professionals, better services and better outcomes can grow. The group emphasised that both quantitative and qualitative information are valuable, but we must always ask, **"So what difference did this make?"** and capture insight from everyday conversations, not just formal processes.

Accountability was also a key theme Professionals need **freedom to do the right thing**, backed by clear actions, shared goals, and timely meeting updates. **Consistency is important,** especially where high staff turnover affects continuity. Participants talked about **co-chairs, regular feedback, and better handovers.**

Overall, measuring impact means listening well, sharing power, working with communities, and making sure systems stay flexible, values-driven, and truly centred on people's experiences.

FEEDBACK AND TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SESSION

CURATORS OF CHANGE

Been to a couple over a brews now – thanks for having me!

Thank you everyone, I always enjoy the over a brews and it always boosts my mood and day. Been having a rubbish day today so thank you for this.

Thanks everyone, I enjoyed the discussion, very useful.

Very thought provoking thank you

Great meeting, looking forward to the write up to implement.

Thanks for the time to reflect and chat – along with some waffle. Nice to meet everyone and thank you.

Thank you so much – My first experience was such a positive one, thank you for having me !

Really helpful to hear such a wide variety of view points

Thanks for the excellent chat. More to do, but we're on it :)

Thank you very much for the interesting discussions and shared insights from everybody.

Thank You!

Please join us for the next Over a Brew session on Wednesday 28 January 2026

https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/curators-of-change/t-moxmqke