

ReCITE Case Study:

What's Your Story: Giving voice, catalysing change

Storytelling is at the heart of ReCITE: building trust among communities and catalysing change for them through creative engagement that allows their voices to be heard. Led by ReCITE's lead creative partner, Writing on the Wall, the What's Your Story programme was a flagship effort that used creative storytelling to engage local participants in Kirkby (Knowsley), Bootle (Sefton), and Toxteth (Liverpool).

Professional artists led workshops that helped participants gain confidence to shape and share their stories of healthcare, highlighting the struggles and unfair outcomes they experienced but also their personal strength and resilience and desire to see change. Participants' stories will be amplified through powerful and immersive films that aim to reshape the public discourse around healthcare that works for communities.



Left: Participants from Toxteth group led by facilitator Nathali Denny; right: A Participant from Bootle group sharing his writing with the group. / Photo: Writing on the Wall

Purpose / Aim

Stories are powerful tools for spotlighting inequities and demanding change. Storytelling is the catalyst for ReCITE's goal to integrate and sustain collaborative action between community and health systems. The What's Your Story programme aimed to engage communities, platform community voices, and act as a springboard to advocate for changes in health systems.

Context

The voices of those in Liverpool City Region's most disadvantaged communities often go unheard in conversations about healthcare. Unfair health outcomes can be the result of struggles to navigate health systems that were not built with these communities in mind.

However, voicing these problems can be difficult for community members, with stigma, distrust, and previous experiences of not being listened to contributing to silence.

Approach

Writing on the Wall has put together 3 “What’s Your Story” programmes that ran for 6 weeks in each of the three boroughs in our region. These creative storytelling programmes provided a platform for 26 community members to find their voice, working with storytelling facilitators to turn their personal experiences navigating unfair experiences within health systems into powerful narratives that reflect their struggles and also the journeys they have taken to move past these challenges.

A Celebration Event in February 2025 brought these different stories to an audience of 37, featuring a showcase of poems, monologues, plays, and personal testimonies from our What’s Your Story groups.

What we learned

Creative writing has a powerful impact on those participating as they find a way to express their personal experiences and make sense of these through the medium of story.

Research is now under way together with nine of our What’s Your Story participants. This will help us to learn more about the ways sharing stories change participants, those who listen to their experiences, and the relationships between them.

“What’s Your Story? showed us that when people are given the space, time, and trust to speak, their voices can shift perspectives and spark action. These stories aren’t just personal; they are catalysts for change, challenging the systems that have failed communities and inspiring new ways of working together.” — *Writing on the Wall Facilitators*

A Grateful Message for our NHS

*In 1948 I witnessed your birth
And though a corona cigar I could not afford
Something more precious saw me get on board.
I no longer needed to pay a fee to see my GP,
Precious money saved to help me feed my family.*

*But now your life of three score years and ten is under threat,
Past promises of treatment being replaced by funeral plans
And private care, and all we do is stand and stare?
No, this will not be, our NHS will not be allowed to die
Our children’s health will not be sacrificed
On false altars of savings, ‘efficiency’ and corporate greed.*

*We must continue to live Nye’s dream
Of quality care for all, and not just to those of wealth.*

*To finish, a postscript to our political class,
Cold winter weather is a proven OAP killer
And most certainly not a vote winner.*

*So, Sir Keir, shame on you
Never again cause our old to choose
Between Christmas cold or food.*

*A problem which you or Chancellor Rachel Reeves did not face,
Not for you to suffer such stress.*

*To all in power, please listen to this plea.
Fight to save our NHS
For we never know what we have ...
Until it’s gone.*

(Written by Joseph Deas)

What's next

Stories are a powerful tool for communities to find voice and advocate for what they need. Our What's Your Story participants are adamant that their stories don't just support their own personal healing, but go on to be catalysts for health education, challenging systemic injustices, and shaping decisions to make a more inclusive and responsive healthcare system.

To support this, they have been working with filmmaker Wes Storey weave together their stories into powerful immersive videos. Two groups have already produced collective poems that Wes has transformed into multimedia pieces that move from struggle and resilience to hope and advocacy for change.

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Link to [visuals/media](#)

Manifesto for Change

We *would.like* a healthcare system where
We do not reinvent the wheel
Go back in time - reinstate the family doctor
so we know who we can turn to
And do not feel afraid, a burden or a nuisance

We *need* a healthcare system that is empathetic,
has consistency and continuity of care
One where, when we speak of pain, we are believed.
We are listened to and not dismissed by our
Age, gender, sexuality, race, colour, class.

We *want* a healthcare system that will boldly go
where no-one has gone before
One where we can get an appointment
With our Doctor - or Dentist
A healthcare system without political corruption
An NHS that is funded above the rate of inflation

We *demand* a healthcare system where we have
The same access to resources as the private sector
We do not want a system where we have to wait
For ambulances. Beds. Treatment.
The Government should not decide my fate, my end of life

We *deserve* a healthcare system
That is not a postcode lottery or a game of chance
We refuse to follow the politician's dance
We deserve a healthcare system
Where Aneurin Bevin turns happily in his grave
ARBED YR NHS

A system where our background does not dictate our future health.