

sounddelivery

BEING THE STORY

Spokesperson Network Pilot Programme

Why we did it. What we learnt.
And what we want to do next

What is the Spokesperson Network?

If we turn on the news, open a newspaper, look online, we are constantly reminded of the many issues facing society in the UK today. However, more often than not, we aren't hearing about these issues from the experts, that is, those who have experienced them firsthand.

There are thousands of people in our communities with lived experience of the health and social issues and social inequalities facing us today, who are full of insights and ideas for solutions to create **lasting change**. After 20+ years of working with people with these lived experiences, **sounddelivery** wanted to find out the elements that are holding people (the experts) back from engaging with the media. We listened to their concerns, and heard that they felt that they are not only poorly represented by the media, but that crucially, they are excluded from the conversations in the media that directly affect them.

sounddelivery's development of the **spokesperson network** pilot seeks to address these concerns and help to ensure that an expert network of leaders with lived experience is supported to get the coverage that they deserve, with a platform that they might not usually have, via mentoring, media training, skills sharing and peer support in partnership and conversation with a diverse range of media partners.



Why we did it

The context - why a spokesperson network programme was needed

Figures for the diversity of contributors in the media world are hard to come by. The majority of research is about those professionals working in the media itself. PressPad which works to encourage greater diversity in newsrooms has brought together [this reading list](#) which highlights the issues of representation on screen.

In a report by Baljeet Sandhu, [Lived Experience Leadership – Rebooting the DNA of Leadership](#), Sandhu highlights the growing need for social purpose organisations to ‘nourish’, repair, reintegrate, and reboot the leadership DNA of the social sector. To invest in targeted, sophisticated and bespoke leadership and development support to help this community of leaders grow, ‘feel welcome’ and reconnect with wider social sector operations. She highlights that this learning and development requires tailored approaches to support, due to people’s unique backgrounds as lived experience leaders, and the personal and professional challenges that they may have faced.

Through her work she saw that it was vital that lived and learnt experience are involved in the design of the programmes and that emerging and experienced lived experience leaders are offered targeted and collective learning and development opportunities. Everyone has lived, and everyone has experiences, but not everyone working in the social sector has direct, firsthand experience of the social issue, injustice or inequality that they are tackling in their work. Although couched in the past tense, for many, lived experience is also very much alive in the present tense and is a process that is integrated into ways of working and being.

Following the end of our pilot programme in January, the Lankelly Chase Foundation published [Telling a Different Story: Understanding news media coverage of severe and multiple disadvantage](#), a research inquiry conducted between January 2018 to March 2019 exploring how print and online news media report on severe and multiple disadvantage (SMD). In this report, SMD refers to the interlocking nature of multiple disadvantages such as extreme poverty, homelessness, discrimination, mental ill- health, substance misuse, violence and abuse and contact with the criminal justice system.

A striking conclusion made in this report is that the majority of coverage lacked the diversity of views and voices of people with direct lived experience of severe disadvantage. Coupled with an apparent lack of trust between journalists, people with lived experience and the charity sector, one of the most important recommendations is the undeniable need to form stronger and deeper relationships. If we can create empathy amongst ourselves, then it will make it easier to bring in distinctive voices, and different types of stories into mainstream media.

Other Spokesperson Networks do exist, such as [NEON](#), and organisations working with spokespeople such as [IMIX](#), both of which we met with in the run up to the pilot and have shared contacts. But we recognised that there was a need for a network that specifically supported those with firsthand experience of our social issues, which was distinctly different but complementary to their work, and in which a different type of support would be needed.

Like many other social leaders, lived experience leaders want to make a positive difference to their communities or wider society. But what makes them unique is that they are using valuable knowledge, perspectives, insight and understanding that they have gathered from their lived experience to inform their social purpose and work, often alongside their learned, professional and practiced experience.

The inspiration - what our members told us

I don't want to hide behind a fake name. I'm fed up, not scared. I am Amanda an ex-prostitute I want to speak out but need help preparing.

Amanda Hailes - a speaker at our Being the Story event

Our [Being the Story live events](#), a platform for leaders with lived experience to tell their stories, was a catalyst for the spokesperson network pilot. Our one day Being the Story live events feature the stories of ten inspirational individuals which spark conversations, challenge perceptions and provoke ideas. After the event we conducted a survey and in depth one-to-one phone interviews with the speakers to help us to navigate our next steps. The key takeaways from this research were that people wanted:

- Media training to enable them to embrace media opportunities and so reach a wider audience.
- On-going formalised media support to provide access to trustworthy journalists, with the reassurance of a media expert in the background.
- Active membership of a **sounddelivery** storytelling community to share ideas, skills and build confidence.
- A platform to maintain and foster the community.
- Mentoring to maintain motivation and provide extra support to ensure speakers continue to fulfill their potential in the media and in other spaces. This was seen as peer support rather than 'expert' support.

Confidence building

In the research we conducted in advance of the pilot, half of all the people we spoke to said they were 'not at all confident' at connecting and negotiating with journalists.

I want to learn how to come across in the media. I'm really aware that if I talk to journalists I don't want to be taken out of context. I'm nervous about how I'll come across. I feel stuck at the moment. I'd like to move forward.

Amanda Hailes

All of the speakers who spoke at our Being the Story event have the passion, expertise and lived experience around a particular social issue or topic, but what came through in the research was a need to build their media literacy, understanding of how the media works and media confidence, to be better equipped for the demands of the media.

We're not trained to get our point across without sounding a complete idiot. I worry about backlash. Even the small stuff makes me really nervous but I know how powerful it can be to come over well in the media. I need training on how to deal with the press.

Onjali Rauf

Several respondents had declined interview opportunities because of their lack of media skills.

*I'd be really helped by building lasting relationships with journalists.
I'd like to feel much more comfortable with the media.*

Onjali Rauf

Everyone in our network who took part in the research, is of course an individual and so **flexibility is key** to what support means to each member. Some members' confidence to motivate themselves with the media is very low. Others said they would like support but they are interested in finding more challenging audiences to speak to and in doing so, to try and win round. Almost 90% of respondents said on-going media support (including contact building) from **sounddelivery** would be very useful.

A community

Respondents felt a considerable and lasting bond with fellow speakers who had been through the Being the Story (BTS) live event experience in particular. For many it had been the first time they'd told their story publicly. They want the supportive 'family' feeling to sustain them through to the next steps. Maintaining connections, confidence and motivation post the 'high' of BTS, they wanted a safe way of sharing ideas and skills and keeping each other up to the mark. **sounddelivery** speakers already felt a sense of belonging to the **sounddelivery** family and it was felt that they would benefit from more proactive sustained development.

A desire to belong echoed by Barbara at BehindBras. Many of the speakers felt that they existed in a vacuum. They felt stronger together. Belonging to a community would help overcome that feeling that they are alone and exposed.

I need to be understood as a person... I feel isolated most of the time and need a wider community of colleagues to share experiences especially with dealing with the media.

Barbara Burton

Skills sharing

As well as the moral support and emotional well-being the community would provide, there was a demand for it to offer practical skill-sharing. Grassroots leaders for change also wanted to ensure that others could benefit from what they have learnt. Darren Murinas, a grassroots leader, learnt his communications skills several years ago, he now focuses on passing on his skills to others.

Making it happen

So building on this research and in depth conversations, **sounddelivery** launched a crowdfunder to pilot a training programme for this network of leaders with lived experience to help ensure they are trained and supported to get the coverage they deserve and to give them a platform they might not usually have. This programme was free for participants. We raised just over £11,000 through crowdfunding and then received additional £10,000 funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Lankelly Chase Foundation with Tudor Trust supporting the programme as well through a development grant for one of their grantees Anne-Marie Douglas of Peer Power.

The Pilot

Our pilot programme aimed to give a network of experts through experienced support and opportunities they need to have their expertise heard more widely and fulfil their potential to create systemic change and to feel connected to a spokesperson network.

Over the six month pilot a network of people have been supported to:

- Develop their skills and digital know-how
- Build confidence in storytelling and understanding of the media
- Improve representation and diversity of voice
- Connect them to a media mentor
- Offer one-to-one support and coaching
- Contribute to a peer support network
- Take part in media interviews and other speaking engagements

Recruitment for the Pilot

As this was a pilot, we initially approached a small network of people we had worked with who had spoken at the Social Media Exchange or Being the Story live event and who had been part of the initial scoping research. We included Anne-Marie Douglas who hadn't spoken at our event, but who had been introduced directly to us by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. We had spoken to Hannah Patterson at the National Lottery Community Fund about their new lived experience leadership fund which had 650+ applications and we recognised that our team didn't have the capacity/time funding to do an open invitation. The people involved in the pilot are all leaders with lived experience, running small grassroots user-led organisations, or individuals using their lived experience and art for positive change. We also involved a number of frontline leaders with learnt experience working directly with those with lived experience of a wide range of issues. Everyone we approached filled in a questionnaire to apply and what they would offer to be involved.

- 21 people wanted to be part of this spokesperson network.
- 16 were matched to media mentors.
- 12 took part in practical workshops.
- one participant dropped out due to ill health part-way through the programme.

Our Spokesperson Network pilot programme supported

- **Amanda Hailes @AmandajHailes @UntoldStoryHull**
Part of Hull-based women's collective An Untold Story, peer-researcher for AVA and Agenda, campaigning for women facing marginalisation.
Speaks on: Multiple Disadvantage (Mental Health, Criminal Justice System, substance misuse, addiction), sex worker's rights
- **Anne-Marie Douglas @annemdouglas @peer_poweruk**
Founder and CEO of Peer Power, an empathy led charity developed with young people which aims to heal childhood trauma and adversity through caring relationships, system change involvement, employment and peer support.
Speaks on: Young People with Complex Needs, Childhood Trauma, Systems Change, Youth Justice, Empathy
- **Barbara Burton @Behindbras**
Founder of the BehindBras Fashion Foundation, providing support, new skills and meaningful employment for former women prisoners, in the fashion, retail and creative industries.
Speaks on: Criminal Justice System, Life After Prison, Employment
- **Bryony Albery @bryonyalbery**
Previously a frontline homelessness support worker, performance poet Bryony is now training to be a social justice lawyer.
Speaks on: Social Justice, Homelessness, Access to Justice
- **Clare Patey @empathymuseum @clarepatey**
Award winning artist, curator, and director of Empathy Museum. Her award-winning immersive project A Mile in My Shoes explores how empathy can transform personal relationships but also help tackle global challenges and open up the public conversation around empathy.
Speaks on: Empathy, The Arts
- **Darren Murinas @darrenmurinas @expertcitizens**
Chief executive of Expert Citizens, an independent group who have all experienced multiple needs and give their ideas to services to help guide and shape them to improve the care of multiple needs citizens.
Speaks on: Multiple Needs (Criminal Justice System, Substance Misuse, Mental Health, Homelessness), Lived Experience
- **Lady Unchained @unchainedp**
Poet and Founder of Unchained Poetry, a platform for artists who like her, have experience of the criminal justice system. Lady Unchained has facilitated workshops with several charities, hosts poetry events, and co-hosts for a National Prison Radio show.
Speaks on: Criminal Justice System, Women in Prison, Life After Prison, Arts for Social Change

- **Marissa Begonia @marissadb1225 @thevoiceofdws**
Domestic worker and founding member of The Voice of Domestic Workers, Marissa campaigns for justice and rights for Britain's migrant domestic workers. She helps them to flee abusive families and find safety.
Speaks on: Migrant Domestic Workers, Modern Day Slavery, Hostile Environment
- **Ric Flo @ricflomusic**
Creative Director and Rapper Ric Flo uses the art of rap and his experience in foster care to encourage positivity in young people through creative workshops whilst developing his own music with the Hip-hop Collective Jungle Brown.
Speaks on: Care System, Arts for Social Change, Young People
- **Simeon Moore @zimbosla @datstv**
Writer, musician and advocate for young people. Simeon was a member of a notorious Birmingham gang and co-created the YouTube channel DatsTV to challenge, and provide an alternative to those channels and music videos that glamorise gun and knife culture.
Speaks on: Youth Violence, Arts for Social Change, Young People,
- **Steve Arnott @redeyefenix @bus_hull**
Hull Beats Bus Founder, committed to building confidence and giving young people the space to be creative through music and art workshops. Star of Sean McAllister's documentary film A Northern Soul.
Speaks on: Young People, Arts for Social Change, In Work Poverty, Disadvantaged Communities
- **Sue James @sue_james1**
Director and solicitor at Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre and a specialist in housing law. She provides support for marginalised and vulnerable groups so they can make their voices heard.
Speaks on: Access to Justice, Legal Aid, Housing, Immigration
- **Tracey Ford @traceyfordjags**
Founder of the JAGS Foundation, created in memory of her son. JAGS raise awareness of the consequences of youth murder and addresses problems affecting young people today offering peer mentoring in schools and works with agencies that help vulnerable young women.
Speaks on: Youth Violence, Young People, Grief, Trauma

Wider network: Individualised range of support inc training and media/speaking opportunities

- **Dom Raban @DomRaban**

As MD of Corporation Pop, a digital innovation agency, Dom has built the world's first healthcare app to use augmented reality, gamification and AI to deliver health information directly to children. @Xploro_Health aims to reduce the stress and anxiety associated with hospitalization and improve the health literacy of children.

Speaks on: Tech for Good, Innovation, Cancer Voices, Social Enterprise

- **Nick O'Shea @ignitionbeer**

Founder of Ignition Brewery, a vibrant, south London brewery which employs and trains people with learning disabilities to brew great beer. The team has a lot to offer and with the right support, they can make beer that competes on the open market. Trying to convince the social care sector to support the development of the company has been tricky and required more resilience than Nick ever thought would be needed.

Speaks on: Learning Disability, Access to Work, Social Enterprise, Craft Beer, Social Enterprise

- **Onjali Q. Raúf @OnjaliRauf**

Founder of Making Herstory set up in memory of her aunt who was murdered, they support women's shelters, lobby for women's rights and join anti-trafficking movements. Author of children's books 'The Boy At the Back of the Class' a child's perspective on the refugee crisis and 'The Star Outside My Window' on the impact of domestic violence on children's lives.

Speaks on: Domestic Abuse, Women's Rights, Refugee Crisis, Representation of social issues in Children's Literature

What we learned

Developing our network's skills and digital know-how

'Social media and digital platforms weren't really my thing but Jude and Helena helped me understand the importance of having an online presence that then led me on to do my first vlog and blog which has helped me amplify my work and ideas reaching a wider audience'

Steve Arnott

- Between July 2019 and January 2020 we delivered four practical workshops on social media, digital leadership, blogging, vlogging, campaigning (led by Campaign Bootcamp), media literacy and engaging with the media, imposter syndrome, self-care and speaking fees.
- Our workshops included guest speakers Clare Horton of The Guardian, Maaisya Valli of Channel 4 News and author, activist and speaker Winnie M Li.
- As a result of the workshops many of the network have begun blogging and vlogging for their own channels as well as for other platforms.
- We offered our network the opportunity to take over our Twitter to amplify their voices and how they're contributing to change. We guided them through the planning and takeover process. These Twitter Moments documented the takeovers:
Brenda <https://twitter.com/i/events/1176856892708204544>
Ric <https://twitter.com/i/events/1186921233184632833>

Improving representation and diversity of voice and giving our network a platform

- **Visit to Channel 4** - In addition to the practical workshops we held a full day visit to Channel 4 News and the BBC where over the course of the day the team had conversations with Emily Wilson - Home Affairs Editor, Channel 4 News and Alison Holt - BBC Social Affairs Correspondent and her producer Lorna Donlon. Anna O'Neil - BBC London, Priya Shah from the Jeremy Vine Programme, Helen Fitzhenry from Woman's Hour and Giles Edwards who produces Four Thought (as well as many other programmes).
- **A visit to media platform Tortoise's 'ThinkIn'** - an open newsroom which led to a follow up piece with Brenda Birungi and conversations about partnerships for the future. This has led to a recent partnership with Tortoise on a series of Digital 'ThinkIns' looking at Unheard Stories during the Coronavirus Pandemic. This Digital ThinkIn was facilitated by the team at **sounddelivery** involved a number of our network sharing their experiences.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ls_HcfhjKhg
- **Appearances on Channel 4 News** - Sunday Morning live, Newsnight, BBC Radio 4, BBC London and BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC World Service, BBC Radio 1 Xtra. Anne-Marie Douglas at Peer Power is working with BBC Producer Giles Edwards to record a talk for Four Thought over the summer.

- **Written features** - in the Metro, Hull Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, Tortoise.
- **Goalcast** - <https://www.goalcast.com/> cross promoting content reaching millions on their channels.
- **Talks and performances by our network** - at Byline Festival, Curio Conference, Expert Citizens' Insight Awards, TedxLondon Women, the Health Foundation 'Healthy Lives' Conference, an event for Rotary in Birmingham and Street Doctors. Simeon, Steve and Jude Habib were also invited to participate in a two day residential organised by the charity Cumberland Lodge (although as participants of the event when a speaker dropped out Simeon, Steve and Jude stepped in). Many (but not all) of these opportunities were paid.
- **Podcast** - We have launched a Being the Story podcast which features their talks recorded at Conway Hall.
- **Documentary** - Brenda Birungi presented her first documentary for BBC Radio 4 featuring Amanda Hailes.

We are continuing to work proactively with a range of media including BBC Stories, Channel 4 News, The Sunday Times, Good Morning Britain talking through story ideas. Having been approached by Good Morning Britain we connected Hassan Akkad, who had spoken at a Being the Story live event, to a producer for the programme. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yihVuERaeHs>

Increasing visibility - a selection of highlights

This is some of the media coverage that our network have been involved with due to their increased visibility, as a direct result of being part of the spokesperson's network:

- Brenda Birungi - Lady Unchained 'Unchained' BBC Radio 4 featuring Amanda Hailes
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00ohghf>
- Travon Steadman Channel 4 News
<https://www.channel4.com/news/increase-in-number-of-older-children-in-care>
- Ric Flo on BBC Radio London - The Scene
<https://www.facebook.com/TheLondonScene/videos/2296476830614855/?t=69>
- Onjali Rauf - Why children are our most powerful hope for change | TEDxLondon Women
<https://youtu.be/I3wgHkfMorM>
- Simeon Moore aka Zimbo and Brenda Birungi aka Lady Unchained, BBC Radio Four - Lights Out - Prison Sentences
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00oh8h9>



- Brenda Birungi - Lady Unchained on BBC 1Xtra Talks - Prison
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00odhv7>
- Daily Mirror Ignition Beer
<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/brewery-praised-hiring-people-learning-21346536>

'It was brilliant having Brenda there. People really enjoyed hearing her speak and it just added something real and creative and challenging to the day. Thanks for all your work in this field.'

Tim Elwell Sutton, Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships (Healthy Lives), The Health Foundation

Building confidence in our storytellers

We have provided one-to-one support for each of our speakers through regular phone calls, emails and face-to-face meetings when possible. We have provided coaching to speakers in the run up to every speaking or media opportunity. Throughout the programme we have also facilitated peer support through the workshops and a Whatsapp group that allowed our network to provide ongoing support and encouragement to each other as well as keeping us all up to date with everyone's activities.

'The support from the sounddelivery team has been outstanding all the way through the programme I couldn't ask for anything more.'

Steve Arnott

'It was really wonderful to meet you all, hearing and sharing heartfelt experiences that unify us in different ways but also gives us strength, confidence and belief that we walk these journeys not alone but beside others that care and have our backs even though we cannot always see you - you're an awesome group BTS.'

Tracey Ford

'This was the standout part of the project to me, because you can get media training and related skills from anywhere but you can't replicate that group and peer support magic... it is the knowing that you have all been through something, pain I guess, and we are channeling that into our change projects and cheering each other on...we can really understand each others' imposter syndrome' because it is fundamentally linked to shame'

Anne-Marie Douglas

Building the field and widening participation through mentoring

Each member of our network, both the core and wider network were offered a media mentor. Every media mentor/mentee match we made was bespoke to the person, based on their skills, background and location. It was up to the mentor and mentee how they communicated, whether it be via phone or face-to-face, and we paid the expenses for anyone that needed to travel to meet their mentor.

Mentors for our pilot programme were:

- Adam Gee, Commissioning Editor, Red Bull Media House @SurrealThing
- Aimee Meade, Communities Editor, Metro.co.uk @AimeePaige
- Brian Woods, Founder, True Vision TV @briantruevision
- Emma Wakefield, Managing Director, Lambent Productions, @lambentp
- Anna Hall, Creative Director, True Vision Yorkshire, @AnnaHallTV
- Giles Edwards, Producer, BBC Radio, @gilesedwards
- Raphael Rowe, Reporter on Sunday Morning Live and The One Show, BBC1, @areporter
- Leena Normington, Poet, podcaster and Youtuber, @leenanorms
- Jamie, Ed and Kate, Postcode Films, @PostcodeFilms
- Zakia Sewell, Broadcaster and DJ, NTS, @zakiaswell
- Mike Lewis, Nine Lives Media, @NineLivesMedia
- Simon Bowens, Campaigner, Friends of the Earth Yorkshire and North East, @SimonBowens
- Alan Hall, Radio Producer, Falling Tree Production, @FallingTreeProd
- Angus Crawford, News Correspondent, BBC, @AngusCrawfordR4 (in a personal capacity with permission of his Editor)

Feedback from participants

'The workshops and the whole experience has been something magical and something I wish to continue for a very long time, it has given me much greater belief in myself and realise the importance of my work. Jude and Helena are like guardian angels and it has been an absolute pleasure to be involved in the network with all the amazing people in it.'

Steve Arnott

"Every single workshop has been insightful; it has shown me to believe in myself and the power my story has. Even though I have experience being on camera and radio, I learnt to be more confident in the things I have to say and has given me a chance to learn from my peers. Speaking to the media has shown me that I don't have to be afraid of them and how to contact them if I have a story to share."

Brenda Birungi aka Lady Unchained

“Being involved with the Spokesperson Network is an experience I will never forget. It feels like I am part of an incredible, unique family. Over the past few months I have learned so much and gained insight into everything from social media, campaigning and talking to the media. I always come away with renewed passion, purpose and the goal to keep going no matter how complex the issues I am trying to highlight, knowing Jude and my Spokesperson Network family are there alongside me.”

Amanda Hailes

“My biggest take away was that journalists are so interested in what we have to say, that pitching is worthwhile and how to pitch. I was encouraged by meeting so many and hearing them say such similar things. Seeing the studios and where it’s all made also made it feel much more accessible.”

Bryony Albery

Changing Perceptions of the Media

Several of the network came into the programme with negative perceptions of the media, some had little experience of meeting or speaking to journalists while others had had a negative experience. These are comments from post-it notes captured as part of the workshops. With perceptions about the media before the programme and perceptions afterwards.

Some phrases used to describe the media before the programme:

Story gatherers, not to be trusted, lazy, busy – therefore uninterested. Generally untrustworthy, conniving, misleading, negative, It’s just their job, pushy, can cause chaos. Clever (crafty), cold, exploitative, uncompassionate. Fear of losing control of the story. Always in a hurry, wanting a story at the expense of empathy.

Some phrases used to describe the media after the programme:

Storygatherers, useful ally, (I have more understanding of how they work). Useful, selective, negative. Changemakers, empathetic, interested, listening, accessible. It’s their job and they are passionate, working to get the whole story, the power to bring the story to everyone. Friendly, only doing their job. Commitment to telling other people’s stories.

Meeting journalists and programme makers made a huge difference in changing their perceptions.

What we want to do next - building on our pilot

As our programme was a pilot, we have been able to learn a lot over the six months, this learning will go into the next phase of a longer term Spokesperson Network Programme.

Workshops

Feedback from our pilot network indicates that more time needs to be allocated for the practical workshops, particularly vlogging and the media training. In a future programme we would like to potentially hold two-day workshops to allow for more time and also additional one-to-one support for those who would be more comfortable with that format; 'I found it really hard to do the media training in a group partly because of a trauma response and really needed one-on-one on reflection for that part of the course'.

The pilot programme was flexible and open, which meant we could engage with a wider group of people, but this also meant that people did cancel attendance on occasion. Those in full time employment did find it difficult to commit to attending all of the workshops and those with less secure work / freelance had to prioritise paid work if it was at the same time as a workshop. Moving forward we would like to review the workshop booking requirements to ensure maximum participation and flexibility whilst minimising drop out rate and wasted workshop participant spaces.

Mentoring

The mentoring has provided an invaluable addition to the programme. Each mentor and mentee were provided with a mentoring guide and talked through how it could work. Many, but not all of the relationships were successful. Everyone had a different experience of their mentoring relationship, some needed more nurturing from us. The success of the relationship was very much dependent on how much the mentees and mentors invested in the relationship. From our conversations with some people, a potential issue with the mentoring was a lack of confidence in having conversations with their mentors and a lack of clear understanding of the parameters of the relationship. This will be addressed in the future programme. Our pilot network also suggested it would be good to hold a meet-up with all of the mentors so that they have an opportunity to meet the other mentors, too. Having said this the relationships which worked - really worked.

'My mentor match has been the highlight of my experience. My networks have been greatly opened through mentor introductions'

Tracey Ford

'Being part of the sounddelivery mentoring programme was a true privilege. We felt it was rewarding for all parties, on both sides of the relationship - I think Tracey (our mentee) and Jaime, Kate and I at Postcode Films gained so much from sharing our stories, reflecting on experiences with the media and imagining possible alternatives for the future. The pairing that Jude arranged was a great fit and the support structure that she put in place helped make sure the mentoring relationship always felt like it was moving forward. We also hope to collaborate creatively with Tracey in the future.'

Ed Owles, Postcode Productions

Financial barriers

One of the key learnings from our pilot programme was the financial barriers that our network are facing and how these impact their ability to fulfill their potential. As they are working for small grassroots charities, freelance, on low-incomes, or volunteering their time at organisations for free, they face challenges in doing their advocacy work. When being invited to speak at events they have informed us that sometimes they decline as they are unable to pay upfront for their travel and expenses. We have often stepped in when this has been the case and covered costs as well as talking to the event organisers to challenge this. Furthermore, late payment by clients have led to repercussions such as network members not having enough money to cover core costs such as internet and office fees. Some of our network did not have access to a laptop and/or a working smartphone which also limited their ability to work to their full potential. Through our networks we managed to source a laptop to donate to one member but in a future programme we would aim to include a small fund for speakers in need of these types of resources.

The group has supported each other in getting access to funding for their ideas. Funding bids are challenging for most organisations but this is an area where we have limited expertise as an organisation. However participants from the programme including Anne-Marie Douglas and Clare Patey (of the network) have shared their expertise, including signposting to Arts Council funding amongst other funding. Steve Arnott (of the network) who runs the [Hull Beats Bus](#) has been awarded Paul Hamlyn Foundation Ideas and Pioneers funding for an alternative schooling research project for excluded young people in Hull - who completely engage with his work thanks to support and skills sharing from the network.

Imposter Syndrome and the Importance of Peer Support

Throughout this pilot programme it has become clear how valuable the peer support has been. Many of the network are leading their organisations, supporting their community, or are doing their work and campaigning largely on their own, yet throughout the programme they questioned their own expertise. Incorporating a session on Imposter Syndrome was important, as the cohort could share their feelings in a safe space. The workshops allowed the network to create and build relationships, and connect with others at different stages of their advocacy work who could offer advice and

expertise. Alongside the face-to-face peer support, we established a WhatsApp group where the network could keep each other (and us) updated with their work, their challenges, their success and to provide support and encouragement to each other regularly and quickly. This aspect of the pilot programme has been hugely beneficial and the network continues to support each other in this way. Some of the network members have expressed an interest in providing peer support to future participants based on their own experience and so this is something that we would include in our future planning.

'Somehow, we are superheroes in the heart of the people we are serving but these superheroes need to be guided and looked after too to make our workload and life easier.'

Marissa Begonia

A trauma informed Spokesperson Network

Many of our network have directly or indirectly been affected by trauma in their personal and professional lives. PTSD is evident within many of our participants and we have been aware that as an organisation we need to be supported ourselves to enable us to respond in the most appropriate way to individual situations relating to trauma. This support would be stepped up in the development of this programme.

The Ripple Effect

The involvement in this network is having a ripple effect within the communities that members work in as well as in regards to the issues that they want amplified. One example Ric Flo was approached by a journalist to do an interview about residential care, but as this was not his experience (he was in foster care), he approached his own network and found a couple of people who might be more suitable interviewees. Another careleaver shared on twitter that she felt confident to share her story publicly because Ric had been so open about his experience during the project. Visibility matters.

Final thoughts

From running this pilot programme over six months and continuing to work alongside this network we have seen the real need to support leaders with lived experience, to gain and nurture the skills, confidence, support and connections to realise their potential in contributing to change. It takes time to develop trusted, long term relationships with the network and should not be limited to the timeline of the pilot project. From our conversations with the media about our network, there is clearly a desire to hear directly from these individuals and for their experiences to inform the stories journalists tell. We believe that by continuing this work, developing it further, scaling up this pilot to a year-long programme across several years and nurturing new leaders we can provide invaluable support to a network of spokespeople and continue to build long-term relationships between the media and leaders with lived experience. This work takes time and the support of sector partners committed to the aims of this work.

Next steps: BTS Spokesperson Network and Programme, Speaker Agency, Live Event, Capacity Building Within the Sector

Words from Jude Habib

It goes without saying that we have absolutely loved working on this pilot and it has been a privilege to work so closely with such an incredible group of individuals. When those in positions of real power seem to be failing us, it is this community that keeps me going, motivated and completely committed to this work. I have learnt so much about strength and bravery, love and community and every member's long term, unwavering commitment to their work. I am grateful to everyone who supported this programme to make it happen. Our incredible crowdfunders who got behind the idea and donated a considerable amount, our foundations who agreed to match fund the donations, charity sector colleagues who acted as sounding boards and supporters and our network of journalists who contributed so much. We would like this programme to develop further and to be sustainable working alongside other funders to scale this up and roll it out long term. We recognise that this needs to be funded. We want this to be collaborative, working together alongside different funders to develop the programme and for the programme to be proactive and responsive to the needs of the time. We know that it has been harder to get support for the live event which has led to all this work but platforms such as this form such an important part of our work in encouraging authentic storytelling in the sector and in sourcing new speakers who might not be on our radar. We'd like to see funding for this included in any future programme funding.

Research into a not for profit Speaker Agency

We have been awarded a grant through the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Ideas and Pioneers Fund to scope a not-for-profit agency which will address the financial disadvantages/hardship faced by the majority of the people in our network and explore other potential income streams including paid-for public speaking opportunities in the corporate sector. The surplus income from an agency would go towards developing the programme further and supporting the speakers of the future as well as a sector live event that we were unable to run in 2019 due to funding constraints.

<https://www.phf.org.uk/featured-ideas-pioneers-grantees/>

Other quotes

'Thank you so much for your words of immense encouragement Jude, I sometimes feel like I am on my last legs and not sure how much more I can carry this heavy load and then I speak with you and you breathe a new sense of willingness to keep going, as I am reminded I am not finished yet'

Tracey Ford

'I know I still have room to grow and become confident in my ability to speak what is not being shared, and to make parents and children's voices be heard about the fear/truth of the lives they are being made to live while we carry on our daily lives not having to face the anguish and pain of how children live in order to survive these turbulent teenage years.'

Tracey Ford

Postscript Our Work and Coronavirus (COVID-19)

As we write this update the world has changed significantly. The people we work with - not just in this network but also our wider network - are being affected dramatically. Income has been lost from workshops and projects being cancelled, opportunities for network members to get paid are declining and any savings that they do have diminished. At the same time the situation is triggering experiences that are affecting their mental health so we're being mindful of how we can support them.

<https://www.sounddelivery.org.uk/2020/04/lady-unchained-coronavirus-lockdown-vs-prison-lockdown>

We are doing our best to support the group, we talk regularly via WhatsApp and have a weekly check in. We are also keeping in touch with them about their financial situations. What was already a challenging situation is now more difficult.

In our wider network we are aware that there are stories not being told and some of the most marginalised groups seem to be even more invisible for example asylum seekers, young people with experience of homelessness and also BME groups. [This blog](#) was written by Helen Jones of the charity LeedsGate a membership body for the Gypsy and Traveller community

These voices like the networks that we work with need to be heard now more than ever. We have been given a special grant by the Lankelly Chase Foundation to support the network at this time to ensure that they can continue to be visible and heard. This is also enabling us to develop other speaking opportunities in the media for people with lived experience who aren't in our immediate network.

This story is far from over, we continue to work to maintain the networks and the relationships that are evolving with media outlets day by day as a result of the pilot. We're excited about the next chapter that we feel is so vital to the increased visibility of people in the UK with lived experience.