Social Impact Report 2020

Working towards a more inclusive society with better outcomes for all.
Social impact is how we measure our success as an employee-owned business. From our strategy, through our practice, to our office management, we want to ensure that everything we do supports our goal of a more inclusive society with better outcomes for all.

This report captures a snapshot of our impact in 2019/20 – our successes and the areas where we have more work to do. We hope that by sharing our story we can be part of a wider conversation about how businesses like us can make a positive contribution to society, through which we can learn and grow together with our clients, and our peers.

Our theory of change describes how the four key elements of our practice contribute to the goal of inclusive, evidence based decision making. You can read about each of the four themes below:

• Rigorous Evidence
• Focus on lived experience
• Inclusive practice
• Building capacity
One of the most important ways we have an impact is by providing rigorous evidence to inform decision making. This year we have focused on the big issues our clients and partners tell us they are facing—inequality, unmet need, climate change and digital transformation. We’ve also been thinking about how we define rigour, and are trialling a new approach that focuses on whether our work is providing the right kind of evidence to provoke change.

We want to be sure that important projects like climate assemblies and evaluation of flexible NHS working are informing policy and not gathering dust on a shelf.

We believe that to be rigorous, evidence on social issues must reflect the range of experiences of the people affected. We also believe that there is power in decision makers hearing the voices of those affected by policy and services directly, and for real people in the process of speaking. This year around 65% of our work involved people with lived experience of the issues we were exploring. Examples like our work with Mind, where people with lived experience of mental health problems worked with staff to develop a new organisational strategy, show us the power of a lived experience approach. However even the best-intentioned traditional research approaches stop short of actively redressing the power differentials between those providing or designing services, and those using them. That’s why this year we’re aiming to go further and help our clients to involve people with lived experience as paid project partners in 5% of our projects.

We’ll be testing this approach with the wider research and evaluation community including policy makers, commissioners, practitioners and academics on October 22nd, to get involved contact Pete.Welsh@traverse.ltd

If you’re interested in how co-production, co-design and lived experience relate and would like to learn more we’ll be running a practice share in November, contact Jessie.Cunnett@traverse.ltd to sign up.
This year, in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the disproportionate effects of the pandemic, we’ve been challenged to take a more critical look at the extent to which our work, and our organisation, is truly inclusive, and whether we’re doing enough to address inequality. In October we collaborated with a group of clients and peers to produce a set of 10 principles for inclusive practice. We’ve used these principles as the basis of productive conversations with clients like EirGrid, who have taken the opportunity of moving online to reflect critically on how inclusive their consultation work really is. But we know there’s more to do, so next year we will challenge ourselves and our clients to go further in our work, as well as putting our own house in order by increasing the diversity of our staff and partners.

Our social impact is a work in progress, and as we continue to build our understanding and develop our practice, we’re committed to sharing our learning and building capacity. This runs through our work, from the types of conversations our project managers have with clients, to the VCS futures conversations we’ve been hosting to give our charity sector colleagues a space to reflect on what covid-19 means for their organisations, to the free routes to action workshops we offer at the end of each project to identify the next steps.

Above all we aim to work in partnership, to ensure that our projects have an impact that’s greater than the sum of their parts. We hope that publishing this report, and being transparent about our challenges as well as our successes we can promote a more collaborative approach to achieving social change.

“It’s not a transactional relationship between us and Traverse. It’s more about learning from each other, working with each other and being reflective.”

Executive summary
We think that good decisions require good evidence, and that good evidence comes from rigorous and inclusive consultation, engagement, research and evaluation.
Traditionally we’ve asked our clients to tell us whether they are happy with the quality of our outputs. This year we’re trying something a little different. Drawing on interviews with our clients and participants, alongside work on quality metrics from Arts Council England, we’re now asking whether the outputs of our projects provide the right kind of evidence to inform change.

We will focus on whether our work is:

- Reliable, people have confidence in the findings
- Interesting to the audience
- Relevant, saying something about the world in which we live
- Timely, the work that is needed for now
- Challenging and thought provoking

From here on in we’ll also be asking these same questions of the participants, citizens, service users and beneficiaries we work with, reflecting our dual responsibility to the organisations we work for, and the people they serve.

We’re also focusing in on some of the most important issues that impact on society today, where we feel that building a solid evidence base can make a real difference. Here’s a flavour of our work and the evidence base we’re building.
Inequality

Inequality is an urgent reality of our society. We think that inclusive, person-centred practices that effect real change are needed. We focus, where we can, on the greatest inequalities and those with least access to research. In this case study we focus on energy costs as a cause of poverty.

Citizens Advice: high and low energy use

Around 10% of households in the UK are defined as fuel poor, and there are concerns that this will increase if the cost of decarbonising the energy system is passed on to consumers. Our work with Citizens Advice was designed to bring the voices of citizens at the margins to the attention of the energy regulator Ofgem, by documenting the lives of people with unusually high or low energy use.

Citizens Advice were concerned that people with very low energy use were managing high costs by using less electricity than is necessary for a basic standard of living. On the flipside they were concerned that people with very high use would suffer as a result of pricing changes without being able to modify their use. These users make up a small proportion of all energy consumers, but would be affected most by changes to the pricing system.

Through 50 in-depth interviews we captured the experiences of people across England, Scotland and Wales, in their own words. 15 interviews were done face-to-face in participants’ homes to build rich and detailed case studies that explored people’s living conditions and how these affected energy use.

We found that low usage was often driven by cost and (fear of) waste, whilst health, comfort and lack of awareness of the amount of electricity used drove high usage levels. While low electricity usage wasn’t always harmful, we found examples where illnesses had occurred or been exacerbated due to self-rationing, sometimes taking a toll on consumers’ mental health.

The data, in particular the case studies, will shape Citizens Advice’s response to Ofgem’s review, to ensure no consumer groups are overlooked or adversely impacted by new pricing structures. Citizens Advice will also use the work to build its own programme around the future of heat and meeting net zero carbon targets in an inclusive and equitable way.

One crucial finding was the importance of housing quality, which led to a reliance on high cost and low efficiency electric heaters. Ofgem agreed to consider this in the code review alongside the Warm Home Discount and the wider role that electricity network operators play in decarbonisation (which many people fear may come at a cost to those in need of supplemental heat).

Rigour: strong evidence for better decisions

Climate change

The world faces a ‘decisive decade’ to avert the worst impacts of climate change. The effects of the climate crisis and the transformation to net zero mean huge changes to our infrastructure, our utility and transport systems, the places we live and the way we live our lives.

We believe that addressing and preventing further inequality is crucial for a more sustainable future. To succeed in this, the transition needs to be based on evidence, inclusive dialogue, and collaborative engagement to form solutions that work for all. As we emerge from a pandemic which has rapidly changed our daily lives, there is a fresh opportunity to engage society in how we both recover and transition.

The two projects below show organisations working at a local and regional level to involve the public and stakeholders in the climate agenda. The methods incorporate the use of experts to build knowledge amongst participants and space for discussion and deliberation. Importantly, the processes were designed to enable the participants to create the resulting recommendations and their pledges for action respectively.

**Brent Borough Council Citizens Assembly on Climate Change**

Traverse was appointed by Brent Council to design and run the Brent Citizens Assembly. This involved appointing an advisory group of three specialists in climate change and participatory democracy; working closely with Brent Council; working with specialist recruiters to recruit 50+ assembly members; and designing interesting, engaging events that ensured participant engagement. Traverse led and facilitated three day-long events across six weeks in November and early December 2020.

We assembled a group of just over 50 residents whose gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic grade and location within the borough broadly reflected Brent’s population.

“I think the report is an excellent and an accurate reflection of the Assembly.”

“It is an excellent and concise report.”

Quotes from Assembly members on final report.
Alongside the Assembly events, Traverse worked in partnership with Commonplace to set up a website where the wider public could submit their own responses to the research question being posed. The micro-site was designed to make the process as transparent as possible, and to enable individual residents and community organisations to feed ideas into the Assembly.

We worked with our advisory group to design a process plan and materials that trod a fine line between providing enough information to build understanding and not overwhelming participants. With many whose first language is not English, we had to be particularly mindful of keeping language simple and avoiding jargon. Traverse also developed a network of experts in the fields of climate science, policy making, economy, and action-taking on a local and national level. Experts from this network were invited to inform and comment on the process, and to attend Assembly meetings where their expertise would be most valuable to Assembly members.

The ability for citizens to debate directly with the experts was essential to the credibility of the process.

“The real value of the process is that in bringing together a reflective sample of residents, what we prioritise needs to be considered in the context of how they live their lives.. everywhere you do this, there will be a different lens through which they see the evidence… I think we can say they’ve chosen these things based on how they live their lives in our borough, and having heard an evidence base around that. We can say to others that your fellow residents have said these things should be our focus.”

Client quote

You can see the recommendations made by the assembly in the final report here.
As populations change, age, and move, we are faced with new challenges to meet their aspiration. Whether that’s funding social care, distributing the costs of climate change, or financing social impact, this challenge must be met. In this case study we focus on tools for flexible working that can support the health service to meet increasing demand.

**Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC): Bank Flexible Working**

Traverse were commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to deliver the Bank Flexible Working pilot which aimed to evaluate technology innovations within NHS trust management of temporary staffing. The goal was to reduce spend on agency workers while also improving flexibility in the workforce.

The evaluation involved understanding the unique local context of each NHS Trust, whilst designing evaluation criteria that could apply across the whole healthcare system. We needed to understand complex system change at both a local HR process and payroll management level and a national contractor management level.

Rather than working from desk research we explored the complexity through interactive workshops that supported staff to co-design a theory of change.

This theory of change was used as a basis for formative evaluation. It enabled Traverse researchers to establish strong working relationships with NHS Trust implementation leads, and senior civil servants. The key to establishing these relationships was our focus on common learning, whilst recognising differences in context and resources.

At the end of the day, the evaluation provided the evidence needed to revise flexible working guidelines across the NHS to better reflect the needs of different staff, in different settings.

The Bank Flexible Working evaluation is just one of a range of projects we’ve delivered exploring new ways of working in the NHS.

For a summary of our learning across projects check out our blog: **How do you solve a problem like workforce transformation?**
Digital innovation

Digital innovation is transforming the way services are delivered and the way people interact with each other. We think that maximising the benefits of digital innovation for all means understanding the impacts across society. In this case study we supported citizens to explore potential futures involving self-driving cars.

Department for Transport CAV’s: providing evidence to challenge assumptions

Traverse delivered a public dialogue that used deliberative research methods to explore public acceptability towards Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs), and figure how, why, and in what circumstances their acceptability increases or decreases.

The process supported members of the public to interact with scientists, stakeholders and policy makers, to explore issues, concerns and aspirations from different perspectives. We recruited people from all walks of life, including people with disabilities and long-term conditions, for whom autonomous vehicles may offer real benefits for mobility.

158 people were brought together across the UK, in Abergavenny, Glasgow, Leeds, Millbrook, and Milton Keynes. In three of the locations, participants experienced self-driving technology for themselves by riding in a simulator, a self-driving pod or a highly-automated car. We wanted to understand whether people’s first experiences of an autonomous vehicle changed their perceptions, making them more or less positive to the technology as a whole.

CCAV, the policy recipients of the project outputs, hailed the dialogues as “ground-breaking” and a “world-first”. The report was published on October 10th 2019 and will be used to:

• Inform the development of the technology itself (including government-funded projects), helping to realise the potential benefits of CAVs while mitigating potential harm.

• Change the way policy makers communicate about connected and autonomous vehicles, so it is clearer and more accessible to citizens.

• Inform the Government’s strategy and regulations in relation to CAVs
When we talk about lived experience, we are talking about the knowledge and perspectives people gain from living in a particular context, whether that’s experience of a health condition, living in a specific community, or an aspect of their identity like gender. Lived experience is about people telling their own stories, in their own words.
Why a lived experience approach?

We believe that rigorous evidence on social issues must reflect the range of experiences of the people affected. We also believe that there is power in decision makers hearing the voices of those affected by policy and services directly, and for real people in the process of speaking.

What does it look like?

We think lived experience is most powerful when people are working in partnership with those delivering the service or making the decision: co-production. But we’re also pragmatic, not all of our work can or should use a partnership model. We distinguish between work that involves people with relevant lived experience as sources of information (e.g. a traditional research study), as participants in a conversation directly with decision makers (e.g. a workshop with policy makers and participants), and projects that genuinely involve a partnership where power is transferred from the decision maker. This can mean people being given the decision making power, or carrying out their own research.

How are we doing?

The majority of our work involves people with lived experience of the subjects we’re working on. Within that around 10% of our paid work this year involved people with lived experience either carrying out the research or presenting the findings themselves. A third didn’t involve anyone with lived experience at all, often because we were working with organisations on their own processes or structures. their views.

What’s our goal?

That 55% of our work that involves people with lived experience as research subjects is where we aim to make a change, by advocating for approaches that give people more power to shape the world around them and have their voices heard.

Our ambition this year is to include people with lived experience as paid research partners in 5% of our projects.

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Focus on lived experience

How much of our work involves people with lived experience directly?

- People with lived experience involved as research subjects: **55%**
- People with lived experience involved as active participants: **9%**
- People with lived experience involved as partners: **1%**
- No people with lived experience involved: **35%**
Where to start?

One way that we’re trying to support the movement to embed lived experience directly in decision making is by identifying areas where voices are missing and stepping in to amplify them.

Understanding the indirect health impacts of covid-19

Early in the covid-19 crisis it became clear that attendance rates for a whole range of medical appointments were significantly down. We set out to understand how why this was happening, to inform the debate about how the health system should deal with the pandemic. Twelve people were recruited by professional market research agency Plus Four, to include a range of age, gender and ethnicity. They were interviewed in the week of the 20th April, just after the second 3-week lockdown period was announced in the UK.

Each participant had experienced disruption to their healthcare within the first three weeks of the lockdown, either because care was not available or because they had not sought it out. In most cases when we spoke to people it was a mix of the two, with individual stories revealing complex interactions with the health and care service.

Each interview was carried out over the telephone by an experienced social researcher and took between 30 and 45 minutes. Participants were assured that all data would be anonymous, that participation was voluntary, and that they would be provided with a link to the report when published so they could follow what happened to their input. The interviews focused on the experience of the individual, with the researcher inviting them to tell their story and reflect on the impact on them and those around them.

We discussed the findings of this project in a joint webinar with National Voices Chief Executive Charlotte Augst, who shared views from their Our Covid Voices series, David McNally, Head of Experience of Care at NHS England and NHS Improvement, and Martin Marshall, Chair of the Royal College of GPs.
The work led directly to a second research project, exploring the patient experience of remote healthcare consultations, as almost all everyday appointments moved to telephone or online during the pandemic. We were able to provide valuable evidence to the NHS teams developing remote appointments, from NHSX to NHS England, Public Health England and even the Number 10 task force, as well as producing a top tips handout for patients to help them get the most out of their appointments.

Mind: Deliberative engagement with people with lived experience of mental health

Traverse was commissioned by Mind in 2019 to bring together 25 people with lived experience of mental health problems to discuss and inform Mind’s future strategy. We ran a two-day workshop with 25 members of the public with lived experience of mental health problems from across England and Wales, and the Mind strategy team. Taking a consensus-building approach we introduced and explored a series of core topics relating to how Mind should focus their work over the next five years and beyond. Working collaboratively with our client we designed a workshop that was inclusive and sensitive to the needs of participants including providing a calm quiet space for when people needed time away from the group, and incorporating trust-building activities such as a diversity circle.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive with comments including: “Facilitated very well - respectfully and clearly/skillfully”, and “Thank you for a weekend full of validation and unity”.

The final report was used immediately at Mind with several senior teams. Our client said: “Thank you so much for turning this around for us so quickly. I have talked about these findings so many times to so many audiences over the last few weeks – from a Heads strategy planning day to a national Mind unit away day to a Network Leaders meeting of local Mind CEOs.

The additional nuance you were able to add has helped me hugely. I’ve already had a meeting with the lived experience leadership team who wanted to understand more about the process.”

In the course of developing their organisational strategy for 2021 and beyond, Mind was exploring some important high-level topics relating to how to focus their future work. Mind wanted to involve people with lived experience of mental health problems in this process to ensure the strategy was genuinely informed by the people it serves.
Focus on lived experience
Diversity and inclusion are both equally important aspects of an inclusive society. Looking back over the last year we have seen first-hand just how much work there is still to do to achieve equity across race, ability, gender and even geography in the UK.
Diversity in our work

In preparing this report we asked ourselves how we would know whether we had done everything we could to ensure a diversity of voices in our work, given the breadth of topics we work on. Could we really compare the demographics of respondents to a consultation on the BBC licence fee concession, which predominantly affected people over 75, with the demographics of trainee clinical endoscopists?

When we tried, we found that the majority of the roughly 100 projects we worked on this year weren’t collecting any data about gender, ethnicity, age or disability of the participants. When we asked ourselves and our clients why, we had a range of plausible reasons, from the data protection argument (we didn’t want to hold data we didn’t need) to the argument that with a fixed sample like people in a particular job we couldn’t control demographics anyway. And while each of those arguments made sense at the time, when we added them up, we found that we couldn’t really say for certain whether we were reaching diverse audiences in our work or not.

So, this year we’re going to challenge all our project managers, our clients, and our partners, and ask why we aren’t monitoring the diversity of the people we work with. Because if we aren’t monitoring it, then how can we know where to improve?
Inclusion in our work

A diverse audience for our work isn’t enough to reach our goal of an equitable society, we need to ensure that our work is inclusive. In October 2019 we held our first inclusive practice share, bringing together clients and partners to reflect on how our practice can and should improve.

We identified ten principles, from championing more participatory processes, to considering the full experience of a participant, to being mindful of people’s full identities when we work with them. This is a work in progress, and we continue to host regular discussions with the group to share learning – including a specific group focusing on how our work can contribute to racial justice in response to the challenge set so powerfully by the Black Lives Matter movement.

These principles have been a crucial tool in helping our clients to consider how the work we do together can be more inclusive. We’ve introduced training to staff at EirGrid, to help them factor inclusive design into all their events. We’ve worked with our clients at BEIS to include additional budget to support participants who are digitally excluded to take part in a research programme.

And we’ve trained our team in Easy Read so we can produce accessible versions of our outputs to make them more widely available.

We have also introduced the simple process of asking a question on exclusion in all participant feedback forms, asking if anything about the activity people took part in limited their participation and how it could have been avoided. We will follow up each instance of exclusion to ensure our practice evolves.

Thinking about the activity you took part in, was there anything that made you feel that you couldn’t take part fully at the time?
Putting our own house in order

We know that our workforce is not as diverse as the audiences we research and engage with, and we need to do better. We also know that recruiting a more diverse workforce isn’t enough on its own, we also need to create an environment that is inclusive.

Finally, we want to be part of a wider change in the social research industry, so we’ll be working transparently and collaboratively to learn from and challenge our peers.

• This year we are publishing our gender pay gap for the first time, at 11% there is work for us to do, starting with a review of how our staff have been affected by the pandemic, to address the potential disproportionate impacts on female staff.

• Next year we will also publish our ethnicity pay gap.

• We are working with specialist recruitment agency Inclusive Boards to recruit a non-executive director to our board to help us embed diversity and inclusion across all our work.

• We are reviewing our policies, learning from other organisations who have already made progress, to improve our own practices.

Our gender pay gap

As of April 2020 we have a mean pay gap of 11% between our female and male employees. We’re working hard to identify the policies and practices that contribute to this. We’ve made progress in some areas, for example we know that we have no pay gap among our response unit of casual staff. As employee owners equality is at the core of our values – that’s why we share our profits at a flat rate for all employees, regardless of role.
After we've delivered our findings and finished a project, we want to know that we've had an impact over and above the final product. We work with our clients to develop their individual and organisational capacity to make better decisions.
Developing capable practitioners

We think that evidence and inclusion are key to good decision making, and an inclusive society that achieves good outcomes for all. But we also understand that for this change to happen, organisations need to change too.

Sometimes we work explicitly with organisations and their leaders to explore this change, and at others it’s an embedded part of our research, engagement or evaluation process. We also do research, engagement and evaluation work that nobody is commissioning yet where we think it will have a meaningful contribution to moving practice forward.

Developing capable practitioners

When we asked our clients what changed for them individually after working with us, we were incredibly pleased to hear stories of growing confidence, knowledge and skills, shifts in perspective and even a new role created to keep up the momentum. We break this experience down into four aspects, which we will support everyone we work with to develop, and which we’ll measure in our feedback surveys:

- Critical thinking: the ability to use evidence differently and more prominently
- Inclusion: being an advocate for the inclusion of different voices in decision making
- Intellectual curiosity: asking questions in our work
- Emotional intelligence: being able to reflect our own, and others, emotional responses to situations

“I have learned a significant amount from the team about good and impactful engagement and apply it to my current role.”

“Transformed our understanding of the importance of listening to customers and what we do with the results afterwards.”

“It’s not a transactional relationship between us and Traverse. Its more about learning from each other, working with each other and being reflective.”

“I have learnt a huge amount, my career has progressed, my role is changing, I am taking a leadership role around impact.”
Influencing best practice

Moving beyond the individual scale we also want to influence the organisations we work with, and the industries we operate in. Wherever possible we do work that moves best practice forward, and share our learning as we go.

Consultation: Heathrow evaluation, improving consultation practice

Traverse were asked to evaluate the delivery of the Heathrow Airport Expansion Consultation by the Heathrow Community Engagement Board Ltd. (HCEB), allowing us to combine two of our areas of expertise: consultation and evaluation.

Our ‘process evaluation’ approach assessed the extent to which Heathrow Airport Limited delivered the Airport Expansion Consultation in line with best practice for consultation. We developed a set of principles which formed the basis of the review, drawing on existing legislation, case law, guidance and best practice, and learnings from other engagement models used around the world.

We provided a valued input into HCEB’s response to Heathrow and considerations for future consultations, and also helped HCEB to expand their own understanding of consultation practice to support their wider work with Heathrow.

“We really enjoyed working with Traverse and the expertise offered by the team has helped HCEB successfully deliver a key objective. We have been impressed with the breadth of specialist thinking and skills that Traverse provides and we have learned a great deal ourselves about the what good consultation practice should look like.”

Heathrow Community Engagement Board Ltd. (HCEB)

Evaluation: An outcomes framework for LGBT+ organisations

Traverse worked with LGBT Consortium, now known as Consortium, to coproduce an outcomes framework. We delivered an exploratory workshop to identify common priorities across a number of LGBT+ organisations. Following this, and a review of the available literature, Traverse created a draft outcomes framework which was revised following discussions with the organisations. This was then tested by wider organisations, feeding into the development of the final outcomes framework.

The framework now offers a reference point for organisations, across the extremely diverse sector, to critically reflect on what outcomes they are best placed to achieve and potential areas of collaboration with others. In combination with a draft reference list of suggested outcomes measures, it also seeks to act as a tool to help organisations of all sizes demonstrate that they are working towards the most pressing priorities for LGBT+ people in the UK.
Engagement: #LockDownDebate

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent nationwide lockdown has demonstrated the importance of public involvement and deliberation, particularly in rapidly changing environments. In May 2020 Traverse came together with Ada Lovelace Institute, Involve and Bang the Table to trial a new model of rapid, online deliberation that would enable citizens to feed into the development of policy for moving out of lockdown.

We went from idea to findings in just 10 weeks, and were able to bring together a broad range of people to discuss the social and ethical aspects of contact tracing in real time, with the professionals who were developing the tools. The project provided a proof of concept for rapid online deliberation, in contrast to the prevailing view of public engagement as slow and cumbersome, a nice to have when circumstances allow.

We shared a learning report as soon as the project finished, to help other organisations make the shift to online deliberation.

In August we followed up with ‘Confidence in a crisis’, a joint report with Ada Lovelace that reflected on the findings in the context of the ongoing pandemic, and made direct recommendations to policymakers for rolling out digital contact tracing.

You can read more about the findings here.

Rapid online deliberation

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<td>Thursday: 90 min Zoom Q&amp;A with specialists</td>
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<td>In your own time: 2 activities on Engagement HQ</td>
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<td>Monday: 60 min Zoom discussion in groups of 8</td>
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Answering the ‘so what’ question: routes to action workshops

We think we should leave a legacy of increased capacity, among our clients and our participants. To achieve this, we’ve developed the idea of the routes to action workshop, which we offer free after every project.

The routes to action workshop is We started with our clients, and this year will expand the offer to participants, helping to capture the enthusiasm generated by engagement and research activities and give something back to participants.

Unlike traditional debrief meetings or panel events used to publicise new research, a route to action workshop brings together key stakeholders to identify and plan how the evidence and insights generated from the research can be turned into practical action. The goal is to maximise the value of the research, engagement or evaluation by explicitly asking what next, in a supported, collaborative setting. We include research participants in the events, ensuring that the actions are as rooted in lived experience as the findings.

To illustrate the potential, we recently ran Routes to Action workshops as part of a research project for the Centre for Ageing Better. The research identified patterns, barriers and enablers to informal volunteering among older people in five ‘hyper local’ sites across England. The Routes to Action workshops brought together local stakeholders to identify and agree on ways to apply insights. Ideas generated at the workshops contributed, among other things, to:

- the funding of two new community-based roles,
- a local philanthropist funding a new project, and
- evidence from the research being used by local community groups in successful funding applications.
Building a better society, one inclusive, evidence based decision at a time.