



Civic University
Network



**Institute for
Community Studies**

Case Study:

Keep Talking Podcasts

Staffordshire University & Expert Citizens

Expert Citizens are a Community Interest Company based in Stoke-on-Trent, run by people with multiple and complex needs- such as mental ill health, homelessness, addiction and offending behavior. As 'ambassadors of lived experience', they work with local and national decision-makers to evaluate the effectiveness of public services from the perspective of those experiencing social disadvantage and encourage systems change. **Staffordshire University** have collaborated with Expert Citizens on a participatory research project exploring experiences of hardship in the city, called **Get Talking about Hardship**. This project ended in 2019 but both partners wanted to explore how community research could be put on a more sustainable footing in the city.

The **Keep Talking** project launched in 2020, designed as a series of conversations between university academics and the peer researchers to explore how can universities and community organisations can work more effectively together to support local, place-based research and community researcher teams beyond the life of a short-term funded project. When Covid hit the project moved online to continue conversations through blog posts and a new **podcast** in which community researchers engaged in conversations with each other about their experiences of the pandemic, with episodes focusing on topics such as isolation, friendships, and mental health.

The podcast format acts part like an interview with questions able to be asked about people's experiences and opinions. It is also more conversational than traditional interviews, allowing all involved to reflect and share insights, and explore particular topics in depth.

Summary

Role of Community	Community involved as peer researchers and podcast hosts.
Depth of Collaboration	Medium-high: participants initially engaged as peer researchers on a time-limited project. Then the same people stayed involved to discuss ideas for how to make peer research and community-university partnerships more sustainable. Moving to podcasts keeps the community engaged and puts them in the driving seat of generating knowledge.
Lens	Social Issues.
Inclusivity	Focus on original project was on hardship, so included some people and not others.
Data Generated	Podcasts are conversations between local residents. The information generated is perhaps richer and more nuanced than data that can be collected through surveys or through secondary data. However, it only reflects the views of those involved in conversation.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Podcasts potentially have greater appeal to the public and may enable the project to gain more local attention and interest• 'Findings' can be shared 'live' with a wider audience and be part of an ongoing public conversation• Podcast format is accessible and so can potentially include a wide range of local people in sharing ideas and viewpoints• Local residents can easily be trained to host podcasts and interview others in the community.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes time to interview large numbers of people• Produces qualitative data, which may not convince potential funders or fit with needs of university or civic partners• On their own, podcasts don't allow for the creation of shared priorities or help build relationships for collective action