

## **Network Meeting - April 5<sup>th</sup> 9.30am – 12.30pm**

*“Our work is a constant struggle, with chinks of light shining through”*

### **Menu**

- [Introduction to the session](#)
- [Celebrating York MCN](#)
- [Thinking about the future](#)
- [What next? Get involved!](#)
- [Discover more- links shared within the meeting](#)

### **Introduction to the session**

The [Democratic Society](#) (DemSoc) is an organisation creating opportunities for people to take part in democracy. Paula Black and Alex Zur-Clark from DemSoc led us through the meeting. They will be continuing to help York MCN on our governance co-design journey over the coming year.

### **Celebrating York MCN**

We listened to 4 members of the Network as they reflected on how the work has impacted them personally and also in their work. We are really grateful to the panellists for sharing their stories. Thank you!

## How has the work impacted you and your work?

- **Everyone got involved for different reasons**

Once panellists been to one meeting it was easy to join other activities.

*“I started as an observer.” “I accidentally fell in to this.” “I was brand new to York.”*

- **The work is both a challenge and a comfort**

It’s a challenge in that it pushes people to address whether they’re living their own values. It’s a comfort as people feel less alone in this difficult work. It’s tiring and energising at the same time.

*“You know there are people with you.” “I’m no longer a lone voice in the wind.” “Makes us feel we’re not alone.”*

- **The Network changes the way we think**

The Network is a learning process.

*“There are lightbulb moments in meetings when you realise you’re dealing with things differently.”*

- **It puts things in to context**

Being involved, hearing updates and being aware of what other work is being done in York has helped panellists recognise how their work fits in to everything else being done across York.

*“Meetings give me a glimpse in to other work going on and a greater understanding.”*

- **Improves mental health**

Being a part of the Network has improved panellists mental health. It builds esteem, gives purpose and improves wellbeing.

*“Without the network I doubt I’d be where I am now mentally.” “It’s been a lifeline.”*

- **Gives us the chance to dream big**

The Network provides tools, skills and confidence - improving work across the board.

*“It’s infectious, it’s inspiring and it confirms that change is possible.” “It gives us the luxury to dream big.” “If I prioritise Network meetings I give myself to time within my own work to step back and think.” “It gives us space to try different things.”*

- **Allows us to collaborate and build relationships**

The Network has allowed for new connections to form. Being involved has been a way of learning how to work better with others. It’s refreshing to be in a non-competitive space and members feel less isolated after getting involved. The impact of building relationships is often overlooked.

*“It’s about relationships with people in the Network who’ve now become friends.” “The people are incredible.” “We’re not working against others but for a common cause.” “I can’t tell who’s a service provider and who’s a service user in the meetings – which is good!”*

- **It provides opportunity to step in to other areas**

The Network provides the opportunity to work in other areas - whether that’s because of connection, collaboration or learning through listening.

*“It opens hypothetical doors which you can walk through into other work.” “Changed the way I work in my own organisation, linking together the different areas involved in multiple complex needs.” “We’ve made huge achievements within projects which we never would have done if we hadn’t been working in this way.” “It’s been an innovation space.”*

## Thinking about the future of York MCN Network

This exercise was designed to help us move forwards as a group and make some decisions about the future of the Network overall. Participants went in to break out rooms and completed the following activities:

- [Activity 1: What is the purpose of York MCN?](#)
- [Activity 2: What should we be doing?](#)

### **Activity 1: What is the purpose of York MCN?**

Reviewing York MCN's six key activity areas.

Meeting participants read what's [currently stated on our website](#) and let us know what they'd like to change...



[Read what's currently on our website.](#)

#### **We should:**

- Put **connection** should at the top of the list as this is most important in all activity areas.
- Mention providing an equal platform
- Say more about **spreading power**, wanting to share it and give it away
- Mention owning work collectively
- Talk more about **empowering** people

- **Provide clarity** around which data is collected and why – this doesn't make sense right now
- Go in to more detail about those with direct experience when discussing engagement
- Mention **hosting** and bringing together a wide network of busy people, allowing them to be in the space safely
- Point out the **coordination** which is needed
- Change 'experiment' to 'learn and reflect' or 'trying new things'
- Talk about how this work allows people to be more creative through use of new tools
- Make '**Challenge**' a main heading and talk about the fact that in order to change things it takes a sustained effort
- Talk about speaking to power - connecting and engaging
- Mention the space allowing people to think about how best to help the people they're helping. **New ideas** can be presented to funders and create new possibilities. These new, holistic forms of support should be encouraged.

## Activity 2: What should we be doing?

Next, participants were asked:

- 1) What York MCN should both **START** and **STOP** doing?
- 2) What we should do **MORE** of?
- 3) **WHO** should be involved?
- 4) **HOW** can we continue?



[Read the list of start, stop, more, who and how.](#)

## What next? Get involved!

If you'd like to explore the governance work further, we are setting up a working group. This group will analyse the information we've already collected and then begin to make decisions about what comes next. Email us: [info@yorkmcn.org](mailto:info@yorkmcn.org) to let us know if you're interested.

## Discover more - links shared within the meeting

- Read the work that's previously been done on Governance, [here](#).
- [Lankelly Chase](#) Publications – [Power](#), [Participation](#) and [Perception](#).
- A bit more about Beyond the Rules [here](#).
- Information on [Lewis Deep Democracy courses](#).
- Johnny H Blog – [‘How the York MCN Network has impacted me.’](#)
- Health Creation Alliance – [Addressing National Health Inequalities Priorities](#).
- If you'd like to feed in to the York CVS volunteer strategy, please contact Alison Semmence – [Alison.semmence@yorkcvs.org.uk](mailto:Alison.semmence@yorkcvs.org.uk)