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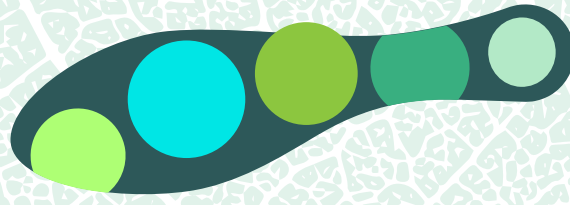
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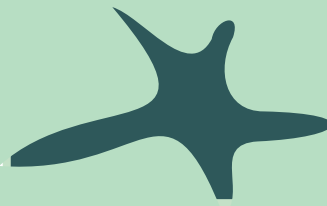
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PEAs in Pods

**Co-production of community-based
public engagement for data and
AI research**



**A showcase of co-production of community
based public engagement featuring the
voices of community members and public
engagement ambassadors.**



Engineering and
Physical Sciences
Research Council



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

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FOREWARD

Trust in Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the confidence that an AI system will consistently act in a fair, transparent, and beneficial manner, respecting individual privacy and societal values without causing unintended harm.


Different user stakeholders will have varying expectations and levels of trust in the use of AI, depending on several factors including their lived experiences, personal knowledge, context of use and understanding of the technology. Additionally, they may be unaware of their rights regarding protection from AI and digital technologies or may be excluded from these conversations altogether due to digital poverty.

As an innovator/provider of AI products and services, to truly build trust, the involvement of people, beyond the conceptual target user group and specifically from marginalised communities, is essential. To achieve this goal, we need to integrate techniques such as co-creation and co-production into the AI ecosystem and ensure that public engagement is embedded from the outset.

The PEAs in Pods project demonstrates how co-production of community based public engagement for AI research can make research more pertinent and impactful. The project seeks to empower the research



Keeley is a Professor in Computational Intelligence in the Department of Computing and Mathematics at Manchester Metropolitan University and an EPSRC Public Engagement Champion.



community, including universities and businesses, to engage meaningfully with communities and embed co-production methods into individual and organisational research processes and governance. Traditionally marginalised communities include those experiencing geographic or socioeconomic deprivation, older people who are often less engaged and underrepresented in discussions regarding the impact of technology, people with lived experience of homelessness, and ethnically diverse communities.

Funded by UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (ESPRC) - Grant Ref: EP/W033488/1, the project began in 2022 with a series of roadshows that recruited 23 researchers from Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Manchester, the University of Salford, and local Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME's). The project team then delivered a unique 4-day training programme to researchers covering public engagement skills and community co-production in the context of AI and data-driven

technologies. Our researchers, now officially Public Engagement Ambassadors (PEAs), went on to deliver three inspirational public engagement programmes over 12 months, supported by a mentoring scheme. The PEAs collaborated with community members at The Tatton (Salford), Inspire (Levenshulme), and Back on Track (Manchester).

This case study booklet captures the experiences and voices of some of the community members and PEAs who co-produced three key outputs: The People's Charter for Artificial Intelligence, a community video on People's Perceptions of AI, and the Strengths Exchange Workshop, which aimed to connect employers committed to social mobility with individuals impacted by homelessness who are ready to return to work.

It has been a privilege and an honour to work alongside community members, our community consultants, the PEAs, the project team, and our partners. As a human being, I have learned so much through "living the experience". I hope you too will feel inspired!

MEET THE RESEARCH TEAM



Professor Keeley Crockett

Professor in Computational Intelligence and EPSRC Public Engagement Champion (Manchester Metropolitan University). Keeley is the principal investigator of this project.



Dr Caitlin Nunn

Reader in Migration and Youth Studies
(Manchester Metropolitan University)



Engineering and
Physical Sciences
Research Council





Lauren Coleman

Social Entrepreneur and Systems
Convenor | Impact Strategist and
Community Facilitator, Noisy Cricket

Dr Sarah Linn

Research Associate (Manchester
Metropolitan University)



Edwin Coyler

Founder and Impact Lead at
Scientia Scripta



Mooch

Community Member Consultant



PROGRAMMES OF INSPIRATIONAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

As part of the PEAs in Pods project, we developed three Public Engagement Programmes. These programs brought together academics, known as Public Engagement Ambassadors (PEAs), and diverse communities across Greater Manchester.

Together they aimed to:

- 1** Raise Awareness of AI in people's everyday lives
- 2** Deepen Understanding of what AI is and what it isn't
- 3** Encourage action on how AI can be used to benefit communities



Public Engagement Programme 1:

The Tatton – Raising Awareness of Artificial Intelligence in the Community

The output of this programme was a 10-minute community-produced video titled '*Community Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence*'. The content and themes explored in the video were entirely shaped by the community, highlighting what matters to people in the age of AI.



You can view the video by scanning the QR code above or by searching '*Community Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence*' (youtube.com).

Video Acknowledgements

- **Community members** - Jay Quincey, Patu Bhatt, Mark Lucas, Danielle Slater, Danielle Lunt, Jessica Eaerton, Leslie Willis, Nasherla Rashid
- **Director** - Matt Thorpe
- **Videographer** - Milo Wye
- **Voiceover** - Rosie Ellis
- **Public Engagement Ambassadors** - John Henry, Rochelle Taylor, Keeley Crockett and the wider PEAs
- **Technical Officers** - Alana Hargreaves, Gareth Preston
- **Music by AudioCoffee(Denys Kyshchuk):** <https://www.audiocoffee.net/>

Public Engagement Programme 2:

The Tatton – Raising Awareness of Artificial Intelligence in the Community

This programme co-created the People's Charter for AI, a set of ten guiding principles that organisations should follow when providing public services and products that use Artificial Intelligence-based systems. The charter is designed for everyone who engages with AI-enabled digital services, as well as for organisations committed to ensuring their services are fair, transparent, and accessible to all.

To support its use, the charter is accompanied by an Explainer booklet, which introduces the Charter, outlines what 'good' looks like for a community perspective, and provides practical guidance for organisations aiming to work towards achieving the principles of the Charter. The charter is available in five languages, making it accessible to a wider audience and reinforcing its commitment to inclusion.

You can download the Charter and the Explainer booklet by scanning the QR code,



Community Members and PEAs working together at the Inspire Café in Levenshulme



The People's Charter for
Artificial Intelligence

The People's Charter for Artificial Intelligence

Principles of the Charter

For more information



1

When Artificial Intelligence is used in an application it should maintain **consistent** standards of service across different communities and user groups.

Communities and individuals should be given the opportunity to be **consulted** before the implementation of Artificial Intelligence-based systems that could impact them.

2



3

Organisations need to be open and transparent about **how** they use people's data when it's used by an Artificial Intelligence-based system to make decisions about them.

Organisations need to be open and transparent on **when** they use Artificial Intelligence in decision making.

4



5

Organisations are responsible and accountable for explaining **why** a decision has been made by an Artificial Intelligence-based system.

When Artificial Intelligence is used in decision making, decisions should always be **fair and avoid discrimination** against any group or individual.

6



7

Organisations should have a duty of care to **communicate** when a decision made by an Artificial Intelligence-based system is wrong and to provide clear and simple information on how to lodge a complaint.

Organisations should state the **benefits and risks** of using any Artificial Intelligence-based system.

8



9

People should have the freedom to **choose** whether to engage with a computer-based service or opt for human assistance.

Applications and services that use Artificial Intelligence-based systems should be **accessible** to everyone.

10



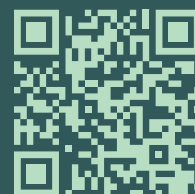
Public Engagement Programme 3:

Back on Track and HI Future – Using machine learning to support people affected by homelessness in finding job opportunities that match their strengths.

The third programme of public engagement focused on HI Future, a pre-existing project from Noisy Cricket. From 2017 to 2023, Noisy Cricket has worked to connect people affected by homelessness in Greater Manchester with businesses, government, and charities to support them in returning to work. Through a series of engaging and interactive workshops, Back on Track's

community members recommended that employer training could help minimise the risks and maximise the rewards of using machine learning to support homeless employment. Noisy Cricket teamed up with Purple Bonsai, user research and learning design studio to create a practical solution for people impacted by homelessness and employers involved in the HI Future project.

You can read more about this project on the PEAs in Pods web page by scanning the QR code.



Our community members and PEAs at a workshop working with Back on Track and HI Future

MEET THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AMBASSADORS

Over the next few pages are a selection of interviews featuring some of our community members and Public Engagement Ambassadors (PEAs) who were involved in our programmes of public engagement. Read about their experiences on the project in their own words and be inspired.



Summer Fun day promoting 'The People's Charter for AI' at The Tatton summer fair

PEA - Matt and community Member Les at The Tatton, Orsall



PEA - Ngozi and community members at Inspire Café



Video Storyboarding Workshop at The Tatton, Orsall

JOHN

Public Engagement Ambassador



Why did you get involved in the PEAs project?

The main driving force was AI and how communities and the public view it. I'm quite intrigued by this idea of perception, it's a unique challenge of AI. When I've presented projects to different communities before there has been a lot of misunderstanding. Gaining a deeper understanding of perception of technology in the community has helped me consider my approach for my future research directions.

What was it like to work with communities?

I had met with some of the community members before and it was really good to work with them again. They were really frank, and that was helpful. I'm conscious of my power and positionality when working with community members, and I didn't want to come across like a 'teacher'. It made me think a lot about how people might view you when you're meeting them outside of a work context, so I just went with a really relaxed approach. In the end, they gave me a nickname and everything. There was a mix of technological understanding in the community and that was good, some could dive straight in, and then peer support other community members.

Tell us about you

I'm Dr John Henry and I am a senior lecturer at the Manchester Metropolitan University in the Department of Computer Mathematics. I'm the programme leader for game design and I lead a Lab named 'Games Science Lab', which is a group of computer scientists that apply games to different solutions and advance game technology.

How did you find the co-production training programme?

I don't think I would have felt anywhere near as comfortable as I did with the community if we hadn't had the training. In practice, I didn't necessarily use all of it, more the key elements of it, but it helped me to distinguish how and where you could embed it into scientific research.

What has been the most important thing you have learnt by being part of the project?

The learning I've taken out of it, and other tangible things such as new research projects. I can see the project's influences on my work when I'm supervising PhD students. It has given me confidence to say: I know that co-production is needed here, or alternatively: No, this just needs some co-design, which is definitely something I couldn't have done before.

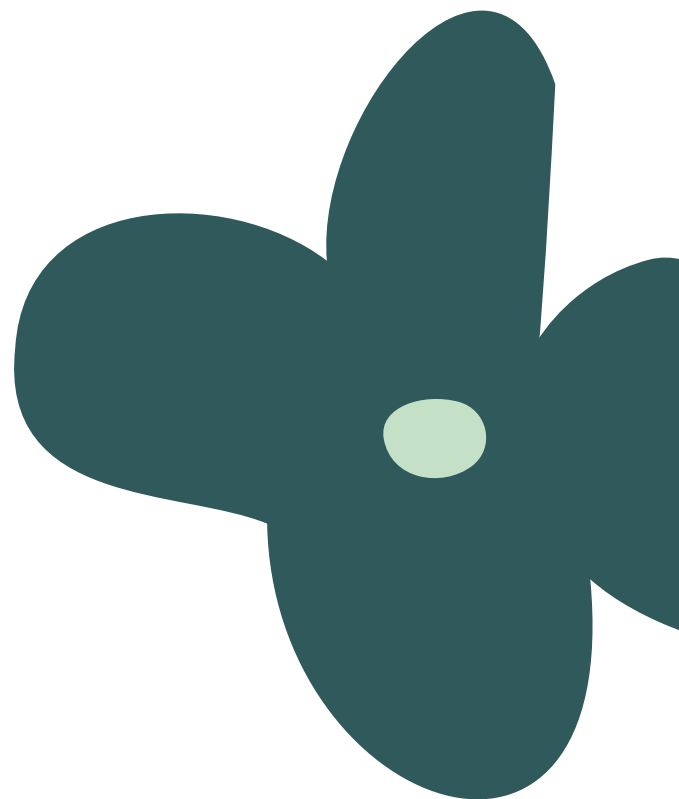
How do you think being involved in the project will impact your future research?

I'm writing a grant, and it got me thinking about everything we did on PEAs with co-design and everything that I do around games approaches. I did some research into co-design, how a core challenge for co-designers is

both participant recruitment but also participant retention. So, I wondered how gamification can help to solve some of the issues around participant recruitment and participant retention and co-design. So, that project wouldn't have been thought up if it wasn't for this experience.

Any final thoughts?

I think the experience was so useful because you experience the logistical chaos of co-production up close, and you learn when you are planning these projects just how much flexibility and community voice are involved when doing this work.



JAY

Tell us about you

My name is Jay. I've lived in Ordsall in Manchester all my life, and I've been helping out at the Tatton community centre since 2017. I was in hospital for awhile and I owe part of my life to them because they looked after me when I came out of hospital. So, when I was well enough, I started helping out and volunteering at the centre.

Community Member

Why did you become involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

Through the Tatton I got involved in the artificial intelligence panel and have remained involved in projects since then. I'm passionate about artificial intelligence and I'm concerned it's leaving the elderly behind. I'm fighting for the small guy. It's getting more and more difficult for the elderly as technology is introduced, so I thought being involved in this project was a way I could help.

What did you think about AI before you became involved in the project and has that changed since you got involved?

I believe that artificial intelligence is good. For a lot of things. But not for all things. I think it's got its place in society. But not in all areas, for example schools. I had a smartphone for years, and I know about computers and I use internet banking. But I'm worried that we didn't have a say about the artificial intelligence, it's being forced on us. It's the older guys I'm talking about who don't want an artificial intelligence bot to look after their banking. So being involved in the project has really increased by understanding of where artificial intelligence is used. I would rather learn, so I can tell people, inform people, so they can feel confident using it. I've gotten other people involved.

What was it like meeting the research team and working with them?

Yeah, it was fab. I'm not good at meeting people, but I got on with every one of them. Had a lot of laughs with them, learnt different things about certain things of different people, and I got other people's opinions on artificial intelligence. I got along well with the others in the community too, because I don't get off the estate and this is different for me. It's multilingual, it's diverse, it's just a nice place to come to.

How do you feel about what you've created as part of the project?

I can't think of how we could have done any better, because this was a new thing that we were doing. I wasn't sure how it was going to end up and how it was going to look. Everyone was learning by doing, it was quite a big learning curve. It was a new thing for the PEA team as well and I think they did really well.

Any final thoughts?

I'd just like to say a big thank you. To the university. And to people from the university. For making me feel so welcomed. I've not had the greatest upbringing and I am desperate to make sure that the elderly don't get left behind. And the funders at the minute allow that - so I would like to say thank you to the funders as well. That means a lot.



"I'm fighting for the small guy..."

I thought being involved in this project was a way I could help"

NGOZI

Public Engagement Ambassador



Tell us about you

My name is Ngozi Nneke, and I'm a lecturer in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence at University Academy 92 in Manchester. Alongside my teaching, I'm currently pursuing a PhD in Explainable AI. My research focuses on making AI predictions more transparent and accessible, ensuring they can be understood by both technical and non-technical audiences.

Why did you get involved in the PEAs project?

I got involved due to a clear connection between the PEAs project and my PhD research. The project offered a unique opportunity to build the practical knowledge and field experience essential to the success of my doctoral work. When Prof Keeley Crockett introduced the project, I saw it as a valuable chance to deepen my understanding of the methodologies and community-based approaches I aim to apply in my own research. Participating in the PEAs project has allowed me to develop key skills, gain real-world insights, and strengthen my overall research capabilities.

What was it like to work with communities?

Working with communities was both insightful and transformative. It required me to be mindful of the people I was engaging with, particularly in terms of their perspectives and levels of understanding. This experience taught me the importance of approaching each interaction with empathy and adaptability. By collaborating directly with community members and seeing things from their point of view, I was able to gain a deeper appreciation for their needs and priorities. It also reinforced the value of co-creation – working in teams, sharing ideas, and building solutions together.

This approach not only enriched my understanding but also positioned me to contribute more meaningfully in future community-focused work.

How did you find the co-production training programme?

Coming from a technical and data science background, I hadn't previously worked on a project like this. The co-production training programme was incredibly valuable in preparing me for meaningful engagement with communities. It helped me understand that you can't simply apply technical solutions without first taking the time to connect with people, understand their context, and see things from their perspective.

The training offered practical insights into how to approach communities thoughtfully and respectfully. I would definitely recommend it to others, especially anyone interested in working at the intersection of AI and community engagement.

How do you think being involved in the project will impact your future research?

Before joining this project, I don't think I would have considered pursuing research that directly involves working with people. However, being part of this experience has completely shifted

my perspective. I now feel confident that this is the direction I want to take in the future. Once I complete my PhD, I intend to continue working in this area, as I've found it genuinely fulfilling. Engaging with communities, having meaningful conversations, and helping others understand the purpose and impact of the work has been incredibly rewarding. This experience has shown me the value of people-centred research and how impactful it can be.

Anything that was challenging or you would want to change?

We always had problems with timing! There is no perfect time, people are working, they are busy, it was difficult to always find time to make meetings work for everyone.

Any final thoughts?

Being part of this project has significantly boosted my confidence. I now feel comfortable speaking about my research in any setting, at any time. It's also helped me gain clarity about my future direction. I now know that I want to pursue research more seriously. Initially, I had planned to focus solely on teaching, but this experience has opened my eyes to the possibility of combining both paths. Engaging with communities has brought me genuine joy, and I've realised that I can continue doing this kind of meaningful work alongside teaching and academic research.

MARK

Community Member



Tell us about you

My name is Mark. I was a computer engineer for 17 years. I've lived in the Levenshulme area for about 30 years, and we have been involved in the community at Inspire for about 5 – 6 years. It's a close community, we always help each other, it's a bit more like an extended family. There is so much diversity so it opens your mind a bit, and you can speak freely. People love it when they come here and they don't like to leave.

How did you become involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

I think it's partly because of my technical background. Artificial intelligence just started to come in at this point a couple of years ago. It was taking off with Chat GPT and various other things. So, I was interested, being of a technical nature anyway, and I like to keep up with what's going on. And I was a little bit concerned as well about the lack of transparency of where AI was being trained – which has continued to come to light in the last couple of years.

What did you think about AI before you became involved in the project and has that changed since you got involved?

I'm a bit sceptical of the high-end AI, where there is no transparency and no way to reverse engineer what has been created. You can't work out what the algorithm is doing. So, if something goes wrong, who fixes it? Are you skewing the information you are putting into it? Is there bias? The people at the top basically seem entitled to do whatever they want because they are wealth creators for the people investing in them. AI development just seems unfettered. We need to rein it in, we need scrutiny and control, and there isn't enough critical thinking.

What was it like working with the research team?

It was good, we were comfortable working together, because when we all get together we all start talking about different subjects. It was good to work with other community centres (like the Tatton) as well. You get to find out what they are doing and what they are up to.

How do you feel about the outputs?

I think the outputs are the culmination of the work the group has put in over the last couple of years. Our video on AI and communities showcases the collective thoughts we are all challenged with, in this fast moving area of data science. The People's Charter attempts to highlight the issues that have arisen with the advent of AI and how it needs to be managed by people. If left unchecked, we will all be susceptible to the loss and control of our own data and the impact it can have on society. Our panels with companies, using AI tools, has shown that community lead oversight does work and is valuable for both sides. Companies have listened and we have been heard and hopefully made a difference.

Any final thoughts?

I would just like to thank the University for organising the project. It's been first class. They should keep funding projects like this. The opportunity has been great, thanks for having me be involved.

“Our video on AI and communities showcases the collective thoughts we are all challenged with, in this fast moving area of data science”



PEAs in Pods
Community | Engagement | Research

MUSHTAHID

Public Engagement Ambassador



Tell us about you

My name is Mohammed (Md) Mushtahid Salam. I'm a medical doctor by training, but after a few years of practice I switched to public health. I completed a Master of Public Health (MPH) in Malaysia and subsequently began my PhD at the University of Manchester. My doctoral research investigates how changes in the built environment affect physical activity levels, using cameras to automatically and objectively measure these changes.

Why did you get involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

I really felt that a mixed-method approach – using both qualitative and quantitative approaches – would be the best fit for my PhD research. I wanted to speak to people as part of my research, but I didn't get the chance to fully explore that within my PhD. I saw PEAs in Pods as the perfect opportunity for me to build skills in public engagement and gain more experience working directly with communities.

What was it like to work with communities?

The community members were great. I had a lot of fun, and it was really a delightful experience working with them. It was also a strange experience for me because I am used to working alone, usually deciding how my research is going to be done and working with data, rather than having direct contact with people. Working with a community is completely different. I felt that all of us got to share our opinions equally and everything was taken into consideration.

How did you find the co-production training programme?

It definitely provided a good foundation, I think, for everyone. You have to be in the right state of mind to do co-production and public engagement. When working with marginalised communities you need to be aware of a range of issues, and the training programme really helps you to think more critically about these. I especially appreciated the focus on power, positionality and intersectionality. I was aware of these considerations through my background, but the training reinforced the importance of thinking about both the community as a whole and each individual within it, as well as our roles within these dynamics.

How do you think being involved in the project will impact your future research?

I'm going to be finishing my PhD soon and I can definitely see how the skills I've gained during this project will be valuable in some of the roles I'm considering – particularly those that involved community engagement and co-production. Being part of the project hasn't only helped me understand 'how' to do this kind of work, but it has also built my confidence to actually do it.

Anything that was challenging or you would want to change?

Obviously, there are ups and downs when you're working on a project like this – but I think that's normal. And when I say ups and downs, I mean managing other commitments alongside this project. Also, because our output on "Hi Future" is not as 'tangible' as some of the others, it can be difficult to explain its impact – or to fully understand it at this stage – since much of it will be realised in the long term. That said, I think the impact of the project on us as participants, and on how community members have become AI champions in their own communities, is already significant. For me, that alone is a huge impact.



ROCHELLE

Public Engagement Ambassador



Tell us about you

I am Rochelle, a lecturer in Artificial Intelligence at Manchester Metropolitan University, where I also lead the MSc Data Science programme. Before transitioning to data science, I worked as a geologist, primarily focusing on data-driven geoscience research.

How did you get involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

My former data science lecturer, Professor Keeley Crockett, introduced me to the project and encouraged me to participate. I found the idea intriguing as it presented an opportunity to broaden my research horizons and further develop my expertise. Once I met and engaged with the communities, witnessing the collaborative nature of the work, I realised how valuable and enriching the experience would be. At that point, I knew it was something special and that I had to continue.

What has been the most important part of taking part in the project?

Engaging with perspectives outside my usual academic sphere has been invaluable. Discussing research within community settings allowed me to appreciate viewpoints I wouldn't typically encounter. My work is highly interdisciplinary, often involving collaboration with subject experts from diverse fields. However, this experience introduced me to a dynamic that I found incredibly rewarding. In data science research, ethical considerations often revolve around data integrity and security. Working directly with communities, however, highlighted a broader spectrum of ethical concerns, particularly related to power dynamics and positionality. This has fundamentally influenced how I approach new research initiatives, especially within co-production frameworks.

How did you find the co-production training programme?

The training was instrumental in framing the ethical dimensions of co-production. It provided a solid foundational understanding, ensuring we were well-prepared to engage with communities thoughtfully and responsibly. It also challenged my assumptions, prompting me to reconsider how to structure collaborative research effectively.

One of the key lessons I took from the training was that methodologies are not always transferable; what works in one community may not be effective in another. Co-production is an ongoing learning process, and adapting to different contexts requires continuous reflection and adjustment.

What was it like meeting with and working with the communities?

Initially, it was a bit daunting and not knowing much about the community or what to expect made me apprehensive. However, once I met everyone, those uncertainties quickly faded. The interactions were genuinely symbiotic; community members were eager to learn but also equally keen to share their knowledge and insights with us. Their enthusiasm and ideas were remarkable, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have collaborated with them.

How do you feel about what you have co-created with the community?

It was fascinating to present our initial ideas, then watch them evolve through the community's input. Rather than leading the direction, we facilitated discussions that allowed their perspectives to shape the final outcome.

I was particularly involved in developing the Charter, though I also appreciated the video, which struck a balance between education and authentic community representation. I take great pride in the Charter and now actively adhere to its principles in my everyday life. Simple action, such as choosing to buy tickets at a railway ticket office rather than through an app, or supporting businesses that offer accessible payment options, can help preserve services that are essential for those who are less tech-savvy. I now make a conscious effort to do this myself.

Any final thoughts?

This project has been an interesting and extremely valuable experience. It has prompted me to reframe many aspects of my approach to research and community engagement.



MALA

Tell us about you

My name is Mala, I'm Indian but I was born and raised in Kenya. I arrived in the UK about forty years ago and first lived in Leicester. I moved to Manchester to the Longsite and Levenshulme area about 30 years ago and started coming to Inspire about fourteen years ago.

Why did you become involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

I was in the Inspire centre and I heard about the project and how it was focused on artificial intelligence. I came to find out more and I thought: This is good, because more and more artificial intelligence is being used, everybody's using it.

What did you think about AI before you became involved in the project and has that changed since you got involved?

I heard somewhere along the line that AI is 'big brother', always watching you, always tracking you. And you can see that businesses are starting to use AI and technology and are now closing down in communities. I used to think: Why are they using this? It's a nuisance. For example, why can't we just have humans talk to us? I know since Covid everyone is going this way, it's changed a lot. It's good in a way, there are benefits, but I think it's bad for the elderly, who are not computer literate. I have more of an awareness of it now. I can see how AI algorithms work, I can see: AI has been used here, and how I get nudged towards certain things.



What was it like meeting the research team and working with them?

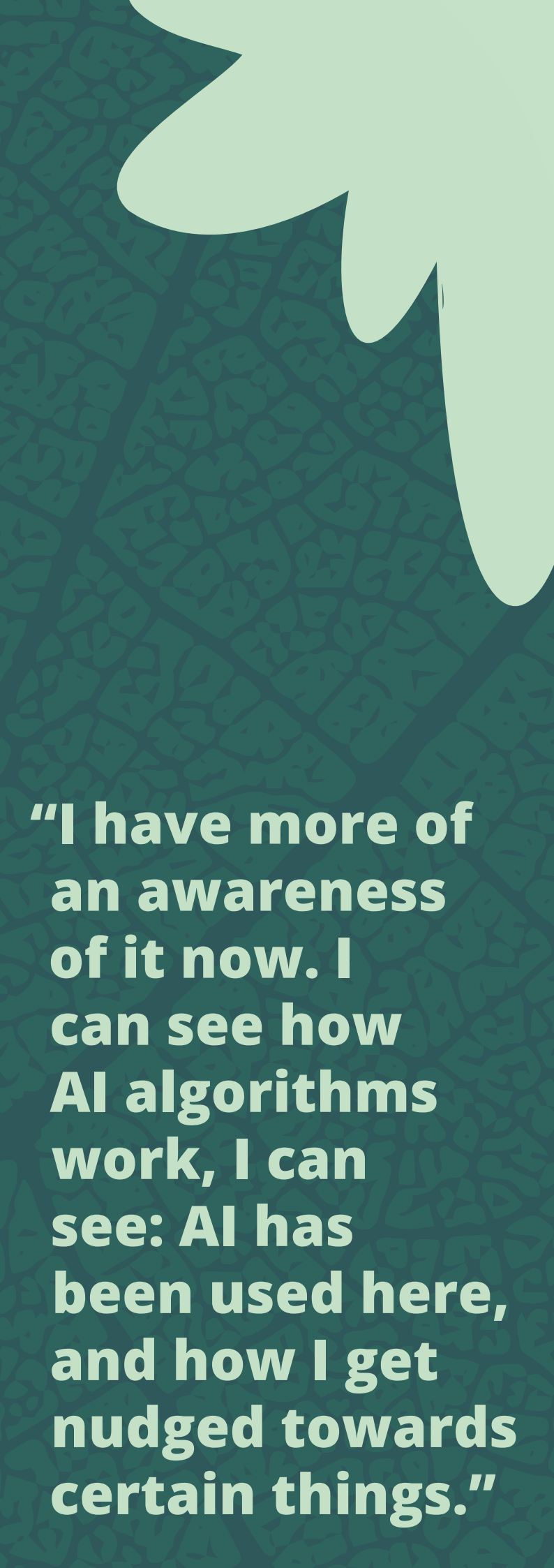
I was a bit unsure in the beginning, but I just kept coming. Then I started to understand more about what is happening, and I felt that yes, we really need someone to help with this kind of thing (to create a charter) because then they can take this to organisations and say: This is what we want. This is where you can see the benefit of working with universities to highlight different experiences.

How do you feel about you've created as part of the project?

I'm really pleased with the project outputs, and I feel like they will have a positive impact on the community. I think the elderly need support - classes to explain to them what is going on. They need resources that are simplified to help them.

Any final thoughts?

Once I get into something, I just want to know more, its my inquisitive nature. This has given me lots of ideas; I can see that change is coming.



"I have more of an awareness of it now. I can see how AI algorithms work, I can see: AI has been used here, and how I get nudged towards certain things."

SUNDAY

Public Engagement Ambassador



Tell us about you

My name is Sunday Cookey Ekpo. I'm a senior lecturer in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Manchester Metropolitan University. I currently lead the Communication and Space System engineering team. I'm also a school governor and a street pastor.

Why did you get involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

I've always had this kind of interest in empowering people. Bringing about life transforming opportunities to others. This project gave me that opportunity to relate to a community, to try to understand how best to help them. Not just my idea of helping them, but what they believe will help them.

How did you find the co-production training programme?

The training programme was so useful, it was very holistic in design. We were able to adopt and adapt, responding to issues as they came up. It gave us that foundational preparation and maturity to handle potential experiences and outcomes when working with the communities.

What has been the most important thing you have learnt by being part of the project?

This project helped me to take a deep dive into co-production process, co-working with the communities and working with people disadvantaged by homelessness. Working with people that will eventually use the products you are developing is very important because their contribution will inform the way a service will be designed, so it's been very helpful for

me. All the stages, all the steps and the interactions, the meetings, the engagements, the opinions of service users, have been an amazing journey and I learnt a lot from colleagues and from the stakeholders that we work with.

Did you feel that you were able to contribute to the project and are you pleased with the final output?

We worked as a family, and everyone was not just useful but needed. So, there was that sense of belonging within the research team and amongst the stakeholders. So definitely my opinions, my comments, my contributions, I felt very much valued and appreciated and I can see some of the things that I contributed and also help colleagues to work on. I am definitely pleased with the final output – what we achieved in the timeframe and with limited time and resources. It was a great collaborative effort by everyone and there is room for additional work to be done going forward.

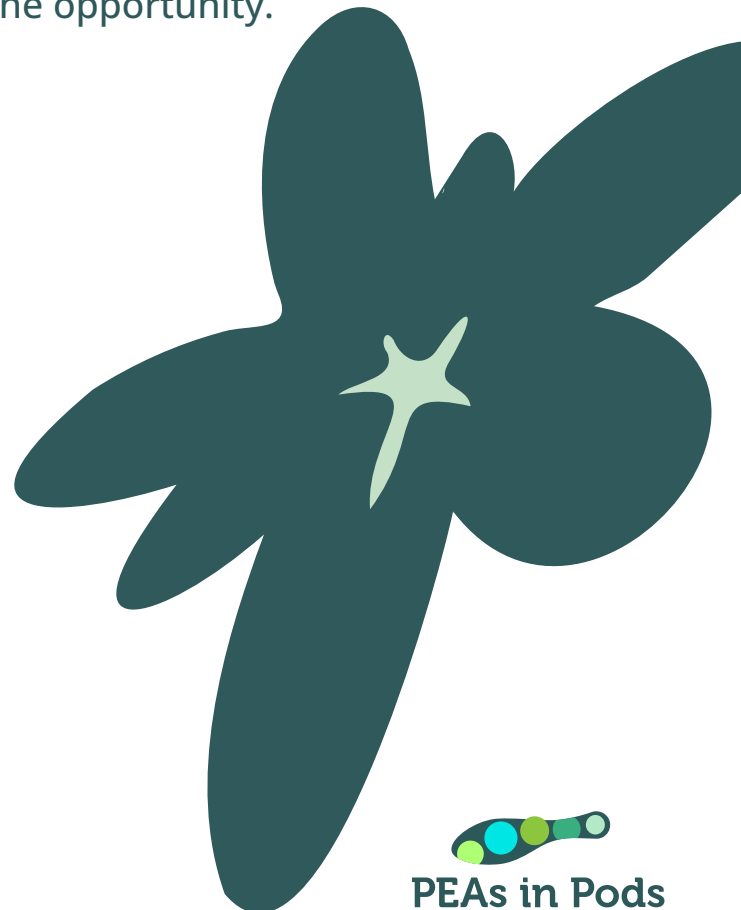
How do you think being involved in the project will impact your future research?

I'm currently working on some projects and I'm drawing on knowledge and experience I gained on the project. The PEAs project

has definitely helped me. I use the insight from the project to advise postgraduate students. So, it has grown my research, but also helped me to grow the research of others. As engineers we solve problems, and if you understand the problem better through working with communities, you can develop solutions that are tailored.

Any final thoughts?

The project really gave me an opportunity to contribute to real impact in terms of the people around us, to impact people in society that we know are there but perhaps we don't know how to help them. We need to develop frameworks to help people who are disadvantaged. People have skills and could contribute to society, but they're not really given the opportunity.



DELYTH

Community Member

Tell us about you

My name is Delyth. I was originally living in the Midlands, but I've been living in Manchester for a number of years after I moved here to study. I've been involved with the community at Back on Track since 2018.

What did you think about AI before you became involved in the project and has that changed since you got involved?

I was interested in it because some of it will be useful, but there is stuff that freaks me out, like deep fakes, convincing people that something is real. Taking part in the project has made me understand a bit more about how AI works. I think its more that I don't trust people (and how they might use AI) then I don't trust the AI itself.

Have you changed anything that you do since being involved in the project?

A little bit. I'm more aware of the algorithms and how they can send me down a content rabbit hole. Now I try to make the algorithm work more for me.

How did you become involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

I've been involved in some projects before, and when the research team came to Back on Track to explain the PEAs project, I was interested in the concept of AI so decided to get involved.

What was it like working with the university research team on the project?

It was nice to work with them, they were personable and open. I felt like my opinions and ideas were valued in creating the output, although it can be difficult to explain the output to others. Sometimes there were some challenges, like some of the more academic language, but the discussions we had together were really beneficial, and I found the majority of it really interesting.

Any final thoughts?

I think people might have been intimidated about projects like this in the past, coming to the university or meeting researchers. But I think being introduced to the project at Back on Track, where community members were comfortable, working with them as a partner, you can get beyond that initial difficulty of people not wanting to get involved. I think its important to make sure projects like this continue to be accessible so different people can be involved.

"I felt like my opinions and ideas were valued in creating the output"



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MATT

Public Engagement Ambassador



Tell us about you

I'm Matt, I'm a senior lecturer in the School of Education at Manchester Metropolitan University. My job is training computing teachers or student teachers on the PGCE. In the last two years I've been the AI faculty lead for Health and Education, working with staff and students to build AI literacies. I'm also in my final year of a part time PhD. My research was initially focusing on learning analytics but I have moved to focus on data practices and AI. I'm more on the social, ethical research side of AI, then the nuts and bolts engineering of AI.

Why did you get involved in the PEAs project?

When I saw the project adverts asking for researchers to get involved, I thought: this has really hit the nail on the head of being in exactly the place I wanted to be. A lot of what underpins my work are social and ethical questions about what people think and feel about these AI technologies. I was on the lookout for something that was more about public engagement, more focused on empowering everyday people and communities, to give people a voice so global tech corporations don't just do what they want unchallenged. So, I jumped on it, I had no hesitation.

What was it like to work with communities?

I really enjoyed it, it was really refreshing to speak to people who were quite forthright and honest with their views. It was good to meet people outside of the world of academia, it felt more like a conversation you have in real life, rather than a conversation you have in the ivory tower of a university. I enjoyed that and it was really good to sort of immerse ourselves in community spaces. I really enjoyed especially going to the Tatton Café - community members saying: 'right go and get yourself a cup of tea or coffee. Are you having some breakfast with us?' I really enjoyed that it wasn't 'us and them'. It just felt like we all sort of mucked in and got on.

How did you find the co-production training programme?

I thought the training was good, and good for networking with the other PEAS as well. So, by the time we hit the projects we had built some relationships amongst ourselves. Tapping into the work of Noisy Cricket and bringing in community members that had worked with them before, to share their expertise was really good.

How do you feel about what you created together with the community?

It was quite a scary proposition to co-create a video. And one of the biggest challenges was getting different people's timeframes to line up. But it was great to be trusted with it and I think one of my biggest learnings from the project happened during the filming and during the co-creation ideation sessions. I learnt to remove any assumptions about what might crop up as you work with communities. Not to steer the conversation or expect an answer of a particular nature, just learning to let people go on tangents. I'm a goal orientated person and that was challenging for me. I made this transition to just enjoying that process of just letting people speak, put them at ease, have open communication, open dialogue and then there's really some quite powerful community views that emerge.

What has been the most important thing you have learnt by being part of the project?

Some of my significant learnings I've taken from the project is probably not what I pre-empted that I would learn at the start. This was my first real community engagement project and I've learnt a lot in terms of soft skills, learning to let things flow, all the 'stuff' around co-creating like having lunch and building relationships.

Any final thoughts?

I feel much better equipped if I was to embark on something again that was going out into the community, because, ultimately, that's where I want to be. I can't say all this stuff about wanting to represent groups that might be underrepresented in the technological world. We've got to practice what we preach, get out there and work with people. You can't just sit as a commentator on these things all the time. So, I feel like I have made that step towards doing that in terms of my own research.



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ARUT

Community Member



Tell us about you

My name is Arut. I'm Armenian, I lived in a lot of different places, but I arrived in Manchester during Covid and the different lockdowns taking place. I'm a really curious person. I'm interested in learning and educating myself. I'm always trying to increase my understanding. I've been involved in the Back on Track community for a number of years, I feel at home there.

What did you think about AI before you became involved in the project and has that changed since you got involved?

We are living in an AI world, either knowingly or unknowingly. I think we don't notice a lot of it until it is something like a flying car. Some of the developments feel unnecessary. AI can provide a lot of solutions for broader society, but we need to be asking the question: Does the solution provide an advantage or disadvantage for ordinary people? Homelessness is a really big thing, and AI can assist. It can be a social good if it's used in the right way. Think of how AI could assist the NHS. I had a really frustrating time in the hospital recently where the technology designed to help was broken, it felt like we are living in the 18th century. For AI to assist, we need people to be honest, you need people to understand that there aren't quick fixes. The biggest achievement of AI right now feels like drone (warfare), money making, scams. It's not really regulated enough.

How did you become involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

I've been involved in some projects before at Back on Track, and I really like to help people, to contribute and to give back. I feel like when I speak, I can motivate people.

What was it like working with the PEAs research team?

It was a good team, people had a positive attitude. I felt like we were working together to understand each other, understand what each of us were saying, what we were explaining, and then we could go a bit deeper into the issues and topics. It was a beautiful thing. It was really well organised. I think the best part of the project was the beginning when you meet people for the first time and you start to talk about ideas and you get 'lost' together. You have to try different ways and try by failing.

Any final thoughts?

You need people who have lived experience in these projects. A lived experience is different. What you live on the ground is different.

"We were working together to understand each other, understand what each of us were saying, what we were explaining, and then we could go a bit deeper into the issues and topics. It was a beautiful thing"

COMMUNITY MEMBER

Why did you become involved in the PEAs in Pods project?

Well, I just thought I might be able to feedback into the project about what has been on my mind. And I also hoped to be able to learn something about the infrastructure of the internet and technology.

What did you think about AI before you became involved in the project and has that changed since you got involved?

Well, I believe that computing and technology is a great asset. It makes things much quicker. I thought: The more I understand about technology, the easier it will make things for me. I can see certain positives and benefits of AI. I can see how it can help in medicine, engineering – any profession if it's used in the right way - but there are also one or two things that I'm not happy about.

What was it like meeting the research team and working with them?

I enjoyed working with the research team and the wider community. I felt like I had a good say in what we were creating together. The team was open to suggestions and listened to all of us working together to create the People's Charter. I'm interested in how research projects like this get funded and to make sure funders are not self-interested, so that even if projects discover things that are not in a funder's interest, the projects continue.

Any final thoughts?

I thought it was a really interesting project and a very good thing for the community. I would like to see more global connection and more things that help people come together across different cultures and languages.

ABOUT THE DESIGN

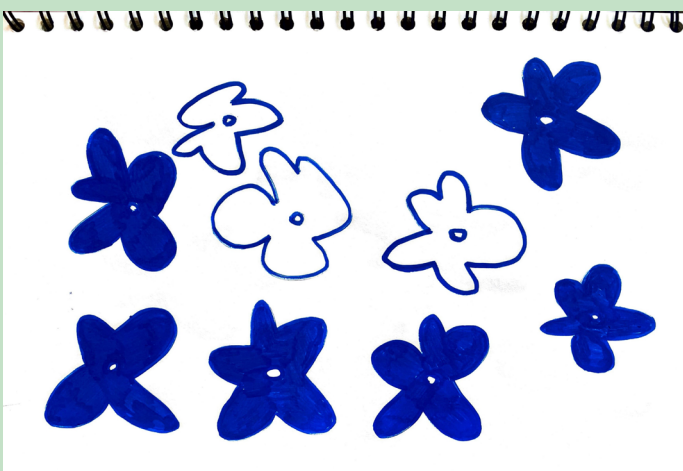
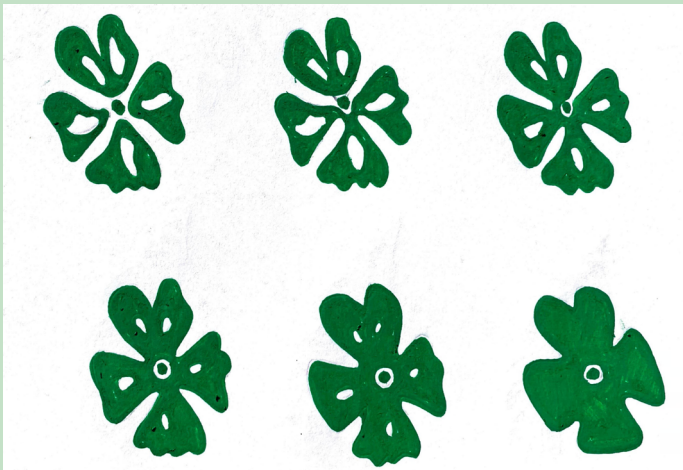
Leanne Bellchambers

Growth and Transformation were the key words I focused on when designing this booklet for PEAs in Pods. These words to me encapsulated perfectly the relationship between the PEAs and community members. The relationship was nurtured and precious, resulting in transformative experiences for both parties.

To capture this I went back to nature, attempting to create a visual ecosystem using illustration, contrast, and layout to display how they have helped each other to grow as well as equip one another with new knowledge and skills. It was important for me to not define clearly between PEAs and community members as this was a mutually beneficial relationship which is displayed beautifully in everyone's interviews.

I'm extremely grateful for this experience. I have been able to put skills I have been learning at university into practice outside of the educational setting. I have learnt a lot about myself along the way too, which is something I will be carrying with me into my third year where I'll be defining my practice. Thanks to Rochelle and Keeley, I feel more confident in myself and my design skills.

Graphic Designer



ENDING WELL FOR COMMUNITIES

There are so many benefits and opportunities of working with community-engaged research.

Many community members were aware of the fast-paced adoption of AI and felt that the project enabled them to have a proactive and engaged approach to it. They expressed optimism for the potential benefits it could bring, but also apprehension that it would leave disenfranchised and marginalised communities behind, with little concern for their welfare or inclusion:

“[AI] has been thrust upon us and we’ve not had a choice whether we want it or not. So, I’d rather learn, so I can tell people, inform people.” Community Member

The project provided opportunities to have engaged conversations and co-create relevant solutions whilst building community member’s confidence as ‘point people’ within their community to help others understand AI.

Participants highlighted how university researchers’ willingness to come to community centres and meet with communities in their

own spaces made a difference to accessibility and willingness to be involved in the project.

Community members highlighted how considerations such as remuneration for travel beyond community centres (for example, coming to the university), remuneration for time and commitment to the project, food, drinks, and a relaxed atmosphere as instrumental to their continued inclusion and commitment to the project.

Community members could see the benefit of collaborating together with university researchers and building deeper relationships with educational institutions, to help build momentum and voice on social issues that were affecting communities. Relationships and communication take time, but result in better outcomes. Community members noted how it was powerful to see:

“People listening to me.” - Community Member

AND WHAT'S NEXT?

Since the completion of the three programmes of public engagement, community member and PEAs have been busy:

- Exploring ways to promote the People's Charter for AI to organisations
- Engaging in new projects with Noisy Cricket
- Taking part in PhD student research on explainability and accountability in artificial intelligence-based systems
- Taking part in roundtables for the Policy Connect Inquiry Skills in the Age of AI chaired by Lord Tim Clement Jones and Lord Chris Holmes launched on 16th June 2025 (Scan the QR code to read the inquiry report Skills in the Age of AI)



This is just the start and the journey will continue. Together we can learn so much more and build a better society where the use of AI can benefit everyone and no one is left behind.



PAY
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FORWARD

THANK YOU AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project received funding from UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Grant Ref: EP/W033488/1. Through its public engagement champions initiative, EPSRC seeks to foster a research culture that actively values public interaction at all stages of the research process, thereby inspiring the public and attracting individuals to STEM careers.

Community members

Jay, Mark, Patu, Linda, Janet, Mala, Janet, Arut, Delyth, Danielle S, Danielle L, Jessica, Nasherla, Lee-man, Les and Gaz.


With special thanks to Inspire Levenshulme, The Tatton, Ordsall, Salford and Back on Track, Manchester.

back on track >



Public Engagement Ambassadors involved in the three Programmes of Public Engagement:

Matthew Thorpe (Manchester Metropolitan University), Rochelle Taylor (Manchester Metropolitan University), John Henry (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ngozi Nneke (University Academy 92), Femi Stevens (Self Employed), Shobha Gowda (University of Salford and University of Manchester), Helen Kirby-Hawkins (Manchester Metropolitan University), Sunday Ekpo (Manchester Metropolitan University), Alex Mbabu (University of Salford), Md Mushtahid Salam (University of Manchester), Cathal O'Reilly (University of Manchester), Mooch (Community Member Consultant).



In memory of community members Les and Linda, who contributed so much of their lived experiences and insights to this project. You both taught us all so much and you are deeply missed.

We would like to specially thank our project advisor and partners for their support on the project.

Project Advisor:

- Professor David Leslie - Director of Ethics and Responsible Innovation Research at The Alan Turing Institute and Professor of Ethics, Technology and Society, Queen Mary University of London

Project Partners:

- Professor Andy Miah, Chair in Science Communication and Future Media, University of Salford
- Professor Richard Kingston - Professor of Urban Planning and GISc, University of Manchester.



FIND OUT MORE



For more information about this booklet and our work in ethical AI at Manchester Metropolitan University, please email ai.ethics@mmu.ac.uk

Find out more about our partners:

- 🌐 **Lauren Coleman** - Co-founder of Noisy Cricket - medium.com/noisy-cricket
- 🌐 **Scientia Scripta** - www.scientiascripta.co.uk/
- 🌐 **The Alan Turing Institute** - <https://www.turing.ac.uk/>
- 🌐 **University of Salford** - www.salford.ac.uk/
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We are committed to ensuring that all of our materials are accessible. This case study booklet is also available in an electronic format.





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