

Street Wisdom comes to Barrow

A Blog by Sharon Senior

I'm very lucky to be in a role where no two days are the same and there's the opportunity to be creative and try out new things. I recently met up with a group of councillors from Barrow Borough Council to talk through some ideas about how we could support their approach to councillor development.

Their interest was piqued by the concept of Street Wisdom. Street Wisdom is a global social enterprise with a mission to bring inspiration to every street on earth. It's a technology that allows anyone, anywhere to get unusual inspiration from their everyday surroundings...and find fresh answers to personal or work-related questions – with profound results.

At North West Employers, we've worked with other organisations to build this concept into leadership programmes and other activities to provide a different kind of learning experience and I was bowled over by the impact of my own personal experience of Street Wisdom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmenRffrXQs>



So, you can imagine my excitement at the prospect of doing something a bit different in Barrow. The Councillors identified an area (Barrow Island) that had previously had a bit of bad press and they were keen to look at how they could shift this perception.

Working with the lovely Gary Loftus, we came up with a session that combined a bit of Street Wisdom with some Transformative Community Building. Gary is steeped in working with communities to develop human potential and has a real energy and passion for his work.

Fast forward to a Friday afternoon in Barrow. We met in the local pub which also serves as a community library and is a great example of the community taking ownership. We were a group of local residents, councillors, council officers, police and health and facilitated by Gary, our challenge was to go out into Barrow Island and speak to the residents.

We asked them the following questions: 1. How many of your neighbours do you know by name? 2. Do you belong to/know of any community groups in the area? 3. What makes this area awesome?

We then came back together to share our experiences. People were really open to being approached and answering the questions and we got some great answers (rather than talking about some of the issues in the area, this was a real transformative). What everyone said was awesome about the place was the people and sense of community.

Sharing the experiences resulted in the group identifying some changes they would make to the work they do - don't over-complicate things, keep it simple, get people involved, don't make assumptions.....

They also liked the experience and how it had made them reflect - really powerful stuff in just one afternoon. I loved it!

A big thank you to the councillors and team at Barrow for trying something different and to Gary for his energy and getting us all to think differently.



Gary Loftus:

The session in Barrow Island was an incredible opportunity to introduce participants to the concept of Street Wisdom, whilst blending my experience around the human potential. The aim was to provide space for fresh insights, and to encourage people to see with new eyes the place where they live and work.

The best part for me is in the sharing of experience, it's the essence, the magic and the energy that creates the potential for new worlds to evolve. As one participant put it 'I couldn't believe how simple it was to engage with folk and the willingness of people to share their thoughts about this amazing place Barrow Island.'

I always walk away from sessions like this with a complete sense of human connection bound in possibility and potential – like Sharon, I feel blessed to have such an amazing job, that helps humans fulfil their dreams.



Councillor Derek Brook, Barrow in Furness Borough Council:

Going out to meet people on the street was much more positive - we got a wider point of view, which was great" and " I'd recommend any councillors to try it as a more fun and positive way of getting out to meet the general public.

Following on from the session we are thinking about how to use this idea in other areas.