

# Everyday Politics





**There are some obvious things that people can do to participate in politics - voting, standing for election, joining a political party, or responding to consultation.**

**But what about the less formal ways that people participate?**

Research has shown lots of ways that 'everyday makers' are involved in political participation. Everyday makers are people who get involved in local and concrete projects with a DIY-ethos, who make a real difference to people's lives and benefit the local community. Everyday makers are well-known, well-networked and trusted across their communities, working either as part of a community-led action group or by themselves. Everyday makers create tangible changes that make a difference. They are doing what we might call everyday politics.

Everyday politics shows that people have power to make a difference in their communities.

This publication is based on the Everyday Politics research project, which explored how a group of citizens who live in Greater Manchester participate in everyday politics. The project used a photovoice approach, where community researchers took photographs to capture what they do in their local communities to make a difference. These photographs were then used as a basis for discussion to understand more about everyday politics.

The community researchers identified five key contributions that everyday politics can make:

- **Valuing:** recognising and building on the strengths in our communities
- **Connecting:** bringing communities together
- **Questioning:** challenging the status quo to put forward alternative approaches
- **Reasoning:** learning within communities to create shared understanding
- **Developing:** working with communities to come up with solutions

**Join the conversation by using the hashtag: #everydaypolitics**

**In what ways can everyday politics make a difference in our communities?**

**How can everyday politics be better supported in your community?**

Everyday Politics is one of the action research projects of Jam and Justice, a three-year programme of research bringing together people with different knowledge, skills and resources interested in making devolution matter in Greater Manchester.

For more information, please visit: *[jamandjustice-rjc.org](http://jamandjustice-rjc.org)*

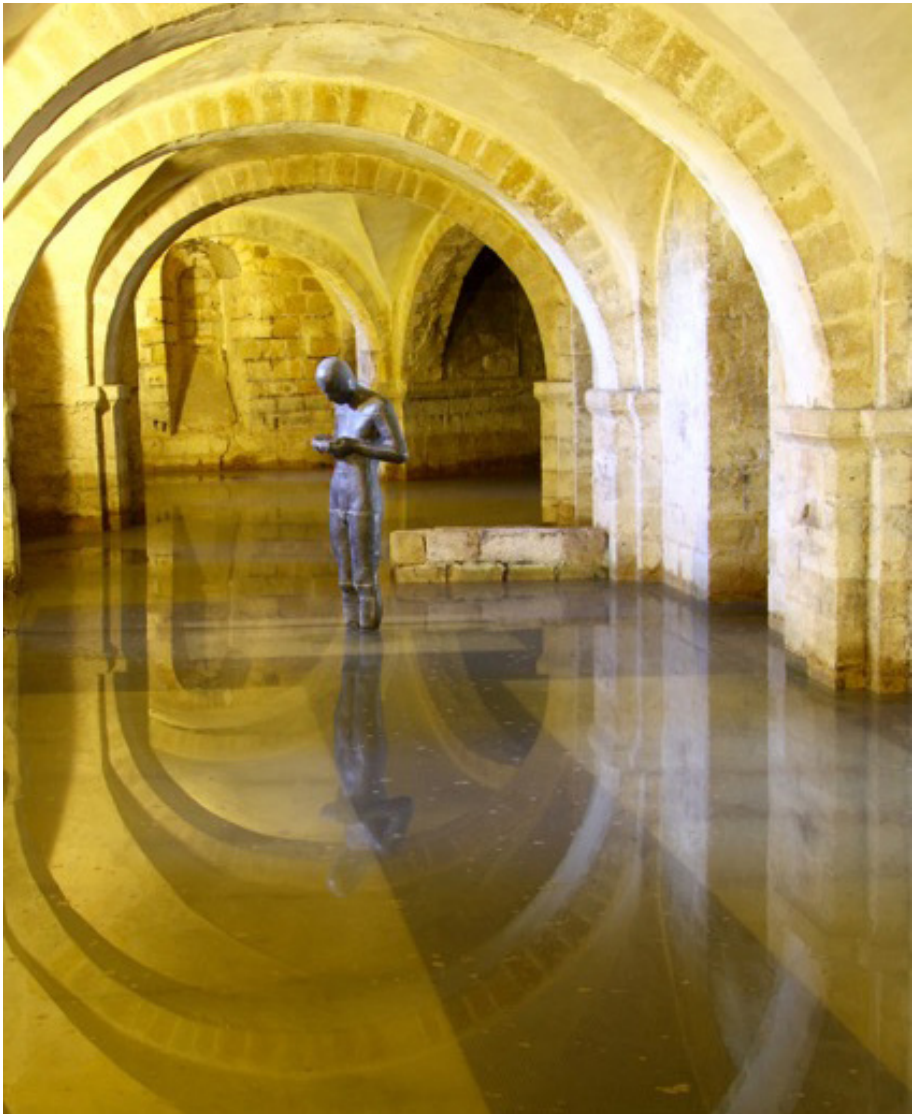
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# Valuing

*"Sometimes it's about supporting people to recognise that they are valuable, that they are a person. Some people can feel so dehumanised by formal politics that they think that they're not worth anything. Sometimes it's that serious, it's on that level. I work with some young people who have no self-esteem, no confidence, no nothing. It's been battered out them, actually. I work with them to try and recharge the batteries".*



“We need love and understanding in order to value each other,  
regardless of different cultures or origins”  
Tony Wright



“Quiet contemplation: It is important to help people to have a greater understanding of themselves and others”  
**Daniel Nkrumah**

***"I choose a different form of politics. I support young people to believe in themselves. A lot of them come out of the care sector. A lot of them have issues around discrimination. A lot of them have issues around poor attainment. My job is to encourage them to believe that they're good people and that with their social experience, they will develop into something. Their situation won't stay like that forever..."***



# Connecting



“This is seniors at the Indian Senior Citizens’ Centre doing yoga together. After they come, they feel so happy and their spirits are lifted. They’re completely changed”

**Dr Saraswati Sinha**



“When I fight my fight, I don’t fight it only for the people that look like me. I fight because it’s the right thing to do. I raise awareness around anything that creates discrimination”

**Aba Graham**

***"People can come together. They bring ideas, they discuss their ideas, they make friends. Coming together encourages people to go and do more things..."***

# Questioning



It's time to clean up the mess in order to build better communities,  
and challenge the barriers that stop progress.  
**Tony Wright**



“I am the chair of Age Friendly Manchester Older People’s Board. This picture is of an age-friendly bench. They are the right height, with good back support and arms to assist you to stand or sit. It encourages older people to come out and use the park, minimising social isolation. It gives assurances that there are places to sit and take a rest”

**Elaine Unegbu**





“This plant looks harmless, but it burns the skin - things are not always what they seem. Challenging the status quo can lead to getting burned”  
**Steven Calver**



"I do this to raise awareness to try and make changes and put pressure on the courts, the police, and the government to get a grip and admit that domestic abuse is out of control - it needs to be resourced better and there should be more education"

Jane Gregory

***"If we don't want to face what the reality is, how do we change things? You need to put your head above the parapet to actually stand up and be counted."***



# Reasoning



“It’s easier to find common ground and address differences over a cup of tea than in a public meeting. It allows us to listen to the other person’s viewpoint and to have time to hear about their lived experience”

**Pete Simms**

***"Reasoning gives people an opportunity to have a discussion. Reasoning is about learning. It is a way of sharing knowledge...it is an open ender...We should be able to go into a room, discuss things, sort something out and whack it out..."***



“This is a picture of difficult dialogue organised by We Stand Together about whether the right to religious freedom should end if it is sexist or homophobic. If we don’t have difficult dialogue between different faiths, how can we work together and integrate?”

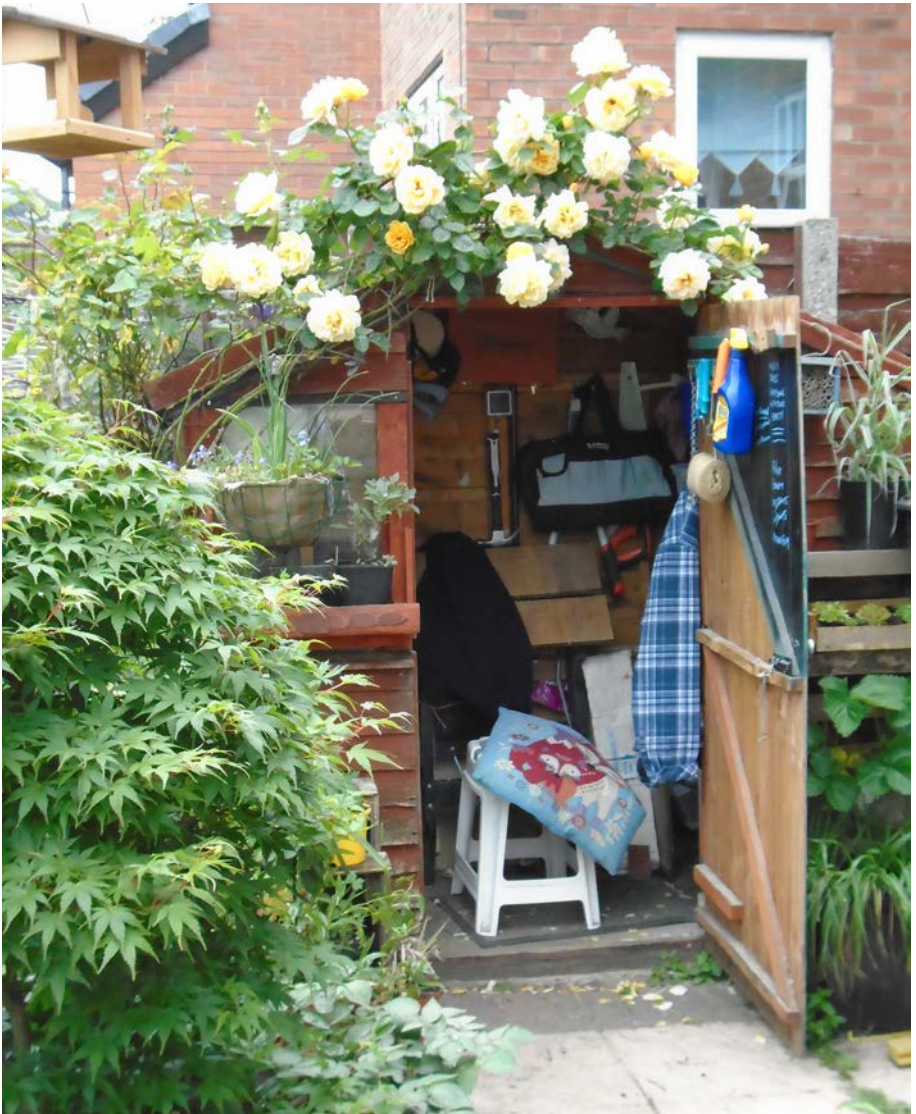
**Nidhi Minocha**

# Developing



“Some basics: ‘food, clothes and shelter’. Everybody needs to be under the umbrella of love to develop”

**Daniel Nkrumah**



“This is the birth place of all the projects I work on. Poverty doesn’t mean that we have to ignore our need for beauty, practicality, and purpose; we just have to think outside the box - great ideas can come to life when you work with what you have”

**Pete Simms**

***"...it's about doing. It's about being willing to get your hands dirty, it's about being willing to be the one who sees things differently. Everyday makers are artists, they're the ones who see the everyday and can help to transform it into something which is amazing"***

# Conclusion

This publication illustrates some of the ways in which everyday makers are making a difference in their communities. Community researchers showed that everyday politics can help people to make change collectively.

The work of everyday makers can often be unrecognised. The research in the project suggests that it can be an energetic way to do participatory politics in action. It has potential to transform relationships that are fundamental in supporting the textured fabrics of our communities.

Everyday makers can do things differently.

The work of everyday makers documented through this publication built on people's strengths, connected communities, encouraged dialogue, and developed creative solutions to problems that those people and their communities were experiencing.

We can learn from everyday makers to think about how we do politics in a more collective way - where there is a greater emphasis on building on the ideas, assets and strengths of our communities to create more just futures.

# Biographies

## **Aba Graham**

I am a proud to be British, of Sierra Leone origin, I came from a poor war torn country with atrocities beyond measure, the struggles in life has only empowered me to give something back to others who are either less fortunate than myself or young people who all have the potential to do great. It is on this premise that I strive for equality and justice. My work importantly creates a platform for those who are marginalized, or disadvantaged to have a voice. Though my capability is limited, (I do not see ill-health as an option), In 2009 I founded Ebony and Ivory Community Organisation (EaICO) serving and supporting children and families from BME background. I continue to strive for change, ensure that local people can express themselves, and aim to resolve social inequality and injustice through dialogue and ideas. I see myself as an everyday change maker, and was honoured to be a finalist at the National Diversity Awards 2018.

## **Daniel Nkrumah MEd.**

Daniel Nkrumah was born in Moss Side, Manchester. He is a highly experienced Youth and Community Education Worker, who continues to work in disadvantaged/marginalised community settings; providing a range of learning opportunities to enable people to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills to allow them to make informed choices about their lives. He is also a regular facilitator at Manchester Metropolitan University. Personal hobbies and interests include: International travel, Photography, Music and Golf. He is a community activist, who throughout is working life has always engaged in and facilitated critical dialogue in order to encourage growth and awareness.

## **Dr Saraswati Sinha**

Since childhood it has always been a vision of mine to serve others. At first, this meant becoming a doctor - including the joy of bringing new born life, hope and beginnings into the world in maternity. Still striving to continue this dream, I am now involved in multiple organisations. As the Chair of Indian Senior Citizens and Sri Durga Mandir Trust, it is always a pleasure to include new people. After moving from India to England, I have met a larger diversity of people during my time as a doctor and community worker-ranging in faith, religion and backgrounds.



## **Elaine Unegbu**

Elaine was born in Aruba and studied nursing in the Netherlands. She spent a number of years working as a nurse, in nursing management, and nursing education in the Netherlands, England, and Nigeria. Elaine has always retained her interests in health and has volunteered in a number of positions of the years. She was also a non-executive director of Manchester Health Authority and a trustee for Age Concern. Elaine is currently the chair of Age Friendly Manchester Older People's Board, and she is also on the Greater Manchester Older People's Network. It is important to Elaine that older people should have a voice to influence decisions. Elaine has an active role in her local Deeper Life Bible Church. She enjoys spending time with her grandchildren, and talking of the pleasure everything brings to her.

## **Jane Gregory**

Salford born, mother of seven and community activist. I have volunteered for thirty years with youths and raising money for local causes. After my daughter suffered years of domestic abuse and her friend was murdered I established Salford Survivor Project. This project helps to anyone affected by abuse. My aim is empowering people in recognising and transforming negative, unhealthy issues to positive choices, changing their lives and the wider community and raising awareness of the long terms devastating affects abuse has on families and society as a whole.

## **Nidhi Minocha**

Nidhi is a mum of three children who comes from a family who have a long history of community service in Manchester. Her parents have been involved in the Civic and community life of Greater Manchester for decades. Nidhi is a British Indian Hindu and has been involved in community work for many years, with a special interest in developing leadership and empowerment in our diverse city to help Manchester develop its citizens towards integrating the various strata in society. Nidhi has a passion to help integrate the Asian (especially Hindu) community in the wider life of our city and its economy, its cultural and civic life.

## **Pete Simms**

Pete has thirty years lived experience of poverty. He created This is It Salford with the support of Community Pride supporting people to change their communities sustainably. He also works as an advocate and facilitator for others in Salford and with national organisations. He believes that the power

for change lies at grassroots level and with engaging decision makers as friends not combatants. Change, for him, is something we can all achieve sustainably.

## **Tony Wright**

Tony Wright develops and sustains resources for supporting disadvantaged communities to engage in innovative activities and opportunities. Tony supports and empowers members of the community to make positive changes in their lives, setting outcome-based support plans to achieve personal goals. Tony works with organisations to develop innovative ways to support the improvement of services across disadvantaged communities of Greater Manchester. Tony creates opportunities for individuals, community groups, and public service providers to come together in sustainable partnerships to learn from each other's work. Tony's work promotes inclusion, independence, and the well-being of residents - supporting and encouraging them not to rely on statutory service provision alone.

## **Steven Calver**

Well where do we start, I am not a Northerner, I came up to the north from the south being gobby I never fitted in but here I feel at home. Recently I found out why I am gobby and have resolved some of my issues as I have been diagnosed as Autistic which explains a lot. I have been well educated but have recently returned to a job I did over 30 years ago because it is good for me and my mental health. As an avid consumer I do not drive, I either walk, cycle or get a bus or train. I consume as little as possible and I actively campaign on issues in or around my community in environmental matters and I try to influence at the highest levels to inform change.

All the Jam and Justice projects have been initiated by the Action Research Collective (ARC), a group of people from different walks of life, brought together by Jam and Justice to learn by doing about the process of co-production. The two ARC members who have been involved in the System Doesn't Work project are:

**Julie Asumu:** I came back to England in 1990 when my son's wife gave birth to twins and needed my support with childcare. I trained as a teacher and a social worker in Africa and did a lot of community work at grassroots level. I hold a BSc (Hons.) degree, in psychology from MMU. In England, I saw an opportunity to share my African working experience with some of the establishments in England. When the twins were of school age, I decided to go into community work at grassroots level as a volunteer. I volunteered with African Women in Arts and Development and Oxfam before joining the initiative to establish Chrysalis. With my volunteering experience, I was able to play a major role in establishing, drawing up a viable and sustainable programme for young mothers.

**Amanda Bickerton** is a social entrepreneur, social justice activist, and a feminist. She is a charity trustee and active volunteer in her community. She is particularly interested in social exclusion and poverty, and hopes for the emergence of a genuinely inclusive, co-produced civic society. A keen local historian, cruciverbalist, and coffee drinker, she lives with her adult son in the city of Salford.

## **Additional Research Team Members**

**Catherine Durose** is a Reader in Policy Sciences at the Institute for Local Government Studies, University of Birmingham where she researches and teaches on urban governance and public policy.

**Dan Silver** is a Research Associate for Jam and Justice, and a Teaching Associate at the University of Manchester. Dan's research focuses on research methods, everyday politics and public policy.

**Sarah Whitehead** is the co-director of Community Pride CIC, a social enterprise in Salford that is working with communities and decision makers across the UK and Europe to build relationships and work together to address poverty and exclusion.

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This book is part of research in the Jam and Justice programme: [jamandjustice-rjc.org](http://jamandjustice-rjc.org)



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