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Centre for Food Policy

Educating, researching, influencing for
integrated and inclusive food policy

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Academic excellence for
business and the professions

Why engage with evidence of lived experience as a means of addressing major food systems challenges?

In 2018 the Centre for Food Policy hosted its seventh annual City Food Symposium. Titled **Connecting People with Food Policy**, it explored how evidence of lived experience can make food policy more effective and equitable in addressing major food system challenges. Emerging from the 20 talks and workshops, and discussions among the 270 participants, were five core benefits of engaging with evidence of lived experience, and five core challenges.

Benefits

1. Evidence of lived experience provides a valuable source of knowledge not held by 'experts'
2. Gathering evidence from people with lived experience generates ideas for effective solutions
3. Involving people with lived experience can be empowering for those involved
4. Listening and involving enables people to advocate for themselves and for others
5. Engaging people with lived experience is part and parcel of 'systems leadership'.

Challenges

1. The nature of the evidence of lived experience makes translating evidence to policy a complex task
2. Evidence of lived experience may be disempowering if not translated into meaningful change
3. Decision-makers and external 'experts' may not view lived experience as a legitimate form of knowledge – and may be unwilling to let it challenge the powers they hold
4. Evidence of lived experience may be used to distract from policy solutions designed to address underlying, systemic causes
5. Gathering and translating evidence of lived experience needs time, patience, investment and trust.

Extract from: *Centre for Food Policy. How can evidence of lived experience make food policy more effective and equitable in addressing major food system challenges? Report of the City Food Symposium 2018.* London, Centre for Food Policy, 2018

Available at: https://www.city.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/440985/2018-City-Food-Sym-Report-FINAL251018.pdf



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Principles for gathering and translating evidence of lived experience

The Centre for Food Policy has adopted the following set of principles to guide our own work advancing the use of evidence of lived experience in policy and practice. We invite others to consider and reflect on them in their work researching, advocating and making-decisions about food policy.

- I. We believe food systems challenges will be addressed more effectively and equitably if we engage with people's lived experiences of these challenges.
- II. We consider people's perspectives on their own realities an important and legitimate source of evidence to inform food policy and practice, as part of a diversity of sources of evidence.
- III. We recognise that the process of listening and giving people a voice is empowering in and of itself – but not respecting the views expressed, or using them only to serve the prior goals of the listener, can be profoundly disempowering.
- IV. We know that when we listen, we may hear things that make us feel uncomfortable and challenge our views, so we will allow ourselves to be challenged and use this to imagine how things could be done differently.
- V. We will embrace the complexity of what we hear and be careful how we interpret it.
- VI. We recognise that *really* listening in a meaningful way will require us to give up some of the power we have.
- VII. We are willing to invest the time and patience needed to build trust and to gather and translate evidence of lived experience into effective policy and practice.
- VIII. We recognise we need to work harder to better understand what difference gathering and translating evidence of lived experience really makes to the effectiveness and equity of food policy and practice.

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