Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory

Research Voices Project

Case Studies

May 2021

Case study 1: the impact of external factors and the communication environment

This case study focuses on how factors outwith the project influenced pre and post project reporting of confidence and knowledge, and how communication environments can impact on the interview process.

About Juror 8

Juror 8 had previous experience of working with groups but didn't always feel their voice was heard in these settings. Juror 8 had both hearing impairment and mild visual impairment.

About the Talking Mat

The 'Confidence in Communication' mat explores how confident participants felt in different communication approaches.

The topics presented in this talking mat were:
- Listening to information
- Remembering information in easy read
- Watching videos to get information
- Taking notes
- Talking one to one
- Talking in a group
- Listening to others
- Listening to views that are different from yours
- Saying what I think about something
- Asking questions
- Saying I don't understand
- Thinking about and learning new things

Jurors were invited to choose from three options:

Thumbs up	I feel really confident about that
Shoulder shrug	Somewhere in the middle
Thumbs down	I don't feel confident about that
Middle ground	Jurors were invited to shift symbols between ratings where they felt it was most appropriate

Description of changes in confidence in communication

The symbol placement across both pre and post-project Talking Mat interviews for Juror 8 indicated an overall increase in self-perceived confidence on a range of communication skills following the project. The overall results from the 2019 Talking Mat show that the juror rated themselves as being very confident for 7 of the concepts, quite confident in 1 of them, somewhere in-between for 3 of them, and not confident at all for 2 of the concepts.

In their post-project Talking Mat, the juror rated themselves as very confident for 12 of the concepts and rated only one of the concepts as being somewhere in-between. ***Taking Notes*** and ***Talking one to one*** both improved from being 'in-between' to 'very confident'. The ***Listening to views that are different from yours*** concept saw an increase from 'quite confident' to 'very confident', while ***Talking in a group*** increased from 'not confident at all' to 'very confident'. There was an increase in confidence with ***Asking questions*** from 'in-between' to 'very confident' and an increase in confidence in ***Saying I don't understand*** from 'not confident' to 'in-between' following the project.

Analysis

Juror 8's pre-project interview took place in a communication environment that was not ideal: a busy office with a cluttered setting and lots of ambient noise. The juror also struggled in their initial interview to engage with the Talking Mats without the listener hand-writing instruction and explanation. In the 2020 interview, the setting was clearer and quieter, and typed written instructions were supplied for the Talking Mat which may have improved their engagement and understanding of the task. While Juror 8 was willing and able to provide additional comment to support their choice of option placements for both the pre and post-project Talking Mat interviews, this shift in communication environment may have contributed to changes in self-reporting.

When asked how confident they felt when ***Listening to information***, the juror rated themselves as 'very confident' in both the pre and post Talking Mat. However, they stated in their first interview that their confidence was predicated on their hearing aid functioning correctly, stating that they only felt confident "*as long as my hearing aid is working*". Through discussions with both the juror and their care assistant, it was understood that this juror struggled to keep up and engage in actively learning new information while making contributions to discussions due to their loss of hearing. In their pre-project interview, when asked about how confident they felt when ***Talking in groups,*** the uror stated, "*If I got the chance*", with an overall confidence rating of 'not confident at all' before the project. This is further supported in the comments made when asked about how confident they felt when ***Talking one to one***, in which they described it as being "*better than a group because a group is too many*", selecting the 'in-between' confidence rating. During the course of the project, the juror received an upgraded hearing aid, that worked more effectively and confidently described how their "*hearing is better*". This could be a major contributing factor for the increase in confidence rating when describing ***Talking one to one*** and ***Talking in a group*** after the project.

The juror described feeling initially apprehensive and nervous about their involvement with the process, "*I thought it was nerves. I was thinking how this will work out?".* When promoted to expand on their 'very confident' card placement for **Thinking about and learning new thing**s in their post-project interview, they reflected on their thoughts when they first arrived *"I was thinking, what are we doing here?".* However, he then felt "*that they got into it*" and that it was a matter of progressing *"one stage at a time"*.

The juror rated their confidence in **Listening to views that are different from yours**, as 'very confident' in pre and post project interviews. However, their comments suggested a shift in their thinking about debate and compromise. In their pre-project interview, the juror stated "*if someone disagrees with you, you have to stick to your guns*", while in their post-project interview, the uror said that in the event of any disagreement, *"you have to meet halfway"* as it "*saves an argument*". The comments made in the later Talking Mat appear to demonstrate a more diplomatic approach that builds upon understanding and respect between people with opposing views. The Citizens' Jury was built on the idea of creating a safe space for open discussion, supporting jurors to challenge and question the opinions of the experts and the other jurors. While it cannot be definitively concluded, it would therefore appear that judging by these comments, the process has impacted the jurors' approach and outlook on these interactions.

Conclusions

Overall, this case study demonstrates various factors that contributed to the increase in the juror's self-perceived confidence with their communication skills, and the importance of acknowledging self-reporting often reflects a more complex picture. The listeners in both pre and post project interviews commented on the importance of the communication environment to support Talking Mat interviews, and more may need to be done to understand the impact of communication environment on self-reporting.

Case study 2: acknowledging gaps in knowledge

This Juror's self-perceived health knowledge showed a decline in confidence between their pre-project interview and post-project interview. This case study aims to explore the hypothesis that the juror demonstrated more knowledge of health research concepts in their post-project interview, but was more able to acknowledge gaps in their knowledge following the Citizens' Jury.

About Juror 7

Juror 7 has strong verbal communication skills, particularly when given prompts to stay on topic. Juror 7 indicated positive engagement in their pre-project and post-project Talking Mat interviews, nodding and responding to symbols and interacting confidently with the mat.

About the Talking Mat

The 'Knowledge of health research' mat explores how much each juror knew about some key concepts in health research before the Citizens' jury. Jurors were invited to rank their knowledge of the following concepts:

Heading 1: Things research looks at	Heading 2: How research is done
Keeping well and healthy	Looking at numbers (statistics)
Medicines and treatments	Talking to people (interviews)
Risks	Ethics
	Research language
	Information (easy to understand)
	Consent

Jurors were invited to describe their knowledge levels using a 3 star system

3 stars	I know a lot about that
2 stars	I know a little about that
1 star	I don't know about that
Middle ground	Jurors were invited to shift symbols between star ratings where they felt it was most appropriate

Description of changes in knowledge of health research

The change in symbol placement between pre and post project Talking Mats for Juror 7 indicated an overall reduction in self-perceived knowledge on a range of health research concepts following the project. The overall results from the pre-project Talking Mat show that three of the health research symbols (*Consent, Health risks and Information*) were rated as three stars for a high level of self-perceived knowledge. Three of the symbols (*Research Language, Medicines and Treatments and Looking at Numbers*) were rated as 2 stars which demonstrates some knowledge of the concept. Three of the symbols (*Keeping well and healthy, Ethics and talking to people*) were rated as 1 star which demonstrates no knowledge of the topic.

In the post-project Talking Mat, the symbols that had previously been rated as 3 stars had all dropped (*Consent* dropped to 2.5 stars, *Health risks* dropped to 2.5 stars, *Information* dropped to 1.5 stars). There was also negative movement in the topics *Looking at numbers* (reduced from 2 stars to 1-star rating), *Talking to people* (reduced from 2 stars to 1-star rating), *Research Language* (reduced from 2 stars to 1.5 stars rating). Overall, a visual comparison of these two Talking Mats suggests that Juror 7 knew less about health research following the project.

Analysis

Juror 7 did make some comments on symbol placement in their pre-project Talking Mat. However, there was often little information or explanation given by the participant in this first interview, even when prompted. For example, when the juror was asked "What do you know about **keeping well and healthy**?" he responded, "*Not much*". This trend continued for a number of the topics, with no additional comments being made when asked to explain their reasoning behind their card placements on the mat. However, in the second follow up Talking Mat, the quantity of comment increased with relevant examples and explanations of concepts.

For a number of symbols in the pre-project Talking Mat interview, the juror rated their knowledge highly with little explanation offered to support this, even with prompting. However, in the post-project Talking Mat, these options were rated lower on the scale, yet further explanation and greater understanding was demonstrated by the thinker. For example, was a considerable drop in knowledge of *Information* rating for Juror 7 from an initial 3-star rating down to a 1.5-star rating. The juror commented on the topic in the initial Talking Mat by exclaiming "*I know a lot!*" and tends to "*look things up on the computer*", prompting a confident 3-star knowledge rating. However, in their post-project Talking Mat, the juror acknowledged how the delivery of information is important in research, stating that they needed to ask the experts at the Citizens' Jury to slow down but this helped to retain more information. The juror appears to interpret the word information differently in each interview, with the juror describing a more general understanding of the word information in their pre-project interview, and then focusing on the processing of research information in their second interview. The different interpretation of the *Information* symbol could be a factor that contributed to the high drop in knowledge for the topic. The drop in the knowledge rating could also be attributed to the juror gaining a greater

understanding of the complexity of the different concepts during the Citizens' Jury, and therefore more awareness of what they do not know. This is often referred to as the illusion of explanatory depth (Rozenblit & Keil, 2002). This explanation may be relevant when exploring the juror's response to the **Medicines and treatment** symbol. In the pre-project interview, the juror made no comment on what they knew about **Medicines and treatments** but rated their knowledge as 2 stars (I know a little). While there was a drop-in knowledge to 1.5 stars in the post-project Talking Mat, the juror demonstrated an understanding of the negative impacts for people not taking their medications as well as allergies and underlying health issues that require medicines, showing much more awareness of the complexity of medication.

It is also important to consider that the more in-depth comments made during the post-project Talking Mat may not be because of an increase in knowledge. The increased quality and quantity of comment may also indicate an increased level of confidence in communicating to the listener and being more comfortable with the general procedure involved when using the Talking Mat as a communication tool. The juror also chose to place the option cards in-between the scale cards in their post-project interview, which may have given them more flexibility to accurately represent their self-perceived knowledge.

However, there was also an increase in perceived knowledge for some concepts like **Ethics** (Increased from 1 star to 1.5 stars) and **Keeping well and healthy** topic (Increased from 1 Star to 2 Stars). In their pre-project interview, the juror made no comment when asked to explain their rating for **Keeping well and healthy** and when asked about **Ethics** they replied, "*What does ethics mean*?" The comments made in the 2020 post project Talking Mat provided more explanation and insight into their improved rating, with the juror showing an awareness of medicines being used to improve health and wellbeing: "*some medicines help certain things, and some don't*". When asked about **Ethics** in the post-project interview, the juror recalled their uncertainty of the topic at the start of the process, which was recorded as a 1-star knowledge rating. However, they explained that after talking and listening to the experts, their understanding improved, leading to a revised symbol placement which reflected their higher self-perceived knowledge.

Conclusions

Overall, this case study highlights the various aspects that must be considered when using Talking Mats interviews as part of pre and post-project evaluation. While the overall visual representation on the Talking Mats shows a decrease in the Jury self-perceived knowledge in a number of symbols, the comments made in the post-project Talking Mat demonstrate more depth and a greater understanding of the concepts. However, this correlation does not imply causation, as there a number of variables that could have influenced this. The juror may have felt nervous or unwilling to share information during their first interview, due to the unfamiliarity with the situation, surroundings and listener. The increased comments made in the post-project interview may have been as a result of building a relationship and familiarity with the thinker during the Citizens' Jury process. The jurors' mood and environment with which the Talking Mat took place on both occasions needs to be considered as a potential extraneous variable and a potential explanation for the decreased ratings or increased comments. The use of more abstract symbols used in the

Talking Mat method also meant the questions being asked to the juror were left open to interpretation. Ultimately, all of these confounding factors should be closely examined and it is important to note that richness of data from these Talking Mat interviews often emerges from the comments made in discussion.

Case study 3: the importance of good quality conversation

A comparison between this Juror's pre-project Talking Mat and post-project Talking Mat would suggest very little change in knowledge of health research. This case study aims to explore the importance of discussion surrounding symbol placement and examines if comments made by the juror indicate a change in knowledge.

About Juror 9

Juror 9 had strong verbal communication skills, but they asked the listener to help remind them of the question and topic so that they could focus. The pre-project interview took place at an external meeting venue and the post-project interview took place in their home. Juror 7 showed positive engagement in both pre and post interviews, nodding and thoughtfully placing individual symbols. This juror expressed their views through personal storytelling, and the listener prompted them to reflect these stories in their Talking Mat.

About the Talking Mat

The 'Knowledge of health research' mat explores how much each juror knew about some key concepts in health research before the Citizens' jury. Jurors were invited to rank their knowledge of the following concepts:

Heading 1: Things research looks at	Heading 2: How research is done
Keeping well and healthy Medicines and treatments Risks	Looking at numbers (statistics) Talking to people (interviews) Ethics Research language Information (easy to understand) Consent

Jurors were invited to describe their knowledge levels using a 3 star system

3 stars	I know a lot about that
2 stars	I know a little about that
1 star	I don't know about that
Middle ground	Jurors were invited to shift symbols between star ratings where they felt it was most appropriate

Description of changes in knowledge of health research

The symbol placement across both the pre and post-project Talking Mats for Juror 7 showed very little change in the person's self-perceived knowledge on a range of health research concepts. The overall results from the 2019 Talking Mat showed that seven of the health research symbols (*Consent, Keeping well and healthy, Medicines and Treatment, Ethics, Risks, Talking to people and Information*) were rated as three stars which indicated a high level of self-perceived knowledge on these topics. The remaining two symbols (*Research Language and Looking at Numbers*) were both ranked as 2 stars which indicates the juror feels they demonstrate some knowledge of the concepts.

In the post-project Talking Mat interview, all of the symbols that were previously ranked as three stars were once again ranked as three stars. The symbol for the concept *Looking at Numbers,* which was ranked as two stars before the project, was again ranked as two stars after the project. The only symbol to change was *Research Language,* which increased from 2 stars to 2.5 stars following the project.

Analysis of changes in knowledge of health research

Juror 9 was prompted to expand on their reasoning behind the symbol placements for both Talking Mats. In the pre-project Talking Mat, the juror did not provide an explanation for several of their placements, even when prompted, which makes it difficult to decipher the extent of their knowledge on those particular concepts. For the *Keeping well and healthy* topic, the juror describes how they know "A lot" about it, but that "*I just sometimes don't stick to it*". They also state that they "know a lot" about the *Risks* topic and gave an example of how "*smoking is a cancer risk*". When asked about *Medicines and treatments,* the juror stated that "*I know how to use them – I take them for my pain*". They also reflected on how "*different chemists give different doses and medications*".

The lack of comments made by the juror during the pre-project Talking Mat could stem from a lack of confidence due to being unfamiliar with the location, the interviewer and the Talking Mat process in general. These confounding variables may have resulted in the juror feeling the need to impress the interviewer by giving the topics three-star confidence rankings, particularly as they shared that they often feel self-conscious meeting new people. Conducting the interview in an unfamiliar external venue could also have affected the jurors' confidence and therefore hindered their ability to speak more openly about their feelings towards the topics.

In contrast to this, in the post-project Talking Mat the juror made additional comments to support each of their card placements on the mat. For the *Research Language* topic, while no comments were made in pre-project, in the post-project interview the juror explained that while they feel more confident overall with research language and its meaning, there are still words that doctors use that "*I wouldn't understand*". For *Consent,* while no comment was made in the first interview, the juror described how they "know a lot" about the topic in their post-project interview and gave an example of a time in which they asked for a gown at the doctors' office for a procedure before later deciding that they didn't need

one, showing an awareness of the issue of consent in a medical setting. For the **Information** topic no additional information was offered in the first interview, but the juror described in their post-project interview that they "Know a lot" and went on to talk about how some of the speakers during the Citizens' Jury were better than others at communicating with the jurors, "*I want more colours and less writing*". It is also interesting to note that for the **Looking at Numbers (statistics)** symbol, the juror stated in their pre-project interview that they "*never use it but are aware of them*". However, in the post-project interview they could not expand on this and simply said: "*I don't know much about this*". Perhaps this juror felt more comfortable in saying that they didn't know about this topic without the worry of judgement or scrutiny, after having established a relationship with the interviewer.

Conclusions

While it is not clear from the physical placement of symbols across both pre and post project Talking Mats that there has been any changes in knowledge for the juror pre and post-project, this juror was able to offer more specific examples when making card placements in the post project Talking Mat. This highlights the importance of keeping detailed notes during these interviews and the importance of trust between the juror and listener.