

How to engage with people using video diaries

A guide on how to engage with people using video diaries

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What is a video diary?

A video diary is a film that someone makes of the things that happen to them over a period of time, which they upload to a website. It provides a very personal view of how the subject sees their world and can make viewers feel as if they are on a personal journey with the user. Capturing on-the-spot reactions and thoughts, video diaries should be authentic and provide a record of someone's experiences in real time.

Why use video diaries?

Video diaries are a great way of capturing people's experiences from their point of view.

Here are some advantages of video diaries:

- It is a powerful way of 'bringing people into the room' at meetings with senior decision makers. It can focus discussions around real people rather than faceless users of a specific service.
- Video diaries can be made in a variety of settings, from people's own homes, to care homes, and supported living. It can help reach people whose voices may otherwise go unheard.
- They are an accessible way of sharing people's experiences in their own words. You can include subtitles on films and translate them if needed.
- After the project, you will end up with a resource that can be used for training or presentations with frontline health and care staff.

Engaging during COVID-19

Here's some tips about how the real-time video work can be adapted to be run virtually when face-to-face engagement isn't possible.

- Using a phone recording app (with permission from the participant). We used one called Cube ACR. You can ask volunteers to transcribe the calls and then edit them to share.
- For people more familiar with technology, give them clear guidelines to record their own video diaries on their phone, tablet or laptop and send them over to you to be edited.
- Meet by video call and record the meeting, then edit.
- Do socially distanced recording outside if weather permits. You might need a long-arm microphone to get decent sound quality.

Things to consider

Consider the following cost and resources. If you're working with a partner organisation, consider how you can split them.

Who is the audience?

- Who is co-ordinating the project?
- Who is making the film? This will involve multiple visits.

- Who is editing the film?
- How will you promote the film e.g. what communication channels will you use?
- Information sheet to gain consent from participant. You will need to outline what their participation in the project will involve, what it will be used for and explain that they can change their mind about being involved at any time. [Click here for an example information sheet.](#)
- Image sharing consent form. You will need to explain clearly where and how the recordings will be shared, and what will happen if they change their mind and wish to withdraw their consent. [Click here for an example consent form.](#)

How to record a video diary

Depending on your Healthwatch, budget, and scale of your project you will need to consider how you are going to film or audio record your video diaries.

Encourage people to send their videos to you

Most people have a smartphone or tablet, and the quality of their cameras is getting better and better. Get people to send their experience using video using email or WeTransfer for the larger videos. There are a lot of free and simple-to-use video and audio editing software such as Kinemaster, which is suitable for Apple and Android, and very user-friendly. There are plenty of tutorials on YouTube to get you started.

Do it yourself

Using simple equipment (often just a smartphone) you can shoot your own video. Consider getting a microphone and tripod for your device to improve the quality of content. You can also find some tips on creating a video [here](#).

Post-COVID-19

In a post pandemic world, you could also employ a filmmaker, or if you don't have the budget, advertise for a volunteer filmmaker. For example, if you have local universities with film studies courses, it may be worth considering advertising the opportunity with them.

Six top tips for filming:

1. Make sure your participant feels comfortable. Having a cuppa, a chat and a run-through before the real thing can reassure them. Take as many takes as necessary to ensure that your participant feels happy with the final output.
2. Try to keep your participant on track, bringing them back to the point when they digress. Remember, you want the end video to be short and focused.
3. While you're filming, try to think about the narrative of the film. Does it tell a story? Do you need to ask any additional questions for the content to make sense to the viewer?
4. Film in landscape not portrait. This will ensure that your video works on other devices, not just your phone.
5. If you decide as the interviewer not to appear in the film make sure the participant to include the question in their answer.

For example to answer the question ‘tell us about your experience at your local GP’ the participant should start by saying ‘My experience at my local GP was amazing...’

6. Ensure that you have instructed the participant where to look, whether it’s at you or the camera. People often prefer talking to others so it might be that you position yourself next to the camera on a tripod so make the participant feel more at ease, and for the conversation to look more natural.

Although you will want to keep silent for the final edit, use your body language to show that you are engaged in what the participant is saying.

Using an audio recording

If using video feels too time-consuming, or your participant doesn’t feel comfortable being filmed, suggest using an audio recording.

Get a decent microphone to plug into your smartphone (we used Rode SmartLav+) and edit using free software such as Audacity or transcribe it into a written testimony/blog. We’d recommend asking the participant if they mind having their photo taken, this can then be displayed whilst the audio is playing, or to accompany their blog.

If you are unable to visit someone in person, you can also record a phone call (with consent of course) using a phone call recording app e.g. Cube ACR App.

Recruiting your participants

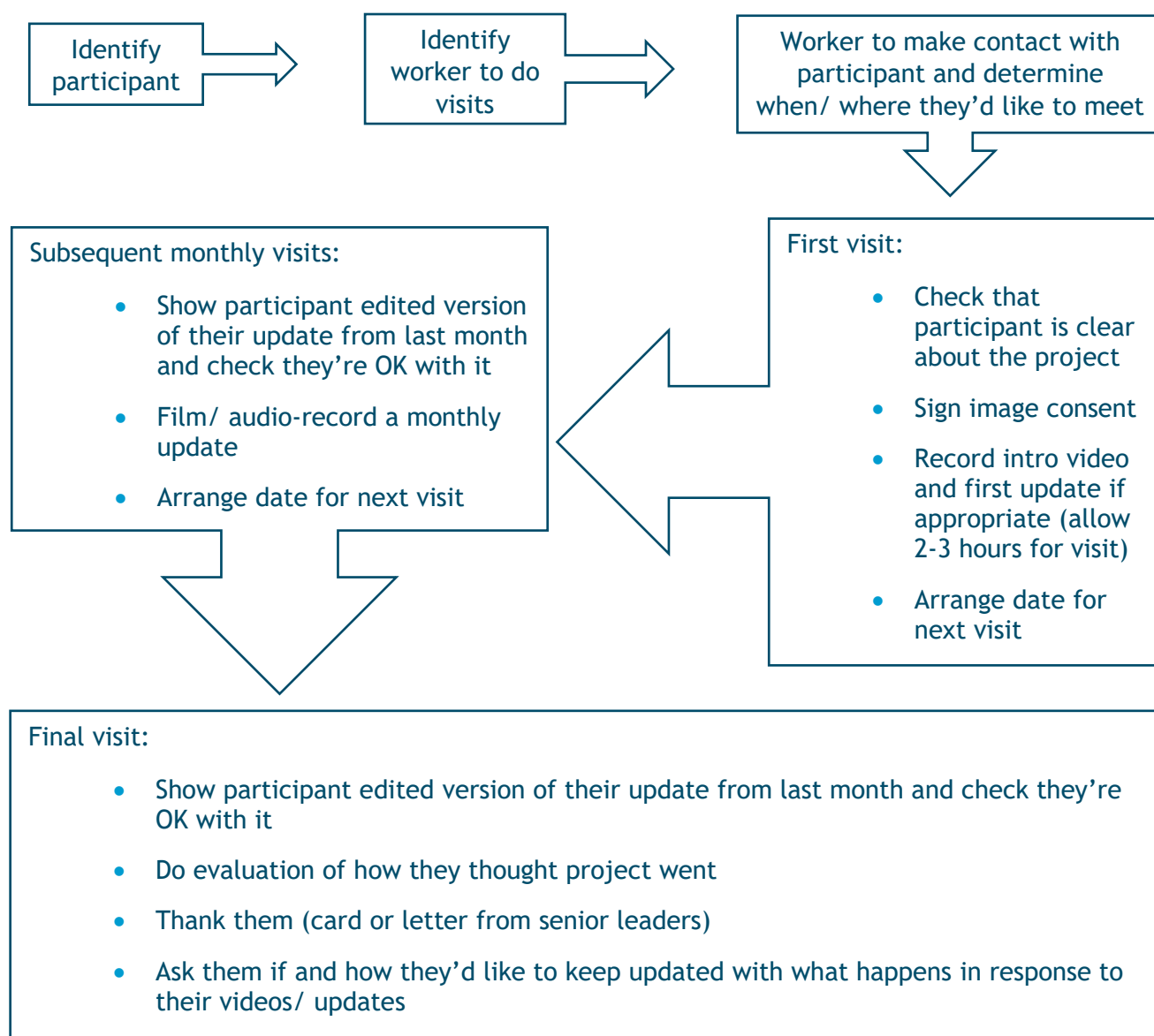
Getting your partners right

Working with the right partners can help you recruit participants and maximise the impact of your project. Think about who will help you recruit the right participants and who you will be trying to influence with your video diaries. For example, a local NHS trust may be able to link you up with frontline professionals who have regular direct contact with people you want to hear from. Get partners round the table before you start the project - this will help get them on board and they may also be able to help you with resources.

Think about equality and diversity

When recruiting participants, think about who you want to hear from. You can be proactive in advertising for participants from groups who you think are less likely to be heard. For example, people from Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic backgrounds, older or younger people, male or female, or those with specific health conditions. Being specific will help your partners help you to find the right people for the project.

Your step-by-step guide to creating a video diary



Top tips

- Have the same worker do all the visits to build a good, trusting relationship
- Ask senior leaders to write a letter to say thank you

Think about the questions you will ask

Getting your questions right is important to make sure that everyone understands the projects aim and to focus the narrative on the experiences and messages you are trying to capture.

Although it is important to agree a broad framework of questions, don't be afraid to deviate should it feel natural to ask the person more about their experience, or to avoid questions should it not feel appropriate.

Example questions

Remember, the number of questions you ask will depend on how long you would like your video to be.

Intro videos

- Can you introduce yourself?
- How would people who know you describe you?
- What do you enjoy?
- Can you tell us a bit about your health conditions and how they impact your life?
- Why did you decide to take part in this project?

Videos updating on people's experiences

1. How has your health been?
2. Can you tell us a bit about your experience of health and care services since we last spoke?
 - What type of health professional have you had contact with?
 - Can you tell us a bit more e.g. When? What? How? Why?
 - How was it? How did you feel?
 - What worked well? What would have made it better?
3. Did you feel like you were listened to?
 - Were your family/ carers involved when you wanted them to be? e.g. in decisions about your care? (As a carer did you feel involved?)
 - Did you get all the information you needed in a way that you understood?
 - Were different health and care professionals communicating well with each other?
 - If you've moved between services in the last month, how did you find these transitions (e.g. if you've moved between home and hospital)?
 - What worked well? What would have made it better?
5. Conclusion: If you could have changed one thing to make your experience better since we last spoke, what would it be?

Example: Healthwatch Leeds

Take a look at how Healthwatch Leeds have used video diaries to engage with people and share their experiences.

Background

In July 2019, Healthwatch Leeds kicked off a project following the experiences of four people who had complex health needs and so needed to access multiple health and care services. They recorded their experiences each monthly video or written testimony. These were shared with senior decision-makers to reflect and act on.

Recruiting participants

Working with partners, people who may otherwise not have been reached were recruited. Healthwatch Leeds worked with:

- Community matrons from the local community healthcare NHS trust who work with people with multiple and complex health needs.
- Professionals from a local hospice's community support team, supporting those living at home with end-of-life care.
- Support workers from their local carer support service.
- Care home managers via their links with their local clinical commissioning group and local authority adult social care department.

Healthwatch Leeds prepared a clear outline of their target audience, what the project would involve, and agreed this through senior managers on the partnership group.

Recruiting participants wasn't without its challenges. Because of this cascade of information, finding the right participants took considerable time. Also, because of the complex health needs of participants, we had a high number of people who had been identified, but then sadly passed away before the project started.

Filming/recording testimonies

Healthwatch Leeds decided at the beginning of the project that they would film every second month to make best use of funding and allow more flexibility. Participants' experiences were captured via an audio recording which was transcribed into a written testimony.

They employed a filmmaker on a freelance basis, someone who had previously volunteered with while studying film. This was a cost-effective solution and a great opportunity for the volunteer as his first paid employment as a film maker.

For each participant two-minute introductory videos were recorded, for us alongside any of the other videos. It enabled the person to introduce themselves in their own words and helped others to connect with them not just as a patient or service user, but as a real person.

Working with partners

From the outset, Healthwatch Leeds had strong buy-in from all partners who include our local NHS hospitals and community trusts, local authority and other third sector partners. They met monthly as a working group to review and reflect on the films/testimonies and decide on actions to take as a result. The films are also shown at the monthly Partnership Executive Group (PEG) attended by chief executives of all the above organisations.

Costs and resources

Healthwatch Leeds have eight full-time equivalent workers, and serve a population of around 2.6 million people. Below are approximate costs/time resources allocated to the project.

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Approximate cost/time resource</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Filmmaker employed to make and edit four films per participant.	£100 per film	A professional filmmaker would cost more than this. Partners Leeds CCG covered 50% of this cost.
Healthwatch project worker to co-ordinate the project, recruit participants, organise meetings with partners, etc.	2 days per month	
Worker to visit participant monthly, direct filmmaker in terms of film edits, transcribe and edit audio recordings.	3 days per month	This role was split between Healthwatch and staff from Leeds CCG.
Communications side of the project e.g. Posting films on website/YouTube channel, etc.	½ day a month	

The difference the work has made

Each health and care partner from the group is beginning to report back on how the learning has been used and what actions for improvement will be taken. Examples so far are:

- Trusts have shared the videos with relevant teams within their services as a professional development tool.
- Yorkshire Ambulance Service and Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust have said they are going to use the videos in their training.
- The University of Leeds is interested in including the videos in the medical education curriculum.
- A city-wide piece of work around the respect form used with DNR patients is going to be started.
- Films have not only been shown within the Leeds health and care system but are being used as best practice examples regionally.

“There is nothing more important or powerful than bringing the patient’s voice, authentically, right into the room of a group of people charged with making decisions for a city. For Leeds having the video diaries played at the beginning of many of our executive meetings in Leeds has grounded us back in the reality of the people we serve, galvanised us again and again to do better and always reminded us that we are servants of the people of Leeds.

We are better because of them and I can’t imagine ever not having them as a powerful tool in our work”

Quote from Thea Stein, Chief Executive of Leeds Community Healthcare Trust and member of Partnership Executive Group.

More information

You can watch the videos, read the written updates and learn more about the project from Healthwatch Leeds [here](#). If you have any further questions about the project, you can contact them by:

Email: [Harriet at Healthwatch Leeds](#)

Telephone: 0113 8980035 / Website: healthwatchleeds.co.uk