



## Eleanor – A powerful storyteller speaks up

**H**aving worked in the local Further Education College for 13 years and in local community theatre for the last 20 years, Eleanor Shaw was looking for new approaches in community resilience and personal empowerment.

This was particularly so in 2017 when Eleanor was experiencing her own personal mental health and well-being journey. As a result, Eleanor embarked on an autobiographical storytelling journey where she found the power of working with stories, helping her to understand her own story and the power of the process. Then she started sharing with her community.

Eleanor brought her networks together as well as fellow community arts workers and created a team of passionate applied practitioners and graduates that would work with people through narratives. She was supported by Social Business Wales and UNLTD. Putting people to the forefront of their own personal health and well-being journey was the ethos to creating a space for people to find their voice, a time for People to Speak Up and to listen up!

And so People Speak Up was born.

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healthier and resilient communities through storytelling, spoken word, creative writing, conversation-based activities, participatory arts, volunteering and training.

Now a registered charity, it has taken over the Ffwrnes Fach, a converted Zion Chapel and turned it into Llanelli's Arts, Health and Well-being Hub in Llanelli town centre. There is a regular programme of activities in the building and they take their work across South Wales into homes, care homes, outdoors and online, supporting over 2,000 individuals in the last year. Services are free to access. People Speak Up is regularly

commissioned by health boards and local authorities and has just become part of the Arts Council of Wales portfolio.

Their team of creative facilitators, together with guest storytellers, musicians, writers and visual artists, deliver a programme of activities that are designed with and around the needs of our local community. Everyone is welcome to participate and they work closely with partners to identify people who would benefit from a referral and services.

People Speak Up has become a lifeline, working with people and their families who are living with or have been affected by: cancer, dementia, loneliness, isolation, anxiety, mental health issues and social exclusion.

A short film about who we are and what we do: <https://bit.ly/AboutPSU>

