



Mhor Collective & Simon Community Scotland (SCS) Connect Hub - Project Report

Executive Summary

Between July and October 2025, Simon Community Scotland's Connect Hub partnered with Mhor Collective to deliver a co-produced media literacy and podcasting project. This initiative formed part of a broader project funded by Ofcom, which studies media literacy in Glasgow.

Set within the Connect Hub's trauma-informed support space for women experiencing homelessness, the initiative aimed to explore how media narratives impact socially excluded groups. The project foregrounded "living experience" as a leadership approach, culminating in the creation of a two-part podcast series ("*Women Without Walls*" and "*Unhoused, Unheard*") and a suite of participant-designed graphic materials.

The project utilised a participatory digital inclusion model. A key methodological success was the development of "Charlie," a fictional composite character created by the group. This narrative device allowed participants to explore complex themes—such as domestic abuse, addiction, and systemic barriers—through storytelling without the immediate pressure and possible trauma of personal disclosure, ensuring psychological safety throughout the production process.

This report is situated within a wider, programme-wide evaluation of Mhor Collective's Glasgow media literacy work. Evaluation data collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys with six core participants reveals that the project was highly effective in building agency and skills. All participants agreed they felt included, respected, and able to influence the project's direction. The findings highlight four transformative shifts:

- **Critical Awareness:** Participants moved from passive consumption to active interrogation of media bias, recognising how vulnerabilised groups are often scapegoated and stigmatised.
- **Digital Confidence:** Practical training in tools like Canva and audio recording translated into "survival literacy," empowering women to navigate essential online services independently.
- **Ethical Storytelling:** The group developed a nuanced understanding of audience strategy, consent, and anonymity.
- **Restoring Agency:** The act of creating content shifted internal narratives, fostering a sense of ownership and advocacy.

This research suggests that media literacy, when embedded in a safe, relational environment, serves as a powerful tool for both personal confidence and social justice.



Future recommendations which will strengthen media literacy include prioritising foundational digital skills training at the outset and maintaining flexible engagement models to accommodate women's recovery journeys, alongside ensuring that access to digital devices and data is maintained so that individual learning, confidence and empowerment can continue to flourish.

Introduction

The Project:

Forming part of a broader project funded by Ofcom to study media literacy in Glasgow, this initiative took place in Simon Community Scotland's (SCS) Connect Hub in the city, whereby SCS partnered with Mhor Collective to co-create a media literacy and podcasting project with women experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The Connect Hub is a trauma-informed support space for women, providing pathways away from and out of homelessness through support, connection and community, building deep trust and centering women's living experience.

Since July 2025, a core group of six women (joined at times by others) met weekly to explore how media can empower, misrepresent, or silence women, particularly those who are already socially excluded or silenced through abuse, violence or exploitation. The project culminated in the co-production of a two-part podcast series, "*Women Without Walls*" and "*Unhoused, Unheard*," alongside a suite of graphic materials designed by the women themselves.

This work built on SCS's trauma-informed ethos and Mhor's participatory digital inclusion model, embedding critical media literacy into a safe, relational space. The project foregrounded lived and living experience, not only as content but as a leadership approach—centering women's voices in shaping, producing, and delivering the work. This allowed for greater trust, transparency and openness.

How it was evaluated:

Forming part of a wider, programme-wide evaluation of Mhor Collective's Glasgow media literacy work, the aim of the evaluation was to assess the changes for participants as a result of their attendance at the session, both to understand what worked well and to gather potential improvements.

A total of six participants completed both an evaluation form and a one-to-one interview in October 2025. A Likert scale was used to gather data in response to four key questions, with the interview format allowing participants to add to or explain their answers more fully if they wished. Further qualitative data was collected through the interviews, which were in a semi-structured format. Before undertaking the survey and interview, participants were asked to sign consent forms to ensure they understood the nature of the survey and their participation, how their data would be used, and that they understood they could withdraw



their participation at any point. All data was anonymised and answers could not be traced to any of the participants.

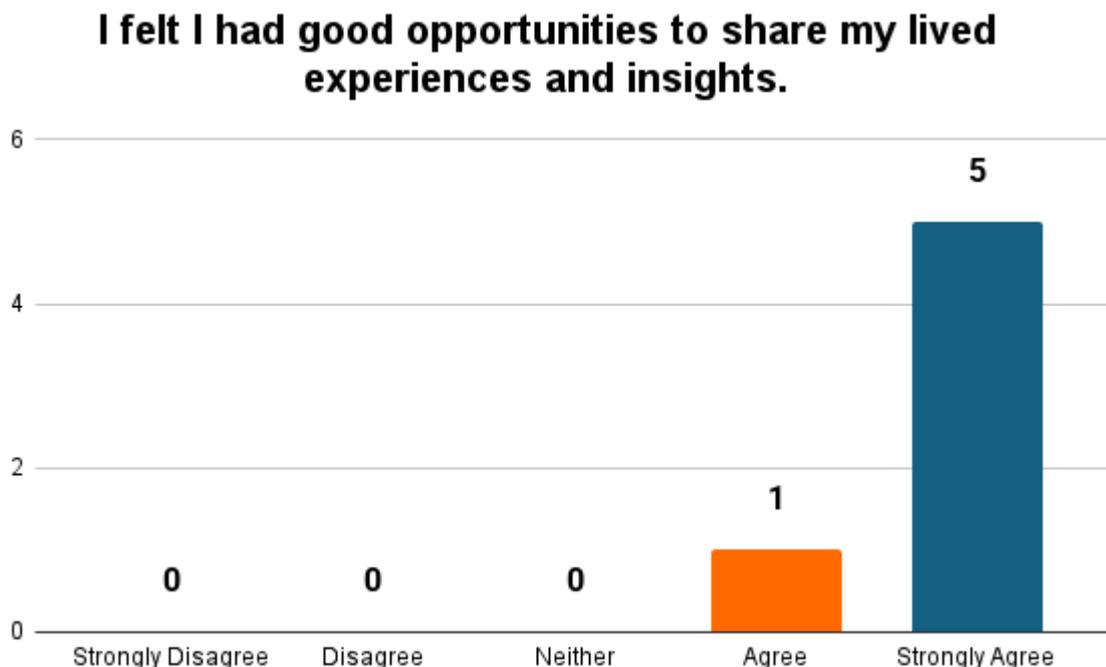
This evaluation fostered insights into four of Mhor’s Key Evaluation Questions:

- How effectively were people with living experience of inequality involved in design and implementation?;
- To what extent have participants (e.g. frontline staff, service users) reported improved media literacy skills and awareness?;
- How effectively did the project engage with the identified target groups and frontline organisations?; and
- What lessons were learned that could inform future media literacy initiatives, particularly those targeting seldom-heard populations?

Findings

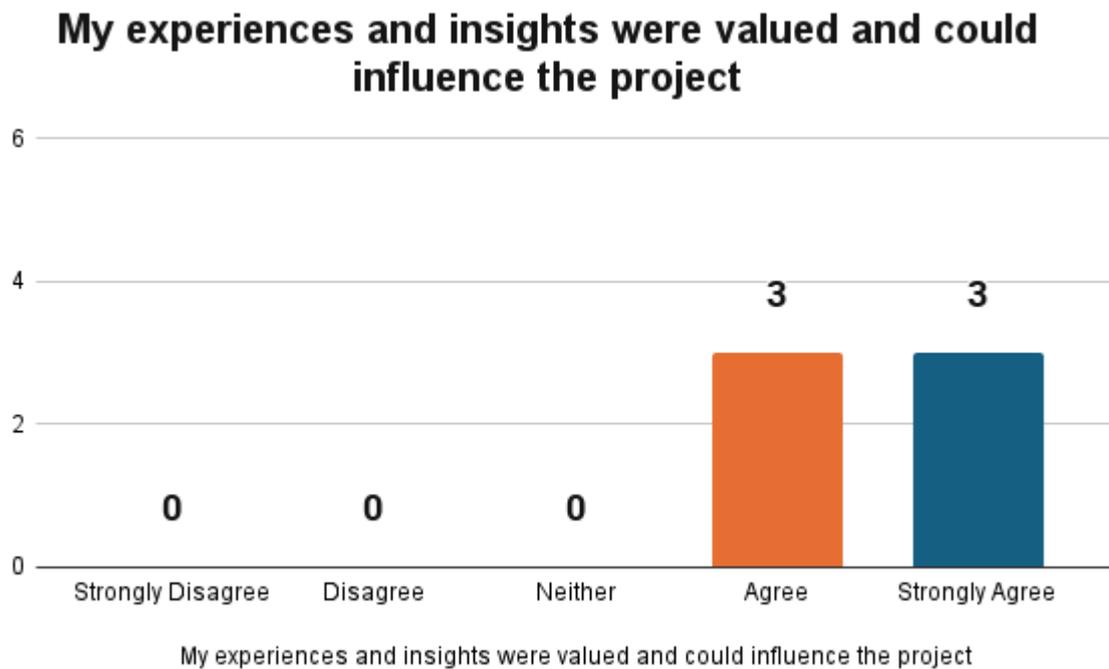
Media Literacy as Empowerment:

All participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had the opportunity to bring their experiences and insights into the project:





Participants also reported feeling valued in their time with the project, with opportunities to shape the work as it progressed:



Therefore the research not only indicates strong levels of satisfaction with collaborative and participatory approaches, but that the topic of media literacy, when embedded in trauma-informed practice, can become a tool of agency, advocacy, and relational repair. The following insights emerged from the women’s participation:

- **Media as Manipulation vs. Media as Power**
Participants critically examined how media narratives shape public perceptions of homelessness. One woman reflected, *“I think a lot of us in the group believed what we had heard through word of mouth and believed what we’d read on social media, about how refugees are causing the homelessness crisis for Scottish people. We talked a lot about how we shouldn’t be blaming other homeless people... but that’s how the media targeted it.”* This led to deeper conversations about bias, scapegoating, and the strategic framing of vulnerable groups.
- **Audience Awareness and Ethical Storytelling**
Through podcast creation, women explored how media is tailored to specific

audiences. “*All media is created with a certain audience in mind... it’s very clever and strategic.*” This awareness informed decisions about voice anonymity, scripting, and consent—ensuring ethical representation and emotional safety.

- **Digital Confidence and Survival Literacy**

Learning to use laptops, search online, and navigate services was transformative. “*I didn’t even know how to type on a laptop keyboard... but once you learn, it makes such a difference.*” Media literacy here was not abstract—it was directly tied to renewing bus passes, accessing benefits, and researching support services, supporting participants to improve their digital citizenship.

- **Critical Consumption and Source Evaluation**

Participants moved from relying on hearsay and social media to interrogating sources. “*It’s one thing to say ‘I know this is true because I lived it’... but it’s another to say ‘I’ve done my research.’*” This shift marked a move toward empowered, evidence-based advocacy and participants being better able to fact-check and verify information.

- **Creative Expression as Media Literacy**

The Canva workshop revealed how design tools can foster both technical skill and emotional expression. “*I didn’t think I was creative... but I want to keep learning how to use it.*” Graphic design became a medium for storytelling, visibility, and ownership, ensuring participants can better create and manage their own content.

- **Peer Learning and Relational Safety**

Media literacy was scaffolded through peer support and practitioner warmth. “*Maeve (SCS staff member) made sure we never felt pressured... we could write it down or bring it up another day.*” This relational approach enabled women to engage at their own pace, reinforcing trust and inclusion.

- **From Passive Consumers to Active Creators**

The podcast process—developing Charlie’s story, scripting, recording, editing—shifted participants from media subjects to media producers. “*Being able to be a part of creating change and influencing change... having such open conversations.*” This was media literacy in its most radical form: reclaiming narrative power.

Lessons Learned

What worked well:

Collaboration

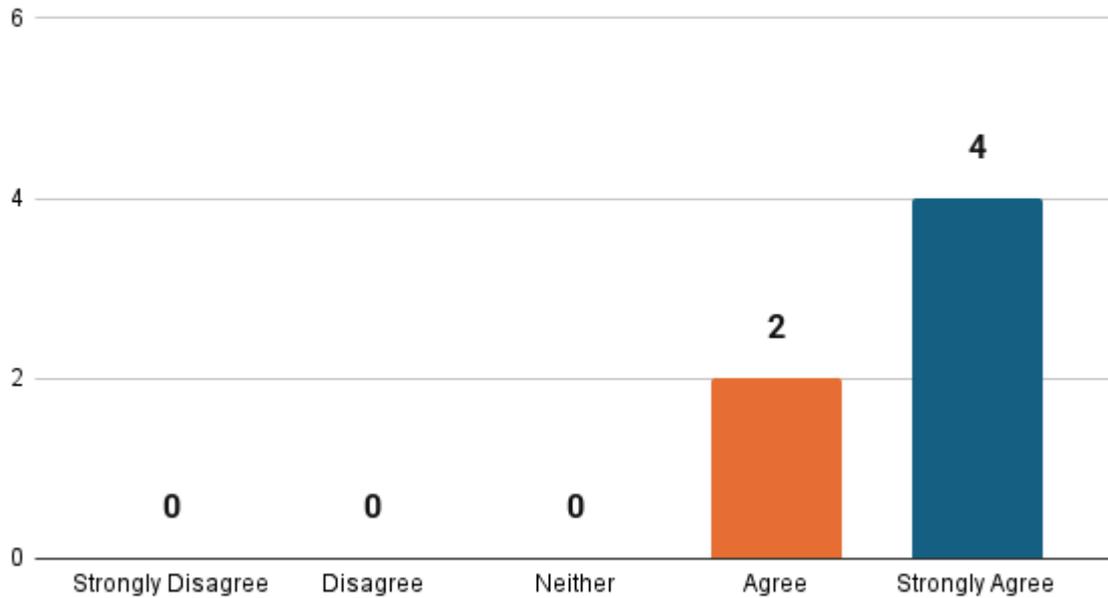
From the outset, the project was co-designed with the women. Sessions were structured but flexible, allowing for drop-in participation and adapting to the realities of women’s lives. Mhor facilitated a Canva workshop where participants co-created a podcast thumbnail, a flyer, and



a launch event poster. These visual outputs were more than promotional—they were acts of authorship and visibility.

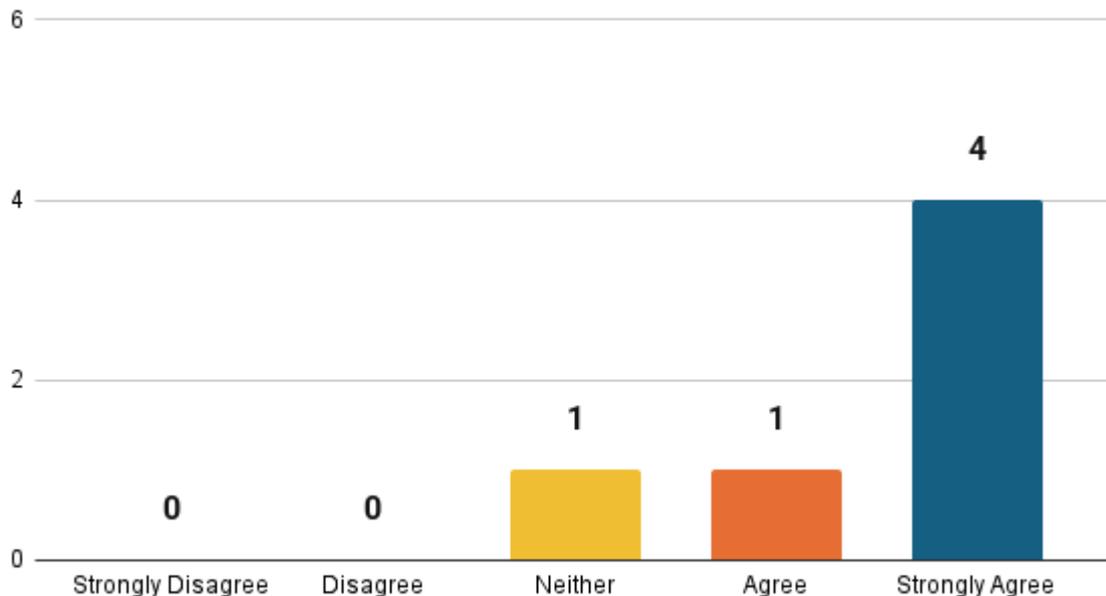
Mhor’s collaborative approach was evidenced by all participants, who agreed or strongly agreed with the sentiment of feeling included and respected during their time in the project:

I felt included and respected during the project activities



This was borne out further by the participants’ drive to take part in future activities of this sort, should they arise:

I would be willing to take part in similar activities again



The single participant who was non-committal on this point (answering “Neither”) reflected that this was very much the result of her own progress along a recovery journey, as noted in the section *“Navigating Recovery and Participation”* below.

The podcast episodes emerged from deep discussion, storytelling, and shared analysis. The first episode, “Women Without Walls,” introduces Charlie, a fictional composite character developed by the group, allowing the women to anonymise their storytelling and exploration. Charlie’s story, of domestic abuse, substance use, kinship care, and systemic navigation, mirrors many of the women’s own experiences. The second episode, “Unhoused, Unheard,” delves into mental health, addiction, and the barriers to accessing support during a housing crisis.

Media Literacy in Action: Podcasting, Canva, and Critical Thinking

The project embedded media literacy into every stage, from researching statistics to designing visuals and recording audio. To reiterate the quantitative data noted above, the women felt included, respected and valued, with the opportunity to influence how things were done and to bring their experience to bear on the project. This suggests that active and practical elements of media creation, overlapping with elements of digital inclusion, imbued the sessions with a sense of relevance and resonance to the women’s lives.

Participants explored, and reflected upon:

- **Misinformation and Media Bias:** *“We talked a lot about how we shouldn’t be blaming other homeless people... but that’s how the media targeted it.”*

- **Passive consumption to actively critical** *“We believed what we’d read on social media... but staff helped us see how the media pits vulnerable groups against each other.”*
- **Audience and Ethics:** *“All media is created with a certain audience in mind... it’s very clever and strategic.”*
- **Digital Confidence:** *“I was able to renew my bus pass myself... it was so easy.”*
- **Creative Expression:** *“The Canva session was great... I didn’t think I was creative, but I want to keep learning how to use it.”*

Areas for improvement:

A number of challenges were noted within the project:

- **Navigating Recovery and Participation:** Some women reflected on the emotional toll of participating while still in early recovery. One participant noted, *“I was so focused on my own abstinence journey... I don’t think I necessarily had enough distance to be entirely comfortable in that space.”*
- **Confidence and Public Speaking:** The podcast’s launch event was a milestone, but also a source of anxiety. *“I was quite nervous... maybe if I’d had more chances outside of this project to do public speaking, I wouldn’t have been so nervous.”*
- **Digital Starting Points:** For many, this was their first time using a laptop. *“I didn’t even know how to type on a laptop keyboard... but once you learn, it makes such a difference.”* Digital inclusion is an essential element of media literacy work in safe spaces, and cannot be assumed.
- **Balancing Co-Production with Timelines:** Staff acknowledged the tension between co-production and project deadlines. *“Sometimes staff had to take on the role of writing prompts... but we always walked the women through it and asked for their thoughts.”*

What Participants Want to Learn Next:

Participants were keen to continue learning about media literacy, media creation and digital literacy, though access to equipment, particularly a laptop device, was noted as key to facilitating this:

“Just continuing to have access to the computer and be able to keep practising and learning and having it available to me.”

“If you’re homeless then you’re really not going to have a laptop and you might not have a phone either.”

This feedback again suggests that, for the women, digital skills and media literacy are not just intertwined but mutually supportive and sustaining, bolstering their agency, confidence and empowerment.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This project didn't just teach media skills—it built solidarity, challenged stigma, and created space for women to be heard on their own terms. As one participant put it:

“Being able to be a part of creating change and influencing change. Being able to have such open conversations.”

The women's voices, stories, and designs will now reach wider audiences through the podcast and its accompanying materials. But perhaps more importantly, the project has already shifted internal narratives—about what's possible, who gets to speak, and how media can be reclaimed as a tool for justice.

Looking ahead, the partnership between SCS and Mhor Collective offers a strong blueprint for future activity. To sustain this momentum, future iterations could emphasise embedding foundational digital skills—such as typing and interface navigation—at the very start of the process. This ensures that technical barriers do not hinder media literacy investigation, creative expression or confidence.

Additionally, the success of using a fictional character ('Charlie') to mask personal trauma proved vital for emotional safety and carries a strong potential to remain a core methodology in future designs. However, to address participants' anxiety regarding launch events, future programmes of this type would benefit from scaffolding public speaking opportunities earlier in the process, building advocacy skills gradually.

Ultimately, this evaluation suggests that media literacy, when grounded in trauma-informed care, is a catalyst for agency. The participants moved from passive consumption to active creation, proving that with the right support, digital media literacy can be bridged not just for access, but for advocacy. The priority now for the women, and media consumers more generally, is to ensure these platforms remain open and accessible, allowing participants to continue shifting from being the subjects of the story to the authors of their own narratives.