



UNDERSTANDING VISITOR EXPERIENCE AT LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL THROUGH NARRATIVE-BASED APPROACHS

Evaluating an Adaptation of The Most Significant Change Method

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1. Acknowledgements

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2. Abstract

This research project examines how narrative-based approaches can be used to understand and communicate visitor experience at Liverpool Cathedral. Focusing on staff and volunteer-recorded stories, it explores how themes of wellbeing, belonging, and inclusion are expressed through everyday encounters, while also evaluating the use of an adapted Most Significant Change (MSC) approach as a tool for reflection and for outreach. The study draws on qualitative data collected through 23 narrative accounts and one semi-structured interview from Cathedral staff and volunteers. A thematic analysis was used to identify key domains of visitor experience, including both predefined and emergent themes.

The findings demonstrate that storytelling provides a nuanced and flexible method for capturing visitor experience, often revealing insights not accessible through more structured approaches. The adapted MSC method also encouraged staff to engage in reflective practice and highlighted opportunities for practical application across communications, research, and outreach. Overall, the study suggests that narrative-based methods can function not only as a research tool but also as a means of fostering inclusion and engagement, supporting the Cathedral's position as a contemporary organisation that balances its roles as both a sacred space and a common ground of encounter.

From these findings, the report proposes four key recommendations: (1) expanding the MSC approach to incorporate multiple levels of reflection across Cathedral teams; (2) introducing an improved story drop box to increase accessibility and participation to benefit the communications team; (3) developing storytelling workshops, in collaboration with Writing on the Wall, to engage underrepresented communities; and (4) applying storytelling more broadly as a tool for preserving local histories and supporting community-focused programming. Together, these recommendations aim to enhance understanding of visitor experience while strengthening the Cathedral's role as an inclusive and reflective community space.

3. Introduction

3.1 Project Background

This research project was undertaken through the University of Liverpool's Interchange programme, which connects voluntary and community



organisations with social science students to support research needs. Through this partnership, the researcher collaborated with Liverpool Cathedral to explore visitor experience and evaluate the use of narrative-based approaches within the organisation.

3.2 The Client Organisation

Liverpool Cathedral, completed in 1978, is an Anglican cathedral located on St James's Mount and is the largest cathedral in Britain and the fifth largest in the world. Designed



by Giles Gilbert Scott, it serves as both a place of worship and a major cultural and visitor destination. The Cathedral plays a central role in the religious and cultural life of Liverpool, welcoming around 600,000 visitors annually. Committed to inclusivity, it offers daily services alongside a wide range of events. The Cathedral aims to provide a welcoming space for reflection and community engagement. It is funded by the Church

of England, heritage, music trusts, and donations.

3.3 Aims and Objectives

This research project examined how narrative-based approaches can be used to understand and communicate visitor experience at Liverpool Cathedral. It explored how stories, recorded by staff and volunteers, provided insight into how the Cathedral fosters wellbeing, belonging, and inclusion among its visitors, while also evaluating the potential of an adapted Most Significant Change (MSC) approach as a tool for reflection and storytelling as a means of outreach.

Specifically, this research sought to explore:

- What cathedral staff and volunteers perceived as significant in visitors' reflections and experiences of the Cathedral
- How themes of wellbeing, belonging, and inclusion were expressed and interpreted through the stories documented
- How the adapted MSC approach functioned in practice, particularly in facilitating reflection among staff and capturing meaningful visitor experiences
- What the use of narrative-based story collection revealed about institutional values and how this could inform future outreach and engagement strategies

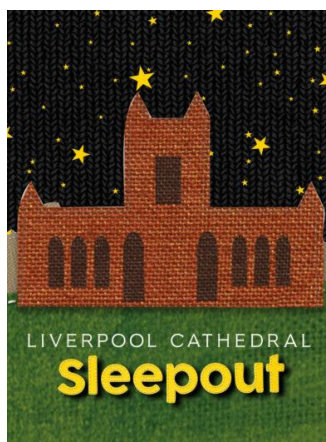
Ultimately, the findings aimed to contribute both to understanding visitor experience and to assessing the value of narrative-based methods as a practical tool for engagement, supporting the Cathedral's mission to act as an inclusive space of both sacred and common ground.

4. Background and Context

“Praised for their architectural magnificence, aesthetic appeal and historical significance... their impact on and significance for English life extends far beyond their role as tourist destinations.” – Theos & Grubb Institute 2012, p. 10.

Despite trends towards declining Church attendance across the country, Anglican cathedrals have experienced renewed popularity and have been described as the success story of the Church of England (Inge, 2006). The Liverpool Cathedral echoes this wider admiration within Britain, and, in addition to its inspiring stature and role as a unifying space for the diocese, “it has stimulated the spirit of giving” (Vere, 1924, p. 12), functioning as an emblem of the organisation's collective mission. From its inception, careful attention was given to its atmosphere, with the interplay of colour from the stained-glass windows, the rose tones of the sandstone, and the varied textures of other materials combining to form a “harmonious whole” (Vere, 1924, p.32). This architectural unity reflects a core ethos of cathedral ministry: providing a welcoming community hub for the people who live nearby.

Liverpool Cathedral actively engages in local community outreach, most notably through its collaboration with the Metropolitan Cathedral and St. Bride’s Church in 2016 to establish Micah Liverpool. This social justice charity works to alleviate poverty and inequality (Micah Liverpool, 2026). Micah currently works with unemployed residents by

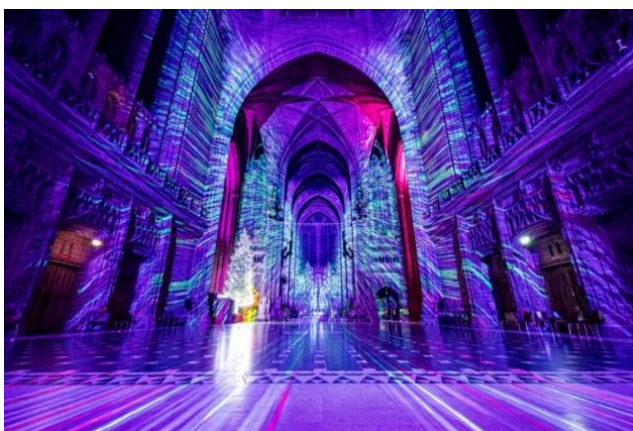


running an employability programme that offers a variety of volunteer roles at Liverpool Cathedral and helps people in need of food or related assistance by hosting two pantry sessions a week, providing three days of emergency supplies to families and individuals (Liverpool Cathedral, 2024). Commitment to local charities is further demonstrated through an annual ‘Sleepout’ fundraiser¹, where a sleepover is hosted on the Cathedral's grounds, raising money for The Whitechapel Centre, a local homeless charity, hosting 450 people in 2019 (Ecroys, 2021, p.34). As a

¹ Liverpool Cathedral ‘Sleep Out’ Fundraiser Poster (2026). Available at: <https://liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/>

registered charity, Liverpool Cathedral operates a citywide school outreach programme that encourages and provides music education for children, involving over 1,500 people annually. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Liverpool Cathedral adapted quickly, moving services and musical offerings online, which was significant as it indicated an acceptance of “new concepts, ideas and meanings, thereby bringing in younger audiences through new, innovative communication and technologies” (Krüger Bridge, 2022, p.53). In response to the long-term impact of COVID-19 on visitor numbers and corporate income, the Cathedral accelerated strategic changes, prioritising local engagement and public events to reposition itself more firmly within the life of the city and region (Ecroys, 2021).

Events have become an integral part of engaging wider community networks, providing an important gateway through which a sense of belonging can be fostered (Walker, 2017). The Cathedral regularly hosts community events, from the monthly *Encountering Common Threads* stitching sessions to larger exhibitions such as *Threads through the Bible: Love, Life, Tragedy & Triumph* (January–March 2025). These events reflect a wider commitment to the creative arts, recognised both for enhancing wellbeing and for offering an accessible medium through which shared messages can be conveyed (Levstek et al., 2021). One of the most spectacular examples is the Luxmuralis son et lumière light show,² or 'The Light Before



Christmas', now in its fourth year, which attracted more than 60,000 visitors in a single evening, many of whom had not previously visited the Cathedral (Kirby et al., 2023). Using art and technology, the installation transforms the interior into a shared immersive experience, as the Dean of Liverpool, The Very Revd Dr Sue Jones, observed: “just being inside the building at night is an incredible experience, so flooding the space with the wonders of the universe will be simply spectacular” (Grant, 2022).

² The Light Before Christmas (2024). Credit; Luxmuralis <https://projectionartgallery.com/index.php/2024>



Similar events, such as *Helios* in 2025,³ described as a “stunning celebration of the Sun’s life-giving power and its significance across cultures and faiths,” demonstrate the Cathedral’s willingness to blend the sacred with cultural programming beyond traditional worship to encourage

engagement across an increasingly diverse region (Liverpool Cathedral, 2025).

Liverpool Cathedral also collaborates with local universities through initiatives such as *Interchange*, which provide opportunities for both students and the Cathedral’s research team to engage in community-focused research. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate an ongoing commitment to inclusion and community engagement, expressed through outreach and cultural programming. Yet as the Cathedral continues to adapt to the changing needs of Liverpool, understanding how visitors experience and interpret these initiatives becomes essential in assessing how institutional aims are embodied in practice. While patterns of engagement can be observed, the meanings behind these encounters are less easily captured. Narrative accounts offer potential not only for revealing these lived experiences in greater depth, but also for communicating them in ways that can encourage wider public engagement.

³ *Helios* (2025). Credit: Gareth Jones; <https://liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/helios>

5. Literature Review

Contemporary research highlights that cathedrals are increasingly understood not only as sacred spaces but also as sites of civic engagement, fostering a sense of belonging and social well-being (Francis & Mansfield, 2022). The transition into this new epoch was exemplified by The Church of England's *Heritage and Renewal* report (1994), which described cathedrals as “shopwindows” whereby the Church of England could present itself to society. This metaphor has been reflected by a growing emphasis on public engagement across Cathedrals, where attendance is not solely rooted in religious practice but also in cultural and experiential encounters. As Muskett (2019) argues, such metaphors do not merely describe cathedral functions but actively shape how institutions understand and enact their roles. The concept of ‘common ground’, for instance, has encouraged the integration of sacred and secular activities, allowing cathedrals to exist in the complex spaces of ‘betweens’, balancing their identity as highly liturgical and distinctly Christian environments with a broader role as inclusive, civic spaces (Budhi-Thornton, 2024, p.368; Pike, 2022). In this sense, increasing attendance is not incidental but a deliberate outcome of cathedrals' positioning themselves as an accessible common ground of encounter.

As Muskett and Francis (2015) observe, the “blossoming” of cathedrals has been matched by the emergence of cathedral studies as a field of social inquiry. The development of cathedral science was introduced and illustrated by Leslie Francis *et al.* (2015), who brought together ten original research projects, each exploring aspects of *Anglican cathedrals in modern Life*. Rooted in empirical theology, these studies showed the value of applying social scientific methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to cathedral ministry and mission (Francis *et al.*, 2020). Within this body of work, Burton (2015) highlighted the value of qualitative insight, drawing on over a thousand visitor comments gathered over three years to explore how cathedrals are experienced both as tourist attractions and as sacred spaces. He argued that such reflections should be actively gathered and interpreted by cathedral staff, positioning them as meaningful insights into visitor experience. This illustrates the potential for developing a narrative-based, staff and volunteer-centred reflective approach to understanding how individuals

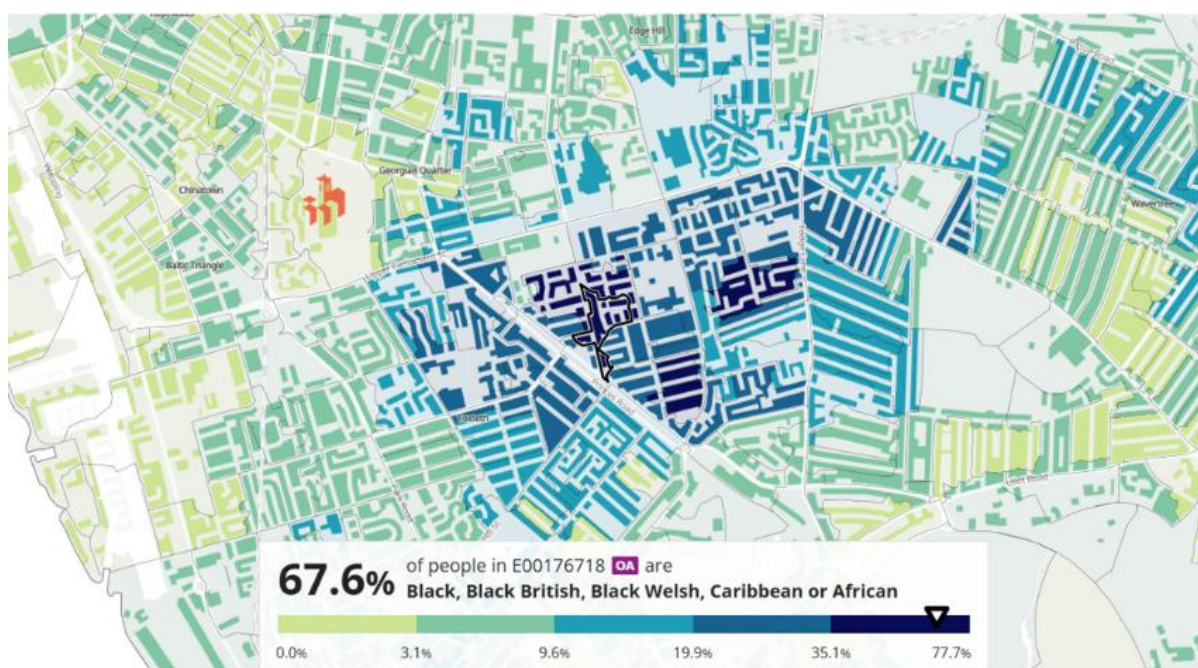
engage with cathedral spaces. This is particularly relevant in the context of Liverpool Cathedral, which “operates a policy of trying to fill all roles locally where possible, as one of its key aims is to make a positive impact on employment in the local economy” (Ecroys, 2021, p.15). With over 90% of its 127 employees in 2019 living within the city, such an approach offers the potential for reflective insight grounded in local knowledge and community (Ecroys, 2021).

Several recent studies examining visitor experience at Liverpool Cathedral have employed structured survey methodologies, generating valuable data on patterns of attendance and motivation (Francis et al., 2020; Kirby et al., 2023; Pike, 2022). As these were conducted at large-scale events, the scope for in-depth qualitative engagement was understandably limited, typically confined to optional open-ended responses (Pike, 2022). However, even within this format, there are clear indications of the value of qualitative insight in capturing visitor experiences. For example, in a study of the Holly Bough service, Pike (2022, pp. 107–108) highlights how visitor comments revealed both appreciation and constructive critique, with participants describing the Cathedral as a place where they felt “welcome and spiritually enriched,” while also identifying areas for improvement. Similarly, Kirby et al. (2023), exploring visitor engagement during the Luxmuralis installation *Space, the Universe and Everything*, used surveys with an optional open-ended prompt through which participants described the experience as “awe-inspiring,” “uplifting,” and conducive to “quiet calm and reflection.” These findings offer valuable insights into how visitors attach meaning to their encounters, highlighting the potential of a more systematic approach to narrative collection to deepen understanding of visitor experience.

Narrative documentation also offers a valuable means of extending accounts beyond research into practical engagement. In media contexts, ‘human interest’ stories communicate experiences in natural and engaging ways, producing relatable narratives that capture attention and resonate with local audiences (Hughes, 1982; Brookes, 2018). Survey data from The Audience Agency (2026), collected by Liverpool Cathedral between January 2025 and March 2026, shows that a notable proportion of visitors became aware of the Cathedral through media-based channels, including its website (13.3%), social media (5.3%), and other digital platforms. This highlights the potential benefit of

developing a body of narrative accounts that can be woven into these channels or shared with the press, enabling the Cathedral to communicate its identity through personal experience rather than direct promotion. Examples of local press coverage, such as that in the *Liverpool Echo* (Bona, 2025; Molyneux, 2025a; Molyneux, 2025b), demonstrate how stories rooted in memory and lived experience can resonate strongly with audiences while subtly encouraging cathedral engagement. In this sense, visitor narratives hold not only analytical significance but also strategic value as tools for outreach.

This is particularly significant at Liverpool Cathedral, where visitor numbers are bolstered by a substantial share of tourists. The Cathedral Group Visitor Survey Report (2023) found that 32% of attendees were from outside the UK, the highest among the cathedrals studied. Similarly, data from The Audience Agency (2026) indicates that only 17.7% of 1,341 respondents were from Liverpool, with the majority coming from elsewhere in the UK (49.7%) or abroad (32.6%). While this reflects strong national and international appeal, it also highlights the importance of strengthening engagement with local communities who may be underrepresented despite their proximity. This is particularly relevant to the Toxteth community, which is home to the most densely populated Black (Black British, Black Welsh, Black Caribbean, or African) population in Liverpool (67.6% of people in E00176718, an output area in L8), less than one mile from the cathedral.⁴



⁴ Office for National Statistics (2021) *Census 2021 maps: Ethnic group data by Output Area* [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/ethnic-group/ethnic-group>

Despite this proximity, Audience Agency (2026) data indicates that, of 1,564 respondents to the question “What is your ethnic group?”, only 1.1% identified as Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British, showcasing the level of underrepresentation of the local communities. This disparity may, in part, reflect differences in religious⁵ or cultural



affiliation within nearby communities, which can influence patterns of engagement with Anglican spaces. However, Liverpool Cathedral seeks to operate as an inclusive community hub open to all, regardless

of faith or background. This, therefore, underscores the benefit of developing strategies that not only extend outreach but also could deepen understanding of how underrepresented communities perceive and experience the Cathedral.

Story documentation offers a potential mechanism for addressing this imbalance. The present study adopts the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology, developed by Rick Davies (1998), which centres on the collection and participatory interpretation of narrative accounts. MSC involves the ongoing collection of “stories” across different levels of an organisation, allowing the most significant examples to surface through a reflective and iterative process (Dart & Davies, 2003). This produces rich qualitative evidence that, as Patton (1997, p. 65) explains, can “render judgments, facilitate improvements and/or generate knowledge.” MSC captures meaningful, participant-driven stories of change, allowing the research to understand impact from the perspective of those directly involved. It is particularly suited to exploratory, community-focused work where diverse experiences need to be heard. Although more commonly applied within international development (Dart and Davies, 2003), this approach offers clear potential for adaptation within cathedral contexts, providing a structured way to utilise visitor stories.

⁵ Office for National Statistics (2021) *Census 2021 maps: Religious identity data by Output Area* [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/religion/muslim>

6. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted in this study, focusing on an adapted Most Significant Change (MSC) framework. It explains how domains were established, how stories were collected and selected, and how participants contributed to the research. The chapter then details the use of reflective interviews, followed by ethical considerations and data analysis procedures. Together, these sections demonstrate how the methodology was implemented in practice to explore visitor experience and evaluate the use of narrative-based approaches within Liverpool Cathedral.

Traditional indicator-based evaluation deploys a pre-determined set of established indicators to provide evidence of whether expected outcomes are achieved. The MSC approach shifts away from this structure, instead focusing on identifying significant change as perceived by participants (Davies, 1998). Although typically concerned with ‘change’, this study adapts the approach to focus on the narrative accounts themselves, treating the stories as reflections of what individuals perceive to be meaningful or significant within their experience. Based on the framework developed by Rick Davies (1998), the adapted version of the MSC methodology used in this study involved the following stages:

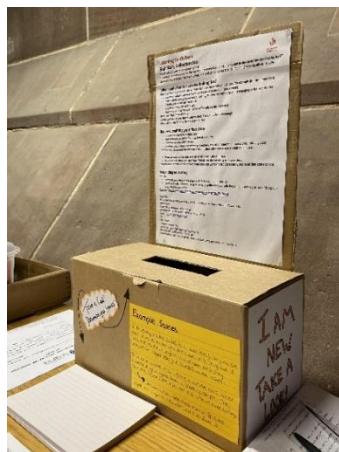
1. Selecting Domains

To determine the scope of the stories, the Cathedral’s aims and ambitions served as a guide. Domains were intentionally left open, reflecting the principle that categories of change should remain flexible and participant-defined rather than rigidly predetermined (Davies, 1998):

- Domain 1 – Belonging, identity and inclusion within Liverpool Cathedral
- Domain 2 – Spiritual, emotional and reflective encounters within Liverpool Cathedral
- Domain 3 – Personal, relatable accounts that convey individual experience and connection

2. Reporting Period

Stories were collected over one month, from 3rd March to 3rd April 2026. Staff and volunteers were encouraged to document both past and ongoing encounters as they arose, enabling more immediate and authentic accounts. This reflects the inductive



nature of MSC, which “extracts meaning out of events that have taken place rather than making assumptions about future events” (Davies, 1998, p. 243). In MSC, stories are typically collected from those most directly involved in a programme, such as staff and volunteers, in response to simple reflective prompts (Dart & Davies, 2003). Participant contributions were gathered through a combination of approaches. A story drop-box in the staff room,⁶ accompanied

by an information sign, invited written submissions, alongside an online Padlet link where staff and volunteers could share accounts digitally. The drop box was incorporated, as many of the Cathedral team favoured the idea of physical submission over using technology. This was reflected by the 23 stories received, with 19 collected through physical submission and 4 online. This aspect of the study reflects self-selection sampling, as individuals chose whether to take part. Elements of convenience were also used through informal, in-person encouragement to help prompt contributions, drawing on staff readily available within the Cathedral. In addition, an email circulated to the wider Cathedral team acted as an open invitation to participate, further reinforcing the voluntary nature of the sample.

⁶ Story Drop Box (2026). Designed and Implemented for the Cathedral by the researcher.

3. Participants

MSC traditionally involves additional layers of collective story selection (Dart and Davies, 2003, p. 139, fig. 1); this was deemed unnecessary given the small scale of the study. Instead, two levels of analysis were used:

- Level 1: Cathedral team members (staff/volunteers) documenting visitor stories.
- Level 2: The researcher grouping stories by finding themes to select the most significant.

4. Phrasing the question

Staff and volunteers were given open-ended prompts that aligned with the domains to encourage the documentation of stories that visitors had told them. In the case of the information sign on the story drop box in the staff room, the prompts were presented as follows:

Listening to Visitors

Staff Story Collection Box

This drop box is part of the research project:

"Listening to Visitors: What Can Personal Stories Reveal about Belonging and Inclusion in Liverpool Cathedral?"

We are inviting staff and volunteers to briefly record visitor stories that felt meaningful or significant to you.

What kind of stories are we looking for?

Past or present accounts of natural interactions you have had with visitors, for example (but not limited to):

- A moment where someone expressed feeling welcomed (or unwelcome)
- A story about belonging, exclusion, identity, memory, or wellbeing whilst engaging with the cathedral
- A spiritual or emotional encounter
- A comment that stayed with you
- An interaction that made you reflect differently on the Cathedral

There is no "right" kind of story.

If it felt significant to you, that is what matters. Every story has a meaning!

Please keep stories brief (a few sentences is fine).



In the open invitation email circulated to the Cathedral team, the prompts were slightly vaguer, but it also encouraged people to go to the drop box, where they could find the information sign and information sheet placed beside it:

Rather than interviewing visitors directly, we are interested in moments or encounters with visitors that have stayed with you. For example, a comment someone made, a brief conversation, or an interaction that made you reflect on a visitor's experience of the Cathedral. These do not need to be long — even a few sentences is perfect.

Visitor experiences often emerge naturally in conversation, and by briefly reflecting on and recording these moments, the project hopes to better understand how recurring themes connect with the Cathedral's values of inclusivity, belonging, and connection in everyday practice.

5. Selection of the Most Significant Stories:

By deciding which stories to document, staff and volunteers had already engaged in an initial level of reflection, identifying what they considered to be significant encounters. By looking at all the stories gathered, finding themes and selecting domains, the researcher acted as the second level of selection. A central component of MSC lies not only in the stories themselves but in the “deliberation and dialogue that surrounds the process of selecting [what is] significant” (Dart & Davies, 2003, p 138). In a larger-scale study, a broader reflective process could be very usefully applied within the cathedral.

6. Reflective Interviews

To complement the narrative data, two semi-structured interviews were intended to have taken place with staff or volunteers who contributed stories. Unfortunately, one interview could not take place due to reasons beyond the researcher's control. The interview, which did take place, provided insight into how and why particular stories were considered significant, while also evaluating the usefulness of the approach. This format allowed the participant to reflect on their experiences while enabling the researcher to explore emerging themes flexibly and naturally (Bryman, 2000). This reflects the participatory nature of MSC, where interpretation is central to understanding and applying visitor experience. An email invitation was circulated to Cathedral team members who had contributed stories, inviting them to participate in a short, semi-structured interview. A guide over the age of 50 years old participated in the interview. It lasted 12 minutes and was conducted in both a quiet and accessible area of the

Cathedral. An audio recording was made of the interview on a Dictaphone provided by Liverpool Cathedral, which was securely stored in the locked staff room. The raw audio file was then uploaded onto the researcher's laptop and stored on the University M drive for transcription. The semi-structured approach, supported by prior visits and informal interactions, helped establish a comfortable rapport with the participant, enabling open responses and more in-depth reflection during the interview.

6.1 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was central to the design and implementation of this study, particularly given its qualitative nature and the involvement of multiple participants (Silverman, 2013). According to the British Sociological Association (2017), participants should be able to give fully informed consent, based on a clear understanding of the research and their role within it. In line with this, Participant Information Sheets (See Appendices A and B) and Consent Forms (See Appendices C and D) were provided for both story collection and interviews. These were made readily available alongside the story drop box, attached to email invitations, and could be provided on request. They outlined the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, the benefits of participation, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

Participation was entirely voluntary, a principle reinforced by the open and self-selecting nature of the story drop box. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. To ensure ethical transparency (Bryman, 2016), interview participants were reminded of their rights before each interview, and verbal consent was obtained in addition to written consent. In this way, consent was informed, freely given, and unambiguous (BSA, 2017), with comprehensive measures taken to ensure confidentiality. No personally identifiable information was requested during the story collection process. However, where visitor names were included, these were replaced with pseudonyms to protect anonymity. As a result, no identifiable data was present in the stored stories or interview transcripts. Physical materials, including signed consent forms and story submissions, were securely stored in a locked drawer, while all digital

data was held on the encrypted University of Liverpool M Drive in accordance with data protection standards.

All participants were adults capable of providing informed consent. The study did not intentionally involve sensitive topics or vulnerable groups, reducing the level of ethical risk. Nonetheless, the researcher completed a Cathedral safeguarding course in preparation for any potential concerns, reflecting Bryman's (2016) emphasis on sensitivity in fieldwork. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of Liverpool School of Law and Social Justice Ethics Committee.

6.2 Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret both the narrative accounts and the semi-structured interview transcripts. This aligns with the broader Most Significant Change (MSC) approach, which emphasises interpretation and the exploration of differing perspectives rather than fixed or objective meanings (Davies, 1998). Stories were selected based on their significance in relation to the identified domains, while remaining open to the emergence of new themes throughout the process, in keeping with a key principle of MSC. The interview data was analysed to evaluate the process of story documentation and its perceived value for participants, focusing on reflection and the potential application of story collection within the Cathedral.

Overall, the qualitative nature of this approach is particularly suited to the Cathedral's aims, as it enabled a deeper understanding of visitors' lived experiences, perceptions, and engagement with the space (Bryman, 2003). In doing so, it captured the complexity and depth of visitor experience, while also introducing a reflective dimension for staff and volunteers, supporting the active interpretation of visitor insight as part of understanding how cathedrals are experienced (Burton, 2015).

7. Findings

The findings of this report emerge from 23 staff and volunteer recorded narrative accounts or ‘stories’ of visitor experience at Liverpool Cathedral, collected using an adapted Most Significant Change approach. Stories were thematically grouped across the predetermined domains, with additional domains identified during the process of analysis. This was complemented by one semi-structured interview with a contributing cathedral team member, offering further insight into how significance was interpreted and constructed within the storytelling process. The insights from the stories and interviews were examined to understand the Cathedral’s role in fostering wellbeing, belonging, and inclusion among its visitors, while also evaluating the effectiveness of this adapted method in supporting outreach and generating knowledge for the Cathedral.

7.1 Most Significant Story Selection

While many stories aligned with the original domains, three new *Emergent Domains* arose from the data, reflecting themes not fully captured within the initial framework. Although the stories were organised according to their most prominent theme, several appeared across multiple domains. This overlap reflects the interconnected nature of visitor experience and is consistent with the interpretive principles of the MSC.

- **Original Domain 1: Belonging, Identity and Inclusion**

This domain reflects how visitors experienced Liverpool Cathedral as a welcoming and inclusive space in which cultural and local identities were recognised and affirmed. In total, six stories were grouped here, illustrating how a sense of connection was shaped through both faith and experiences of openness and hospitality.

- **MSS Domain 1 - Russian couple (tour by telephone)**

Today I met a Russian couple who spoke no English but used their phone as a translator, they asked about the age of the building of the Cathedral. They said "Your cathedral church is beautiful and your people so welcoming and friendly." They lived 150km from Moscow and were orthodox Christian's. They enjoyed a short tour and were surprised that the cathedral was used daily for worship, and how open and friendly the people were. This was my first experience of 'tour by telephone'

This story was selected as the most significant as it captures multiple dimensions of belonging within a single encounter. Despite the language barrier, meaningful communication occurred, highlighting the accessibility of the Cathedral. Importantly, the visitors' emphasis on being warmly welcomed suggests that belonging is shaped not only through shared faith but also through personal interactions. Their surprise at the Cathedral's openness further implies that such inclusivity may not be universally expected. Similar patterns appear across the domain. An Albanian mother of three, for example, described returning to the Cathedral for peace, illustrating how a personal sense of inclusion can develop outside of formal religious practice. At a local level, a man who had resided in Liverpool his whole life reflected on a family connection to the Cathedral's construction, while another visitor recalled contributing a penny as a schoolchild, describing it as "built for the people by the people." Belonging, therefore, emerged both through warm encounters and through local memory and intergenerational identity.

- **Original Domain 2: Spiritual, Emotional and Reflective Encounters**

This domain brought together stories where visitors engaged with the Cathedral as a sacred space for both spiritual reflection and to process emotions. These accounts highlighted how the space is used for contemplation and prayer by providing a still and calm environment. In total, three stories were grouped within this domain.

- **MSS Domain 2 - Grief and prayer**

Today I met P*, a lady sitting in the Holy Spirit Chapel weeping. Her husband had died recently and this was "their place" to come and feel God's presence. She asked me to sit and pray with her, which I did. We chatted for about 20 minutes - P went away feeling at peace and knowing God loved her. She took a prayer stone from the Lady Chapel which said 'peace and determination'.

*P is a pseudonym to protect the visitors identity.

This story demonstrates the role that the cathedral can play in providing emotional support for the community. The encounter moves past an observation and into an active engagement from the member of the Cathedral team, providing a moment of comfort through their presence and prayer. This moves the cathedral beyond its physical setting into a site of healing where personal grief can be met with reassurance and care through religious practice. The two other stories in this domain reflected a similar light; one visitor described the tension between the Cathedral's beauty and the suffering in the world, while another found comfort in recognising the communion service as identical to that of her home church abroad. These accounts suggest that reflection can be both deeply personal and shaped by wider spiritual frameworks.

- **Original Domain 3: Personal and Relatable Accounts (Human Interest Stories)**

Six stories were grouped in this domain, reflecting personal memories and individual connections to Liverpool Cathedral. Unlike the previous domains, these accounts were characterised by their narrative quality and relatability, often offering glimpses into the lived experiences of individuals who engage with the cathedral.

- **MSS Domain 3 - Hide and seek story**

Many people have told me they used play hide and seek whilst the building was still under construction as children. One woman told me she was once locked in as the game of hide and seek lasted so long, that a caretaker found her and her friend in the evening and let them out.

The story above captures a moment in which the Cathedral formed part of everyday social life for the local Liverpool community, before its completion. The image of the woman as a child, while the building itself was still under construction, evokes the idea that they developed in parallel. This could create a powerful, yet relatable narrative, positioning the cathedral as not only a landmark, but also as a living part of the people's personal histories. This is all conveyed in a short and emotive passage which could easily be retold and resonated with. Alongside this, several other stories revealed similarly personal and often nostalgic connections. One visitor recalled childhood memories of playing near the sandstone quarry used to build the Cathedral, while another described returning to the tower after his wedding, reflecting on the site's emotional significance.

Alternatively, a former miner connected a contemporary art installation to his own working life, demonstrating how individual experience can shape the way the Cathedral is understood and interpreted.

- **Emergent Domain 1: Learning, Curiosity and Interpretation**

Alongside the predefined domains, six stories revealed how visitors engage with Liverpool Cathedral as a place of learning and discovery. Rather than simply observing the space, many arrive with questions that quickly develop into deeper engagement, moving from practical details to wider conversations and connection.

- **MSS Emergent Domain 1 - Devon couple (architecture + arts & crafts)**

Today I took a couple from Devon to the Lady Chapel. They asked about the difference in size - we talked about the crucifixion to the baptism of Jesus, the dedication of the Lady Chapel, and the beauty of the windows. The gentleman was Church of England, the lady was very orthodox Roman Catholic. They had met and married in India, coming to England and settling here in the 60s. They loved Rennie Mackintosh and the influence on Giles Gilbert Scott. They told me their house is fully Mackintosh-inspired and noticed some influences in the Cathedral. We discussed how G.G.S took some ideas from the Arts and Crafts movement in his work. They were in Liverpool visiting a grandson at Liverpool John Moores, studying history.

During this story, the couple construct a meaningful moment from their visit through conversation rather than simply receiving information, which is why it is the most significant. The couple use their own interests through dialogue with the member of the cathedral team to notice connections that may not be visible to others. Similarly, other stories within this domain showcase that visitor questions, whether about the building or exhibitions, lead to more in-depth engagement and connection to the cathedral. For instance, a visitor attending the Titanic exhibition was guided through connections between the Ismay family and specific features of the Cathedral, leaving with a more meaningful understanding of what they had seen.

- **Emergent Domain 2: Global connections and Shared Faith**

A small number of stories highlighted how Liverpool Cathedral connects visitors through shared expressions of faith across different cultural contexts. While these accounts also appeared within domains of belonging and spiritual experience, they are considered separately here due to the recurrence of familiar practices internationally. In total, three stories were grouped within this domain.

- **MSS Emergent Domain 2 - Home away from home**

Today I met a lady from North India. She was hopping to prey - I told her we were about to have a 12 o'clock communion - she joined the group. Looking at the service she said "I cannot believe this is a literal translation of the service in my home church." She stayed for the communion after which we talked about what the cathedral could offer in terms of services. She recorded some of the service to share with her mum in India (because of Iraq she was unable to fly home for easter). Amazed and fulfilled with the service she decided to return for more, which she did on Palm Sunday.

By providing a sense of reassurance, particularly when being away from home, the cathedral in this story functions as a familiar and safe place, or a 'home away from home'. This story was the most significant as it clearly depicts the service as a shared religious practice that turned the visit into a meaningful personal experience that facilitated future engagement. Similar experiences appear in the other two stories, including the Russian couple discussed in Domain 1 and a Polish couple, both of whom identified connections through shared Orthodox Christian traditions despite language differences. These moments extend beyond local belonging, pointing to a wider sense of connection that situates the Cathedral within a global context.

- **Emergent Domain 3 Constructive Critique and Feedback**

Two stories reflected moments where visitors expressed critical or contrasting views of the cathedral, particularly in relation to art installations. Although fewer in number, these accounts are important as they show that visitor experience is not always positive, being shaped by individual perspective and expectations.

- **MSS Emergent Domain 3- Instillation criticism**

A lady about the "Pink writing on the wall." I explained about Tracey Emin. She said "well I think it is horrible - it has no place in the cathedral." We talked about the meaning, the Faith and expression of love. She said "well I understand but I still don't like it."

This story was chosen as the most significant as it was the only instance where a visitor engaged critically with the space. Even after the discussion, the visitor maintains her position, highlighting how the meaning within the Cathedral is not fixed but interpreted differently by everyone. At the same time, the response reflects the Cathedral's wider aims, offering a calm explanation that encourages openness and dialogue, positioning the space as a shared ground for encounter. This pattern appeared in the second story in this domain, where artworks such as the Wasnicki paintings and the Tracey Emin installation prompted divided reactions. In this way, interpretation becomes part of the experience itself, creating opportunities for conversation and reflection around the role of contemporary art within a sacred setting.

7.2 Reflective Interviews

The reflective interview provided additional insight into how significance was interpreted and constructed by staff and volunteers when documenting visitor stories. The responses suggested that interactions with visitors often extend beyond factual engagement with the Cathedral, instead reflecting moments of personal connection and emotion. As Participant A noted, "sometimes we don't even talk about the cathedral... we talk about them," highlighting how visitor experience is often shaped through interpersonal exchange rather than simply interpretations of the space. A key theme emerging from the interview was the importance of welcome and adaptability in shaping visitor experience. Participant A emphasised the need to respond to individual needs, explaining that "not everybody's interested in the windows and the architecture... sometimes they just want to come in and be quiet, or reflect." This portrays the role of staff and volunteers in facilitating different forms of engagement, from conversation to quiet presence.

The process of documenting stories also prompted reflection, although this was often already embedded within existing informal practices. Participant A described how staff and volunteers regularly share experiences, noting that "we talk informally...about who

we've met, [and] any interesting stories," suggesting that reflective practice was already present, but not formally recorded. While documenting stories was seen as useful in some cases, particularly for identifying feedback or improving accessibility, its value was understood as dependent on the nature of the stories collected. Finally, the interview highlighted an awareness of diversity within visitor experience, but also limitations in the range of perspectives captured. Participant A reflected that many of the stories they recalled were from "British and White" visitors, indicating potential gaps in representation within the data. This reinforces the importance of developing approaches that engage a broader range of voices.

8. Discussion

In practice, the adapted MSC approach proved effective in both generating insight and encouraging reflection among staff and volunteers, a finding reinforced through the interview. The use of narrative accounts allowed experiences to emerge organically, capturing moments often missed by more structured methods. Broad prompts supported alignment with the original domains (belonging and identity, spiritual and emotional experience, and personal narratives) while also enabling the three additional themes to emerge (learning and curiosity, global connections, and constructive critique). This demonstrated the flexibility of the approach and its potential for practical application across Cathedral activity.

The findings offer clear value for events programming and outreach at Liverpool Cathedral. The Devon couple's story in Emergent Domain 1 illustrates how visitors bring specific interests into their experience suggesting that, over time, story collection could inform events shaped around emerging patterns of engagement. Similarly, feedback within Emergent Domain 3, particularly in response to the Tracey Emin installation, demonstrates how critical perspectives can inform future programming. Rather than being viewed negatively, such responses provide insight into how different audiences interpret the Cathedral's integration of contemporary art within a sacred setting. The ability of the Cathedral team to respond calmly and thoughtfully to these views further supports the Cathedral's aim to act as a space of learning, encouraging visitors to engage with the space in open ways. Participant A highlighted that this responsiveness is developed over time through informal discussion of visitor interactions, particularly those that are more challenging or unexpected, describing it as "a good way to reflect on your communication." This suggests that reflective practice is already embedded within staff and volunteer interactions, with the method serving to formalise and extend these existing processes.

More broadly, the collection of stories offers a more nuanced understanding of why visitors engage with the Cathedral, moving beyond surface-level responses that may

emerge through direct questioning. As Participant A acknowledged, many of the stories recalled were from white British visitors, reflecting broader patterns of attendance with White British visitors making up 45.8% of the 1,564 respondents to the question “What is your ethnic group?” (Audience Agency, 2025). While the storytelling approach in this instance did not fully capture underrepresented voices, it demonstrates clear potential as a more indirect means of understanding visitors. In terms of future outreach, approaches such as a creative writing workshop that incorporates reflective storytelling could provide a more sensitive way for these underrepresented communities to express their experiences and perceptions of the cathedral. Insights generated through these methods could then inform outreach and programming, ensuring they better reflect a wider range of perspectives. This reinforces the inductive nature of the MSC approach. In this way, storytelling becomes not only a method of evaluation but a tool for future inclusion, enabling the Cathedral to better understand and connect with those who may otherwise remain unheard.

In terms of supporting local engagement through narrative, there is clear value for the Cathedral’s communications team in relation to Domain 3. These stories highlight the potential of narrative accounts as engaging forms of communication, with their accessible and often nostalgic nature aligning with “human interest” storytelling (Hughes, 1982; Brookes, 2018). Due to the research design, many of the accounts are brief and would not be sufficient for full press coverage, but they are well-suited to shorter formats such as social media or website features, where many visitors already engage with content. Developing a bank of these stories would provide a valuable resource, enabling the Cathedral to share authentic and relatable visitor experiences. Over time, this approach could also encourage further participation. The sharing of stories may prompt visitors to reflect on and document their own experiences, creating a cycle of engagement. With longer-term implementation, the communications team could invite contributors to share contact details, allowing for the development of more in-depth accounts that could be adapted for wider press coverage. In this way, the methodology demonstrates both practical and analytical value for communication strategies.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate how visitor experience can be effectively understood through narrative-based approaches, offering clear analytical value for the Cathedral research team. Stories within Original Domain 1 suggest that belonging is shaped through multiple and overlapping factors. For example, the Russian couple's interaction with the Cathedral team member, despite a language barrier, highlights the Cathedral's welcoming and accessible nature. In contrast, local narratives emphasise the importance of historical and personal connection, with one lifelong Liverpudlian reflecting on his grandfather's role in the Cathedral's construction, positioning the building as part of his identity. This is reinforced in the interviews, where Participant A emphasised the importance of interpersonal engagement, noting that "sometimes we don't even talk about the cathedral... we talk about them," highlighting how feelings of welcome are often shaped through relational encounters. This showcases the role of Liverpool Cathedral in fostering both individual and collective identity within increasingly diverse and secular contexts, while also extending this literature by showing how belonging is actively constructed through everyday interactions.

Emergent Domain 2 highlights how the Cathedral operates not only as a local space but as an international place of encounter, where shared religious practices create connections across cultural and geographical boundaries. This reflects how modern cathedrals balance inclusive, open access with the continuation of traditional worship. Original Domain 2 further reinforces the Cathedral's spiritual role in fostering reflection and emotional well-being, creating a space that supports spiritual experience beyond regular worshipping communities. At the same time, the emergence of domains such as learning and curiosity, and constructive critique, suggests that visitor experience is active and interpretive. Taken together, these findings demonstrate the value of narrative-based approaches in understanding how the Cathedral functions as a contemporary space that balances sacred and secular roles while remaining a welcoming community hub.

8.1 Evaluation

While the findings demonstrate the value of the adapted MSC approach, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted on a relatively small scale, with a short collection period of one month, which limited the range of perspectives captured. Participation relied on the motivation of staff and volunteers to engage with and document stories, leading to uneven levels of contribution, with cathedral guides forming the majority of participants due to their more direct and frequent contact with visitors. Practical challenges also emerged in the implementation of the method. The concept of “stories” initially created some uncertainty among some members of the Cathedral team regarding what should be recorded, with some requiring further clarification before engaging fully. While this was addressed through follow-up communication, including a more detailed explanatory email, clearer guidance from the outset may have increased productivity. Similarly, the use of an online submission platform (Padlet) proved slightly confusing, particularly where it appeared to require account creation, which conflicted with the intended anonymity of responses. Finally, the adapted approach did not incorporate multiple levels of collective story selection across the organisation, which is central to MSC. This was again due to time constraints, and as such, this study should be understood as an initial evaluation of an exploratory method in practice. While some of these challenges were addressed throughout the research process, there are clear areas for refinement.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings show that narrative-based approaches offer a valuable way of understanding and communicating visitor experience at Liverpool Cathedral. Staff and volunteer recorded stories reveal how well-being, belonging, and inclusion are expressed through everyday encounters. The adapted Most Significant Change approach proved effective in capturing meaningful experiences while encouraging reflection, with additional domains highlighting its flexibility. Overall, storytelling functions not only as a research method but as a practical tool with value across research, communications, and outreach. However, there remain opportunities to further develop this approach within the Cathedral.

1. MSC Expansion

One limitation of the adapted MSC approach used in this study was the absence of multiple levels of reflection in the selection of significant stories. In its full application, MSC involves a structured process of deliberation across different levels of an organisation. Expanding this approach within Liverpool Cathedral would allow for a more robust and participatory model, as exemplified by the researcher's illustration, Figure 1. From the ground up, stories would be collected directly from visitors, removing story documentation as a primary level of selection. However,

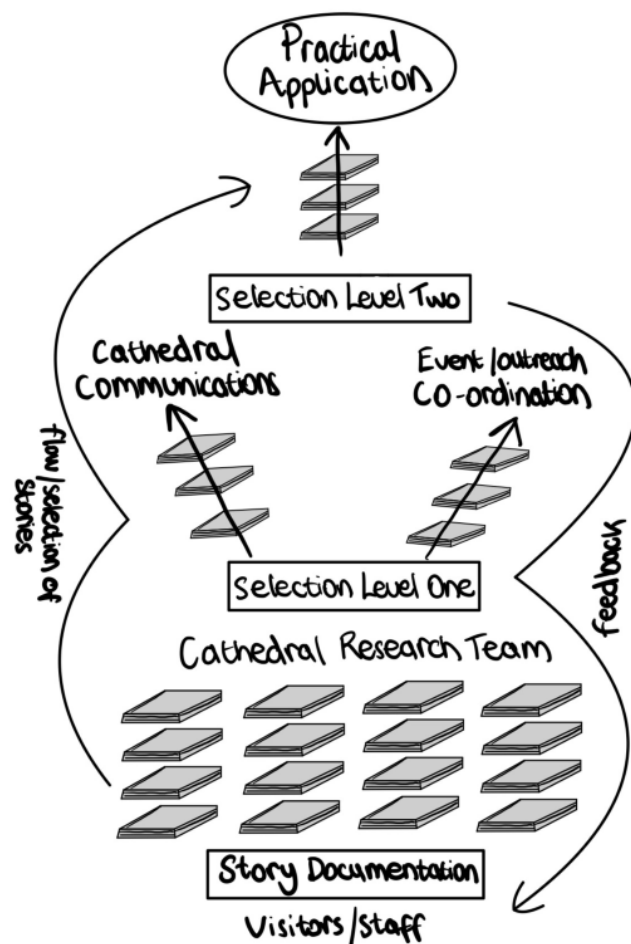


Figure 1, MSC Expansion

staff could still be encouraged to contribute accounts of their own interactions, recognising the benefit of the reflective process highlighted in the interviews. The

collected stories would then be reviewed by the Cathedral research team, who would group them into domains and identify sets of significant examples, forming the first level of selection. This stage is particularly valuable, as it enables patterns and themes to be identified across the dataset that can be applied to cathedral studies.

Following this, selected stories would be shared with relevant areas of Cathedral activity, such as communications, events and outreach coordination. These groups would act as a second level of selection, identifying stories most relevant to their specific objectives and refining them into forms suitable for practical application. This may include use in media outputs, public engagement, or the development of exhibitions. Through this process, stories move through successive levels of interpretation and selection, becoming increasingly focused while retaining their original significance. At the same time, feedback can be communicated back through the structure, allowing staff and visitors to see how their contributions inform practice. In this way, the model offers an inclusive and iterative approach to understanding visitor experience, embedding reflection and engagement across multiple levels of Cathedral activity (Burton, 2015).

2. Story Drop Box

Regardless of further MSC implementation, the communications team would benefit from an improved story drop box, enabling visitors to document connections to the Cathedral on a continuous basis, as illustrated by the researcher in Figure 2.

- 1) An A4 poster holder on the front would allow the information sheet to be updated to reflect specific themes or domains being explored.
- 2) An improved online submission software, supported by a QR code, could encourage greater digital participation
- 3) Providing paper for physical submissions ensures accessibility for those less confident with technology.
- 4) A lightweight, freestanding design would allow the box to be easily repositioned depending on space and context.

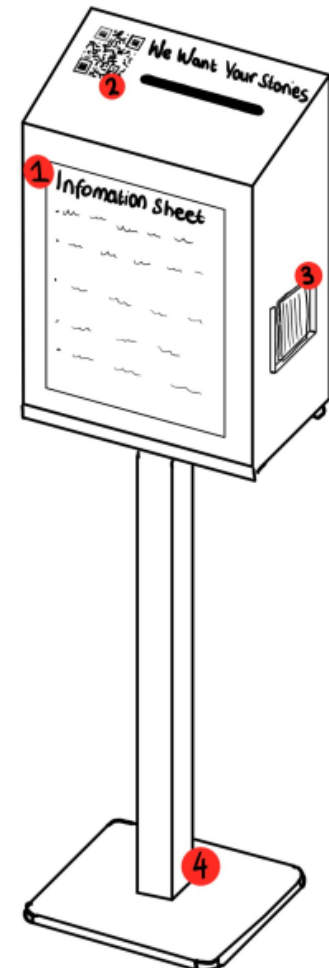


Figure 2, MSC Expansion

3. Understanding Underrepresented Communities

The Cathedral's research lead has been in discussion with the Toxteth-based charity *Writing on the Wall* regarding a potential creative writing workshop to be held at Liverpool Cathedral aimed at encouraging underrepresented residents to engage with the space while developing literary skills. This presents an opportunity to explore underrepresented perspectives through storytelling, offering a more nuanced and sensitive alternative to direct questioning. Working in collaboration with *Writing on the Wall* provides an appropriate framework for this approach. As an organisation centred on creative

expression across diverse communities, it offers a platform through which storytelling can be integrated so participants can share their experiences in ways that are both sensitive and beneficial. For example, participants could be invited to structure a short narrative around their encounter with the Cathedral, reflecting on their expectations prior to visiting, their initial impressions on arrival, and how their experience may have developed over time. While the primary aim of the workshop would be to support creative writing, the narratives produced could also offer valuable insight for the Cathedral research team. They would provide a way of understanding how the Cathedral is interpreted and experienced by individuals whose perspectives are currently underrepresented within existing visitor data.

4. Broader Story Application

Throughout this report, the analytical and practical value of narrative accounts has been demonstrated, but developing a broader initiative around storytelling at Liverpool Cathedral could provide an important means of preserving local oral histories that may otherwise be lost. As highlighted in the findings, many residents have direct connections to the Cathedral's construction and development, forming part of a shared civic identity. Capturing these accounts presents a valuable opportunity to document recent history while strengthening community engagement. One potential approach would be the introduction of a campaign such as "We Want to Hear Your Stories," encouraging participation while supporting interactive, story-led programming. This could be particularly effective in engaging underrepresented communities. For example, in July 2026, it will be 45 years since the 1981 Toxteth riots. In the aftermath of the uprisings, the media heavily stigmatised the area through exclusion and negativity, imposing identities on a practically voiceless community (Butler, 2020). A small-scale exhibition, such as one titled *Beyond the Headlines: Reframing Toxteth 1981*, could centre on and collect community stories to challenge dominant representations. As Toxteth-born activist Jimi Jagne reflects, the events were "not spontaneous or criminal but an inevitable consequence of toxic circumstances" (Graham, 2024), highlighting the importance of capturing perspectives that have historically been overlooked. Such an exhibition could be delivered with minimal resources, for example, through portable display panels and

the repurposing of the improved story drop box (as shown in the researcher's illustration, Figure 3), allowing visitors to document their own experiences, encouraging Toxteth

residents to come to the cathedral. The material collected could then inform further research or be developed into communication outputs adhering to the appeal of human-interest storytelling, such as press features focused

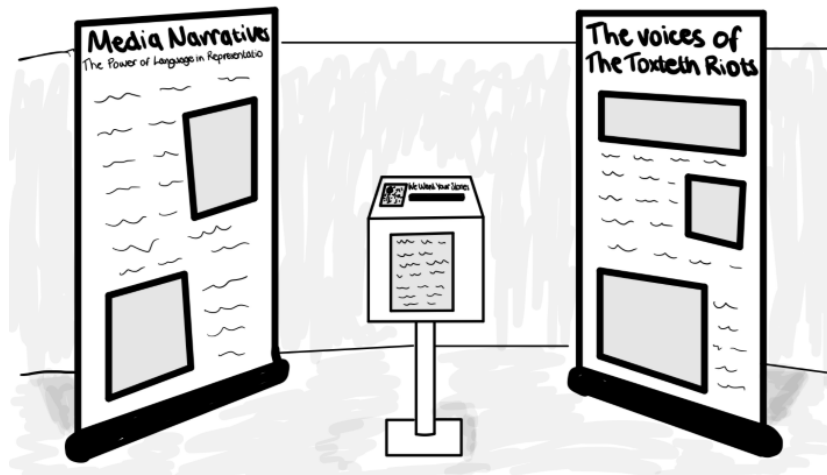


Figure 3, MSC Expansion

on the underrepresented voices of the Toxteth riots. In this way, storytelling would also function as a means of preserving community history, reinforcing and displaying the Cathedral's role as an inclusive space that values and reflects the experiences of its local community.

These recommendations are entirely at the discretion of the Liverpool Cathedral and can be enacted to the degree to which they wish. They could be taken forward as small or large initiatives. In conclusion, these recommendations are ultimately designed to support the cathedral to continue to contribute to cultural engagement, social cohesion and the spiritual life of the community within the Liverpool area.



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11. Appendices

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY COLLECTION

Title of Study: How Visitor Stories Can Reveal Belonging and Exclusion in Liverpool Cathedral

Version 1 (08/12/2025)

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

As part of my undergraduate degree, I am completing an Interchange research project with Liverpool Cathedral exploring how it supports belonging, inclusion, and well-being amongst the local community. The study gathers short visitor stories and reflects on them to see whether this storytelling approach helps the Cathedral hear a wider range of voices, including those not usually represented.

2. Why have I been chosen to take part?

You have been invited because you are a cathedral volunteer or employee who regularly engages with visitors. Your interactions place you in a strong position to notice the kinds of experiences visitors share informally. We hope to involve around 5–10 cathedral team members.

3. Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any point without giving a reason, and there will be no disadvantage to you.

4. What will happen if I take part?

This study uses an adapted version of the **Most Significant Change (MSC)** method, which involves collecting stories and selecting those that show the most meaningful impact:

Collecting Visitor Stories

This involves documenting visitor stories over two months (February – March 2026).

You will be asked to:

- Record any significant stories visitors share with you based on a prompt.

- Make notes shortly after the interaction to ensure accuracy.
- Avoid including any personal or identifiable information about the visitor.
- Share stories only with the researchers through the secure methods provided.

There is no expectation that stories must emerge. If none do, that is completely fine, and there will be no disadvantage to you for not documenting any.

Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

5. How will my data be used?

The University processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in accordance with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit.

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. I, Aaron Stone and Dr Lynn Hancock act as the Data Processor for this study, and any queries relating to the handling of your personal data can be sent to Dr. Lynn Hancock - [lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk]

Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below.

How will my data be collected?	Through digitally documented stories, which are shared on a Liverpool cathedral password-protected SharePoint file.
How will my data be stored?	On a password-protected Cathedral SharePoint file and an encrypted University of Liverpool M drive.
How long will my data be stored for?	Until July 2026.
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	Data is anonymised at the onset. The student researcher and the cathedral research lead will be the only people with access to the data.
Will my data be anonymised?	Yes.
How will my data be used?	For research purposes.
Who will have access to my data?	Only the student researcher and the cathedral research lead will have direct access to your data.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	No.
How will my data be destroyed?	It will be deleted automatically after the student researcher's graduation.

6. Expenses and/or payments

Not applicable.

7. Are there any benefits in taking part?

There are no direct personal benefits. However, your participation will contribute to the Cathedral's understanding of visitor experience and help support future community and inclusion work.

8. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results will be compiled into a report published by the Corporation of the Cathedral Church of Christ in Liverpool and can be accessed by visiting their website at <https://liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/>. You will not be identified in the published work. All participants in this study will have full anonymity.

9. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You may withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Because no personal data is collected, it may not be possible to remove your individual contributions once they have been anonymised and included in the analysis. Any material already analysed will remain part of the study, but no further data will be collected from you.

All data will be deleted automatically after the student researcher's graduation.

10. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting Lynn Hancock, [lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk], and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, then you should contact the Research Ethics and Integrity Office at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Ethics and Integrity Office, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, you must be aware of your right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113."

11. Contact details of the investigatory team

Student Investigator:

Aaron Stone

Hsaston2@liverpool.ac.uk

Lead Investigator:

Dr Lynn Hancock

lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk

Thank you for reading about this study.

Appendix B



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: INTERVIEW

Title of Study: How Visitor Stories Can Reveal Belonging and Exclusion in Liverpool Cathedral

Version 2 (16/02/2026)

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

As part of my undergraduate degree, I am completing an Interchange research project with Liverpool Cathedral exploring how it supports belonging, inclusion, and well-being amongst the local community. The study gathers short visitor stories and reflects on them to see whether this storytelling approach helps the Cathedral hear a wider range of voices, including those not usually represented.

2. Why have I been chosen to take part?

You were selected because you are participating in the story-collection stage of the Most Significant Change method. Since reflection on the stories is central to this approach, we are inviting you to take part in a short interview to support that process.

3. Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any point without giving a reason, and there will be no disadvantage to you.

4. What will happen if I take part?

This part of the study involves a brief interview to understand how Cathedral team members interpret and experience the stories collected in the project.

If you take part, you will be invited to a single 10–20 minute semi-structured interview in a quiet space within the Cathedral. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded for accurate transcription.

You may be asked about:

- Stories you found meaningful
- Your views or experiences related to inclusion and belonging
- How the Cathedral supports social connection
- Whether taking part in the project has influenced your perspective

Your responsibilities are to answer what you feel comfortable with, avoid sharing identifiable information about others, and let the researcher know if you wish to pause or stop.

5. How will my data be used?

The University processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in accordance with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit.

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. I, Aaron Stone and Dr Lynn Hancock act as the Data Processor for this study, and any queries relating to the handling of your personal data can be sent to Dr Lynn Hancock - [lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk]

Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below.

How will my data be collected?	Through an audio-recorded interview.
How will my data be stored?	On the University of Liverpool encrypted drive (M drive).
How long will my data be stored for?	Until July 2026.
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	Data will be anonymised during transcription and stored securely. Only the research team will have access, and nothing identifiable will be shared.
Will my data be anonymised?	Yes.
How will my data be used?	For research purposes.
Who will have access to my data?	The interviewer and the relevant supervisors.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	No.
How will my data be destroyed?	It will be deleted automatically after the student researcher's graduation.

6. Expenses and/or payments

Not applicable.

7. Are there any benefits in taking part?

There are no direct personal benefits. However, your participation will contribute to the Cathedral's understanding of visitor experience and help support future community and inclusion work.

8. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results will be compiled into a report published by the Corporation of the Cathedral Church of Christ in Liverpool and can be accessed by visiting their website at <https://liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/>. You will not be identified in the published work. All participants in this study will have full anonymity.

9. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw from the study at any time without explaining your decision. If you choose to withdraw, you can specify whether any data collected up to that point may still be used. You can request that your data be destroyed and not used further. To withdraw or discuss data removal, please contact Dr. Lynn Hancock, [lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk].

10. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting Lynn Hancock, [lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk], and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, then you should contact the Research Ethics and Integrity Office at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Ethics and Integrity Office, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, you must be aware of your right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113."

11. Contact details of the investigatory team

Student Investigator:

Aaron Stone

Hsaston2@liverpool.ac.uk

Lead Investigator:

Dr Lynn Hancock

lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk

Thank you for reading about this study.



Appendix C



Story Collection Participant Consent Form

Version number 1, 8th December 2025

Principal Investigator

[Lynn Hnacock]

[University of Liverpool]

[lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk]

Student Investigator

[Aaron Stone]

[University of Liverpool]

[hsaston2@liverpool.ac.uk]

Research ethics approval number: 17592

Title of the research project: How Visitor Stories Can Reveal Belonging and Exclusion in Liverpool Cathedral

Name of researcher: Aaron Stone

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated [08/12/2025] for the above study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily if necessary. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part and can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. ☐
3. I understand that because no personal data is collected, the stories cannot be withdrawn once collected, as they will no longer be identifiable. ☐
4. I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Liverpool. ☐
5. I understand that any signed consent forms will be stored securely by the Principal Investigator in a locked drawer, and that all stories will be stored on Liverpool Cathedral's password-protected SharePoint and the University of Liverpool's encrypted M Drive until July 2026. ☐
6. I understand that my documented story/ stories will be kept confidential, no identifiable details will be linked to the research materials, and I will not be identifiable in any research reports or publications. ☐
7. I give permission for members of the research team to access my anonymised data. ☐
8. I agree that I am 18 years and above. ☐
9. I agree to take part in the above study ☐

Participant name

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Appendix D



Interview Participant Consent Form

Version number 2, 16th February 2026

Research ethics approval number:

Title of the research project: How Visitor Stories Can Reveal Belonging and Exclusion in Liverpool Cathedral

Name of researcher: Aaron Stone

Please initial box

10. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated [16/02/2026] for the above study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

11. I understand that taking part in the study involves an audio-recorded interview.

☐

12. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part and can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. In addition, I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular question or questions.

☐

13. I understand that I can ask for access to the information I provide, and I can request the destruction of that information. I understand that following anonymisation, I will no longer be able to request access to or withdrawal of the information I provide.

☐

14. I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Liverpool.

☐

15. I understand that signed consent forms will be kept in a locked drawer in the Principal Investigator's office and original audio recordings will be retained in the University of Liverpool's encrypted drive, with access restricted to the researcher and relevant supervisors, until Summer 2026.

☐

16. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I permit members of the research team to have access to my fully anonymised responses. I understand that my name

☐

will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

17. I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Liverpool until it is fully anonymised.

☐

18. I agree that I am 18 years and above.

☐

19. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

Participant name

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Principal Investigator

[Lynn Hnacock]
[University of Liverpool]
[lynn0406@liverpool.ac.uk]

Student Investigator

[Aaron Stone]
[University of Liverpool]
[hsaston2@liverpool.ac.uk]