# The Language of Photography Seminar Day

**Eastwood Children’s Centre, London.**

**Sat 12th February 2011**

**Photovoice Workshop-** Project manager-Matt Daw.

**Introduction to Photovoice and its’ work.**

PhotoVoice works with a broad methodology which is tailored to the needs of participants in each project. It is a methodology that builds on the power and potential of photography as a flexible and empowering tool that is at once, accessible, therapeutic, influential and communicative.  Over the years, Photo Voice has worked with countless photographers, practitioners and community members around the world to develop its skills and understanding of participatory photography as a tool to enable positive social change.

**Warm Up Exercise**

**Exercise 1**

Get into a group of 3 or 4 people who you don’t already know. Take it in turns to describe a photograph you know well/is powerful/important to you. It can be one of your own photos or one you have seen in a book/magazine. Don’t change the image. Discuss why you chose the photo with your small group.

Purpose: Beginning the dialogue, what and why you chose an image reveals so much about you- even more than words. The power of image and how images communicate.

**Finding your photographic voice**

When running participatory photography projects it is useful to offer participants a challenge. Rather than just giving them cameras and asking them to take images of what they are interested in, you can ask them to take a picture they think nobody else could take. In this way it encourages participants to move away from the obvious and becomes immediately more interesting. Encourage participants to try to intrigue people with their photographs and consider ‘how’ to take a photograph in a different way which makes a statement. What is the meaning it has? eg. choosing a detail as a representation of the problem/issue or photographing the damage left behind caused by the problem and also detail, perspective, lighting, angle, framing, focus etc.

**Participatory Photography Projects- Basic Guidelines:**

**Top tips**

Matt recommended using decent digital cameras, which he leaves with the participants. This made for a higher level of engagement. Do not use disposable cameras...people don’t value them and therefore they don’t invest the same thought/time/care when taking shots.

Matt recommended Fuji Film Cameras12.2 megapixels cost £48 from the Fuji Online Shop. He thought they were easy to explain to beginners. He also suggested getting in touch with Fuji to ask for a sponsorship deal if you use their logo on your publicity)

Matt suggested that participants keep a Scrapbook. In the Scrapbook make a note of what you were thinking at the time you took the picture. Record the What? Why? and How? ideas. Maybe video the feedback sessions.

Matt said that although you should be able to just give kids cameras and see what they come back with, actually technical work around cameras promotes quality and increases engagement and suggested introducing one new technical aspect (Framing/ close up/flash etc) and one new challenge in a session (one object 3 angles/ a detail of something/something un obvious etc)

**Technical**

Firstly, turn the flash off (The flash on auto assumes photographers are not capable of deciding when a flash is needed and can easily cause over exposure)

Give everyone the same camera. This makes instruction easier as you can use the same handouts/user guides for everyone.

Be steady. There are 3 stages to taking a photograph.

1. Half press the button before you take the photo...this is the focus
2. press button
3. hold the camera still...the digital camera needs a bit longer to actually take the photo

Framing. Using your thumb and forefinger on both hands make a square frame. Look through it. The viewfinder on the camera is a frame on the world. It is important to think about the framing- what are you including in frame and what are you not? Look and see what’s inside the frame and what’s outside the frame. Experiment with the angle and point of view of your shot.

**Exercise 2**

Work in pairs

Find something big and something small to photograph.

Photograph the object from three different angles. Discuss which picture you prefer.

**Exercise 3**

Take a photo of your partner. Now take another using the guidelines above and see which is the best photograph, which do you prefer and why?

There is a 3 stage process in decision making when you take a photograph:

1. What? What you’re going to photograph?
2. How? How? What angle? Close up? Far away?
3. Why? Why you’re photographing it?

The photograph has a purpose and is taken from your perspective, your experience, your point of view.

A photograph is not just documentation...it is a canvas, an expression, a piece of art. It is a good idea to look at some paintings to see how artists express themselves.

Taking of photograph

Photograph exists...it has a life of its’ own ie. In a magazine/poster/album

Someone else perceives the image

**Practical Workshop:**

Each participant go and take a photo, thinking about the above and find an image that no one else would take and that one that would signify the meaning of the day.

Give your image a title.

Load all photos onto computer (Card readers are available for £10 and enable you to copy all digital memory card/images on your computer.)

View images and ask each person to express why they took that photo.