Community Philosophy – creating opportunities to develop thinking communities, deepen understanding, and take thoughtful action.

Community Philosophy is a growing movement in which voluntary groups engage in philosophical thinking and action in public spaces. It is practiced by a wide range of groups, with older people through the work of Age UK, through Philosophy in Pubs, the youth and community sector, church groups, housing associations, cafes, galleries, museums and a variety of informal local thinking groups.

Community Philosophy provides spaces, resources and expertise that enable local people to join, form, and sustain self-determining, democratic thinking communities. These groups have already helped many individuals and communities develop their thinking skills and dispositions, deepen their own thinking and that of others, and explore thinking as a practical tool for engagement in community and cultural life. Community Philosophy brings people together, gives them a chance to access practical, transformational philosophy, develop a thoughtful, purposeful voice, and take pleasure in these collaborative activities.

The Community Philosophy Approach

Community Philosophy employs practices from the Community of Enquiry approach used in school-based Philosophy for Children (P4C). As with P4C, a stimulus may be chosen to stimulate thinking and questioning. Alternatively, topics may be chosen in advance, based on the issues that those working in the community have gleaned through everyday dialogue with local people or that have emerged through previous enquiry.

And as with P4C, supportive and challenging philosophical dialogue is facilitated, with the aim of exploring the ideas and concepts that emerge. But in Community Philosophy there is an emphasis on the potential for group self-determination and an aim to inform social action. The Practical Thinking Model and the Stages of Community Philosophy reflect the action-orientated, democratic and locally focused nature of the enterprise.

Community Philosophy aims to encourage, promote and improve thinking: for pleasure, as a form of action, and as an aid to initiating and guiding social action. To achieve these ends and to inform action, the Community Philosophy Practical Thinking Model promotes 6 types of thinking:

Creative Thinking – *inventing, playing and imagining*
Asking new questions
Generating hypotheses
Making up thought experiments
Seeing things from other perspectives
Concept formation

Critical Thinking – *clarifying and problematising*
Challenging beliefs, assumptions and reasons
Questioning meanings and values
Testing hypotheses
Analysing arguments and concepts
Developing criteria

Collaborative Thinking – *building and enabling*
Encouraging and supporting voices and actions
Co-facilitating enquiry
Negotiating and compromising
Working in teams and groups

Caring Thinking – *respecting and nurturing*
Looking after others and communities
Considering the abilities and interests of others
Listening with care and respect
Being mindful and thoughtful about emotions

Reflective Thinking – *reviewing and evaluating*
Summarising, mapping, celebrating
Monitoring and assessing activities practices and processes
Evaluating change and development
Developing meta-cognition

Active Thinking – *making changes*
Identifying barriers
Planning
Decision-making
Applying thinking in the social world
Finding ways forward

Aims & Principles

Community Philosophy aims to:

• help people to develop self-determining and self-sustaining democratic communities of philosophical enquiry and action.
• help individuals and communities develop philosophical enquiry as a practical tool for engagement and action in community and cultural life.
• promote the creative, critical, collaborative and caring aspects of philosophical enquiry, and to develop reflective thinking and thinking for action.
• make philosophy an accessible, purposeful and pleasurable means to the promotion of personal and community well-being.

Community Philosophy principles

• Inclusivity
• Diversity
• Democratic engagement
• Accessibility
• Community self-determination
• Personal and social action / transformation
• Voluntary participation
• Readiness to learn from others
• Benevolence