



Writing Personal Stories: 10 top tips

[TAPPI](#) aims to amplify the voices of tenants and housing/care staff by giving them a platform to share their experiences. Often, these individuals' perspectives are overlooked. One way TAPPI communicates people's voices is through [Personal Stories](#) - short narratives based on conversations with tenants and their supporters. These stories are written in individuals' voices and approved by them before publication.

Here are 10 tips for creating authentic Personal Stories:

1. **Conversation is key:** Allocate time for a thorough conversation with the individual. Take lots of notes or record and transcribe the conversation with their permission. To capture their authentic voice, include the phrases they use, their tone and way of speaking.
2. **Build trust:** Clarify the writing process and spend time building trust. Ensure the person you are profiling is comfortable knowing that you will reflect their voice and allow for their revisions. Also, clarify where these Personal Stories will be distributed before sharing.
3. **Develop a structure:** Create a clear and consistent framework for your Personal Story. The TAPPI pieces were around 700 words and were all titled consistently e.g. '[Debra's Story/Elisabeth's Story/JP's Story](#)'. Begin with an intro paragraph of around 50 words that provides context about the person – who they are, where they live, etc. Then launch into a set of 3-4 questions.
4. **Craft your questions:** Think carefully about the messages you want to convey in your Personal Stories. TAPPI pieces showed how technology was used by residents and staff, exploring challenges, benefits and potential impact. A list of the questions we used are below.
5. **Point of view:** The TAPPI's Personal Stories used first-person narratives, with individuals telling their own stories. Alternatively, you can write in the third-person and include quotes from the individual. TAPPI testbed Pobl has done this effectively [here](#).
6. **Paint a picture:** Adding 'colour' and examples is great. [TAPPI Personal Stories](#) paint a real-life picture of that person's experience with TAPPI, including day-to-day anecdotes and stories. Avoid too many broad or vague statements and instead, ask people about personal tales or incidents.
7. **Be real:** Don't just include the good bits. This will make the story feel inauthentic as it's rare for someone to think a project or initiative is brilliant with no challenges whatsoever. Be real about the problems and issues – they are valuable in terms of providing opportunities to learn.
8. **Convey emotions:** People have highs and lows; passions and frustrations, and it will add authenticity to include these feelings and emotions in the Personal Story. Ask individuals how something made them feel, what their thoughts were and how they responded emotionally.
9. **Talk about interests:** A key learning from TAPPI is finding out what people are interested in and engaging them in technology through these passions. This mirrors what social care and housing services are all about – helping people to do the things they love in the place they call home.
10. **Images are everything:** Bring your Personal Stories to life through pictures of residents and staff interacting with technology and using it to do the things they love. Images can help Personal Stories gain traction on social media, website, newsletters, etc. Remember to get written permission from people for their images to be taken and clarify how you'll use them.

Personal Story questions

For each Personal Story, we picked 3-4 questions / prompts from the list below:

- Tell us about yourself.
- Tell us about your job / role.
- What do you love about your role?
- Tell us how you use technology and how it supports you.
- How do you feel about technology?
- How could technology help you?
- What technology do you use with tenants?
- How will the technology benefit families and staff?
- Why did you get involved in TAPPI?
- Tell us about the work you've been doing through TAPPI. What has it enabled you to do?
- What are the barriers and how can we overcome them?
- Have there been any challenges in the project so far?
- How have you recruited residents to the project?
- What support do residents want?

Please do get in touch with the TAPPI team with any queries: info@housinglin.org.uk

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