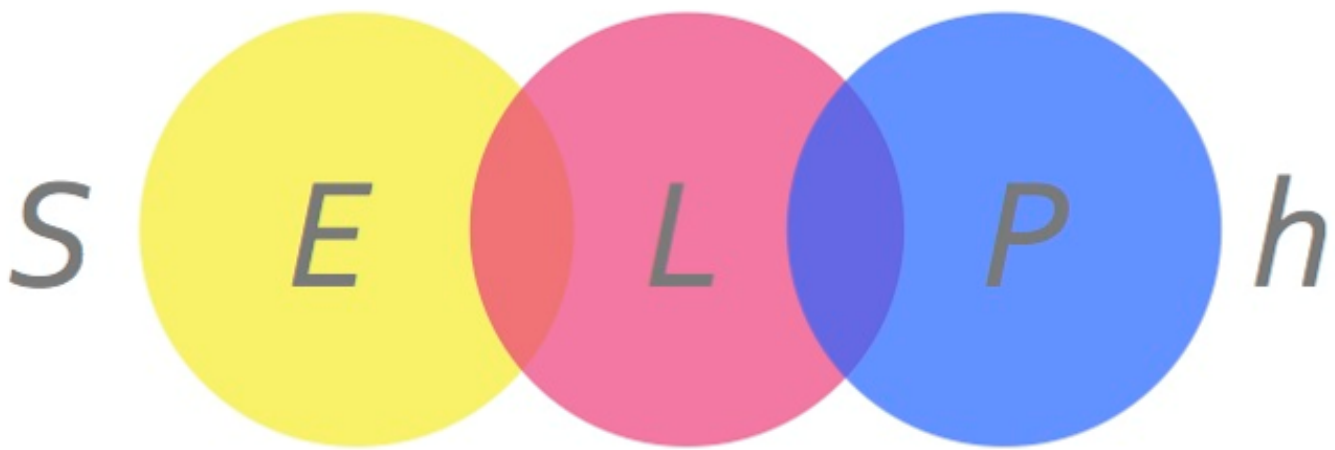


SELPh TOOLKIT: TALKING THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY



SOUTH EAST LONDON PHOTOGRAPHY



WWW.HERONNETWORK.COM

WHAT IS SELPh?

SELPh is a network of researchers, health practitioners, service users and community members who use photography as a way of talking about everyday experiences to raise awareness of community health problems.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

SELPh has a particular focus on mental health and aims to improve mental well-being, promote recovery and build social support networks for people recovering from mental illness. SELPh is user-led and provides group members with the opportunity to talk about their everyday experiences with others through photography, voice their opinions to contribute to a dialogue on health and well-being and tackle the stigma that surrounds mental illness. SELPh is based on 'Photovoice', a participatory action research method that is used to give voice to community groups and effect change (Wang, 2006).

Working in partnership with health networks and community organisations, SELPh designs and delivers photovoice groups for people experiencing and recovering from mental illness, as well as other socially excluded groups who may not always have their voices heard. We tailor our programmes to focus on the community health issues that are important to group members, to facilitate storytelling and discussions on health and wellbeing with diverse audiences.



"A short sweet self-portrait to serve as a reminder That despite Depression, Anxiety & BPD We will be taking No Left Turns So everything will be All-Right"

HISTORY



SELPh was founded by Billy Gazard, Wojtek Wojcik and Anthony Wallace in association with the Health Inequalities Research Network (HERON) in 2011 and funded by the Maudsley Charity. SELPh was originally set up to use photography to talk about experience of mental illness but now uses photographs to also talk about community health more broadly. Since 2011, the group has run numerous photography courses and workshops with a variety of groups, from local community members with experience of mental illness, mental health service users, community organisations and young people. SELPh has also held several exhibitions to showcase the work of these groups at various galleries and community spaces in South London.

SELPh TOOLKIT AIMS

Since photography is an excellent way to capture people's stories and raise awareness of community health problems, the SELPh team and researchers at the Health Inequalities Research Network (HERON) have developed this toolkit to guide other researchers, health practitioners, service users and community organisations to set up their own photovoice groups and projects.

The SELPh Toolkit aims to:

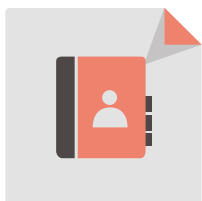
1. Provide information on setting up your own community photovoice group
2. Outline the process of facilitating a photovoice group
3. Provide a framework for evaluating your photovoice project

SELPh STEPS

Through photographs, communities can tell their stories as well as identify and tackle health problems that are important to them. Once you've decided on the focus of the photography group, here are the 8 basic steps for setting up, facilitating and evaluating your own project:

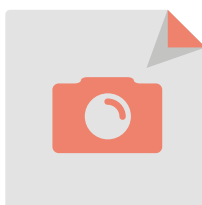
1. Recruit community members and facilitators to the group
2. Introduce group members to Photovoice and the aims of the group
3. Decide on ground rules with the group
4. Distribute cameras for the project and give basic instructions on usage
5. Provide time for group members to take pictures
6. Meet to discuss photographs and community health themes
7. Plan with group members how to share photographs and stories
8. Evaluate the impact of the project

BEFORE YOU START...



Why set up your own group?

- To gain experience of group work, facilitating a reflective discussion, and hearing narratives of community health and illness.
- To provide local communities with an innovative way of talking about mental illness and community health.
- To raise awareness of mental illness and community health problems with a range of audiences.
- To provide a starting point for engaging local communities in action research.



What do you need?

- A group to work with - identify communities that you think would benefit from joining the photography group.
- 3 volunteers to facilitate the sessions.
- A space to run the session - find a low-cost room to hire in your local area e.g. a local library or leisure centre. If this is not possible, team up with a community organisation that may have their own space that can be used for these sessions.
- Cameras - most smart phones have good quality cameras that can be used for the groups. For those who don't own a smart phone, you may need to provide a digital camera.
- A computer and projector – being able to share photos on a projected screen facilitates the process of discussing photographs taken by group members.
- Website/social media – to share stories with local communities. You may also want to secure funding to make prints that can be displayed at an exhibition or local event.
- Funding – while setting up a photography group can be low cost, you may need funds for prints and an exhibition space. NHS or other health charities may be particularly interested in supporting projects that provide a platform for local communities to voice their opinions on community health.

STEP 1 - RECRUIT COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND FACILITATORS TO THE GROUP

Getting a team together

Firstly, you need to get a team together to run the group. There are certain qualities you may wish to look for in a facilitator. A good facilitator is someone who understands the needs of the community group. For example, if you plan to focus on mental health, they may have experience of working with people with mental illness or may have experience of mental illness themselves. They may have other relevant skills, such as photography experience, and be able to address any technical issues that arise or facilitate discussions about the meaning of a photograph. A good facilitator will also be able to make group members feel at ease and be able to manage group dynamics. See page 7 for "Roles and Responsibilities of Facilitators".

Getting communities involved

You may already have a group of people who you'd like to work with in mind. If you don't, think about the best way to get in touch with the group you'd like to work with e.g. through community organisations or health services. For example, if you wanted to work with mental health charities or NHS trusts, you could get in contact with the charity's representatives or doctors and nurses working across different wards and ask them to pass on details of your photography group to their network of service users. These organisations will want to know how the group will be of benefit to their service users before circulating any information so make sure this is clear in any correspondence.

Once you are given the go-ahead to advertise your group, it is important that you provide enough information in your posters, emails or other advertisements, for people to decide whether or not your photography group is right for them. When community members start getting in touch, you may also wish to check if they are able to commit to the group e.g. are they well enough to come to the majority of the sessions and are they available on the dates and times you are planning to run the group.

Ethical considerations

- Participation is voluntary – group members should be made aware that taking part in the group is voluntary and that they can leave the group at any time.
- User-led group – the focus of the photography groups is community health. Group members should decide on themes for photographs and lead discussions on the issues that are important to them.
- Ownership of photographs – individuals remain in ownership of any photographs that are taken. Permission should be sought for showcasing any photographs at exhibitions or events.

STEP 2 - INTRODUCE GROUP MEMBERS TO PHOTOVOICE AND THE AIMS OF THE GROUP

How do the groups work?

There are many ways a group can be structured. This will depend on the number of group members and the specific needs of the group. Our sessions focused on community health range between 2-4 sessions. We have found working with a group of up to 15 members and 3 facilitators works well in sessions of up to 90 minutes for each session. A 90-minute session allows enough time for group members to discuss their pictures in small groups as well as present their favourite images to the group as a whole. However, our sessions dedicated to talking about mental illness tend to be longer due to their parallel focus on building social networks and promoting recovery. Two different group forms that have worked well for us are presented in Box A and B.

The first session

The first session is an opportunity for group members to find out about the group, what they can expect to do throughout the sessions, ask questions and get to know the facilitators and other members of the group (see Appendix 1 for sample agenda for session 1).

1. Group members find out about the aims of the group and possible benefits of taking part.
2. Group members learn more about the general structure of the sessions and what they can expect week to week.
3. The group discusses ways of seeing photographs to tell stories, talk about community health and how photographs and narratives may be used to reach the wider community and policy makers.
4. At the end of the session, the group decides on a theme to take pictures on based on the aims of the group. Facilitators may need to provide example themes for group members to choose from (see Appendix 3 “Sample 12-week project plan for talking about mental illness” for example themes).

A: Talking about mental illness

- Group members attend weekly 90-minute sessions for 6-12 weeks. The 6-12 week structure allows individuals with experience of mental illness to build social support networks and promote recovery whilst also allowing rapport to develop between group members for more in-depth discussion of photographs and themes.
- Sessions take place outside of mental healthcare settings e.g. a local leisure centre, when possible.
- In the first session, group members and facilitators are introduced to each other and discuss the aims of the group. At the end of the first session, the group decides on a theme to take photographs on for the following week.
- In the second session, facilitators check in with the group, then group members get into groups of 2-3 to share and discuss their pictures and choose their favourite one. Each group member then presents their picture to the whole group and the group discuss how they see the picture and what it means to them.
- At the end of the session, the group decides on a different theme for the following week based on topics that have arisen in discussion. The rest of the sessions follow the same structure as session two.
- The final week is dedicated to choosing pictures for the exhibition and group members decide on what stories they would like to share with the wider community. The group's work can be showcased at an exhibition or a community event.

See Appendix 4 for sample presentation.

B: Talking about community health

- Group members attend two to four 90-minute sessions to discuss the health problems that are important to their communities.
- In the first session, group members and facilitators are introduced to each other and they discuss the community health problems that are important to them using research and evidence on health from the local area and their own personal experiences.
- Based on group discussions, the group identify the community health problems that they would like to explore through photography. Group members can decide to explore all themes before a second and final session or may want to explore one theme per session. This will also depend on the resources you have available.
- In the second/final session, group members get into groups of 2-3 to share and discuss their pictures and choose their favourite images. Each group member then presents their pictures to the whole group, describe how it relates to the chosen themes and the group discuss how they see the picture and what it means to them.
- Group members then decide on how best to present their photographs e.g. through an exhibition, a local event or through social media.

See Appendix 5 for sample presentation.

STEP 3 - DECIDE ON GROUND RULES WITH THE GROUP

As for any group work that explores sensitive topics, it is important for both facilitators and group members to abide by agreed ground rules for the group and for facilitators to plan how to manage group dynamics. It is important to keep the following in mind:

Roles and responsibilities of facilitators

1. Lead a discussion on the ground rules with group members and aim to establish simple boundaries – the group provides an experience of exploring with others in safety.
2. Explain the aims and structure of the group clearly so that there is minimal instruction in subsequent sessions and can be group led.
3. Aim for gentle facilitation to guide discussion towards reflection and interpretation, away from ‘technical talk’ or inappropriate topics.
4. Be mindful of any special needs group members may have such as mobility aids or language interpretation and look out for any verbal or non-verbal cues of emotional distress. If someone is experiencing distress, ensure that you are able to manage this within the context of the group and signpost individuals to appropriate services if necessary.
5. Keep an eye on the group dynamic to minimize anxiety (e.g. group members feeling that they are “not good enough”). Be aware of anxiety about competence and the need for instruction. Encourage and facilitate experimentation and early sharing. This will grow trust and safety within the group.

Common ground rules for group members

1. Do not take photos of people without their consent. If, however, the person is not recognizable in the photo, you may use it.
2. Do not take photos of people doing something private (for example, through a window) or something that might get them in trouble with the police or any other law enforcement (e.g. illegal dumping, illegal drug use or sales, graffiti, vandalism etc.)
3. If someone approaches you while you are taking a photo and asks for the photo to be deleted, do so immediately and leave the area without arguing.
6. Be respectful and non-judgemental towards other group members. Remember that they are sharing their personal stories through their photos too.
7. Listen to others’ suggestions and be open to change.
8. Be considerate when giving feedback on photos and narratives. The group is a safe place for people to express their opinions and share their experiences.

STEP 4 - PROVIDING A CAMERA

If you are providing digital cameras to group members it is important that group members sign an agreement to take good care of the camera while it is on loan and return the camera to a facilitator at the end of the process. Facilitators should also give basic instructions on how to use the camera and be prepared to answer any questions on camera usage. You may want to steer away from questions that are overly technical and remind group members that the focus of the group is on telling stories and discussing photographs rather than a photographic skills group.

Digital cameras or mobile phones?

The composition of your group will often dictate whether you provide a basic digital camera or group members use their mobile phones to take pictures. We have found that groups we have run with younger people have preferred to use their mobile phones due to better quality images and convenience. However, some groups have preferred to use digital cameras as they do not have access to a smart phone or prefer that all group members are using the same device.

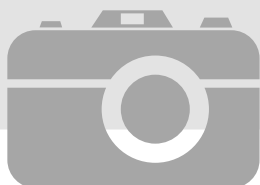
Digital camera

Pros:

- Easy to use
- Fairness (everyone has access to the same equipment)
- Easy to upload pictures to PC for sharing with group

Cons:

- Not as convenient as a mobile phone
- Not as good quality images as many mobile phones
- Involves additional set up costs



Mobile phone

Pros:

- Very convenient
- No cost

Cons:

- Relies on everyone in the group having a smart phone
- Perceived unfairness (some group members may have better camera than others)
- More difficult to upload pictures to PC for sharing with group



STEP 5 AND 6 - TAKING PICTURES AND DISCUSSING WITH OTHERS

After the first meeting, subsequent sessions are very much group member led, with group members discussing their own images and deciding on photography themes each week (see Appendix 2 “Sample agenda for subsequent sessions”). Sessions can be held weekly to ensure that group members have adequate time to take pictures on the chosen theme for the next session. Each week follows a simple structure:

1. Facilitators check in with group members, see how they are in general and how they got on with that week's theme.
2. Group members get into groups of 2-3 to share and discuss their photos with each other and choose their favourite picture. Whilst group members are discussing photographs, facilitators upload pictures to a PC for displaying group member's pictures via a projector.
3. The whole group then gets back together, and the facilitator presents a slideshow of each member's favourite photo. If they want to, group members can explain the story behind their chosen photo and what meaning it has for them. This is also a good opportunity for group members to discuss what they see in the picture, how they feel and community health more generally.
4. Before the end of the session, the group decides together on a theme for the following week. In the last few sessions, the group starts to think about what pictures they would like to present and what stories they would like to share at the planned exhibition or event.

STEP 7 - SHARING PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORIES

In the last few sessions, group members decide on their chosen photos for the exhibition and finalize their narratives. Group members do not have to just pick one photo. They can choose 3 or 4 photos if they wish and if they feel it would help them to tell their story. In these sessions, facilitators and other group members help each other to identify photos, think about how they all fit together and write something about each picture.

There are different ways of doing this. The programme is very user-led and it may be the case that different groups may want to spend more or less time preparing their photos and narratives for the exhibition. Some group members may need lots of support in writing their narratives whilst others are more comfortable getting on with it themselves.

It is important to remind everyone that participation in the exhibition is voluntary, it is up to the group how involved they want to be in the exhibition and all work can be displayed anonymously. The group could also display their work online or through social media.

A few practical tips for organising the exhibition or event:

- Check out the venue in person – this will give you a better understanding of what it'll be like to exhibit the work there rather than just looking at the venue online. This can also help you make sure the space is suitable for the work you are displaying (e.g. lighting, size of prints).
- Think about logistics – how will you transport the work to the venue?
- Present high-quality work – be careful of tears/marks on the photos.
- Promote the exhibition - prepare a mailing list and send out invitations once you have booked the venue and set a date for the exhibition.
- Make use of social media, leaflets, newsletters, word of mouth and posters.
- Think about who else, aside from friends, family and other members of the community, would be interested in coming to the exhibition. For example, mental health charities interested in the use of photography to speak out about experiences with mental illness, local government and policy makers.

STEP 8 - EVALUATION

Hold the evaluation or "debrief" session one week after the exhibition. Group members are likely to benefit from an additional session after the exhibition to discuss how they felt about taking part in the exhibition and if they have any interest in continuing to use photos to express themselves and share their personal experiences. This also provides an opportunity for facilitators to find out from the group which parts of the course worked well, and which parts could be improved. Facilitators can then reflect on these experiences to implement change along the way and in subsequent groups.

Examples of some questions facilitators could ask the group:

1. How do you feel the group benefited you?
2. What did you enjoy most about being part of the group?
3. What things worked well and what things didn't work so well?
4. What aspects of SELPh were most important to you?
5. What has changed for you after being a part of SELPh?
6. Has taking part in SELPh made you think differently/more about community health and what it means to you?

Also make sure to collect feedback at your event or exhibition to see how local communities and decision makers felt about the photographs and stories that were displayed.

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE AGENDA FOR SESSION 1

10:00

- Thank everyone for coming.
- Introduce yourself and other facilitators in the group.
- Explain what will be happening in these sessions over the next 12 weeks.

10:10

- Set up an ice-breaker so that group members can get to know one another and also the facilitators.

10:20

- Provide brief guidance on how to use the cameras and ground rules on taking photos.
- Explain things like: how to switch the camera on and off, how to take a photo, how to use different settings on the camera, how to view the photos you've taken, how to delete photos, how to safely carry and store the camera so that it doesn't get damaged.
- Ground rules: see page 7 of Toolkit "Common ground rules for group members."

10:40

- As a group, show an example photo (perhaps taken by a previous SELPh participant, with their consent) and discuss the following questions:
 - Why did they take this photo?
 - Why did this person choose this photo to share? What makes it meaningful to them?
 - What meaning does it have to me?
 - What meaning do I think it has for them?

10:50

- As a whole group, decide on a theme for the following week (see Sample 12- week project plan for ideas of themes).

11:00

- End session

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE AGENDA FOR SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS

10:00

- Group check-in.
- Find out how everyone is doing and how they got on with this week's photography theme.

10:10

- Split group members into small groups to discuss pictures they have taken on their digital cameras or mobile phones. Ask each group member to choose 1-2 pictures to showcase to the whole group whilst they are discussing their pictures.
- Facilitator to upload pictures from cameras to a PC.

10:40

- Each group member presents their favourite image, describing the image and the story behind it. Group members then reflect on the image and discuss what they see in the image and what story they get from it related to the theme of the week. Facilitators to give input and direct discussion where necessary.

11:20

- As a whole group, decide on a theme for the following week (see Appendix 3: "Sample 12-week project plan for talking about mental illness" for ideas of themes).

11:30

- End session.

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE 12-WEEK PROJECT PLAN FOR TALKING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

Week 1

- Provide an overview of the project, explain how to use the camera, discuss the use of photography to tell stories and talk about mental illness and community health, decide on a theme for the first week.

Week 2-10

- Themes for these weeks will be chosen by group members. Examples of themes chosen by group members include themes connected to identity, health and resilience, such as home, neighbourhood, family, social identity, what makes you feel sad/happy, mental health and personal resilience, as well as more abstract themes, such as shape and colour.
- First half: discuss photos in groups of 2-3 and choose one or two photos to share with the whole group.
- Second half: present a slideshow of the group's photos and facilitate discussion on each group members' chosen photo.

Week 10

- Start preparing for the exhibition or community event – group members can help each other look over all the photos they've taken so far and choose a few to showcase at the exhibition/event.
- Facilitator to help group members write narratives for their chosen photos by asking questions such as "What is this a photo of?", "What does this photo make you think of?", "What meaning does this photo have to you?" etc.

Week 11

- Continue to work on choosing a final photo (or photos) for the exhibition and developing a narrative – if a group member wants to include more than one photo, they may all be connected by a single theme or they may tell a story.
- Discuss with group members how involved they would like to be in the exhibition and talk about what will happen on the day.
- Check if group members would like to be named as the photographer, use a pseudonym or present unnamed photographs.

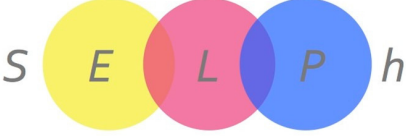
Week 12

- Finalise narratives and arrange to have photos printed (and possibly framed).
- For those involved in the exhibition, check that they are comfortable with what they will be doing on the day.

APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE PRESENTATION - TALKING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

S E L P h

South East London Photography Group



selphgroup.com

S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

***'talking about
community health
through
photography'***

selphgroup.com

S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

What is SELPh?

- A group where you can meet people and talk about your everyday experiences through photos
- Learn basic photography skills
- Show your work in an exhibition

When and where?

- [Date and time]
- [Location]
- [Contact information]

selphgroup.com

S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

Timetable

- DD/MM/YY Introduction
- DD/MM/YY Theme 1 - Identity (self-reflection, family, home, neighborhood)
- DD/MM/YY Theme 2 - Health (feelings, personal health, health journeys, community wellbeing)
- DD/MM/YY Theme 3 - Resilience (places of resilience, community, society)

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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

What should our ground rules be for the group?

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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

How can we use photos to talk about our everyday experiences?

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APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE PRESENTATION - TALKING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

Example photograph from previous SELPh participant or facilitator

Description of photograph

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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

Possible exhibition?

- [Venue and date]

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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

This week's theme.....

Identity

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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

Your camera....

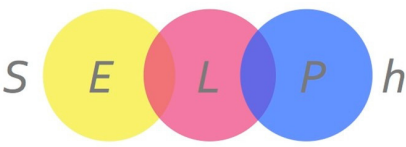
Any questions?

selphgroup.com

APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE PRESENTATION - TALKING ABOUT COMMUNITY HEALTH

S E L P h

South East London Photography Group



S E L P h

selphgroup.com

S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

***'talking about
community health
through
photography'***

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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

**Present research and evidence
on health from the local area**



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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

**What community health
problems are important to you?**



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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

**How can we use photos to
talk about our everyday
experiences?**

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S E L P h

South East London Photography Group

*Example photograph from
previous SELPh participant
or facilitator*

*Description of
photograph*

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APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE PRESENTATION - TALKING ABOUT COMMUNITY HEALTH



South East London Photography Group

Photography rules

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South East London Photography Group

Task:

1. Take 3 pictures to visually capture a community health problem that is important to you
2. Write a short statement to describe what each picture means to you
3. Bring to the next session or send to us by email or direct message on instagram

selphgroup.com



South East London Photography Group

Any questions?

selphgroup.com

Acknowledgments

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Produced by the Health Inequalities Research Network (HERON)



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