

Larger Us programme invitation

**Become a
stronger
better
kinder
change-maker**

**LARGER
US**

WINTER 2021-22

The invitation

We're inviting you to join a powerful new programme designed to help you become a stronger, better, kinder change-maker and give you the tools to make breakthroughs on the issues you care about.

This is an opportunity to work intensively with a small group of people over three months to explore how we can build a better future. It's about healing divisions rather than deepening them and widening our circles of compassion - strengthening the relationships we have with ourselves, with the people already in our circle and those outside of it.

Together, we'll be taking a deep dive into how our states of mind and the state of the world influence each other - and how we can use this knowledge to change things for the better.

It will be challenging, invigorating and rewarding - both personally and professionally!

Why Larger Us?

Larger Us supports a shift from a divided, 'them-and-us' world to one where we cooperate to create a better future for an 'us' that includes every person on the planet and all the species we share it with.

We do this by supporting people who are committed to improving the world - at every level from neighbourhoods to nations - to think about the relationship between what's going on in our minds and what's going on in the world, and act in ways that help to bridge divides on the problems we face.

[Find out more about our team and history.](#)



Why this programme?

This is a programme for people who want to improve the state of their community, country or even the world by finding solutions that work for the long-term.

We've spent a long time researching and thinking deeply about the causes, consequences and remedies for polarisation - and have developed this programme to share our learning with people actively engaged in changing things for the better.

This pilot 3 month programme is for people who:

- Want to bring about long-term transformation on the issues they care about - rather than defeat opponents in short-lived victories
- Are interested in bridging divides rather than deepening them, and willing to hold the courageous conversations needed to make that happen
- Recognise that creating positive change depends on working on our states of mind as much as the state of the world.

Is this for me?

Perhaps you work (or volunteer) for a small community organisation, an NGO, a campaign group or charity, a political party, or be an influencer or journalist. Whatever you're doing, we want to hear from you if you're seeking to:

- Widen public understanding, interest and engagement in the improvements you are trying to make; and/or
- Fix a broken system or challenge the status quo; and/or
- Support people or places directly affected by the things you want to improve.

Each group in the programme will be made up of people who are all working in different ways on different issues. What you'll have in common is your commitment to bringing people together and to finding long-term solutions to issues you care deeply about.

You'll also be deeply curious to:

- Learn if your work may be inadvertently contributing to polarisation or the conditions that give rise to polarisation.
- Find ways to reach new audiences and bring people together, not divide them; and

- Understand how your own personal development has major consequences for those around you and wider society.

If this sounds like you, you're encouraged to apply! It doesn't matter where you are based in the world, what background you come from, or what level of experience you have.

We want to help people like you to find ways to bridge divides, move away - and help others to move away - from a them-and-us mentality, and cultivate understanding, respect and relationships with people who are unlike you, while still standing firm in your values.

This journey starts within so you'll be exploring how what's happening in your mind can impact how you go about your work, and, in turn, how what's happening around you can impact what happens inside your head.

Why small groups?

We believe small groups have the potential to transform their members and the world around them.

[We've written about this in detail](#) but in a nutshell, small groups are exceptional environments for us to learn, to cultivate values, and to build the structures needed for collective action, not to mention being great settings in which to undertake challenging personal development.

You'll be in a group of up to eight people and each session will be facilitated by [Kate Pumphrey](#), our design director, who has spent years curating gatherings of small groups and obsessing over what makes them remarkable forums and platforms. Within your group you'll gently hold each other accountable for the intentions you set for yourself, and have room to contribute your thoughts and experiences, explore nuances and challenges, and benefit from each other's perspectives.

The programme is designed to harness all that makes small groups so powerful - personal transformation together with collective transformation.

When are we starting?

We're kicking off in November, we'll meet online and each session will last for two hours.

Group 1 will start on 9th November and meet on Tuesdays from 8.30am-10.30am (GMT), ending on 8th February 2022.

Group 2 will start on 10th November and meet on Wednesdays from 4pm to 6pm (GMT), ending on 9th February 2022.

Each group will take part in 13 weekly sessions with a break during the final week of December.

What will we be covering?

You'll take a deep dive into exploring the ways psychology and politics overlap when it comes to the issues you care about.

Our programme is carefully designed to guide you along your journey and help you to make the most out of the experience, and Larger Us will support you every step of the way.

During this pilot programme you and your group will:

- Explore the relevance, implications and nuances of big concepts like polarisation, personal agency, belonging, power, shame, trauma, and speaking up for what you believe in
- Debate the five principles of 'larger us change-making' and discuss ways you might start to apply them to your life and work (more on these below)
- Engage in rigorous reflection on how your emotions, past experiences and beliefs impact your work and what this means for how effective you are at pushing for change in the world
- Commit to behaviours and actions that will test, develop and help to embed the three bedrock values of compassion, curiosity and awareness that underpin this style of change-making (see below)
- Explore a curated library of videos, blogs and podcasts that will deepen your understanding of the concepts we discuss together each week

Together, we'll be exploring the five principles at the centre of larger us change-making:

We've spent years researching how we can improve our communities, our countries and the world without dividing people. These principles go to the heart of everything we've learned and experienced to date and we can't wait to explore them with you!

Principles	Questions we'll be exploring together
1. Build agency and belonging	<p>Do people feel powerful or powerless when they think about the issue I work on?</p> <p>Does my work generate a healthy sense of belonging and group identity?</p> <p>When we create belonging, is it welcoming and inclusive - or about a them-and-us?</p>
2. Appeal to love not fear	<p>What kind of emotional responses do I try to evoke through my work?</p> <p>What kind of emotional responses may I be triggering unintentionally through my work?</p> <p>Is my work presenting issues as solvable or insurmountable?</p>

Critical questions	Questions we'll be exploring together
<p>3. Help people navigate crisis</p>	<p>How can my change-making respond to difficult collective emotions?</p> <p>Where does my work help people to work through or heal from trauma, and where might it make things worse?</p> <p>What kinds of stories do I use to make sense of the world?</p>
<p>4. Bridge divides but recognise difference</p>	<p>Who's in my 'in-group'? What perspectives are implicitly left out?</p> <p>Whom do I 'other' - e.g. through opposition, ignoring, or contempt? Who is 'othered' by my in-group?</p> <p>What are the values and/or lived experiences that drive 'the other side' to act as they do?</p>
<p>5. Seek to transform not defeat</p>	<p>What would breakthrough success look like on the issue I work on?</p> <p>Does polarisation make that success more or less likely?</p> <p>How do we come back from polarisation to a new larger us?</p>

Alongside the five principles, we'll be helping each other to nurture three bedrock values that have to underpin larger us change-making.

We will examine these values together, discuss their relevance and consider how they can be made a real and active part of our day-to-day lives.

Bedrock values	Includes
Compassion	Learning how, in the face of difficulty, we can turn towards ourselves with kindness and understanding. Extending our compassion to others so we can be kind and helpful towards them, no matter how different they seem to us.
Awareness	Being aware of ourselves, our emotional responses, biases and stories we tell about our past, present and future. Being aware of others, cultivating empathy, appreciating different perspectives. Paying attention to the stories we tell about our collective past, present and future.
Curiosity	Living with humility, being open to change and to encounters with people who are different from us. Being an active listener and able to have courageous conversations.

In addition, you'll be asked to set aside between 2-3 hours each week for talks, readings and activities to get the most out of the programme.

Each week you may be asked to watch a webinar (either live or recorded) as important preparation for the week ahead. You will also be asked to carry out further reading, watching, reflection or small group work to support your understanding of the topics we're exploring and their practical implications.

How might the programme impact you?

We'll invite you to explore subjects that may be difficult

Doing this work together in a small group means being prepared to share things about yourself with other people. This can be difficult, especially if you're used to being in places where you don't feel safe enough to voice your fears or vulnerabilities.

Rest assured that you will never be asked to disclose more than you feel comfortable sharing. We've taken great care over the design of our sessions to help you feel respected, heard and valued. Everyone who is offered a place on the programme will be asked to commit to helping to maintain a warm, respectful and safe environment for everyone.

Each session will be guided by Kate, an experienced facilitator, who will support you to create a trusting and safe space with your fellow group members.

We're expecting you to feel challenged at times

We'll be exploring concepts or themes that might make you feel uncomfortable, frustrated or even a bit angry - knowing that these are subjects and emotions that are often unhelpfully repressed or ignored in everyday life. We will support you if this happens.

We're learning too and we want your feedback

We have run early prototypes of this programme ([you can read what people have said about them here](#)), but this 3 month pilot is our most immersive experience so far. We are a small team, we really care about our work and this programme, and we'd love your help to improve it.

How can we support you?

Your place on this pilot will be fully funded but we do expect a high level of commitment

We have limited places available on the programme and we expect them to be in high demand. We want everyone to have a really valuable experience so if you're invited onto the programme we ask that you respect the other members of your group by making every effort to attend and commit yourself to each session, including engaging fully in any homework tasks we ask you to complete.

There is a bursary available to help those who need it to access the programme

Although your place on the programme is funded we recognise that by participating you may have some other 'hidden' costs, such as childcare or time spent away from job applications if you are unemployed or from crucial paid work if you are a freelancer.

We have a handful of bursaries of up to £1000 per person available to help you with these costs if you need them to access the programme. If you are seeking a bursary, you will be asked to give a brief overview of your circumstances in the application form. Please use this space to outline what hidden costs you will incur and/or how the bursary will break down a barrier to you accessing the programme. (Your answer will not impact the success of your application).

This is an inclusive programme and we want to make it accessible to everyone

If you are offered a place we will ask you if there's anything we can do to make the programme more accessible for you and do everything we can to meet your needs.

How do I apply?

We invite you to ask yourself these questions before applying:

1. Do I agree that long-term success on the issues I care about depends on bringing people together rather than dividing them?
2. Am I prepared to learn about new concepts and listen to the thoughts and views of others even if that makes me uncomfortable at times?
3. Am I prepared to reflect with humility on my own views and behaviours and share these with the wider group?
4. Am I ok with taking part in the pilot run of this programme? Can I accept that things might not be 'perfect' and there are things I think need to change?
5. Is my mental health and wellbeing in a place where it's safe for me to examine my thoughts and behaviours and share my feelings with a group of new people?

If your answer to these questions is yes, [we would love you to apply online here!](#)

The deadline for applications is 11.59pm (BST) on Sunday 10th October.

We will reply to all applicants by the end of Friday 22nd October.

If you've got any queries about the programme then please do get in touch with either Claire (claire.brown@larger.us) or Kate (kate.pumphrey@larger.us) directly.

Here's a list of the main questions in the application form if you'd like to prepare your answers before you start the process:

- Could you tell us about the change you are trying to make (either in your professional life or through a voluntary role) and how you are going about it? (150-250 words)
- Do you think them-and-us dynamics are a feature of the issue that you work on? If so, in what ways? (150-250 words)
- Are you part of one or more communities where you would be keen to share what you learn? If so, please could you briefly describe it / them. (Up to 200 words)
- Do you currently work (or have you worked in the past) on your state of mind? (Up to 200 words)

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US

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