

Attending the Partnerships for Social Justice workshop

 boingboing.org.uk/partnerships-for-social-justice

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Achieving equitable public services through the empowerment and influence of clients, citizens and communities.

Boingboingers [Debbie](#), Justin and [Marisol](#) attended a workshop at the end of November. It was run by Partnerships for Social Justice (PSJ) founded by Ghazala Mir, an Associate Professor at the University of Leeds, who researches interventions to reduce health and social inequalities. Here, Debbie, Justin and Marisol tell you more about what they found out at the workshop.

PSJ is about working with people (professionals, citizens and communities) who are interested in improving health and wellbeing and addressing social factors that contribute to disadvantage and social exclusion. The network develops research to improve public understanding of the social causes of inequality and increase leadership on equity in public services and within disadvantaged communities. They also train organisations that support disadvantaged communities to conduct research about inequalities experienced within the community. These social inequities are often reinforced by public service systems through the replication of discrimination and exclusion. PSJ seeks to achieve equitable public services through the empowerment and influence of clients, citizens, and communities.

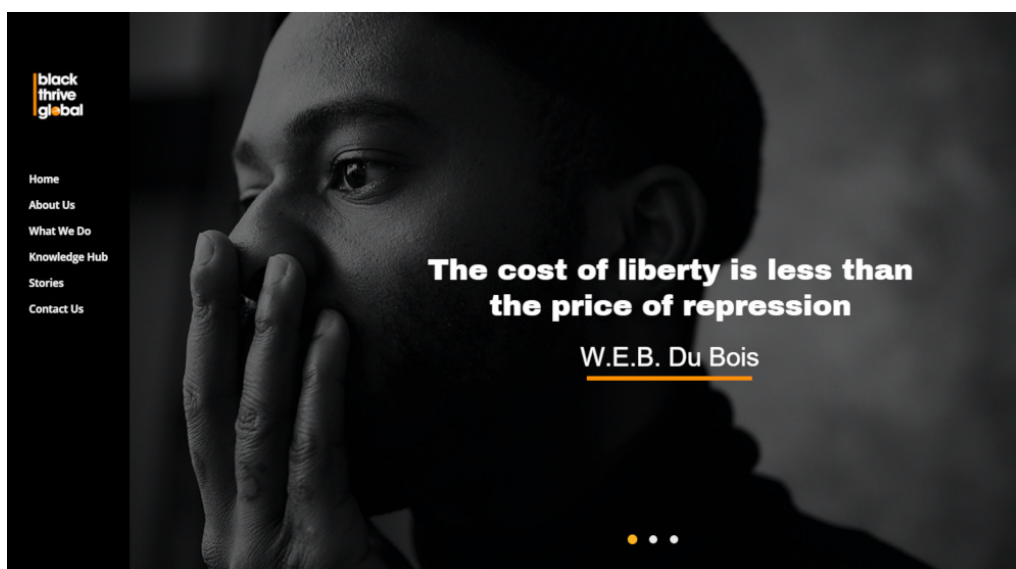
PSJ is a network, consisting of The Inequalities Research Network, Health Inequalities Research Network, NIHR SPHR Equal England and Leeds Equality Network, and brings together practitioners, researchers and members of the public to collaborate on reducing inequalities.

The workshop was intended to enable discussion and debate, exchange ideas and expertise, and forge new collaborative projects. It focussed on approaches to increasing the participation, empowerment and influence of those who experience discrimination, exclusion and inequity in order to transform services. All these aspects seemed very much in line with Boingboing's approach of 'beating the odds whilst changing the odds' by using an inequalities lens and championing the voices of marginalised groups using co-production and transformative research. All the speakers talked about how important it is to use co-production to involve the people who are directly affected and usually unheard.

Sarah Salway, Professor of Public health at the University of Sheffield welcomed us to the workshop then co-ordinated the day and Q&A sessions extremely well.

The first speaker was Lela Kogbara, Director of the Community Interest Company Black Thrive Global, whose talk was entitled **Improving employment outcomes for Black people with long-term health conditions through collaborative radical solutions.**

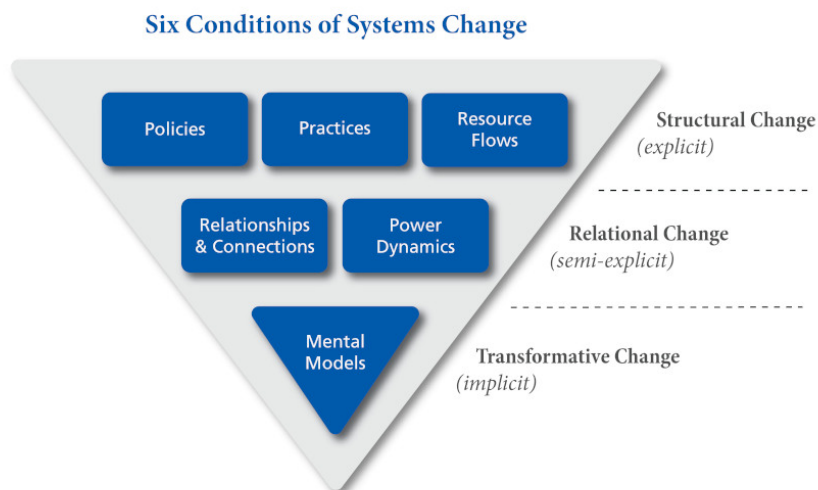
Lela spoke of action-based collaborative working, bringing together public services including the local authority, health services and the police. Lela also spoke about tackling social justice, particularly in public services. For example, a focus on empowering patients as part of a transformation of services. She stressed the importance of an improvement of employment outcomes for Black people with long term health conditions. Lela highlighted that Black people are more likely to develop long term health conditions earlier, are more likely to be dismissed from work or disciplined at work, leading to a negative cycle. There's firm evidence linking good employment to good health.



“Lela suggested there are good intentions in public services but there remains a lack of understanding due to the absence of research. She said the problem lies with Public services focusing on policy without addressing the real issues, so they

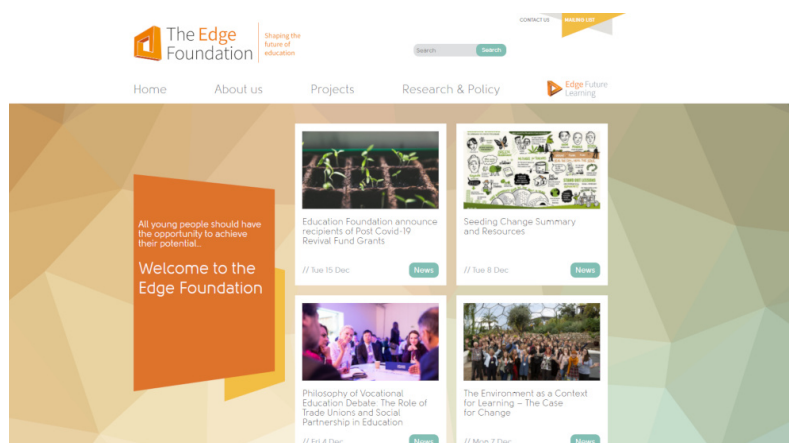
are not effective.”

She referred to the collective impact model and a paper written by Kania, Kramer and Senge in 2018. (Find out more about their paper and webinar called [The Water of Systems Change](#)). The Water of Systems Change looks at the conditions that are holding the problems in place and how they must be tackled to make a change (e.g. social or environmental problems).



Lela concentrated on the work of Black Thrive in Lambeth who had hired and paid community and peer researchers because of their lived experience. They were also exploring participatory budgeting where the community controlled the budget on their local housing estate. In the Q&A session after Lela’s talk, people highlighted the absence of research into inequalities experienced by black people and people with disabilities. As Boingboingers know, this applies to many marginalised groups!

Olly Newton, Executive Director of [The Edge Foundation](#) was the second speaker. His talk was entitled: **Young people influencing policy: tokenism, change makers and future centering**. Olly examined the real spaces for young people to influence educational policy and break away from some of the outdated nineteenth century principles that still prevail. He provided lots of interesting illustrations where change had been possible and focused on four points to signpost his talk and how to begin the change process.





Avoid tokenism – do not ask the opinion of young people if the policy has already been decided!



Think about the culture of spaces – are young people's voices being heard, respected and taken seriously?



What are the influences in these spaces? – Is there diversity/personalisation? Is there a variety of young people with different lived experiences? Do they truly represent the community?



Developing character and skills – What are they learning or not learning in the current education system? We still work under the old education system that continues with the existing power dynamics.

“Olly suggested education is not just about learning rote knowledge. Young people should be able to challenge views and use their lived experiences. They should be taking an active part in deciding their own futures. He also suggested that if young people recruit other young people it changes the dynamic and the conversation is much freer. Research must include a wide variety of young people to ensure this is representational.”

Olly highlighted the importance of a broad curriculum and insisted we need to consider whether young people are learning the skills that they need today. It is important to get a balance between skills and behaviour to help them become productive adults and for their future careers which is possible within the current framework. One question in the Q&A was ‘How can schools take this radical approach under the current top-down structures?’ Here are some links Olly shared which give good examples.

XP students film

Pupil Power

Ashoka

Rethinking Assessment

Next to speak was Jason Grant-Rowles, a lived experience researcher from the Synergi Collaborative Centre. His talk was on: **Biographical storytelling to understand ethnic inequalities in severe mental illness**. Jason was brought up in New Cross in south east London which has had a troubled past and he identified the need for help for young people involved with gangs and crime, especially young Black boys. He noted that ethnic minorities, especially Black people are more likely to experience severe mental health issues.



“Jason highlighted the importance of letting people feel comfortable about their background to enable them to seek and receive the support they need.”

He spoke candidly about his own mental health experience. Jason briefly outlined the biographical narrative interpretive method (BNIM) which is an in-depth interviewing method (developed by Tom Wengraf) to understand participants’ lived experience and impact of intersecting inequalities (e.g. race, gender, class, generation). Synergi uses the technique as a good way for listening to marginalised voices so that these individuals do not fall by the wayside. It seeks to

reframe the existing discourse using co-production of knowledge to create robust research methods. Synergi has pledged to reduce ethnic inequality of mental health by working *with* the system because, they believe if there’s no advocacy in a pressured system, individuals will fall by the wayside.

The final speaker was Amy Barnes who researches and teaches public health policy at the University of Sheffield. Amy’s talk was **on Increasing participation in local decision making: a review of the evidence**. The focus was on health inequalities caused by social determinants or unequal conditions. Her research involves participatory initiatives which challenge economic circumstances. She spoke about her work where the research team had systematically reviewed reports on participatory initiatives in Europe after the world economic crash in 2007. It was used to review participation and influence in local decision-making in Europe.

Effective initiatives involve a mix of elements:

1. **Safe spaces are important for people to feel safe and encourage participation.**
2. **Develop and strengthen relationships.**
3. **Collective capacities – this means shared knowledge and sense of belonging. It gives people confidence to influence change.**
4. **Change culture and practice – listen to people with lived experience.**
5. **Long-term commitments – public influence is a norm rather than a short-term ‘project.’**

In essence, safe spaces allow learning to happen and trusting relationships to grow.

After a break we were given the option of two breakout groups to join:

1. Group discussion on future collaborative research projects – this was more of a networking event for people keen to collaborate with PSJ on future research
2. Group discussions on the day’s presentations on service transformation via empowerment and influence of clients, citizens and communities.

Each of us gleaned something different from the group discussions and it gave us time to reflect on what we had learned from the workshop.

Here are some of our takeaway points:

1. **We need to create systems change because policies alone have little influence.**
2. **Include community voice – particularly people with lived experience.**
3. **If system change is desired – we must engage with public users.**
4. **The importance of teaching young people ‘real examples’ to gain the skills they need for their future careers.**
5. **In today’s society, more people (men) are opening up about their mental illness but there is still a stigma attached to it.**
6. **Participatory research is about relationships, politics and power.**



Debbie Hatfield is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Brighton funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Her work includes promoting and developing her PhD findings which looked at patient and public engagement and involvement in commissioning health services.



Justin Williams is a doctoral researcher at the University of Brighton funded by the ESRC, South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership (SCDTP). His research is a co-produced study looking at what employers can do to promote resilience in ex-offenders in the workplace.



Marisol Garn is a doctoral researcher at University of Brighton funded by the ESRC, SCDTP. Her research project is a co-produced study that explores parents/carers experiences of school engagement at secondary education.



The Resilience Revolution Final Research Report 2016-2022

Resilience Revolution's Final Research Report 2016-2022

This report presents the research and evaluation of the Resilience Revolution programme (2016-2022).

The Resilience Revolution is an innovative whole town approach to building resilience, made possible by funding from The National Lottery Fund's HeadStart programme. Funding was available between 2016 and 2022, across 6 areas nationally in the UK with the purpose of testing and learning new ways to support young people's mental health (ages 10-16).

In Blackpool, the programme took the bold step of developing a vision for the whole town; giving everyone who lived, worked or volunteered in the town the opportunity to get involved. The Resilience Revolution embraced co-production as a way to design and test innovative projects. Co production meant a range of people, with different expertise, working together, as equals towards shared goals.



The Research Ready Communities pilot continued

For the past year and a half Boingboing has been working on a Research Ready Communities pilot project in Blackpool alongside the National Institute for Health Research as part of their Under-served Communities programme. Typically, much of the funding for health research in the UK goes to universities in London, Oxford and Cambridge, but health research is needed the most in places like Blackpool, where the harmful impacts of health inequalities are worst felt.



Loops – a review

On 22nd February Grace and Lauren, members of the Activist Alliance, attended the show Loops at the Blackpool Grand Theatre. It was a play made in collaboration with Liverpool Everyman + Playhouse, 20 Stories High theatre company and, “a brilliant group of activists and artists who all shared important stories of what their experiences were, with courage, honesty and jokes”.



Watch our workshops: how to do community co-research on health equity

Created as part of the ongoing Community Solutions for Health Equity project that Boingboing Foundation are proudly part of, we are pleased to share recordings of a series of workshops held recently in Blackpool. These workshops are free resources to be taken advantage of by any community members or organisations looking for a beginner's guide to developing the research skills and knowledge needed to explore health inequalities in coastal areas.

Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) Oct 2015 – adapted from Hart & Blincoe 2007 www.boingboing.org.uk

	BASICS	BELONGING	LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
SPECIFIC APPROACHES	Good enough housing	Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong Help child/YP understand their place in the world	Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
	Enough money to live	Tap into good influences	Engage mentors for children/YP	Being brave	Support the child/YP to understand other people's feelings
	Being safe	Keep relationships going The more healthy relationships the better	Map out career or life plan	Solving problems	Help the child/YP to know her/himself
	Access & transport	Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope	Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	Putting on rose-tinted glasses	Help the child/YP take responsibility for her/himself
	Healthy diet	Get together people the child/YP can count on	Highlight achievements	Fostering their interests	Remember tomorrow is another day
	Exercise and fresh air	Responsibilities & obligations	Develop life skills	Calm down & self-soothing	Lean on others when necessary
	Enough sleep	Focus on good times and places Make sense of where child/YP has come from		Have a laugh	There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them
	Play & leisure	Predict a good experience of someone or something new			
	Being free from prejudice & discrimination	Make friends and mix with other children/YPs			
NOBLE TRUTHS					
	ACCEPTING	CONSERVING	COMMITMENT	ENLISTING	

The Boingboing Resilience Framework

The Resilience Framework is a handy table that summarises 'what works' when supporting children and young people's resilience according to the Resilience Research base. The Resilience Framework forms a cornerstone of our research and practice. On this page we have pulled together lots of useful links so you can find out all about the Resilience Framework.



Prevention in Health and Social Care Inquiry Submissions

Co-leaders of the Resilience Revolution made not one, but two submissions to the UK Parliament 'Prevention in Health and Social Care' inquiry last month. The inquiry is about preventing ill health, now and in the future.



A guide to becoming more eco-friendly in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast

Hi, I'm Maya, and I wanted to say a big thank you to you for reading. These guides were created to help people in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast become more environmentally friendly, without feeling too overwhelmed by climate issues. They were produced as part of the Boingboing Activist in Residence project, which gave me the opportunity to work as an Eco-activist in Residence at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. I decided that I wanted to use this role to make two guides: one for local residents, and another for Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' Green Champions.

NIHR | National Institute for
Health and Care Research



An introduction to the Research Ready Communities pilot

For the past year and a half Boingboing has been working on a Research Ready Communities pilot project in Blackpool alongside the National Institute for Health Research as part of their Under-served Communities programme. Typically, much of the funding for health research in the UK goes to universities in London, Oxford and Cambridge, but health research is needed the most in places like Blackpool, where the harmful impacts of health inequalities are worst felt.



Online Resilience Forum – 3rd April 2023 – Psychological distress and resilience among a population affected by conflict

This Online Resilience Forum from CRSJ and Boingboing is for anyone interested in resilience research. This month's forum is on 'psychological distress and resilience among a population affected by conflict' presented by University of Brighton PhD student Omar S Rasheed.

[Older Entries](#)