



National  
Co-ordinating  
Centre for  
Public Engagement

# Enhancing Place-based Public Engagement: Lessons Learned

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With thanks to the EPPE teams and participants, for contributing their expertise so generously

February 2022



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# The EPPE story: a timeline of activity

The UK Government published its long anticipated Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022, coinciding with the publication of this EPPE final report. Place – and inequalities linked to place – have become a top policy priority in the UK. The EPPE programme was created to pilot effective ways in which public and communities can be meaningfully engaged and involved in Research and Innovation, and has much learning to contribute to the current focus on place-based research and innovation policy. This report summarises the journey travelled, and the key lessons learned. The timeline on the following slides captures some of the key information about the EPPE programme, to contextualise this work.

2018 - 19



The Brexit referendum brings into focus the huge regional inequalities across the UK. 'Left-behind places' are headline news.

The UKRI Public Engagement team commission the NCCPE to undertake a [rapid review](#) of how university research, innovation and engagement might be better aligned to the needs of areas of the UK experiencing significant disadvantage in its different forms. The report's recommendations inform the launch of the EPPE programme.



2019



The [EPPE call](#) is launched in autumn 2019, a competitive £500k pathfinder funding opportunity to support eligible research organisations UK-wide to pilot place-based public engagement partnerships and activities.

The call targets engagement with community partner(s) / organisation(s) from the 40% most socioeconomically deprived areas of the UK.

## Objectives of the fund

The objectives for the call are to:

- **Initiate or enhance partnerships** between research and community partner(s) / organisation(s) in areas of the UK experiencing significant disadvantage, where there is an opportunity to engage with research and innovation (R&I);
- **Align with the objectives** of other place-based funding and policy work in recognising the role of 'place' in R&I;
- **Demonstrate collaborative engagement** with R&I through research organisations, communities and partner organisations, investing in new or tried-and-tested co-production methodologies;
- Learn from these approaches and **utilise that learning** to build collaborative capacity that supports productive interactions between research organisations and communities.



# The EPPE story: a timeline of activity

2020

2020



Locations of the funded projects

91 institutions apply to the programme, and 25 projects are funded, with grants ranging from £17,846 to £50,000. A list of the funded projects is included as an annex to this report. Projects are initially funded for up to 6 months.

The NCCPE is invited to coordinate the funded projects, and also to provide consultancy support to the unsuccessful bidders.

	Understanding: Changing how people think	Capability: Changing what people do	Innovation: Changing how the world works
LEARNING			
EVALUATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universities and communities value working together and understand how to do it well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger networks between community organisations and universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and innovation involves more diverse participants</li> </ul>
MONITORING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More understanding of universities/communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researchers engage communities with their research</li> <li>Community members and researchers develop new skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research agendas are informed by publics</li> <li>Universities develop long term strategic relationships with community organisations to do/develop engagement work</li> </ul>

Extract from the EPPE MEL framework

The teams meet face to face once in early 2020, and later virtually. One key output of the early collaboration is a collective Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The framework identifies a set of overarching programme outcomes, categorised in three areas: Understanding, Capability and Innovation. It also identifies 11 key questions to guide the programme teams' reflections on their work. These include:

- What are the key factors that influence the effectiveness of this type of activity? Scale? Geography? Discipline? Context? Experience of collaborative working? How long the partners have been working together?
- To what extent does a focus on research and innovation affect the development of community university partnership work?



The COVID-19 pandemic has a huge impact on the teams' planned activities: most had scoped extensive face-to-face engagement with communities.

Plans need to be re-written, with many moving to online or virtual mechanisms.

Projects are re-scheduled and UKRI grants extensions.



# The EPPE story: a timeline of activity

2020 - 2021

2021

2022



Collaborate CIC is commissioned to deliver an interim evaluation of the programme, which begins in August 2020 and is completed in January 2021. [View a full copy of the report.](#)

The review includes a workshop with 15 of the projects represented, interviews with teams and a survey. The review inevitably focuses on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on plans, although was also found to have had some positive impacts, including foregrounding community issues, encouraging innovative solutions and accelerating progress between partners.

The report identifies emerging learning about adopting a place-based approach, and the characteristics of healthy place-based partnerships.

The 25 project teams work on their final project reports over the course of 2021.

In autumn 2021 NCCPE begins work on this report: a review of the programme and the lessons learned. This involves reviewing the final project reports; the outputs from the three co-ordination meetings; and interviews with members of some of the project teams, and builds on the interim report produced by Collaborate CIC.

The publication of this report coincides with the publication of the government’s long awaited Levelling Up White Paper. The role of R&I in addressing place-based inequality is recognised, and UKRI is set a new organisational objective to *“Deliver economic, social, and cultural benefits from research and innovation to all of our citizens, including by developing research and innovation strengths across the UK in support of levelling up.”*

The EPPE programme provides important evidence to inform how UKRI addresses this new objective.

# Summary of Key Findings



# Key findings

## 1. What themes did the projects explore?

Themes cited by the projects covered a range of different focal points, with the most commonly cited being developing collaborative research practice.

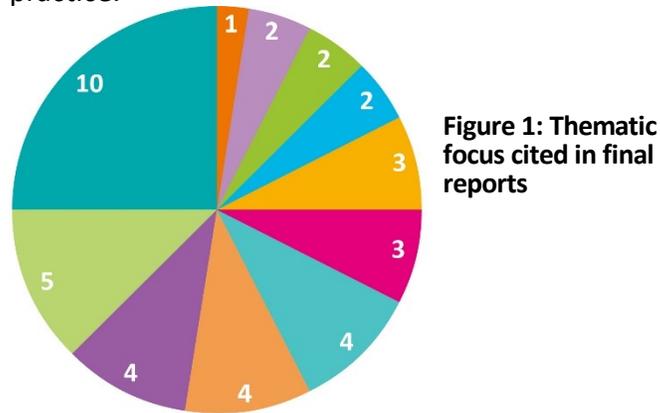


Figure 1: Thematic focus cited in final reports

- Increasing engagement with local heritage
- Influencing local redevelopment
- Creative ways of tackling local challenges
- Shaping local policy
- Co-produce local responses to climate changes
- Raising awareness of local needs
- Improving uptake of health care
- Influencing the design of local services
- Platforming different voices
- Listening exercises
- Developing collaborative research practice

## 2. How did the projects make sense of place-based work?

The projects frame the purposes of their place-based work in three broad ways:

- Tackling/responding to disadvantage affecting a specific geographical location
- Developing targeted solutions that respond to the needs and challenges of people in a specific geographical location
- Fostering stronger relationships between HEIs and their local communities/stakeholders

## 3. What were the overarching outcomes of the projects?

The table lists the overarching outcomes of the EPPE projects, building on those described in the original Monitoring Evaluation and Learning framework, and evidenced in one or more of the project final reports.

Understanding	Capability	Innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Universities and communities value working together and understand how to do it well</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> More understanding of universities/communities</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Researchers develop their understanding of value added by working collaboratively with communities/community organisations</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> HEIs develop a better understanding of the needs of local areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Stronger networks between community organisations and HEIs</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Researchers engage communities with their research</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Community members develop new skills</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Researchers develop new community research skills</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Partners develop new skills/learning/networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Research and innovation involves more diverse participants</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> Research agendas are informed by publics</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> HEIs develop long-term strategic relationships with community organisations to develop engagement work</li> <li><span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> HEIs' institutional practices are challenged and grow to support more engaged research</li> </ul>

N=20  
(the report reviewed the 20 final reports received at the time of the review.)



# Key findings

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## 4. What lessons were learned about taking a place-based focus for public engagement with R&I?

We have identified four key affordances arising from EPPE's focus on place-based engagement with R&I:

- **Carrying out place-based PE with research stimulated methodological innovation:** starting with considerations of place resulted in significant methodological innovation, for both communities and researchers.
- **Place-based research presented more opportunity for legacy:** teams emphasised how the projects created lasting legacies – for instance in strengthened community-university relationships, learning how to design inclusive research and in local infrastructure and service provision.
- **The place lens helped to foreground community needs and interests:** making place the starting point helped to put the community at the centre and build the research outward from there.
- **The place-lens opened up multiple new lines of enquiry:** Several of the projects reflected on how they had uncovered challenges or issues within communities that were related but distinct from the project's focus, generating rich new lines of enquiry.

## 5. How did people work in partnership in the place-based projects?

Collaborate's interim report identified 'four characteristics of successful place-based partnerships'. These were confirmed in the final reports and in the interviews we conducted:

- Good relationships and trust
- Shared purpose
- Learning and adaptation
- Distributed power and decision making

## 6. What did the project partners learn about place-based working?

We highlight three key lessons learned:

- **The impact of including communities in research projects:** There were a range of approaches used in the EPPE projects, from employing community researchers, to academic and non-academic partners collaborating to create workshops. Using community partners' local knowledge to tailor activities to best fit the target groups was crucial in ensuring meaningful engagement, helping to adopt a contextually sensitive approach whilst also being more realistic and practical about the arrangements.
- **Reflections on the scope of reach within communities:** Even with the involvement of community partners, some interviewees shared how it had been difficult to engage a diverse representation of the community. Challenges were raised about how the place-based calls impose geographical boundaries around projects which don't necessarily align with what the local residents identify as their 'place', and risk artificially excluding people outside of the defined area who are impacted by the issues being addressed.
- **The importance of using inclusive and accessible language:** Many of the projects emphasised how language choice, terminology and jargon could reinforce power structures between partners, most particularly the choice of language used by universities. Working with community partners with local knowledge proved vital to ensure culturally sensitive engagement and communications.



# Key findings

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## 7. What legacies arose from the place-based EPPE projects?

We identified the following key legacies of the programme for HEIs, communities and policy makers.

### Legacy for HEIs included:

- HEIs improved their understanding of local needs
- HEIs built findings into future research activity
- Follow on student involvement from projects
- Longstanding relationship building
- Challenging institutional practices/HEIs increased understanding of community-based practice

### Legacy for communities

- Long-term interventions benefitting local communities
- Building a legacy of community researchers
- Capacity and confidence building in communities

### Legacy for policy

- Creating change in local government
- Creating practical resources for local councils

## 8. What are the key lessons learned that could be applied to future programmes?

Building on the reflections of the teams about their experiences of the EPPE programme, we have identified what has worked well in this funding programme as well as some considerations for future UKRI place-based funding programmes.

### ▪ The importance of UKRI prioritising place-based and engaged work in its funding priorities

Interviews conducted as part of our review highlighted the value of UKRI funding place-based research. This was identified to be vital in creating a more systemic shift in universities, and to support research staff to advocate for place-based research within their institutions.

### ▪ Centralising the EPPE programme call drew more attention across the institution

Some of the projects reflected on how it had been important that the EPPE funding call required one centralised application per institution. This encouraged interdisciplinary teams and brought place-based research to a wider academic audience.

### ▪ The EPPE programme provided opportunities to contribute to interventions beyond research

Our review highlighted the importance of the funding not being restricted to research activity alone. This enabled partners to respond to the research in dynamic ways and to mobilise activity that drives change. By enabling funds to be used to support the non-academic partners, several projects identified opportunities to support longer-term sustainability of the community sector.

### ▪ UKRI could go further in requiring involvement of partners in bid development

Whilst it was generally reported that the EPPE bidding process encouraged institutions to think about the role of partners, a few projects suggested enhancements: for example, requiring evidence that partners have been involved in co-writing the bid (and making available a small funding stream to support this).

### ▪ UKRI could better support the development of evaluation methods in the application process

A small number of projects reflected on the value of funders incentivising and supporting projects with evaluation. Suggestions included a greater focus on the proposed evaluation process in the application, encouraging projects to consider how to embed this into the process (and perhaps offering them support to do so).

**Full report**



# Introducing the EPPE programme

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This introduction sets the scene for the EPPE programme, situating it within the wider context of place-based Research and Innovation (R&I). It also provides an overview of our review of the EPPE programme, setting out the methodological approach used to analyse the range of data sources.

## A background to place-based R&I

UKRI's 2019 [Vision for Public Engagement](#) included a goal to 'Engage under-represented communities and places with research and innovation'.

In pursuit of this goal, and to support the development of the EPPE programme, the UKRI Public Engagement team commissioned the NCCPE to undertake a rapid review of how university research, innovation and engagement might be better aligned to the needs in areas of the UK experiencing significant disadvantage.

The [NCCPE's report](#) reviewed the policy landscape, and summarised key approaches and types of intervention being deployed to address poverty and inequality in different sectors. It identified lessons learned about 'what works' and widely agreed good practice principles. It also listed lessons learned about how to fund place-based working.

The key findings of this review are included in Appendix 1. The report provides valuable context for the EPPE programme: why it was focused in the way it was, and how it builds on existing policy and practice in this increasingly important domain.

## Overview of the EPPE programme review

This review draws on the learning from the 25 funded projects and the experiences of the teams involved in designing and delivering the project activities.

## Materials included in the review

Our review draws on three data sources:

**Final project reports** – the final reports were submitted by the teams to UKRI on completion of the EPPE projects. 20 final reports were received by the time of the review, and formed the main basis of the analysis.

**Co-ordination meeting materials** – The NCCPE hosted three co-ordination meetings, bringing the project teams together to share experiences of the EPPE programme and to discuss and identify key learning.

**Interviews with academic partners involved in EPPE projects** – The NCCPE carried out a small number of interviews with university staff on completion of the EPPE programme after receipt of the final reports.

Additionally, our review is informed by the **Collaborate Interim Report** which documented the finding of an evaluation carried out by **Collaborate CIC** between August and December 2020. The report drew on both desk research and engagement with a selection of EPPE project partners to understand their experiences of being involved in the EPPE programme and to identify learning that may inform future place-based funding schemes.

## Review methodology

Our review has involved in depth analysis of the data relating to the EPPE programme. The final reports and co-ordination meeting materials were coded in NVivo (a qualitative data analysis software application). The coding framework built on the themes identified in Collaborate CIC's Interim Report, establishing additional themes that reflected the learning documented on completion of the EPPE projects.

To compliment the findings coming out of the final reports and co-ordination meeting materials we also conducted interviews with academic partners from five of the EPPE projects, in order to generate case studies. These projects were selected for the ability to speak to some of the key themes highlighted in our report, and in no way provide an exhaustive account of the rich and diverse.

## Report limitations

It is worth noting that the majority of the new data explored in this report was from the individual project reports. Whilst these sought to reflect the views of project partners, and most captured feedback from participants in the activity, the reports were submitted by the HEI partner. In addition, the 5 case studies were provided by the academic partners.

# Project contexts: How did the projects make sense of place-based work?



This section of the report contextualises the projects, providing an account of how they are situated within place-based practice, the focus of their projects, the methods used in the projects and the overarching outcomes.

Later in the report (p.35) we provide 5 project case studies. These provide a narrative illustration of some of the key findings of this review.

## How did the projects make sense of place-based work?

We identified three broad ways in which the projects talk about their place-based work:

- **Tackling/responding to disadvantage affecting a specific geographical location**

HEIs and partners recognise the importance of responding to the specific challenges impacting communities bound by a geographical location. Projects that speak to this framing prioritise listening to and learning from communities.

- **Developing targeted solutions that respond to the needs and challenges of people in a specific geographical location**

Similarly to the previous framing, HEIs and partners emphasise the importance of contextualising their work in the places and with communities they are engaging, however, this framing has more of a focus on identifying and responding to challenges through tangible actions.

- **Fostering stronger relationships between HEIs and their local communities/stakeholders**

This framing places less emphasis on creating change or responding to specific challenges and focuses more on ways to foster strong relationships between communities, universities and other non-academic partners.

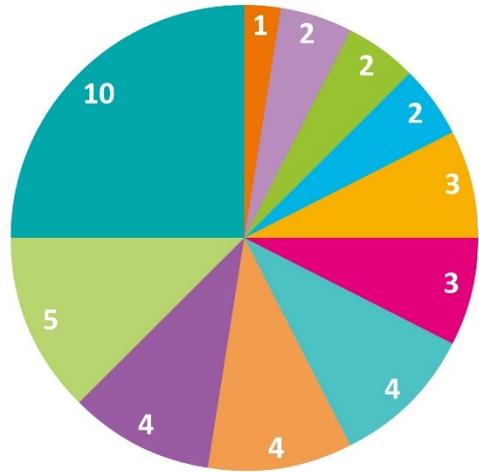
These framings were, in part, informed by the call for the projects, which encouraged applicants to engage under-represented communities and places and to collaborate with diverse partners:

*‘Through this call UKRI aims to support engagement that works with community partner(s)/organisation(s) from the 40% most socioeconomically deprived areas of the UK, defined as those areas listed in the **bottom two quintiles** of the IMD for the respective part of the UK. [ ] Proposals are expected to define the geography within which their project will focus and reference the relevant IMD’. [EPPE Call specification](#)*



# Project contexts: How did the reports frame their thematic focus?

Our final analysis looked at how the projects describe the thematic focus of their work. Projects referred to one or more of the following categories:



**Figure 1: Thematic focus cited in final reports**

- Increasing engagement with local heritage
- Influencing local redevelopment
- Creative ways of tackling local challenges
- Shaping local policy
- Co-produce local responses to climate changes
- Raising awareness of local needs
- Improving uptake of health care
- Influencing the design of local services
- Platforming different voices
- Listening exercises
- Developing collaborative research practice

Thematic focus	Description
<b>Developing collaborative research practice (10)</b>	This includes two different sub themes: HEIs/organisations building their skills in working with communities AND building research capacity in communities
<b>Listening exercises (5)</b>	Working with communities to hear their stories/experiences; understanding local communities
<b>Influencing the design of local services (4)</b>	Working with communities to directly feed into the design of local services
<b>Improving uptake of health care (4)</b>	Engaging communities to understand the barriers of accessing healthcare and how these can be overcome to support uptake of health care
<b>Platforming different voices (4)</b>	Engaging with communities to hear seldom heard perspectives, creating spaces where different voices can be heard
<b>Co-produce local responses to climate change (3)</b>	Working with communities to respond to localised issues associated with climate change
<b>Raising awareness of local needs (3)</b>	Identifying local needs and raising awareness of these
<b>Influencing local redevelopment (2)</b>	Working with communities to feed into the redevelopment of local areas
<b>Creative ways of tackling local challenges (2)</b>	Using arts-based methods to respond to locally identified challenges e.g., screen printing workshops around air pollution
<b>Shaping local policy (2)</b>	Working with communities to identify how to inform local policies

N=20  
(20 final reports had been received at the time of the review, and form the basis of the analysis.)

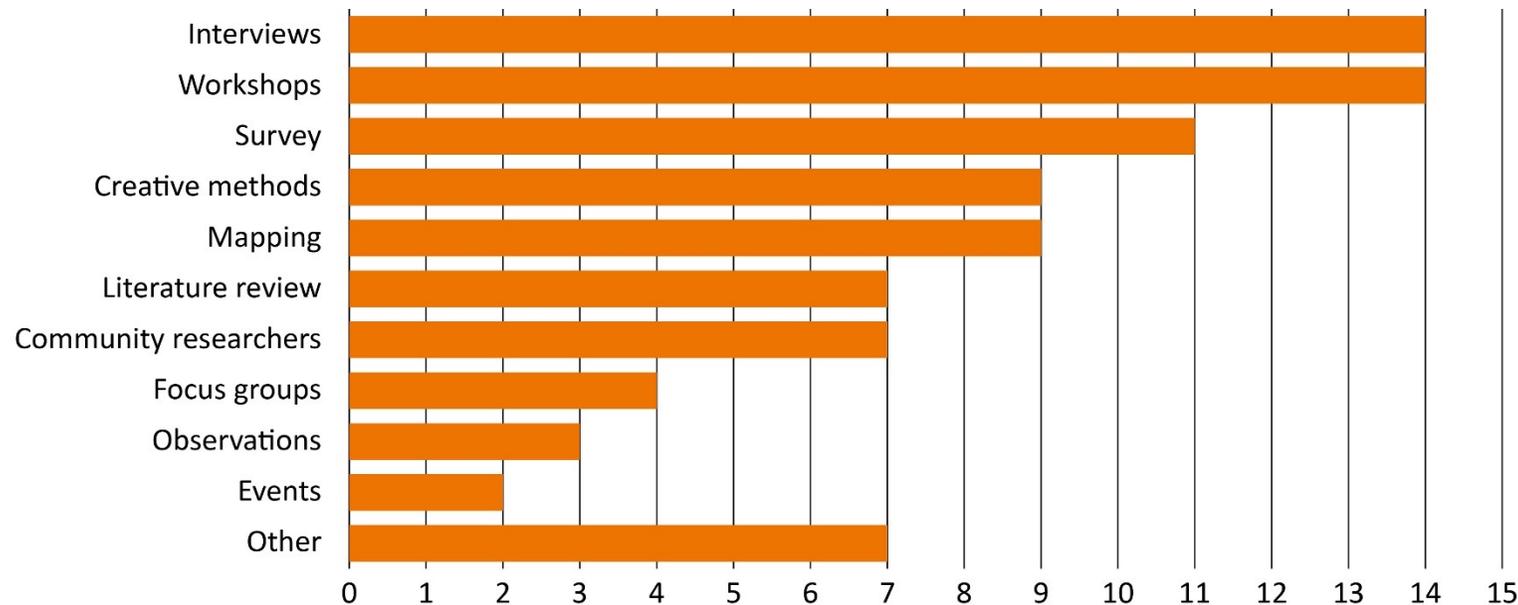


# Project contexts: What methods were used in the projects?

The projects used a range of different methods listed below. Reports commonly referenced using more than one method (for example, a project where community researchers conduct interviews, or where creative methods are used in workshops).

There were several methods referenced by only one project, which were included as 'other'. These were: Community organising methods; Digital storytelling; Documentary review; Informal discussion; Social media polls; and Statistical analysis and Testimony.

**Figure 2: Methods cited in the final reports**



N=20  
(20 final reports had been received at the time of the review, and form the basis of the analysis.)

## The impact of COVID-19 pandemic

The projects were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in various ways, and this meant several changed their methodology or approach, or put more emphasis on certain aspects of the project. Therefore, the methods employed present a different picture to the original plans.

The scope to include community researchers was particularly impacted and several projects reflect on how they had been unable to continue with this aspect of the research when lockdown conditions required all activity to move online.

Similarly, many of the projects that had intended to run face-to-face surveys within the community, had to adapt to online methods. A few of the projects reflected on how this significantly reduced the number of responses and the scale and reach of the surveying activities.



# Project contexts: What were the overarching outcomes of the projects?

The NCCPE worked with the project teams and UKRI to create a Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework for the programme (a summary is provided in Appendix 3).

This framework was intended to help ensure a coherent approach to evaluation and reporting across the programme.

The table lists the overarching outcomes of the EPPE projects as described in their final reports, and exemplified in the MEL framework. All the outcomes were evidenced in one or more of the projects.

## Overarching project outcomes

Understanding	Capability	Innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Universities and communities value working together and understand how to do it well</li> <li>▪ More understanding of universities/communities</li> <li>▪ Researchers develop their understanding of value added by working collaboratively with communities/community organisations</li> <li>▪ HEIs develop a better understanding of the needs of local areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stronger networks between community organisations and HEIs</li> <li>▪ Researchers engage communities with their research</li> <li>▪ Community members develop new skills</li> <li>▪ Researchers develop new community research skills</li> <li>▪ Partners develop new skills/learning/networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research and innovation involves more diverse participants</li> <li>▪ Research agendas are informed by publics</li> <li>▪ HEIs develop long-term strategic relationships with community organisations to develop engagement work</li> <li>▪ HEIs' institutional practices are challenged and grow to support more engaged research</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project examples from final reports:</b></p> <p>The University of Stirling:  <i>'All project partners have developed a much clearer understanding of the energy challenges facing local communities, and what changes can take place to improve this'.</i></p>	<p>The University of Hertfordshire:  <i>'The university researchers have gained new knowledge and skills in community engagement from our close working with Healthwatch Hertfordshire and Stevenage Borough Council'.</i></p>	<p>The University of Leicester's EPPE project led to the creation of a new HEI-wide framework to enable community researchers to be employed by the university.</p>



# Key lessons learned about taking a place-based focus for public engagement with R&I

**This section explores the benefits of working through a place-based lens to engagement with Research and Innovation (R&I).**

The interim report also looked in detail at the value of using ‘place’ as a lens<sup>1</sup> and we have drawn on their findings to identify four key affordances of this focus on place:

- Carrying out place-based research stimulated methodological innovation, for both parties
- Place-based research presented more opportunity for legacy
- The place lens helped to foreground community needs and interests
- The place lens opened up multiple new lines of enquiry

## **Carrying out place-based research stimulated methodological innovation, for both parties**

Our review captures how both academic and non-academic partners have developed as a result of taking a place-based approach. For academics and HEIs EPPE projects have influenced and changed practices, orientating them more toward working in collaboration and partnership with communities. This change has been reported at both a department level as well as in central leadership. Similarly, non-academic partners have developed more nuanced understandings of their places and the people living within them, whilst also building skills and capacity as researchers. This theme builds on the findings in the interim report which states how employing place-based research was in itself an intervention, because the methodological approaches led to wider change. Projects also reflected on how Covid-19 pandemic restrictions had led to both challenges and opportunities to develop innovative practice.

*A strong research partnership between the different organisations was established during the first three months of the project, which was sustained and strengthened during the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the research team unable to engage, face to face, with the children and families from March 2020, remote partnership working with staff at Stevenage Borough Council led to new ways of working, with innovative new methods of engagement. (University of Hertfordshire, Final Report)*

*Everyone commented on how much they enjoyed the weave of different expertise by having research staff, partner staff, artists and participants engaging together. It created a sense of community, which increased people’s sense of value. As well as learning more about the local cultural history, partners also commented on learning new heritage and creative skills, which were valuable to them and their participants. [...] Through the project we have moved increasingly towards a participatory model of heritage. This has opened up pathways of new fields of academic literature that extend beyond the fields of post- industrial heritage in which we have begun. (Swansea University, Final Report)*

<sup>1</sup> Collaborate Interim Report 2021, pp. 20-25



# Key lessons learned about taking a place-based focus for public engagement with R&I

## Place-based research presented more opportunity for legacy

Our review has highlighted how the EPPE projects supported academic partners to develop much deeper understandings of how to support community-led, place-based approaches. The interim report identified that there had been significant learning gained through the process about working in partnership. Our findings are consistent with this, however, in reflecting back on the EPPE programme at the end of the projects, many emphasised how the learning has gone beyond the boundaries of their project, especially regarding the inclusion of more diverse voices in research.

Staffordshire University evidenced how the EPPE project 'Keep Talking' had enabled academic partners to build on their existing community engagement practices. The project enabled them to deepen their skills in working with specific communities. For example, whilst university staff have extensive experience of working with communities the academic partners reflect on how through the EPPE programme they have a better understanding of the importance of recognising the specific needs of groups:

*'We have learnt about working with people in recovery in participatory projects and the need for more structured sessions than previously delivered with community groups.'* (Staffordshire University, Final Report)

In addition to developing academic partners' ability to work collaboratively with community researchers, the Keep Talking project has had a wider impact on the institution's strategic engagement approach, with members of the community research team sitting on the university advisory board and contributing to the developing Civic University Agreement.

The University of Leicester reflected on how their EPPE project had led to wider institutional change. Working with community researchers as project partners was not only central to the project's epistemological position but pivotal in changing wider practices within the institution. As a result of the EPPE project the university now has policy and procedure to enable community researchers to be employed through the university, demonstrating a more robust commitment to valuing lived experience as well as providing structures to support the safeguarding of community researchers.

Our review identified how impacts often continue beyond the duration and funding of these projects. These impacts included sustained relationships between academic and non-academic project partners and long-term interventions that create a change within the project's target community. Similarly, some of the projects spoke about how resources generated through the EPPE programme remained with the non-academic partners and how this brought about positive change for communities, from enhancing physical infrastructure to improving service provisions.

The University of Plymouth reflects on how their EPPE project, 'The Pop-Up Centre for Health Technology', led to the creation of two health technology start-ups, one focused on digital access for asylum seekers and the other on VR engagement with LGBTQ communities. At the time of submitting their final project report, these start-ups were still active and there were plans to continue to innovate around access to health care in the target area of Plymouth.

The partnerships in The Open University's EPPE project 'BG Reach' led to the installation of computers and Wi-Fi in the community centre to support future activities. Based on needs identified through BG Reach, the community centre has established follow-on activities which included building the IT skills of local residents.



# Key lessons learned about taking a place-based focus for public engagement with R&I

## The place lens helped to foreground community needs and interests

The interim report highlighted how place offered a specific lens through which to understand and frame the challenges the projects responded to:

*'The focus on "place" offered a useful lens, and entry point to complex issues, and a way to create new and meaningful partnerships that 'flipped the starting point' by putting the community at the centre and built the research outward from there.'*<sup>2</sup>

Our review confirms how the focus on 'place' brought to the forefront the complexity and nuances of local challenges and needs. Across all the data, 'place' was framed as far more than the geographical boundaries of the projects, providing a lens through which to make sense of the specific communities and networks that inform its identity.

The University of York's final report highlights the importance of recognising the history and context of the place where the EPPE project, 'Stories in the Sky: Digital Placemaking', was undertaken. The project partnered with a residents' association from a significantly studied 1960's housing development. Through the EPPE project the partners created a digital aid which supported the residents' association to deliver their guided tours around the site, whilst also capturing local voice and identity. The project team were particularly sensitive and responsive to the history of the housing development site, and the individual residents and community who have been identified to be at risk of research fatigue<sup>3</sup>.

Several projects made explicit how the central focus on communities at the beginning of the projects subverted the 'usual' starting point. Some academic partners identified a tendency in research to begin projects internally before opening outward to non-academic partners. The structure of the EPPE programme enabled academic partners to challenge and expand their usual practice. Whilst many of the final reports identified that the application timeframe and lack of available seed funding to pay potential partners did restrict the amount of involvement partners could have in developing the bids, a significant number of HEIs did find ways to collaborate with proposed partners to develop research ideas.

Some of the projects also highlighted how place-based working did not mean working in a local silo, but rather that big ideas and concepts were grounded in the everyday experiences of local communities.

The University of Hertfordshire's EPPE project collaborated with health institutes and children and family services in an area of Stevenage with significant socio-economic deprivation and health inequity. The project partnerships led the project team to develop a very detailed and nuanced understanding of the health implications of deprivation for children and families living in Stevenage, however, the project also resulted in learning for the regional partners and challenged assumptions underpinning current national public health policy about the food consumption habits of children and families living in poverty. The learning, rooted in the lived experiences of people experiencing deprivation, enabled the health institution and academic partners to deepen their understanding around the national public health priority of children and family wellbeing and to use this new understanding to inform their future practices.

<sup>2</sup> Collaborate Interim Report 2021, pp. 23

<sup>3</sup> Research fatigue refers to the experience of being over-researched. This usually relates to groups of people/communities who become overwhelmed by being the subject of research. Research fatigue is particularly likely when there is low levels of transparency between researchers and communities and when the community feel there are no perceived tangible benefits from being involved in the research.

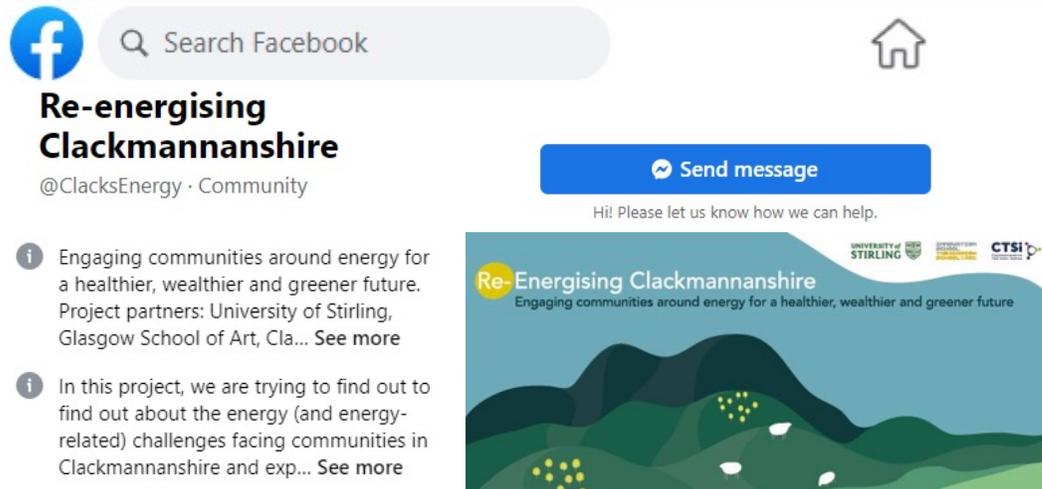


# Key lessons learned about taking a place-based focus for public engagement with R&I

## The place-lens opens up multiple new lines of enquiry

Several of the projects reflected on how they had uncovered challenges or issues within communities that were related but distinct from the project's focus. This additional information was used to inform the next steps of both the non-academic and academic partners.

The University of Stirling's EPPE project, Re-energising Clackmannanshire, is one example of how the EPPE programme enabled the partners to identify other issues experienced by the community and to use this understanding to develop follow on projects, sometimes in different geographical areas. One of the priorities the team identified was the need to address pollution and waste in the local area. Subsequently, the academic partners engaged a colleague to carry out a follow-on project with the partner community centre, focused on river waste. The colleague brought funding, enabling the team to commission an artist to work with the community to create an art installation from waste collected through a river clean-up programme.



University of Stirling's Re-energising Clackmannanshire Facebook page

## Raising community voices in future health research

### WHAT DID WE FIND?

We identified 10 future health research priority areas. The community members our team spoke with want to see:

-  **Clearer COVID-19 communication** and support.
-  **Improve mental health support** and reduce stigma.
-  Improve **sexual health awareness** for all ages.
-  More respect for, and collaboration with, **traditional medicines/healing practices**.
-  **Stop using 'BAME'** and be more specific when referring to different groups.
-  Improve the **dietary and nutritional information** available in different cultural contexts.
-  Better support for **loneliness affecting older adults**.
-  Reduce the high rates of **maternal fatality in Black women**.
-  **Focused research and support on diseases** such as Lupus, Diabetes, Prostate Cancer, Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and Sickle Cell Trait (SCT).
-  Provide more **pop-up health checks and social activities that support health** in local community centres

Findings from the University of Leicester's Raising Community Voices project



# How did people work in partnership in the place-based projects?

This section of the review explores the partnerships established through the EPPE projects. Drawing on the characteristics of good place-based partnerships set out in the interim report this section discusses how the projects reflect on the nature of their partnerships on completion of the EPPE programme.

The interim report<sup>4</sup> identified ‘four characteristics of successful place-based partnerships’ set out below:

- Good relationships and trust
- Shared purpose
- Learning and adaptation
- Distributed power and decision making

The findings from our review strongly confirmed these characteristics, and we have explored them further in this section.

Characteristics of healthy place-based partnerships	
Good relationships	Learning and adaptation
Shared purpose	Distributed power

## The importance of identifying a shared purpose

The interim report identified that a shared purpose was important in enabling the projects to better weather unforeseen changes. A shared purpose enabled partners to be flexible and adaptable, whilst maintaining a commitment to pre-determined project aims and objectives. This was particularly important given the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the rapidly changing contexts in which the EPPE projects were required to work. Additionally, shared purpose between HEI staff was also highlighted to be important in driving a place-based agenda within the institution and enabling longer-term sustained change to take place.

Our review revealed comparable themes, learning how shared purpose enabled partners to mobilise around the same concerns/values, even when their approaches to working were distinct from each other. This shared purpose strengthened partnerships between very different organisations.

The Open University’s BG Reach final report reflected on how the partner organisations collaborated well despite distinct missions and characters. The report sets out the importance of establishing a shared purpose and how this not only enabled very different organisations to work together, but also, to identify each of the partner’s different strengths and to mobilise these around improving the quality of life in the target disadvantaged communities. A quote from one of the members of the community group highlighted how:

*‘it worked so well with all three partners, because everyone got on, all the partners had different strengths, us (Aberbeeg Community Group) knowing our community, The Open University brought in the tutors and Linc helped to pull everyone together. It has been wonderful’ (The Open University, Final Report)*

<sup>4</sup> Collaborate Interim Report 2021, p.32



# How did people work in partnership in the place-based projects?

## Ensuring a willingness to learn and adapt

Our review highlighted how important it was for project partners to be willing to learn and adapt their practices. This was a central theme coming through in the data and related to both academic and non-academic partners. Similarly, the interim report discussed how there is no one size fits all approach to place-based working, and that whilst possible to draw on what others have done in different places, people working in place-based ways should be willing to adapt their practice as their understanding develops over the duration of a project.

The final reports highlight ways in which project partners developed new, or built upon existing, skills and how these skills have contributed to improving their wider professional practice. This included university staff learning valuable skills in working with community groups, for example, how to use language that is broadly inclusive; community organisations learning research skills, for example, how to evaluate the impacts of their projects; and all partners learning new engagement approaches, for example, how to use arts psychotherapy to engage communities in discussions about their experiences. Some academic partners prioritised learning about the practices of the communities they sought to engage, for example, by participating in workshops hosted by the partners or external facilitators. A small number of final reports highlighted the importance of attending these types of workshops as ‘newcomers’ rather than co-investigators, or academic experts. This openness to learn brought significant insights to the teams in how to best work in partnership.

The data also drew attention to the importance of multi-partner reflection sessions. These sessions provided a valuable space to share learning and to discuss how the project or partners needed to adapt.

The University of Bradford discussed the value of reflection sessions for ensuring strong relationships between the different partners in the EPPE project, Bradford Community Connectors. Regular project meetings were largely reflective in nature, providing space for all the project partners to come together and talk about what was working well, as well as the challenges they were facing. The project report explained how through regular team meetings all partners developed an:

*‘understanding of the purpose of the project, shared aims, consensus on project delivery, shared learning and building relationships that endure. (University of Bradford, Final Report)*

The reflective nature of the meetings enabled progression within the project. Early meetings supported the development of a shared purpose for the project, whilst later meetings provided space to reflect on the learning and how to build and maintain long-term sustainable relationships.

The interim report concluded:

*‘Many teams recognised that as there is no single-way of doing place-based community engagement and ongoing dialogue is therefore key to be able to adapt plans in response to what is emerging from the work with places. The ever-changing context of COVID-19 also required partners to be flexible and adapt their work in short order. This meant prioritising opportunities to share learning between partners, which had wider value to the partnerships.’<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> Collaborate Interim Report 2021, p.33



# How did people work in partnership in the place-based projects?

## Establishing an equitable distribution of power across partners

The importance of re-distributing power and decision making in project partnerships came through as a key theme in our review. Many of the projects reported how the EPPE programme had offered an opportunity to challenge the relationships between universities and communities, and to explore new ways of working in collaboration. This confirms the findings presented in the interim report which highlights how nearly all the projects included in the report identified the importance of challenging power structures that reinforce inequitable relations between universities and communities.

Projects that engaged community researchers were particularly focused on re-distributing power. This was often realised by formalising community researchers' roles within the HEI. In several of the projects the community researchers were given paid roles within the institution for the duration of the project, meaning that they were seen as part of the wider university staff rather than as community representatives. This is one example of how the EPPE projects not only encouraged academic partners to step outside of the institution but also how communities stepped into university spaces.

Whilst there were many positive examples of the EPPE projects re-distributing power between the different partners, there were challenges within some of the projects around how to maintain a balance of power dynamics. Our review identified how existing structural and cultural factors could reinforce power imbalances between partners. Several projects highlighted how the relatively short timeframe to establish the proposals created a barrier to achieving more equitable decision-making processes. Additionally, the reports emphasised that the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic meant many non-academic partners had significant additional demands on their time which left less opportunity for them to participate as fully in the EPPE programme.

Despite these challenges, many of the projects articulated specific ways in which structural power imbalances were challenged, for example, through the distribution of funding; by costing for community partners' time in the bid to ensure communities were engaged as early as possible; and involving non-academic partners in the design of the project aims.



### Get Talking about Community Research Comic (Staffordshire University):

An illustrated comic designed following community researchers request for easily accessible resources to understand the role. Keep Talking community researchers and project team are represented in the illustrations



# How did people work in partnership in the place-based projects?

## Fostering good relationships between partners

The interim report highlighted the importance of good relationships in healthy place-based partnerships, which were characterised by the following factors:

- Respect for the perspectives of others where there is not agreement
- Realistic expectations
- High trust
- Inclusive approaches
- The ability to resolve issues and difficulties as they arise<sup>6</sup>



**BG Reach – The Open University in Wales EPPE project**, supporting the people of Blaenau Gwent to make art, music, creative writing and film that reflects on the rich and fascinating history of their local area.

Time spent building relationships at the start was important, however, particular attention was also needed to ensure relationships were successfully maintained.

The data included in our review also emphasised the importance of relationships between the partners, as well as between the project partners and target communities. The value of integrating into existing place-based networks was a key theme, both in terms of building trust with communities and increasing the scope and reach of the projects. Key community-based individuals were often vital in building relationships and these individuals would commonly be networked across the local area.

When discussing the importance of working with known people, the University of Manchester's final report describes how:

*'we honoured the networks that already existed and this allowed us to connect with a small group of community members who bought into the project and were linked intrinsically with other aspects of community life – the allotment, the residents group, the Women's Group - thereby acting as changemakers and project advocates throughout the duration of the project.'*

Additionally, some of the final reports discussed the benefits of recruiting an engagement officer or external body, stating that having an external facilitator with a strong history of community-based work assisted in building trust between communities, non-academic and academic partners. Other practical suggestions for building trust included choosing safe and/or neutral spaces for activities, and creating clearly defined lines of communication between partners.

<sup>6</sup> Collaborate Interim Report 2021, p.33



# How did people work in partnership in the place-based projects?.

## Fostering good relationships between partners (cont.)

When reflecting on the nature of the relationships between communities and universities, many of the projects identified how place-based working could challenge pre-conceptions about HEIs. Some reports referenced community members being initially suspicious or intimidated by the involvement of a university in the project. Through sustained relationships, and a focus on place and responding to local needs, some projects reported how communities came to trust the university partners, and their perspectives on the university shifted positively.

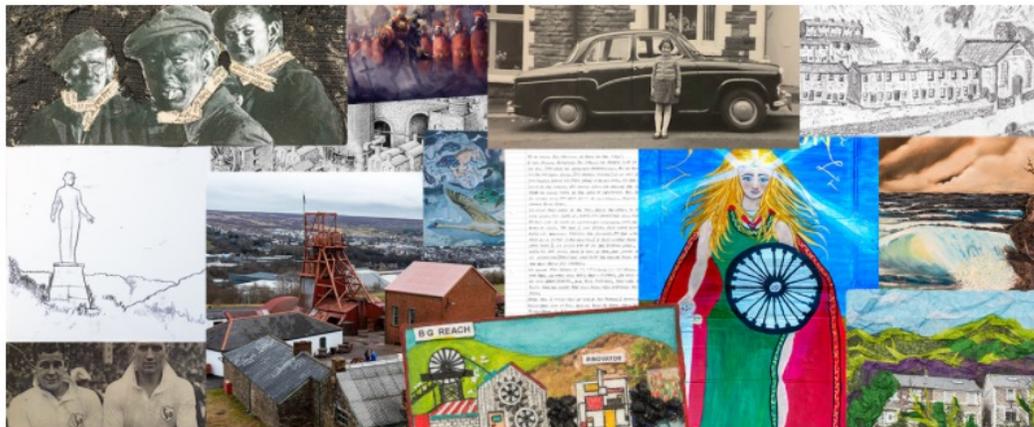
The University of Manchester highlighted how initial conversations with community partners uncovered a significant amount of suspicion from community members towards the university. Communities identified their concerns about the potentially extractive nature of working with universities, highlighting how they felt unsure about who the university partners were and what they wanted to get from the community. By identifying this suspicion at the beginning of the project, the university researchers were able to work on rebuilding trust. By ensuring transparency in their engagement with the community they were able to forge a strong relationship which community members, ensuring that they did not experience the work together as extractive or tokenistic.

The Open University's final report reflected on how their EPPE project created a shift in the target community's perception of the university. The report highlights how many of the workshop attendees were initially intimidated about the involvement of a university, stating that they thought the workshop may be too challenging and not inclusive of them. In response the project team ensured the

*'early stages of BG REACH were designed around the need to build trust and familiarity between project staff and potential participants.'* (The Open University, Final Report)

The project team highlight how trust building and familiarity was supported by the informal design of workshops and events, as well as using pre-established relationships between university staff and communities. On reflection, participants shared their positive experiences of the workshop, captured in the following quote where a participant described being

*'pleasantly surprised - very enthusiastic about it' and having 'found it interesting and stimulating.'* (The Open University, Final Report)



OpenLearn

Free learning from  
The Open University

This online exhibition showcases some of the wonderful work produced by participants in the BG REACH project (**B**laenau **G**went **R**esidents **E**ngaging in **A**rts, **C**ulture and **H**eritage).

BG REACH is a creative arts project supporting the people of Blaenau Gwent to make art, music, creative writing and film that reflects on the rich and fascinating history of their local area. This exhibition is a celebration of Blaenau Gwent's heritage expressed through the talents of the people who live there.



# What did the project partners learn about place-based working?

**In this section we explore what partners learnt from working through a place-based lens. We look specifically at the impact of including community members, reflections on the scope of reach within communities, and the importance of using inclusive and accessible language.**

## The impact of including communities in research projects

Our review identified how universities and partners brought different insights to the process of community engagement, and how valuable these partnerships were when combined through co-creation. There were a range of approaches used in the EPPE projects, from employing community researchers, to academic and non-academic partners collaborating to create workshops. Using community partners' local knowledge to tailor activities to best fit the target groups was crucial in ensuring meaningful engagement. This reflected findings from the interim report where some projects highlighted the importance of:

*'adapting engagement times to accommodate working or child care hours and by making use of basic technical applications like WhatsApp which community members could access easily.'*<sup>7</sup>

From looking across the data we learned how community partners brought a level of understanding about the people the project sought to engage, being able to advise on how to adopt a contextually sensitive approach whilst also being more realistic and practical about the arrangements.

In the 'Journeys and Turning Points' project, the University of Essex described the importance of using local and contextual knowledge. The project was a collaboration between the university and practitioners working with young people categorised by Islington Council to be 'prolific offenders'. The project team highlight the importance of a dedicated engagement officer who had previously been in a role within the partner organisation.

*'The recruitment of the engagement officer also helped the team to foster positive and productive relationships with practitioners / gatekeepers, who were crucial in recruiting and accessing young people.'* (University of Essex, Final Report)

Both the engagement officer and partner organisation brought local and contextual knowledge about the prospective participants. This was particularly important when engaging young people whose age meant that they were no longer eligible for support by Islington services, but who would benefit from involvement in the programme. The report described how these individuals have historically had little trust in the systems and authorities, meaning these established relationships and trust were key to their engagement.

On reflecting on the project, the key worker explained how important the opportunity presented was for the young people saying:

*'[the project] helps them to recognise their talents and assets – they have so much to offer, and they've had so little opportunity to show it. So, even something like this, gives them a small window, a small opportunity, to show some of that.'*

And one of the participants reflected on their experience of being involved in the project:

*'You know something? I have spoken to the research team... and I felt like it was the first team who actually, that I openly spoke to them, as open as I could be. I liked all their approach, and... all the things they said, openly. They were transparent with me, and I tried to be the same with them.'*

<sup>7</sup> Collaborate Interim Report 2021, p.36



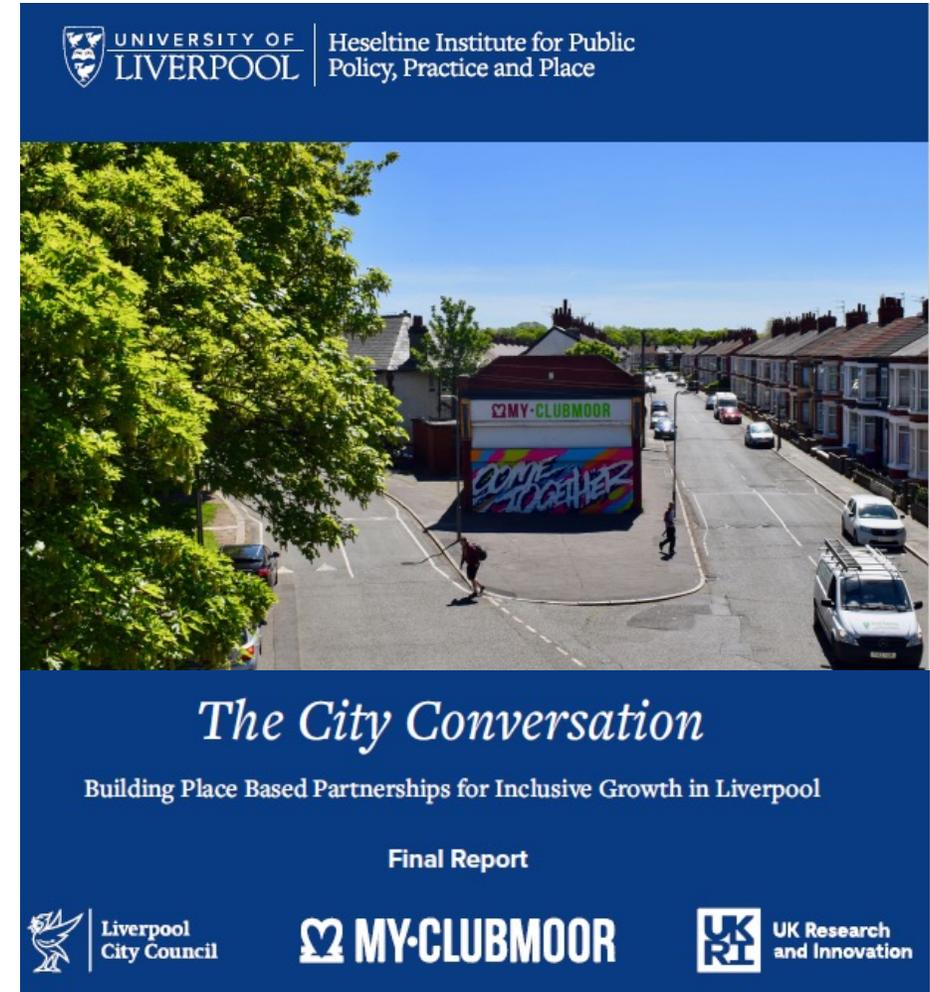
# What did the project partners learn about place-based working?

## Reflections on the reach of the projects

The majority of the EPPE projects recognised the importance of engaging a diverse selection of community members and had reflected this in their recruitment of community researchers, or by reaching out to specific communities who are less frequently engaged in research. However, even with the involvement of community partners some interviewees shared how it had been difficult to engage a diverse representation of the community. Questions arose about the representativeness of community partners, including the extent to which they represent communities as they change and adapt over time.

Other reflections on the reach of the EPPE projects included the need to draw geographical boundaries around the projects to align with a place-based funding call, and the extent to which these boundaries align with what the local residents identify as their 'place', or whether the boundaries artificially exclude people outside of the defined area who are impacted by the issues being addressed.

*So people had different interpretations of what the Clubmoor area actually was. So there were some people who were outside the physical boundary of the ward who wanted to take part. [...] people saw it as different things depending on which bit of the ward they lived in. Wards are fairly transient, people pass through them, people come into them for work. I think what we did was we stuck to the boundaries when we promoted the activity, but we weren't completely rigid on it. (University of Liverpool, Interview)*



Final report of the Liverpool University EPPE project



# What did the project partners learn about place-based working?

## The importance of using inclusive and accessible language

The interim report stated how '[u]sing inclusive and accessible language and being aware of tone allowed for more equitable communication on several projects'<sup>8</sup>. Our review corroborated this finding, with many of the projects emphasising how language choice, terminology and jargon could reinforce power structures between partners, most particularly the choice of language used by universities. Academic partners referenced a range of ways that community partners supported and challenged them to change their approach. This included creating accessible language documentation; use of inclusive language and removal of potentially inflammatory terms such as 'disadvantaged communities'; or setting out formal language commitments to hold academics to account. Working with community partners with local knowledge proved vital to ensure culturally sensitive engagement and communications.

The University of Hertfordshire's final report highlighted how in their project academic partners were asked to re-frame their research focus to better align with the communities they sought to engage. This involved focusing on emotional wellbeing and resilience in children rather than obesity and healthy eating practices. The community partners were able to provide local context, highlighting that whilst nationally there may be statistical correlations between obesity and wards ranked highly on the indices of multiple deprivation, the specific issue facing the children of their community was in fact malnutrition, as a result of families being unable to afford food.

Partners in the SIT-UP project also recognised how language could be a barrier:

*'The importance of language, that is, being sensitive to the necessity of developing shared and inclusive language; developing a commitment amongst academic and stakeholder participants of not hiding behind academic or professional jargon, acronyms, concepts and identities that might be obstacles and inhibit shared learning and knowledge co-creation.'* (Keele University, Final Report)

Liverpool School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine discuss the importance of using language which is contextually sensitive and inclusive. In their project exploring the impact of period poverty on women experiencing homelessness they became acutely aware of potential for language to exclude and impact on the dignity of the women they were seeking to engage. Their report sets out how the university researchers were guided by the community partners to ensure the language used in the project materials was considered and sensitive to the participants. Terminology such as 'period poverty', 'disadvantage', or 'deprivation' might be appropriate in academic or policy realms but in the context of this project it was clear that the project team needed to adapt their language and their approach. Rather than using potentially exclusionary language to reach people, the project team relied on engaging women through specific services, for example, by speaking with women who were attending food banks. Reflecting on what they have gained through working in partnership the academic partners identified having learned from community partners:

*'how to approach women in their services, and that engagement with impoverished women requires sensitive, individualised approaches, as they can be shamed by assumptions and wording on their circumstances.'* (Liverpool School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Final Report)



Extract from Get Talking about Community Research Comic (Staffordshire University)

<sup>8</sup> Collaborate Interim Report 2021, p.31



# Legacy from the place-based projects

This section of the report draws on our exploration into the legacy of the EPPE projects, it looks at the outcomes and impacts for universities, communities and policy makers.

## Legacy for HEIs

HEIs reported a range of legacies from the programme, detailed below:

- HEIs improved their understanding of local needs
- HEIs built findings into future research activity
- Follow on student involvement from projects
- Longstanding relationship building
- Challenging institutional practices/HEIs increased understanding of community-based practice

**The table summarises the frequency with which these were mentioned.** It is worth noting, in analysing 20 final reports, 6 HEIs did not reference any of the legacies above; 5 referenced one, 2 referenced two, 5 referenced three and 2 referenced four of the legacies.

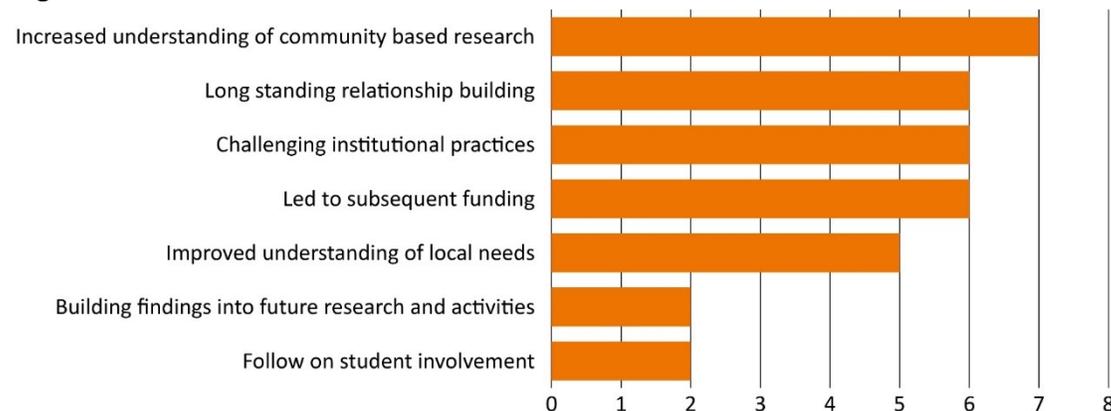


Figure 4: Legacies for HEIs N=20

## HEI's improved their understanding of local needs

By focusing on place, five projects identified how their university has improved their understanding of the needs of surrounding communities. In some cases, this fed into the university's wider strategic commitments to support and engage local communities, for example, through the formation of Civic University Agreements or defining a longer-term commitment to work with specific communities. For some universities the EPPE project had enabled them to identify the specific skills they could contribute to support wider local agendas, for example The University of Exeter's (Cornwall Campus) EPPE project highlighted how their expertise in the monitoring of social and environmental benefits of regeneration can support local communities to better evidence impact and advocate for themselves.

## Growing Communities Through Nature



University of Exeter's EPPE project



# Legacy from the place-based projects

## Legacy for HEIs (cont.)

### *HEIs building findings into future research activity*

Engaging partner communities in the development of future bids was frequently cited. Many of the universities were either planning to develop, or in the process of developing, projects which involved the same community partners, and seven projects had successfully secured additional funding at the time of submitting the final project report. Where discussed, the extent to which the community partners were involved in the development of subsequent bids was varied, and largely depended on factors such as the chosen funder and timeframes.

A smaller number of universities identified having set up new projects based on the EPPE project model. In these examples the universities were taking the learning from their engagement with the EPPE project community partners and applying this in different geographical contexts.

Swansea University's final report highlights how the research team have built on their EPPE project to successfully bid for funding to continue deepening their commitment to use heritage practice and engagement to bring about regional social and economic benefits. The EPPE project team has secured three years of additional funding through Research Wales Innovation Fund (delivered through HEFCW) which will enable them to develop a wider place-making programme of inclusive public engagement, using heritage practice to deliver social and economic benefit across the region.

Additionally, a member of the EPPE project team went on to secure additional funding of £9880 through the Royal Society of Chemistry Outreach Fund to continue their engagement with a group of participants who were particularly interested in objects from archaeological excavations shared during EPPE project sessions. In this follow-on project clients from Crisis Homeless Charity created and glazed their own crucibles based on those exhibited in the sessions.

### *Follow on student involvement*

Our analysis highlighted how two universities had continued to engage with partner communities through their students. Students built on the work of the EPPE projects through engaged learning opportunities, for example, being involved in facilitating the co-design of community spaces (Manchester Metropolitan University). The reports did not reflect any specific detail around the level of student engagement, or how students were supported to carry out such activities in an inclusive, place-based way, however useful learning could be gleaned from those who are doing this work.



Swansea University's EPPE project, Copperopolis



# Legacy from the place-based projects

## Legacy for HEIs (cont.)

### **Longstanding relationship building**

A total of seven projects explicitly cited the role of the EPPE projects in creating longstanding relationships. These were most common between communities and universities, although also included relationships between universities and local government, and between the community partners and other non-academic partners.

The University of Bradford discussed the importance of a longstanding relationship with their EPPE project partner. They reflected on how they had built a relationship that went beyond the scope of the EPPE project towards a commitment to a long-term partnership. This involved wider actions such as the project researchers committing to grow opportunities for communities to engage with the university; using the EPPE project to evidence the benefits of engagement practices to senior management; the community organisation, university and other strategic partners seeking out additional funding for specific projects.

Following their EPPE project, Engaging Local Citizens in Aston's Research, Aston University described how they have continued to work with Citizens UK, to use the learning from their project to investigate future opportunities to provide community advice clinics, as well as working in collaboration on a new project addressing digital exclusion.

### **Challenging institutional practices/HEIs increased understanding of community-based practice**

Six projects reflected on the changes or challenges to institutional practices as a result of the EPPE projects. Sometimes this related to a shift in how the HEI project team approached engagement work, for example, one report said the following:

*'Where we had originally approached engagement as centrally an "inside to out" processes (of 'reaching out' to communities), we soon found it was equally a process of "outside to in" (of renegotiating institutional structures and practices, and partly forcing a review of these).'* (University of Leicester, Final Report)

For some projects the approach had shone a light on a need for change within HEI governance, for example, in reconfiguring relationships between community representatives and HEIs.

The University of Leicester described how their EPPE project had enabled much wider systemic change at an institutional level. In working with community researchers, the university partners were able to create new processes through which community members can have their research role recognised in paid positions within the university. This not only challenged normative assumptions around who is classified as a 'researcher', and who holds the expertise to contribute to the production of knowledge, but also meant that community researchers were protected by the same level of safeguarding as other university staff.



# Legacy from the place-based projects

## Legacy for communities

Three key legacies for communities were identified through the review:

- Capacity and confidence building in communities
- Building a legacy of community researchers
- Long-term interventions benefitting local communities

### ***Capacity and confidence building in communities***

Six of the EPPE projects explicitly stated how working collaboratively led to community partners experiencing increased confidence and capacity. In some instances, this was due to the time resource the EPPE project afforded community organisations who were otherwise significantly under-funded and under-resourced. The scope for the EPPE funding to cover these partner costs meant that some organisations had the time to consider how the specific EPPE project could feed into their wider organisational strategies.

Additionally, some projects reflected on how the EPPE programme has enabled community organisations to become more 'research ready', building their confidence and capacity to collaborate with universities on future projects (e.g., University of Bradford). Importantly, this was not only about the community organisation understanding how to carry out research, but rather about community organisations better understanding the challenges and obstacles of working with universities and how to advocate for themselves and their communities in future community-university partnerships.

### ***Building a legacy of community researchers***

Community researchers played important roles in seven of the EPPE projects. These individuals were often vital in accessing members of communities who might otherwise have not engaged with the projects. Whilst the community researchers brought local and contextual understanding of the specific areas for the EPPE projects, several projects also reflected on the importance of creating a legacy of community research which outlived the duration of the EPPE programme. The project teams approached this in two different ways: by ensuring community researchers had the skills, support and connections to continue to carry out research activity in their local area, and by creating toolkits and resources to support other institutions to involve community researchers in future projects.

The University of Wolverhampton's final report describes their approach to creating a lasting community peer research network in a disadvantaged area of Wolverhampton. Rather than recruiting community researchers to respond to a specific topic or project focus, the university worked with two local agencies (an arts centre and local voluntary sector council) to train community researchers in a way that enabled them to be embedded within the future activities of the local agencies. In this project the focus was on creating the community peer research network and the scope for that network to contribute to improving the lives of people living in the area.

The University of Liverpool's final report describes how their project led to a community researcher toolkit, which whilst not planned for at the start of the project, integrates the learning from their EPPE project into a resource that supports the city's asset-based approach to working with neighbourhoods. The toolkit is aimed at public sector and community organisations and is intended to build community involvement in service design.



# Legacy from the place-based projects

## Legacy for communities (cont.)

### *Long-term interventions for local communities*

Six of the projects identified clear long-term interventions that outlived the EPPE project timeframes. Creating long-term change is a particular challenge for project-based funding, where the needs of communities continue beyond the funding timeframe. Several projects reflected on the importance of thinking beyond the lifetime of the short-term project, recognising the need to build on this work to develop longer-term interventions. The negative implications of leaving the community following the EPPE programme, without consideration of how to sustain the project momentum, were documented. Many teams sought to address these by ensuring there were key stakeholders in the communities to build on the project actions, who had the confidence and resource to do this.

Maintaining a relationship between the university and community was also important in creating longer-term interventions, enabling universities to sustain a dialogue with the communities and seek additional funding opportunities. Our review identified how long-term interventions were particularly prevalent in projects that involved local councils and projects which worked on existing community infrastructure programmes. Projects that engaged councils commonly had outcomes focused on improving existing services, such as health services, energy services, biodiversity and nature services, and were resourced to act on the recommendations.

The University of Exeter (Cornwall Campus) worked with Cornwall Council to make improvements to biodiversity in three towns across the county. Their EPPE project fed into the existing work of the 'Making Space for Nature' team from Cornwall Council who had received EU funding to deliver biodiversity gains across Cornwall. The University of Exeter highlighted how working alongside an existing programme of work, which was being delivered strategically through local government, supported their EPPE project to contribute to wider and longer-term interventions.

The University of the West of Scotland's final report highlights the benefit of a consortium approach including the local council. Their EPPE project aimed to understand the relationship between investment in cultural regeneration and the alleviation of poverty. The local council partners were already conducting policy work which aligned with this aim and the council's existing framework was used to guide the EPPE project and to shape the outputs in ways that could feed directly into policy. However, this EPPE project presented the opportunity, time and space to evaluate and reflect on the local council's approach to 'lifting communities out of poverty' and the role of arts and culture in enabling this, and to do this in a way that engaged communities as project partners.

Similarly, some of the EPPE projects who worked with community partners on their existing programmes of work were able to carry out discrete activity which was tangible and useful, whilst also feeding into the long-term development of the wider programme of work.

Manchester Metropolitan University's project '100 Year Street' sought to engage local residents in creating a vision for a vacant site in Liverpool. Their final report discusses the benefits of collaborating with an organisation already involved in the visioning and long-term planning of sustainable interventions for the area. The EPPE project's community partners had a history of using arts-based practice to engage residents with vacant and underused sites within the neighbourhood and this project was able to provide resource time to build on the existing work and to progress the plans for area of identified land. By partnering with Manchester Metropolitan University, the community partners developed new skills in digital mapping which is intended to support them in their future visioning for other sites in the local area.



# Legacy from the place-based projects

## Legacy for policy

### Creating change in local government

Six projects cited having created change at a local government scale. Some projects highlighted how involving council representatives in their research had supported the council to not only recognise the value in co-created approaches, but to better understand the barriers and opportunities to devolved local control. Other projects identified how their work was being used to shape new local policies, for example, the development of new children and young people policies (University of Hertfordshire), as well as influencing wider regeneration plans (University of the West of Scotland).

### Creating practical resources for local councils

In setting out the outcomes and outputs of the EPPE projects, three reports identified resources aimed at supporting local councils. This included community researcher toolkits and guidance (as discussed above), which were made available as city-wide resources. A small number of reports also highlighted how they had developed evaluation tools which had been shared with council partners for them to use in subsequent projects (Manchester Metropolitan University).

Finally, some projects created digital outputs which local councils were able to use after the EPPE project had finished, for example, interactive maps which local councils could draw on the stimulate longer term discussions with local communities on the regeneration of their area (Manchester Metropolitan University).

Policy brief prepared by the University of Plymouth's EPPE project



Digital Health Hubs provide some of the health information that people need at a place and time when is convenient to them. However, for those who don't have the skills, motivation or means to access digital it can help to overcome digital and social exclusion. Community assets have proven to be the ideal setting for this and this policy brief seeks to define the challenges, give examples of best practice and outlines the findings from the Health Tech Hub pilot project in Plymouth.

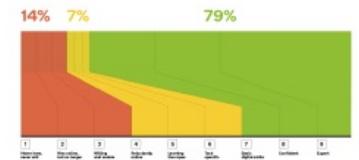
#### Digital health and Digital Inclusion

As health information and services are increasingly delivered digitally, the ability to use digital technologies is increasingly a form of health literacy<sup>4</sup>. People with lower health literacy have worse health outcomes<sup>5</sup>. These days, digital exclusion is perceived as a form of inequality as there is a close correlation between digital exclusion and social disadvantages including lower income, lower levels of education, and poor housing. Digital exclusion disproportionately affects vulnerable people, low-income groups, people in social housing, people with fewer educational qualifications, the elderly and the more marginalised communities in our society. This creates a strong correlation between digital exclusion and social exclusion<sup>6</sup>.

What is Digital Inclusion? Digital inclusion means: (1) being able to use digital devices; (2) connectivity-access to right infrastructure to access; and (3) accessibility-services need to be designed to meet all users' needs<sup>1</sup>. The definition of digital inclusion from GOV.UK highlights three criteria:

- Digital skills - Being able to use computers and the internet. This is important, but a lack of digital skills is not necessarily the only, or the biggest, barrier people face
- Connectivity - Access to the internet and the right infrastructure that people need for access
- Accessibility - Accessibility is a barrier for many people and services need to be designed to meet all users' needs

To improve digital inclusion, the following barriers must be overcome: access, individual skills, confidence and motivation. More user-friendly products and increased awareness of digital services and products available is also needed<sup>2</sup>.



#### National UK policy on Digital health

Digital inclusion matters to health and social care organisations because: it's crucial to achieving priorities, they have an obligation to reduce inequalities, there are clear policy commitments and there's a strong benefits case. Supporting people to get online and use digital health resources can be crucial to achieving local priorities including physical and mental wellbeing, prevention, self-care, shared care and shared decision making, long term condition management, appropriate use of urgent and emergency care<sup>8</sup>.

Community engagement interventions are effective in improving health and wellbeing, through improving health behaviours, health consequences, participant self-efficacy and perceived social support for disadvantaged groups<sup>12</sup>. Various policies and projects commit to digital inclusion (Appendix 1).



Relationship between Health and Digital

Since 2013 Good Things Foundation has been working with the NHS and other partners to bring digital health inclusion to those people who are most excluded and for whom digital can have the biggest benefit. They evidenced that digital can provide access to relevant information, health professionals and peer support and it can help manage conditions and improve health and wellbeing indicators<sup>13</sup>.

The Good Things Foundation found through the Widening Digital Participation Programme there needed to be 3 distinct avenues of trust have to be in place in order to help those people who are excluded from services:

- A trusted place. Where people feel like power is evenly distributed
- A trusted person. Who understands you as a peer, not a health professional
- Trusted information. E.g. Websites and apps that display the NHS logo





# Reflections on the EPPE programme

This final section of the report reflects on how the EPPE programme has been experienced by the project teams. It draws together some short reflections on what has worked well in this funding programme as well as some considerations for future UKRI place-based funding programmes.

## The importance of UKRI prioritising place-based engaged work in its funding priorities

Interviews conducted as part of our review highlighted the value of UKRI funding place-based research. This was identified to be vital in creating a more systemic shift in universities, and to support research staff to advocate for place-based research within their institutions.

When discussing the role of the EPPE programme funding in creating wider change, the University of Bradford expressed how:

*'if [the funding] hadn't been from UKRI I just don't think it would have carried so much weight, so I think it's really helpful to have that gravitas of the UKRI money, particularly for the smaller universities. It's a big deal.'*

They discussed how the requirement for institutional match funding *'raises the intentions straight away, gives it a little more scrutiny.'*

## Centralising the EPPE programme call drew more attention across the institution

Some of the projects reflected on how it had been important that the EPPE funding call required one centralised application per institution. This encouraged interdisciplinary teams and brought place-based research to a wider academic audience.

The University of Manchester described how the internal application process had engaged a range of different senior staff in selecting the university's chosen project, highlighting how:

*'It wasn't just something that happened in one faculty, it was a university wide call, they were then sieved and one was chosen by a panel that was convened across the university.'*

## The EPPE programme provided opportunities to contribute to interventions beyond research

Our review highlighted the importance of the funding not being restricted to research activity alone. This enabled partners to respond to the research in dynamic ways and to mobilise activity that drives change. By enabling funds to be used to support the non-academic partners, a number of projects identified opportunities to support longer-term sustainability of the community sector.

## UKRI could go further in requiring involvement of partners in bid development

Whilst it was generally reported that the EPPE bidding process encouraged institutions to think about the role of partners, a few projects expressed how this could be developed more in future. For example, requiring evidence that partners have been involved in co-writing the bid (and making available a small funding stream to support this). This reflection is very much dependent on longer timeframes to develop bids as many universities identified how the short timeframe impacted on their ability to involve prospective partners.

## UKRI could better support the development of evaluation methods in the application process

A small number of projects reflected on the value of funders incentivising and supporting projects with evaluation. Suggestions included a greater focus on the proposed evaluation process in the application, encouraging projects to consider how to really embed this into the process (and perhaps offering them support to do so). Additionally, one project suggested that future iterations could encourage teams to be more creative in their evaluation plans, by encouraging applicants to think about a range of different evaluation tools that could be drawn upon. Whilst the NCCPE offered valued post-award support for evaluation including creating a MEL framework in partnership with the EPPE teams and UKRI (a summary can be found in Appendix 2), and providing a webinar on evaluation planning (including the use of creative methods), having this framework and support available pre-bid writing, and a more extensive support package for evaluation post award, would have been valuable.



## Project case studies

This section of the report presents five case studies, carried out as part of our review process. These case studies are intended to provide a more in-depth account of a small number of EPPE projects which were selected due to their ability to speak to some of the key findings of this review.

Exeter  
Liverpool  
Manchester  
Bradford  
Leicester



# Growing Communities Through Nature in Cornwall



# Growing Communities Through Nature in Cornwall

## What was the background to the project?

The 'Growing Communities Through Nature' project sought to use urban green space to engage people to improve biodiversity and social amenities as part of nature-based climate mitigation. The project took place in three Cornish towns, Newquay, Launceston and Helston, and it was guided by the following aim:

- to use co-production of public open space designs to improve biodiversity, mitigate climate change and foster lasting community links in these Cornish towns

The project built on Cornwall Council's existing Making Space for Nature work (formally known as Green Infrastructure for Growth 2) and was part funded by the European Development Fund, which aims to improve urban green spaces for biodiversity and for people.

## Who did they partner with?

The project built on existing partnerships between the University of Exeter (Cornwall Campus), the Making Space for Nature team in Cornwall Council (part funded by the European Regional Development Fund), the South Kerrier Alliance Community Interest Company (SKA CIC) and the Climate Action Group in Helston.

The University of Exeter (Cornwall Campus) were already partnering in the Cornwall Council's EU funded work, with an impact fellow who works across both organisations.

## What did they do?

The project began by identifying those who had an interest in the public open spaces in each town. The academic partners then met with the stakeholder groups to understand their aims and aspirations for the sites. Whilst the council had already engaged some of the key stakeholder groups, the EPPE project provided an opportunity to broaden this engagement, including schools, residents' groups and local climate activists.

Following on from the mapping activities, the project team ran a workshop in each of the three towns (Newquay, Launceston and Helston), as well as a follow up workshop in Helston. The workshops were held at, or near, the green space set to be redeveloped and were professionally facilitated by an individual outside of the project team.

## What were the key reflections/learning?

This project explored different types of partnerships, with the University of Exeter (Cornwall Campus) working with both Cornwall Council and local community and climate action groups. This led to some interesting reflections and learning. The University of Exeter (Cornwall Campus) team member highlighted the differences in the partnership dynamics between the various organisations. In Helston, the community climate action group had access to the land, which enabled the residents to set their own agenda and bring in the university to support them with that. The Newquay and Launceston projects were taking place on council-owned land, which meant that the work was carried out by the council, and whilst The University of Exeter (Cornwall Campus) were partners in this work, the community were consulted rather than brought in as equal partners.

Other learning included the importance of the impact fellow, who was a key person in building/maintaining relationships, and the use of external facilitators for workshops – as the team didn't want the HEI staff to be seen as the experts, but one of a team of people with different expertises.



# Growing Communities Through Nature in Cornwall

Additionally, the project process drew attention to how different people have shared distinct visions for their place, and the importance of understanding and giving space for those different voices to come through:

*'Everybody is there because they have a shared interest in this particular plot of land, but we all want different things to happen, so the council want the transformation to meet its targets for its funding, the local community want it to meet their needs, and we were there as action researchers, so we needed to extract data out of it, to learn from it. So that's what you're trying to manage all the time, how to find a common good when you come at it with different interests.'*

Meeting and getting to know the different stakeholders was identified as key in building relationships and trust between the University of Exeter (Cornwall Campus) and local residents. Similarly, the impact fellow played an important role in developing and sustaining the relationships between the university and council team, as well as bringing an understanding of the council's processes and procedures. Indeed, both the impact fellow in Cornwall Council and the Climate Action Group in Helston were vital in ensuring the work was sustained.

Both the final report and interview highlighted the importance of working with people on existing projects and/or priorities. As has been noted in many of the final reports, engagement in universities can be ad-hoc and this can make it difficult to sustain the impacts of a participatory project. In interview with a member of the

academic partnership, they reflected on the importance of ensuring engagement practice was not driven by the university's funding requirements. They explained that if this happens, there is a risk of fostering cynicism towards the HEI sector.

Finally, the university team reflected on the challenges of ensuring delivery of both the action (at a community

scale) and the research (relating to the contribution to knowledge). This was identified as a key aspect in the developing field of engagement work. The space and opportunity to build these skills, afforded through the EPPE programme, was hugely helpful and significant.





# Growing Communities Through Nature in Cornwall

## What were the outcomes?

There were a range of outcomes associated with this project:

The University of Exeter (Cornwall Campus) developed a more detailed understanding of how they can continue to contribute to local needs, especially around place-making. They were able to identify the skills and expertise they could bring to the local area to complement existing endeavours.

Through this project, Cornwall Council staff have been able to experience the benefits of deeper community participation. The involvement of the University and an external facilitator allowed greater trust building at sites where the council led the improvements and resulted in more significant engagement with project plans. The project team acknowledge that this process is still only possible in pockets of the council, rather than creating a wider cultural shift towards co-production, but identify this as a positive start to a longer-term journey.

Whilst the two council-led sites were redeveloped by council contractors, on the Helston site, the community carried out the work themselves. The project team highlight that all three green spaces have been improved, but the improvements in Helston were noted to have been more significant.

*Coronation Park, Helston – before intervention (bottom left) and after intervention (bottom right)*





**The City Conversation – Building Place Based  
Partnerships for Inclusive Growth in Liverpool**

# The City Conversation – Building Place Based Partnerships for Inclusive Growth in Liverpool



## What was the background to the project?

The City Conversation took place in Clubmoor Ward, a neighbourhood in Liverpool that has experienced long term deprivation. The project used a participatory approach to community engagement to better understand localised issues and how to design more effective public services in response to these. The project aligned with the community partner's existing work, which focused on updating their own plans to reflect the needs of the area.

The project was guided by the following objectives:

- to strengthen connections and trust between the collaborative partners and local community to better understand residents' priorities
- to pioneer co-creation methodologies with disadvantaged communities
- to engage 60 residents and introduce a different conversation with communities that focuses upon prevention and early intervention
- to gather data and intelligence to inform and shape future public services in Liverpool
- to build local capacity through training 20 community researchers
- to deliver 6 citizen focus groups and 2 community workshops
- to evaluate the approach and disseminate learning across the UK and beyond

## Who did they partner with?

Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place (The University of Liverpool) which '*is an interdisciplinary research institute focusing on the development of sustainable and inclusive cities and city regions*'.

Liverpool City Council.

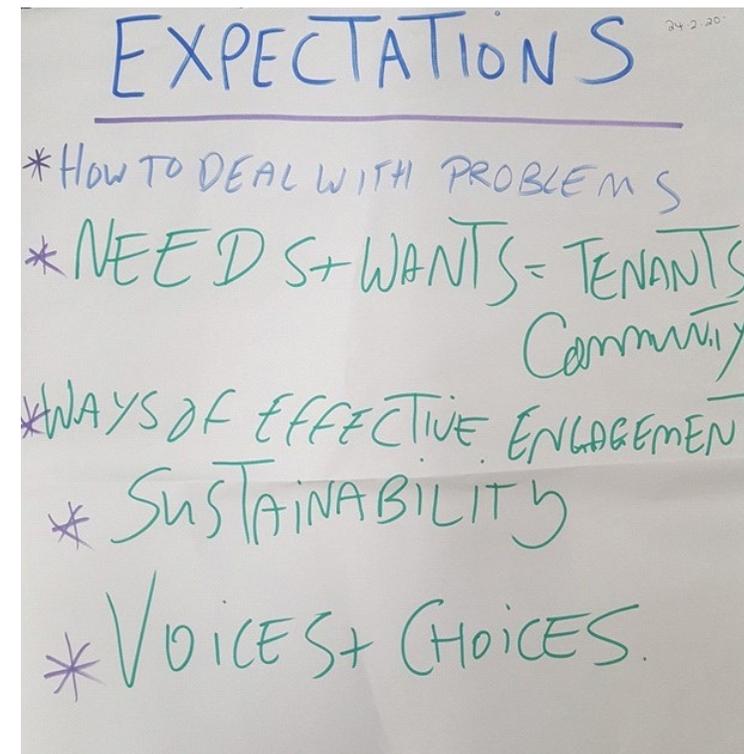
MyClubmoor Partnership Board in Liverpool which '*aims to create a network of committed, active, inspirational people working together towards raising aspirations and making Clubmoor the best that it can be.*'

## What did they do?

A steering group made up of representatives from Liverpool City Council, MyClubmoor Partnership Board, The University of Liverpool, and Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services was set up from the start of the project. The steering group played a key role in designing the research as well as engaging with challenges arising as the project progressed.

The project recruited and trained 23 community researchers, including local residents, members of community organisations and public service groups. The project utilised an assets based approach and methods to engage with Clubmoor residents through surveys and one-to-one interviews. This aspect of the project was most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which required surveys and interviews to be conducted online or over the phone. This led to significantly lower responses than had been predicted through face-to-face methods.

As part of the project, two practitioner workshops were carried out to share the data collected from the community research. These workshops targeted people from key services operating within the Clubmoor area, including representatives from Citizens Advice, housing associations, local health services, the local authority and the police.



Training session for community researchers

# The City Conversation – Building Place Based Partnerships for Inclusive Growth in Liverpool



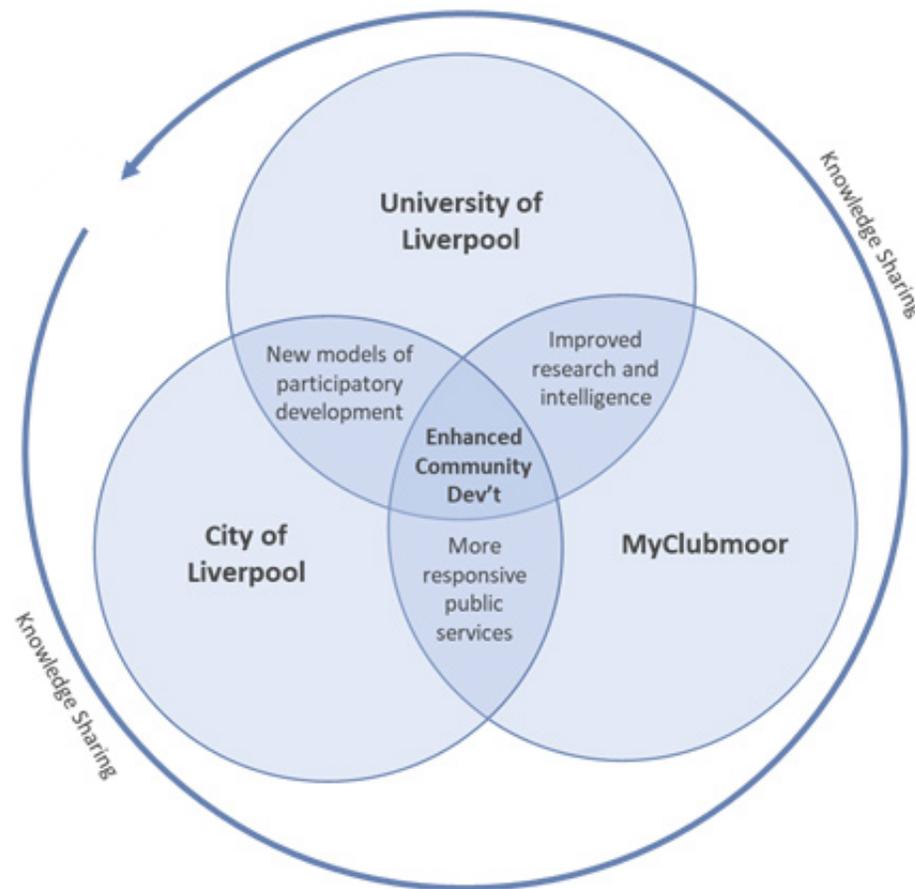
## What were the key reflections/ learning?

This project highlighted the importance of employing a place-based lens when working with specific geographical communities. In identifying key people to engage in the research, the project team found that there were individuals who sat outside of the official boundaries of the Clubmoor Ward who played vital roles in the community. Additionally, in developing the project it became apparent that residents had different geographical understandings of what defined the Clubmoor area:

*‘There were a couple of people who were dotted around the edges who thought they were Clubmoor and we couldn’t say, you know, you can’t participate, because they were active in the area.’*

When reflecting on the learning from this project the University of Liverpool team identified the importance of working with a community organisation on something in which they were already invested. In the case of MyClubmoor, this was the aim of updating their own organisational plan to reflect the needs of the community.

The following figure is taken from the final project report and captures the intersection of interests of the different partners, with Enhanced Community Development at the centre, a key priority for all of the partners.



The project had close ties with the city council with representatives sitting on the steering group, attending the practitioner workshops and taking on community researcher roles. In reflecting on the successes of this project, the University of Liverpool team highlighted how this level of engagement from Liverpool City Council was perceived very positively by the Clubmoor community and has led to improved relationships between residents and the city council. Residents reported feeling that the city council were better at listening to their needs and that they had a clearer relationship with specific council representatives for future engagement:

*‘The link to the council was viewed really positively by Clubmoor, partly because they now had a name to contact who they could follow-up on other matters, so it was more important for them probably than with the university.’*

Lastly, the team reflected on the importance of funding going directly to the Clubmoor area and how this built a greater sense of participation and engagement with the EPPE project:

*‘I think that some of the money that went to Clubmoor was a positive thing, and...I am sure it was a bit of a positive hook as well, as it helped build some sustainability into their work.’*

# The City Conversation – Building Place Based Partnerships for Inclusive Growth in Liverpool



## What were the outcomes?

This project brought about outcomes for the University of Liverpool and the community partners, as well as creating wider outputs.

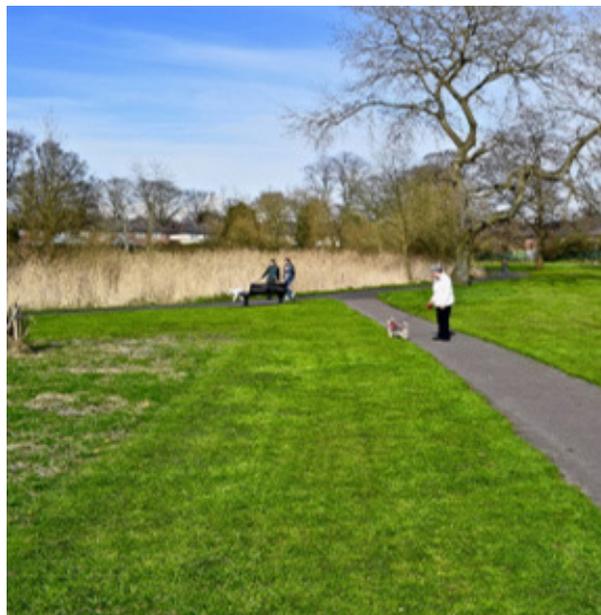
The methodological approach employed in this research has led the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place to seek more opportunities to involve a variety of local stakeholders in the research process. The University of Liverpool are replicating the methods used in this project across other research happening within Liverpool City Region.

Both the Clubmoor community and Liverpool City Council representatives have developed skills in research that are intended to inform future activities. MyClubmoor intend to build on their community research training as a way of continuing to listen to, and report on, the needs of the area. Similarly, representatives from Liverpool City Council witnessed the benefits of carrying out engaged research with target communities.

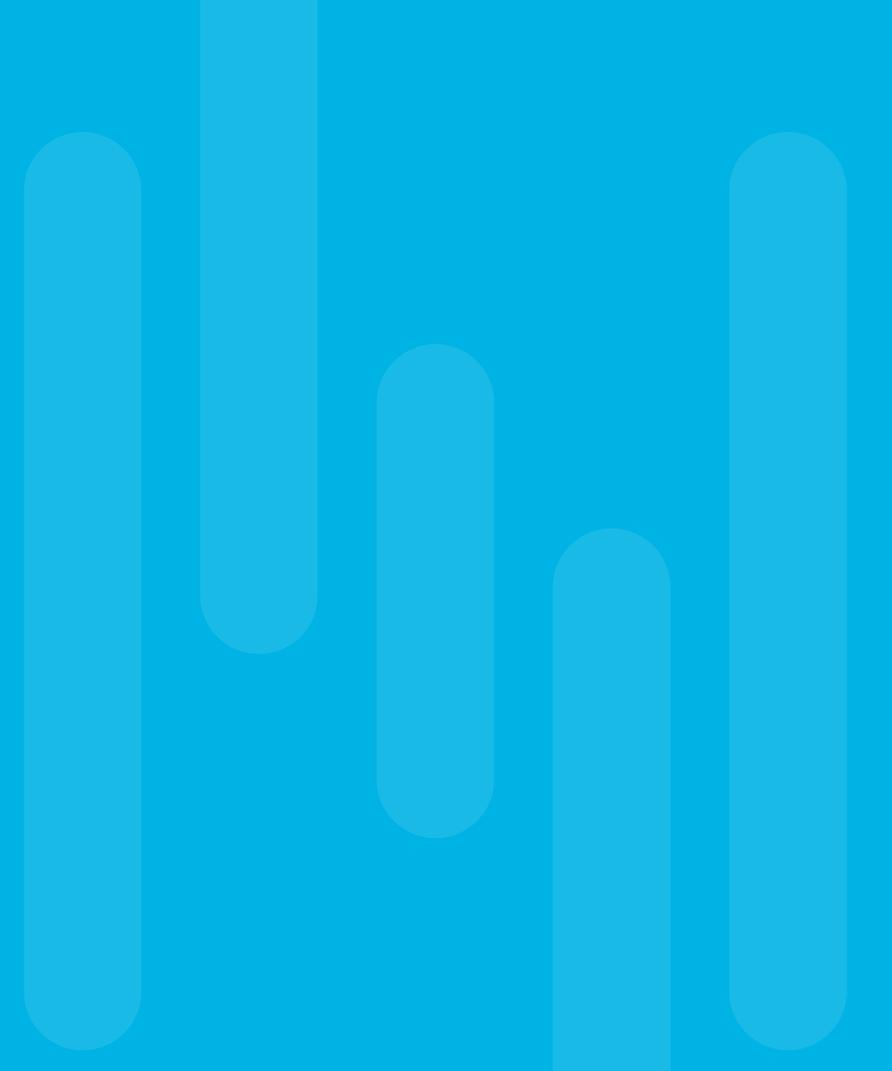
The listening activities identified a list of localised issues and concerns that could be addressed through public policy. The insights gained from the standpoint of local residents was seen as a strength and something that

might not have been achieved through standard research practices. Additionally, the community expressed feeling a closer connection with Liverpool City Council and increased confidence that they can raise issues at a city council level and that they will be listened to.

Finally, an unexpected output from this project was the creation of a community research toolkit, designed to inform people who are seeking to carry out community-led research. The toolkit was widely distributed across the city to both public and community organisations.



*The best things about Clubmoor are the support for green spaces, residents and the NHS during the Covid-19 pandemic*



**Developing Community Co-researchers to Investigate  
Air Quality, Health and Well-being in Brunswick**

# Developing Community Co-researchers to Investigate Air Quality, Health and Well-being in Brunswick



## What was the background to the project?

Brunswick (in the ward of Ardwick) is a council-led regeneration area in Manchester and is amongst the top 10% most deprived areas in the UK. The project built on concerns over air quality, raised by residents in a previous ESRC funded collaboration between The University of Manchester and S4B, a housing association. As with many low-income areas, Brunswick is disproportionately affected by poor air quality, and this project sought to work with communities to find inclusive ways of addressing and responding to this.

The project was guided by the following aims:

- to work with communities to identify strategic priorities for air quality
- to develop and test ways of working with communities to train, offer equipment and support them to address air quality in their area
- to share learning on community engaged approaches to addressing poor air quality with researchers and policy makers

## Who were the project partners?

The University of Manchester (interdisciplinary team).

S4B is a housing association who are co-ordinating the council-led regeneration of the Brunswick area (they have a community liaison officer who was part funded in the bid).

An artist practitioner with experience of working with The University of Manchester (and a selection of their artist peers).

## What did they do?

Community researchers – interview training (offered at different times during the project).

Workshops using air quality monitors.

Workshops at an allotment, school and women's group - working with artists, e.g. screen printing, creative mapping and badge making.



Print created by  
Year 6 pupils



# Developing Community Co-researchers to Investigate Air Quality, Health and Well-being in Brunswick



## What were the outcomes?

This project generated a range of outcomes at community, policy and university scales.

Through the workshops, participants created a range of screen-printed art works, which have been exhibited in the community.

Members of the community attended training in how to use air quality monitors to develop a better understanding of what is happening in their local area.

The community were involved in imagining what would need to change to improve air quality in the area, which has led on to an additional partnership with Manchester City Council, S4B, and the wider Brunswick community, to carry out a targeting study of the specific barriers to active travel in the ward. The partnership is seeking funding to continue to transform this learning into action.

Through this funding programme, the University of Manchester has developed a strong place connection, getting to know the different partners in the area and being able to think strategically about how to develop these relationships going forward.

In addition, the university have started engaging with a different area in Manchester, to integrate the learning from the EPPE project into a regeneration project before the project begins. This links in with the university's current work on their civic agreement, ensuring they are rooting their civic focus within the context of their local area.

Additionally, the learning around how to best work in partnership with communities to address poor air quality has informed future projects in other areas of Manchester.

Finally, this project led to the creation of a number of policy advice documents. This includes one on how you should work with communities, which has since been picked up and raised as a question in parliament.

*Community allotment and orchard*





# **Bradford Community Connectors: Shaping Research into Healthcare Improvement**

# Bradford Community Connectors: Shaping Research into Healthcare Improvement



## What was the background to the project?

The 'Bradford Community Connectors' project took place in Bradford city centre in an area of multiple deprivation. This area sits in stark contrast to the University of Bradford campus, which it is positioned alongside.

The primary aim of this project was:

- to pilot a creative enquiry engagement method to increase interaction with health research and innovation in an area of multiple deprivation in Bradford, focusing on people who are seldom heard and seldom contribute to our thinking about research

## Who were the project partners?

The University of Bradford.

NIHR Yorkshire & Humber Patient Safety Translational Research Centre is based in Bradford, 'delivering research to make healthcare safer'.

The Millside Centre 'is a new community centre based in the heart of Bradford serving vulnerable people in our locality'.

Ministry of Others (socially engaged artists).

## What did they do?

Observations and conversations with community centre users (42), and follow-up interviews (20) - all carried out by community connector.

Artist created a 'health treasure box' with participants. They created creative care packages, as a way of keeping in touch with people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Designed and developed a portal for people to continue their engagement and to be involved in shaping/influencing health research.



*Health treasure boxes used to maintain connection with participants during the Covid-19 pandemic*

# Bradford Community Connectors: Shaping Research into Healthcare Improvement



## What were the key reflections/learning?

The project highlighted the importance of taking a place-based approach to look at who is missing from conversations around health research. Bradford is a diverse city, yet the project team recognised that there is a tendency to involve white British and South Asian communities, whilst other ethnic minority groups are seldom engaged. Understanding this informed the choice of project partners, choosing a community centre who were inclusive of a broader representation of Bradford's population.

The University of Bradford reflected on the importance of setting aside time to build relationships between partners at the beginning. The dynamics of bringing together community centre staff, artists and academic partners inevitably brings challenges, as well as all the significant benefits of local knowledge and established trust (community centre), creative ways of exploring difficult challenges (artists), and the analytical skills and connections to feed learning into wider conversations (universities and research institutes). When reflecting on the project process, The University of Bradford team spoke about the importance of *'setting aside time to rehearse the 'what ifs''*, giving space to the different partners to consider their roles and to understand their expectations. This is part of recognising and responding to the process of co-creating with different partners, recognising that each partner is distinct and will have established ways of working which may diverge from

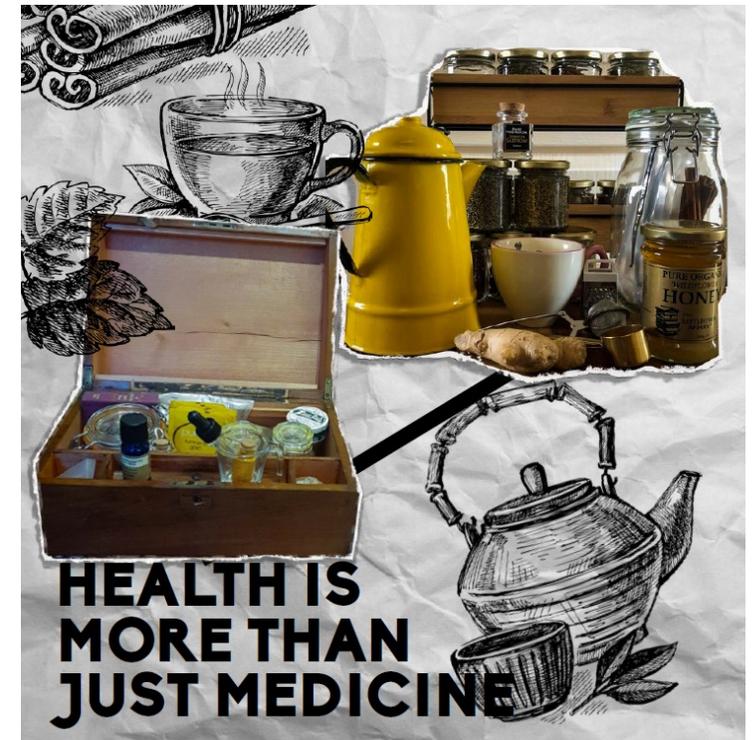
other partners. This emerged in the relationship between the community centre manager, who is responsible for providing detail on a programme of activities to local residents, and the socially engaged artist, who is used to working in a more emergent and unstructured way. Whilst raising some initial challenges, the outcome of this partnership was hugely beneficial to the project and provided important learning for the whole team.

This project highlighted the importance of safeguarding and training for artist investigators working in communities. Collaborative projects like this need to engage with the wider considerations of participatory ethics. The artists become frontline workers within the communities and this raises interesting questions around *'how to make sure that the person has the right support around them, whether they're an artist on any other sort of practitioner, and how that can be boundaried'*.

This important reflection feeds into wider discussions on how to work across disciplines.

The nature of this funding programme highlighted some important learning around the way universities partner with community organisations. The EPPE programme enabled some funding to go into building the capacity of the community centre by opening up connections to other people and organisations within the community. This was important in broadening the research conversation, but also in creating longer term impact for people living in the area. This may sometimes fall outside the focus of the project, for example, by providing funds

to build the community organisation's resilience, but has a long-term mutual benefit of supporting the community centre's day to day activity, challenging funding inequalities between universities and communities, and developing effective research outcomes.



Picture of the 'health tool kit' from the final graphical report

# Bradford Community Connectors: Shaping Research into Healthcare Improvement



## What were the outcomes?

The project brought about a range of outcomes for the community, university and wider health research sector.

At a community level, the project opened up important conversations about health and wellbeing in the area, and provided a space for people to share their experiences. The project was orientated toward listening to people who were often excluded from conversations about health. Additionally, this project sought to prioritise these voices in health research and explore ways in which the community, as well as broader Bradford city residents, could continue to engage in health research through the creation of a web portal.

The project closely aligned with the community centre's existing priorities and the learning will continue to inform the work of the centre.

The local photographer brought in to capture the images for the final graphical report was keen to continue to work with the people they had met in the community. They secured Arts Council funding to run follow-on photography workshops with seven of the EPPE project participants. The outputs from these workshops were exhibited in a city gallery, empowering residents to share their stories and experiences with a wider audience.

This project also had a significant impact on the University of Bradford, who already have a strong civic focus. The learning from this project was presented to the Deputy Vice-Chancellors and, following on from the EPPE project, the university team have presented a proposal for how to embed and increase community engaged research going forward. This proposal is to invest in training researchers, create a community of practice, and further build and maintain relationships with local community organisations across the University of Bradford. The aim of this proposal is to support community co-production at the heart of the university activities.

Finally, this project acted as a stimulus for wider conversations with university groups and NHS partners involved in health research. These groups came together to share what they believe is needed to build a practice of co-production. Key action points included: practical skills, development, for example, training for researchers in safeguarding when working with communities, facilitation skills, and funding and project design considerations. This includes ensuring an appropriate and relevant offer for the people getting involved, particularly when working with more marginalised people.

*The University of Bradford (blue building) seen from The Millside Centre (foreground)*





# Raising Community Voices in Future Health Research in Leicester



# Raising Community Voices in Future Health Research in Leicester

## What was the background to the project?

The project engaged four areas of Leicester that experience multiple deprivations, collaborating with communities to identify health priorities in order to shape future engagement activities as well as informing future research.

Employing a participatory approach, the project was guided by three objectives:

- to identify how UoL/UHL can better engage citizens from different backgrounds and places in the co-production of knowledge in ways attuned to the power dynamics involved in this engagement
- to build on the above, co-develop place-based priorities for research into health and wellbeing in key disadvantaged areas in Leicester
- to lay the foundations for a longer-term programme of meaningful and enduring UoL/UHL engagement with local communities in health/inequalities research and targeted policy development

## Who did they partner with?

University of Leicester (UoL).

University Hospitals Leicester (UHL) .

Citizens UK who are *'made up of hundreds of member organisations who are committed to taking action together for social justice and the common good'*.

Aakash Odedra Company, a community-based dance company that *'exists to deliver exceptional creative experiences...to help create a society that is happier and healthier through dance'*.

## What did they do?

The project was deliberately designed to adapt to fit with the community. As such, collaborating with community researchers became the primary approach.

Three community researchers, who were women of colour, engaged over 50 community members through interviews and engagement activities.

**Raising community voices**  
in future health research

Funded by:

### WHO ARE WE?

 **Dr. Furaha Asani**  
Project Critter  
 **Dr. Sonal Bhavsar**  
Community Researcher  
 **Pamela Campbell-Morris**  
Community Researcher  
 **Raheema Caratella**  
Community Organiser  
 **Prof. Jason Hughes**  
Academic Lead  
 **Prafulla Modi**  
Community Researcher  
 **Dr. Marie Nugent**  
Public Engagement Manager  
 **Rebecca Pritchard**  
Patient & Public Involvement Manager

### WHAT DID WE DO?

**We wanted to find out:**

- How can future research listen to the needs of our communities?
- What do Leicester's communities think are important priorities in supporting health and wellbeing?

**1** 

**We trained and recruited Leicester-based community researchers**

**2** 

**Community researchers spoke to their community members to identify priority areas for future health research.**

### WHAT DID WE FIND?

**We identified 10 future health research priority areas.** The community members our team spoke with want to see:

-  **Clearer COVID-19 communication** and support.
-  **Improve mental health support** and reduce stigma.
-  **Improve sexual health awareness** for all ages.
-  **More respect for, and collaboration with, traditional medicines/healing practices**
-  **Stop using 'BAME'** and be more specific when referring to different groups.
-  **Improve the dietary and nutritional information** available in different cultural contexts.
-  **Better support for loneliness affecting older adults.**
-  **Reduce the high rates of maternal fatality in Black women.**
-  **Focused research and support on diseases** such as Lupus, Diabetes, Prostate Cancer, Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and Sickle Cell Trait (SCT).
-  **Provide more pop-up health checks and social activities that support health** in local community centres

Project collaborators:







# Raising Community Voices in Future Health Research in Leicester

## What were the key reflections/learning?

The project team embedded flexibility and adaptability into all aspects of their approach. The methodology was deliberately agile, but the academic team also embodied a willingness to learn and adapt as they went through the project process. As such, the project report and interview highlighted the learning in action that happened by going through the project process together with the community.

At the beginning of the engagement activity, Citizens UK led a training programme that was attended by all the project partners. The academic partners attended as participants rather than co-facilitators and this was identified as vital in establishing more equitable power relations between academic and community partners. By attending the training programme as participants, the academic partners positioned themselves equally as

‘newcomers’ in a shared community of practice. The relationships between all partners was a key aspect of this project. Academic partners reflected on how *‘the relationships got very rapidly reconfigured as it went through. It wasn’t like a pre-baked set of relationships’*. The team recognised how ensuring the relationships developed alongside the project took time and deliberate attention, and required them to demonstrate to the community how and why this project was different to other, potentially less collaborative, research they may have previously experienced:

*‘It took a long time to get to a point where it felt different, at the start it was like “we’ve (community members) been here, what’s different about this”, and what was key was going in there not with a clear sense of actually what we wanted to get out. We wanted to learn in the broadest sense what meaningful and enduring*

*engagement looked like, we wanted to learn about the health priorities of different places (...) but it was really quite flexible, agile, exploratory. I think once that was communicated, that we were actually interested and we weren’t quite sure what we wanted to find out, that was already slightly different, but also the sense that this was part of a longer-term project.’*

Similarly, maintaining a level of openness in the project methodology enabled the community researchers to have a greater sense of control over how they structured and fed back on their engagement work. Academic partners described how important it was for this to be led by the community researchers – saying:

*‘You know your communities best, you will know how to engage with them most effectively, and it’s up to you to decide and tell us how you can best capture that knowledge and share that back with us.’*





# Raising Community Voices in Future Health Research in Leicester

## What were the key reflections/learning? cont.

This project also took significant steps in challenging institutional practices and advocating for processes and systems that contribute more widely to the university's public engagement work. Early in the project, the academic partners identified the importance of finding a mechanism through which the community researchers could be fully integrated into the research team, including being paid through the university for their time. This meant negotiating with HR and recruitment, to provide short term contracts that recognised the specific skills and expertise community researchers contributed to the project. This proved challenging:

*'It wasn't perfect, it wasn't an easy process to go through, it delayed the ability for us to make a start on actually doing the listening work. But I think they were important hoops to try and jump through and negotiate. And we now have an outline of recommendations for how people can be more appropriately paid to be part of research projects from community settings.'*

Finally, the project provided many opportunities for learning and development within the academic partnerships. The centralised nature of the funding call supported an interdisciplinary team from across UoL and UHL. At the end of the project, members of the team reflected on how this brought interesting challenges around how to manage tensions between different

professional approaches. These tensions reflect bigger challenges of participation, equitability and inclusion within health research and grappling with these became important not just to this project but to the wider research of the institutions.

*'Sometimes the conversations we were having, about the different contexts in which you might get certain behaviours and therefore different kinds of disease prevalences and sometime linking those lifestyle and behaviours to ethnicity, and of course having conversations around this, we had partners involved in the work that come from a medicalised perspective that actually, quite understandably, clash with people who are advocating for taking a bit more of a de-colonised approach to how we talk about this work. These were tensions that absolutely came up, quite rightly. I think this is part of the work that we're doing here, and on reflection (...) I think overall I can look back and say those conversations were had and navigated quite well, it led to tensions but it didn't get in the way of us pulling things together in ways that were effective and everyone could see the value in.'*

## What were the outcomes?

The EPPE project has led to a range of outcomes at community and university scales.

Ten health priorities were identified through this research and these priorities continue to inform the work of the university.

The project led to significant institutional changes which will have a wider impact on how the University of Leicester carry out public engagement with research. Most notably, the project has led to a new standard operating procedure that enables people from communities to be appropriately paid and supported in their community researcher roles.

Following this project, the community researchers were keen to be part of further active listening projects.

The NHS based team shared the EPPE project's model of community-led listening with peers and this model has subsequently been embedded within the next bio-medical research application to NIHR. The approach (created and showcased through the project) has also been more widely adopted by the area's bio-medical research council. Additionally, other health researchers in the Leicester area have come forward to express interest in adopting a community listening model, and the community researchers have been offered additional work on these projects.

# Appendices

# **Appendix 1: Achieving Equity in Place-based Research and Innovation: Summary**



# Achieving Equity in Place-Based Research and Innovation: summary



## Achieving equity in place-based research, innovation and public engagement

### Summary report

September 2019

#### The review explored:

- The state of the art in current thinking and sense making about 'left behind places'
- The key interventions being made, and by whom
- How HEIs / researchers might contribute to the needs of these places and support partners working there
- Potential partners or initiatives that research funders and HEIs may wish to work with in this area

#### Key challenges

The review identified three important challenges in developing effective place-based approaches to research and innovation:

- **Citizen/community-led working:** interventions at a community level often 'do to' communities rather than engage publics actively in their shaping and delivery. There is an important opportunity to develop our understanding of how to conduct research and innovation in citizen-centric ways. This goes beyond the provision of research to communities, to explore how researchers can create the conditions for communities to articulate and address the research innovation challenges they want to address, and build community leadership, resilience, inclusion and equity.
- **Being sensitive to inequality:** viewing communities through the lens of fairness and equity reveals profound structural inequalities, for instance in how place and poverty are inextricably linked. This is compounded by lack of investment in these communities, including lack of research and innovation funding. We need to better understand how research and innovation funding can be targeted to contribute value to places experiencing significant disadvantage.
- **Working in system-oriented and collaborative ways:** the causes and impacts of disadvantage are complex, as are any attempts to address them. Researchers should not 'go it alone' in seeking to address them, but need to work collaboratively with others. There is an opportunity to better embed collaborative practice in research culture, at different geographic scales, and to clarify how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can work more productively with a host of types of organisation committed to achieving social outcomes.

#### Frontiers of policy and practice

The review identified the following as being particularly productive areas to focus future place-based research and innovation policy and practice:

- Co-production, and other 'engaged' research methodologies such as participatory action research
- Activity to build capacity and trust
- Work that strengthens regional or local partnerships for research equity

[View a full copy of the report.](#)

## **Appendix 2: List of EPPE Projects**



# List of the funded projects

UNIVERSITY	PROJECT TITLE
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	Formative study to evaluate period poverty among homeless and impoverished women in North-west England
University of Essex	Community Research and Engagement Programme (COURAGE)
University of Plymouth	The Pop-Up Centre for Health Technology
University of Stirling	Re-energising Clackmannanshire: engaging communities around energy for a healthier, wealthier and greener future
University of York	Stories in the Sky: digital place making
City, University of London/ University of Essex	Journeys and Turning Points: Prolific Offenders on the Andover Estate
Edinburgh Napier University	The Seven Kingdoms of Wester Hailes: Developing Researchers in Place
The Open University	BG Reach: Blaenau Gwent Residents Engaging in Arts, Community and Heritage
Rothamsted Research	Delivering a community supported vision for achieving net zero carbon targets within a livestock farmed environment - impacts on the landscape, communities and livelihoods in the Ruby Country, Devon
Swansea University	Copperopolis: Place-making, Public Engagement & Heritage-led Regeneration in the Lower Swansea Valley
University of Hertfordshire	Building a health and wellbeing research partnership with children and their families living in deprived neighbourhoods in Stevenage
University of Manchester	Developing community co-researchers to investigate air quality, health and well-being in Brunswick

UNIVERSITY	PROJECT TITLE
University of the West of Scotland	Evidencing the impact of cultural regeneration on poverty: A collaborative approach
University of Wolverhampton	CAPTURE: Community Action-research Partnership Training University Research and Engagement
University of Bradford	Bradford community connectors: shaping research into healthcare improvement
University of Leicester	Raising community voices in future health research
Teesside University	TV Lab: establishing a partnership approach to intra- and inter-community engagement
University of Cambridge	Using data to improve health: are the publics engaged?
Staffordshire University	How to 'Keep Talking': sustainable community research teams in deprived areas
University of Exeter	Growing communities through nature
Keele University	Social Innovation through University Partnership (SIT-UP]: Developing a Keele Deal for Social Inclusion
Museum of London Archaeology	Evidence from the Edge: materialising poverty present and past
Aston University	Engaging local citizens in Aston's research
University of Liverpool	The City Conversation – Building Place Based Partnerships for Inclusive Growth
Manchester Metropolitan University	100 Year Street

# **Appendix 3: EPPE Programme Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework Summary**

19th December 2019



# EPPE Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework Summary

We developed a MEL framework to:

- Capture relevant information to answer our key evaluation questions
- Help us to reflect on the project as it is underway, and ensure that learning is captured and used to improve practice
- Help us to monitor if and how the programme is delivering against its objectives
- Inform the development of a future funding call relating to place based engagement
- Ensure all project partners are aware of their responsibilities for evaluation, and to provide consistency in how we evaluate the programme as a whole

## Programme Objectives

- **Initiate or enhance partnerships** between research and community partner(s) / organisation(s) in areas of the UK experiencing significant disadvantage, defined according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, where there is an opportunity to engage with research and innovation
- **Align with the objectives** of other place-based funding and policy work in recognising the role of 'place' in research and innovation
- **Demonstrate collaborative engagement** with research and innovation through research organisations, communities and partner organisations, investing in new or tried-and-tested co-production methodologies
- Learn from these approaches and **utilise that learning** to build collaborative capacity that supports productive interactions between research organisations and communities

## Anticipated impacts

### Long term impacts

- Better informed research and innovation aligned with societal needs

### Outcome areas

- Projects:
  - Building relationships in areas of disadvantage
  - Being guided by societal need
- Programme:
  - Developing good practice in place based approaches
  - Laying strong foundations for future programme of activity



# EPPE Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework Summary

We considered three categories of impacts that could arise from the programme (drawing on the NCCPE’s work to review REF 2014 case studies which looked at the impacts of engaged research<sup>8</sup>):

- **Understanding:** stimulating curiosity, developing understanding and knowledge, building empathy. Change how people think
- **Capability:** building individual and collective capacity and skills, strengthening relationships and networks. Changing what people do
- **Innovation:** improving decision making and the ways things work at an organisational, regional or national level. Changes to policies and practices. Changing how the world works

The table offers examples of the types of impact that might be achieved through the EPPE programme against each of the categories.

## Understanding



Stimulating curiosity, understanding and empathy

## Capability



Building capacity and strengthening networks

## Innovation



Improving decision making and the way things work

### Understanding: Changing how people think

- Universities and communities value working together and understand how to do it well
- More understanding of universities/communities

### Capability: Changing what people do

- Stronger networks between community organisations and universities
- Researchers engage communities with their research
- Community members and researchers develop new skills

### Innovation: Changing how the world works

- Research and innovation involves more diverse participants
- Research agendas are informed by publics
- Universities develop long term strategic relationships with community organisations to do/develop engagement work

<sup>8</sup>[NCCPE Review of the REF, 2014](#)

# EPPE Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework Summary



The NCCPE worked with the project teams and UKRI to create a set of questions to inform project evaluations.

We then explored the approaches to answering those questions that teams could employ.

The questions are detailed on the right

1. What are the key factors that influence the effectiveness of this type of activity? Scale? Geography? Discipline? Context? Experience of collaborative working? How long the partners have been working together? What is the influence of these things on the project processes and outcomes?
2. What are the expectations of community partners/ researchers for the programme
3. What are the experiences of community partners/ researchers involved in the programme
4. What have all the partners learned about working together
5. What are specific opportunities and challenges of developing engagement with communities living in areas of high deprivation, and what are effective approaches to developing work in this area?
6. What has been the legacy from the project? *Connected Communities typology: Products, People, Networks, Concepts, Institutions, and The Research Landscape*
7. What works in terms of sustainability for research organisations and community organisations working together
8. What's informed the project teams approach? Literature? Partners? Experience?
9. To what extent does a focus on research and innovation affect the development of community university partnership work.
10. What could a second phase of this programme look like – in terms of timescale, ambition, outcomes, and funding?



The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) is internationally recognised for its work supporting and inspiring universities to engage with the public.

We work to change perspectives, promote innovation, and nurture and celebrate excellence. We also champion meaningful engagement that makes a real and valued difference to people's lives.

The NCCPE is supported by the UK Higher Education Councils, Research Councils UK and Wellcome, and has been hosted by the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England since it was established in 2008.

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