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At the start of last year's Newsletter we commented that there would be big political and policy change in 2010 – and indeed there was. These are times of massive change. In 2011 those we work with face real challenges – these are tough times and they will get tougher; we know the motivation for change is rolling back the state through the shrinking of public services and reducing the central mechanisms of quality assurance and standards.

It is already becoming evident what this will mean for young people, disabled people & service users, older people and many of the other groups the Centre works in partnership with. Many independent commentators (for example JRF) and many media reports (Community Care, Children and Young People Now, The Guardian) consider that they will be most effected and come off badly as a result of the current cuts in services and benefits.

In this context, we at the Centre need to explore how to apply our well established principles for practice, to develop new and more effective ways of ensuring people can have their voices heard and have influence on decisions that affect their lives to ensure their rights are not reduced and the quality of their lived lives is at least maintained.



Raksha, Jennie and Thilo in the CSA office.

We hope the work we have planned for the coming year will indeed do this through the development of existing work and partnerships as well as the development of new ones. Below you can read about our new and exciting project on Amplified Communities, as well as the project with the Centre for Citizenship Participation and the WRVS looking at how to enhance older people's wellbeing; and our continued work on young people's participation and public & patient involvement in research, including our work with young people as partners in research.

Particularly at this time, we are seeking to maintain our work internationally; we continue to develop our work overseas and whilst for the time being, our work in Eastern Europe has come to an end, we are developing new partnerships in South Africa. Our work in other countries is important to us as it both enables us to develop our practice further in new circumstances but also brings knowledge, sharing of ideas and perspectives to all that we do.

The work of the Centre for Social Action is all based on a commitment to social justice through participation, we are currently, within this overarching aim, working on three interrelated themes:

- communities & diversity & community resources,
- participation in research with both PPI (public and patient involvement) and young people as researchers,
- person centred support.

We undertake such work both in the UK and internationally. This Newsletter is divided into sections on the above themes.

RightSpace

RightSpace overarches all the themes of the Centre's work. It brings together conversation, reflection and practice to explore how we can all continue to promote social justice for children and young people and motivate us to do more (<http://www.rightspace.org.uk>). On the site there are video clips from a range of people talking about their experiences, including Harry and Susie, two of the Centre's Associate Research Assistants.

We are planning a national event on **Tuesday 19th April 2011**. This event will take place at the Electric Works in Sheffield, providing opportunity for discussions with like minded people and **Dr. Maggie Atkinson, Children's Commissioner for England** will be speaking. If you're passionate about promoting the human rights of children and young people then this event is for you. You can register for the event by emailing Fiss Shelton (felicity.shenton@durham.gov.uk) or at the **RightSpace** website (<http://www.rightspace.org.uk>).

Communities & diversity & community resources

We have a number of projects working with communities members exploring how communities are made up and how they are connected and communicate.

The Amplified Resilient Community

We are embarking in an exciting new project and exploration around the use of social media in order to connect communities, enhance social capital and build community resiliency: the **Amplified Resilient Community (ARC)**. This project stems out of our commitment to social justice through participation, our research into social capital and the insights gained through “Amplified Leicester” funded in 2009 by NESTA (we have written about this in the last newsletter).



Thilo and the Amplified Leicester team.

The good news is that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation will be funding the project for the next two years.

ARC recognises that social mobility and moving out of poverty are an urgent priority within which personal resilience, as well as community resilience, will be needed to manage the difficulties associated with financial and social exclusion. We believe that the key to developing resilience is to become amplified. Amplified individuals and communities use participatory digital media to expand and extend their capacities to sense, collaborate and generate new ideas and solutions. Central to community amplification is forming effective national and international networks in order to access and share resources. Our understanding of the ‘amplified individual’ is based on research conducted by the Institute for the Future, Palo Alto, California.

The ‘Amplified Resilient Community’ project will tap into existing networks and resources in two neighbourhoods in Leicester and will facilitate communities to enhance their resilience. This will be done by developing digital media skills, having talks and workshops by leading experts in the field,



Thilo and Professor Sue Thomas answering questions.

and accessing existing national and international community networks. The project seeks to develop amplified communities with the capacities that will help them become adaptive and flexible under the current constraints and uncertainties. It will pioneer community resilience through the use of social media and research whether amplification contributes to community resilience as a way to move towards new solutions for life improvement.

Thilo Boeck had the chance to travel to San Francisco where he met with people and organisations which use social media and online platforms to enhance community resiliency. This was a truly mind enhancing experience and an opportunity to forge new international contacts which will be important for the project. It is worth looking at the work of:

Howard Rheingold, one of the leading critics, writers and teachers on the cultural, social and political implications of modern communication media.

www.rheingold.com **www.smartmobs.com**

Andrea Saveri, consultant and influential thinker on collective action, platforms for enabling resilience, and amplified communities

www.andreasaveri.com

Sean Ness and Jake Dunagan from the Institute for the Future

www.iftf.org

Susan Tenby and Megan Keane from TechSoup

www.techsoup.org **www.techsoupglobal.org**

Joe Lambert, Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Digital Storytelling

www.storycenter.org **www.storymapping.org**

The ARC project is a partnership between the Centre for Social Action and the Institute of Creative Technologies (IOCT) at De Montfort University.



Twitter: **#arcleic** Website: **www.amplifiedleicester.com**

Equality and diversity

The Centre for Social Action has been commissioned by The Leicestershire Equalities Forum (LSEF) to develop a **Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland sub-regional needs analysis** around their equality and diversity strategy. This will be a research project that takes into account the current need for more targeted public services and to develop a framework to best assess how to avoid that already vulnerable communities becoming more excluded. Thilo and Jennie will work on this project.

Participation in research



Supporting public and patient involvement in research – Raksha's reflection on her work

2010 has been a full year! For the past year I have had a dual role, role one being the regions lead for patient and public involvement (PPI) in research but role two was set up to develop the Leicester Northampton and Rutland Research Engaging with Patients and the Public forum (LNR REP/P).

Workshop on sharing experiences

Whilst wearing my RDS-EM (Research Design Service-East Midlands) hat back in March I ran a bespoke workshop for NHS Lincolnshire looking into the experiences of people and patients who have got involved in research. Eight service users gave a unique insight into their before, during and after research experiences. The workshop highlighted many issues behind people's motivations for getting involved in the first place. The finished report was circulated widely across the National Institute for Health Research and INVOLVE's distribution lists.

Training/Teaching

The demand for our PPI workshops remains high on researchers' agenda's. Three have taken place over the last year. All of which reached maximum capacity. In total around 70 people have attended these workshops across Leicester, Northampton and Nottingham.

Advice Giving

Over the last 12 months I personally offered advice on 27 bids for national funding competitions. These varied from funding stream to funding stream. Some were very NHS service delivery focused whilst others were designed to research an area and show immediate patient benefit.

Staff Training Day

The RDS EM asked Raksha to organise and set up a bespoke PPI staff away day. The purpose of the day was to

1. To equip staff with information on how to do better PPI in research when offering advice to researchers
2. To communicate recent developments and changes in PPI agendas
3. To launch the resources that the RDS has for its staff

Delivery of the event was via a mix of talks given by RDS staff and our regional Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB) panel members, to help identify PPI good practice real examples of research synopses were used to inform practice. From the evaluation forms it is clear that everybody found the day interesting and learned new things about PPI.

Leicester Northampton and Rutland Research Engaging with Patients and Public (LNR REP/P)



See the newly designed logo above!

Over the last 12 months this project has come about in leaps and bounds. We now have a logo (see above) a website www.lnr-rep.org.uk and some clear aims about what we should be prioritising. In particular we are planning on organising some good practice events. One of the events coming up in the early spring is a daylong training event on how to do PPI at bid development, delivery and dissemination stages. It will be a free event for clinicians and researchers to learn about the varied area of patient involvement in trials right through to mental health.

Future

For 2011 I am expecting my post will become a full time RDS post for a year. The LNR REP/P will lead on running two good practice events. These will focus researchers to think about what is useful public and patient involvement in their chosen areas of research. To find out more about Raksha's work visit the CSA website.

Research with young people

The **Associate Research Assistants** (ARA) continue to be an integral part of the Centre. In July 2009 we appointed 6 young people as the first Associate Research Assistants, last year we were able to renew the contracts of Iman, Harry and Susie and also appoint 3 more ARA – Mayuri Chudasama, Pritesh Nathubhai and Ruth Taylor. The three existing ARA were involved throughout the selection process and we had a really strong field. We are really pleased to have been able to make further steps to embedding the ARA posts as part of the Centre.

As an interview panel member in the recruitment process for the post of Associate Research Assistant, I was struck by the exemplary calibre of all the candidates who had been shortlisted for interview. The interview day gave them the opportunity to be judged in a variety of ways e.g. through writing reflections on the process throughout the day, being involved in team activities and speaking to a panel of employees at the university. The diversity of tasks offered gave each candidate the chance to shine.

Harry Carter one of the interviewers

Since then the ARA have undertaken the young people's consultation element in the evaluation of the Leicester **Connexions** courses for young people.

I think the most satisfying thing about this job is that what we do and the research we undertake actually makes a difference and makes a change. This is true with the CXN project as 3 of us, coupled with 2 young people from CXN planned, undertook and evaluated the project to evaluate CXN. This project was good as it was not only our 'creation' but also when we conducted the interviews I got to speak to people with different circumstances and also made me aware of other backgrounds and other peoples situations and how they have overcome them and are still trying to achieve their goals. Also our research will enable Connexions to apply for more funding so more people can benefit from the work that Connexion does – a massive personal reward factor. **Pritesh Nathubhai**



Iman, Mayuri, Susie, Harry, Ruth and Pritesh.

They are currently travelling the country to facilitate group sessions with young people who have been part of the **'People and Place'** project. This is an evaluation of the work at 6 museums looking to increase young people's participation in the museums. The project is lead by Jason Wood of the Youth and Community Division and two other members of the Youth and Community Division are working with the ARA on the field work.

*The People and Place programmes was set up to increase the participation of young people in museums through them constructing exhibitions, carrying out field work and trying to reform museum policies to be more youth friendly. At present our preparation has got as far as finalising the young people's and worker's sessions within museums, looking at what evaluation activities were most fitting, and identifying key questions to ask staff working at the museums. **Harry Carter***

*Another thing I love about this job is when we come together to collate ideas for new projects – most recently the People and Place project we are doing in which we go to different museums and study young people's interactions with them. Not only do we get a lot done in a session but we also have fun whilst doing it and are looking forward to going on site visits with the team. **Pritesh Nathubhai***

For both these projects, the ARA have developed the research questions within the broad framework of the aims and objectives of the project, they also developed the exercises to help the young participants tell them about their experiences through group sessions and interviews, analysed the information and created the key messages and report headings and contributed to the drafting of the report.

The ARA are keen to undertake their own research into young people's understandings of inequality and are seeking funding for this – any ideas for sources of funding gratefully received.

*We have been studying other areas interesting to us, that we can begin research projects on. To this end, we decided to undertake some research on inequalities surrounding young people and how they are perceived in society. So far we have applied for a grant from the Esmee Fairburn Foundation, which if successful, will enable us to continue this research. **Harry Carter***



The ARA at work.

We continue to work on the evaluation of the Howard League's **U R Boss project** (www.howardleague.org/u-r-boss), and have recently submitted a report on their legal service. The focus of the work in the next 12 months will be on young people's participation and the ARA will be part of the team undertaking this work.

Involve conference

Harry, Iman, Susie and Jennie prepared a paper to present at the Involve conference in Nov 2010. Unfortunately Susie could not attend the actual conference. The paper was about the experience of employing young people as researchers from the perspective of the young people and the Director of the Centre for Social Action. The paper was well received and there was good discussion after from the adults and young people attending.

*Iman and I and Jennie went to Nottingham for the INVOLVE Conference on Public Involvement in Health Research, to deliver a session on the employment of young people by the university from a young person's and an adult's perspective. This looked at a range of issues such as structural changes within universities and the reaction of others about our employment. The abstract published in the conference's programme must have been popular as the session attracted a lot of people. During the question and answer session which followed, the delegates were impressed with the good and improving system of employment of young people at De Montfort and one even asked if this approach could be franchised out by the university. **Harry Carter***

CSA's work with young researchers included in Involve publication.

The work the CSA did working with young people as peer researchers for the evaluation of Leicester's Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Strategy has been included as an example in the Dept of Health funded Involve publication 'Turning the pyramid upside down: examples of public involvement in social care research' available from:

http://www.invo.org.uk/pdfs/6822_INVOLVE_SCCS_brochure_WEB.pdf



Harry and Iman at the Involve conference.

Involving Children and Young People in Health and Social Care Research

At the end of 2010 Thilo and Jennie signed a contract with Routledge to edit a book of papers about young people and children in research. We have an excellent group of people who will be writing the chapters. The book should be published in 2012. Watch this space!

Young people's research in South Africa

Hellmüth Weich and Jennie continue to work with a group of five secondary schools in Bloemfontein, South Africa – connecting our themes of young people and research and our international work. The project is lead by Saretjie Musgrave, who was a teacher at one of the schools, and now works for the University of the Free State (UFS). Along with staff from the University of the Free State, Hellmüth and Jennie have provided training and support to the students who are undertaking the research amongst their peers, in their schools and communities to find out more about vulnerable children and how they are supported within their communities. Whilst our involvement has been a small part of this project, we have provided key inputs to support the training in research and to develop the teachers and young people's understanding of how to undertake a research project. We have done this from the UK via Skype and other internet based platforms and resources.

The schools' catchment areas have different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and a range of first languages are spoken – Afrikaans, English, Sesotho and IsiXhosa. Over 150 students have taken part in the project, called **Children who Care**, they have spoken with young people, teachers and adults in the community. They are currently working on the analysis and presentation of the findings. The teacher team describe the work:

Over the past year and a half the learners received training in the ethics, methodology etc. of research and implemented their skills while conducting research in their local community to determine the needs of vulnerable children. They became involved in policy research, formulation and implementation. Teachers and lecturers from the university facilitated the process to ensure the quality of the research due to the sensitivity of the topic. Learners were supported by teachers, community members as well as professionals, while they faced real-live issues allowing them to truly make a difference.

One of the students writes,

"Why should I do the research and not adults? We have more knowledge on how the children is being treated at our age. We may have experienced the problem more than the adults have. The vulnerable children may be around our age therefore we can relate our lives to them. The adults does not know how to handle the problem or situation. Us teenagers will be able to make a difference."

The project has used a range of technologies to support the students learning and facilitate communication between Hellmüth and Jennie in England with the teachers and students. Excitingly this work won the heat in South Africa and came second in the all Africa final for the Microsoft Innovative Teaching Award competition.



This is a group of 180 learners from different schools in a school hall.



Learners are discussing in their groups.



Learners are discussing in their groups.



Young researchers finding information about the mode of transport used to come to school.

Twitter

All the CSA team 'tweet' from time to time. If you want to follow us our twitter names are:



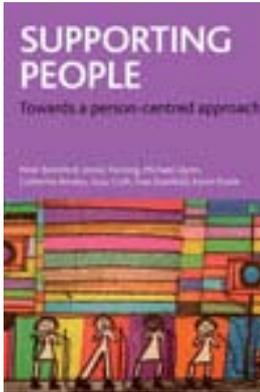
@jenniefleming

@tgboeck

@rpandya1

Person Centred Support

Standards We Expect



The consortium, working together on the Standards We Expect, has been working really hard to finalise all the outputs from this project. Readers of the Centre for Social Action Newsletter will remember that the major output from this research project will be a book – **Supporting People – towards a person centred approach**, being published by Policy Press. This book will discuss the findings of the research project and explores the major policy move to ‘personalisation’ in social care and beyond, from first principles. It does this by focusing on the nature of such person-centred support, the barriers it faces and how these may be overcome, from the key but under-examined perspectives of service users, carers, face-to-face practitioners and

middle managers. The book draws on evidence from a wide range of settings and service user groups in the UK, addressing policy, practice, philosophical and theoretical issues. It will be the first such book building on new knowledge to offer an independent and critical discussion of personalisation and person-centred support – the key policy identified for the future of health and social care – offering guidance for understanding and implementation. The book is also linked with a range of other outputs – there are 27 on-line appendices sharing many of the documents and frameworks created by the project. The consortium has produced an accessible summary of the Supporting People book and also produced 5 further reports:

- **Accessible summary: Supporting People – towards a person centred approach**
- **Person Centred Support: Service users’ guide**
- **Person Centred Support: guide for practitioners**
- **Making Change: a guide to running successful and accessible training**
- **Choices for end of life care**
- **A local change case study**

The book is available from Policy Press directly or other book sellers, both in paper copy and as an e-book. All of reports and appendices will be available from websites of Policy Press www.policypress.co.uk, Shaping Our Lives www.shapingourlives.org.uk and also the CSA <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/csa> the week beginning 16th May 2011.

SupportNet

Since the last Newsletter we have completed the work on the evaluation of SupportNet in Nottingham. SupportNet is working in two areas of Nottingham (Bilborough and Beechdale) with people who live, work and run businesses in the local area, to think together about what type of care people want, now and in the future. A report capturing the learning from SupportNet is available at <http://bit.ly/eLgslR>.

Shaping our Age – Older people's well-being

This project which explores how older people themselves can help each other to improve their health and live well for longer is progressing well.

Last summer we appointed Martin Hoban as the researcher and he is working hard on this project. In Oct last year we had a launch meeting, which was chaired by David Brindle (of the Guardian) and David Behan (Director General of Social Care, Dept of Health) was a key speaker, the launch was attended by over 15 people – older people and representations of organisations concerned with older people's well being. We have recruited a group of people to be the Older People's Reference Group, and they have had their first meeting; this group will take a key role in working with the research team to ensure the research incorporates the knowledge and perspectives of older people themselves.

Currently Martin and a small team of researchers are undertaking the first phase of the consultation with older people to find out about their lives, their well-being and what they see as contributing to it and what they want in place to live well in old age.

For more information visit: <http://www.shapingourage.com>

International work

South Africa

Hellmüth and Jennie are working with members of the Social Work Division on a second project in South Africa. This is an interesting project linking social workers in the NW of England with those in South Africa. The project is a partnership of **Skills for Care (UK) and Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA)** in South Africa

The purpose of this research and exchange project is:

- To bring together a collective of informed professionals to share and exchange ideas and experiences
- To facilitate an interactive system of peer support and action learning forums
- To share, compare and contrast current and best practice models of social work delivery
- To capture the regulatory and training and qualification frameworks including opportunities for continued professional development and transferability of skills, knowledge and experiences between countries, licensing and registration arrangements
- To exchange social work professionals from both countries for a visit to the other country of suggested duration between 2-4 weeks
- To explore and develop other methods of communications to share practice, for example, Skype, video conferencing and Communities of Platform

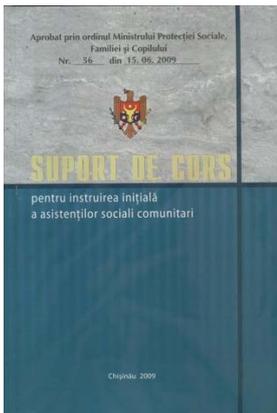
- To record and share the outcomes with relevant stakeholders to inform qualification, regulation and service developments in both countries

The team from DMU are supporting the research element of the project through training, supervision and support. The training was undertaken in UK and using Skype, we linked with the group in South Africa; in this way we were able to develop common understandings of important elements of research such as ethics, information collection, and analysis.

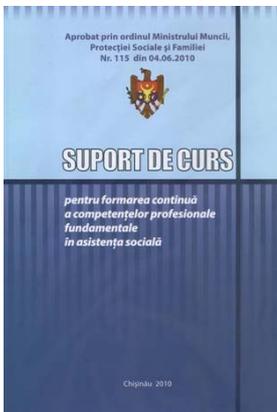
The social workers will work as pairs, with each pair exploring one of the following topics: empowerment, information management systems, safeguarding, multi-disciplinary working, communities/personalisation, training, supervision and caseload management.

Moldova

We have finished our work on the **Support to the Delivery of Effective and Sustainable Social Assistance Services in Moldova**, project with Oxford Policy Management (OPM) and EveryChild Moldova on a DfID/SIDA funded project in Moldova. The project has been working with Moldovan partners to develop the policy and institutional framework to support the delivery of effective and sustainable social assistance services in Moldova. Jennie and Hellmüth finalised their contributions to the training manuals and visited Moldova to run some training the trainers' courses for those in the Ministry and departments who will be delivering the training to cascade out through all the Community Social Assistants in the country.



Initial Training Manual



Continuous Training Manual



Jennie with some of the Moldovan trainers.

This brings to an end (for the moment) of the Centre's work in Eastern Europe and the countries that were part of the former Soviet Union. Since 1991, members of the Centre for Social Action have continually offered support to the development of social care services – most particularly for children and young people in many countries – including Russia, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia Moldova and others.

Commissioning the Centre for Social Action

The Centre for Social Action is always interested in new contracts to do training, research and consultancy with a range of statutory, voluntary, or private sector organisations. All these activities are informed by our social action methodology; so we always aim to work collaboratively with our commissioners and community members to ensure there is full understanding and ownership of the proposed project on the part of all those who will be directly involved in it.

We are experienced in the fields of health, youth work, children and family support, community development and regeneration, social capital, restorative justice and participation and service user involvement.

We can be commissioned to undertake the following services:

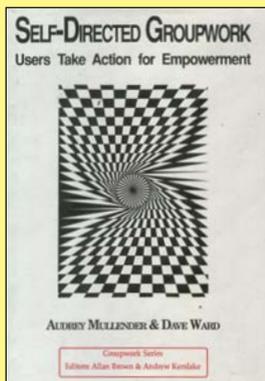
Research and evaluation: we undertake project evaluations and community consultations of all kinds. These often involve training community members and service users to be researchers or information gatherers in their own communities and always aim to ensure ownership and understanding of topics chosen for research on their part. We can also conduct surveys of a particular field in order to produce good practice guides, or conduct audits of existing practice, such as community development work. We also offer training about research and evaluation for organisations and community members (e.g. training for health professionals and service users on participative research).

Training: we work directly with community groups using social action methods to enable them to identify issues important to them and devise action plans to address them. Trainers share their skills with community members and facilitate them to have direct ownership of eventual outcomes. We also offer training to practitioners from all social welfare fields in social action methods, which introduces them to a range of ideas and exercises which can then be used directly in work with their particular community groups, to stimulate greater community involvement and ownership.

Consultancy: we can provide consultancy to various groups, organisations, teams and individuals on setting up services and projects and running groups using social action methods. The social action methodology can be used in a very flexible way to address a wide range of organisational needs.

If you are interested in discussing any of these possibilities then please contact Jennie Fleming at the Centre for Social Action on tel (0116) 257 7873 or jfleming@dmu.ac.uk

New edition of Self Directed Groupwork – examples of social action practice?



Professors Mullender and Ward, the authors of the 1991 Self-Directed Groupwork, have asked Jennie to join them in the creation of a new edition of this seminal publication and we have just signed the contract with Palgrave Macmillan. Whilst the revision is at an early stage, we are seeking examples of practise that put into the principles and process of social action. If you have any group work examples you think could be included, please do get in contact with Jennie (jfleming@dmu.ac.uk)

Publications

Boeck T and Fleming J (2011) 'The Role of Social Capital and Resources in Resilience to Risk' in *Good Practice in Assessing Risk – Current Knowledge, issues and approaches* London: Jessica Kingsley pp 48-65

Fleming J (2010) 'Young people's involvement in research – still a long way to go?' *Qualitative Social Work* May 2010

Fleming Jennie, Ward Dave, Yates Scott (2010) *How to – use a consortium working approach* London: National Children's Bureau

Pandya R (2010) Research involvement: patient's carers and members of the public share experiences, De Montfort University and NHS Lincolnshire, report available on request from rpandya@dmu.ac.uk

Conferences

In October 2010, Thilo Boeck was invited by United Nations Volunteers (UNV) to participate in a Regional Consultation meeting in Turkey. The purpose of the meeting was to help to identify regional and country specific perspectives on issues to be covered by the forthcoming State of the Worlds Volunteerism Report. His contribution focused on the importance of participation in volunteering, the insights gained through our work on social capital and volunteering and faith and volunteering. Both can be found at:

Volunteering and Faith Communities in England

The Impact of Volunteering on Social Capital and Community Cohesion

In November Jennie, Iman Delanius and Harrison Carter attended the Involve conference, **'Public involvement in research: innovation and impact'** in Nottingham UK. They presented a paper titled "Wanted young researchers: employing young people as researchers" describing the employment of young people as Associate Research Assistants from the view of both the ARA and the Director of the Centre for Social Action. The paper was very well received with people complementing the model we have developed.

Raksha also attended the Involve conference and was involved in the running of 2 workshops and presentations:

"Developing a code of ethics for pre-protocol stage" (R Pandya and A Bates)

"A regional approach to PPI" (R Pandya, O'Leary and Richardson)

National Institute for Health Research, Leicestershire Partnership Trust, Leicester Tigers Ground – **"Innovation in Mental Health Research Conference: PPI Expertise in the Dragons Den"** around 120 people were present and engaged with the Dragons Den.

health&life sciences

Centre for Social Action

Working alongside community members, practitioners, managers and policy-makers to achieve social change.



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