



BRADFORD COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

Shaping Research into Healthcare
Improvement Report



10.12.2020

THE PROJECT

This project has been carried out in partnership between the University of Bradford and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Yorkshire and Humber Patient Safety Translational Research Centre, the Ministry of Others and the Millside Centre.



A view of the University of Bradford from the Millside Community Centre. Less than 500 metres in between the two buildings, but worlds apart.

"I suffer from anxiety and I think the 'people centred approach' is a great way to engage individuals who have been marginalized in society to talk more openly about their health needs."

Where people are born, grow up, live and work and their life experiences and hardships all influence how healthy a person is and their health problems.

People's backgrounds and the places they live also affect their experience of using healthcare services and, sometimes, the quality of their care.

People who live in certain areas, such as near the Millside Centre in central Bradford (BD1), on average have lower incomes and poorer health than people who live in other areas.

To improve the health, wellbeing and experiences of health services for communities we need to listen to and understand what matters most to people. People who use services should be involved in the decisions to help improve them and these services. Currently, the voices of people who live in certain places are seldom heard.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the University of Bradford, NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

WHO WE ARE?

The team is a partnership between researchers, artists from the Ministry of Others and a community organisation, the Millside Centre in central Bradford (BD1). The three health researchers are from the University of Bradford and an NHS research organisation, Yorkshire and Humber Patient Safety Translational Research Centre.

We worked together from December 2019 to July 2020 for a project funded by UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) under their 'Enhancing Place-based Partnership' pilot scheme. The funding was to find new ways to include everybody in research and to discover how Universities work with community organisations.





WHAT WE WANTED TO DO

Using the community centre as a base, we worked with artists as community connectors to connect and engage with people around their interests.

We wanted to listen to people's experiences and find out about people's challenges and wisdoms about their health, and their views on health services.

We wanted to talk with people who had a connection with the Millside Centre to find out what matters to them about their health.

We wanted to learn from people's experiences and suggestions to develop and

shape future research projects in order to improve healthcare services in the future.

We also wanted to find out if this approach could be used to develop training to support people to become more involved in research in the future.

Ultimately, bringing people together who are interested in improving healthcare to train and support them to contribute to research and improving health within their own communities.

The researchers, community organisation and artists also wanted to learn new ways of working to engage with people in the community.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

WHAT WE DID?

1
THE ARTIST, MANDEEP, WAS THE CONNECTOR FOR THIS PROJECT. SHE WAS BASED AT MILLSIDE CENTRE DURING THE PROJECT, CONNECTING WITH THE CENTRE AND ALSO TO THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS.

2
SHE ALSO EXPLORED THE LOCAL AREA TO MEET PEOPLE, AND WENT TO WORKSHOPS IN OTHER COMMUNITY CENTRES.

3
THE MILLSIDE CENTRE MANAGER, FURAHA, INVITED MANDEEP TO ATTEND COMMUNITY CENTRE NETWORKS AND RAISE AWARENESS OF THE PROJECT AMONG OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS.

4
MANDEEP FOCUSED ON LISTENING TO PEOPLE AND USED HER CREATIVE APPROACHES AND SKILLS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND, BY GETTING TO KNOW PEOPLE, ENCOURAGE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

5
THROUGH HER CONVERSATIONS SHE DISCOVERED WHAT PEOPLE WERE INTERESTED IN AND THEIR OWN THOUGHTS ABOUT HEALTH AND WHAT MADE US FEEL WELL.

6

THE ARTISTS REFLECTION

The sharp edged corners of Bradford
Reveal parts of a neglected city
A post-war concrete tower block...a vertical labyrinth
Stands frozen in time
On the 4th floor there is a new story waiting to be told.

I enter the floating parlour...
The room overlooks the softly sculpted hillsides
I ask the lady what it means to live a good life
And listen to what's behind the words...
Hope, strength and resilience and a healthy dose of patience
Listening becomes the sacred art of communing.

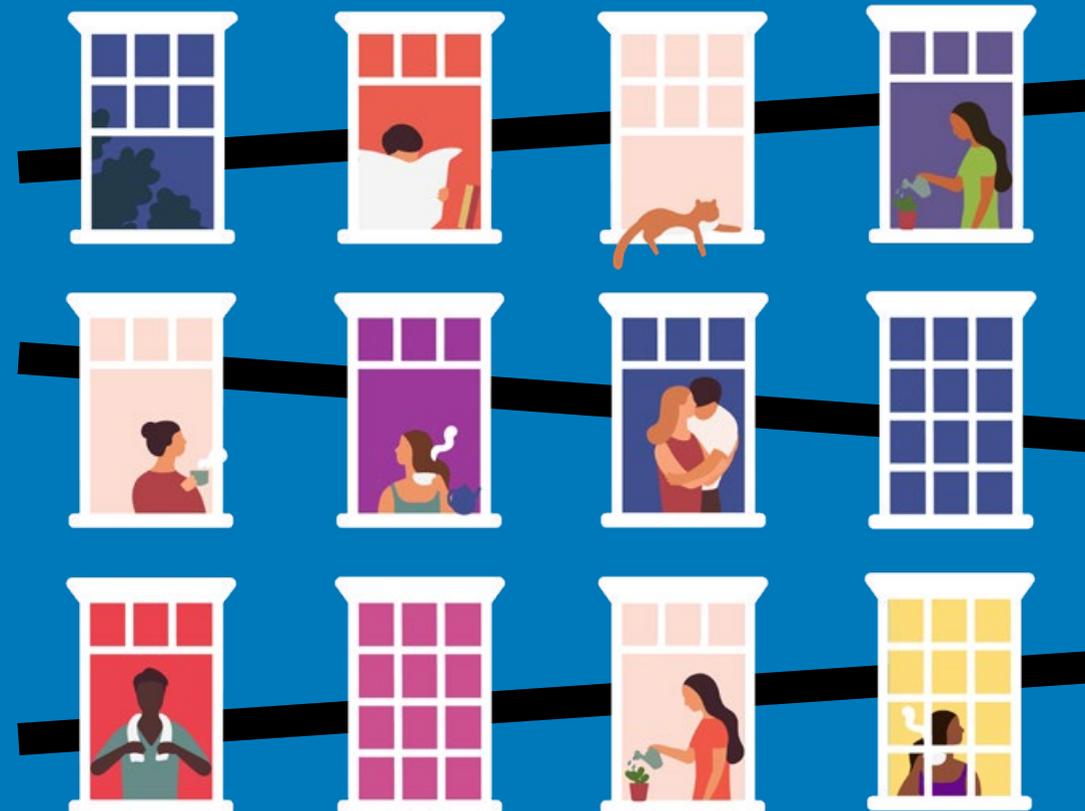
I wander into an overcrowded community hall
The weekly pop-up buffet
Welcomes strangers from all corners of the world
They stand in a queue waiting to be served dhaal, chapati
and chai
This might be the only hot meal they eat this week.

I sit beside a young woman
She tells me she doesn't feel safe
'A fight might break out any moment now'
'I'm going to take my food home'
She disappears with a plastic bag of bread, curry and rice.

I meet a gentleman in the big metropolis
Art, music and books are his closest companions
And he has hope-filled stories to tell

'Be positive when life challenges you'
'From hardship comes strength.'

We sip a cup of tea together
'It's the good old British remedy for cheering you up'
A warm liquid to sip on and console ourselves through
difficult times
A little warmth goes a long way
'Things could be worse...but I'm still here, I'm still alive.'



TALKING AND LISTENING

Mandeep had initial conversations with 42 different people who access the Millside Centre.

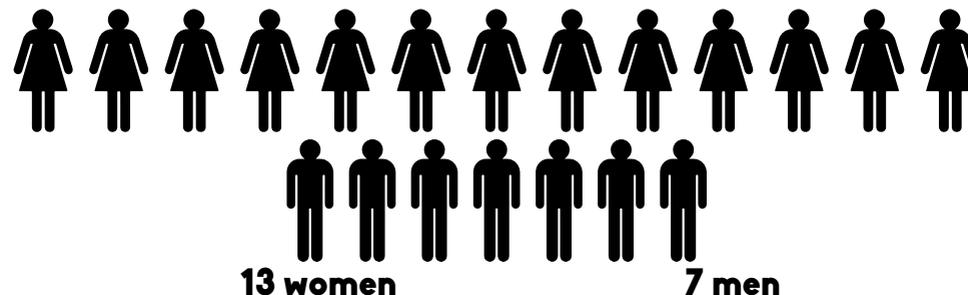
20 people met Mandeep again in a setting of their choice, whether the Millside Centre, a local cafe, a park or (before lockdown) welcoming her into their home. During that second conversation, people told her more about their personal experiences and shared parts of their identity.

The people Mandeep talked with mostly have difficult and complex lives with low income and health problems including mental health conditions and trauma.

Some of the participants are refugees or asylum seekers. Some have had experience of homelessness. While everyone was a visitor to the Millside Centre, and most people lived nearby, there were many similarities and differences between people.



WHO WAS INVOLVED



11 unemployed

9 employed or are retired



Some people are from Bradford and other parts of Britain, as well as many different parts of the world:



Pakistan



St Kitts



Dom Republic



Egypt



Jamaica



Romania



Czech Republic



Sudan



Iran



Zimbabwe



Slovakia



Poland

WHAT'S IMPORTANT

During the conversations, people told Mandeep about many things that they valued for their health that included:

- Music such as Kora and Rock
- Poetry such as If by Kipling
- Religion such as a religious locket called a Tai'widh
- Family
- Community
- Health wisdoms from people's different cultures, natural remedies and ... tea

Mandeep worked with participants to create a health treasure box. The people she spoke with and centre volunteers helped her to fill the box with lavender, hibiscus, ginger, senna pods, tea leaf strainers and stirrers and set the scene to focus the next phase of the listening.



**HEALTH IS
MORE THAN
JUST MEDICINE**

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

The team worked with Mandeep to plan workshops and develop research training for people in the community who wanted to continue to have health conversations and help to design, shape and influence health research.

As part of this we produced a webpage to explain about involvement in research and enable people to sign up to become involved in patient safety research

<https://safety-in-numbers.co.uk>

BUT before we could carry out the workshops, we had the Covid19 lockdown, and we were not able to carry out the workshops at all.

When lockdown happened, our first response was to connect with all the people we were engaging with for the project to see if they needed any help or support.

Mandeep kept in touch with people by phone and text. Many of the people shared their thoughts, fears, worries and anxieties about the pandemic and their current situation.

Mandeep was able to keep in touch with 12 people during the first lockdown and she developed creative care packages with items specifically tailored to each person. Each package had a handwritten letter, with pre-paid postcards and items that they expressed an interest in such as a 'build a bird



box' activity for two of the participants to create with their daughters, or a notebook to write reflections and learning from studying the Quran. She also included toilet roll, just in case the shops ran out of it again.

WHAT WE FOUND

Throughout the project, Mandeeep made notes and met with the wider project team to share learning and insights for the team to learn about the most important issues around healthcare that people identified.

From the first sets of conversations, the research team identified ten topic areas that were common to different people's experiences.

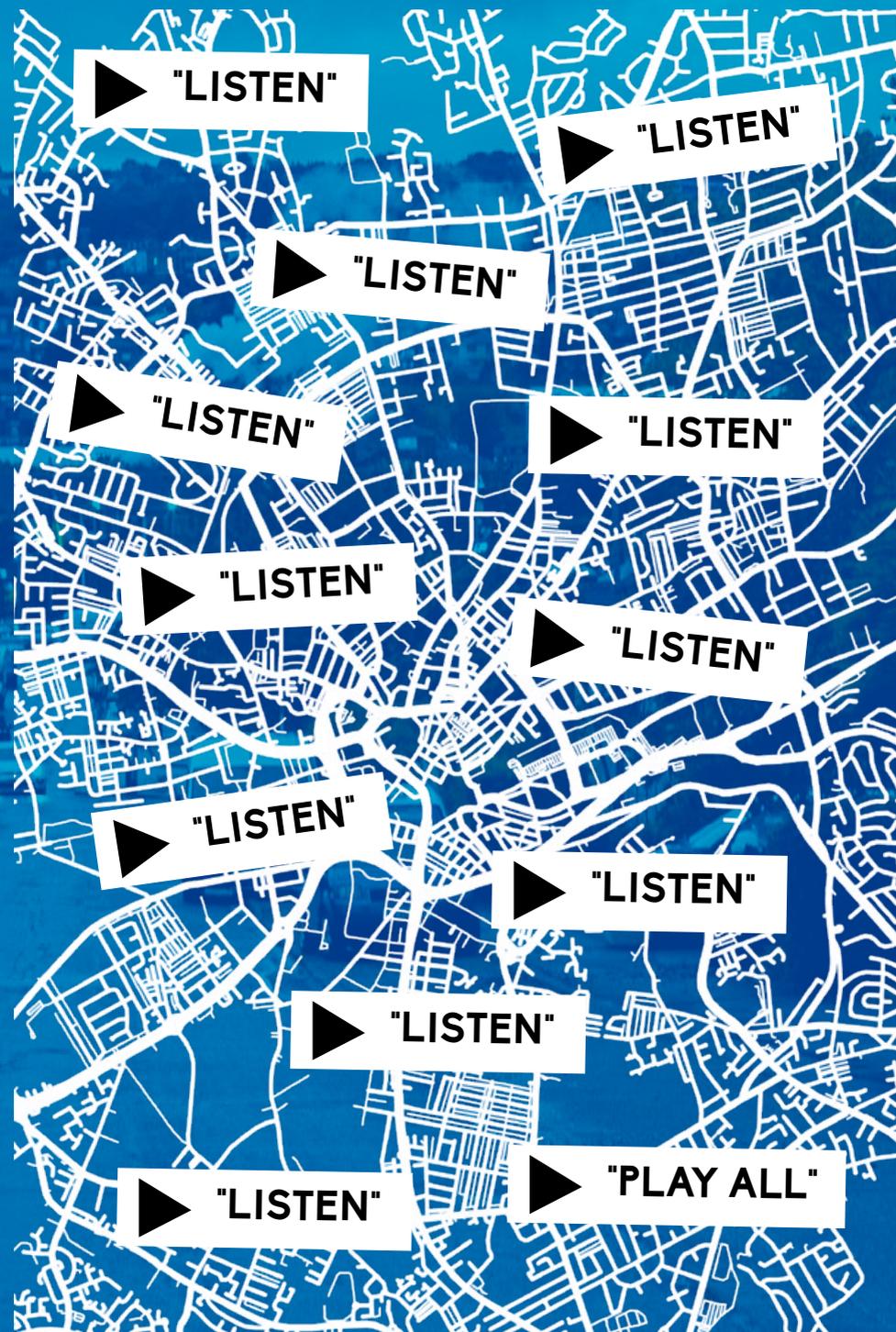
We asked participants to choose between 1 and 3 of the areas that were most important to them, and explain why. The three most important topics chosen were:

'Appreciation at being listened to by health professionals'

'The feeling of being ashamed affect people accessing health care or making health decisions'

'Difficulties in navigating health services, especially for people with mental health conditions'

LISTEN TO THEIR OWN WORDS →



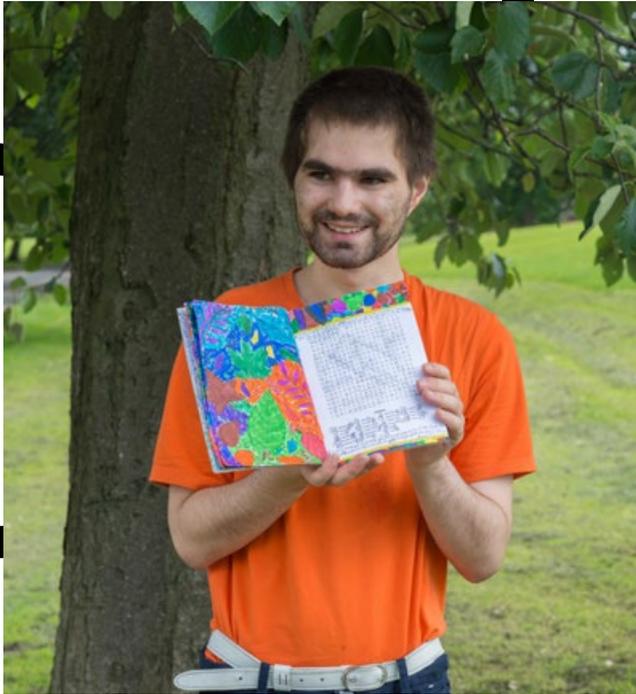
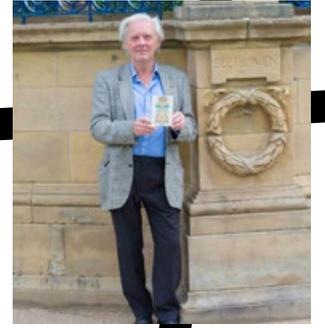
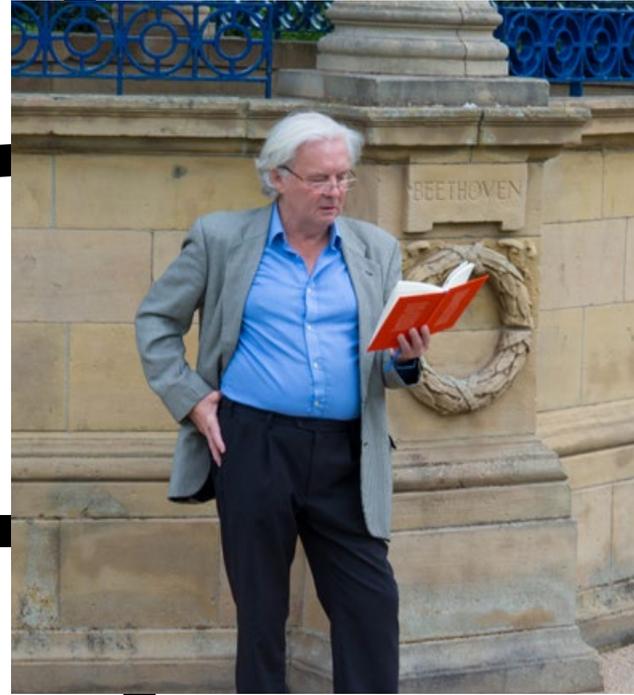


LOCKDOWN

Once the first lockdown eased and people could meet outdoors, while we could not carry out the workshops, we offered all the participants the opportunity to have a photograph of themselves or something that reflects them.

Local photographer Shy Burhan met with participants to take pictures in a place of their choice with items that meant something to them, related to their health or items from the project. The pictures were framed and provided to the participants.





WHAT WE LEARNED

As well as learning about what matters to people about health and health services, as a team we have also learned about the opportunities and challenges of working across organisations.

That it is possible to including people in thinking about research who have not previously had a connection with the University or any research centre.

The value of listening to people and finding out what they are interested in, and creating activities flexibly around those, without a fixed view on how the people would or should respond.

That an artist's creative approaches can build relationships and trust to enable people's voices to be heard.

The value of taking time to actively listen and provide a safe space for people to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings.

The value for the University to work outside its normal physical boundaries and enable people to realise their own creativity and curiosity to engage with research.

The value of working with community organisations, and the need to support them in their goals and find shared goals. They have the skills and networks to help make person-centred projects succeed.

And, perhaps most importantly..
People do want to be listened to, heard, valued and cared for. Listening to what is important to them allows us to develop, build and strengthen relationships further.



AND FINALLY... THANK YOU

To our 42 participants. Thankyou for sharing your stories with us and for keeping in touch during what has been, and continues to be, a difficult time.

To the Millside Community Centre for supporting and hosting the project and introducing the artist to volunteers, centre visitors and other organisations.

To all the other community organisations that we interacted with during the project including BIASAN, Curry Circle, Muslim Women's Council and Sharing Voices (Women's Think Tank session), CNet Bradford (Women's Health and Wellbeing Network), Hope Housing (Cook & Eat session), The Faith Centre (The Faith Centre Consultation), Displace Yourself Theatre (Ignite Your Heart Fire), Women's Health Network, Womenszone.

To the Yorkshire & Humber Patient Safety Translational Research Centre, Rebecca, Beth and Livi for their dedication to this project.

To the University of Bradford for providing financial support for this project.

To UKRI for funding the project.

To Breaking Free Design for the design of this report.



THANK YOU!



WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE INVOLVED WITH OUR FUTURE WORK?

Check out www.safety-in-numbers.co.uk
for more information on upcoming projects
and how you can get involved

CITY OF RESEARCH

EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED