LivingBodiesObjects

Collaborating With Care

A Toolkit for Values-Informed Medical Humanities Research

Research England

LivingBodiesObjects

wellcome

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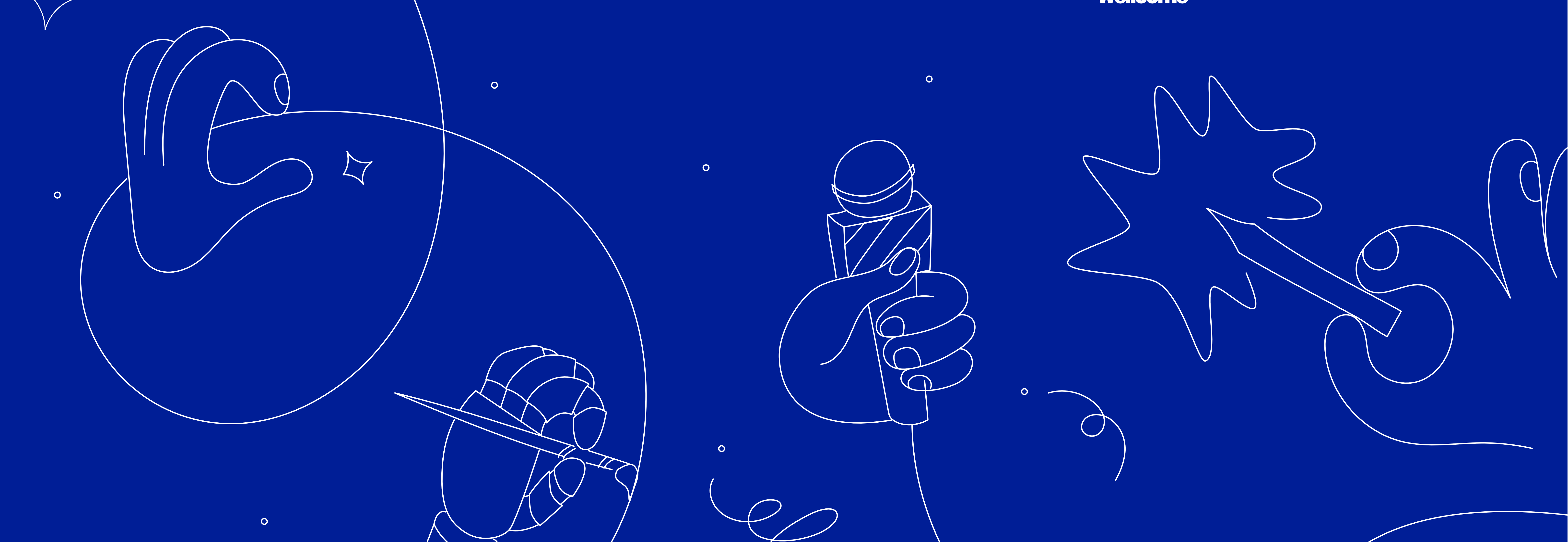

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Welcome

The Collaborating with Care Toolkit is designed for anyone who is interested in doing collaborative, creative and experimental research with care and accountability.

This toolkit emerges from a three-year Wellcome-funded project at the University of Leeds called LivingBodiesObjects: Technology and the Spaces of Health (LBO). LBO involved researchers, artists, educators, activists, creative facilitators and curators who shared a commitment to accessible and inclusive research culture.

Our project was focused on stories and experiences related to health and embodiment, and our approach combined different types of knowledge about health and health research, incorporating insights from medical humanities and disability studies, lived experience, embodied knowledge, and health-related professional experience.

The resources in this toolkit focus on how to design creative research projects and activities that are accessible, inclusive, and responsive.

The resources in this toolkit focus on how to design creative research projects and activities that are accessible, inclusive, and responsive. Through trial and error, we've developed strategies for caring, creative, accountable research planning, development and implementation.

When we began LBO, we sought out project handbooks and toolkits to help guide our process. While we found a few helpful resources, most notably the *CLEAR Lab Book* (CLEAR 2021), we were surprised at the relatively small number of small number of materials outlining and sharing experiences of equitable and inclusive research project design and implementation. We hope this resource can help meet that need, offering insights and tools based on our LBO experiences to help others conduct collaborative research in ways attuned to reciprocity and respect.

Who are we?

We are a group of researchers from the University of Leeds, with disciplinary backgrounds in English (Clare Barker, Amelia DeFalco, Stuart Murray), History of Medicine (Jamie Stark), and Creative and Curatorial Practice (Lynn Wray). One of our research team members was the University's Head of Research Development (Faye Robinson), and another is the founder of our creative partner organization, Immersive Networks (Dave Lynch). The team producing this toolkit also includes our Project Managers (Kelly Armstrong and Joanne Sutherland) and some of our research assistants (Yaxin Luo, Deyanna Ricketts, and Rachel Garratt).

The LivingBodiesObjects project centred on the development of a physical and virtual medical humanities lab, exploring all aspects of how research is done, from leadership models to research spaces to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in research. We worked on creative projects with four partner organizations who engage with varied communities concerned with matters of health: Interplay National Sensory Theatre, Blueberry Academy, The Bhopal Medical Appeal, and the Thackray Museum of Medicine. Members of our partner organizations have all contributed to this toolkit too: Steve Byrne, former director of Interplay Theatre; Dave Tabron, Blueberry Academy; Jared Stoughton, BMA; and Jack Gann and Jamie Taylor, Thackray Museum of Medicine. To find out more about LBO, our partners and our creative projects, please visit our project website.

What is values-informed medical humanities research?

Medical humanities, as we deploy the term, is a field of study concerned with experiences of health, medicine, illness, and disability, with the relationship between bodies and environments, with ageing and care, with the diversity of embodied human experience and the vulnerability it engenders. As Anna McFarlane explains, 'Medical humanities is an umbrella term that covers a number of related fields .... It is also an interdisciplinary field of enquiry in its own right, combining methodologies from the humanities with the study of medicine' (2022, 928). At the present moment, medical humanities is at a particularly expansive phase in its development, encompassing a growing number of disciplinary approaches and methodologies.

In LBO, we embraced a capacious vision of medical humanities that brought humanities-based methodologies (close reading; self-reflexive, critical analysis; arts-based practice methodologies) to bear on our project partners' aims and priorities. To this end, we developed a set of project values that we felt reflected our shared ethos and that we could use to help direct team behaviour and project activities. This enabled us to develop a series of critical questions to evaluate project activities according to these values: Is this research being pursued with care for those involved, both the researchers and those researched? Is it accountable to those it draws from and might affect? Are our methods engaging creative and unexpected ways of working?

Who and what is this toolkit for?

There are many excellent toolkits that explore action research, co-production, and other forms of collaborative research (see e.g. Leeds Social Sciences Institute 2023), as well as strategies for decolonial and anti-racist scholarship (CLEAR 2021; Sian 2024). The 'Collaborating with Care' Toolkit has a particular emphasis on developing research strategies that embody project values, in our case, care, accountability and creativity. While ours was a humanities project focused on health themes with a foundation in medical humanities and disability studies, we hope that our methods and approaches will be of interest to much wider audiences: researchers across disciplines; facilitators; creative practitioners; and anyone wanting to design collaborative activities with attention to care and accessibility.

For LBO, self-consciously establishing a caring, inclusive research culture was a central strand of our activity. Institutional habits and pressures can make it difficult to work at an equitable pace that includes time for self-reflection and responsiveness. We aspired towards a research model that was based on partnerships between equals, valued different kinds of knowledge and experience, and challenged the hierarchies that can emerge between academics and collaborators, or between team members of different status and career stage.

We approached, with attention and curiosity, aspects of project design and experience that are often taken for granted or fixed by institutional processes, and all members of our team contributed their insights to this toolkit, including academic researchers, project managers, creative facilitators, research assistants, and project partners. We wanted our activities to be partner-led – to develop our research questions and activities with our partners with a view to what will be most useful for their future work – and to be non-extractive. In other words, we wanted to avoid using our partners' time and energy as resources to fuel academic research agendas. This toolkit offers an account of the concepts and methods that helped us put these goals into practice.

We didn't always succeed in these aspirations, and this toolkit includes details of our successes, mistakes, and failures, in the hope that things that didn't work might be useful for other teams experimenting in similar areas. Learning from mistakes and failures was a key part of LBO and a big motivation for the creation of this toolkit.

How to use the toolkit

Please feel free to download, copy, raid, reproduce, adopt or adapt our resources as they are useful to you!

We always tried to tailor our activities and approaches to our partners, making sure our plans reflected their priorities. Every project and collaboration is different and our toolkit is not designed to be a ready-made off-the-shelf solution to all research culture challenges. Selecting and adapting resources that are most appropriate to individual projects and circumstances is part of the LBO ethos.

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We'd love your feedback. Please get in touch to let us know how you've engaged with the toolkit: https://forms.office.com/e/7z8qHFvcPh.

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LBO values: Care, Creativity, Accountability

Care

Care is a capacious term that invokes a range of emotions and behaviours: one feels care and does care (DeFalco 2016, 5). It is frequently associated with feelings of empathy, compassion, concern, and actions of responsiveness, support, and reciprocity (Tronto 1993, 103). Care's capaciousness as a concept means it is helpfully flexible, but its indistinction can lead to misuse, with self-serving, careless, or even harmful behaviours labelled 'care' (DeFalco 2016; Martin et al. 2015, 3). In LBO we sought to avoid this kind of unconsidered, platitudinous care, focusing on the careful labour required to enact responsible, respectful, reciprocal relations (DeFalco 2024, 129; 2016, 63-69; Kittay 1999, 34-37; Oliver 2011, 91; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 20, 85). We deployed this project value carefully and self-consciously, always asking if, and most importantly, exactly how the work we did embodied a commitment to assisting the communities and environments we worked with and in. In practice, this meant engaging with one another, project partners and the communities they serve alert to power structures and vulnerabilities. It meant developing a Ways of Working Agreement that prioritized mutual flourishing while remaining attuned to the increased responsibilities that come with privilege (this responsibility leads to our third value, 'accountability', outlined below). It meant paying attention to our team members' and partners' embodied and mental wellbeing, our workloads, obligations and interactions, and considering the multiple, intersecting risks of the work we do and minimizing the possibility of harm wherever possible. It meant listening when alerted to potential or existing harms, even when those were being communicated in subtle or indirect ways. It meant considering the accessibility of our practice at every stage and working to develop research environments and habits that made participation not only possible, but comfortable and rewarding.

As we discovered, research that prioritizes care is hard work. It is labour and time intensive. It's complicated and frequently goes wrong. But as much as care-focused research methods highlight problems, they provide affirmative ways to repair those problems. As much as they complicate the work, they also clarify it by providing ethical goals and guidelines that help us gauge the 'success' of our work. Care provides an alternative metric for success, one based on safety, satisfaction and support, rather than academic outputs and project deliverables.

Creativity

Creativity was the driving force that moved LBO forward. The project used participatory making experiments – whether that be co-creating a theatre production, virtual gallery, museum exhibit or immersive experience – to open up conversations with our project partners and participants about experiences of, and future possibilities for, disability, health and care. We understand that creativity (creative action and creative thought) can shift the 'horizons of the possible', challenge normative, ableist and consensus thinking and enable us to imagine other ways of being and doing in the world (see Barker 2011; Barker and Murray 2017).

We understand creating as an ethical action that requires openness and criticality in equal measure. As a result, we prioritized self-reflexive, collaborative, critical creativity. Often, this practice involved a lot of questions: What are we creating and why? What tools and methods are we employing and why? Who does our creation represent (or fail to represent)? Who is this creation for? What might it do in the world? Who might it affect and how?

Our team was comprised of people from different disciplinary and professional backgrounds. Our work together helped us realise that creative and critical approaches are not distinct and that we are all engaged in creative acts whether we are making something tangible, facilitating the research process, reading, talking or thinking together. Creativity occurred at all stages of the making process, whether we were making theatre work, designing a digital platform, or writing something for our website, and it came from multiple perspectives, including embodied and lived experience, critical arguments drawn from theoretical literature, and practical experimentation. All these perspectives inform and spark the generation and development of ideas, discussion and critique, production and reflection.

"In terms of what we want to take forward from LivingBodiesObjects into how we plan for exhibitions at Thackray, I would love to have that kind of exploratory, creative, playful [approach] built into every project. To start with more of a blank slate and to work things out... to allow for exploration, for play, creativity, for collaboration in a way much greater than we previously would have done. That's the thing I really want to cling to."

Jack Gann,
Thackray Museum of Medicine

Accountability

Accountability refers to 'the actions that enact our beholdenness' to others (CLEAR Lab Book 2021, 12). During our project, accountability was about an ongoing and continuous awareness that our team and our work exist in relationship to others, that our work affects others, and (especially) that we needed to consider these effects carefully and adjust what we were doing to make sure the outcomes were enabling, affirmative, and careful. Our understanding of accountability was underpinned by a sense of humility (being open to learning from others; see Cariou 2020), respect for different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing, especially those that emerge from experience of bodily difference or disability, and commitments to particular actions to maintain good relations with one another and our partners.

Accountability immediately raises the questions of who are we accountable to, and who is our work for? Why is it worth doing? What right(s) do we have to do the work we're planning and whose permission do we need? It was important that our work aligned with, supported – and was determined by – our partners' priorities, plans and desires; that we treated them with respect and care; that we valued their time and expertise and didn't waste their time, energy or resources. We were also accountable to the communities our partners serve, and again, our work had to serve the interests, needs and priorities of these communities.

Accountability meant that we prioritized accessibility: we committed to communicating in a variety of ways and providing choices and alternatives; to paying attention to the spaces we worked in; to being aware of power dynamics and histories of oppression or exclusion and working to mitigate their ongoing effects. And we are also (and continue to be) accountable to the wider possible audiences of our work, those we may not know or anticipate. So we have to keep asking: who might be touched by our work? How might it touch them? And how can we ensure that it doesn't cause harm? Sometimes accountability might mean taking on a Killjoy role, asking uncomfortable questions of ourselves and others and being willing to inconvenience or be inconvenienced if something needs to change. It also means that our obligations to our project partners and the communities they serve didn't end when the project ended: accountability means staying in good relationships with those we work with and a commitment over time to tracking how our work travels and where it ends up.

"There are different kinds of accountability and I think there was very much an emphasis on kind of being accountable to each other ... But also accountability to the people that, as a charity, we're working for as well, and that was always really important for us to keep in mind... There was a lot of... coming back to that to make sure that we were thinking about the impacts of what we were doing and holding ourselves accountable."

Jared Stoughton,
Bhopal Medical Appeal

Project design and getting started

Designing collaborative research projects is a complex and challenging process, especially when you're looking to establish and maintain a caring, accountable research culture throughout the preparation and working periods.

Collaborating with attention and care is time consuming and demanding, and difficult to do without the development of structures and strategies that ensure the necessary time, staffing, work habits and methodologies are in place. The earliest period of project design and development is the time to start thinking about the integration of values-centered working methods and structures.

Even if, like us, you aren't able to settle on specific values at the outset, if you are seeking to work in ways that foster and ensure reciprocity and positive relations across teams of academics, community partners, stakeholders, early career researchers, consultants, creative facilitators and other contributors, you need to take this into account during the planning and development stage.

Reflecting on the kind of research culture you want to nurture will help you develop your project's research aims, methodology, duration, staffing, management structure, and budget in ways that facilitate positive collaborations. It's important that research culture is part of the planning process, not something to add on after a grant application is successful or a project is underway. What follows are some of the key project design elements that we engaged (with differing degrees of success) in our efforts to collaborate with care.

Writing an EDI-informed funding application

Equity, diversity and inclusion work (EDI) takes time – a lot of time. For a project to be proactive and creative regarding equity, diversity and inclusion, it's important to incorporate these aspects of the project fully into both your grant application and detailed research plan to ensure that you have the time, budget, people and resources to fully attend to these aspects of the research in the ways that you want to.

Many funding application forms have a discrete section where applicants are required to discuss the equity and inclusion implications or commitments of their project, and it is positive that funders are encouraging research teams to consider EDI at the outset of their work. However, this is often a section where applicants reiterate their institution's commitments to equitable staff recruitment practices or point to generic EDI training that their team will undertake. But more focused EDI plans that outline the specific needs and requirements of a particular project and point to bespoke EDI actions and commitments are needed.

A more comprehensive approach involves considering EDI at every stage of the research process and in every section of the application form, rather than just in the required box. Your institution may provide guidance on how to do this, so do consult with your research office at an early stage.

Our experience

The LBO project was a medical humanities project working with health-related organizations, so our approach to EDI centred on health and disability in research, although we did always try to consider equity and inclusion as holistically as possible. Our starting points were:

a) that 'academia powerfully mandates able-bodiedness and able-mindedness' (Dolmage 2017, 7) – that is, that universities (and their research culture) have been a major driver in defining what constitutes 'normal' or 'desirable' characteristics of body and mind (such as rationality, productivity, and independence; see Price 2011, 30; Chen 2023, Chapter 3);
b) that university research culture does not always represent best practice regarding equality and inclusion (see Ahmed 2012; Mitchell and Snyder 2015; Price 2011); and that
c) research culture can have detrimental impacts on health, including 'stress, anxiety, mental health problems, strain on personal relationships, and a sense of isolation and loneliness at work' (Wellcome 2020, 3).

In developing our medical humanities lab, we wanted to explore approaches to research that, rather than being circumscribed by academic management structures, neoliberal cultures of speed (Hassan 2009; Tomlinson 2007) and output-driven notions of productivity (Weeks 2011), might instead be informed by disability studies and related fields (Murray 2023) and designed around central ideas such as embodiment, bodyminds (Price 2011; Schalk 2018), vulnerability (Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds 2014), care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017), and crip temporalities (Kafer 2013; Johnson and McRuer 2014).

Our own application made these priorities explicit and listed concrete commitments to practices, activities and outputs that would help us realize our initial goal of disability-informed research practice. These commitments were the earliest iteration of our Ways of Working Agreement (see also Appendix A: LBO Ways of Working Agreement) and this toolkit. Once the project started, they inevitably evolved into new shapes, but having these commitments at the forefront of the application and our work together meant that our research team had a clear sense of the centrality of EDI to the project and its outcomes.

This approach worked well but we are now aware of many things we could have done better had we anticipated them at the application stage (see Mistakes)! Time was always our biggest challenge, despite wanting to prioritize slow, healthy and reflective research methods. Because our plans for outputs and activities were fluid and partner-led, we had to continually readjust our schedules, expectations and workloads, and we underestimated how much time would be required to work with care throughout the project. There are many times when we felt stress and time pressure or had to rein in ambitious ideas for the sake of team wellbeing (see Time).

There was also a significant tension between our ways of working approach and our project design: we had planned for four six-month residencies with partners that would overlap to enable the sharing of learning between partners and facilitate our sense of a wider project community. This had the desired effect, but the overlap periods, combined with readjusted timeframes for some of the residencies, were often periods of overwork and stress because we were essentially working across two or more residencies at once and there was no chance to rest and reflect between significant pieces of work. This is something we could have considered more effectively when mapping out the project's design and schedule for the application.

Equity, diversity and inclusion work (EDI) takes time – a lot of time.

Suggestions for EDI-informed application writing

Time and planning (see also Time)

- Always be generous in your project time planning. Adopt an approach informed by crip temporalities (see Atkinson, Hale, and Liddiard 2024) and pace the work appropriately, rather than assuming the funder will see hyperproductivity as the greatest value for money.
- Ensure EDI is discussed and addressed explicitly as part of planning all project activities, not just those where there are established institutional policies, like recruitment. For example, EDI is relevant when developing and planning agendas, meetings, research discussions and activities, the choice and use of spaces, equipment and resources, as well as travel.
- Build in protected time for rest, reflection and contingency after key milestones.
- Ensure you allocate the time and budget necessary to apply an 'ethics of pace' when establishing relations with key partners, stakeholders or participants, enabling you to work 'at the speed of trust' (Bailey 2021, 288).
- A good starting point when working on research design is to ask of each activity or process, 'who might this exclude?' and 'what can we do to remedy this exclusion?'.
- Use imagination regarding project design and at every stage, ask 'what will this be like in reality?' for each member of the team and external partners.

Budget (see also Budget and Project Finances)

- Ensure you budget enough for the professional support (project management, research assistants etc) that will make the project run smoothly. When appointing part-time staff, make sure their workload is realistic in relation to their hours.
- Anticipate EDI-related needs that might arise from the research and cost in appropriate support. For instance, if working with potentially traumatizing topics (for participants or researchers), can you cost in access to counselling?

Recruitment

- If you want to ensure your job adverts reach a diverse range of people, can you build on institutional inclusive recruitment policies by budgeting for consultation with relevant organizations or advertising in unusual outlets?
- Would it be useful to include specific forms of non-academic or experiential knowledge in the essential or desirable criteria on your job descriptions?

Leadership and management

- Outline clear management structures and decision-making processes, including responsibilities for project EDI work. Project structure is an EDI issue because unclear procedures or ambiguities regarding responsibilities can cause extra workload and stress, and unallocated care work and emotional labour often fall to women and minoritized colleagues (see Ahmed 2012).

Partner work

- To prioritize accountable and partner-led research, does your funding allow for partner organizations to have and manage their own budgets?
- Can you set aside contingency budgets for outputs or events that may be determined by the partner organizations and the populations they serve?

Outputs

- Consider whether there are ways you can make your research findings more accessible, and build in relevant production, consultation and staff costs. Could you create outputs in different formats or media? Would it be useful to produce easy read resources, or to consult with accessibility experts before key moments of publication or public engagement? Could you produce outputs that explain the research accessibly to lay audiences (e.g. podcasts or blogs) so your work can reach wider non-academic audiences? Do you want to produce an accessible report on the research that could be given back to participants and populations affected by the research?

Citations

- Check the references in your project research vision and ensure you are following good citation practices (see CLEAR Lab's Citational Politics Library for useful resources).

Devolved leadership

'Devolved leadership' is the way we describe the non-hierarchical model of leadership and management we adopted in the LivingBodiesObjects project, where responsibility was distributed across members of the project, the facilitation team, and project partners. All named applicants (the project team) functioned as joint Principal Investigators (Co-PIs), sharing the coordination of activities that took place and taking collective responsibility for the project together.

This leadership model focused on teamwork rather than a top-down structure. Our aim was to share decision-making and make space for each team member to contribute their individual knowledge, expertise and perspective. Devolved leadership allowed more flexibility in roles and responsibilities, as well as shared accountability and more opportunities for career progression.

Our approach to devolved leadership

To avoid a conventional top-down management structure, we developed a 'helical' model for the project, in which cyclical and iterative phases of collaborative experimentation enabled the team to address and return to key ideas across the four residencies, whilst distributing leadership responsibilities among the project team for particular aspects of the work. Each of our four six-month residencies, as well as additional emergent projects and workstreams that ran throughout, was coordinated by a different Co-PI who worked collaboratively with the creative facilitation team, project manager, and resident project partner(s).

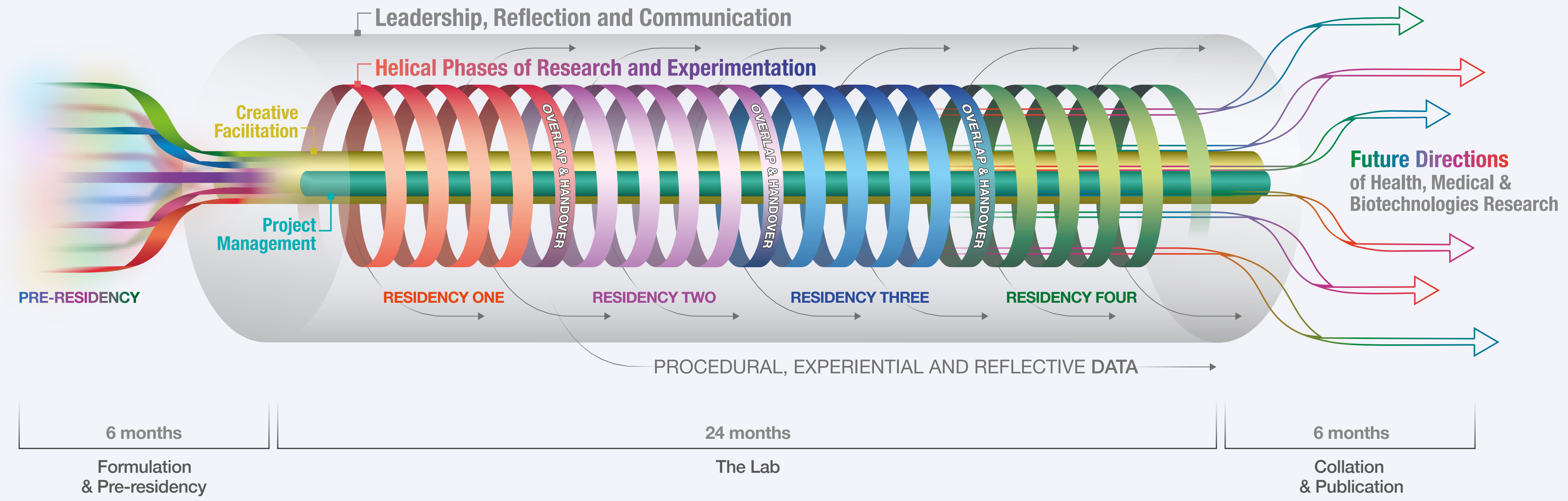
As a result, each residency was a bespoke collaboration that emerged out of particular relationships, consultations, practices and abilities.

The creative facilitation team and project manager led the creative and administrative activities relating to each residency (see Project Management), including managing the day-to-day activities of residents and collaborators, which enabled resident partners the creative freedom to experiment and take risks, whilst also interacting with the project team and research priorities. Our postdoctoral Research Development and Documentation Fellow also contributed to the design and facilitation of creative activities and led on documenting and disseminating activities, working closely with the project team on these processes.

All team members participated in fortnightly team meetings to communicate research development, ensure cohesion and connections across the residencies, seek input from others, and provide support and guidance throughout the project.

Tools we have used to support our devolved leadership approach

- Activity Sheets;
- Standard agendas for management and Co-PI meetings co-created by the team;
- Round Robins, shared Project Values and Ways of Working.



Benefits

- A devolved leadership model offers career development and leadership experience for multiple members of the team.
- It also helps overcome the potential problems and biases inherent in hierarchical structures.
- It enabled us to draw on the full range and diversity of existing experience, knowledge and expertise in the team.
- Shared responsibility – challenges are not one person's problem, and there is flexibility to cover activities if someone is unavailable for any reason. As a result, challenges are not the responsibility of one individual, but an opportunity to reflect on what was learned and how the team can improve together.
- Devolved leadership relies on identified and shared project values and ways of working. In LBO, these have been essential guides for project activity and decision making (see LBO Values).

Challenges

- Accountability – it's important to be mindful that shared leadership can sometimes mean it is unclear what should be done and by whom. As a result, clear ways of holding yourselves and others to account are needed.
- Devolved leadership is different from many people's prior experience of leadership and management. The change, therefore, requires conscious thought and relationships of trust. It can't simply follow established practices from other projects and teams.
- Additional time is needed for consultation and consensus-based decision-making.
- Not everyone in the team has the same amount of time or capacity at any given point. There is therefore a need for honest and frequent conversations about team members' commitments and priorities outside the project to help determine who can do what and when.
- Some aspects of the project still require a designated named person to be sole lead (e.g. financial and contractual accountability within the University's systems and processes requires a single lead).

To avoid a conventional top-down management structure, we developed a 'helical' model for the project.

Find out more

To read more about models of devolved or collective research leadership, see Hamdan, Meschitti and Burhan 2021; Cheruvelil et al 2024; Brún and McAuliffe 2023; and Frers and Meier 2022.

Project management

Many collaborative research projects employ a project manager, often on a part-time basis, to oversee the administrative and logistical aspects of project work. Often, the project manager works 'behind the scenes' to facilitate the timely delivery of the academic activities and outputs of the research team. They are responsible for processes, finances, and management of resources, and often liaise and mediate between different constituents in the research process (including the research team, project partners, and the institution's research and finance offices).

The project manager makes the research possible! But project management is an aspect of collaborative research that is often taken for granted or not planned in detail when teams write a funding application or prepare to start work. A project manager is often appointed after funding has been secured, meaning they haven't been consulted on the project's design, and often they are expected to slot into a design and schedule produced by academics who don't always have the understanding of university processes, timeframes or systems that a professional project manager does.

At the application stage, there can be a tendency to copy and paste generic text regarding project management and to replicate management models and structures from other projects. But when projects are experimental in design, involve nonstandard outputs and/or multiple partners, a bespoke project management model is often needed. It's important to realize that every decision made by researchers has project management implications.

Our experience

On LBO, we were lucky to be able to appoint a project manager known to the team who was able to make significant contributions to the design and set-up of the project (including contracts with project partners) before the grant officially started.

We aimed to be reflective about every aspect of our project design and delivery, and to pay special attention to the work of professional service colleagues who contribute to the planning, delivery and assessment of research activities. This meant that our project managers were much more involved in research activities than is often the case; they participated in some of our creative activities and workshops with partners (especially in the early stages of the project, when we were building relationships), and had a strong understanding of what was happening in the research from week to week, including contributing ideas and feedback.

We found that this level of involvement was greatly beneficial for our project, which was defined by creative experimentation, relationships of trust with partners, and an evolving understanding of what the outputs would be. Since our project centralized career development for all involved – including professional service staff – we made sure our project managers had the freedom to be innovative and creative in ways that might develop their professional knowledge and skills (e.g. by experimenting with different facilitation styles) and not simply help to deliver the overall programme of activity.

We held regular online project management meetings – fortnightly throughout most of the project but weekly in the early stages – that were chaired by our project manager and involved all core research team members and our creative partners. The project manager set the agenda, so had a regular timeslot to discuss key management issues, chase up outstanding requirements, and update the team on logistical activities.

We initially scheduled these meetings on project workshop days, but this meant project management discussions and workshop activities competed for time. Having a separate, dedicated timeslot for project management meetings meant the whole team was up to date on key issues and involved in the smooth running of the project and reflected the importance of project management for delivering project activities (including workshops). We came to understand just how specialist a skill set project management is and how crucial the project manager is for the successful and timely delivery of outputs and maintaining good relations within the project team and with partners.

Challenges for project managers

- To do their own job efficiently, project managers often rely on information and input from others – paperwork, decisions, answers to questions, etc – and so must spend a lot of time chasing people.
- The project manager works closely with university/institutional processes and procedures, which may be slow or complex, very different from those of project partners (especially smaller organizations), and/or badly understood by academics, especially those who are new to large-scale collaborative projects (as is the case for many arts and humanities researchers due to the limited number of large-scale awards).
- The project manager is responsible for processing expenses and may have to make a case to the university or the funder to justify expense claims that appear to be ineligible or excessive.

"I felt much more like a part of the project rather than someone who sat outside it."

Kelly Armstrong,
LBO Project Manager

Recommendations for facilitating successful project management

Time

- Project managers are often employed on a part-time basis. Don't underestimate how much time they will need to do their job effectively, especially if your project is complex in design or involves multiple partner organizations. Everything takes longer in practice than you might think!
- Allocate time to project management meetings in proportion to the complexity of your project and ensure that those with relevant decision-making responsibilities attend. Respect your project manager's time and ensure that team members and partners develop an understanding of the processes they facilitate.

Complexity

- At application stage, consider in detail how complicated or time-consuming managing your project will be and seek professional project management advice and input where feasible. There may be ways of reducing complexity by simplifying your budget or redistributing responsibilities – for instance, a devolved budget in which every institution receives their funding directly will mean your project manager spends much less time dealing with invoices and budget queries.

Induction and training

- At the outset of the project, allocate the time and budget for an induction and training process on procedures and finances for researchers and partners, run by the project manager. This can enhance understanding, establish good relations with partners, and save everyone time and stress over the project's duration. This might mean careful workload planning as the set-up phase of a project may require more of your project manager's time than when the project is up and running. Regular review meetings between the project manager and partners are also a good idea.

Decision-making

- Set up a clear and detailed decision-making structure within your team and ensure your project manager is fully apprised of everyone's roles and responsibilities. This means they will know who to go to for particular decisions and answers. The clear delineation of roles is especially important if your project has an experimental or unusual leadership model, as LBO did (five Co-Principal Investigators with devolved and rotating leadership responsibilities). Sub-committees or teams for specific aspects of the work are helpful. And don't shy away from discussing seemingly minor details of who does what and when – 'who will pick up the box and transport it from here to there?' – as the project manager must plan on such a granular level to keep a project moving.
- Include the project manager in research-related decisions and give them the opportunity to attend meetings of all kinds, including research-focused ones; they may identify important practical considerations or obstacles (regarding finance, timing, resources, processes) that researchers are not aware of, saving you time in the long run and ensuring that activities can happen in practice.
- Always consult the project manager about spending decisions to avoid ineligible claims and ensure they can justify costs.

Budget and project finances

At first glance, a research project's budget may appear to be far removed from the project's values or the production of values-informed research. The budget is practical, measurable, and clearly defined – simply a financial description of the planned activities – whereas values are conceptual, ethical, expansive.

But in fact, the budget is a place where project values can be put into practice in the most concrete and effective ways. The distribution of funds across a project demonstrates where its priorities lie, who has control, and how trust is managed. To undertake values-informed research, it is therefore important to explore how to be creative within the parameters of your funding scheme and institutional processes. And once research is underway, transparent discussion with partners about financial decisions is essential for maintaining good relations.

While there are many facets to project budgets and finances, this entry focuses on characteristics that were particularly important to the LBO project: devolved budgets and the benefits of flexibility within budget allocations. For suggestions on how to build your budget at the application stage, see Writing an EDI-informed Funding Application, and see Project Management for more on financial processes.

Our experience

The LBO project had a devolved budget: each of our four main project partner organizations had their own budget which they were able to allocate and spend independently. This was possible for us because of the flexibility of our particular funding scheme. The effect of the independent budgets was to ensure that our activities were genuinely partner-led and that the project has lasting legacies for our partners in multiple forms, including creative outputs, equipment they could keep and reuse, and professional development training.

This budget model enabled us to act in accordance with our project values. Our budget flexibility made it possible to respond creatively to emerging project needs and ideas: we were able to divert funding towards the aspects of the research that turned out to be most generative and vital, many of which were not anticipated at the start of the project (including this toolkit!). The devolved model also encouraged accountable rather than extractive relationships between the research team and partners, as it ensured that our partners' needs were prioritized and the funding benefited them immediately and directly.

Identified outcomes can help to maintain focus and ensure delivery of specific outputs within research projects and programmes. However, we have found that we have achieved much more than we anticipated because of this openness and flexibility. Although many funding schemes do allow research teams to devolve budgets to partners and keep some budget lines relatively open and flexible, this isn't always something that academics or university finance offices consider as an option, as there are such established or seemingly self-evident models for research budgeting. We would urge funders and university research offices to recognize the value of budgets that can evolve over time as ideas and plans emerge and mature.

Challenges

- While devolved budgets might offer partners freedom and control, it's important to recognize that they may also produce stresses and strains. Quarterly invoicing, for example, may create cash flow problems within smaller organizations who may need to receive funding upfront. The complexity and slow speed of many university financial systems may also cause problems for partners.
- The administrative burden behind devolved budgets can be huge – both for project partners and for project managers. It is essential that all parties understand what they are taking on and have the workload capacity to manage the partnership.
- Even if your funder allows you to be flexible with your budget, your university's financial systems may have fixed categories for financial reporting that make it difficult to put this into practice. When you make departures from the budget in your original grant application, it's important to keep your finance office colleagues informed so they can navigate any challenges that arise.
- Trust is essential: there may be financial and reputational risks for research institutions and partners if work isn't delivered as promised.

Recommendations

- Openness can enable teams to achieve more than they anticipated. This requires dedicated resource, rather than aiming to achieve additional unanticipated developments and outputs on top of what has been planned and resourced.
- Whenever possible, clarify your budget and financial arrangements before the start of the project, especially for complex arrangements, so partners know how the funding will work and who will be responsible for what.
- Devote time to induction and finance training for partners to ensure they understand university invoicing and claims procedures (see Project Management).
- Involve partners' finance teams in the Onboarding stages of the project even if they are not directly involved in the research, to ensure they understand the project and how the partnership will work.
- The project manager can hold regular budget review meetings with partners to ensure transparency, clarify procedures, and address any concerns.

"The money that we had with the residency allowed us to do an exhibition that we couldn't have dreamt of doing 12 or 24 months ago."

Jamie Taylor, Thackray Museum of Medicine

"Having our own budget to manage has been a really new experience for us in some ways because as a charity, we generally tend to have quite limited funds for things and there always has to be a cost-benefit analysis that takes place ahead of any project... [The devolved budget] gave a huge amount of freedom... sometimes it's very easy to get scared into not doing things but when you have the freedom to put the funds in upfront and then see what comes of it, we've found that the results have been very fruitful."

Jared Stoughton, Bhopal Medical Appeal

The lab

The meaning of the term ‘lab’ has expanded from its regular usage denoting a building or room set apart for practical investigations in science (Gooday 2008) to culturally signify something closer to the original, looser definition of ‘laboratorium’ as a place to labour or simply a ‘workplace’. Labs are usually understood to be contained sites of experimentation, innovation and development. The first design and innovation labs (e.g. Bell Labs) were founded in the United States in the 1920s as spaces that provided the right conditions and technologies for rigorous experimentation and investigation.

In the humanities, new forms of research and practice have expanded the definition of what a lab is. The recent proliferations of humanities ‘labs’ in academic institutions since 2010 – the move from ‘research centres’ to ‘labs’ – has been termed the ‘laboratory turn’ (Pawlicka-Deger 2020). Urszula Pawlicka-Deger describes this ‘turn’ as a pragmatic response to the need for humanities infrastructure that better meets the needs of interdisciplinary working practices. Though some types of humanities labs (such as digital humanities, fab labs and media labs) have been constructed as physical sites with specific technologies, in others, the term ‘lab’ has been used more as a spatial metaphor for interdisciplinary or collaborative research. Challenge-orientated social, community and citizen labs have also inspired a reconceptualization of the lab space as a dynamic form driven by flexible approaches to research. As a result, a new form of ‘the conceptual lab’ has emerged where labs are not necessarily physical workspaces but exist as a metaphorical shorthand for programmes where societal or institutional problems are ‘labbed’. In this formulation the ‘lab’ has been transformed from a noun into a verb.

LBO labs

LBO sought to investigate how principles and ideas from medical humanities scholarship might inform the construction of a ‘lab space’ for collaborative, interdisciplinary research into health and disability (Wray, Murray, Lynch and Eyres forthcoming 2026). Our research design positioned the development of two dynamic laboratories – a physical lab in the University of Leeds and a bespoke virtual lab – as both the sites of our research and the focus of our project. Through academic enquiry and action research with external partners across our four six-month ‘residencies’, we sought to explore what the optimal ‘lab space’ for collaborative research might be.

Initially we felt our lab needed to be a physical space where we could welcome guests. We secured a location in the Health Sciences Library at the University of Leeds and in the first year of the project, we set out to transform an institutional office space into a bespoke lab for creative, collaborative experimentation. It was important for us to acknowledge that a university lab is not a neutral space; labs are historically spaces with strict hierarchies and power relations and they carry a problematic heritage as sites of experimentation on and exploitation of marginalized communities and disabled bodies. Indeed, historically, laboratories embody many of the problematic imperial power dynamics which we were seeking to critique. As Jay Dolmage highlights, eugenic science in all its forms was driven by university research on disabled, Indigenous, and Black bodies and minds and the term ‘lab’ itself implies control, regulation and mastery over phenomena and others (2017, 11-20). Our central challenge was, therefore, to use our project values to carefully construct a space where we could push back against the hierarchical, extractive, managed and output-driven processes of academic institutions. We aimed to design laboratory experiences that offered ways of using space that emerged directly from our research interests in intersectional medical humanities and disability studies and served the needs and practices of our different collaborators.

Though our lab space proved invaluable for our meetings and daily work, we found that embodying the critical space of an ‘imaginary’ within the physical limitations of a room was more complex than we had envisaged. The university location of our lab sometimes created barriers to collaboration and served to reinforce epistemic hierarchies and privilege certain ways

of doing and knowing that careful facilitation couldn't always reset. The spatial dynamics of the physical lab (small scale, seats around a table, the library environment), for example, were well suited to theoretical and group discussion, but limited experimentation, movement, and creative play. The transition to our partner's theatre space during the Interplay residency clearly reversed this, and our work took on a new freedom in that location. We also experimented with creating a 'lab without walls', exploring what happened when we worked within the virtual realm or took our lab out to others.

Our experience throughout LBO highlighted some clear advantages of working with a more dispersed model of situated research where our research team travelled to our partners' spaces of work (see Wray, Murray, Lynch and Eyres forthcoming 2026). Indeed, it was often necessary to collaborate in our partners' spaces in order to practise lab research with care, enable different forms of creativity, and demonstrate accountability to our partners and the communities they serve. For our residency with the Bhopal Medical Appeal, for example, we reduced their burden of travel by regularly moving our activities to their Brighton base and strengthened our understanding of the BMA's contexts and priorities by travelling to sites in Bhopal. We also made the choice to hold most of our lab activities at the Thackray Museum of Medicine during our final residency to take advantage of their collections and spaces. We found that sometimes it is critical to work in context and learnt that to do experimental, collaborative research well it was necessary to have a fluid, responsive mode of working where we were as invested in going out to others as we were in inviting others in. We began to think of our 'lab' as the specific entanglements of people, places, ideas, and objects that occur wherever our research took shape rather than as a physical site.

Challenges

- University-based labs can reinforce existing hierarchies, power relations and academic ways of knowing and doing.
- Existing institutional spaces might not be well suited to experimentation and creative innovation or accessible for participants with physical disabilities or neurodiversity.
- New or bespoke infrastructure and refurbishment of physical sites require significant investments of time and money, as well as careful project management, which may not fit with funder/project timelines and budgets.
- Institutional IT contracts and policies may prohibit the development of bespoke virtual labs and/or experimentation with existing platforms.
- Data protection and security need to be carefully considered when using existing virtual platforms.

Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to whether a university-based lab is the most appropriate location for the research activity. As literature from participatory research demonstrates (Wallerstein et al 2019), there need to be more equitable spatial contexts and locations built into the collaborative research process to enable partners or participants to draw on their own strengths and knowledge-experiences.
- Going out to collaborators' spaces of work to do research activities can demonstrate a commitment to accommodating their working practices and schedules and the needs of participants.

Case Study

Virtual labs

At the project's outset, the virtual lab was envisioned as an accessible collective space for experimentation without the limits of material boundaries. Immersive Networks (our creative partners) reviewed VR environments that are accessible via browsers and had the potential for uploading custom environments, evaluating accessibility, longevity, and functionality across a range of technologies (mobiles, low end computers, and VR headsets). We chose to use Spatial.io, an immersive social platform focused on community connection, to host our virtual labs and collaborative experiments.

In our residency with Blueberry Academy, Blueberry trainees used Spatial to create safe spaces where they could talk openly about challenging health experiences and public interactions. Blueberry staff reported that trainees spoke with unprecedented openness about personal experience, and, as a result, Blueberry has a new appreciation for how immersive technologies can continue to facilitate communication around difficult subjects.

Project governance structures

Research governance structures for funded projects involve expert groups working in an advisory capacity to provide oversight of the delivery of project aims. They are an important means of ensuring accountability and enabling delivery of the overall programme of work.

Funding applications often ask for details of project governance structures, and it is preferable to name your advisors at this early stage; it provides reassurance to a funding panel that your project will have access to relevant forms of expertise, oversight and support.

LBO governance arrangements

For LBO, our governance was provided by a Steering Group and an Advisory Board. These meetings were complemented by Key Partner Meetings that brought together our partner organizations at regular intervals during the project.

The Steering Group included colleagues within our own institution who provided oversight and guidance on institutional policies and structures, the operational challenges of organizing research activities, career development opportunities, and possibilities for research dissemination and impact. Having strong connections within our institution (with, for example, our Research Culture and Data Management teams) ensured that structures were in place for our project methods and outcomes to inform university strategy and practices.

The Advisory Board included academics, disability advocates, creative practitioners and curators who provided critical reflection on the direction of our residencies with key partners and the LBO project as a whole. The Advisory Board's aim was to help ensure that the project and its outcomes were open, accessible, relevant and accountable to a wide range of communities, and that opportunities for participation followed best practice regarding equality and inclusion and cross-sector research methods.

The Key Partner Meetings offered an opportunity for all four project partner organizations to share their experiences of working with the project and provide ideas and input for future activities to the project team. They were chaired by our creative partners (rather than LBO research team members) to enable free discussion of any problems encountered. These meetings often generated important reflection and feedback, as well as establishing relationships and synergies between our partners. Some Key Partner Meetings were held in partner organizations' sites, such as the Thackray Museum, and when possible, our partners also visited each other during crossover periods between residencies.

Benefits

- Shared learning: we learnt a lot from our governance groups. The groups provided opportunities for us to discuss how we might share learning from the project within our wider research environment and institution. They also constructively challenged our assumptions and enriched our approach (see Beyond). We had valuable conversations about how the language we used might be interpreted by different disciplines and professional communities, which led to changes in our Values and Ways of Working statements.
- Accountability: governance meetings provided regular opportunities for the groups to ask the project team questions, reflect on progress, and keep the work on track. Your oversight groups may provide fresh perspectives on what you are doing and identify issues or opportunities that are difficult to spot when you are immersed in day-to-day project work. This was particularly important to LBO due to the experimental nature and scale of our project.
- Dissemination and impact generation: our governance groups provided new opportunities for us to contribute to initiatives and activities outside our own project and reach additional audiences and communities. For example, a Steering Group member facilitated our participation in the Research Culture Uncovered podcast (Research Culture Uncovered 2023) and an Advisory Board conversation resulted in a podcast series on the Bhopal disasters, featuring Bhopal Medical Appeal colleagues and LBO team members (GND Media 2024).

Recommendations

- Use your governance structures proactively. Prepare specific questions and topics on which to seek advisors' input at times when this would be valuable within your project plan, rather than simply sharing project updates. At various points we asked for feedback on outputs (including our website) and for advice on how to showcase and disseminate our work (e.g. in our end-of-project event). Look for opportunities to involve group members in project activities where appropriate and look for opportunities to contribute to work outside the project.
- Seek input from a wide range of disciplinary and professional perspectives. We had excellent support and contributions from a wide range of disciplines, methods, and professional teams including the University's Library, Research Culture, and Professional Development and Learning teams.

We had excellent support and contributions from a wide range of disciplines, methods, and professional teams.

Choosing project values

Values help inform a project's ethos, perspectives and practices, offering a shared sense of ethical commitments that can help a team feel united and protected. Project values shape day-to-day work and interaction; they help set priorities, establish frameworks and draw boundaries.

In our experience with LBO, we found that our project values needed to emerge from and for the project work at hand. As a result, we took our time to find the right concepts. We discussed our values for months, finally settling on them at the project's mid-point by reflecting on the methods we had employed, the work we had created, and what had gone well, as well as the problems we had encountered. It took us time to settle on project values because we needed to establish our practice, develop relationships of trust, and establish shared priorities to recognize and understand the values that underpinned our perspectives and efforts.

How we chose our project values

Throughout the first half of the project, we had regular conversations during our Ways of Working workshops about concepts such as equity, justice, care, accessibility, and accountability. By the time we chose our values, we had written our Ways of Working Agreement (see also Appendix A: LBO Ways of Working Agreement) and had established our shared priorities and working styles.

Our value selection process was indebted to CLEAR Lab as we adapted their clearly documented process for choosing project values (see CLEAR Lab Book 2021, 63-67 and *How We Choose Our Values* 2021). We planned a workshop devoted to choosing project values, which involved the core research team, our project manager, and one of our creative partners from Immersive Networks. We didn't invite members of our key partner organizations, mainly for the practical reason that we were working with one partner organization at a time and were at different stages of collaboration with each. Had our project been structured differently, we would have included our partners. In preparation for the values workshop, we reviewed CLEAR Lab's resources and read through our Living Glossary, which included many entries on values-related terms. We started the workshop with a Round Robin with the following prompt (provided in advance on our Activity Sheet): 'follow the CLEAR lab process and tell us a (short!) story about something that has happened on the project that you think exemplifies what is important to us. OR: Briefly introduce one or more "value" that you think is important to the project (from our collective work or from your own reading etc) and why.' As everyone took turns speaking, we drew up a list of the values mentioned and implied in each other's stories.

We then clustered these values into groups as many terms overlapped with one another. Consensus emerged very quickly around 'care' as a key value, as it came up frequently in the round robin commentary. We had a cluster of values relating to humility, reciprocity and accountability; a cluster of creativity-related terms including exploration and innovation; and accessibility also came up many times. After discussion of the first cluster, we settled on 'accountability' as a value that we felt encompassed ideas of humility and reciprocity and would also imply accessibility, since to be accountable to partners, participants and audiences we would need to make our activities accessible. 'Creativity' was the most difficult term to decide upon, as we had varying ideas about what to prioritize and some of us were keen for a notion of 'criticality' to be foregrounded. We considered whether creativity was actually a value or not and whether a value had to be a one-word term. We finished the session with 'creative-criticality' as our third value.

Three team members then collaborated to write up accounts of our values based on our discussions, our Glossary, our interactions with partners and participants, and our reading, using Live Co-Writing as a method for making the writing genuinely collaborative. The rest of the team were invited to edit and comment on the document on Teams and we held a follow-up workshop to finalize the values descriptions. By this stage it was clear that 'creative-criticality' wasn't working for us, so after further conversation we reverted to 'creativity', with an idea of criticality firmly written into the definition.

We shared our values descriptions with our project partners and Advisory Board for comment and feedback, and from that point onwards our values formed a central part of our activities (for instance, we workshopped them with partners at the beginning of the remaining residencies, along with their own organization's values). Rather than understanding our values primarily as guides for the project, we saw them as being in an ongoing relationship with our activities, intertwined and in negotiation with the work we were doing. We checked back in with our values on subsequent Ways of Working days to ensure they still represented our priorities.

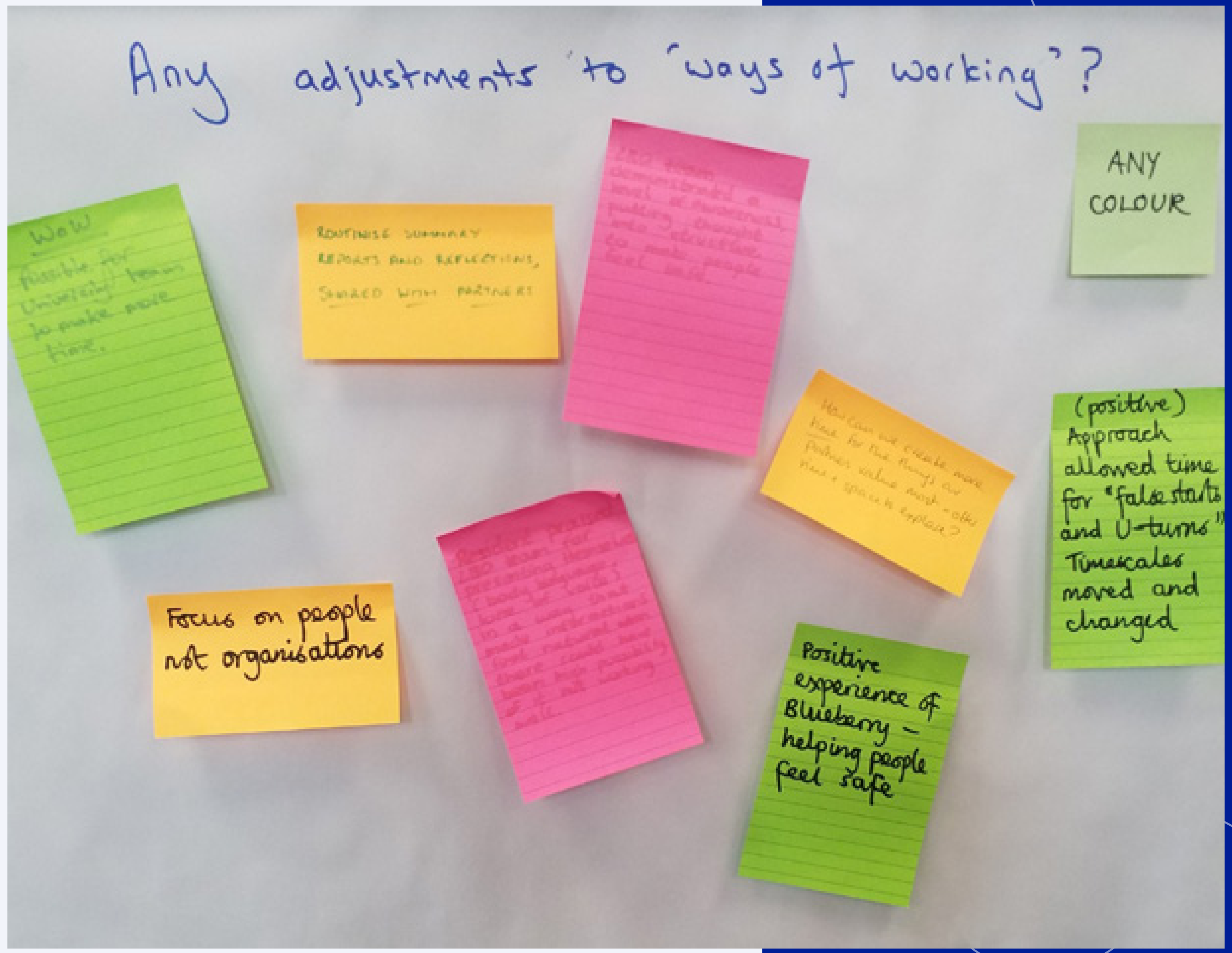
Benefits

- Having named project values gives your project a sense of identity, priorities, ethical responsibilities, and shared purpose.
- Values can help in decision-making about whether and how to do things.
- You can refer to your values (along with your Ways of Working Agreement) in situations of conflict or tension.

Risks and considerations

- It is important to have consensus about project values, but the process of choosing values may cause tensions and differences of opinion between team members. There is potential for conflict because values are something we care about deeply.
- Having a transparent and equitable process for selecting values is essential. Don't rush a decision if it's difficult to reach consensus.
- Think carefully about when you are ready to choose your values. An established team may do this at the very start of a project or even write values into a funding application. It's very good practice if you can do this! But if you are new to working together you may need time to explore and experiment with your ways of working first.
- Initiate your values selection process with plenty of preparatory discussion. Preparation and discussion are essential; attempting to choose values out of the blue won't work.

Ways of working agreements



A Ways of Working Agreement (WoWA) outlines principles and commitments for working collaboratively. It can offer methodological strategies and practical guidelines for working according to project values, providing a useful template for assuring equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) priorities are considered for all activities. Many organizations have tailored versions of these documents, such as Safer Spaces agreements that guide participants' conduct in meetings, advise on how and when to speak, and aim to make everyone feel included, especially those in marginalized or otherwise vulnerable positions. See Appendix A for our Ways of Working Agreement.

LBO ways of working

Because the LBO project was centred on partnerships, engaged with communities with a range of health needs, and was designed to be reflective about working practices, it was important to develop a set of commitments regarding how we would work as a team and with others. When thinking about our commitments to EDI, we were mindful of how many institutions with power – such as universities – may claim to welcome more people into their spaces but fail to transform those spaces to be truly inclusive, keeping existing power dynamics intact. We wanted to ensure that our project consistently made visitors welcome, reflected on distributions and operations of power, and protected the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone involved.

We started thinking about ways of working from the beginning of LBO, but our Ways of Working Agreement took several months to put together. We needed to build trust and ease as a team, experiment with different methods of facilitation, and experience some obstacles and tensions before we could create a bespoke Agreement that reflected our project's specific commitments. We engaged in regular reflection and experimentation about how we worked with our team, partners and communities according to our project values. We considered our approach to research spaces, practices and methods and strove to develop working methods able to destabilize conventional power dynamics and contribute to positive change in academic research culture.

The first draft of our WoWA was produced via a live co-writing process on our project Teams site (see Live Co-Writing). Together in the same room, we all accessed the same document and added bullet points of what we each thought were important principles or commitments, discussing our entries as we wrote. We then went through a collaborative editing process of reviewing the entries, identifying key themes and grouping entries under key headings (e.g. health, wellbeing and accessibility; workload; working with others; interacting with care). When there were overlaps between people's entries, we discussed the best wording for capturing everyone's priorities. Once we had consensus over a rough draft, a couple of team members then did some final edits to refine language and ensure the document was coherent – but only when the principles had been agreed upon. We deliberately kept our statements short, clear and open-ended, so they could apply to most scenarios. We revisited our WoWA at key points of the project (for instance, between residencies) to update it, add in any new learning from recent experiences, and check that we were still happy with our commitments and priorities.

Benefits

- Having practical ways of working guidance makes it easier to organize project activities and events in ways that reflect project values.
- The WoWA provides a tool for addressing problematic behaviour or activity. It's easier to see why and how project dynamics need to change if you have a shared set of commitments to hold yourselves accountable to.
- A WoWA allows you to share project methods and values with project partners and collaborators in a quick and direct way.
- The WoWA is a handy tool for developing weekly activity sheets since it alerts you to the EDI considerations that need to be addressed (see Activity Sheet).

Limitations

- Any WoWA will be an aspirational document. In LBO, we didn't always manage to put our commitments into practice, but the Agreement helped remind us of our guiding values and helped us aim toward best practice every time we worked together.
- You can't anticipate every kind of accommodation that will be required at the start of a project. The WoWA requires updating and adapting as a project develops and changes.
- Like so many of the tools and techniques outlined in the toolkit, developing a WoWA takes resources, especially time. It can feel like an unnecessary step – why not just get the work started and save all the time it takes to create a shared set of priorities and practices? – but it is well worth the time spent. In fact, it ended up saving time as the project continued since it provided a reliable template for developing new working relationships and project activities.

"There was a lot of reflection on the ways of working with the LivingBodiesObjects project team and that was just really valuable for us as an organization and has helped to change our working practices going forward."

Jared Stoughton,
Bhopal Medical Appeal

Partnerships

Working in partnership means either formal or informal collaboration between academics, groups and organizations. It can involve partners bringing different kinds of experience and input into a single piece of work, but often refers to broader, longer-term collaboration, perhaps even stretching across different projects.

At the core of partnership working is mutual respect. A good partnership recognizes that each partner brings something important, and that the reason for the partnership is to create richer, more meaningful outcomes.

It is essential to start out with an honest discussion about what the partnership might involve, where it will lead, and what contributions each partner will make.

Common or complementary goals are vital. In some cases, these can be connected to the aims and objectives of the contributing partners, in others they might be focused on third-party beneficiaries. Some partnerships are open-ended, perhaps building a strategic relationship which could outlast a single project, while others are time-limited and focused on specific outcomes within a given timeframe. Whatever form a partnership takes, it is important to recognize that they do not just happen. They require willingness from those involved to listen, communicate, and adapt. It is crucial to recognize the limitations and pressures which different partners might be under due to imbalances in scale, capacity, or resources.

For excellent resources to support partnerships and provide insights into the practical processes of partnership development, see NCCPE 2025.

LBO partnerships

Our project involved several different kinds of partnership. Our 'key' partners were four non-academic organizations which each held a six-month residency with our lab: Interplay Theatre, Blueberry Academy, the Bhopal Medical Appeal, and the Thackray Museum of Medicine. Although the residencies were all the same duration – and part of the same project, with shared overall goals – the partnerships all took on quite different forms.

The relationships with our key partners began before we applied for project funding. While some partnership details were developed once funding was in place, we discussed timing and budgeting well in advance. Perhaps most importantly, we also shared project details, structure and goals, soliciting partner feedback which we incorporated into project design. Our partnership development process involved formal meetings to discuss contracts and requirements of the funding and more informal activities to establish relationships and explore our mutual interests.

Once the project was underway, we implemented a 'devolved finance' model (see Budget and Project Finances), which made each partner organization responsible for their own residency budget. To comply with our central funders' requirements an agreement about finance management was necessary for each residency. Each of these agreements required aligning the financial process of at least two institutions so each partnership worked slightly differently.

As well as our four key partners, we also developed a close partnership throughout the project with our creative facilitators (Immersive Networks). Having a partnership with them which spanned the four residencies allowed them to support our various ways of working with key partners. As our partnerships developed our key partners appreciated the semi-independent input from our facilitators. It helped to ensure partnerships which more closely matched the needs and capacities of the different organizations.

Benefits and recommendations

- Partnership working can draw on diverse, complementary skills and experiences.
- By having a formal or semi-formal partnership arrangement you can have clear expectations and be aware of what is and isn't in the scope of the partnership.
- When entering into a partnership, being open and explicit about project values and ways of working as well as research ideas can help everyone involved to build trust and agree on what their aims are.
- Our partners stressed the importance of getting buy-in at an early stage from different constituents in the partner organization, not just those directly involved in the research. Your collaborators will have to present a case to their trustees or board to gain approval for the project, and the support of senior management will ensure a smoother process for your collaborators and help with disseminating the research. The partner's finance team, meanwhile, will have to process invoices so will need to understand the nature of the activities.
- A partnership which extends beyond an individual project can create new opportunities or possibilities for working together.

Limitations and risks

- Developing meaningful partnerships takes time and resources, including during the project planning stage when a project is unfunded and team time is limited.
- Partnerships can sometimes be inflexible and this can be problematic, such as when the needs and priorities of one or more partners change significantly during a project.
- Partnership agreements can sometimes close down other avenues to collaboration.
- It's important to be aware of the risks that partners take when entering into a research partnership that requires their time and investment. A partnership may disrupt the usual workings of the organization or there may be a mismatch between your organizational cultures or ways of working.
- Another risk is that the research will be extractive, deriving benefit for the researchers (via publications and prestige) without ultimately benefiting partners or contributing to their organizational goals or priorities (see Reciprocity).
- It's important not to make assumptions about your partners' time or take their labour for granted.

"One of the strengths that I... like about the project is that it was flexible... it seems to have fitted all of our different sized organizations."

"A real strength [is that] we [made] everyone an LBO researcher. It is a really attractive thing for an organization to be part of a project like this because it... brings that organization together and makes people feel valued."

Jamie Taylor,
Thackray Museum of Medicine

Onboarding/offboarding

Onboarding is the process of preparing to undertake a task or become familiar with a new concept, approach, or method. It is about getting ready and transitioning to new environments and ways of working.

Offboarding is a way of drawing together the benefits of an activity and reflecting on the experience.

Onboarding and offboarding are often used in the context of an individual starting out in a new job or institution. There, onboarding is about ensuring that ways of working become harmonized as well as learning new skills or acquiring essential knowledge and capabilities.

Onboarding involves being attentive to change and its impact on people. Making time and space for introductions to new settings and ideas is important. Practical ways of doing this can involve using objects or stories to inspire shared conversations. These can act as neutral starting points for discussion, establishing shared priorities and learning about how members of the group might view things differently.

While onboarding is a useful concept for organizing projects, it can also be applied to outputs. When considering how to engage audiences and readerships – whether through a written, digital, or artistic output – identifying what onboarding might be required is a strategy to increase engagement and meaning-making.

Planning offboarding requires mechanisms to capture insights. Here, reflective practice is key, including (for LBO) the use of Reflective Interviews to identify key points of learning. Offboarding also draws attention to activities or threads that are incomplete and prompts discussion about how these will be managed as the project moves to a new phase. A prioritization exercise, highlighting areas of potential future development, can act as an effective tool to focus offboarding, whether using digital means (such as Padlet) or post-it notes as part of a collective exercise.

Onboarding and offboarding in LBO

When transitioning from one project phase to the next we took time to become familiar with each new partner's priorities, ways of working, and institutional context. This process took time but meant that we developed shared priorities and areas of focus before we started to create outputs.

Benefits

- Preparing people for a new environment or role means that they feel more comfortable and able to contribute to shared activities and experiences.
- Onboarding offers a space for thinking about individual and group needs and what perspectives people bring.
- When team members move on, or when a particular project phase ends, offboarding ensures that earlier experiences can be integrated into future activities.

Limitations

- Thinking about onboarding and offboarding, and working out effective strategies, takes time and needs planning at an early stage.
- Without making onboarding personal there is a risk that – as with any kind of induction process – it can become generic and vague.
- Prioritization exercises can bring teams together at moments of transition. It's important to have clear follow-up protocols for any areas which require ongoing attention or development.

↑ Comic strip by Jamie Stark, Jack Gann and Jamie Taylor.

Case Study

Thackray Museum of Medicine

We integrated onboarding into some of our project outputs. For example, when developing an exhibition on personalized medicine and healthcare with our residency partner, the Thackray Museum of Medicine in Leeds, we explored how to help 'onboard' museum visitors. In other words, we asked 'how can we help visitors enter the exhibition in a spirit of playful engagement?' To that end we placed a simple interactive area immediately outside the exhibition space – a wall with mirrors and glasses for visitors to try on – to start visitors thinking about their own choices and preferences. We then included similar interactive experiences in the exhibition, with mirrors and choices being repeated throughout.

For the same exhibition, we finished with an offboarding exercise, directing visitors to an area where they could evaluate the exhibition and find additional information about accessing support for their own health.

Early career researchers

Early Career Researcher, or ECR, is a loosely defined term used in the UK to reference any researcher who is in the early stages of their career. It can include PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, or recently hired staff members (lecturers/assistant professors). The precarity of the academic job market means that many ECRs have a lot of research and work experience as they shift from contract to contract in a range of roles and institutions.

We made ECR support and career development a priority in LBO, budgeting for ECR professionalization in our application. LBO's postdoctoral Research Development and Documentation Fellow was included in all aspects of project management and development and had a personal professional development fund, which was used for training, workshops and conferences. This colleague's contract also extended six months beyond the official project end date to allow for time to write up publications and prepare for the next career stage; too often, postdoc posts that last the duration of a project leave the postholder having to do any follow-on work in an unpaid capacity.

LBO Research Assistants

Skills development and professionalization were also prioritized in the recruitment and mentoring of LBO's research assistants. We wanted to explore models for ECR involvement in large-scale projects that are genuinely supportive of professional development rather than contributing further to precarity in the sector, as many short-term posts do. With that in mind, we set up a PGR/ECR Employability Scheme which offered part-time Research Assistant (RA) roles for Leeds postgraduate researchers or very recent PhD graduates who were still attached to the university. We were mindful of the fact that PhD researchers funded by UK research councils often have access to a range of professional development and employability opportunities that are unavailable to self-funded students or those with other funding sources, effectively creating a two-tier system of opportunity in UK academia. Our roles were open to ECRs who did not have research council support and were designed to be manageable alongside a PhD (within the number of working hours permitted by the university and national visa requirements) or, for recent graduates, alongside teaching or other part-time employment. They were short-term posts attached to our six-month residencies with project partners, and hours and working patterns were designed to be as flexible as possible. Each Research Assistant had their own specialist research project within a residency – for instance, Dey Ricketts supported Blueberry Academy by producing a literature review on the use of VR technology by and for young adults with learning disabilities, while Chris Stringer produced a digital map of areas affected by groundwater contamination in Bhopal, to be used by the Bhopal Medical Appeal – but they were also encouraged to participate in multiple aspects of project design and delivery, especially those areas of residency activity that offered them opportunities to develop particular skills or acquire professional experience that they had identified as being important to their future career plans.

The RAs were jointly mentored by an LBO academic team member and by a member of the partner organization. The roles were designed to enhance ECR employability both inside and outside of the academy by offering the experience of contributing to a large collaborative interdisciplinary research project with significant public engagement and impact elements (of which there are relatively few in the arts and humanities) and the experience of working for organizations in the creative industries, museums, or third sector. With RAs given significant responsibilities and opportunities to shape our collective research direction, the roles allowed for CV enhancement whilst providing meaningful, well-paid and sustainable work experience for the role-holders. Inductions helped to establish the researcher's career development goals and to plan how the role might be shaped to meet them and were followed up by regular mentoring meetings. This flexibility led to some wonderful unanticipated outcomes, such as when Yaxin Luo's expertise as a theatre practitioner resulted in her performance as a key character in our theatre piece developed with Interplay Theatre as well as conducting research on disability theatre.

LBO RA experiences

As LBO Research Assistants we were postgraduate researchers or had recently completed our PhDs. We worked with a close-knit, inclusive team where everyone's voice and input was valued. We were questioning how research is done alongside conducting our research. This meant working with experienced researchers as well as in-sector practitioners to make links between living, bodies and objects.

Expectations (prior to role)

- Useful research training/practice
- Sifting through mountains of data
- Regular check-ins for progress
- Regular commitments
- Regular pay

Opportunities

- Flexible working to promote autonomy
- Opportunity to practise and share/present our work
- Opportunity to gain work experience (regardless of characteristic)
- Opportunity to learn from and network with academics and practitioners

Permissions

- Permission to fail and learn
- Permission to explore
- Permission to find one's research identity

Struggles

- Struggle to get off the ground/work out how to begin the research
- Struggles with uncertainty
- Struggles with time frames
- Struggle to get regular employment

Yaxin Luo

Research Assistant with Interplay Theatre

As an artist-researcher on the LivingBodiesObjects project in collaboration with Interplay National Sensory Theatre, my work focused on experimentation with a variety of technologies to create new theatrical works and research on evaluating audience experience, particularly for students with learning disabilities. My primary responsibilities were threefold. As a research assistant, I undertook research on theatre and disability and audience experience; as a member of the creative team, I facilitated the creation and development of the theatrical production; and as a performer, I infused vitality into my character, enhancing the interaction between the student audience and our 'artificial friend', the robot Kara (see Co-creation for more about this performance).

To pursue a balanced power dynamic, we considered students with learning disabilities to be co-creators of the interactive theatrical experience. We highlighted a sense of play to foster the audience's engagement and considered the accessibility of theatre spaces and experiences for students with physical and learning disabilities. As Petra Kuppers writes, disabled people may experience a 'non-fit with social space. We have to think about how to get into the theatre, how to get into our seat, how to access the spectacle – these are core issues for disabled audiences' (2017, 5). With considerations such as accessibility and convenience, respect for autonomy, and the inspiration of creativity in mind, we encouraged students to directly participate in the set design by bringing and selecting objects to use as props as well as devising questions to ask Kara.

We wanted the students to feel empowered throughout the audience survey process, which occurred both during and after the experience. We used open discussion with the audience after the performance and offered individuals the opportunity for one-to-one conversations with Kara. To explore what audiences thought about the experience, one audience group from Blueberry Academy also took part in a feedback workshop including creative writing, drawing, and feedback letter writing.

Despite an increasing amount of literature on learning disability, drama therapy and therapeutic applications of theatre, it has taken longer for theatre created by people with learning disabilities to be acknowledged (Palmer and Hayhow 2009, 2). To ensure the students' talents and contributions were recognised, we awarded them with official certificates (see Appendix F). Overall, our work with Interplay Theatre explored how we could use technology positively and affectionately to engage audiences and create accessible and entertaining theatrical experiences.

Deyanna Ricketts

Research Assistant with Blueberry Academy

I was a Research Assistant on LBO's second residency with Blueberry Academy. Here, we worked with young adults with additional needs as fellow researchers. This approach led to a refreshing take on co-production and enhanced participation because the 'trainees' (as Blueberry calls them) were not only able to gain an understanding of what it was like to be a researcher but also were integral to the outcomes of this residency.

We worked together on helping the trainees access and use VR technology. To help them understand why we were researching the use of VR technology with young adults with additional needs, my job was to produce a systematic literature review in both academic and easy read formats. This was so the trainees could understand and access information they otherwise wouldn't have been able to access. As Mencap explain, 'Easy Read is a way of showing written down information that makes it easier to read. Text is broken down into short sentences on a page, images are chosen to represent each sentence and language is simplified where possible' (2024). I first went away and did the preliminary desk research. I then spoke to Blueberry trainees and asked them how they would like the information to be shared with them. They requested picture references and plain language that anyone could understand.

Being consulted as fellow researchers led to greater engagement from the trainees with the VR technologies we experimented with and also helped improve their confidence and communication with the rest of the LBO research team. However, our approach met with challenges, including the need to fit the relevant research processes within Blueberry's college terms and changes to the trainee team when individuals moved on from the academy.

Our efforts to ensure that anyone could understand our research outputs met LBO's EDI mission in several ways. It helped everyone feel valued within the research regardless of characteristic, and ensured that power differentials between researchers and participants were minimized. Our innovative co-production approach with the trainees allowed me to explore further things from my own research field. A potential drawback of the easy-read information approach is that it can be seen as infantilizing, and what makes sense to one person may not make sense to another. However, by consulting the trainees and including them every step of the way, we worked hard to ensure they would be happy with the output.

Rachel Garratt

Research Assistant with the Bhopal Medical Appeal

I would encourage anyone hiring Early Career Researchers as research assistants to include them in a wide range of project activities and discussions, as LivingBodiesObject has. The parameters of my role were to conduct audience research for our digital storytelling project, and I had a clear idea as I went into the project of what this would involve: creating and distributing surveys, running focus groups, and compiling my findings into reports for the project. I was pleasantly surprised to find that I was encouraged by the team to get involved in different aspects of the project and participate more fully in residency activities and discussions.

LivingBodiesObjects allowed me to participate in the creative work on the project, including discussions of how to work with sensitive testimonies from survivors of the Bhopal disasters, and to give feedback on our digital resources during the creative process. Including early career researchers in this manner ensured that fresh perspectives were brought to the group, and it also benefited me as someone who had recently graduated with my PhD. It allowed me to explore a topic beyond my established field of research and to be involved in elements of the project that I had not expected to be.

It is important, however, to remember some of the insecurities that an early career researcher may have entering a project like this. Being involved in parts of the project beyond my previous experiences was ultimately a positive experience. However, there were times that I felt the need to emphasize that I was relatively inexperienced and may need certain topics or practices explained to me. This is where the LivingBodiesObjects ways of working discussions were useful, as I felt comfortable raising concerns and being honest about my lack of knowledge or experience in certain areas.

It is also important that early career researchers gain experience beyond academic settings, as many will go into jobs outside of academic research and universities. Being able to discuss the workings of the partner organizations – in my case, a charity – has added further skills and experience that I can take into other roles. This is where the mentoring on a project is useful, especially when individuals like myself are exploring multiple career avenues.

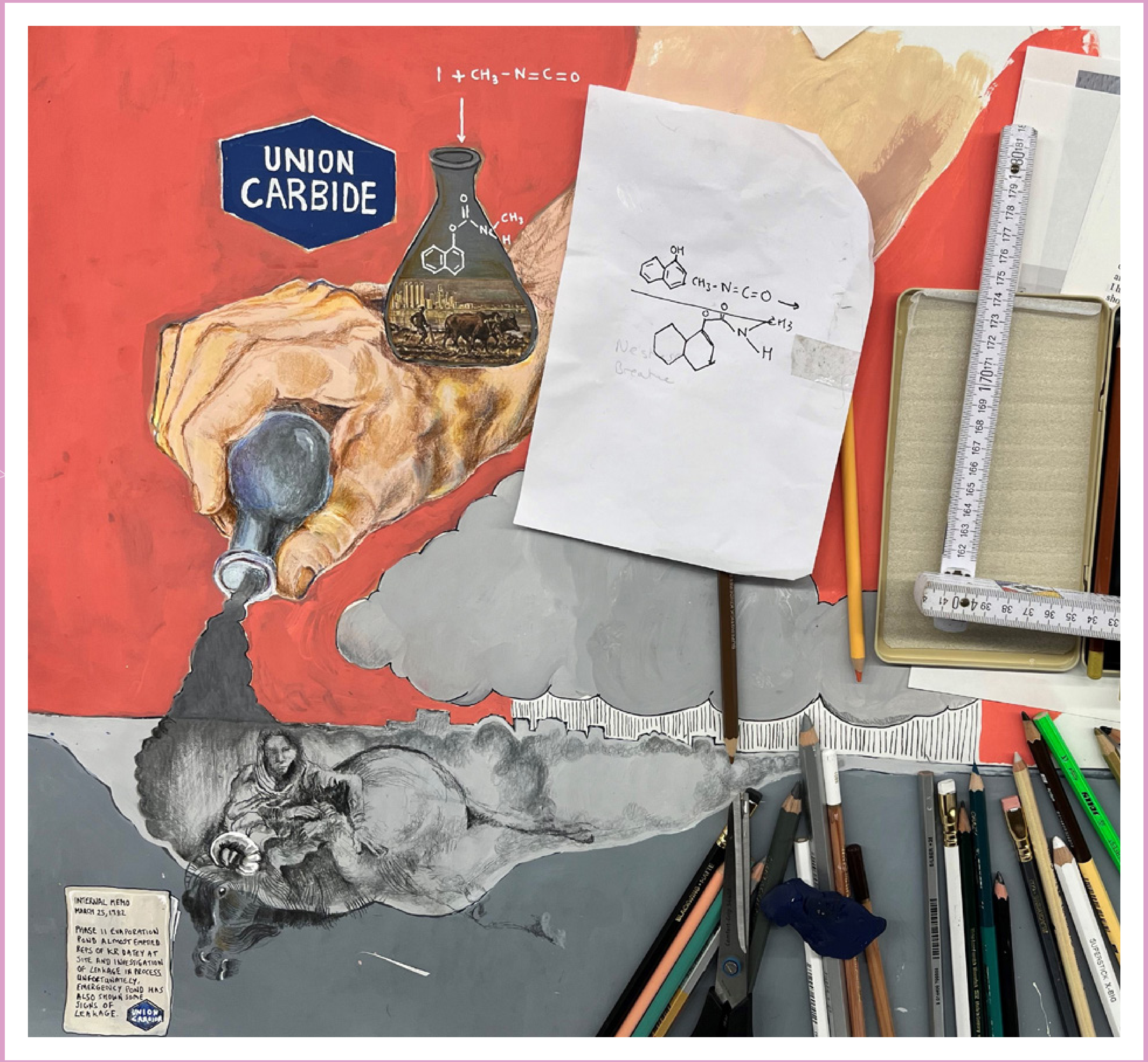
I would advise those working on future projects to involve ECRs in many different aspects of the project; however, they should be mindful of their level of comfort and foster an environment where they can raise concerns. Despite feeling out of my depth at times, I think that I gained far more than I had expected from being involved in the project and that my knowledge and insights were useful and valued.

Activities & Practices

Over the course of LBO we developed a range of activities and practices to help us work according to our project values.

Many of our activities and practices emerged as responses to problems or difficulties and serve as reminders that it's important to reflect on research culture over the duration of a project and make sure that structures and practices are living up to expectations and working for everyone involved. If not, it's never too late to change! Introducing new practices and activities can work wonders for shifting and improving research culture. While some of these activities, like co-creation, (creative) documentation and using technology were planned from the start, the forms these endeavours took shifted over the course of the project as different techniques proved more or less comfortable and useful. Other practices, like activity sheets, reflective interviews and moments activities were a direct response to unexpected challenges, project partner needs and staff skillsets and innovation.

As with so many of the entries in this toolkit, this section underscores the importance of regular project scrutiny and reflection. It's important to audit activities, structures, practices, and schedules regularly to make sure they continue to embody project values. Such reflection takes time but is invaluable for discovering new strategies and techniques and making the most of diverse insights and skillsets offered by project teams.



Activity sheet

The activity sheet is a document we used to plan and schedule project activities, ensure everyone had a shared understanding of what we were going to do, and make sure we'd anticipated any accessibility needs and adjustments in advance.

We developed the activity sheet template during our first residency as activity days became more complicated and involved greater numbers of visitors. There were occasions when we realized we needed to work harder to plan with care and create safe spaces for our activities because people came to them with different approaches and practices and this could lead to conflict or diverging priorities. Without these sheets, we found activity days could be difficult to prepare for, people had different expectations about the purpose of activities, and some visitors were not able to participate as they might have liked. While our roving lab was often a strength, this mobility sometimes meant that it was hard to keep up with arrangements from week to week.

We wanted our activities to be inclusive and to respond to the evolving needs of our work and everyone involved, and we found the activity sheet a helpful tool for ensuring that this was the case. We also wanted to create a framework for people choosing their level of participation in any activity, and to stress that it was fine to opt out, quietly observe or contribute in different ways.

See Appendix B for a sample activity sheet.

How we used activity sheets

We aimed to circulate an activity sheet at least a week in advance of the activity it described. The event organizer would plan the day and develop the activity sheet, often in consultation with other team members or partners. Thought would be given to the purpose and desired outcomes of an activity, the best methods for achieving those outcomes while working with care, as well as to who was participating to make sure specific needs, preferences and priorities were accommodated.

We found that our activity sheets needed to cover:

- logistical and practical information such as the location and time of an activity, any travel information, and technology needs;
- any preparation tasks that needed to be completed in advance (complete with links to reading or online tools);
- a schedule of activities, including the objectives of each task and some information about how we would do it;
- and – most importantly – information about what we called EDI Considerations: from accessibility information and alternative versions of materials to content warnings, encouragement to take breaks from screen time, and requests to be mindful of power, status or hierarchies that could come into play. We always made a point to say that participants in our lab day activities could occupy the space in whatever ways felt comfortable to them: sitting, standing, lying down or moving around. And we tried to include a range of options for creative tasks to suit different communication and learning preferences (e.g. writing, drawing, voice recordings, etc).

The activity sheets varied from week to week: the schedule could be as simple as a meeting agenda or much more detailed for complex activities involving multiple participants and media.

We have used different technologies throughout our project, and we found that technology and software can both enable inclusive participation and support accessibility, as well as limit and exclude participation (see Using Technology). Thinking about this in advance helped us to mitigate such risks and choose appropriate tools.

↑ **'Research journey' comic strip by Dave Lynch and Steve Byrne,** reflecting on the development of activity sheets to ensure safe spaces. (See Appendix E for an account of this Comics Exercise).

"the ways of working and. . . safe spaces. . . that we've been talking about will feed directly into our [future] work."

Steve Byrne,
Interplay National Sensory Theatre

Benefits

- Receiving the activity sheet well in advance means participants have adequate time to complete any preparation tasks, or to ask questions.
- All participants will have clear expectations and a shared understanding of events.
- People also understand what technology or tools will be used and can access them in advance.
- The expectation that we'd think proactively about accessibility and EDI needs meant that we would plan events more carefully, make events more inclusive, and think not only about the desired 'outcomes' of an activity but also the embodied and psychological experience of the day for everybody involved.
- Consistency: the activity sheet ensures the same and full range of factors are considered each time, not just when remembered.
- It also enables careful planning of activities, so that appropriate tasks or methods are designed for particular outcomes. This helps to make the days run smoothly.
- We now have a detailed archive and record of project activities week by week.

Limitations/challenges

- It is difficult to anticipate all participants' needs and potential barriers to participation. There were many times that we got things wrong.
- Careful preparation in this way generally leads to better activity days but significantly increases the time and workload commitment for the event organizer. Inevitably, not everyone can commit the same amount of time to pre-work.
- This level of planning can inhibit spontaneity and openness. There was an ongoing tension in our project between the need to plan carefully for accessibility and workload reasons and the importance of making room for creative freedom and unexpected outcomes. Sometimes we departed from the activity sheet's schedule when we needed to follow up the most interesting or urgent conversations.

Co-creation

Co-creation involves different groups or people making or producing things in collaboration. It can be about generating new knowledge or insights, but also about making something tangible, such as a text or creative output. One of the most important features of responsible co-creation is that there is equity of input and agency across contributors; when co-creation is at its best the final outputs and outcomes reflect the input of everyone involved.

There are many different scales and kinds of co-creation. It can range from two academic researchers working together on a single output, to complex multi-partner projects which involve many organizations and stakeholders. Amongst the most important features of successful co-creation are shared understanding, mutual respect, and forward planning.

Co-creation typically allows diverse perspectives and skills to come together towards shared goals. This kind of collaboration must be done in a way that respects and values this diversity. For academic collaborators, it is particularly important to recognize different ways of 'being expert' and to recognize the value of lived experience. Shared understanding of these goals is also key. Effective co-creation allows for joint planning and offers mechanisms for collaborators to shape both the creative process and the outcomes that result. Collaborators might come from very different starting points, and so exchanging information about everyone's expectations from the outset is vital. Like many other aspects of project management explored in the toolkit, having clear roles and utilizing inclusive facilitation strategies during co-creation sessions makes for better outcomes.

Co-creation in LBO

In LBO, our emphasis was on learning through making creative outputs with our partners, and the process of co-creation was just as important as the final product. Our co-creative work was a means to explore and refine our research questions and ways of working and to test out creative uses of immersive and digital technologies (see Using Technology). The initial phases of our collaborations were focused on exploratory activities and reflection with our partners to define our research questions. Our partners shared their key priorities and ambitions for the project, and we worked with them and other collaborators (including creative practitioners, performers, medical specialists, technicians, schools and community groups) to explore how to co-create work that met those priorities.

Benefits of co-creation

- Project outputs and outcomes reflect the views and experiences of a wider range of individuals, groups and communities.
- Individuals and communities who have been historically marginalized in research can shape activities and outcomes.
- The process of co-creating can lead to richer and potentially unexpected questions, insights and perspectives.

Challenges

- All research projects carry risk, but co-creation is arguably more uncertain and risk laden.
- Meaningful co-creation can require significant time and resources, and working on projects with compressed timescales can inhibit its potential benefits. It is hard to generalize about how long should be allocated to this kind of work, but co-creation processes work best when there is ample time built in to establish agreed upon ways of working.
- Working with other institutions who have their own established protocols and procedures (for instance, regarding finance, consent or the care of artefacts) can necessitate the development of new processes to balance the requirements of both institutions. See Partnerships.
- Authorship of co-created outputs is not straightforward, and so attribution needs to be discussed regularly to ensure all contributors are credited appropriately. This is especially important for Early Career Researchers.

Find out more about co-creation

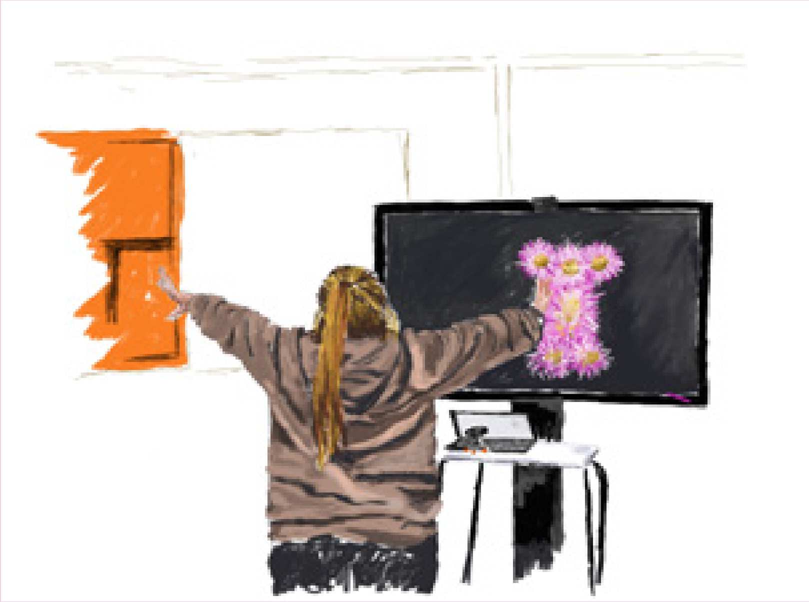
The AHRC-funded Creative Communities project, based at the University of Northumbria, has summarised some key principles and benefits of co-creation.

"One of the things I've really learnt and really embraced is that going into a project where you don't necessarily know the outcome is really freeing because it gives you that invitation to spend that time ... to interrogate ideas, interrogate assumptions... Not knowing is a power... it's not a bug it's a feature."

Jamie Taylor,
Thackray Museum of Medicine

Co-creation Case Study

Interplay Theatre



← **Drawing by Lynn Wray.**

In one strand of our collaboration with Interplay Theatre, we developed an interactive theatre performance for audiences with learning disabilities. We began to develop our shared priorities and plans through a series of group activities and workshops, including acting and movement exercises, discussions of poems, scripts, novels and scholarship on accessible theatre. This exploration helped us identify a shared interest in futures of care, particularly robot care, and so we developed a piece of interactive theatre about an 'artificial friend' (see also Early Career Researchers).

We created the performance through weekly workshops with Interplay's actors and technicians to create a scenario, script, interactive parameters, costuming, lighting, and sound design. The performance that resulted was entirely co-created; indeed, as an interactive performance, even the audience from John Jamieson Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre was involved in determining the direction of the final show. We designed a 'Robot Researcher' certificate to acknowledge this contribution (see Appendix F).

Co-creation Case Study

Thackray Museum of Medicine

During our six-month collaboration with the Thackray Museum of Medicine, we co-created an exhibition about the future of personalized medicine. We discussed what opportunities there were for co-creation with local community groups, given the condensed timeframe in which we were working. We recognized that as the relationships our Thackray colleagues were building with local communities were a work in progress, there was insufficient time to build the trust that creates effective relationships with new groups or develop the whole exhibition in a co-creative way.

We knew that we would not be able to include everything that we worked on during the residency in the final exhibition. Our experiments creating fictional patents (Stark and Gooday 2015), using the Thackray's collection, as well as projection mapping and generating new soundscapes, were very useful tools, but did not make the cut.

Instead, we focused on co-creating specific elements of the exhibition with three community groups with whom the museum had an established relationship. These included the 'Community Pharmacy' installation, which displayed bottles of 3D-printed pills designed by community participants who imagined what they would like their personalized medication to look, taste and smell like, and what conditions it might treat.

"Having the freedom to define what we're going do is a very different approach to how we normally put an exhibition together... we were able to find [parameters, themes, subject] through the exploratory process, the ideations that we did with LivingBodiesObjects, and come out with a project that feels much more meaningful in a way because it's come from us."

Jack Gann,
Thackray Museum of Medicine

Using technology

It is impossible to undertake research without using technology. Whether one is making notes with a pencil or working with the Large Hadron Collider, technology is ubiquitous in research. Using technology is a critical and ethical act that shapes research culture. It's tempting to assume that cutting edge technologies will imbue research with a beneficial degree of sophistication and novelty. In fact, technology frequently fails, and when it does work it can unnecessarily complicate research. Using technology effectively requires an awareness of how it can be a barrier as well as an enabler and being judicious in choosing what technology to employ, as well as when, where, and how to employ it (King, Stark and Cooke 2016).

LBO and technology

In LBO, we used technology as a means of developing both ideas and final outputs. We employed a wide range of technologies, including digital platforms, VR, 3D printing, projection mapping, GIS mapping, photography, film, sound recording equipment, motion capture, 3D scanning, AI image generators, costumes and makeup (for theatre production), pencils, pens, paper, stickers, and digital painting software. In all cases, technologies were chosen with both the desired outputs and the experience of using them in mind. For example, VR became a focal point of the residency with Blueberry Academy, a training provider for young disabled people, after careful deliberation and discussion with staff and trainees. However, we discovered older technology (hand-written notes) offered a better means of documentation than film or sound recordings, which felt invasive and inappropriate (see Documentation and Reflection).

Technology was both an enabling tool and a source of critical reflection. We often found ourselves asking why we were considering the use of certain technologies over others, and whether it might actually work better to distance ourselves from them altogether (Murray 2020). We tried to be accountable to our partners and project team in our decision-making about using, adapting, or abandoning specific technologies. We also recognized that making decisions about which technologies to use, and when, carries a burden of care, since we wanted to be sure that our partners and collaborators felt as comfortable as possible in using the tools we suggested. The use of technology provided an important way for us to reflect, and reflect on, our project values.

Benefits

- Using technologies in the way we suggest provides a flexible framework that encourages consultation with partners and ongoing attention to how technology is being used. In our experience, this helped us make informed choices about the method and materials employed for each partnership. In many cases, our final choices were significantly different from what we had initially imagined.
- A commitment to self-reflexive technology use can reflect a project's values and way of working.

Limitations

- Open-ended discussions about the use of technology can potentially signal to project partners uncertainty or a lack of expertise. Partners may be concerned that choices are too experimental or may not get the outcomes they desire.
- Many forms of technology are expensive and may need to be written into project budgets at the application stage. Cost may limit the technologies teams have access to and prevent flexibility over the course of a project. If your team has purchased equipment, you may feel compelled to use it even if it no longer seems to be the best choice for the activity.

Recommendations

- Start by asking general questions: what is the purpose or goal in using the technology? How will it be used? Can your goals be achieved in a more effective way if different technology is used? Who benefits from the technology's use? Individually or collaboratively? Does the technology in question offer the most accessible research method? How will the technology affect the quality of the research experience as well as its outcomes? What would a successful outcome look like?
- These questions are best understood as provocations and guides. This kind of self-reflection can help disrupt assumptions that certain technologies are a 'natural' fit for certain research tasks, helping researchers decide if the most 'sophisticated' technology is necessarily the best for the task at hand. While these questions should be asked prior to choosing and using technology, it's helpful to revisit them as the research proceeds to assess whether a technology should be changed or even abandoned over the course of a project.

Living glossary

On the LBO project, our 'Living Glossary' became a useful tool for our thinking about project values, key concepts, and EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) work. It is a collection of concepts, insights, and provocations that reflects the diverse types of knowledge that our project valued. It includes quotations and concepts from academic scholarship, notes on the best practice of other labs and groups and organizations, and our own reflections (and those of our partners) on our work in progress. The glossary functioned as our conceptual toolkit, where we explored, defined and documented the ideas that underpin our work, but we also used it as a space for thought in action, where we reflected on what we were reading, what was happening in the lab, and how our work related to that of others.

LBO's living glossary

Our Glossary began early in the project, during our 'pause before the start' (see Pausing). Our creative partners had found a transdisciplinary glossary to be generative in a previous project (see The Superposition 2019), and our own began when we embarked on initial reading to help shape our project's thinking on EDI and our main research ideas. It started life as a simple Word document on our LBO Teams site in which we pasted definitions of, and quotations regarding, key terms from academic scholarship, as a way of beginning to record and share our reading and develop a conceptual framework for our work. We started with some of the more obvious terms for our project: 'laboratory', 'accessibility', 'ableism', 'care'; 'equity', 'diversity', 'inclusion'; 'living', 'bodies', 'objects'. There was no obligation to contribute to the Glossary; rather, it was simply a space where team members could record ideas that the rest of the team might find useful. It evolved into much more than this as we commented on each other's entries, reflected on some of our key terms in practice, and added terms related to research methods and to our embodied and affective experiences of research: 'fatigue', 'doubt', 'uncertainty', 'failure', 'pace', 'play', 'trust'.

As we realized the usefulness of the Living Glossary, we held a workshop to discuss its development and decided to post a version on our project website as a record of our sources and inspirations. You can access this version on our website. After much discussion about whether or how to 'curate' it for public view, we added some basic subtitles to the website version (title terms, EDI terminology, methodologies, environments, provocations) but kept our working version on Teams in its original messy format, to capture our thinking processes and highlight the document's strategically playful, experimental and unfinished status. We see the Living Glossary as a 'magpie' document, a collection of things that interest us and inform our work without having a specific project purpose. It includes fragments and thoughts that could lead us in new directions or nowhere at all. Sometimes we added terms and never wrote entries for them, while other Living Glossary terms have become guiding ideas and appear as entries in this toolkit. The 'living' status of the glossary was key to its significance as the conversations in the margins were often just as important as the terms themselves.

Benefits

- Having a shared project Glossary means everyone on the team has access to key elements of each other's reading, and somewhere to go to for important concepts, definitions, and discussions when preparing for a workshop or working on a publication.
- Creating a Glossary is a collaborative knowledge-building and knowledge-sharing exercise, where everyone benefits from each other's different interests, perspectives and knowledges.
- A Living Glossary is a great way of being led by curiosity and discovering what your team members are most interested in.
- It is a valuable tool for reflection on your research and connecting your own practice to that of others and to theoretical models in your fields.
- It can help develop project outputs or activities. When deciding on our project values, we scoured the Glossary to ascertain which 'values'-related terms we seemed most invested in, and the idea for this toolkit evolved from our original Glossary.

Limitations

- When reading or researching, it's easy to forget to collect key ideas in your Glossary document, so engagement with it can be uneven. We inevitably had periods when we forgot about it for a while then came back to it, and some team members used it more than others. This is OK though!
- If you decide to 'curate' or make your glossary available in any way, there may be quite a lot of work involved. We planned to update our website version every few months, but never actually got around to doing this.
- If your Glossary is comprised primarily of academic scholarship, it may not be the most accessible document for non-academic partners, participants, or publics. It's important to consider who you want to see it, why, and how best to adapt it for that audience.

Documentation and reflection

The documentation of collaborative research projects can be conceptualized and carried out in many different ways. Often it is understood as a method of recording and authenticating research processes. This can include capturing the research activities taking place through notetaking (field notes, participant observation, research diaries) or audio-visual media (audio or film recordings, photographs, or live sketching) and/or documenting decision-making processes. Multimedia documentation of project activities may also be used to animate research findings when they are made public through conferences, publications, or websites and help to make them more accessible and engaging for audiences. However, when conceptualized as creative practice, documentation can offer much more to the research process than the 'objective' capture of research. When imagined as a site of active knowledge production, the act of documenting can function as a process of doing research: a mode of individual or collective analysis, critical reflection and meaning making.

Documentation in LBO

LBO was unusual in both our approach to, and level of investment in, documentation practices. This included recruiting a practice-based researcher (Dr Lynn Wray) for a specific documentation-focused role on the project. The thoughtful documentation of our research activities was essential for understanding which of the ways of working we developed functioned well and which didn't.

Initially, some members of the team felt it was important to gather a complete record of all research activities by filming or audio recording the entire lab session each week. Early processes involved capturing and storing data and using tagging methods and qualitative data analysis software (e.g. NVIVO) to streamline the data analysis. In the early stages of our work, Wray also felt compelled to use the project's high-end audio-visual technology to record activities. However, these passive methods of recording activities – standing behind a camera and filming – caused Wray to feel disconnected from the project as they did not constitute doing practice research (see Wray forthcoming). Our activities often involved whole day sessions and soon generated huge amounts of data that there wasn't time to process, store and analyze effectively. We also found that these forms of capture were not always conducive to creating a relaxed and inclusive environment for experimental activities, and in some circumstances – for instance when working with participants with learning disabilities – it would have been unethical to document our sessions using audiovisual media.

In response to these challenges, Wray conceptualized a new approach which focused on bringing the whole team into the documentation of our research, using recording techniques and reflective exercises that drew on our creative and analytical skills. This reduced the amount of data and improved its relevance and quality by ensuring it had already been through a process of analysis during the process of creating it. For example, during the Interplay collaboration, Wray found reportage drawing to be a more active and less intrusive method of reading a scene and analyzing its significance than using audiovisual media (for an extended discussion of this approach see Wray forthcoming). LBO involved many different people – researchers, collaborators, creative practitioners, participants, professional services staff and audiences – who all had different experiences of the research activities and valuable insights to share. It was important to involve as many people as possible in the documentation process to capture different perspectives on the research experience (a key focus of LBO). Sometimes, the technologies we used to make creative outputs also functioned as effective modes of documentation and analysis (see Using Technology): at Blueberry Academy, for example, we used Oculus VR headsets to record participants sharing their experience of using the VR painting app, Tiltbrush, to draw safe spaces. Similarly, the co-creation of a virtual exhibition of the participants' work on Spatial.io allowed us to involve the learners and Blueberry staff members in documenting and interpreting their own research journey.

To facilitate multi-perspectival reflection, we used reflective writing exercises, listening exercises and reflective interviews. Some of these methods were developed from Wray's previous research projects (see Graham, Wray and Ankenbrand 2020 and Belknap, Blickhan, Fitzpatrick and Wray 2024). One-to-one Reflective Interviews in the middle and at the end of each residency were coupled with deep Listening Exercises (see Appendix D) where we reviewed the interviews both individually and as a team. An LBO team member interviewed a key partner about their experience, what they had learnt and the impact on their practice. The listening exercise involved a different team member reviewing the interview, making notes of any new learnings and reporting back to the team in a group discussion, where we considered any next steps or changes that could be made to our ways of working. We also used the Moments Exercise as a rapid means of capturing what felt important to team members and collaborators on our lab day each week.This ensured that we had a record of our research journey and a means for each team member to process their experience on the day. In the final stages of the project, Wray combined the 'moments' exercise with comic-making activities to produce a creative, embodied and collective mode of reflection (see Comics Exercises in Appendix E).

Throughout our four collaborations we explored which methods of documentation could involve different members of the team, which senses could be engaged in making or experiencing documentation, and how disciplines might coincide and co-exist in the spaces of documentation. We found that creative modes of documentation, such as sequential drawing, film-making, immersive video, creative writing and the curation of virtual spaces, offer more than just a static record of health and disability research; they can function as living, embodied sites of collaborative analysis, sense-making and reflection that enable the synthesis of different lived experiences, bodies, objects, practices and disciplines.

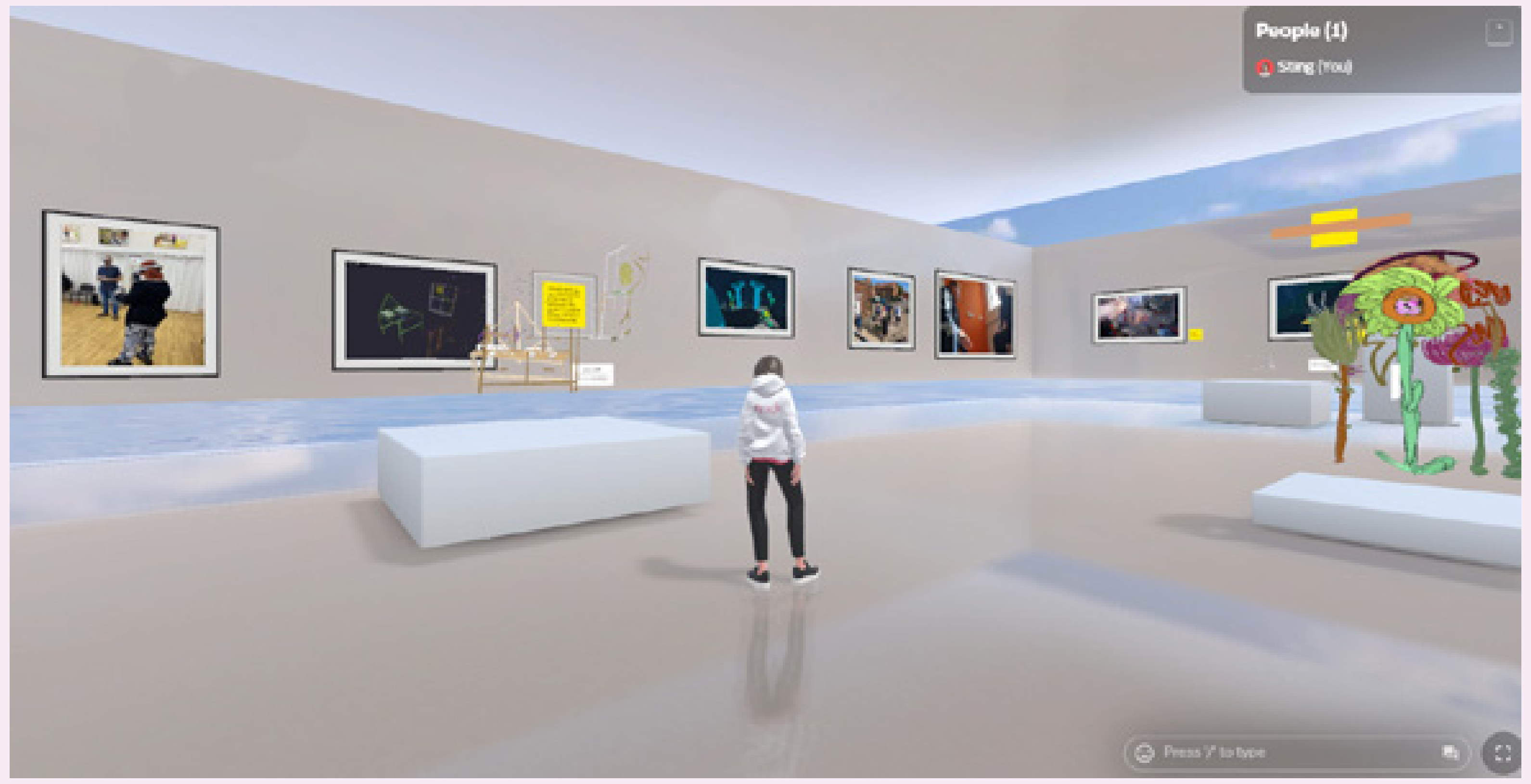
Challenges

- It may be difficult to involve collaborators and participants in the documentation of research outside of scheduled project activities when they may not have paid time to do this labour.
- Audio-visual methods of recording require significant resources including equipment, time and data storage.
- Recording of activities might limit team members' and collaborators' ability and desire to participate freely in activities.
- Documentation of research activities involving human participants necessarily involves ethical review and informed consent processes. These processes take time to develop and may be off-putting rather than reassuring to participants and collaborators. If consent is not given, it can prevent forms of capture that record the whole of an activity indiscriminately, such as filming or audio recording.
- Collaborators and participants might have preferences for using different forms of creative expression to document their experience.
- Data protection and security need to be carefully considered when storing research data.

Recommendations

- When deciding what media to use when documenting research activities, consider how the documentation will be used and analyzed. Will there be time to process and review the material and space to store it? Who will review and edit it?
- Use methods of documentation that enable reflection and analysis in the process of capture, for example, those that require decision-making about what to highlight, include or leave out.
- Creative methods of documentation that draw on kinaesthetic ways of knowing and use the body in the action of recording (drawing, handwriting, dance or sculpting with plasticine or clay) can be useful for processing and capturing embodied and sensory experiences and can help engage non-academic collaborators in the processes of documentation.

↑ **Drawing by Lynn Wray.**



The thoughtful documentation of our research activities was essential for understanding which of the ways of working we developed functioned well and which didn't.

Moments exercise

The 'moments' exercise enables critical reflection on individual and institutional practice and/or research processes in action research projects.

Based on an idea conceived by Helen Graham and developed in collaboration with LBO Research Fellow Lynn Wray and colleagues during the Bradford's National Museum project (see Graham, Wray and Ankenbrand, 'Moments' 2020), it involves participants or collaborators taking time to reflect upon and record – in their own words, marks or gestures – a moment of realization or something that had special significance for them during the research process.

This exercise can be used to highlight what is meaningful in a research journey, draw out important moments of insight, or indicate where there is a need to change existing practices, environments, or ways of working. Analyzing the results of the exercise can provide insight into research impact. See also Documentation and Reflection.

How to use the moments exercise

There are many different ways in which the moments exercise could be used, depending on context and the aims of the investigators. Our examples here demonstrate how it can be used to gather rapid reflections on project activities 'in the moment' or to critically reflect on the entirety of a research project.

In LBO, we used the moments exercise to incorporate critical reflection into our weekly lab sessions during our collaboration with Interplay National Sensory Theatre (see Appendix C for instructions). During each session, we invited team members and collaborators to take five minutes to record their reflections (through writing, sketching or audio recording) and to pick out a 'key moment' from the day. This could be:

- a moment of realization
- a feeling or sensation
- a change in perspective
- something that made people think differently about their discipline or practice
- a reaction to the space.

The immediate purpose was to encourage critical reflection-in-action about individual and collective practice related to our creative activities and experiments

↑ **Drawing by Lynn Wray to accompany a team member's 'moment' during Interplay Theatre collaboration.**

(Mann 2016). We encouraged people to try writing or drawing on paper to connect more deeply to their embodied knowledge and multi-sensory experiences of the activities, their bodies, spaces of work and encounters with objects and other people.

A longer-term objective was to collate these reflections, representing everyone's preferences regarding forms of creative self-expression, to develop a multi-perspectival record of the research journey. At the end of the Interplay collaboration, we invited everyone to review their reflections and pick out the 'key moment' that they felt moved the research forward. Wray then produced a drawing to accompany each text-based 'key moment' (see Appendix C).

Towards the end of the project, in our final Key Partners' meeting, we used a different version of the moments exercise which incorporated comic-making to facilitate reflection on the activities and ways of working that were significant to LBO team members and partners. Each participant was invited to draw a grid or set of panels on a piece of paper, and then populate the grid with speech, thought bubbles and text boxes. They then swapped their grid with a partner. We asked participants to think back to an 'aha moment' in their residency – a significant moment where their thinking shifted, things started to come together, or an experiment worked – and to draw how this unfolded in the grid boxes they had been handed, filling in any text or speech in the bubbles and boxes to make a comic strip (see Appendix E for further details of this activity). The last step involved a collective analysis of the drawings to identify key themes, challenges, successes, and failures.

We found that the act of making a sequential drawing provided an embodied mode of reflecting on, analyzing, and thinking through a moment that had specific value for each team member and collaborator. The swapping of the grid between partners was intended to create a set of constraints that would free up each participant's thinking enough to work quickly and economically and connect to their affective experience. The intention was that the combination of grid structure and the gestural act of mark making – the choice about how to convey the action in each frame – would enable analytical thinking and help the maker reconnect with their own emotional and sensorial experience of what happened and communicate this to the group. The exercise resulted in a visual record of the important impacts of the research on individual practice and group ways of working and contributed to discussion and reflection on our research practices that informed this toolkit.

Benefits

- The moments exercise offers opportunities for in-action and on-action critical reflection and analysis of research processes and practices.
- It highlights what is significant for a range of contributors with different knowledge-experiences.
- The exercise offers all participants an opportunity to share their positive and negative experiences. It can be anonymized.
- It is an inclusive means of critical reflection and collective analysis since any form of media can be used: audio or film recordings on a mobile phone; drawing or sketching; different modes of writing; zine- or comic-making.
- When done consistently during a research project and reviewed whilst the project is active, it can contribute insights that improve ways of working.
- It needs minimal preparation and can take as little as five minutes. It can easily be adapted for different contexts and purposes.
- When developed into creative exercises, the moments exercise can be used as an embodied mode of reflection that focuses on kinaesthetic knowledge and bodily, spatial, and sensory experiences of situations, activities, or contexts.
- It provides a multimedia and multiple-perspectival record of collaborators' and team members' personal experience and insights.
- The focus on moments speeds up the process of analysis. The reflections provide easy to digest research data for collective analysis.

Challenges

- During LBO, our flexible ways of working and commitment to care always offered the option to 'opt out' of activities. This approach often meant that people left before the end of the session and participation in the moments exercise was inconsistent.
- Imbalances of power may cause contributors to be overly positive in their reflections or wary of offering critical commentary for fear of causing offence. To overcome this, it is important to be clear about the intended use of the reflections and to offer anonymization.

Reflective interviews

As the name suggests, reflective interviews are conversations designed to encourage reflections. They are a means of exploring and capturing interviewees' beliefs and experiences.

Reflective interviews are a long-established research method, used extensively in the social sciences, and have much in common with approaches to oral histories and user experience interviews. In the LBO project, we conducted reflective interviews with members of our partner organizations to aid understanding of their project experiences and enable improvements to our ways of working.

Effective reflective interviews aim to uncover and learn more about interviewees' attitudes towards their experiences. There are three critical phases to interviewing: planning, conducting the interview itself, and analyzing the interview content. Planning ahead allows you (and, quite possibly, your interviewee) to get a clear sense of what you want to achieve from the interview. It's important to remember that you will likely only get one chance to capture these reflections in this way: think about what ground you'd like to cover, and which aspects are most pertinent to you and your interviewee(s). Questions for the interview should be short and open-ended. Planning questions as a group can often lead to richer insights emerging in the interviews, so it's a good idea to run these past a trusted colleague, collaborator, or project member. If you are inexperienced in interviewing, it can also be useful to conduct practice interviews within your team. Remember too that you're likely to have to secure ethical approval for interviews such as these, so it can save time to factor them into your ethics process at an early stage too.

You should strongly consider a participant information sheet, covering the scope of the interview and how the information will be stored/used, if you don't already have that in place with your interviewee.

When it comes to the interview, try to put your interviewee at ease. This should be a relaxing and interesting experience for everyone involved. It can sometimes be harder to achieve a relaxed, informal feeling if the interview is remote, so it is worth allowing extra time to make sure everyone is comfortable with the set-up before the interview begins. If you're doing the interview in person, choose a quiet, accessible place, and make sure that your interviewee feels comfortable in those surroundings. Take your time: questions should be unhurried, and you should leave spaces of silence for your interviewee to think, talk, and pause. If it is likely to be longer than an hour, perhaps allow time for a break and agree to that in advance. Recording the interview is essential so that you can focus on your interviewer role and ask follow-up questions as needed.

After the interview you'll have the recording, which you might want to have transcribed (factor that into your timescales, and budgeting, if necessary). Analyzing interviews like these can be time-consuming, but that depends very much on the purpose of the interview. If you make a recording, and you have the interviewees' permission, you could consider using it as part of wider engagement materials, or simply for developing future research ideas or as evidence of change.

How we used reflective interviews

We carried out reflective interviews after some but not all of our key partner collaborations. The choice of whether – and when – to interview was driven more by partners' enthusiasm for them, and our perceptions about how useful they would be, than a desire to be comprehensive.

When we carried out these post-residency interviews, they served a different purpose to conventional reflective research interviews. First, they were as much about helping our partners gain more insight into their LBO experiences as they were about us learning more from them. We deliberately paired collaborators from our key partners with core team members who had been less involved in their particular residency. This gave both the interviewers and interviewees an opportunity to glean fresh insights into the collaborative process.

We agreed on a common set of broad, open-ended questions in advance, which were used as the basis for all the interviews. Interviewers used their discretion to explore and follow up on aspects of particular interest. This produced a set of interviews which were individual in character. This flexibility was possible because we were not intending for these to be used as a form of robust research data. Rather, we were interested in how the residency had gone, what its impacts were, and how to incorporate learning into future collaborations.

We did not do detailed analysis of the interviews during the project. We considered them to be part of our evaluation process rather than original research. However, we have the interview content and participants' consent if we wish to use them for research outputs or planning in the future.

As part of our ongoing ways of working development, our Research and Documentation Fellow devised a Listening Exercise (see Appendix D for instructions) to aid our learning from the interviews. We scheduled time to listen to the reflective interviews and to collate important feedback (both positive and negative) from our partners. Hearing how others approached both the interviews and the collaboration was very instructive and created productive discussion for our future planning.

Benefits

- Reflective interviews can offer unique insights into the experiences of partners, collaborators, audiences and even other team members. They bring the benefit of space, allowing interviewees to express their thoughts and feelings freely in a way which might not be possible through writing or group discussion.
- They can provide vital feedback for planning future activities, and also evidence of the difference that projects or events have made.

Limitations

- As with any other interviews, the scope of reflective interviews is necessarily limited and what comes up in these settings is not predictable. It's important to bear this unpredictability in mind when making claims or plans which are dependent on findings from reflective interviews.
- As with other methods described in this toolkit, to do reflective interviews thoroughly and effectively takes time and planning. However, they are a great way for teams to reflect collectively, and do not have to be comprehensive to be useful.

Find out more

For practical advice about how to approach, plan, conduct, and evaluate a reflective interview, or set of interviews, see Roulston 2010. The Oral History Society run highly regarded training courses for researchers interested in using similar techniques. User experience (UX) interviews share many features in common with reflective interviews. For some tips on setting them up, see User Interviews.

Reflective Interview - LBO blueberry residency

Listening exercises

A ‘listening exercise’ is a structured exercise where researchers listen attentively to participants’ perspectives, experiences and emotions during recorded interviews, focus groups or self-recorded audio clips. The researcher(s) will typically take notes to identify important points, insights and quotes and pay close attention to phrasing and non-verbal cues used by the participant. The notes made might be bought back to the research team for collective deliberation and analysis.

Listening exercises can help a research team better understand the aims, ideas and experiences of collaborators, participants and project partners (and vice versa). They can provide a pause where team members can take a moment to practise active listening and to analyze and reflect upon what they are hearing from partners. The new insights gained from this exercise can be used to make meaningful changes to ways of working, research practices and processes.

How to develop listening exercises

It can be useful to plan listening exercises at different points in your research process, for example, at the start, mid-point and end of the research activity. This enables a better understanding of how the expectations, experiences and motivations of participants and collaborators changed over time. It also allows the research team to take stock and make meaningful changes to practices and ways of working whilst the research is in process. This can ultimately make for better relationships and outcomes.

See Appendix D for a sample listening exercise from the LBO project. There is no right way to do a listening exercise, but we have found these considerations and steps helpful in thinking about how to structure a session:

- Plan your interviews or focus groups prior to the listening exercise so that they contain questions that can result in helpful material for the research team to work with, e.g. ‘what could we be doing better?’, ‘what would you like to achieve through the research?’.
- Identify an overarching aim and supplementary questions for the listening session – what will you be exploring through the listening exercise? What sound clips or recordings would be most useful to explore this?
- Think about the space you will be in – how might you use this space, and what options does this present for reflecting and capturing ideas and feedback?
- Prepare and assign a sound clip or recording for each person participating in the session. Consider how much time you will have for the session and how long the listening phase of the exercise will last. This may mean selecting and editing the clips you have so that they are an appropriate length.
- Think about how you pair the clips you have with the people participating. The exercise can work with each person listening to and reflecting on a different clip, or more than one person listening to each clip and recording their impressions and thoughts separately. Similarly, you may wish to pair up people with recordings from activities or people they have been less closely involved with.
- Identify and share a list of areas you would like each person to focus on individually while listening (see 2. a-g in Appendix D).
- Think about how you will capture and share ideas and thoughts during the listening phase of the exercise (e.g. post-it notes on a display board? Online collaboration platform?). When choosing the method, consider whether you will want to return to this resource at a later date.
- Identify questions as a focal point for the group discussion (see 6 in Appendix D), based on the original question and aim for the session. What might you do or change as a consequence of your discussion (see 7 in Appendix D)?

How we used listening exercises in LBO

In LBO, we developed a listening exercise to better understand the experiences of our collaborators and to help us make changes to our research practices as the project progressed. We organized semi-structured Reflective Interviews that took place at the mid- and endpoint of some of the collaborations. An LBO team member

interviewed each of our collaborators and project partners involved in that residency. A mid- and endpoint review day was then scheduled in which we facilitated the listening exercise. In preparation for the exercise, we selected 10-minute audio or video clips from each of the interviews to make it a manageable and focused process.

For the listening exercise, each LBO team member was given a different audio/video clip and invited to listen attentively to what was being said. They took notes on post-its focused on the specific aspects we stipulated (see Appendix D). These were then grouped together on different boards. We then had a collective discussion to deliberate on what we had learnt from the exercise, consider whether we needed to make any changes to our ways of working, and to identify opportunities for further action.

Round robins

Round robins are an inclusive facilitation technique that can be used to encourage participation, level out power hierarchies, and gauge how team members are feeling about a particular issue.

The key feature of round robins is that they are a structured way of allowing everyone in a space or meeting to speak. They can be used in research settings, from project management meetings with a small team to large workshops with partners and research participants. They foreground active, respectful listening, which can support a sense of belonging and collaboration. In LBO, we found that round robins could act as a reminder to all project members that we are accountable to one another as colleagues and that they are an effective way of embedding care within the structure of research facilitation. We are indebted to CLEAR Lab for our understanding and use of round robins as we followed the protocols in their lab book (CLEAR 2021, 51) and film *How We Run a Lab Meeting* (CLEAR 2021).

How round robins work is simple, and they work equally well in-person or online. In response to a question or prompt (on any topic), team members take turns to speak to the group or can choose to pass if they don't want to participate. The crucial aspect of this is that everyone gets the chance to speak once before anyone speaks again or responds to somebody's comment. A round robin is not, therefore, about dialogue; it is about encouraging everyone to express their opinion on a topic and valuing everyone's contribution equally.

Holding a round robin at the start of a meeting can enhance equitable participation throughout the meeting, because once someone has spoken once they are more likely to feel empowered to join in again. Even though round robins invite informality, the process must be structured; for it to work, everyone has to remember to listen to everyone else before opening out into general discussion, and those who contribute have to be mindful of others and not speak for too long. Round robins encourage reflection on hierarchies and relations, and can be facilitated to maximize inclusivity: it can be helpful to start with an early career member of the team rather than the Principal Investigator, for instance, and more experienced members of the team may deliberately choose to '"step back" from the conversation sometimes to make space for others to speak' (CLEAR 2021, 51), either by passing on the opportunity to speak, responding very briefly, or simply agreeing with somebody else's point.

How we used round robins

During our project we used round robins in multiple ways. Sometimes we used them to check how people were feeling at the start of our weekly team meetings or lab days. Speakers were able to say if they were tired, overworked, worried, or had a stressful commute, and so were able to situate themselves as people (rather than colleagues) before research-related activities began.

Sometimes when working with partner organizations we used round robins to bring

people into our team, level the playing field between researchers and participants, and make visitors feel welcome. Asking everyone in the room in turn 'what do you think about X?' allowed trainees from Blueberry Academy, or actors working with Interplay Theatre, to feel they could get involved or express an opinion on our activities, contributing to Blueberry's ethos that 'we are all LBO researchers'.

Round robins were also useful to gauge the feeling in the room about important decisions and sometimes formed the first stage in a process of consensus building. For instance, towards the end of the project we asked everyone to think about whether we should produce a co-authored book. A round robin on this topic ascertained that there wasn't much appetite for the book so we could move on to more open discussion about what we might want to write instead. Had we approached this question in a different way, it may have felt riskier to speak out against an idea or proposal, but the round robin gave everyone space to say why they felt as they did.

Benefits

- 'How are you feeling today?' round robins function as a useful reminder that not every team member starts work equally and evenly and that we all bring our complex and diverse backgrounds and experiences (of work or life outside work) to our gatherings. Team members can ground themselves before activities begin and the meeting that follows is often more open and empathetic.
- Round robins facilitate inclusion and can be useful for counteracting hierarchies in research teams. As CLEAR Lab put it, 'Round robins mean that the junior researchers, introverts, women, people of colour, new recruits, and others that may not otherwise speak have a structured chance to share their insights' (2021, 51).
- Similarly, when working with collaborators, round robins break down the 'us and them' dynamic that sometimes frames relationships between academics and non-academic partners and can highlight commonalities among people working on the project.
- Round robins can be an efficient way of soliciting opinions to aid decision making, which is useful if you want to know how to proceed without lengthy discussion or if it's very important to understand everyone's motivations or priorities.

Challenges

- When working under time pressures, round robins may not seem like the most important item on a meeting agenda and may be dropped.
- Although round robins aspire to inclusivity, the process can create its own pressures, especially for those feeling vulnerable or unsure about their participation. Some individuals may feel pressured because they have nothing to say or may worry about talking too long or whether their contribution is useful.
- It can take a lot of discipline not to respond to people's initial comments and conversation may open up prematurely, before everyone has spoken. People may feel impatient that dialogue is being held up or time wasted. The facilitator has to be alert to this and ensure everyone gets their turn to speak.
- Just because everyone has the opportunity to speak at a round robin opening, it does not follow that the conversations that follow will be equally inclusive. It is necessary to remain vigilant about who feels empowered to speak.

Live co-writing

There are lots of ways of writing with other people but the one that some members of our team have found most enjoyable, productive and genuinely collaborative is what we are calling live co-writing. We have used this, in pairs or a bigger group, to write many of our collective project 'outputs' – our website, our Project Values and Ways of Working Agreement, and indeed many parts of this toolkit! This mode of writing is ideal when you need to ensure a text represents a team ethos or contains multiple voices. It can be used for major research publications but can also make some of the more day-to-day requirements of project work – creating a website, developing a team approach – more manageable and fun.

LBO live co-writing

Our approach to live co-writing is very simple. We get together (ideally in the same room but it can work on a digital platform like Teams or Google docs too), open a shared document, and start writing, talking about what we're doing as we go. Sometimes we might each do some individual prep work or jot down notes or starting points beforehand, but the writing is done together in the present moment. The talking is important as it helps to clarify aims, develop arguments, and build a sense of shared investment and purpose in the work, and allows you to talk out problems when they occur. Developing shared aims and goals is about more than writing content. A shared writing ethos is key for live co-writing to work.

Our 'live' approach is very different from asynchronous co-writing, when each contributor works on the document in their own time. It is different from co-writing models in which individuals author defined sections or contributions that will stand apart from one another. Our approach can result in more fully collaborative writing and editing, a blend of ideas, voices and styles that somehow becomes more than two or more people's individual ideas added together. In the materials we've co-written, there are many times we've finished (or deleted, or rewritten) each other's sentences. As feminist collaboration theorist Lorraine York writes, 'collaborative work is, indeed, not easily divisible or parsable into its constituent parts' (2002, 8), and in fact, for us a sign of the process working well is when we don't know who wrote what!

We've found it's helpful to:

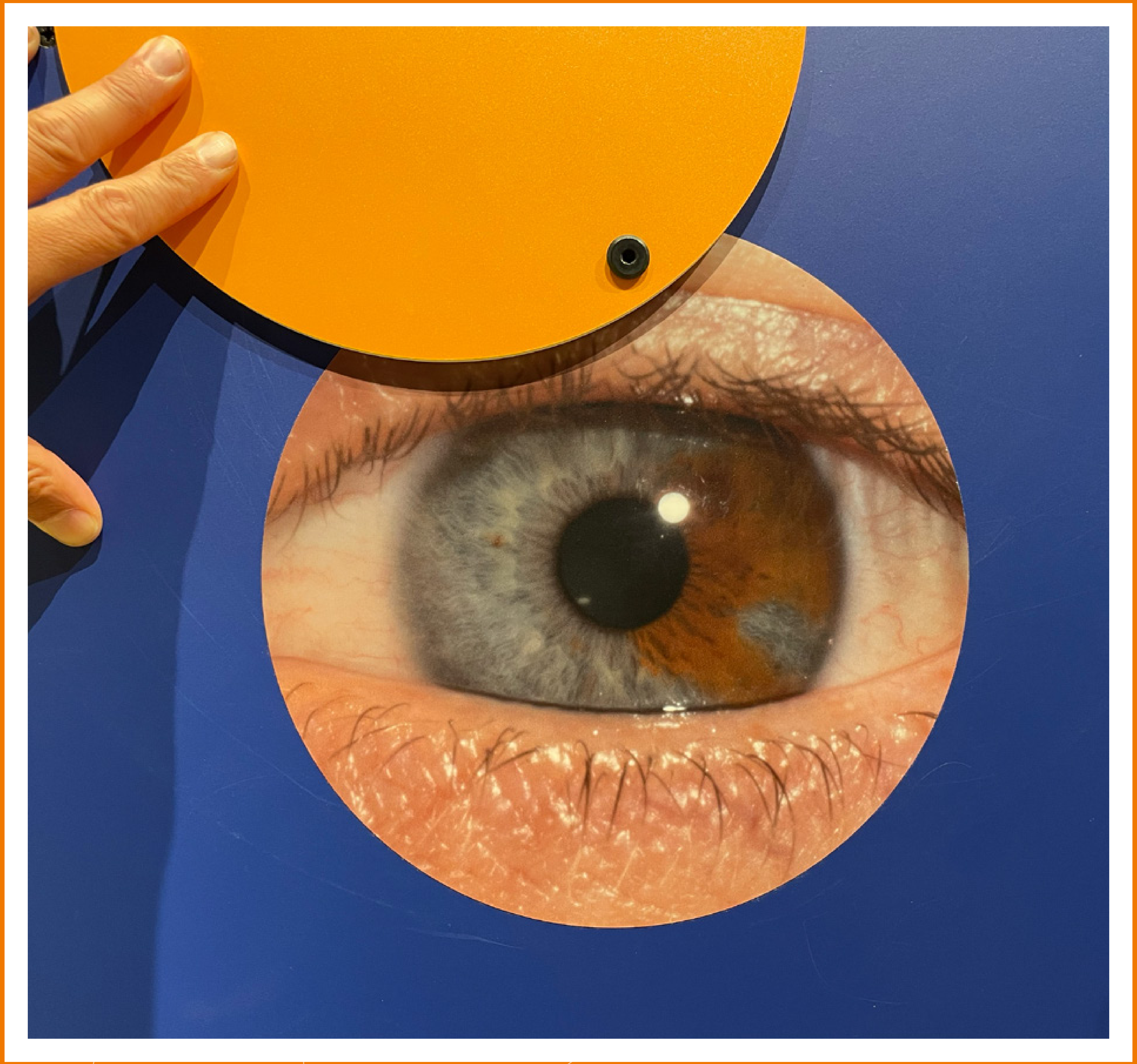
- Set aside more time than you (think you) need. Working in blocks of less than half a day can be frustrating. Full days are preferable.
- Choose your working space carefully. Setting and space matter. Consider accessibility, comfort, cost, sensory elements, the potential for interruption and distraction. We've found that scheduled writing retreats can be very helpful but are by no means necessary.
- Create an agenda and schedule for the day that includes flexible goals. Including breaks for movement is important. We schedule an afternoon walk when possible.
- Be willing to let conversation wander and abandon initial goals, letting the collaborative interaction determine new directions when necessary.

Benefits

- One of the nicest things about this approach, we've found, is that it takes the pressure and anxiety out of writing. Even academics who write regularly can find writing to be frustrating and fraught. It can trigger anxieties about productivity and make us doubt our ideas. Writing together, and talking as we write, alleviates much of this pressure and makes writing much more relaxed and enjoyable. If you get stuck on something, your co-writers are often able to fix it!
- Writing together 'live' means that you set aside time just for writing; it becomes something you make proper time for rather than something you try to squeeze into the gaps between meetings.
- We learn from one another's writing approach and method.
- Safety and security in numbers! Ideas developed in pairs and groups are often stronger since they are tested and debated as part of the collaborative process. We've taken heart from feminist traditions of collaborative writing as a potentially subversive form of authorship that challenges the individualism that often adheres to conventional models of authorship. Collaborative writing challenges notions of singular masters, authors, and talents and draws attention to the dialogic nature of ideas (York 2002).

Challenges

- Live co-writing is time consuming and depends on flexible schedules.
- Authorship is truly shared, which we take as a strength, but requires vigilance across the co-writing team to make sure all participants are credited appropriately. This is especially important in the case of early career colleagues who may need to develop a publication profile, and sometimes even in co-writing we should credit individual ideas or expertise (see Credits).
- For this process to work, you must really trust the person/people you're writing with and feel comfortable with them – there is a real intimacy to writing together! The collaboration needs to be undertaken willingly and in spirit of generosity to produce the kind of collaborative writing we've described (and prize). Coerced collaboration won't produce the benefits we've experienced and abandoning individual ownership of particular ideas may not be advisable for some co-authors, depending on the writing context and the power differentials involved.
- Sometimes individual writing is best. Co-writing isn't just about sharing workload; it's about privileging co-creation and a dialogic style.



Concepts and Provocations

This section includes entries for the concepts and ideas that we have found especially generative for the development and delivery of LBO, including many terms, like 'beyond' and 'killjoy' that represent the difficult but essential processes of self-reflection and critique that were required to uphold our commitment to a caring, accountable research culture. The importance of these concepts emerged over the course of the project.

We didn't anticipate, for example, that pausing or epistemic generosity would be integral when we designed the project; however, they became increasingly important points of reference and engagement as our work progressed. This section contains ideas, concepts, approaches, and roles that we found to be challenging and crucial in equal measure. We include them here not as directives but as examples of how and why alertness and openness to emergent priorities are key for collaborating with care.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity in research means respecting the contributions of all those who participate in a research project. Reciprocity ensures that research is not extractive; it foregrounds the obligation created when non-academic collaborators provide time and research materials to research teams. Reciprocity is a way of working that connects to values of responsibility and accountability in the research process. When it is a foundational way of working established at the start of a project, reciprocity can act as a catalyst for implementing other values as the research develops.

There are many ways of practising reciprocity, including in project design and planning, to ensure that there is exchange and mutuality throughout a project. It is especially important to make sure that results and findings are returned to partners or participants at the end of the project so collaborators benefit from their participation. Outputs and findings should be shared in ways and formats that are meaningful for partners or the communities they serve. There is no point simply passing on a published article or giving a presentation at an Advisory Board meeting if that will have no meaning to recipients. Where there are publications, however, it is important to give thought to how partners should be credited.

Reciprocity in LBO

In LBO we emphasized our desire to work with partners in a reciprocal fashion from the start. At the beginning of each collaboration we stressed that the project team had no pre-set research questions but rather that the questions and direction of the research would evolve through Co-creation. We established a working dynamic in which progression was always subject to consultation and understood to be a two-way process. At times, our partners' priorities changed and, as a team, we had to respond to these changes. Having established reciprocity as a working method made this easier to do.

We made sure that our co-created research was shared with partners in ways that would continue to be useful for their organizations and communities after the end of the project. For example, in our digital storytelling project with the Bhopal Medical Appeal, we used a digital storytelling platform, Shorthand, that is accessible, easy to use, and doesn't require coding knowledge. The LBO team and BMA partners all experimented with Shorthand throughout the residency and gained skills in its use, meaning that after the project, the BMA have this co-created story as a tangible output for use in their fundraising and awareness-raising campaigns and can continue using Shorthand in their future storytelling work. And when working with Blueberry Academy, Research Assistant Dey Ricketts produced both academic and easy read versions of her report on uses of VR technology with neurodivergent young adults (see Early Career Researchers). This made her academic research accessible to Blueberry trainees – our LBO co-researchers – and has facilitated Blueberry's ongoing use of VR in their training modules.

"Having the freedom to determine the priorities of the residency has been, I think, really helpful for us because the priorities have kind of shifted through time... that flexibility really allowed us to make sure that we created something that was going to be immediately impactful and help people on the ground right now."

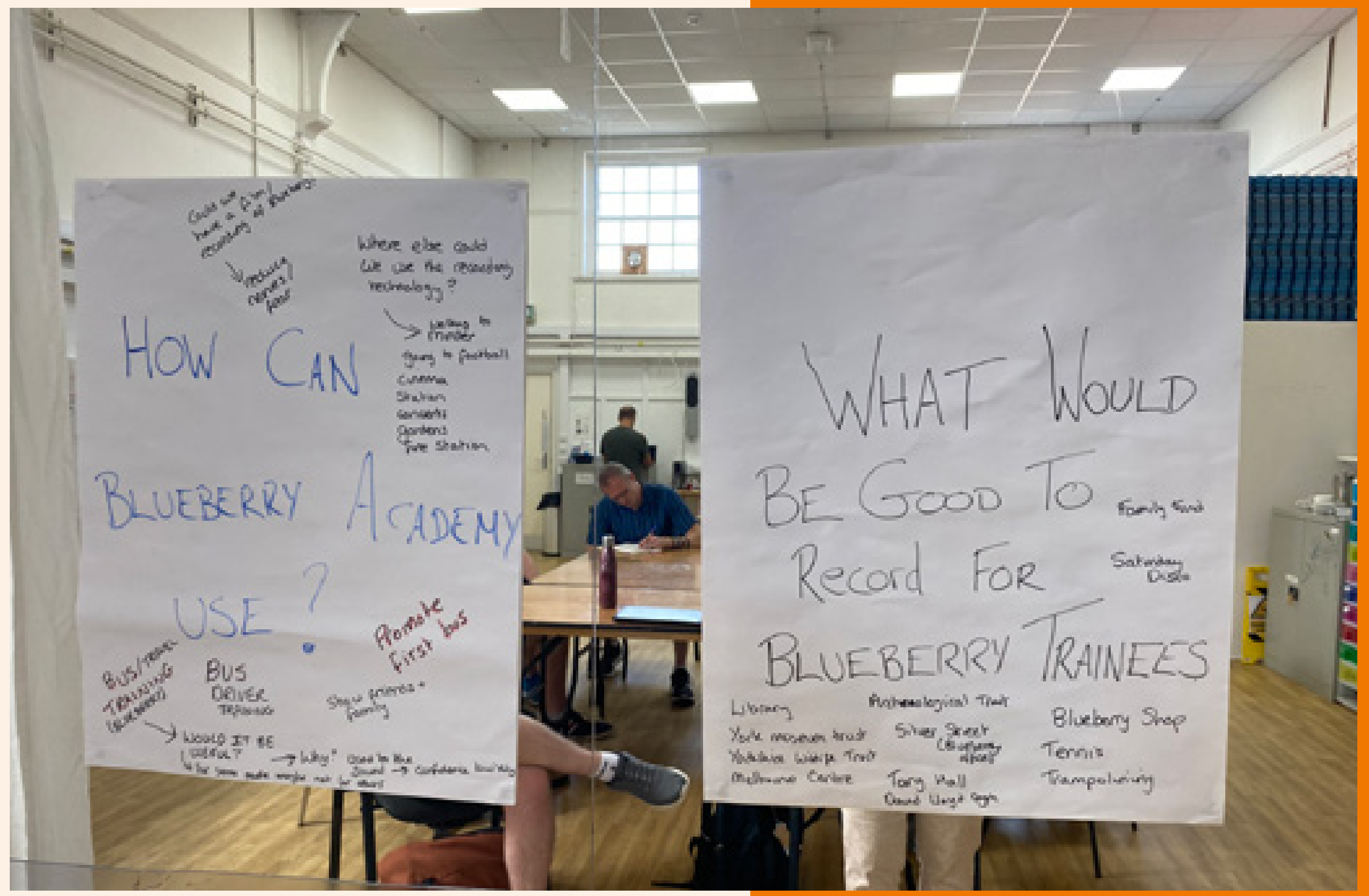
Jared Stoughton,
Bhopal Medical Appeal

Benefits

- Being involved in a reciprocal relationship with partners means that research values and trajectories evolve, as opposed to being understood as a priori procedures that must be followed.
- Reciprocal research establishes strong bonds and trust between project teams and partners. It is particularly useful when working with small or medium-sized organizations and communities, especially those new to research collaboration. In such cases, a commitment to consultation and sharing can provide vital support and reassurance as partners adjust to institutional systems and operations.

Challenges

- One challenge of reciprocity is that it takes time. During LBO we were able to spend time planning for reciprocity at the start of each partner collaboration, but this may not be possible for many research projects. Reciprocal ways of working also require regular check-ins and discussion throughout the collaboration to maintain key relationships. Someone – usually an experienced member of the research team – needs to take responsibility for initiating and managing these regular interactions. Not all research teams are structured in ways that make this possible.
- Reciprocal research carries risks. Because it prioritizes consultation and flexibility, it is possible that both researchers and partners can exploit the openness of the relationship to change the nature of the work being undertaken. More formal research relationships that put in place fixed milestones and schedules of deliverables can provide greater security should a partnership break down.
- Giving back research to partners and participants in meaningful and creative ways may require complex data management arrangements. This should be taken into consideration at the start of the project when developing your Data Management Plan.



"We wanted ... our trainees, the people who come to Blueberry Academy as their learning institute or the place that they work... to be involved in the process and not have a process done to them... Our young people really bought into the idea that they were LivingBodiesObjects researchers and that their views were what we there to catch and it was all about equality. It meant that they really bought into the process."

Dave Tabron,
Blueberry Academy

Epistemic generosity

In her essay 'The Question of Feminist Critique', Rachelle Chadwick expresses her concern with the frequently 'adversarial' tone of feminist scholarship, sharing her 'discomfort with the performance of militaristic, adversarial and combative gestures as marks of critical rigour' (2024, 377). This approach isn't limited to feminist critique; academic scholarship tends toward the adversarial, prizing interrogation and critique. In response to her discomfort, Chadwick proposes an alternative mode of engagement and enquiry that, she argues, better reflects feminist orientations and approaches. Building on the work of scholars like Bruno Latour, Audre Lorde, Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, Elizabeth Grosz, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, she calls this mode of engagement 'epistemic generosity'. Epistemic generosity involves an

> 'open receptivity' to other ideas, persons, perspectives, non-human worlds and texts. As a stance of openness, it is associated with waiting, slowness and listening, rather than pursuit, vigilance and self-affirmation. Furthermore, as a non-directive mode of relating (i.e. not concerned with sharply defined objectives or goals), epistemic generosity does not presume to know. Open to surprise, wonder and connection, it is fundamentally an orientation to thinking and knowing rooted in hopefulness (Chadwick 2024, 378).

In LBO we didn't 'presume to know' and prioritized a reciprocal, accountable, reflexive approach to learning and making. Epistemic generosity is a mode of investigation built on care, creativity and accountability that requires significant investment and commitment from all involved. It prioritizes relations and collaboration as opposed to the pursuit of singular learning objectives or outcomes. It is committed to dialogue and collaboration and pays close attention to 'nuance, difference and complexity' (Chadwick 2024, 383). In our practice, it required 'open receptivity' from all project participants (Chadwick 2024, 378) and a willingness to come together to listen and learn from a wide range of sources, including people, texts, spaces and experiences.

Benefits

- Epistemic generosity offers a mode for inclusive, collaborative learning and making.
- It can lead to the creation of new knowledges and methodologies.
- This can lead to meaningful transformations.

Risks

- Epistemic generosity requires vulnerability from participants, and the risks of this are not equitable: 'the costs of generosity differ for those located in historically and socially marginalized positions' (Chadwick 2024, 378).
- It is resource intensive: epistemic generosity requires time, energy and emotional labour. This labour and investment may not be spread equally throughout a team. If only some team members commit to epistemic generosity, there are risks of exploitation, exhaustion, frustration.
- Results are unpredictable.

Further Reading

Bruno Latour has also discussed the limits of the critical mode in his article 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern' (2004).

Open to surprise, wonder and connection, epistemic generosity is fundamentally an orientation to thinking and knowing rooted in hopefulness.

Mistakes

Mistakes are inevitable in any research project and the more complex the work is, the greater the likelihood that mistakes will be made. They can occur at any point during the research process and affect any part of the activity. Mistakes can be structural: working in the wrong way across the team or with partners, or even working with the wrong partner altogether. Problems may stem from incomplete research or planning in setting up the project (see Writing an EDI-informed Funding Application), using the wrong equipment and procedures (see Using Technology), or misunderstanding timeframes and schedules (see Time). But they can also be small (see e.g. Beyond): choosing the wrong day for a team meeting as it creates unequal demands on participants, for example, or not keeping a record of a conversation that turns out later to be important.

Mistakes are connected to failure but are not quite the same. Often failure involves trying an idea, or experimenting with a thesis, that does not produce the desired results. With failures, an activity could have had a clarity of purpose even as it fails in unanticipated ways. In addition, failure usually involves a conception of scale; it tends to invoke the idea of a substantial action. Within research culture, there is an increasing recognition of the need to acknowledge, interrogate, and learn from failure (see Stefan 2010 and FailSafe). Mistakes are more haphazard and less clear cut. They can be difficult to see and accept, and at times are only recognized retrospectively. Research inevitably evolves organically and involves change, and change will often create a new normal that forms the basis of subsequent activity. It can take time to recognize that a new direction that felt natural at the time might have been wrong.

Mistakes are most common because of poor decision-making and communication. One member of a research team might leave a conversation assuming that a certain consensus or direction has been agreed, but another may believe something substantially different. This type of scenario is typical of the ways in which mistakes can be produced through differences in judgement. It is important to stress that divergences of opinion or understanding do not necessarily imply that either perspective is wrong. Even in projects where there are good structures for clear communication, it is not always possible – or indeed desirable, given the time it would take – to double check that everyone has a shared understanding of what has been said.

It is important to distinguish between actual mistakes and uncertainty, doubt or discomfort in the research process (see Conversations about Arts, Humanities and Health 2025). As Matthew Wolf-Meyer has argued (2018), uncertainty and doubt can be generative when developing research methods, even if they are unwanted and induce anxiety, because they create moments to pause and reflect. Mistakes, however, cannot always be rectified, particularly if they are recognized in hindsight. But all research projects need to learn from what did not work as planned; building in responses to failure is vital in developing better research processes. Establishing processes for regular reflection (see Documentation and Reflection) can help research teams prevent or minimize future mistakes as well as revising ways of working in response to things that have gone wrong. In LBO, we wrote this into our Ways of Working Agreement (see Appendix A): 'Mistakes are part of learning. But reflection and action are required when mistakes are made.' Like many of our ways of working commitments, this was aspirational rather than something we always achieved. But its inclusion helped us acknowledge that mistakes will be made and that even when they are small in scale, they can have important effects on research outcomes and experiences.

Beyond

When doing values-informed research, you may encounter tensions between your values and the language and practice of dominant academic discourse. In one of our LBO advisory board meetings, our project advisors prompted us to reflect more deeply on some of the language we were using on our website. We had asked them to review some new pages on our ways of working and project values. We were pleased with this work, felt we'd done it with care, and were confident it reflected the ethos of the project well. But the feedback we received focused on our use of the title 'Beyond EDI' on one of our webpages.

We were referring to the 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusion' initiatives that are so prevalent in universities and other organizations, and the scholarship and practices around these. We wanted our project to help advance these agendas while reflecting critically on them and finding innovative ways to embed EDI considerations more firmly in our research practice. We were influenced by our reading in disability studies – on institutional 'inclusionism' (Mitchell and Snyder 2015, 12) and academic ableism (Dolmage 2018; Price 2011; Chen 2023) – and in feminist and critical race critiques of institutional 'diversity' initiatives (Ahmed 2012). There are many valid critiques of EDI 'agendas' (which may be enacted cynically or tokenistically) even while there is so much excellent EDI practice that we would like to contribute to.

But our advisors questioned our use of 'beyond': What did it mean, really, for our project to go 'beyond EDI'? they asked. What were we doing that nobody else had done before, or that others working directly in this area hadn't thought about already? This feedback revealed tensions between the values-informed work we were committed to doing, and the kind of language we are trained to use in academia to make claims about our work. 'Beyond' is akin to 'firsting' (Liboiron 2021) – asserting you are the first to do something – that is based on imperialist models of research as pioneering discovery. This is often a competitive approach to research rather than promoting the collaborative ethos that was so important to our project (see Epistemic Generosity). Our title, then, was provocative in a way that was at odds with our project values and might discourage engagement with the substance of our discussion. We changed it to, simply, Our Ways of Working, and valued the advisory board discussion as an opportunity for reflection on getting our titles right, keeping our claims proportionate, and maintaining good relations in our field.

Killjoy

Sara Ahmed's foundational work on the figure of the feminist killjoy can inform research culture and practice in important ways and can be mobilized within research projects to safeguard inclusive practice and ethical vigilance. The killjoy is a figure who '[points] out moments of sexism' and might 'expose the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced, or negated under the public signs of joy' (Ahmed 2010, 65). To be a killjoy could mean objecting to a misogynistic joke or pointing out how the women in a team are taking on a disproportionate amount of care work or administration. It could mean calling out a colleague in a meeting or making a complaint to the project lead about inappropriate behaviour.

The figure of the killjoy is not limited to gender politics; disability studies scholars Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer adapt Ahmed's work to identify the 'crip killjoy', for instance – the disabled figure who '[refuses] to act in accordance with the system of compulsory able-bodiedness [...] that requires individuals to mask, suppress, and disregard discomfort in the process of determining what is possible, of what we are capable' (2014, 136). A crip killjoy could also be someone who points out inaccessible working practices or asks for adjustments to be made. The killjoy is a vulnerable position to inhabit, and often emerges from circumstances of marginalization or discrimination, but it also produces a kind of power via its 'productive misalignment with cultural instructions to be (or act) happy in oppressive circumstances' (Johnson and McRuer 2014, 136).

Risks

The killjoy role is an inherently risky one. It involves speaking up about injustice, which can mean speaking truth to power or putting oneself on the line by stepping outside of established hierarchies. A key aspect of being a killjoy is the affect it creates and denies – the idea, literally, of killing the joy in a situation:

> Feminist subjects might bring others down not only by talking about unhappy topics such as sexism but by exposing how happiness is sustained by erasing the very signs of not getting along. Feminists do kill joy in a certain sense: they disturb the very fantasy that happiness can be found in certain places. (Ahmed 2010, 66)

Any instance of a killjoy speaking out to expose a problem might disrupt feelings of joy, satisfaction, and comfort and instead produce unease, discomfort or anger. To be a killjoy means being prepared for negative responses; one of the 'killjoy commitments' in Ahmed's *The Feminist Killjoy Handbook* is 'I am willing to cause unhappiness' (2023, 19). And this willingness may require acceptance or tolerance of others' negative perceptions, or even of being seen as the problem oneself: 'to be a killjoy is to be heard as a complainer, as saying something negative, as being negative' (Ahmed 2023, 17). The killjoy can potentially trouble working relationships, slow down teamwork, or prevent things happening.

Killjoy solidarity

Despite their disruptive force, killjoys are valuable and necessary members of any team or collaboration. They can halt or prevent harmful practices or catalyze the revision of difficult relationships or problematic behaviours. Killjoys work towards more inclusive practice and make things better, even if the process isn't an easy one. On the LBO project, different people took on a killjoy role at different points, always to the benefit of the project. Often, this meant Pausing to address a problem before proceeding with our research, and while this took time it invariably made the research – and working relationships – better overall. We want to claim the killjoy as a positive aspect of inclusive research culture – one that keeps us accountable to those we are working with.

To enable team members to take on a killjoy role when needed, or show solidarity and care when they do, teams can:

- Listen to the killjoy respectfully, with awareness of the riskiness of their role, rather than expressing frustration at the disruption of an activity or a mood.
- Establish clear processes for complaint and strategies for dealing with conflict.
- Work in a spirit of Epistemic Generosity, prioritizing care, listening, openness and humility over adversarial approaches to critique.
- Those in secure, privileged or powerful positions should take on the killjoy role when they can. Using power positively can take the burden of being the killjoy off less experienced or minoritized members of a team.

Time

On any research project, time may feel like the most precious commodity you have. It may feel like there is never enough time to do all you want to do in the way you want to do it. And you will inevitably be working simultaneously to competing timelines, clocks, and rhythms:

- the duration of your funding, agreed project milestones and deadlines;
- the semesters of the academic year with heavy periods of teaching and administration;
- the pace of university systems, which may leave you waiting for recruitment or contracts or expenses to be processed;
- for those of us in the UK, the national REF (Research Excellence Framework) cycle, which creates timebound pressure for outputs or evidence of 'impact';
- if on a fixed-term contract, the rhythms of the job market and need to plan for your next post;
- the rhythms and intensities of the research activities you're doing;
- pacing and energy levels within your team, which may wax and wane according to multiple factors including health, disability, and all the cycles above.

On the LBO project, we aimed to be especially mindful of time pressures, pace, energy and the rhythms of research as part of our explorations of how to establish accessible and inclusive research culture. We wanted to treat health, wellbeing and energy levels seriously, as factors to be considered as part of caring and accountable research practice, rather than as obstacles to be overcome in the pursuit of maximum productivity.

Crip temporalities

One of our starting points for LBO was a recognition of how 'the temporalities of normative research processes [...] are typically fast-paced and output-oriented' (Atkinson, Hale and Liddiard 2024) and how this type of research formation is ableist and exclusionary. Expectations of 'chrononormativity' (Freeman 2010) – that is, the idea that we all share the same orientations to time, follow similar timelines, and use time to maximize productivity – can render certain forms of research activity impossible for disabled colleagues or mean they have to work harder or longer to 'keep pace' with sector-wide norms.

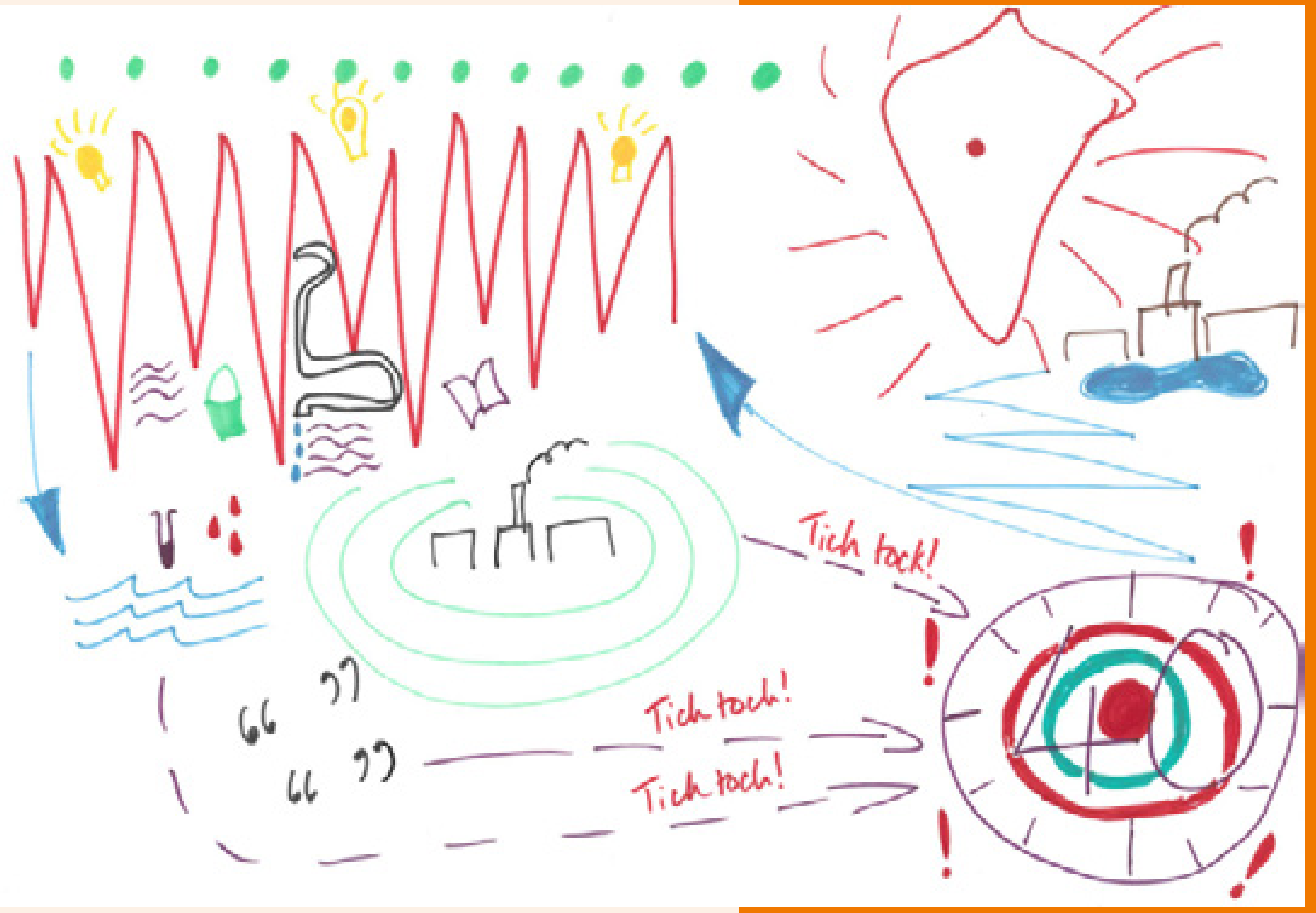
As Susan Wendell writes, in many professional spheres '[p]ace is a major aspect of expectations of performance', but 'for those who must move or think slowly, and for those whose energy is severely limited, expectations of pace can make work, recreational, community, and social activities inaccessible' (1996, 38). Meanwhile, it is well documented that productivity demands in academia can produce physical and mental ill health – anxiety, burnout, exhaustion (see Wellcome 2020) – but they continue to increase as the 'pace of life' (Wendell 1996, 37) speeds up: Moya Bailey critiques how 'the academy demands more and more output [...]. Efficiency and productivity drive the pace of life, and the ethics of that pace – the demand it makes on the human body – is rarely if ever questioned' (Bailey 2021, 287). We wanted to explore how research might be designed to adhere to an 'ethics of pace' (Bailey 2021) and how we could employ pacing as a strategy to enact care for researchers, collaborators, and participants.

Our approach to time was informed by disability studies scholarship, particularly Alison Kafer's theorization of 'crip time', which 'address[es] how illness, disease, and disability are conceptualized in terms of time, affect one's experiences of time, and render adherence to normative expectations of time impossible', but also 'highlight[s] how people are refusing and resisting those very expectations, thereby creating new affective relations and orientations to time, temporality, and pasts/presents/futures' (2021, 428). Crip time involves a 'reorientation to time' that has the potential to offer a 'challenge to normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling', since 'crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds' (Kafer 2013, 27). Rather than timelines being dictated by project schedules or institutional demands, crip time requires adaptations to accommodate individuals' pace of movement, processing speeds, or energy levels, so it is a way of thinking about time that prioritizes health, wellbeing, accessibility and inclusion.

Pacing in LBO

During LBO, we experimented with strategies for dislodging unhealthy and unsustainable research practices by exploring the value of pacing, resting, generous scheduling, and moving slowly (or quickly) when needed (see also Pausing). While our team included disabled and nondisabled members, we felt that modelling our activities on crip temporal practices would produce a research culture that is more accessible and inclusive for all. At the level of weekly scheduling, we built a commitment to pacing into our Ways of Working Agreement (see Appendix A): 'Pacing is important. It's good to go slowly. We won't try and do too much in one day'. This meant planning activities carefully, giving them sufficient time, not trying to rush decisions or the production of outputs, and scheduling in regular breaks. We kept our lab days to a maximum of six hours (with an hour-long lunch break and pauses between activities) and moved our Project Management meetings from lab days to another regular slot to relieve congested schedules.

↓ **'Research journey' comic by LBO team member,** showing the significance of time pressures. See Appendix E for an account of this Comics Exercise.



At the level of the three-year project duration, we learned to pace our activities by choosing not to follow up every opportunity that arose and postponing things until there was more time for them. We had set aside a six-month period at the end of our project for reflection and dissemination, and this proved invaluable for finishing off work in a less pressured way, bringing together what was most meaningful in the research (including this toolkit), and winding down the project in a way that didn't leave us exhausted at the end. However, we also faced major obstacles to effective pacing, including our overlap periods between residencies with key partners, which produced time pressure and unmanageable workloads on occasion (see Writing an EDI-informed Funding Application). Our Comics Exercises (see Appendix E) in our final Key Partner Meeting revealed that time pressure was a significant part of the project experience for several team members. Overall, our desire to 'disrupt debilitating patterns in academia and beyond' by 'adopting an ethics of pace in our scholarly practice' (Bailey 2021, 288) remained a project aspiration rather than something we always achieved, but many of us feel we have learned valuable lessons about research temporalities and pacing that will inform the design and ethos of our future projects.

Keeping momentum: immersion vs scheduling

In LBO, we experienced a significant learning curve regarding differences in how team members, disciplines and professions use and work in time, and a related tension between our project values and their time-related implications. To enact care and accountability towards each other and our collaborators required pacing, strategic time planning, and careful attempts to avoid overload (see Activity Sheet). But to facilitate creativity in our practice we often needed to work intensely, immersively, sometimes spontaneously – in ways that couldn't always be planned ahead.

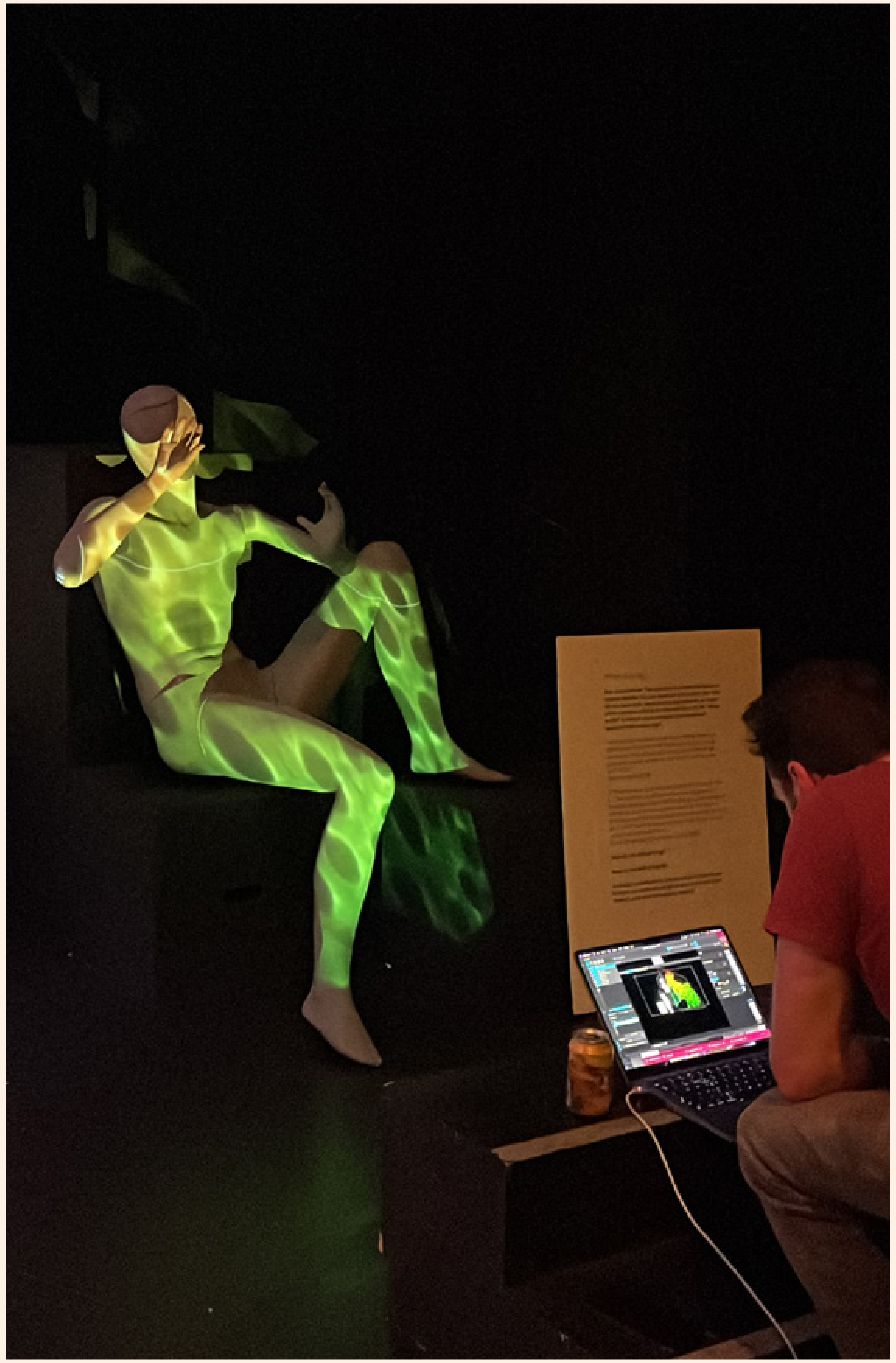
This emerged as an instructive tension early in LBO when we were preparing for our project launch event, which involved the team working together to devise creative activities for our guests to interact with (a museum exhibit, artworks, a sound installation, a dance performance, and critical provocations). We found that our creative partners and those of us with experience in the creative industries were used to intensive working in the days before an event or deadline and often found this approach generated new ideas and developments in their creative work. Those of us academics with teaching obligations and fixed days on the project found it difficult to maintain creative momentum. We were ready for the launch 'just in time' which produced both exhilaration – the adrenalin of the deadline and a successful event – and anxiety within the team. Afterwards, we experienced exhaustion and we 'lost' time and momentum when recovering and catching up on other things. We had a Killjoy conversation about how the rush towards the end resulted in us failing to make the event as accessible as we intended.

After the launch, we often discussed this apparent incompatibility between creative spontaneity and careful pacing, which informed the development of our Ways of Working Agreement (see also Appendix A), Project Values and Activity Sheets. We never fully resolved this issue – there were other times when we worked in ways that created pressure – but we got better at recognizing and anticipating the tension, knowing each other's work patterns and preferences, and adjusting our plans accordingly. This sometimes meant simplifying our plans, choosing to do less rather than more, which made that experience of creative energy more accessible to everyone involved.

Time and values-informed research

One of the most useful lessons we learned on LBO was that values-informed research – working with care and self-reflection – takes significant amounts of time. If you want to work in this way, interrogating your research journey, processes and approaches as you proceed, it is essential to have the resources for it, and time is possibly the most valuable of these resources. Schedule your values/EDI work into your time plan and prioritize it, otherwise it may get squeezed off the agenda or left as an afterthought when your research gets busy. It took our LBO team a while to find a rhythm for our 'ways of working' activities but we developed a schedule that included ways of working days every few weeks with specific tasks and focal points: choosing our Project Values, writing our Ways of Working Agreement (see Appendix A), reflecting on how the project could support our career development priorities. We also made 'ways of working' an agenda item in our fortnightly project management meetings so we all had a sense of it as an ongoing workstream and priority and could respond quickly to EDI or values-related issues if they arose in our day-to-day work.

Finding strategies for conducting research according to our Project Values was often slow, painstaking, and time-consuming work, but for many of us it was the most valuable element of the project and will have a lasting influence on how we approach future work. In that sense, it was time very well spent.



Pausing

Pausing is an intervention in research activity that focuses on time and how it is used. To deliberately pause troubles ideas central to research practice: the demand for constant productivity and the pressure to maintain momentum and avoid interruption or delays. The need for projects to 'hit the ground running' is a phrase repeated so often as to appear axiomatic. According to this logic, productivity is inherently to be found in speed; the faster the work, the more you will achieve (see Hassan 2009, Tomlinson 2007).

When milestones have to be met and deadlines hit, or when the pressures of publication are acute, deliberately pausing can seem counterintuitive, even risky. However, pausing research doesn't mean taking 'time off' from research. Rather, it is a highly valuable opportunity to address any problems that have arisen, reflect on research practice, and – crucially – rest between activities.

Our sense of the generative potential of pausing emerges from critical perspectives that reconceive time, such as Alison Kafer's idea of 'crip time', which 'bends the clock to meet disabled minds and bodies' (2013, 27; see Time). Everyone involved in research knows that time demands are among the most significant sources of stress and ill-health for participants. In a research context, crip time uncovers the biases inherent in assumptions about how long work 'takes'. An active practice of pausing encourages such 'bending' of schedules and enables reflection on research as an embodied activity. Ultimately, the essential point is to understand pausing as an active and productive process and not as 'time lost'.

Pausing in LBO

Pausing was a strategy we used consciously during the project when needs arose to rest, reflect, address an issue or explore an aspect of research culture. It was written into our Ways of Working Agreement: 'If there is conflict or discomfort, we take time to pause the discussion and address it' (see Appendix A). This happened within individual sessions, requiring us to abandon the schedule on our Activity Sheet to stop and address something before proceeding. Occasionally this was the result of Killjoy interventions, when someone raised a problem related to ethics, inclusion, or accessibility.

It also happened at larger scale, such as when we paused other activities for several weeks to give more collective time and attention to completing our ethics application. And sometimes we put particular activities on hold because people were too busy, overwhelmed, or in need of a break. In each of these cases, while we had to readjust (and sometimes downsize) our plans afterwards, the pause enabled the work to resume in more inclusive or careful ways. The pauses exemplified our ethos that an active commitment to care was more important than 'keeping to time'.

The 'pause before the start'

We also built in a process of 'pausing before the start', a phrase coined by one of our creative partners. At the very start of the project, before we began any partnership work or developed any research questions, we spent time in exploratory workshops to build relationships and trust within the team, including our creative partners, and ask ourselves questions about the medical humanities research we sought to initiate and why.

To quote our creative partner, these workshops were a process of 'getting lost in order to find ourselves'. We then paused at the start of each collaboration, taking time to get to know our partners, discuss hopes, expectations, approaches and ways of working, to very deliberately not hit the ground running. Starting each block of work in this way established that how we worked was just as important as what we produced and meant that the research began in the spirit of curiosity, openness, and humility.

Benefits

- An overt commitment to pausing shows all members of a team that issues connected to research time – like burnout and exhaustion – are acknowledged and will be addressed. As a result, researchers can feel supported and able to speak freely about the time pressures produced by workload, deadlines, health, and family/caring responsibilities.
- Pausing gives the research team an opportunity to let questions and approaches evolve organically instead of being superimposed by time pressures. These questions can be large (how to approach partners, for example) or small (how to record an activity to best capture it). In this way, pausing can offer tangible and empirical improvements to research (including working relationships) that ultimately save time. At LBO, we found that the initial reflections at the start of our partnerships were a great aid to the production of outcomes.

Limitations

- Despite an active commitment to scrutinizing pace and scheduling, time pressures may be unavoidable. Often, research time is determined by outside forces (institutional demands, deadlines, partner needs and schedules, and so on). Structural challenges can make it difficult to use time as a research team might want. This issue can be mitigated to some extent by building in pauses to a research workplan at application stage (see Writing an EDI-informed Funding Application).
- Pausing can create pressure when first working with partners since it might not be what a partner expects at the start of a research collaboration, particularly when there is a desire for tangible outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix A: LBO ways of working agreement

Our Ways of Working Agreement reflects our key principles and commitments, as well as what we have learnt from our partners about their practice. In some ways this agreement is aspirational, as we don't always manage to put these commitments into practice, but it reminds us of what we value and makes sure we aim towards best practice every time we work together.

Principles

- Accessibility comes first. It is everyone's responsibility.
- We work with care and create safe spaces.
- We are accountable to partners, participants and each other.
- Mistakes are part of learning. But reflection and action are required when mistakes are made.
- Everyone matters. We believe that the practice of good research must value all those are who part of the process, whatever their position.
- Pauses, silences and reflection are integral parts of creation.
- We foreground partner priorities and practices in our collaborations.
- We aim to enact positive change in research culture and ways of doing research wherever it occurs.

Our commitments

- Our project employs a non-hierarchical leadership model.
- Excellent accessibility resources and checklists exist. We use these resources to plan events and create materials.
- We have regular ways of working review meetings. This includes at least one review meeting between each residency to update the plan based on our learning from that residency and that partner organization.
- We constantly develop our working practices and their documentation, especially when planning, and reflecting on, key events, outputs, meetings etc.
- We use reflection activities and meetings to share learning, understand what we've done well, maintain accountability, and identify what we need to do better.

Health, accessibility and wellbeing

- We make time for breaks and physical movement, also fresh air.
- In our lab meetings and sessions everyone is welcome to sit, stand, lie on the floor, move around – whatever is comfortable and comforting for their body.
- We adopt the CLEAR Lab rule: 'If you're tired, heartbroken, or sick, GO HOME. This job is not more important than your health. We are accountable to you as a whole person. You are not a drone' (CLEAR Lab Book 2021, 15).
- Pacing is important. It's good to go slowly. We won't try and do too much in one day.
- We value our mental health and wellbeing and provide content warnings when helpful.
- Participation is never mandatory. Observation is okay. If anyone doesn't feel up to full engagement, they are still welcome to be present and listen.
- We respect each other's physical and emotional boundaries.
- We respect everyone's preferences for expression and provide options for contributing to the work.

Workload

- We recognize that each member of the team has different workload commitments, both to the project and outside the project, and that these commitments will fluctuate.
- We will be open, honest and understanding about when and how the team, partners and participants can commit time and energy.
- We aim to be transparent and clear about who has what responsibilities at any time, and the workload consequences of those responsibilities.
- Different people will lead on the various project residencies and activities. We support team members who take on leadership responsibilities and respect their time.

Working with others

- We are committed to learning from others and we're accountable to those who teach us. We will incorporate our partners' best practices into our own ways of working.
- We will make sure our visitors and collaborators have all the information they need before they join us.
- We will work in spaces that are appropriate for our participants, paying attention to accessibility, power dynamics and comfort.
- We will involve our partners in our regular reflections and ensure we have clear processes for feedback.

Interacting with care

- We listen respectfully to people's points of view and let them finish what they are saying.
- We don't tolerate offensive language or jokes.
- We stay mindful of differences within the group, including seniority, role and disciplinary background.
- We make space for feedback, which should be constructive and conscientious.
- We draw creatively on a range of teamwork strategies to facilitate specific tasks, events and activities.
- If there is conflict or discomfort, we take time to pause the discussion and address it.
- We embrace playfulness and experimentation in what we do.

Appendix B: Sample activity sheet

SAMPLE LBO ACTIVITY SHEET

LBO Ways of Working Session:
Ways of Working Document Development and Project Roles

Date: Friday 26 May 2023
Time: 10.00 – 2.30
Location: Hybrid lab/Teams. If you can make it to campus, it would be nice to do this in person as far as possible!

Preparation tasks

Current drafts of our EDI/lab handbook documents are in this folder on Teams: [link]

- **Please review the Our Ways of Working document**, which Clare and Amelia have updated and streamlined, focusing on our Ways of Working principles. **Please add comments** offering feedback, reflections, suggestions for anything you feel is missing or needs revising etc.
- **Please review and update the LBO project glossary**: [link]. Please add any key terms that have become important in our work over the last few months and/or add to or edit existing entries that interest you. *This is a collectively owned and produced document so don't worry about adding your thoughts to someone else's work!* Your entries could include: quotations from/summaries of things you have read (academic or non-academic); your own reflections on how we've engaged with certain concepts in the project, or how they have shaped or enabled our thinking; responses to other people's comments. They don't have to be polished – can be exploratory or half-formed thoughts and ideas – and it's up to you how much or little you contribute. Feel free to add material to the main body of the glossary or use comment boxes if you like.
- **Have a think about the following questions in preparation for the Roles session**:
  - Which aspects of your role so far have given you the most enjoyment or satisfaction?
  - Do you feel that your responsibilities and contributions are clear and manageable and that you understand what others are doing?
  - How would you like to contribute to the project over the next phases, considering your career development, job satisfaction, best use of skills, etc?

Workshop Schedule

10.00 – 11.30 Ways of Working Document Development
The aims of this session are:
- To reach consensus on a version of the Ways of Working document that a) reflects our approaches and priorities; and b) we are happy to share on the LBO website.
- To use the Glossary to reflect on what is important to us as a team.
- To select some key terms/extracts from the Glossary that we are happy to share publicly, and that will then be edited to create the first version of the Glossary for the website. *We'll still keep the long, work-in-progress version of the Glossary as a space for reflecting on and developing emerging ideas and concepts.*

Exercise 1: Round robin (15 mins). How do you feel about the updated Our Ways of Working document? Anything missing? What should we focus on in this session?
[Reminder: in a round robin, everyone gets chance to answer the question (or to pass if they prefer) before anyone speaks for a second time. This will be a quick way of determining priorities for discussion, but shouldn't become a discussion itself.]

Exercise 2 (30 mins): Based on round robin feedback, collective editing of the document until we have a version we are happy with.

Exercise 3 (45 mins): Glossary discussion. What terms/concepts feel most important for the project? (How) have our priorities shifted? Would it be useful to do some reading/ development on particular entries? **Which entries do we want to include in our public-facing version of the glossary?**

11.30 – 12.30 Lunch

12.30 – 2.15 Project Roles session
Now we are nearly halfway through the project, the aims of this session are:
- To reflect on the roles we're playing in the team in relation to workload, distribution of expertise, and job satisfaction;
- To identify what's working well and discuss anything that might need clarifying or resetting;
- To enter the next phase of the project with a clear sense of our duties, responsibilities, and priorities.

Exercise 1 (20 mins): Pair work. Discuss the Roles prep questions above with your partner, from both of your perspectives. On the whiteboard in the lab, or on the Teams chat, please write some points down under the following headings:
- What is working well? [This can include what you are happy with in your own role and/or what you see other people/groups doing that is working well.]
- Priorities for discussion. [What roles or aspects of the project might need a bit more discussion to get them working smoothly or enable people to thrive/manage workload/make best use of skills etc.]

Exercise 2 (until 2pm; we'll have a 10 min break in the middle): Open discussion based on points raised on the board/chat.

Exercise 3 (15 mins): Confirm action points that have arisen from the session.

2.15-2.30 Wrap up and reflection
Short (5-minute) reflection exercise (writing, drawing, audio, chat with a partner, for sharing or not as you prefer): How do you feel now about your roles/work over the next few months? Any bits of EDI/career development work you would like us to prioritise in the near future?

EDI considerations

Sensitive topics
The roles discussion could raise sensitive issues if people are experiencing issues with their own roles or have concerns about how aspects of the project are working. The pairs task is set up so people can raise any issues one-to-one first and discuss with their partner what they would like to share, how they would like to approach it, and how they want to frame the issue on the board and in the open discussion.

Online participation
If you're joining on Teams, this is the link for the whole day: [link]

We'll be editing the WoW docs on Teams, sharing the screen, so everyone can contribute at the same time.

Mobility
In the lab, feel free to sit/stand/lie down/move around – the owl should ensure we're all visible to people online!

Documentation

The Ways of Working and Glossary documents will be their own form of documentation. We can record the Teams meeting in case we want to go back to any part of the discussion in future.

Roles session: the board, action points and reflection exercise should capture the outcomes of the discussion and any points for follow up. We'll take photos of the whiteboard.

Contact person for questions, EDI requests, opting out of sessions, etc: [name]

Appendix C: Sample moments exercise

Instructions

Identify one key moment from during the Interplay residency that held particular meaning or significance for you or your practice.

This might be a moment of realization about:

- Your own practice;
- Your sphere of practice e.g. medical humanities, immersive technologies, sensory theatre, storytelling, digital media, dance, motion capture, tech etc;
- The interactions between bodies, technologies, objects and health;
- The spaces of medical humanities research;
- What the lab/virtual lab might be/how it might function.

Or:

- A breakthrough moment, when ideas came together that shaped the residency or gave it meaning for you;
- A moment that opened up new possibilities for you e.g. the introduction of a new technology or process you haven't used before;
- A moment when you observed or noticed a particular impact the work had on someone else (a participant or collaborator);
- A moment where you felt something strongly, or had an embodied response to something we did, a space we were in or an encounter.

Then, either:

- Write for five minutes reflecting on this moment and why it was significant to you/ your practice/your sphere of practice/the residency/the project. The writing style can be experimental.

Or:

- Record an audio file on your phone (approx. 5 minutes) reflecting on why it was significant.

And/or :

- Select a photograph or piece of visual/audio-visual media that captures the moment or do a drawing or sketch.

← **Drawing by Lynn Wray.**

Sample moments exercise: Jamie Stark

On one side of a wall in LBO lab, an actor covered in motion capture dots, connected to a microphone, moving precisely and speaking clearly. On the other side, a group of interested humans clustered around a screen showing some perfectly rendered moving blobs, trying to make linguistic sense of a series of scales and glissandos: the product of the actor's actions, transformed through technological means.

To begin with, it was hard to work out what our artificial friend – Rose – was saying. Then I realised that the point was not to try and decipher words: it was to infer meaning from the sounds and gestures combined. Then the real revelation: taking part in this activity was the learning itself. Speaking with a robot was such a fundamentally different experience that I felt like I had never spoken with anyone else before. The realization that my cognitive make-up and assumptions about interactions didn't equip me to communicate effectively was actually quite overwhelming, even though I knew that we were only testing. I thought: "what would I actually do if I was the only person standing here, and the robot on the screen was my only possible way of communicating with anyone, or anything else?"

That brought home the realization that understanding people's experiences and expectations of communicating with robots – whether in the past, in the imagination, or in actuality – is hugely important when we start to think about the future of human/non-human relationships, including in care. Designing a good robot is hard! But even if you do design a "good" (what I mean by this, I'm not sure: effective or accessible, I suppose) robot, you still won't know what it is like to interact with it, and knowing what that is like matters for all of us.

Appendix D: Sample listening exercise

What are we hearing from our residency partners?

Aim: To understand what the key learnings from the residencies are and how we/our partners can take forward the work in future.

Method: Active listening to, and group analysis of, the residency partners' reflections.

Preparation

- All members of the team need to bring in headphones that work with their laptops/tablets.
- We will provide a link to each clip in advance.

Activity

1. Listen to your individual extracts from the interviews (email to follow with details) using your own device and headphones.
2. As you listen, write down anything you hear relating to:
   a) Key learnings from the residency on pink post-its
   b) What partners valued on purple post-its
   c) Research questions that emerged on green post-its
   d) Possibilities for future collaborative work on blue post-its
   e) Any possible adjustments to ways of working on yellow post-its
   f) Anything that might provide useful evidence of impact on orange post-its
   g) Any other discussion points to note for later.
3. If you're in the lab, put your post-its on the appropriate board/sheet of paper (grouped according to colour).
4. Walk around to review each of the boards (10 mins). We'll take a photo of each board for anyone online and send them over during the break.
5. Add in any additional learnings/possibilities/questions that you think are missing on post-its (e.g. your own ideas or perspectives) (5 mins).
6. Discussion (30 mins). Following on from what we have learnt, invite ideas/discussion on topics including the following:
   - What have we learned from the BMA residency and what have our partners valued?
   - What possible research questions emerged during the BMA residency?
   - What are the potential pathways to take forward future collaborative work?
   - What have we learnt about ways of working during this residency?
   - Is there any evidence emerging of research impact?
   - How do we end the residencies well?
   - How do we thank our residency partners?
7. Define/agree action points (15 mins), including how to return to any areas where further discussion and reflection is needed.

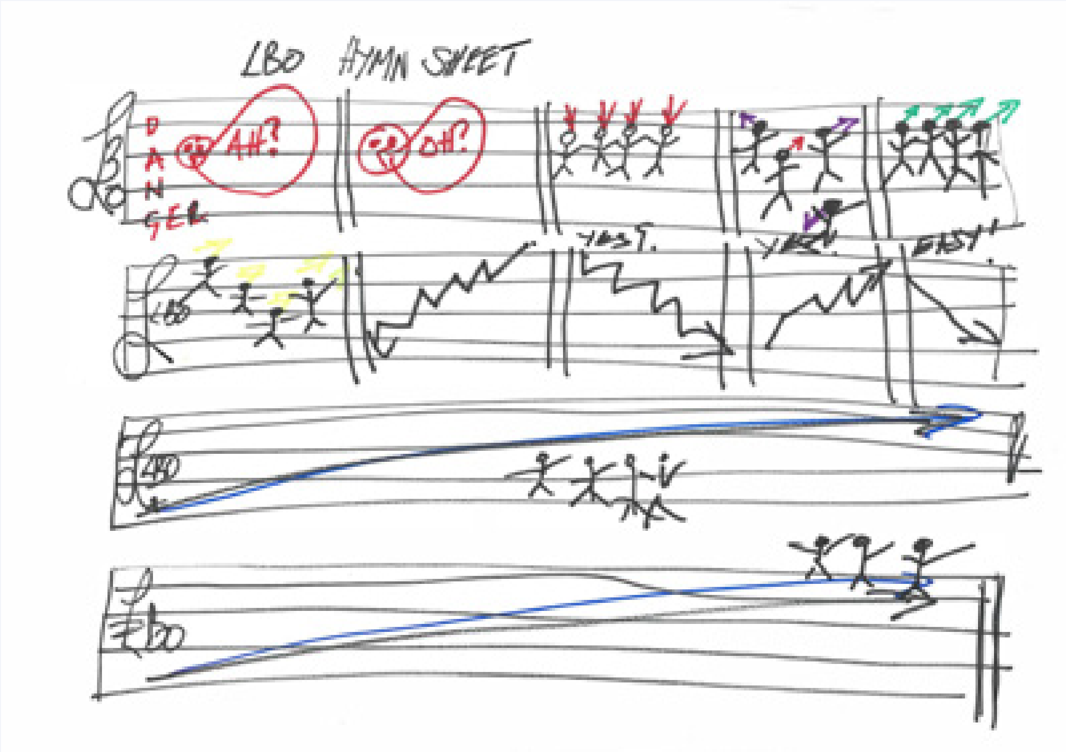
Appendix E: Sample comics exercises

Moment comic strip

- Draw a grid or set of panels on an A3 page using a sharpie. You can do any combination of shapes and sizes you like (5 mins).
- Populate the grid with speech and thought bubbles and text boxes (2 mins).
- Now swap your A3 sheet with grid with your partner.
- Think back to an 'aha' moment in the residency where your thinking shifted, things started to come together, an experiment worked, or you had an emotional or embodied experience.
- Draw the action from your moment in the grid boxes and fill in any text or speech in the bubbles to make a comic strip. Work fast and don't think too hard (10 mins).
- Talk your partner through your comic strip (5 mins).

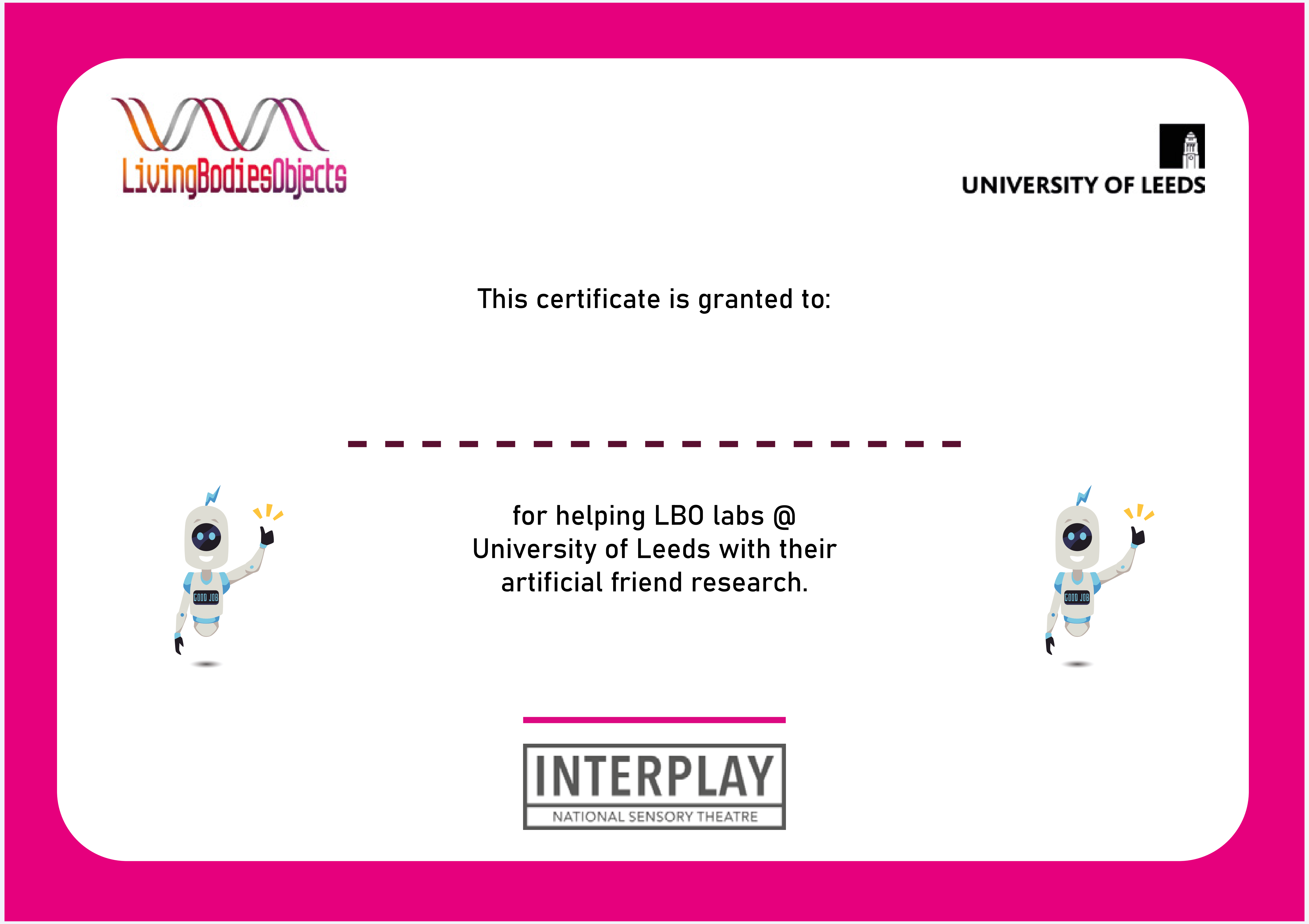
The research journey

- Think about the residency you were most involved in.
- Use the same technique of grids populated with gestural mark-making to sketch your experiences and feelings over the course of the residency.
- Take 10 mins to do this.
- Now take 5 mins to take your partner on a walk through your drawing.



↑ 'Research journey' comic by Steve Byrne.

Appendix F:
Robot researcher certificate



LivingBodiesObjects

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This certificate is granted to:

for helping LBO labs @
University of Leeds with their
artificial friend research.

INTERPLAY
NATIONAL SENSORY THEATRE

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"We are all LBO researchers."

Dave Tabron,
Blueberry Academy

Credits

In crediting the work in this toolkit, we have favoured a broad definition of contributorship (Nick et al 2023, 3; Sarna-Wojcicki et al 2017) over a more conventional notion of academic authorship. As part of LBO's commitment to accountability, we want to ensure that everyone's contributions are properly recognized, including our project managers' and partners', rather than reinforcing the notion that academic 'researchers are the sole creators of knowledge' (Nick et al 2023, 3).

A toolkit of this scale was an unanticipated outcome of the LBO project. To enable our project partners and research assistants to contribute alongside their other commitments, we held a series of toolkit development activities during our final Key Partner Meeting: a ideation session on what our partners would like to see in the toolkit, short individual interviews in which we asked a series of questions designed to feed into toolkit entries, and a creative reflection exercise (see Appendix E). We also interviewed our project managers, whose contributions are woven into entries in the 'Project design and getting started' section. Other contributions informing the entries have come in the form of concepts, phrases and ideas that our partners, colleagues and participants have introduced to us throughout the project.

Our resulting entries have been written by members of the LBO research team, but our crediting system below is informed by good practice regarding authorship (see e.g. CLEAR Lab 2021, 58-63; CLEAR Lab, *Author Order* 2021) and recognizes that 'contributors of knowledge should be given credit as authors of the publication of that knowledge' (Sarna-Wojcicki et al 2017, 737).

Because we work within a system that rewards and recognizes publications and individual achievement, we decided to ensure that all the labour involved in producing the toolkit is visible and credited. Our credits below include a list of contributions to individual entries to acknowledge the specific work of individual team members. All contributor lists are in alphabetical order unless there was a clear 'lead' contributor to a particular entry. In those cases, the 'lead' contributor is listed first.

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Activity sheet: Clare Barker and Amelia DeFalco

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Living glossary: Clare Barker

Documentation and reflection: Lynn Wray

Moments exercise: Lynn Wray

Reflective interviews: Jamie Stark

Listening exercises: Lynn Wray and Faye Robinson

Round robins: Clare Barker and Stuart Murray

Live co-writing: Clare Barker and Amelia DeFalco

Concepts and provocations – Introduction: Amelia DeFalco

Reciprocity: Stuart Murray

Epistemic generosity: Amelia DeFalco

Mistakes: Stuart Murray

Beyond: Clare Barker

Killjoy: Clare Barker

Time: Clare Barker

Pausing: Stuart Murray, Clare Barker and Dave Lynch

Appendix A – LBO ways of working agreement: LBO team

Appendix B – Sample activity sheet: LBO team

Appendix C – Sample moments exercise: Lynn Wray and Jamie Stark

Appendix D – Sample listening exercise: Lynn Wray and Faye Robinson

Appendix E – Sample comics exercises: Lynn Wray

Appendix F – Robot researcher certificate: Amelia DeFalco and Lynn Wray

Acknowledgements and credits: Clare Barker