

Collaborating for impact TSRF 2019 Panel members' impressions of the conference

Louise Meikleham:

We asked our panel to be participant researchers during the day, so while they've been attending sessions they'd be thinking about any themes that's cropped up, or something that's interested them, or surprised them along the way. So I won't talk for any longer, I'm going to pass on first to Kerrie, if she can reflect on her experience of the day.

Kerrie Friel:

And I'm going to take your microphone because the other one's been a bit dodgy (laughter). I've been a bit naughty, I've not really been doing what I was supposed to do so I'm just going to wing it like I do all the time. So I really enjoyed today, it's been amazing to see everybody and all the different inputs. I think, well, for me personally, I think, for me personally, I think we've all maybe, we're all very familiar we're all coming from the same point of view, you know, we don't want to teach a gran to suck eggs, so we're all kind of here coming from the same kind of platform...I've not learned that many things but it's really just reaffirmed that we're all on the right page. And saying that, what I have learned is that sometimes it's actually good to just sit back and not talk all the time. So I've actually kept my mouth shut, I think I've said a lot in some of the workshops, but I thought, 'Oh I'm just going to sit back and well let people have a go for a change.' So sometimes my biggest achievement is actually keeping my mouth shut. So yeah, it's been really great, there's a great energy within all the workshop's and it's been amazing linking with people. What I would like to do is shamelessly say that at the end if you're interested, linking with me to do a little initiative that I've done called 'Keeping up with the Karmashians.' So karma, is your action your work or your deed. So I have four kids, I don't want them aspiring to be like, reality people or what have you. So years ago we had 'Keeping up with the Joneses' so you had to aspire to have stuff, but stuff doesn't make you happy. And we've now got all this reality nonsense. So 'Keeping up with the Karmashians' is keeping up with people like everybody in this room, so an individual, an activist, an organisation, people that are doing good and who want to make a difference. So anybody who would like to be on my little forum that I put on Facebook, it's not on anything else because I'm a technophobe and other people don't work anything else (?). So basically I would catch up, with my phone, and say here you are, and basically promote your organisation. So if anybody would like to do that, please let me know, because that way it raises awareness of what you do, and it can create collaboration, which is what it's all about.

Louise Meikleham:

Thank you Kerrie, I think that's a brilliant offer and we should obviously think about it. Next, Cassy Rutherford's going to share her reflections of the day.

Cassy Rutherford:

First of all I just want to thank everybody that I've spoken to today or who has presented or have shown anything that I've seen. I've learned so much so trying to distil it into two minutes has been practically impossible. I actually went into the early session with an eye towards this part of the day thinking, I'm going to be focused, but in reality my brain's been jumping between my role as a panel list here, my interest in social research, my role with any funder, the trust's role as a funder, and there's huge amount of information that I'm going to take away, so thank you.

I think for me one of the key themes that has come through is the importance of relationships, of human to human interaction, and everybody has something to bring to whatever collaboration they're doing – skills, knowledge, experience. And everybody's contribution needs to be recognised and equally valued. But across that there's also been a word of caution with a lot of people that I've spoken to about recognising our own biases and our own privilege. Networks and relationship-building have come across as being really important to identifying research questions, building collaborations, to finding new partners and to sharing key findings. But we need to keep checking that we're not being confined to what's familiar to us. And we're hearing from other voices too that we might not ordinarily hear from and that we are going to the right people and accessing them, speaking to them in a way that is useful and helpful to them. So recognising my privilege as working for a funder, I think that's a particularly important one for me, and for the trust to constantly remember, so I think that's the key thing that I'm personally going to be taking away so thank you.

Jane Cullingworth:

So I've been really struck today by the kind of research that's been presented. Such an incredibly strong participatory kind of focus. I attended the first session, 'What do you mean I have the right?' I don't know if Duncan and Derek are still in the room, but honestly this presentation really blew me away. And they showed a film, basically, people with lived experience who were involved in, became peer researchers. And they showed a film, and one of the, a quote from one of the women who's an asylum film, earlier in the film, she said: 'Being an asylum seeker has an impact on every day of my life.' And it was just interesting given that we were here to talk about impact. And I think so much now about impact in terms of research and what it means to third sector organisations, but to hear this young woman talk about the impact of being an asylum seeker, just really kind of brought it down to a very kind of, emotional, very kind of humbling reality, really, which is the kind of experiences and challenges that people live through. And so, if we are doing research with, or for, or on in some cases, people, there's a real responsibility on how it is that you do that. And that research has the, in terms of how you do research, you have the power to have a very direct and dramatic impact on people's lives. So the thing about this research was that it had so impacted on the people who were involved in it, it

was really very, very striking. And I think that there's a risk when you're in academia that you get a bit removed from the coal face. So this, to me, is a sort of reminder to always stay very focused on what research is about, and that it really has to be about people. And that it's really important that when you partner, that you partner with people – a word that came up for me was 'ethos,' that there's a shared ethos in how it is that you work with people.

I just also want to comment, when I went to a lightening talk from HIV Scotland, and I think what was really interesting about that particular project, which was about putting together a book of people's stories with the lived experience of HIV, which is the number of ways in which that project has had an impact. So it had very significant impact on the people whose stories, who wrote their stories, who were involved in that process. It had a very significant impact on the organisation which at the time of this writing was actually quite vulnerable, even though they've been around for 25 years. And it's now shifted its policy work to creative activism – it's really helped to highlight stigma, apparently there is now some Scottish Government commitment towards an awareness campaign. And then the woman who was involved – is Angie still here? I don't think so. So Angie is a PhD student who actually was their writer in residence – right I've had a look at my notes, I've called her the writer in evidence by mistake, which is also very interesting (laughter) – but it also had a significant impact on her in terms of her own work and her PhD. So, yeah, research can really make a difference, that's what I'm taking away.

Louise Meikleham:

Thank you, Jane. I think we probably shouldn't underestimate how far the stories and the people behind the stories can take us. Next up is Harriet, now Harriet had a particularly busy day. She had to dart off to another event, which involved research, and she was able to come back and go to a workshop in the afternoon and now some of her reflections on her very busy day.

Harriet Waugh:

Yeah, I'm looking forward to a relaxing evening tonight, definitely. But it was, I had to run off to support minister, but it was around visiting a third sector organisation, and we had a bit of a chat about research as well, so it felt quite fitting and it helped frame my mind for the rest of the day. Um...I'm very conscious of Steven's little card, which terrifies the life out of me (laughter). After missing the workshop in the morning, I missed one of the lightening talks, because I was too busy chatting with somebody, and we were talking about how you need to bring experience across the whole process when you're doing research. So it's not just about finding a group of people that you want to ask their thoughts on later down the line when you've already decided everything, and they're kind of going, 'Oh there was just a tiny little thing and it's right back there.' It's about bringing people along the whole process. And then I did manage to make one of the lightening talks, and heard Chris Baird, who talked about how as a participant researcher, he was involved in the whole process across the way, so that's a really nice kind of link. He also reflected on how his training and supervision helped balance, kind of coming in with a very specific interest, and almost a little bit of a bias towards what he was interviewing on. I

then when on to Richard Whitecross, who reflected about how best to provide support in an appropriate way with those that he was interviewing. All that kind of really came together, to for me, to illustrate how basically person-centred approaches to research can, and also most definitely should, sit alongside a rigorous approach to governance and safeguarding. And it was nice to see that balance really come across from so many different people. And I just wanted to finish by sharing a quote from Richard, which I hastily scribbled down so hopefully it's close to word-perfect. He said that the approach that they took when he was doing his work with Edinburgh Women's Aid: '...our live participants, not to be interviewed once to give them data, but led them to be heard.' And I thought that that really showed how those two things are quite identical to the whole part.

Louise Meikleham:

Thank you very much, Harriet. So finally I'm going to hand over to Lucy,

Lucy Mulvaugh:

Thanks very much. I don't know about everybody else, but I've had an amazing day and I'm absolutely shattered (laughter). There's been such a wealth of information and learning today, I'm really quite overwhelmed by it, and I think I'm just going to be doing a lot of reflection in the coming days and weeks. And hopefully going to be able to be in contact with some of you that I had a chance to talk to you today. And if anybody is interested in being in touch then my contact details are on the Alliance website as well.

I'm really chuffed because I've learned new terminology today, I'm not quite sure yet what it means, so I'm going to have to go and look it up. But I learned the phrase, 'Creative Learning Pedagogy,' don't know if I'm saying that right, in the session led by Articulating Abertay, which sounds like a fantastic piece of work involving young people, young care experience people. And the other thing that was great learning from that session was the fact that you don't have to produce a really lengthy, wordy, written report from your research. The young care experience people involved in that project didn't want to do that, they produced a video instead. And I thought that was a fabulous kind of creative way of capturing the learning from a participatory peer-research project. And I really sort of hope that it's something that we can encourage those that are funding or sponsoring research in the future to support that kind of alternative fact-finding sharing methodology. And finally, because everybody's already fed back on things that I was going to feed back on, so that's great. The one thing as well that I'll take away from today was I thought really interesting input from Edinburgh Women's Aid around the decision-making process that they've gone through about why to get involved with a particular piece of research when they are very regularly approached by different people and organisations wanting to speak to the women that access their services. And some of the things that were

brought up was that basically, the researcher had taken the time to raise some of these issues proactively himself. It met the strategic objectives of the organisation, they had like-minded similar values which spoke a lot to me. The request was backed up by a sister organisation, so I think that role of trusted intermediary kind of really came up there. The research had basically shown that he understood issues around the physical and emotional safety of the participants, which I think is something that we've all kind of spoken about a little bit today. But thank you so much everybody, it's just been a marvellous day.

Louise Meikleham:

I would just like to say thanks to all the panel members, it's been really fascinating to hear all the different perspectives you've had on research, impact, and collaboration. And I have to say that at the start of the day I would have said that my take on research and impact would have been something about making a visible difference. But having reflected on sessions I've been to today, I think sometimes that impact might not be immediate, but it is worthwhile persisting. And the other reflection I had is actually something that Ilsa said in the session we were in this afternoon with Carnegie upstairs, and it's really the value of conferences like this. I think what they're really great at is unpicking some of these really complex relationships and trying to figure out what the recipe is for a good collaboration that does have impact. So thanks everyone for putting the conference together.