

Upscaling the impact of the 'Working Better with Whitley' project

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Introduction

With it sometimes hard to relate research to the realities of everyday life, the University of Reading and a local community research team, the 'Whitley Researchers', adopted a less conventional approach to research, **PAR (Participatory Action Research)**, to make their research more accessible to local people.

PAR (Participatory Action Research) ... is a more inclusive approach to conducting research in communities. Local residents are actively involved as researchers so that projects are run *with* communities rather than *about* them.

My role has involved:

- Upscaling the impact of their research nationally by designing a leaflet and website
- Sharing the stories of the Whitley Researchers
- Working alongside the Whitley Researchers on their 'Financial Exclusion' project
- Facilitating a co-produced event organised by Reading Borough Council to ensure that local voices are heard

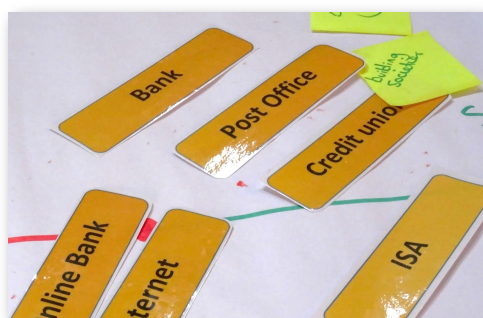


How do young people manage their money?
The Whitley Researchers conducted a focus group with UoR students.

Putting PAR into practice: Financial Exclusion research project in Whitley, South Reading

In 2012, Whitley was granted £1 million Big Local National Lottery funding for community development. The 'Whitley Researchers' was established to explore different issues in the area and work out how the funding should be spent.

The Whitley Researchers' current project focuses on 'Financial Exclusion'. Through interviews and focus groups, our team have explored how local residents manage their money and access financial advice and services. The research findings will be used to make recommendations for future community development initiatives in Whitley.



"Who do you trust with your money?"
A question we asked during the focus groups.

Sharing the stories of the Whitley Researchers

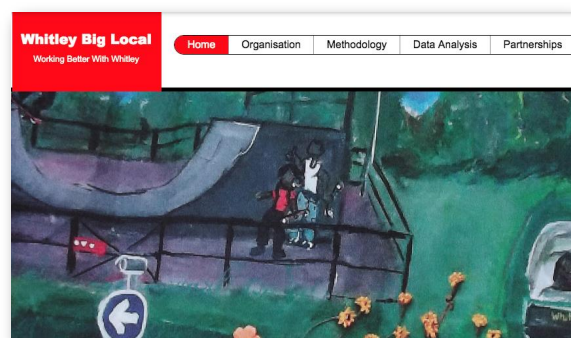
The success of the 'Whitley Researchers' is partly due to the group's inclusive nature and willingness to involve as many people as possible. The group believe that with more people invested in the Big Local partnership, participating and shaping the project, the more successful it will be.

To encourage others to get involved, I designed a leaflet to provide a brief overview of the Whitley Researchers and their values. The leaflet used accessible language to ensure readers with little or no research experience could understand and feel confident to get involved.



Whitley Researchers: Working Better With Whitley
Our final leaflet

We are also developing a website by working with the 'Whitley Researchers' and community organisations to share their research practices, stories and experiences, to ensure information is relatable and inclusive. In order to do so, I gathered qualitative data on how the research has impacted on the lives of the Whitley Researchers.



Whitley Researchers: Working Better With Whitley
Our initial website design

Next steps

The Whitley Researchers are writing a report based on the findings of the 'Financial Exclusion' research project, which may lead to the establishment of new community development initiatives, such as a credit union or financial advice service. Further content for the website is also being developed.

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