Pedagogical Research and Educational Scholarship Research Cluster
research.reading.ac.uk/pedagogical-research-pcls

PRaES

University of Reading

Developing and implementing collaborations between academics and support services, and between institutions, to promote effective student support

Facilitated by
Dr Lydia Yee
Dr Katie Barfoot

BPS Seminar Series, University of Reading
8th September 2025

Today's workshop

University of Reading

Activity	Time
Collaborative response to case studies (small groups)	40 minutes
Feedback to wider group	20 minutes
Barriers and enablers to collaboration	15 minutes
Coffee break at 2:30pm	15 minutes
Feedback to co-create a 'Collaboration Success Toolkit'	10 minutes

Group activity
Approx. 5 per group

University of Reading

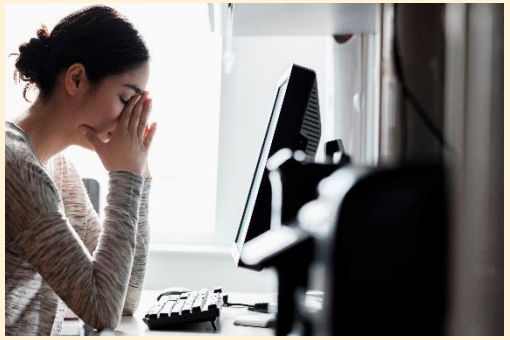
Case studies

Four hypothetical (but, likely common!) student-staff scenarios…

Aims:

- To discuss how academics, support services, and possibly other institutions might respond to scenarios collaboratively
- To explore best practices, highlight missed opportunities, and develop clearer referral/partnership pathways

Scenario 1:
Financial strain



Amira, a second-year student, is struggling to pay her rent after her part-time job hours were cut. She has missed several classes because she is working extra shifts. Her grades are starting to fall, and she is considering dropping out.

Prompts:

- Who should Amira talk to first?
- How might academics and student support services coordinate to help?
- Are there any other collaborations, organisations or people who could be involved to make a difference?

Scenario 2:
Mental health concerns

University of Reading

Jordan, a final-year student, has become increasingly withdrawn and has stopped participating in seminars. His academic advisor is worried but doesn't know how best to approach him. Jordan has visited the counselling service once but didn't follow up.

Prompts:

- What role should academics play here, and what role should support services play?
- How could communication between them be managed effectively (while respecting confidentiality)?
- What would an "ideal joined-up response" look like?

Scenario 3:
Academic challenges

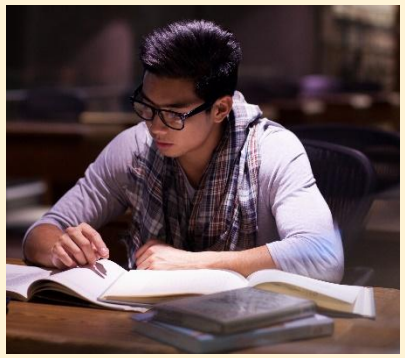
University of Reading

Leila, a first-year student, is the first in her family to attend university. She is struggling with referencing and critical writing. She is embarrassed to ask for help, and her tutor is concerned she may fail her first assessments.

Prompts:

- Which services could support Leila (academic skills, peer mentoring, library staff)?
- How can academics make referrals without making her feel singled out?
- Could collaboration with another institution (e.g., shared study skills resources) be useful?

Scenario 4:
International student adjustment



University of Reading

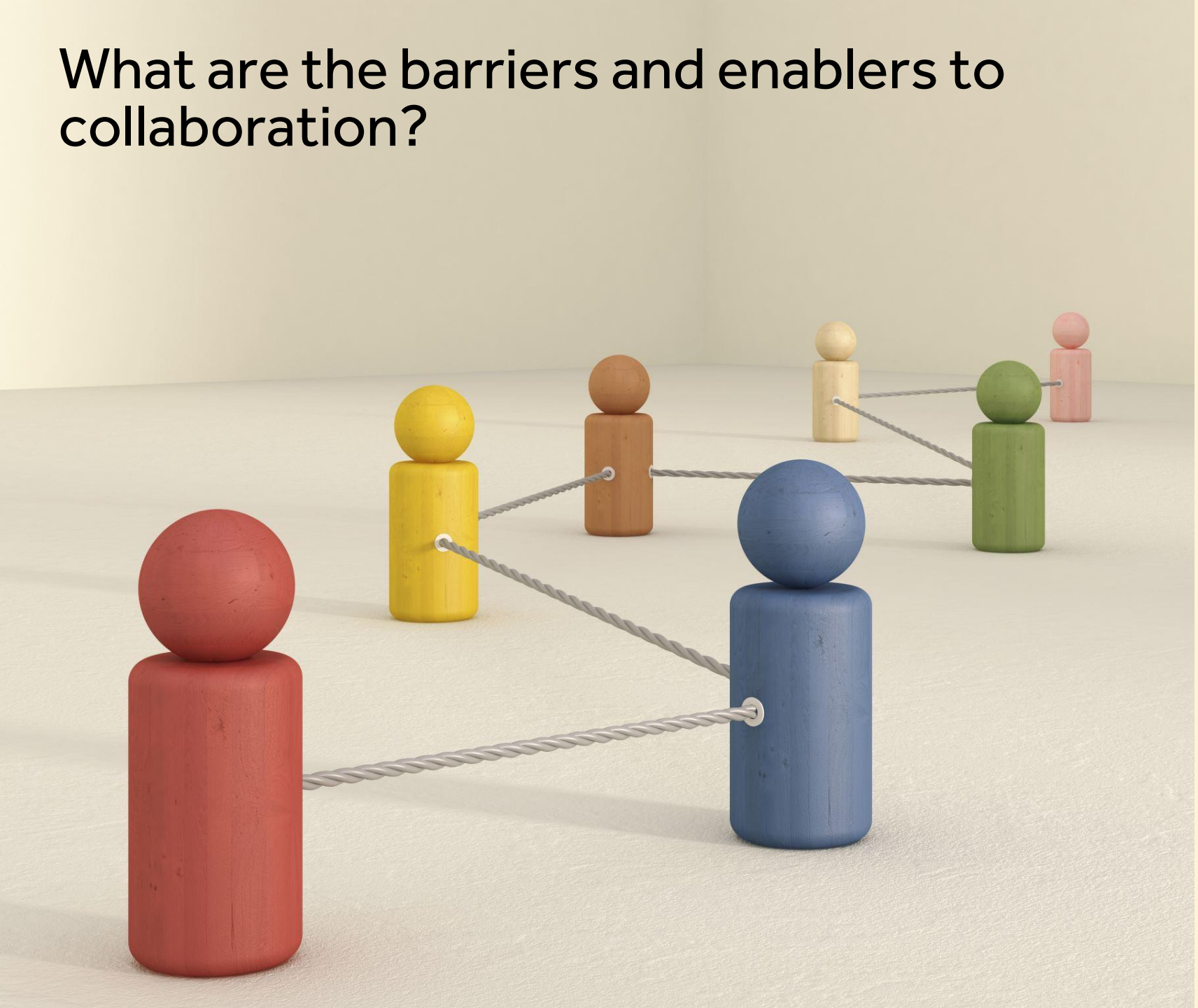
Wei, an international postgraduate student, is excelling academically but feels socially isolated. He has not joined any societies and has confided to his supervisor that he feels lonely and may return home early.

Prompts:

- How could academic staff, student services, and wellbeing teams collaborate to support Wei?
- What institutional or cross-institutional initiatives could reduce isolation for international students?
- How might collaborations with community organisations play a role?

Feedback

What are the barriers and enablers to collaboration?



- Padlet: https://padlet.com/universityofreading/barriers-enablers-to-collaboration-eqy6xb6d7grcdn24

Examples…

Barriers

- Siloed systems
- Lack of communication

Enablers

- Joint training
- Shared platforms

Now to the coffee break…

Reconvening at 2.45pm

What themes have emerged?

Lydia Yee /teacher/
8 days ago

Scroll to the right for enabler ideas :)

Lydia Yee /teacher/
24 days ago

Barriers

1

Dancing dragon
20 days ago

Barrier & enabler

Being concerned about peoples workload and adding to their workload. E.g. Some services may have automatic replies stating to expect delayed replies and I'm sometimes concerned about putting them out. Also sometimes 'need' a quick response. I've found that having a named contact from a service where we both help each other with queries can be helpful in reducing this concern

Unique Kiwi
20 days ago

Barriers

- systems - case management
- Funding models - UG v PG support and finance packages
- Different support structures and terminology - what is offered and how it is deceived varies across unis
- Expectations - whether student works, what level of skills they are expected to have at start of course, academic standards, whether student is able to work
- Where decision making sits - local adjustments and referral with depts and wider adjustments with central services
- Issues with dissemination of information - fitness of ILP's as mechanism for sharing adjustments
- 'Personalness' of experience often dictates how quickly issue is identified and confidence of parties to engage. For example, difficult conversations can be easier.
- Academic regulations and procedures can dictate a process over the need of the student. Uni can assume what is needed rather than ask or work with student
- Expectations - impact of poor academic skills on marking / grades. How much family and social expectations impact on confidence
- Ability to identify, diagnose or recognise SpLD or issues

Fearless Lobster
20 days ago

Lack of information

Not being aware of what other people/services exist and can help

Loyal Trout
20 days ago

GDPE

I understand that this is important, but sharing information between departments and teams can be really difficult especially when we have a worry about data protection.

Graceful Anchovy
20 days ago

Workload and the stretch to balance multiple roles and the composure when supporting students.

Barrier

Charismatic Ocelot
20 days ago

Opaque support Structures - who leads support provision?

Laura Girling /teacher/
20 days ago

Capacity to do the job well

There are some excellent ideas to do/ try but I don't think we have enough hours in the day to do it well.

Donna
20 days ago

Resources, fear of litigation, competing budgets and long-term goals.

Fearless Lobster
20 days ago

Time and workload

Groovy Oyster
20 days ago

GDPR

Knowing what you can and cannot communicate about with services. What they are allowed to share back with you on or not.

Fancy Bison
20 days ago

Resources

Limited capacity to collaborate or provide bespoke support.

Adorable Lobster
20 days ago

Workload models

Alana
20 days ago

Processes can be a point of failure e.g. not identifying need early enough

Fearless Lobster
20 days ago

Worries about confidentiality

PSYCH@RHUL
20 days ago

Breaking the ice to get students feel comfortable emailing staff/tutors

Thoughtful Goldfish
20 days ago

Ignorance ...

Of the structure of support centres (and which should be the first point of contact)

Simona Cantarella /teacher/
20 days ago

Lack of clarity about roles and procedures

I find difficult to navigate the roles and procedures that different centres or departments might have.

Busy Mongoose
20 days ago

Shared inboxes

Great for admin but difficult to build relationships

Graceful Anchovy
20 days ago

Colleagues sharing similar values to support student development and academic success holistically

Charismatic Ocelot
20 days ago

Clear structures of support

Fearless Lobster
20 days ago

Common goals

Busy Mongoose
20 days ago

Personal relationships

Knowing who is who and what they do is key. And having space to make and maintain the relationships

Lydia Yee /teacher/
24 days ago

Enablers

Dancing Jellyfish
20 days ago

Having a wide network to enable collaboration

Groovy Oyster
20 days ago

Open dialogue

Open communication with services. Two-way understanding.

Fearless Lobster
20 days ago

Clear information about roles and boundaries

Dancing Jellyfish
20 days ago

Events that allow for creating collaborations

Loyal Trout
20 days ago

Resources

Putting resources (time, money, space) into these activities

Adorable Lobster
20 days ago

Setting up "partnerships"

Encoding ways of working between academic depts and student services to achieve specific goals over a short period of time; a product is two fold in that working relationships are.fostered that extend beoyond the formal partnership, as well as the specific goal for the project, that fosters future ways of working together

Laura Girling /teacher/
20 days ago

Frequent contact with services

Building relationships with staff in other services so we know we can ask them quick questions to support our own knowledge on what they can offer students

Charismatic Ocelot
20 days ago

Compassionate communication to students

Wise Badger
20 days ago

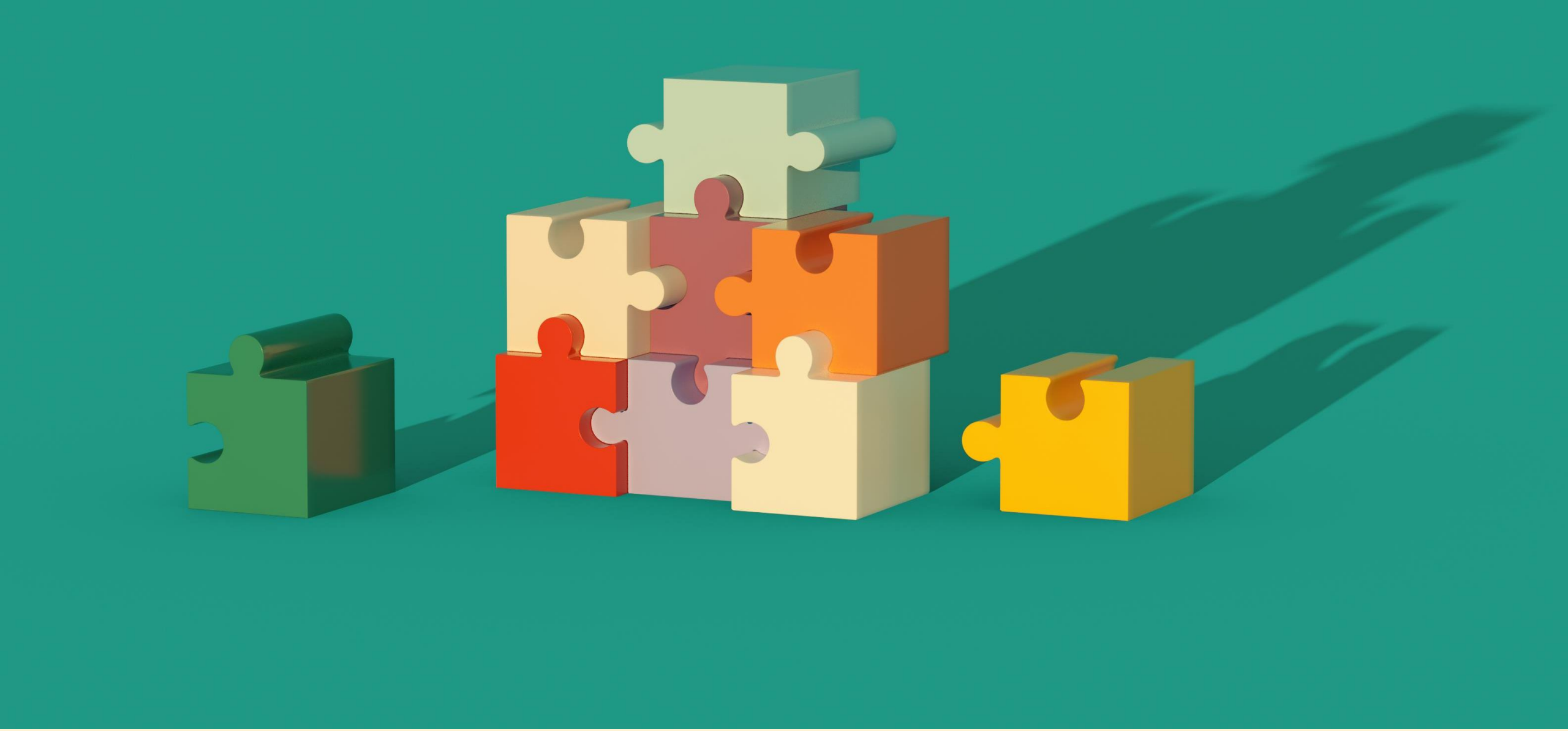
Having worked (closely) with people from other areas

Lydia Yee /teacher/
8 days ago

Lovely notes from one of the groups

Created during the case study activity (how academics and support services can work together to support students)

University of Reading



Collaboration success toolkit

Cornerstones of successful collaboration

Support for academics – what is their role?

Sharing practice across academics and services

Time / workload

Utilising what we already have?