Listening Matters:
Innovative Methodologies for Institutional Change

Sheffield Hallam University

LISTENING ROOMS
at Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield Hallam University

The Guardian University Awards 2020
Winner
The Guardian

Emma Heron & Helen J Parkin

Sheffield Hallam University

Liverpool Learning Summit:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

January 25th, 2022

Today

This session will:

- Present The Listening Rooms Project – An innovative data collection and analysis approach to listen to experiences in an inclusive and accessible way.

- Explore how this method has been used to give protected characteristics the necessary focus both to acknowledge lived experience and support positive change.

- Share findings and recommendations from a number of EDI projects.

LISTENING ROOMS
at Sheffield Hallam University

Listening Rooms - Emma Heron

o Rationale
  o Importance of the student voice - strategically, morally
  o The problem with surveys - limited voice, shallow, inauthentic?
o How?
  o Friendship pairs, egg timer, 6 cue cards, 1 hour, no researcher
  o Works well online
o Who?
  o Pairs of students, identified on a project basis
o Discuss what?
  o Belonging, Becoming, Journey, Success, Confidence, Happiness
  o No explicit questioning and no wrong answers

BBC

The listening project

Capturing the nation in conversation

BRITISH LIBRARY   BBC RADIO 4

A BBC Radio and British Library partnership

LISTENING ROOMS
at Sheffield Hallam University

Round Table Analysis
- Helen J Parkin

LISTENING ROOMS
at Sheffield Hallam University

- Rationale
  - To analyse large qualitative data sets
  - To reach consensus over data
  - To achieve stakeholder buy-in
  - An extension of the conversation
- How?
  - Identify appropriate stakeholders and bring them to the table
  - Guided thematic discussion
  - Recorded and transcribed
- Who?
  - Anyone with audience and influence (not just those with power and authority) to make change happen
  - Students where possible
- Discuss what?
  - Transcripts generated through Listening Rooms

Shared values

LISTENING ROOMS at Sheffield Hallam University

Value (Nancy Kline's)	Listening Rooms	Round Table Analysis
Respect	Automatic via friendship	Briefing at start of session
Equality	Both people in the room have equal right to share their view	All transcripts have equal attention All in room given chance to speak irrespective of status
Ease	Friendship Safe environment (+ cake)	Limited data to read & informal environment
Diversity	Anyone welcome in the room	Welcoming of diverse points of view
Appreciation	Prompt cards	Framing
Encouragement	'No wrong answers' & friendship	Positives over negatives

An institutional mechanism for qualitative research

Research

Action

Impact

Using Listening Rooms in the Context of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Students of Colour ([UUK](UUK))
(Feeding into Access and Participation Plan and Race Equality Charter)

LGBTQ+ Staff/Students
(Feeding into Stonewall submission)

Disadvantaged Male Students
(Feeding into Access and Participation Plan)

Female Employee Experiences
(Feeding into Athena Swan submission)

Upcoming
Sexual Harassment of Students; Experiences of Parents and Carers

Business as usual at Sheffield Hallam University

Students of Colour

Indicative Findings

Confidence and Success

- Students derive confidence from their peers and particularly from those who share their lived experiences and backgrounds
- Students recognise the importance of a variety of experiences to develop a sense of belonging and feelings of happiness, including but not limited to sports societies, academic groups and social media

Understanding the lived experience

- Students experienced micro-aggressions in a number of environments
- Students have encountered difficulties obtaining employment based on their name
- There was recognition that white privilege exists and people of colour would face difficulties that their white peers would never experience

Recommendations

Confidence and Success

- Providing opportunities for students to engage with role models and alumni from courses who reflect the lived experiences and backgrounds of students and can share stories of success
- Sharing student stories with the wider student body to validate feelings and experiences and create a sense of community and counteract stigma associated with mental health

Understanding the lived experience

- Promotion of Positive Bystander materials
- Work with employers to raise awareness regarding Unconscious Bias through Employability Fairs
- Promoting inclusivity and acknowledgment of the 'white advantage' through curriculum and structure

LGBTQ+ Staff

Indicative Findings

Heteronormative Views

- Staff shared many positive experiences of working at the University and feeling confident and comfortable to be their authentic selves amongst colleagues, but there is also a sense that there is more work to be done across the University to achieve a more inclusive culture.

- Staff shared examples of heteronormative assumptions that are regularly made, which leads to them having to repeatedly come out.

Identity and Belonging

- We are currently in a world where there are more visible Role Models for the LGBTQ+ Community and this is beneficial. Some staff felt they had a responsibility to be a Role Model to the community but felt an occasional reluctance to fulfil this role and fatigued by the constant need to represent the community.

- There were some examples where staff had negative experiences of homophobia and microaggressions, and while some of these behaviours were challenged and managed through appropriate processes and practices, some behaviours remain unchallenged.
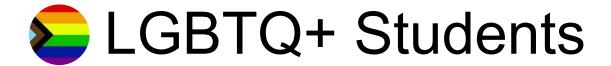
Recommendations

Heteronormative Views

- Encouraging people to consider the importance of language and unlearn the gendered biases of language, potentially through the relaunch of the Allies Network.

- Provision of workshops and training to encourage all staff to actively reflect on and address their biases towards the LGBTQ+ community and through engagement with, and demonstration of, the Equality Objectives and Hallam Values.

Identity and Belonging

- New starter induction programme to continue to promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and raise awareness and how to challenge inappropriate behaviours.

- Build existing EDI training into wider staff development programmes such as the Leadership Programmes.

🏳️‍🌈 LGBTQ+ Students

Indicative Findings

- Mental health issues were widely discussed amongst the LGBT+ community and it was apparent that many of the participants had experiences their own mental health challenges.

- Discussion around risky behaviours such as drug taking was prevalent, though further investigation is required to explore this issue.

- While there was evidence that staff are supportive of the LGBT+ community, there is evidence that further staff development would be beneficial to understand the experiences of LGBT+ students.

- There is a need for safe spaces for the community that are not focussed on alcohol.

Recommendations

- There is a need to review current provision at the university with regard to support for mental and sexual health for the LGBT+ community.

- Further exploration, with SHU wellbeing service and the Students' Union, is necessary to understand what risky behaviours (such as drug taking) students engage in, and respond appropriately for different cohorts of students.

- Engage with appropriate services to deliver staff development to raise awareness of and support for the experiences of LGBT+ students.

- Engage with the university and the Students' Union to develop safe spaces for the LGBT+ community that are not focussed on alcohol.

OfS Disadvantaged Males

Indicative Findings

- This cohort of students have a wide variety of views on what success is and we need to open up the conversation on success and reframe failure.

- Social mobility and bettering oneself was a strong theme for this cohort, which is distinct from other cohorts explored through this approach.

- Aspirations were very high and there was a belief that anything can be achieved with hard work, counter to much of the literature in the area.

- Role models – this cohort look to role models but also *are* role models, though some suffer from a lack of confidence and often imposter syndrome.

- Part-time is work often seen as a barrier but this data set shows what skills these students have gained from their part-time work (particularly strong evidence of increased confidence for example).

Recommendations

- Open discourse on notions of success and failure should be encouraged, particularly through Academic Advising

- Reframing discourse in sector about aspirations for this cohort to challenge existing narrative that disadvantaged males have low expectations

- Embracing the power of existing cohort as role models to encourage further participation in HE, emphasizing what skills and experiences we value (but we need to define these first)

- Exploring ways in which we can embrace skills developed through part time work as part of the curriculum.

Female Employee Experiences

Indicative Findings

Recruitment and Induction

- There is some concern that, as a department, we are not attracting enough diversity to the jobs that we advertise.
- There is awareness of flexible working practices that enable staff who are unable to fulfil traditional full-time roles to enter the workplace but concerns that these aren't always applied.

Progression

- Workloads were an issue for staff with some feeling that they didn't have enough time to take on additional management or research responsibilities, and this was particularly pertinent for staff with additional (caring) responsibilities outside of the workplace.
- Varied understanding of the process of progression and varied experiences of being supported once staff have progressed.
- Experiences of Professional Development Reviews (PDRs) are varied with some staff feeling that the PDR is a 'tick box' exercise.

Recommendations

Recruitment and Induction

- Exploring alternative mechanisms to promote job opportunities to a more diverse audience in order to attract a more diverse workforce.
- Consideration should be given to flexible work opportunities to enable non-traditional working hours that accommodate people with a wider variety of personal circumstances.

Progression

- Exploration of what it means to progress to positions of seniority to counter the perception that being more senior means committing to a greater workload and more working hours.
- Wider discussion of progression processes and practices in all staff sessions at departmental level, including overviews of the Academic Careers Framework. Role model presentations could be used to encourage staff into progression.
- Provision of training for managers around how to conduct effective PDRs and ensuring that training and development for staff is a visible and attainable aspect of the PDR process.

Impact

Each project is tailored to the needs of the identified stakeholders

During Round Table we explore how we might measure the impacts of each project

Stakeholder are responsible for taking forward agreed recommendations and measuring impact

The Listening Rooms Team revisit projects after agreed period of time to review progress

Further Reading and Consultancy

- Paper
  - Heron, E. (2019). <u>Friendship as method: reflections on a new approach to understanding student experiences in higher education</u>. Journal Of Further And Higher Education, 1-15. doi: 10.1080/0309877x.2018.1541977

- Further Reading
  - Nancy Kline: <u>Time to Think</u> and <u>The Ten Components</u>

- Consultancy
  - Pick and Mix (Kit/ Listening Room facilitation/Round Table facilitation

- Licence

Thanks for listening!

Contacts:

H.J.Parkin@shu.ac.uk
E.J.Heron@shu.ac.uk

Information about consultancy:

ListeningRooms@shu.ac.uk