Deepening partnership values to survive and thrive in the pandemic

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Abstract

In this paper we, a social work lecturer and undergraduate student, draw on the Higher Education Academy's (2014) partnership values to reflect on how the coronavirus pandemic impacted on our student-staff partnership. The deepening sense of responsibility, plurality, reciprocity, inclusivity, honesty, trust, courage, authenticity and empowerment enabled us to survive and thrive during a time of change and uncertainty. Focussing on the dissemination strand of our partnership work, we consider the threats imposed, and opportunities afforded to us, by university closure, lockdown, and social distancing measures. Our intentions to co-present our staff-student partnership work within the university were put on hold. However, as external events moved to online platforms, and our confidence and abilities grew, these became more accessible, taking us in directions we would not have considered otherwise. Whilst we recognise the challenges to some aspects of our work, we also acknowledge that the pandemic disrupted the traditional institutional hierarchies and boundaries that create distance between students and staff. This enabled more flexible ways of working to emerge, enhanced through technological advances and greater use of liminal spaces. We believe a continuation of these working practices has the potential to increase student engagement and widen participation in future, as well as strengthening the values on which student-staff partnerships depend.

Keywords

Students as Partners, partnership values, pandemic, co-production, reflective practice

Introduction

Partnership is a specific form of student engagement, involving very high levels of student participation (Healey et al., 2016). Students as partners comprises an aspect of student engagement that Matthews (2016, p. 1) suggests 'is a joint endeavour to shape and influence university teaching and learning'. Pre-pandemic, we - a social work lecturer (Emma) and undergraduate student (Fiona), became acquainted with the students as partners approach, which had underpinned the co-design, co-delivery and co-evaluation of a reflective writing workshop we developed for first year undergraduate students. The first iteration of the reflective writing workshop took place pre-pandemic, on campus, in person, with approximately 20 students and two student facilitators. The second iteration occurred during one of the mandatory lockdowns so was adapted for online learning with approximately 30 students and one student facilitator. Along with two other students, we contributed to the launch of a Staff-Student Partnership initiative within our university. Following a positive response from attendees we began to co-evaluate both the reflective writing workshop and the students as partners approach, which subsequently led to plans to disseminate our work to a wider audience. The work undertaken within this partnership project consisted of approximately thirty meetings over 3.5 years to plan and prepare the

reflective writing workshop materials and the dissemination activities, which included four conferences, a journal club, a poster presentation (Reith-Hall & Steane, 2021) and the publication of this article.

It is twenty-five years since the Boyer Commission (1998) called for dissemination to be recognised as integral to undergraduate education, during which time, the positive outcomes for students have been highlighted. Little (2020) summarises the benefits of providing students with opportunities to share their work via the usual academic dissemination routes of journals and conferences as follows: improvements in a range of skills, including networking, critical thinking, interpersonal and communication skills, public speaking and presentation skills; increase in pride, self-confidence and self-esteem; the development of student self-authorship; an increased sense of belonging to an academic community of practice and encouraging a bidirectional relationship with research (and scholarly activity) and fellow participants. Given these benefits, we were surprised and saddened by the lack of student participation in conference events and written outputs. Little (2020) explains that student representation and voice in dissemination activities leads to transformative learning experiences (Mezirow, 1997; 2003), which the social work discipline and profession strongly values. The British Association of Social Work code of ethics, to which we both subscribe, explains social justice as 'challenging unjust policies and practices… Social workers are expected to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate, and/or where distribution of resources, policies and practice are oppressive, discriminatory or otherwise unfair, harmful or illegal' (BASW, 2021, 7). In our opinion, the exclusion of students from dissemination activities is oppressive, unfair and disadvantageous for it prevents them from experiencing the positive outcomes highlighted above, and reinforces the teacher-learner divide, whereby the more powerful partner receives the credit for the work which is not solely theirs to receive. The negative feelings that this predicament invoked in us motivated us to challenge the status quo by modelling co-presentation and co-authorship within our own staff-student partnership to a range of different audiences.

Yet in March 2020, as Archer-Kuhn et al. (2020, p.1010) recall, COVID-19 'came crashing down... in what felt like a tsunami', throwing our personal and professional lives into disarray. For us, the anxieties associated with lockdown, university closure, moving to online delivery and working remotely were running high, and the prospect of child-care and home-schooling was daunting and overwhelming. As our domestic circumstances changed beyond all recognition, we clung to the plans and structure our diaries afforded us. But as conferences and events were cancelled (Reith-Hall & Steane, 2021) and our calendars became uncharacteristically empty, the threat to the dissemination strand of our work, and with it, a desire for normality within our university lives, was keenly felt. The coronavirus pandemic undoubtedly impacted on our student-staff partnership, but as some opportunities were lost, other doors opened. As Afrouz (2021, p. 563) suggests, uncertainty is an 'opportunity to explore new possibilities, collaborations, and innovations in social work education'. Drawing on the nine values outlined in the HE Academy's (2014) Framework for Student Engagement through Partnership – responsibility, plurality, reciprocity, inclusivity, honesty, trust,

courage, authenticity and empowerment - we reflect on how our partnership, and our intention to disseminate our work, was able to survive and thrive during a time of rapid change and considerable uncertainty during the global pandemic. We also offer our initial thoughts on which practices should continue in a post pandemic environment.

Responsibility

In the context of student engagement through partnership, responsibility requires 'all parties [to] share collective responsibility for the aims of the partnership, and individual responsibility for the contribution they make' (HEA, 2014). The aims of our partnership crystallised over time, with the final stage of the project focussing on co-presentation and dissemination. Puzzlement and frustration about the absence of student representation in conferences and scholarly outputs served to unite us in a quest to upend this lamentable tradition. Social justice is integral to the social work profession to which we belong, so perhaps our response to such a glaring omission is unsurprising. Certainly, the messages conveyed in Paulo Freire's (1970) 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' were not lost on us. Motivated to challenge the status quo, we became determined to model collective responsibility and equitable decision making throughout our dissemination activities. Prior to the pandemic, we had already co-presented (in person) at a teaching and learning showcase event and a Staff-Student Partnership initiative within our university, so we were relatively confident in terms of our content and approach. Yet when the pandemic hit UK shores, we presumed our plans to disseminate our message to a wider audience would be put on hold, particularly as conferences were postponed or cancelled. Just as apathy began to take hold, an opportunity to present virtually arose, at which point Fiona declared herself 'a bit of a tech geek'. Her excitement and energy levels were infectious and as she proposed to take individual responsibility for the technical components, Emma felt reassured by Fiona's confidence and grateful that we could proceed with at least some of our plans, albeit in altered formats and on different platforms. There are so many ways for aims to be fulfilled and goals to be achieved, that an important lesson for partnerships going forward is to accept change and be open and flexible to new and different ways of learning and working. The key is for all partners to share collective responsibility for developing the solutions to the challenges and changes that their projects encounter.

Plurality

Plurality requires 'all parties to recognise and value the unique talents, perspectives and experiences that individuals contribute to partnership' (HEA, 2014). Whilst our values, perspectives and ways of working are very similar, our talents and skills differ considerably in some key areas. Emma had experience in creating conference presentations and writing for an academic audience, which Fiona was able to learn and benefit from. For example, Emma shared her insights into how to select an appropriate journal before any structured writing commenced, which Fiona had not previously considered but could see the value of. Fiona is very tech savvy - her capabilities and 'can do' approach helped reduce the anxieties of Emma, who at the start of the pandemic had not heard of Teams or Zoom and so was struggling to master these online learning platforms. Whilst fully acknowledging the problematic and over-simplistic dichotomy (Bayne and Ross, 2007) of the terms 'digital immigrant' and 'digital native', our stereotypical occupation of these positions became an oft rehearsed in-joke! Fiona used her expertise to support the development of Emma's

technological skills, for example showing her how to use Microsoft Teams to share resources and work on documents simultaneously. Fiona felt a sense of pride when Emma subsequently began using online platforms of her own volition to develop and sustain communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In the process of developing the reflective writing workshop for an online audience, we acknowledged how far our knowledge and skills had developed. Fiona could see the progress in Emma's technical skills who in return noticed the confidence Fiona conveyed in her role of workshop facilitator. In addition to developing our knowledge and skills, by pooling our talents and experiences, we were able to achieve significantly more in this partnership than either one of us could have alone. As we have moved out of the pandemic and started to engage in larger and more commercial projects, we have also recognised our limitations, enlisting other partners with different skills, talents and experiences to achieve project aims and impact on the partnership in a multitude of ways.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity in this context means that 'all parties have an interest in, and stand to benefit from working and/or learning in partnership'. Fiona had always experienced Emma to acknowledge and value the experience and expertise that students contribute and found her willingness to confess to her own limitations both humbling and reassuring. It created space for us both to be learners and teachers and allowed for very open discussions about what each of us hoped to gain from the partnership. Initially we were focussed on outputs – we both relished the opportunity to co-author a paper but also enjoyed co-presenting at conferences. However, as the pandemic continued, the benefits of the process of working and learning together became more apparent. Dialogue and a reciprocal ethos (Matthews, 2017, p. 3) facilitated reflections on individual contributions, challenges and intended achievements. As the personal impact of the pandemic intensified, we continuously evaluated and re-evaluated what we each sought to gain from working and learning together, which enabled us to continue with our plans or change track if required. Aware of, and sensitive to each other's personal circumstances and professional commitments, we were very mindful not to pressure each other, embracing the notion of sink or swim, we are in this together.

Some partnerships are tightly defined with fixed parameters from the outset, whereas others, such as ours, develop more organically. Reciprocity becomes really important when circumstances and priorities change. The pandemic led to huge delays in reviewing processes, which meant not all of our plans could be completed within the timeframe of Fiona's degree, therefore we had to reconsider whether a continued focus on this project remained beneficial to Fiona as she embarked on her first graduate job, and also to think again about the time and energy each of us could invest given circumstances had changed. We have taken this forward in a post pandemic context, whereby Emma, now working on a new project, sought practitioner perspectives for a case-study based exam, which Fiona, now a fully-fledged practitioner, agreed to provide. Initially, there was no financial incentive, so we returned to the idea of reciprocity to ensure mutual benefits ensued. Emma was able to demonstrate course requirements outlined in our profession's new education and training standards (Social Work England, 2021) whilst Fiona acquired evidence for our regulator's Continuing Professional Development requirements (Social Work England, 2019). We recommend that discussions about reciprocity inform staff-student

partnerships and are revisited regularly to ensure that no-one is taken for granted, everyone is properly supported and that each partner can consider what investment they are prepared to make in light of the benefits and costs the project's opportunities have to offer.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity refers to there being 'equality of opportunity and any barriers (structural or cultural) that prevent engagement are challenged' (HEA, 2014). Before the pandemic, our collaborative endeavours took place face-to-face, exclusively within university spaces such as classrooms and offices. The coronavirus pandemic 'inverted many interpersonal, social and political norms and practices in our society and personal and professional lives' (Buzzi and Megele, 2020), including accelerating the shifting of traditional boundaries associated with partnership working. At the height of the first lockdown, we had no choice but to plan, prepare and present our work online. Yet we are both mothers of young children so found ourselves taking on more responsibilities for childcare and home learning than either of us would have chosen, which meant our partnership work tended to take place outside of our typical working hours. Seeing into each other's homes and conversing with each other's children on Zoom or Teams created a far more personal interaction than meeting in the campus rooms with their whitewashed walls and glass facades. The social dimension of new media and technologies have 'important implications for human sociality, relationships, identity, empathy and the creation of communities' (Megele and Buzzi, 2020, p. 157). We gained insight into each other's identities as wives and mothers, empathising with the frustrations of children too lively to sleep in the evenings which we had carefully set aside for study or work. Whilst initially, the 'triple shift of productivity, housework, and child-care' (Donoso et al., 2021) felt exclusionary, the similarities of our pandemic-induced circumstances, fostered a greater sense of inclusion, in a psychological sense at least. As the participants in Mercer-Mapstone et al.'s (2018) research acknowledged, 'as we made ourselves vulnerable and exposed ourselves to often confronting truths through the balancing act of navigating multiple, fragile identities, we also felt supported by each other and our partnership – creating a brave space within which we could grow' (p. 25). Once society began to open up, we were keen to resume face-to-face contact. Working on outputs provided some guilt-free escapism from domestic life which we recognised was of benefit to ourselves and our families. Campus buildings remained closed, so we became adept at working at picnic tables in parks and beer gardens with Wi-Fi - once social distancing policies were relaxed. The neutrality of these liminal spaces further broke down the unseen structural barriers, whereby the academic has more power than the student, reinforced by access to university spaces. The shift of place and space made way for a more inclusive environment in which power dynamics became more equitable, and this is something we have taken forward. We recommend that academic and student partners consider meeting on neutral territory, where access to, and ownership of space is equal, further disrupting traditional power differentials.

Honesty and trust

All parties are 'honest about what they can contribute to partnership and about where the boundaries of partnership lie' and to establish trust 'all parties take time to get to know one-another and can be confident they will be treated with respect and fairness' (HEA, 2014). Honesty and trust had always been key values within our partnership, which actually began with Emma sharing her reservations over introducing peer

feedback activities, and Fiona's appreciation of Emma's willingness to share her own fallibilities. Through getting to know each other and having open and honest dialogue (Healey et al., 2014; HEA, 2014), we have built trust and reflected on our progress, as well as the thoughts and feelings this invoked. Yet the level of honesty and trust deepened within our partnership during the pandemic, primarily because our emotions were having a greater impact on our daily functioning during this time of uncertainty and flux. The role of emotions in teaching and learning is reasonably well documented. In 1994, bell hooks spoke of teaching "in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students" (p. 13), whilst Trowler (2010) suggests that student engagement includes an emotional dimension, as well as behavioural and cognitive dimensions.

For many students, the consequences of the pandemic had a negative emotional impact on their learning, hence Diers-Lawson (2020) suggests it is the education provider's responsibility to reassure students during a time of crisis. However, reassurance is not always possible, and sometimes sitting with the uncertainty and empathising with discomfort or distress, may be the most appropriate and authentic response. Felten (2017) acknowledges the centrality of emotions to students as partners and encourages staff and students to do the same. Felten's recognition of the role of emotions for staff should not be underestimated - Emma was no more immune to the effects of the pandemic than Fiona, therefore emotional support became a far more mutual endeavour. As the pandemic upended the boundaries of traditional partnerships, we found that honest conversations about what was happening in each of our lives and the feelings we were experiencing facilitated a strong sense of trust. Following a first submission of one of our co-authored papers, a lengthy critique from reviewer 2 was received during Fiona's protracted recovery from Covid and Emma's parent being admitted to hospital. Whilst the prospect of achievement diminished and our physical and mental energy levels waned, our empathy levels soared and our focus switched from progressing outputs to bolstering our emotional wellbeing and seeking to 'flatten the emotional distress curve' (Kaslow et al., 2020) of the pandemic. Through honesty and trust, we were increasingly able to be sensitive to each other's circumstances and more flexible with our plans. We engaged in a continuous process of negotiation and renegotiation in relation to our project as well as extending our support to each other during difficult times. This intensified and consolidated 'the relational and social elements of mutual learning' (Matthews, 2016, p. 1) and solidarity between us. As Blackman and Featherstone (2015) suggest, trust is an important element in a time of uncertainty. We agree with Hutchison's (2021, p. 529) call for educators to incorporate feminist principles, such as acknowledging and centring emotions and operating from a place of compassion and love, to include the emotional dimension of teaching and learning, into their pedagogies, not just in a global pandemic, but as standard practice. Exercising care and compassion for students and staff should be recognised as a strength rather than a weakness. It is a morally and socially just way of being, which contributes to pedagogies of mattering (Gravett, Taylor and Fairchild, 2021) and is likely to foster positive outcomes. To this, we add that honesty and trust should form the bedrock of successful and equitable student-staff partnerships; we found that honesty and trust underpinned all of the other values of partnership working.

Courage

It is through courage that 'all parties are encouraged to critique and challenge practices, structures and approaches that undermine partnership, and are enabled to

take risks to develop new ways of working and learning' (HEA, 2014). Grion (2016, p. 360) maintains that 'real, effective transformation will only be possible when we have the courage and strength to overcome barriers and to cross boundaries'. Whilst neither of us would use the term courageous to describe ourselves, courage is a trait which we recognise in each other, and the notion of using strengths to overcome barriers is an approach we both use and promote in social work practice and education. The lack of student representation at conferences, including those which are about student engagement and partnership, continues to frustrate us, hence we have both questioned why students are left out of dissemination activities. Prior to the pandemic, we were told that because conferences take place outside of term time that students are not available, yet we wonder whether this is an assumption academics have made as opposed to students turning invitations down. Of course participation in extra-curricular activities should not be forced on students, some of whom might choose not to participate; however we suspect that oftentimes, students are simply not invited due to academic oversight. If students are involved in identifying publication outlets and dissemination events, if they co-create the abstracts and know the timescales and deadlines in advance, we see no reason why they would not want to co-present or co-author with their academic partners, and at the very least, they should be given the option to choose whether they want to participate or not. Participation is not yet fully embedded in academic culture, and it may take courage to challenge conference organisers and journal editors about why students are not routinely invited to be involved in presenting and publishing.

We were able to take advantage of presenting in a virtual environment, which the pandemic required, making the most of new opportunities resulting in significant achievements. We presented at a RAISE special interest group on engaging assessment, a RAISE special interest group partnership event and a RAISE Symposium for Early Career Researchers. We shared an early draft of our written work at the RAISE journal club. We contributed to a poster event for Social Work England and worked on co-authoring this paper for the Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal. The pandemic enabled us to participate in far more events and activities than we had originally planned. We both hoped that as conferences moved online, we would see more student presenters since logistical barriers were removed. Sadly, this has not been our experience, which suggests the issue is cultural rather than structural. Courage, which is fundamental to *student-faculty partnerships* (Cook-Sather and Wilson, 2020) was necessary to survive and thrive during the pandemic and will equally be necessary as we move into a 'new normal'. Post pandemic, we urge academics and students alike to pluck up the courage to challenge the status quo by enquiring about student representation, free student places and asking heads of department to foot the bill for conference fees and travel costs. Conversations about availability and time commitments should also take place regularly to ensure the co-development of conference abstracts and presentations are manageable.

Authenticity

The authenticity value means 'the rationale for all parties to invest in partnership is meaningful and credible' (HEA, 2014). From the project's inception, we knew that regardless of what we achieved, we wanted our working relationship to be authentic. Full co-production ensured tokenism was avoided (Reith-Hall, 2020). The work was

divided equally between us, with regular discussions throughout to ensure we were both on the same page and able to work to our agreed timescales. The honest conversations about the time and effort required for publications, and acknowledgement that our efforts might not produce the desired result served us well. With some experience of the review process, Emma did not want to create false hope or unrealistic expectations for Fiona, but also recognised she could not protect Fiona from a potentially harsh critique and that a paternalistic approach was part of what we both opposed. Agreeing that we were committed to the process of working together, irrespective of what outputs we might produce, was important for two high achievers, creating a positive energy which enabled us to face setbacks further down the line. This fits with Healey et al.'s (2014, p. 7) view that 'partnership is a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself'; a stance also echoed by Matthews (2016). As the pandemic wore on, we became even more invested in our partnership because it provided a focus, away from the realities of lockdown, which felt both legitimate and meaningful, and that as a student and lecturer we equally valued and benefitted from. For a time, the outcomes were a lesser priority than the project being an outlet to support our wellbeing and to strengthen our student-staff partnership. Post-pandemic, we both have less time to spend on joint projects, however we have maintained the need to be authentic in our approach, which we shared with people with lived experience in a new project we are working on. Open discussions about time commitments, financial reward and professional development are key to success, reflecting the importance of authenticity post-pandemic.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a process where 'power is distributed appropriately and ways of working and learning promote healthy power dynamics' (HEA, 2014). Fiona experienced the partnership as being empowering from the beginning because Emma always valued her ideas, contributions and skills. Conversely, for Emma the shift in power dynamics was more of a process, albeit one that was expediated by the circumstances of the pandemic. The campus closure took the work out of Emma's work environment and into online spaces – territory that was largely unfamiliar to her. Fiona's ability and willingness to take responsibility for moving everything online provided a sense of achievement for Fiona and immediately disrupted the traditional teacher-learner hierarchy. This transformational process which increases ownership and control of the learning process is described as empowerment (Piper, 2006). Initially the pendulum of power probably swung too far the other way. But once Emma became more familiar with the neutral space and developed the skills to allow her to contribute online, and after Fiona gained confidence in her writing being read before completion, which was very much out of her comfort zone, power came to be redistributed more evenly. As Matthews (2017, p. 3) admonishes, 'power is not diminished, but instead shared as all partners come to appreciate the resources (capital) they have to offer'. Moreover, the pandemic created a sense of uncertainty in which our plans changed overnight, yet this allowed for more discussion about our roles, contributions and the constantly changing circumstances in which we were operating, promoted a really healthy power dynamic within the partnership. Fook (2013) argued that the 'vulnerability' of uncertainty could be approached positively through the openness for creativity. Whilst the pandemic meant we faced more challenges than we had previously, it also gave us permission, a license and a newfound energy to create and sustain a partnership from which we both benefited

academically and emotionally and where power was reallocated (Pownall and Hossain, 2020), allowing for its appropriate and effective distribution, whereby we were partners and co-creators. We have taken the spirit and principles of empowerment forward into a new project with multiple partners with different needs, keeping our profession's commitment to social justice at the forefront. Instead of apologising for the restrictions we face – whether that is health conditions or responsibility for school pick-ups – we simply identify the most favourable conditions to maximise participation for everyone involved. For some people, new media platforms might be prohibitive but for others, flexible ways of working can empower them. We recommend that partnerships carefully consider the conditions which best foster co-creation and co-production, recognising that these will vary according to the specific needs and attributes of different people within the partnership.

Conclusion

The pandemic has had a mixed impact on student engagement in higher education, with the full effects yet to be established. As Taylor-Beswick (2021, 10) advises, 'in the wake of Covid-19, it will be important to reflect upon the changes that have been made in both education and practice'. Lockdown, university closures and social distancing forced upon us new ways of learning and working, some of which will inevitably remain. As Megele and Buzzi (2020, p.157) explain, 'the synchronous and asynchronous capabilities of digital and social media technologies... offer new possibilities for rich and dynamic conversations that can generate a sense of belonging, enhance personal and professional identities, and create significant, new and imaginative opportunities and potential'. It is hoped that the benefits and freedom offered by technology will become an accepted way of working for students and staff partners alike. However, online learning and working should not necessarily become the modus operandi. Face-to-face interactions in neutral spaces allow for deeper and more reflective conversations to occur and meaningful and relational partnerships with healthier power dynamics to develop and flourish. The pandemic has revealed that a greater degree of flexibility in approaches to learn and work together has the potential to enhance student engagement, providing partnership values are embedded and embodied.

Through our experiences of partnership in the pandemic, we learnt to share collective responsibility for the project's aims, and through reciprocity, we endeavoured to ensure that outcomes were mutually beneficial. Regular reflection and revision of our aims and outcomes allowed us to adapt to changing circumstances and sustain the energy we required to progress. Through plurality, we pooled experiences, expertise, talents and skills. Prepared to adopt the positions of teacher and learner, we recognised we each have areas for development as well as something to offer. We developed the courage to question existing practices and to challenge structural and cultural barriers to promote an inclusive working and learning environment where power was continuously revisited and renegotiated. We based our partnership on honesty and trust, actively demonstrating respect and empathy to support each other through the difficulties as well as remembering to celebrate our successes. We were open to crossing traditional boundaries to foster and sustain authentic and empowering relationships in which our wellbeing was enhanced and resulted in achievements relating to our dissemination activities. The deepening of the HEA's (2014) partnership values allowed us to survive and thrive in the pandemic and we

believe a continuation of the working practices and values underpinning them have the potential to positively shape the future of student engagement beyond the pandemic.

Since moving into a 'new normal' era, we are already seeing the development of more student-staff partnerships and a greater representation of students in dissemination activities within the spheres in which we operate. And whilst we cannot claim to be responsible for the following successes, we are confident we have played an important role in changing organisational culture around staff-student partnerships generally and highlighting the merits of co-producing outputs specifically. Within our department, we have inspired other staff and students to engage in partnership projects and have since had the pleasure of witnessing the dissemination of those activities. We have observed changes at school level too, noting an increase in students co-presenting at a teaching and learning showcase event. A university wide research project about student-staff partnerships is also underway, from which a bank of good practice examples (including ours) will be developed and made available to other people within our university. There are positive signs of wider impact too – we have both been contacted by other universities, local authorities and third sector organisations for advice on how to go about establishing effective partnerships and for more information about the outputs relating to this project and those we have established since.

For anyone interested in developing effective and impactful staff-student partnerships and for those with the power to open up spaces to encourage students to actively participate in dissemination activities, we highly recommend using Healey et al.'s (2014) partnership values framework, preferably in a critical manner. Pre-dating the pandemic and retaining relevance beyond it, the benefit of the framework is that it encourages staff and students to have more in-depth critically reflective discussions about their partnership than they might typically engage in. This is particularly helpful early in the partnership and if/when circumstances change, to ensure that everyone has a shared understanding and to allow people and the projects they establish to respond to challenges flexibly and constructively. The framework does not necessarily have to be adopted in its entirety and some partnerships may require a greater focus on certain values or find they need to include additional values which are relevant to the project content, context or subject discipline. Therefore staff, students and other partners should use the framework in so far as it is useful to any individual within the partnership and to fulfil the aims, goals and requirements of their project.

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