

# Harnessing the expertise of people with lived experience



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## A message from our Academic Lead



Welcome to the 2020-21 annual report for the BU PIER partnership. In the following pages we provide an overview of PIER activity for the 2020-21 academic year. Although still affected by the restrictions caused by the Pandemic, we certainly found our stride this year in what has become the 'new normal'.

If 2019-20 was a crisis response, 2020-21 has been one of adaptation and recovery. PIER activity for the entire year was conducted online and yet we engaged in activities with more students and involved more PIER members than ever before. This demonstrates incredible strength and resilience from across our community of individual members, organisations, students and academics. The dictionary definition of resilience is 'the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape' it describes the 'capacity to recover quickly from difficulties'. The 2020-21 PIER annual report is an opportunity to stop and pause and acknowledge this resilience. The report is full of examples, testimonies and case studies from 2020-21. These illustrate how we worked together across our community to embed lived experience expertise in all aspects of health and social science education and research at BU and how all of our activity was richer for it.

In 2020-21 our members contributed expert lived experience knowledge on diabetes, stroke, Parkinson's, cancer, multiple sclerosis, brain injury, epilepsy, visual impairment, hearing impairment, rural racism, digital exclusion, childbirth, HIV, mental health, parenting, domestic abuse, transgender, having a stoma, being a child in care, refugee, disabled, in recovery from substance use, homeless and being a carer, amongst others. This demonstrates a broad and varied range of experiences and expertise as well as access to networks and communities from across the UK that our individual members have introduced us to.

A significant achievement this year was collaborating with PIER members and academics to create a new five-year strategy for the PIER partnership. The strategy re-confirms our vision and values as a partnership and sets some ambitious goals for harnessing the expertise of people with lived experience in research and educational activity at BU. The University's 2025 vision is to 'inspire learning, advance knowledge and enrich society through the fusion of education, research and practice' (BU2025 vision). Approval of the PIER 2025 strategy by the Faculty Executive Board marks Bournemouth University's recognition of how the expertise of people with lived experience is an essential component in achieving these aims. We have an exciting year ahead as we continue to identify ways of bringing people together to explore and find solutions to real world challenges, which improve outcomes for all. For now, I would like to acknowledge the unwavering commitment of PIER members and organisations we have collaborated with over the last year. You are integral to the success of education and research at BU and we would like to thank each and every individual for your involvement. Here's to another successful year!

Kind regards

**Dr Mel Hughes**  
Associate Professor in Social Work  
Academic Lead for BU PIER Partnership

# Our goal, values and approach

The PIER partnership is a collaboration between people with lived experience, academics and students at Bournemouth University. As experts by experience, we bring unique perspectives, knowledge and insight to health and social science education, research and practice, leading to improved outcomes for all involved.



## Our goal

For those who are most affected by health and social inequalities to lead the way in shaping responses and improving outcomes.



## Our shared values

The BU PIER partnership is underpinned by our shared values and goals of humanised and relationship based models of collaboration. Our work is based on respect and meaningful engagement where everyone involved feels valued and respected.



## Our approach

To involve people with lived experience as consultants; reviewers; researchers; facilitators and assessors due to the expertise they have and the perspectives they can share.

To develop inclusive models of collaboration in education, research and practice which are based on parity of involvement; giving people a voice; and enabling a wide range of people to participate in ways which work best for them.

To broaden the range of voices collaborating in research, education and practice; in particular, marginalised and seldom heard groups.

# A word from our co-ordinators



## Pete Atkins

PIER co-ordinator  
(HCPC & SW  
England Programmes)

I have been co-ordinating service user and carer involvement at Bournemouth University since 2006. I came to the job from previously working as an Officer for the charity East Dorset Mental Health Carers Forum working with, what was then, Poole, Dorset and Bournemouth Councils and Dorset Health Care University Foundation Trust (DHUFT), as well as being a Mental Health Carer in my own right.

2020-21 year has been about consolidating the successes of the previous year and developing our new ways of working in education and research.

Reflecting on the whole year, the main highlights for me were:

- Keeping the BU PIER members updated regularly on what was happening both locally and nationally with regards to the Covid -19 situation and its impact on us.
- Developing and supporting the VOICE digital platform and posting research opportunities on it as well as taking part in activities myself
- Adapting to the new Hybrid model of working both online and on-site opportunities
- Developing a wider variety of ways to gain feedback from both students and BU PIER members using Mentimeter, emails and telephone
- Increasing the number of BU PIER members involved individually from 51% of the group last year to 71% this year
- Posting regular updates on education sessions we have done this year on the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences (HSS) Blog. This included co-authored blog posts with ODP, Physiotherapy, Social Work and Occupational Therapy.
- Engaging with 17 Academics in education activities throughout the year
- Supporting each other throughout the year
- Updating the BU PIER membership list.



## Angela Warren

PIER coordinator  
(NMC programmes)

From my first contact with BU in 2002, it's great to look back over the last 19 years and see just how far service user and carer involvement has come, in terms of the range of activities in education across the Faculty, alongside a growing commitment to see public involvement securely embedded in all stages of the research cycle.

As I reflect on each year, there are always things to highlight and celebrate; an example in this last year, is where we saw an increase in the number of students benefitting from the contributions from those with lived experience; which we know from their evaluations, enhances their learning and gives them skills and knowledge to take into their future practice.

I feel proud of the way many of the PIER members have embraced online involvement. Though not without its challenges, we have achieved things we probably would have not thought possible, particularly in our nursing programmes with such large cohorts. Our 'Service user conversations' Zoom sessions saw 20 PIER members engaging with over 300 nursing students over two days. Though some PIER members still have a preference for on-site sessions with students; we would not have been able to even contemplate an activity on this scale in a physical setting. When students feed back that their experience with PIER members was 'eye opening' and reinforced to them why they want to be nurses, we know that we are having an active part in the development of the future health and social care workforce, which (in the words of one of the PIER group) 'is a great privilege.'

Another highlight for me has been the involvement in research in its broadest sense. We have moved from simply being involved as participants in research studies to involvement from the outset (in some cases); where people with lived experience help shape and develop an idea. To receive an e-mail from an academic saying, 'We need to get PPI (Patient and Public Involvement) before we do the application to find out what service users think of the idea...' brought a smile to my face and a fist punch in the air 'Yes!'

Why do I do this work? It's about the people; the PIER members, our students and great colleagues. When you ask for feedback and receive a response such as this, you know you're in the right job

It is a joy to be involved.... we genuinely make an impact and that can be felt by everyone.'



# Our year in numbers

109	separate activities conducted
1,454	students we engaged with
68	PIER members involved (71% of our membership)
493.75	direct contact hours between people with lived experience and BU students and academics
30	academics we collaborated with
20	community organisations we collaborated with
16	research studies we coordinated involvement in
33	digital resources we made
1,534	individual visits to the PIER webpages
5,326	page views on the PIER webpages



# Collaborations with community partners

In 2020-21 we collaborated with 20 community organisations in both education and research activities. This greatly enhanced the real-world learning for students and the real-world application and impact of BU research. We have chosen three examples to share in this report:

## Social Work

We collaborated with six community partners to deliver the user led 1st year BA social work unit: Learning from the Lived Experience.



In this user-led unit, social work students were divided into small student groups and allocated a community facilitator who supported them to identify opportunities within the community for seeking a deeper understanding of a particular lived experience. What is unique about this unit is that each facilitator has first-hand experience of the topic. They share this expertise with the students and support them to make links between their knowledge gained from literature, research, legislation and policy and the real-world lived experiences of service users, carers and practitioners.

At the end of the 20-day unit, students created a 15-minute group presentation based on the knowledge gained.

### What did students learn?

**“I am extremely grateful to Louisa and this unit for providing me with a safe space to explore ideas that I had not considered prior to looking into the topic. I am extremely lucky to have been placed with such a great facilitator, group and group of service users who all cared so passionately and were open and honest in their storytelling with us.”**

Student facilitated by The Inclusion Agency exploring the lived experience of rural racism.

**“Working with Par has been amazing. He has been so open and honest about his experience while also providing us with vital new skills and knowledge surrounding HIV. He sent us a package in the post full of booklets, ribbons and information, which was a lovely bonus because it felt as if we actually had a purpose doing all this.”**

Student facilitated by Body Positive Dorset exploring the lived experience of men and HIV.

### Feedback from the academic



**“It was a privilege to step in to lead this unit for this semester. Not only is it evident that the students get so much learning from working with the community facilitators, it was clear that many**

**also developed their empathy and understanding of different topics, and many became advocates and/or allies. I also learned a lot from the unit, and it was a pleasure to work with the community facilitators who are clearly dedicated to supporting the development of our students as effective practitioners.”**

Dr Orlanda Harvey, lecturer in social work.

### Community Facilitator feedback

**“The students were engaged, applying their own experience and theoretical knowledge to develop thoughtful questions and discussion topics for our sessions together. I look forward to working with the University again on this and other community engagement projects.”**

Dorset Parent Infant Partnership, DorPIP helping families flourish.

**“Teaching the social work students about the Lived Experience of all things Trans has been a pleasure and a privilege. Watching them learn and seeing the way they soak up all the information given, from a topic rarely taught in depth, has been amazing. And the fact that I know my students are going to make a difference for other trans people; from educating their peers to guidance for possible future clients. I very much look forward to the next one.”**

Communi-T Trans group exploring the lived experience of being Transgender

## Operating Department Practice



We collaborated with 2nd year Operating Department Practice (ODP) students on their surgical placement unit. ODP students were able to speak to people with specific communication needs which affect their daily lives; and staff from organisations supporting people in the community.

The idea was for students to hear about the person's experiences and ask questions regarding their daily lives and experiences of hospital admissions. Discussions were then initiated on how students and practitioners could facilitate more person centred and individualised care when in practice when working with patients with specific communication needs. The intended learning outcomes for the session with Dorset Blind Association and Bournemouth Blind Society were for students to:

- reflect on their practice from a perspective beyond professional knowledge, challenging their stereotypes and assumptions of service users
- see and respect diversity, improving their communication skills and empathy
- develop their own professional identity, determining their actions and clinical judgement in relation to individualised care

### Feedback from the academic

**“The session for second year ODPs with members of the Dorset Blind Association and Bournemouth Blind Society was a successful exercise, as it enabled students to speak with people who are visually impaired. Students were able to meet the intended learning outcomes and hear many stories concerning their lived experiences. As such, the session supported the students to further develop and reflect on their practice exploring how they could facilitate a more humanised approach to care and so enhance future practice.”**

Jo Taylor, Lecturer Perioperative Care/Adult Nursing.

### Feedback from students

#### I learnt:

**“The need for compassion, independence.”**

**“Determination shown by those who are visually impaired.”**

**“An insight into how to help visually impaired [people] - each need is different.”**

**“Consideration of the need to adapt to individual needs.”**

**“The importance of good communication skills and information.”**

### Feedback from Bournemouth Blind Society

**“It was helpful that the PIER member was able to put the point of view of a visually impaired person who has experienced hospital visits and faced a number of the issues that can arise.**

**I was able to give more general information, explaining a little about the different eye conditions and how they result in different visual experiences e.g., Age Related Macular Degeneration means the person loses vision from the centre of the eye, whereas someone with Glaucoma loses all vision except central vision - commonly called Tunnel Vision.”**

### Feedback from BU PIER member

**“Thank you for the opportunity of talking to the year 2 ODP students. This is the first time that I have done a session like this and was unsure as to what to expect. I did however enjoy the session and would love to do more. If you need to have a visually impaired person again please let me know and if I am available, I would love to help.”**

## The SMARTT research project

Finally, we have chosen an example of collaborating with community partners in research:



The SMARTT Critical Care Pathways - (Safe, Machine Assisted, Real Time Transfer) project was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and an NHSx Artificial Intelligence funding call and started in January 2021. It is led by Christopher Bourdeaux, an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) consultant at University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation. ICU consultants make many hundreds of rapid decisions in a high-pressure environment every day. Deciding who needs to stay in ICU and who can safely leave is critical decision, but one that sometimes is difficult to make. Keeping patients in ICU too long or releasing them too soon are both detrimental to recovery. This project is developing an artificial intelligence-based decision support tool to help ICU staff decide when a patient is well enough to be safely moved out of intensive care. In 2020-21, four members of BU PIER joined the public advisory group supporting this project. So far, they have been involved in workshops to learn more about digital health and artificial intelligence and to meet the research team and find out more about the project. They have important input into making sure the patient and public voice is central to the research. They are involved in developing information packs for families and ICU patients describing the research that is being done using routinely collected data. They will continue to provide essential input into the decision-making tool to make sure families receive the information they need about how and when patients are moved between hospital wards.



**Jo Welsman**

Patient and Public Involvement  
Lead, NIHR South West Research  
Design Service

### BU PIER members feedback

**“Jo has been very good at keeping us well informed throughout the process so far and the advisory group has a very good mix of people in it and the meetings online have been well facilitated and very interactive.”**

**“Working in a team that includes fellow service users and medical specialists is hugely empowering - comments have impact! Tangible examples of the impact of service user comments are reported to the group by the PPI lead.”**

**“Participation has increased my interest in the cutting-edge developments in AI's use in medicine - the training provided for the group has been a springboard for wanting to know more.”**



# Individual members

So much of the success of the PIER partnership is down to the incredible commitment, passion, resilience, skills, knowledge, networks and expertise of our individual members. Whilst this is always valued and appreciated, the conditions and circumstances in which our members contributed throughout the 2020-21 really must be acknowledged. Many of our members were shielding; had reduced access to health and social care due to the restrictions and pressures on services; were socially isolated because of the various rules and restrictions regarding meeting in person; and were dealing with a whole range of health issues including covid and long covid. Many of us have continued to develop our skills in using digital technology such as Teams and Zoom to be able to keep involvement going. We know that online activity has increased the opportunities for involvement for some of our members and for others, the return on-site involvement cannot come soon enough. Despite this, more members than ever, were involved and collaborated with us on some fantastic sessions, workshops, lectures, simulation and role play activities, assessments of presentations, reading of practice portfolios, creation of online resources and films and the design and development of research funding bids, and involvement in research studies. In 2020-21, we saw the start of the hugely successful BIG meetings for PIER members led by PIER members. These meetings really did show our community at its best and we extend a special thank you to those involved in the organising group for being our pioneers. We are hugely grateful to all of our PIER members and thank you for your continued involvement. We know from your feedback that you valued your involvement too. Over to you for the last word...



**“Involvement with BU PIER allows me to share my own experiences with Health Services. It is rewarding to be part of a team who contribute towards (H&SS) Students’ education and preparing them for the reality of working in the NHS of the 21st Century.”**

**“I very much enjoy being part of the PIER programme. The group have a wealth of hands on and lived experience to offer in education sessions across the board and a bond has developed between us. Supporting and encouraging future generations of those choosing a career in various aspects of social care is incredibly worthwhile. Seeing and feeling student enthusiasm gives me a buzz of satisfaction in the knowledge that I am somehow involved in future generations within this field and that I am still useful.”**

# Co-production

The approach we take in both our education and research activity is one of collaboration; where our PIER members work together as equal partners with academics and our external partners to design, deliver and evaluate teaching and learning activities for our students, and to be involved at all stages of the research cycle.

We have long since moved away from the model of involvement in Education, where people with lived experience simply ‘tell their story’; to one where there is meaningful dialogue and focussed planning in order to deliver sessions to students that help develop their knowledge, skills and understanding which they can take into their future practice.

**One example in nursing was a year one activity, ‘Service user conversations’,** where PIER members worked with Angela and Dr Sue Baron to design an online activity for students and a PIER member to talk about what matters to them about communication and to identify any communication needs and how they may be addressed. Co-producing teaching and learning activities ensures that the lived experience and expertise is at the heart of the curriculum and provides that vital link between theory and practice. The students described the session as:

**“Informative, thought provoking, valuable, a huge learning curve, so useful and important.”**

and one added,

**“This morning has been energising and confirmed why I am doing this course.”**

**Comments from PIER members included:**

**“I enjoyed meeting and talking with the nursing students at the start of their learning at Bournemouth as it is a good introduction to the BU PIER group.”**

**“I find being involved with Service User conversations with nursing students a very positive experience as it rebuilds some of the self-worth that I have lost since having to give up my career due to my MS; I suddenly feel useful again, as though I still have a contribution to make that may make a difference.”**

PIER members continue to comment favourably on activities where they have been involved in the planning and design of sessions, working closely with academic members of staff.

**“Every activity or resource I have had the privilege to co-create with our PIER partners has been consistently positively evaluated by students and faculty, with some activities or resources being adopted by allied health professional programmes at BU, and local or international organisations. This adoption by others is testament to the valuable contribution they make to education, practice, and research in healthcare.”**

Dr Sue Baron, Senior Lecturer in Adult Nursing

**A new unit of learning in Occupational Therapy (OT); Community engagement in OT** saw the coming together of PIER members, community groups and students, looking at what hinders those with a health issue or disability in engaging in activities that contribute to their well-being.

This activity involved students engaging with organisations that support specific groups of people within their locality and helping them to see what they offer to support this aim, what they currently provide and what additional support could be offered to enhance what services already provide. Students were required to find out how their occupational perspective (their theoretical basis) might add value to an organisation whilst drawing on the organisation’s expertise.

## Feedback from the academic



**“This was an invaluable experience offering opportunities for students to further develop their communication skills and consider the importance of coproduction and co-creation in developing outcomes that had the**

**potential to increase the visibility of many of the groups who experience marginalisation in their communities. The students were resourceful and offered exciting ideas which unfortunately could not be delivered due to the pandemic but offered the organisations involved different ways of meeting some of the challenges. Many of these new partnerships have been maintained and in the forthcoming year students will be able to deliver the co-created activities.”**

Dr Juliette Truman, Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy & Health Psychology

## Feedback from students

**“We will endeavour to use co-production in future practice, using co-production in this project has been a rewarding experience by collaborating with the members we managed to come up with a range of activities that all members could participate in and take forward to introduce at the centre.”**

Student collaborating with MS Bournemouth

**“I have enjoyed working on a live brief such as this and being able to work through issues and interventions as a team (students and service users). In future I can really see the benefit on working on these kinds of projects with the service user as it really challenges your idea of occupation and interventions and what is appropriate for the one and the many. In future practice I would like to now work with whole communities, something I had not thought of in terms of OT before.”**

Student collaborating with Body Positive

## Feedback from PIER community partners

**“I felt the session went exceedingly well, the students were very informed and interested in the project. They seemed to ask all the right questions and had the members’ interests at heart. I think the ideas were good and certainly something that I had not thought of. Overall, I was very impressed with the students and would certainly love to actually have this in person when we can.”**



MS Bournemouth

**“Working with the occupational therapy students was a brilliant experience. It was great to be able to be a service provider but also a service user. The ideas of a service that they came back with, blew me away and made me cry. I felt like they had really grasped how difficult living with HIV can be but also how it could be seen in a positive way. It also included our service users being a part of something; something that also may raise money for the charity. The delivery of the presentation and ideas was thought through in detail and this enabled them to come up with an amazing idea.”**



Body Positive Dorset

## Co-production in research

In research we are aware of the increasing emphasis in recent years for there to be meaningful public involvement at all stages of the research cycle; from the development of the research question, through to dissemination of the findings. In PIER, we constantly seek to support and embed best practice in involvement in research, which we know increases relevance, impact and outcomes of the research study. In 2020-21, we coordinated involvement in 16 research studies.

### Disability and Inclusive Ageing

Three PIER members collaborated with three academics from the BU Research Centre for Seldom Heard Voices to design and develop a research study on disability and inclusive ageing. The application was in response to a funding call from the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) to fund research into reducing inequalities for disabled people across the life-course. Working together as a group, we identified what aspects of life would enable disabled people to live well for longer and how best to explore this through research. This led to the involvement of two local charities: Access Dorset and The Samee Project in the research bid and the three people with lived experience involved as co-applicants. Whilst the application for funding was not successful (only around 1 in 10 are), the research group were commended for the quality of the collaboration with people with lived experience. The funders highlighted the co-produced elements as the strength of the proposal. We will therefore continue to work together to secure funding from another source.

### Institute of Medical Imaging and Visualisation

We also support researchers to consult with people with lived experience on existing research ideas. In 2020-21, the Institute of Medical Imaging and Visualisation (IMIV) at Bournemouth University sought the input of PIER members, acknowledging the importance of consulting members of the public before a funding application is submitted to ‘find out what the service users think of the idea and how it’s proposed to be carried out.’ Members of the focus group raised questions that the researchers had not considered which demonstrated the value of the lived experience perspective when designing a research project.

### Co-designing and delivering courses

To complement current provision for supporting researchers with public involvement in their projects, MeI, Angela and PIER members will be co-designing and delivering a five-day course at master’s level: Public Involvement in research, for research students to explore and evaluate a range of models and approaches to public involvement through each stage of the research cycle. The course promises to be interactive, with PIER members bringing their own lived experience of being involved in research. This will complement a programme of half day workshops PIER are co-designing which will be offered to existing researchers and research students across BU.

## Online involvement

Pre-COVID, most PIER activity was onsite. When lockdown came, we had to adapt to online delivery of the curriculum and involvement in research activity.

The last year has seen the development of innovative ways of working online in educational activity to ensure that students received the best learning experiences.

### Online assessment and moderation of students’ work

In Social Work, students previously gave presentations on their practice learning in person to a marking panel. In 2020-21, students pre-recorded their presentation and submitted online. PIER members could view the presentations in their own time and still contribute to the assessment process. Having this time enabled PIER members to provide much more detailed written feedback which informed the students’ marks and was shared with the student so they could learn from this perspective. Significant weight was placed on the PIER members comments and there were many examples of this changing the mark the student received for their presentation. Reflecting on the content and quality of the presentations, PIER members said:

**“The students were exceptional..... eager to do well and learn from this experience.”**

**“They showed empathy, maturity, warmth and professionalism.”**

PIER members are involved in both assessment and moderation of student work. Whilst this is part of Regulator requirements for Social Work, BU Social Work Team recognise the importance of involving people with lived experience expertise in student learning as it opens up a different way of engaging in practice. In addition to assessing practice presentations, PIER members were involved in moderating student practice portfolios. The focus is to look at how students demonstrate the opportunities they have created to learn from people with lived experience and how that learning is applied within their practice.

As we moved these activities online, we held two training sessions to ensure PIER members had met the academic; could understand what was required; and had the opportunity to ask questions. It also enabled some people to participate who had not assessed or moderated students’ work before. We learned a lot along the way!

For portfolio moderation, each PIER member reviewed a number of randomly selected examples individually and provided feedback through a PIER partnership designed form. Each PIER member was also asked to reflect on both their impressions of the presentations they had seen, and the portfolios, so we could discuss any emerging themes or observations from looking at the work as a whole. This provided opportunity to draw together some important themes to feedback to students and to influence teaching going forward. This was a helpful process for PIER members and the teaching team.

### Feedback from the academic



**“Continuing to involve PIER members in the assessment of student presentations and feedback on their portfolio work has enabled us to provide a broader range of feedback for students from the perspective of people with lived**

**experiences. We have overcome the challenges of new technology and found ways of working together to adapt to the circumstances the pandemic presented. With the range of feedback and consultation, we have identified changes in the way we embed the importance of understanding the value of learning from people who are experts by experience through our teaching. This encourages more empathic and value-led practitioners and, I note from the PIER member comments, that those qualities shone through in the work which was reviewed. When that happens, it is fantastic to see. It is such a strength of this programme to have involvement and support of our PIER members. We hope to build on that collaboration!”**

Ros Dray, Senior Lecturer in Social Work and Social Work Practice Lead

### BU PIER members’ feedback

#### My thoughts on the Portfolio assessments:

**“The students were exceptional.”**

**“They wanted to make a difference to the lives of their service users.”**

**“They showed empathy, maturity, warmth and professionalism.”**

**“Eager to do well and learn from this experience.”**

**“Great high level of preparation before going onto placement.”**

**“Ros has made a huge difference to the role we are able to play in helping to moderate the presentations and portfolios for the students. Her belief in the importance of the voice of the client has made this difference. It feels like a comprehensive and meaningful process now with valued roles for PIER members. I think it has resulted in genuinely improved understanding by students, of the importance of learning from service users and carers. The presentations are more heartfelt and the learning clearer. As always, such a privilege to witness students recounting their learning.”**



## Creating digital resources

**Nursing:** A new area of involvement in nursing in 2020-21 was within the unit, 'Clinical Management and Medicines Management.' PIER members were recorded on Zoom, talking about their experiences of polypharmacy (taking a range of different medications). The videos were viewed by students who later met the service users and carers in virtual rooms to ask questions in a seminar style session.

The use of Zoom arguably enabled a greater number of people to be involved; particularly those who have been shielding throughout the pandemic. One PIER member acknowledged that she had been involved in more activities with students than in pre-COVID times; due to both the time and energy saved by not needing to travel. Others, while enjoying the involvement in something new, said,

I do hope that we get back to face to face sessions as soon as possible

**Physio:** Students echoed this in the evaluation of a Physio session focussing on Neuro rehabilitation. Aimed at reviewing how to assess a person with a progressive neuro condition, the online session meant that looking at aspects of posture and seating, for example, was challenging. However, the students' evaluation of the session was very positive and highlighted the importance of treating each person as an individual and not defining them as a condition.

## Embracing the challenge of online involvement

At the outset, the pandemic forced us to move to the online delivery of the curriculum and this certainly had its challenges in terms of the immediacy of the situation. Challenges with IT equipment and demands on WiFi in homes caused frustration and had an impact on learning for some students. Over time we have seen that online delivery offers students increased flexibility in terms of managing work and family life; time and cost saved through less travel and a blend of individual and collaborative learning.

Platforms such as Zoom have enabled people with lived experience to engage in smaller groups with students where there is more scope for everyone to participate. However, some PIER members and students have expressed dissatisfaction with online sessions, favouring the more personal and familiar format of on campus contact.

Going forward in the new academic year, we will see a move to a hybrid model of teaching and learning which will be both online and campus based and for our PIER members, be more flexible and inclusive.

## Creating resources

The shift to online learning created an opportunity to work closely with PIER members to create teaching resources. This included recorded interviews, top tips, narratives and case studies and short films. We have included examples here from Midwifery and Social Work:

In Midwifery this led to the creation of a series of short films documenting Childbirth Journeys. Daisy Wiggins, Lecturer in Midwifery, writes:

**"Childbirth Journeys is a new level 4 midwifery unit providing students with an overview of the whole childbirth journey process from conception to the postnatal period through women's lived experiences. Having anatomy and physiology underpinning women's stories, given through either video and audio, provided a depth to students' learning and understanding of the childbirth continuum. Angela has been instrumental in supporting the unit lead to access groups of women to share their stories, utilising groups and communities to enable a wide range of people to be involved. One area that we noted was underrepresented were ethnic minorities and this is an area that could be expanded next time round.**

**Angela provided support to this unit for nine months leading up to delivery of the unit the following year. This included the development of 13 stories: 12 from women and one from a father, about their journeys."**

**Feedback from students in MUSE (Mid Unit Student Evaluation) showed that they liked the use of these video clips:**

**"I have loved hearing different women's stories."**

**"Great use of multimedia approaches to teaching."**

We hope to continue to build on the video clips and increase diversity when this unit runs again in the next academic year.

## First year BA (Hons) Social Work students

In social work, we collaborated with Dr Sally Lee to record a number of conversations with PIER members. The aim of the Social Exclusion and Discrimination unit is to explore the nature, lived experience, impact and possible causes of social exclusion and discrimination. Students engage with theories and research to understand the causes of social exclusion and discrimination. To enhance this learning, it was important to include voices from lived experience. People can experience exclusion and discrimination for many reasons including age, class, disability, race, homelessness, unemployment, and especially poverty and we wanted to show the reality of this. We recorded separate conversations with eight PIER members who have different experiences of social exclusion and/or discrimination. Dr Sally Lee set up zoom meetings to discuss their experiences of exclusion and where applicable, their experience of social work interventions, and recorded these for student to view.

## Feedback from the academic



**"The recordings provide a wide range of perspectives and insights into the lived experience of social exclusion. PIER Partnership members always work collaboratively to help students gain the learning they require. The recordings have been utilised with both BA (Hons) and MA Social Work students and feedback has included comments on the value of learning from people with real life experience."**

Dr Sally Lee, Senior Lecturer in Social Work

## BU PIER members' feedback

**"Sally was as friendly, encouraging & helpful as she usually is. She explained what would happen & made sure I was ok with everything."**

**"I was left to take lead on what I was talking about and Sally was there to gently guide and get me on track if and when I needed it."**

**"I think the recording process works really well; the only thing I would change would be to have some Q&A prior to the recording to enable me to really think through how I answer the questions. Other than that, I felt it went really well."**

**"It's great the video can be used to continue to teach a wider number of students so they can hear from my first-hand experience as a service user & through this they can be aware of issues they wouldn't usually see as a problem."**

**"The only thing I found particularly difficult was not being able to talk face to face with the students and giving them chance to ask questions, which I've always found important as I feel the interaction is as a valuable part of learning than just me talking."**



# Raising our profile

When you read many of the examples shared in this annual report, it is hardly surprising that our reputation is growing. Pete, Angela and Mel are frequently approached by external organisations for information, guidance, support and requests to collaborate on the development of public involvement in education, research and practice. In 2020-21 this included requests from Bournemouth and Poole College, Dorset Healthcare Trust, National Institute for Health Research, Social Work England, National Voices and the Health Foundation. Not only have these approaches led to opportunities for us to collaborate with external organisations and share our experiences and best practice; they led to a number of opportunities for PIER members to contribute to these developments and join new public involvement groups. Throughout the year we engaged in conversations with other universities who involve people with lived experience in their programmes. In 2020-21 we engaged with colleagues through the Scottish inter-universities network, Edgehill College, University of East Anglia and even with colleagues in Japan at Seinan Gakuin University. Lecturer Naoko Taira was keen for her university to establish their own PIER partnership and to learn from our experiences.

“ I still clearly remember the excitement I felt when I finished your interview. The system of your university is really impressive. Your practice gave me some ideas how to improve the quality of social work education in Japan. We need to find the way to connect theories, practices and lived experiences, which would foster critical view and reflexivity. It is really impressive that you have a proper system to connect the people with lived experience and the academic staff members and researchers who seek expertise of the experts by experience.”

Despite everything moving online for the year, we continued to present at events and conferences to share the work of the PIER partnership. In many ways, moving to online events enabled us to engage more frequently with colleagues across the UK. One example is of presenting at the National Comensus Conference.

2021 saw the opportunity for abstracts to be submitted for an online conference 'Celebrating Public and Patient Involvement in Health and Social Care Education', hosted by Comensus at the University of Central Lancashire. The conference was an online three-day event, with a packed and varied programme; recognising and celebrating that service user and carer involvement could continue to thrive even through a global pandemic. We had two separate submissions accepted to the conference.

Angela presented Communication in COVID times; showcasing the 'Service user conversations' activity, incorporating recordings of the service users and carers involved alongside Dr Sue Baron, the academic lead, who each spoke about different aspects of the activity and how PIER members were involved. The inclusion of PIER members in the conference presentation, illustrated the collaborative working in designing and delivering what was a very ambitious activity, involving 355 nursing students and 20 people with lived experience all on Zoom! Tom (BU PIER member) reflected on the positive impact the session had on the students, in spite of some technical challenges, and cited the activity as the greatest involvement he had had as a PIER member, to date.

Dr Sally Lee and PIER member Rachel, also co-created and delivered a presentation at the Comensus conference on Partnerships to promote sexual well-being based on a research study they are conducting together. Such was the success, they subsequently presented it again at the Social Work & Sexualities 3rd International Conference: Laws, policies, guidelines and gender-sexuality identities. As Dr Sally Lee explained:

**“Working with PIER members gives academic research additional depth of meaning – it situates it in real life. Rachel brings a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to this research project because it is important to her.”**

One attendee said that it was wonderful to be part of such an inclusive conference and community. A number of PIER members attended; being online enabled many more to participate without the need to travel and with the freedom to dip in and out as needed. Though there was not the same opportunity for asking questions and networking, this was balanced by the advantage of the conference being more accessible to a greater number of people. Overall, we found the conference interesting, lively and thought provoking; getting us to think about how we keep public involvement meaningful and what the challenges and opportunities are for the future. We were given a lot to think about and reflect on.

**We also continue to share our lived experiences and expertise through publications.** Including the lived experience in textbooks brings a unique perspective and opportunities for students to reflect and consider the application of their learning. An excellent example of this was the book *A Guide to Statutory Social Work Interventions: The Lived Experience* (2019) edited by Dr Mel Hughes where people with lived experiences of social work interventions co-wrote each chapter with an academic.

In 2020-2021, PIER members contributed to a chapter of a book in progress *Understanding Mental Health Practice for Adult Nursing Students* edited by Dr Steve Trenoweth. Adult nurses have long since raised concerns over their lack of confidence in caring for people with mental health needs in the adult setting and so this book is very timely and much needed. Co-written by Dr Trenoweth and Angela Warren, the first chapter explores the importance of mental health care and includes the thoughts and views of PIER members who were 'interviewed' via Zoom. Their input brings the chapter to life and gives the reader real life examples to reflect on.

Increasingly we are being approached to be part of advisory panels because of the extensive work and reputation of the PIER partnership and our alignment with the BU Research Centre for Seldom Heard Voices. For example, Mel was appointed to two advisory boards to develop inclusive involvement in research: The Health Foundation Inclusion Panel Strategic Advisory Group and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Centre for Engagement and Dissemination's Inclusivity in Public Involvement and

Engagement: Themed review Steering Group. Pete is a member of the Policy Research Unit in Adult Social Care (ASCRU) Public Involvement and Engagement Group (PIEG) - The role of the group is to advise on planning and shaping public involvement in ASCRU and to support the unit and individual research projects to produce high quality, relevant research. In addition, the group advise on how to engage with the wider public on the work of the unit.

This involvement helps to ensure that we have a voice in influencing public involvement policy and practice at a national level. At the start of the year, it was also announced that Mel had been successfully awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in recognition for her work to embed lived experience expertise in social work education. Mel is only one of four academics at BU with this recognition.

These are just some of the many examples of how our national profile is enabling us to influence public involvement in health and social care research, education and practice. We will continue to use our Twitter account, Facebook page, VOICE digital platform, PIER webpage, email updates, coffee mornings and BIG members meetings to share these opportunities and activities.



## VOICE

Bournemouth University and the PIER partnership are founding members of the VOICE UK Collaboration network which puts us at the forefront of the design and development of a hub for public involvement activity, resources and opportunities with research colleagues and people with lived experience across the UK

VOICE is described as 'a passionate community of members of the public, patients and carers who contribute their unique individual experiences to improve research and innovation'. It is a digital platform which brings together academic researchers with people with lived experience. At BU, we have been able to post opportunities for people with lived experiences to become involved in the design of our research studies and PIER members have been able to sign up to opportunities both locally and across the UK. If you would like to be more involved in research, you can sign up for free at [www.voice-global.org](http://www.voice-global.org). A number of our members have done so and said they can log on at any time to see what opportunities there are, but also receive a weekly newsletter flagging up specific opportunities based on their areas of experience and interest.

# Our plans for next year

2021-22 will be guided by our new five-year strategy. The PIER strategy 2025 outlines the BU PIER Partnership's five-year plan for ensuring that the expertise of people with lived experience (including patients, potential patients, carers and people who use or represent people who use health and social care services) underpins and informs education, research and professional practice at BU. We identified five key objectives in the strategy to align the work of the PIER Partnership with the BU2025 vision and strategic plan

## BU PIER Partnership 2025 key objectives:

- 1) Enhance the student experience
- 2) Increase research and knowledge exchange income
- 3) Harness the knowledge and expertise of PIER members
- 4) Increase external collaboration and impact
- 5) Contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development goals (SDGs)

The strategy includes some bold ambitions for the PIER partnership and our members to be involved in; opportunities across Bournemouth University in education and research and with health, social care and university partners externally. At the heart of this will be our goal to harness the expertise of people with lived experience to address real-life challenges and improve outcomes for all. Who better to identify research and practice priorities than those whose day to day lives are affected? We will continue to do this by embedding lived experience expertise into both education and research at BU by bringing together academics, students, community partners and people with lived experience to work together as equal partners.

As part of our goals for 2021-22, we have strengthened our alignment with the Research Centre for Seldom Heard Voices. Our learning from Black Lives Matter and Covid includes an understanding that often those who are most affected by health, social and economic inequalities have the least opportunity to shape health and social care research, education and professional practice. If we don't draw on the expertise of people with lived experience and ensure that we include a diverse range of voices, we will reinforce existing inequalities rather than reduce them. The year ahead promises to include some exciting opportunities to draw on the expertise of our individual members and community partners and to amplify the voices of those with the most to gain from high quality health and social care.

We very much look forward to collaborating with you all in the coming year.

**Dr Mel Hughes,**  
Associate Professor in Social Work and Academic Lead  
for the PIER Partnership

**Angela Warren and Pete Atkins,**  
PIER co-ordinators



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