

Working With Groups

A PROUD Masterclass



PROUD

 **imagination**
LANCASTER

16th May 2014
The Storey, Lancaster



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Aims

Working with groups can be challenging as well as incredibly rewarding. The PROUD team at ImaginationLancaster are aware that many other people and groups in Lancashire face similar obstacles when it comes to inspiring fun and effective group work. The aim of the event was designed to share experience, techniques and tools to:

- > Inspire great group work
- > Give people a voice
- > Work with different needs and abilities
- > Connect people with disparate opinions and viewpoints

This could be in the context of a group that people work with day-to-day. It may be could be that you need to work together as a community to write a bid and attract funding, or come to collaborative consensus on important decisions. It could be a friends groups, a co-design project or new ways to work with young people. Through the event we wished to share ImaginationLancaster’s techniques and tools and at the same time learn from others about how you go about inspiring lively, creative group work.





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Participants

Rawa Abu Lawi	PhD Student, ImaginationLancaster
Sarah Cruickshank	34th Lancaster (St Chad's)
Scout Group	
Lucy Ingle	Morecambe Library
Jackie Jones	They Eat Culture
Natalie Levy	Dale Street Woodland /
All Circles	
Corinne Pritchard	Design Visualiser,
ImaginationLancaster	
Jenny Rutter	They Eat Culture /
JCR Creative	
Mari Ryan	UThink PDP
Paul Scholefield	Dale Street Woodland
Stuart Reynolds	Friends of Lancaster Library
Paul Smith	The Glasgow School of Art





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Agenda

- 10:30 Welcome by Leon Cruickshank
- 10:35 Who are you? 5 lines tool
- 10:40 Introduction to the aims of today
- 10:45 Scenario Tool exercise considering motivations & fears
- 11:05 Learning from Amazing group work
- 11:35 Learning from Disastrous group work
- 11:55 Brief introduction to the tools
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:45 Trying out the tools
- 13:15 Modifying the tools or liking them as they are
- 13:45 Ordering the tools and modifications you require
- 14:00 Discussion and exchange of insights
- 14:40 Next steps
- 14:45 Close





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Introduction

The workshop started with tea and coffee. On arrival participants were asked to complete the 'Who are you?' tool - which asks people to introduce themselves using 5 lines and 5 words. This made for an entertaining, energising start to the day. Facilitator Leon Cruickshank introduced the PROUD project and the context and aims of today's event.



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Motivations and Fears

To deliberately draw out peoples motivations for attending today's workshop and ask people to express their fears for what would be not be a worthwhile use of their time, groups were asked to discuss the best and worst possible outcomes, and capture the most significant points using the Scenario tool. The second part of the exercise asked people to consider how they could achieve and avoid the positive and negative outcomes.

Overall, the groups were in agreement in that they wished for a workshop where they went away having gained new techniques, tools and also a network of contacts to support improved group work in future. A disastrous day would be that they learnt nothing new and wasted their valuable time. There was real agreement that to make the most of the day they'd need to 'talk to people, listen to people and get stuck in'.

The Project: working with Groups

<p>The WORST case scenario...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Not taking away anything useful· People being afraid to use the tools.	<p>The best case scenario...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Getting some exciting tools to make engagement more useful· Free stuff ;)
<p>HOW TO AVOID</p> <p>Engage!</p> <p>Help people overcome their "it's always been this way" attitude. Helping people use "new" tools</p>	<p>HOW TO achieve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Engage!· share knowledge & practice 😊



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Amazing Group Work

The group were invited to use the Hexagon tool to discuss and capture the times they had led or experienced amazing group work. Good planning and organisation and making time to think about the needs of the group you will be facilitating were seen as crucial. Amazing group work involves making people feel relaxed and welcome with fun ice breakers, dynamic facilitation and interaction throughout the session. Designing ways to give people with less confidence a voice so dominant personalities don't take over allow groups to work in a non hierarchical manner.

Resources and tools that allow people to reflect, exchange knowledge and learn should be created in advance with a good balance of 'Thinking time, discussion time and doing time' on the day. A good facilitator should aim to be flexible enough to adapt from the original plan to meet the needs of the group. Giving the group ownership of problems or tasks was felt to be a productive way to inspire them to get involved and design solutions to meet their needs that could be progressed after the event.



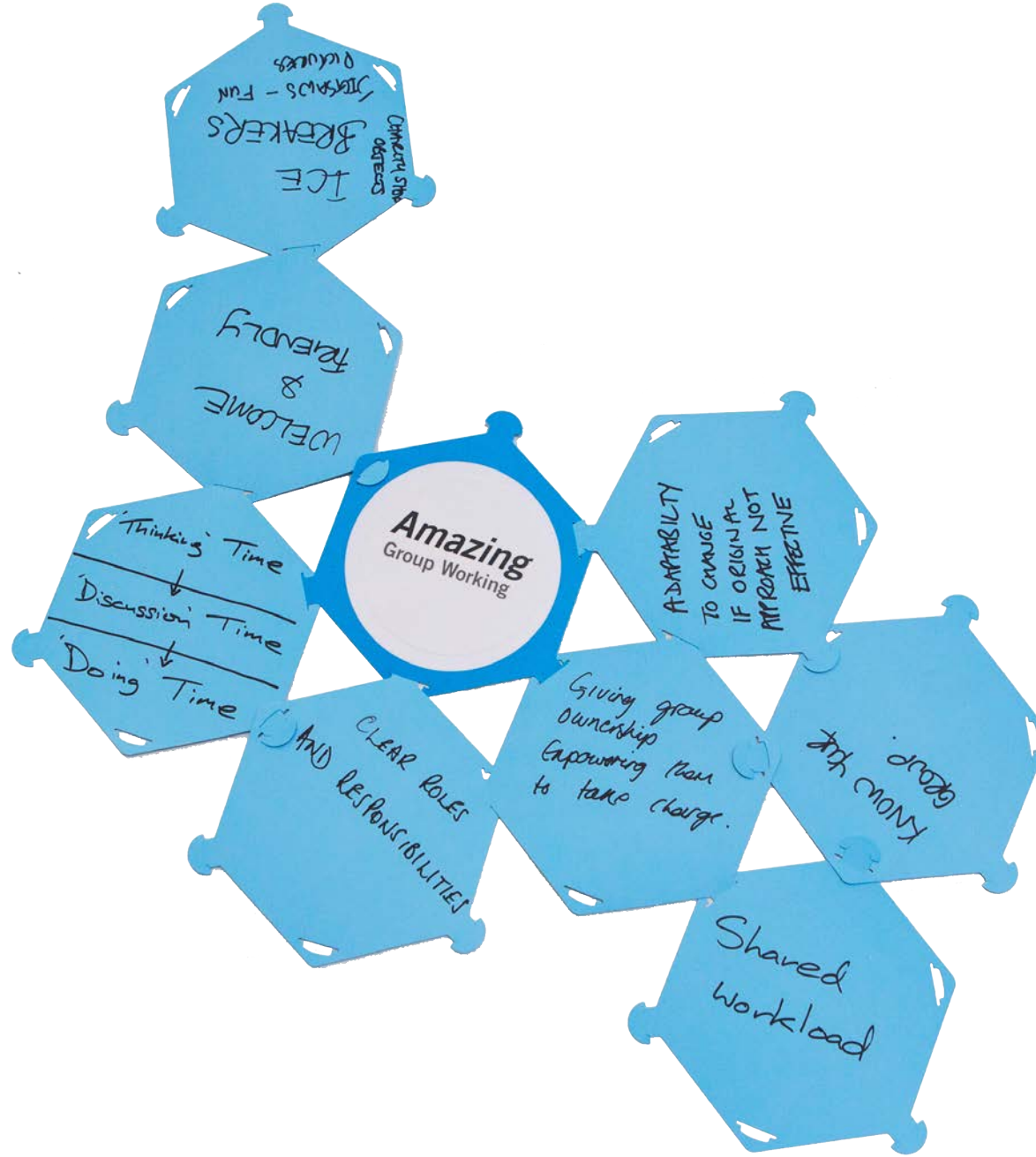
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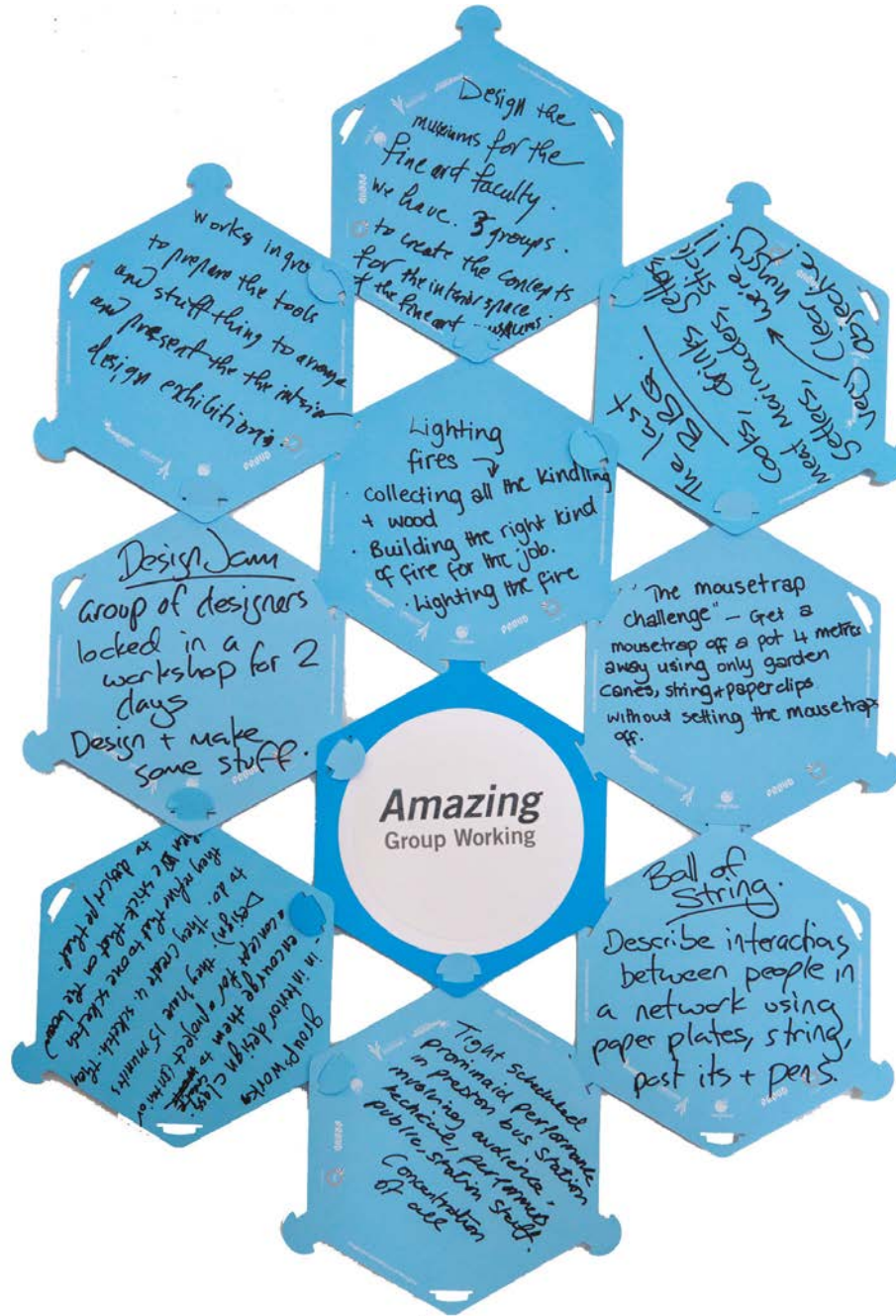




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Disastrous Group Work

Often we learn the most when the planning and/or delivery of an event where group work is called for and doesn't go to plan. To encourage the sharing of valuable insights and experience the groups went onto explore the times they had been involved in a group working disaster. Responses ranged from avoiding practical problems on the day such as technology failures (always have a Plan B), and making sure you know the space and layout of the room you'll be working in (ask for photos if you can't visit in person) and create a flexible activities plan that will still work if numbers change. Good communication and marketing well in advance helps to avoid everyone's worst fear than no one turns up, or goes to the wrong venue.

Many of the groups have encountered people problems such as facilitators trying to get 'too personal, too soon'. Dealing with people who challenge or try to take over a group can adversely affect a workshop and a skilled facilitator should be able to deal with these and diffuse situations so tempers aren't lost. It's important not to make assumptions about the knowledge of the participants involved so the content is not pitched at too high or too low a level resulting in a lack of engagement. Forcing collaboration where there is a culture clash can result in even more friction if not handled well and brought to a positive outcome by the end of the workshop.



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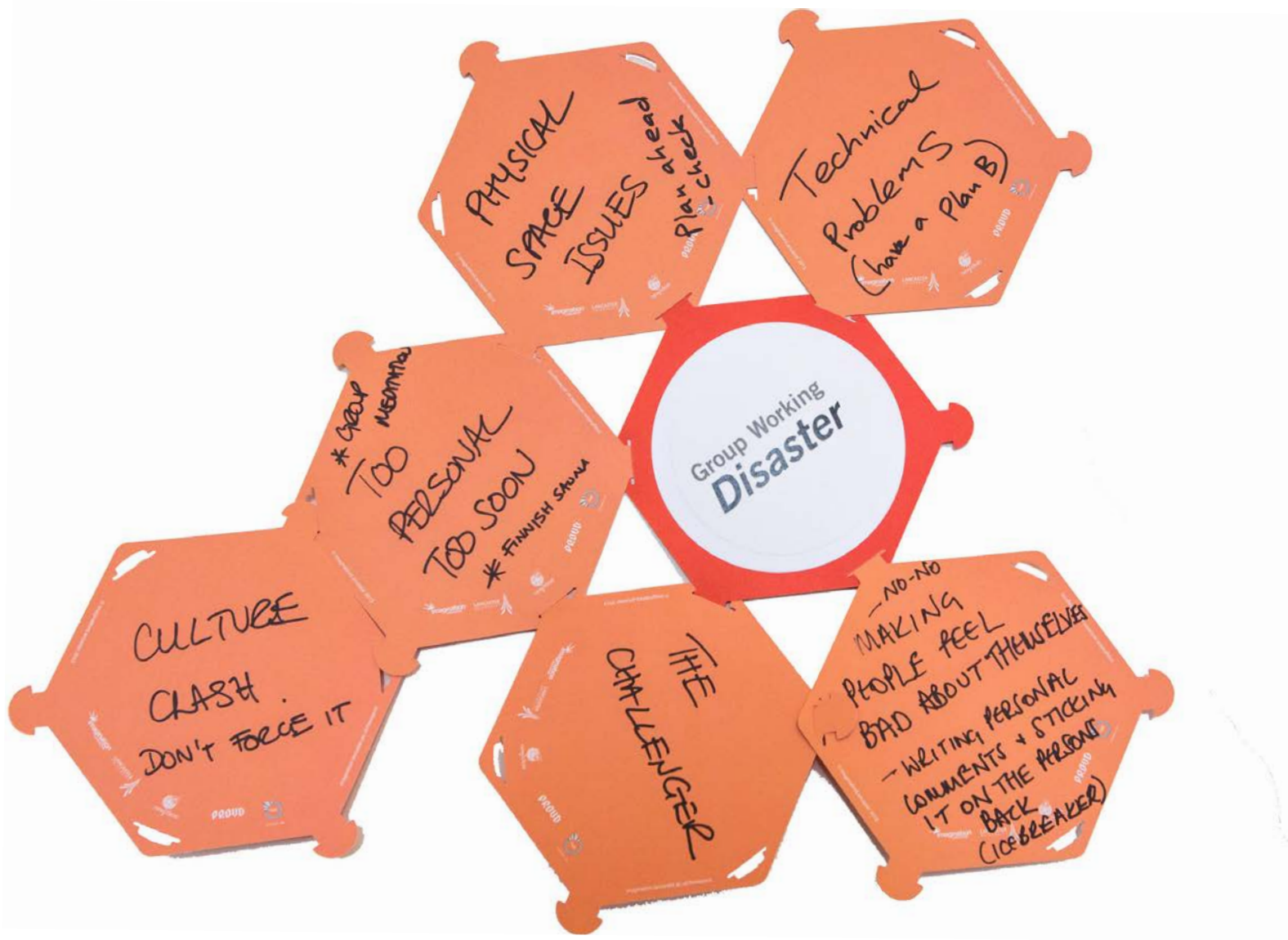


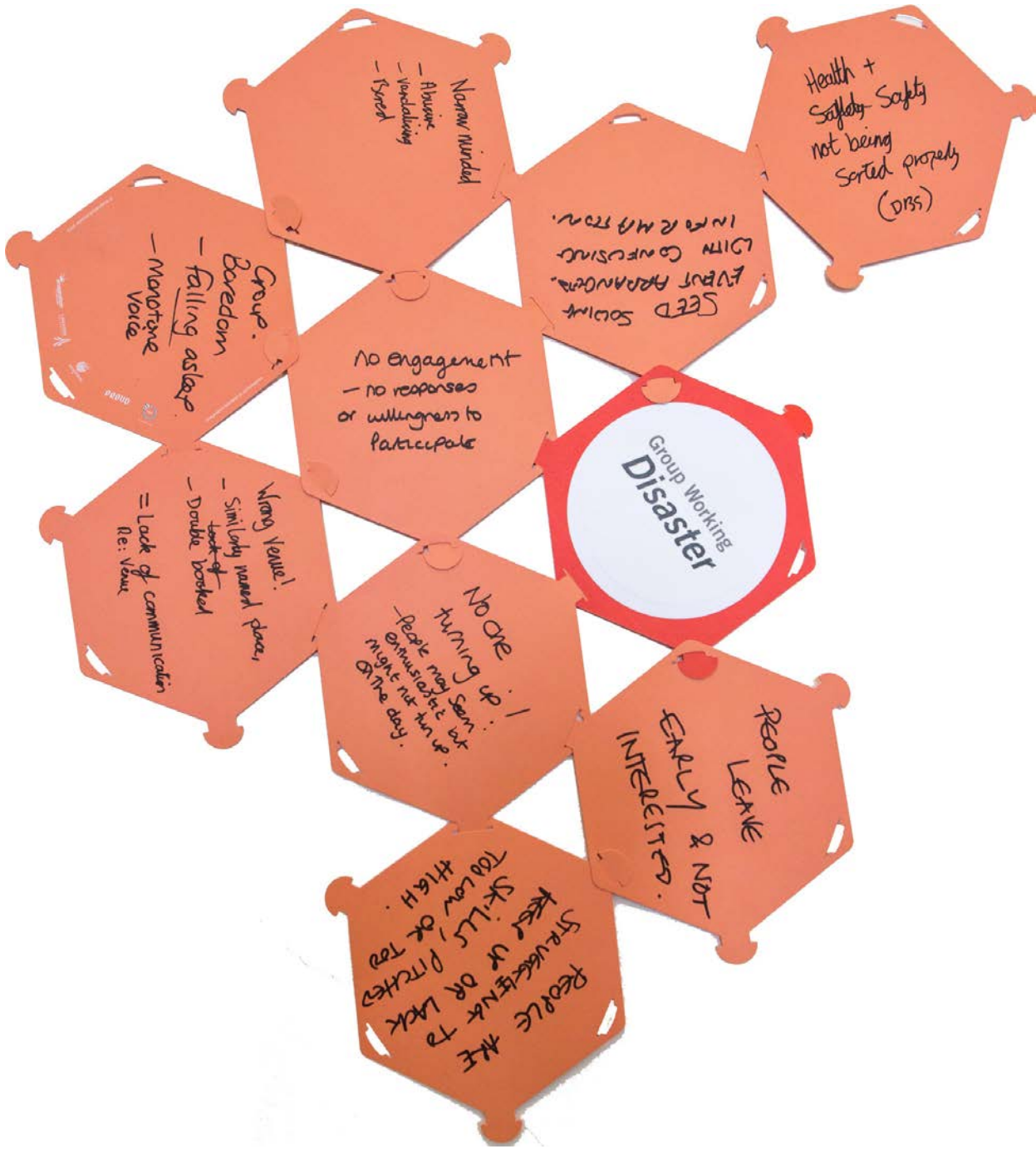
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Introduction to the Tools

Leon then introduced six tools to the group to explore and try out after lunch. These were:

- 1) Hexagons - Connectable cards for mapping problems, generating ideas or modelling shapes.
- 2) Giant Timeline - A table sized timeline for planning projects and activities
- 3) Scenario Tool - A mini comic strip for revealing peoples motivations and fears at the start of an event / project
- 4) Meeting Organiser - A tool that enables people attending a meeting to design the agenda as a group
- 5) Stickers - Circular stickers to help great group work for highlighting issues, areas to explore and much more
- 6) Commenters - Circular foam shapes for generating ideas, discussion and reaching collaborative consensus



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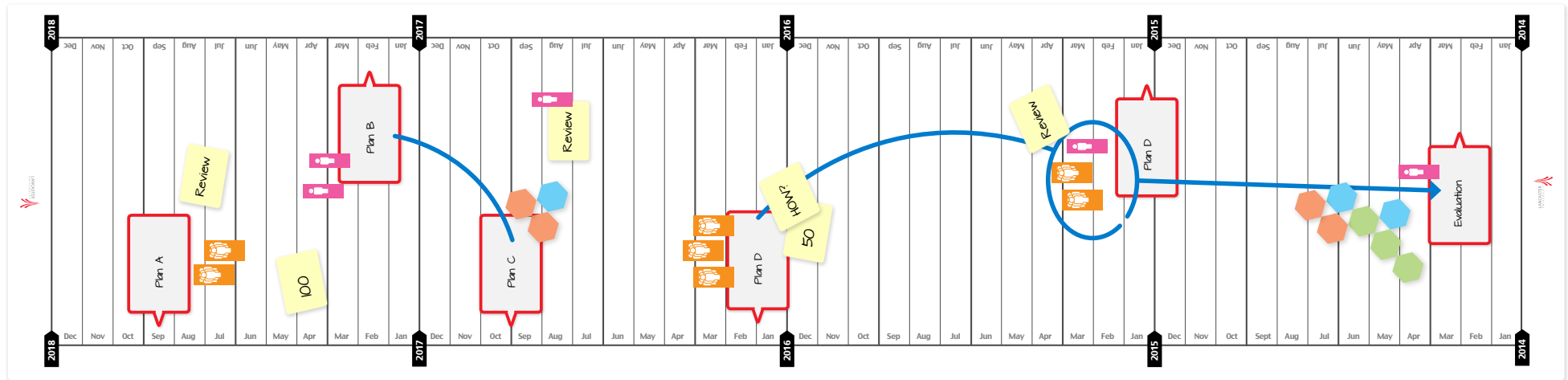


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The Giant Timeline

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Break down the timeline into days, weeks, months or years.

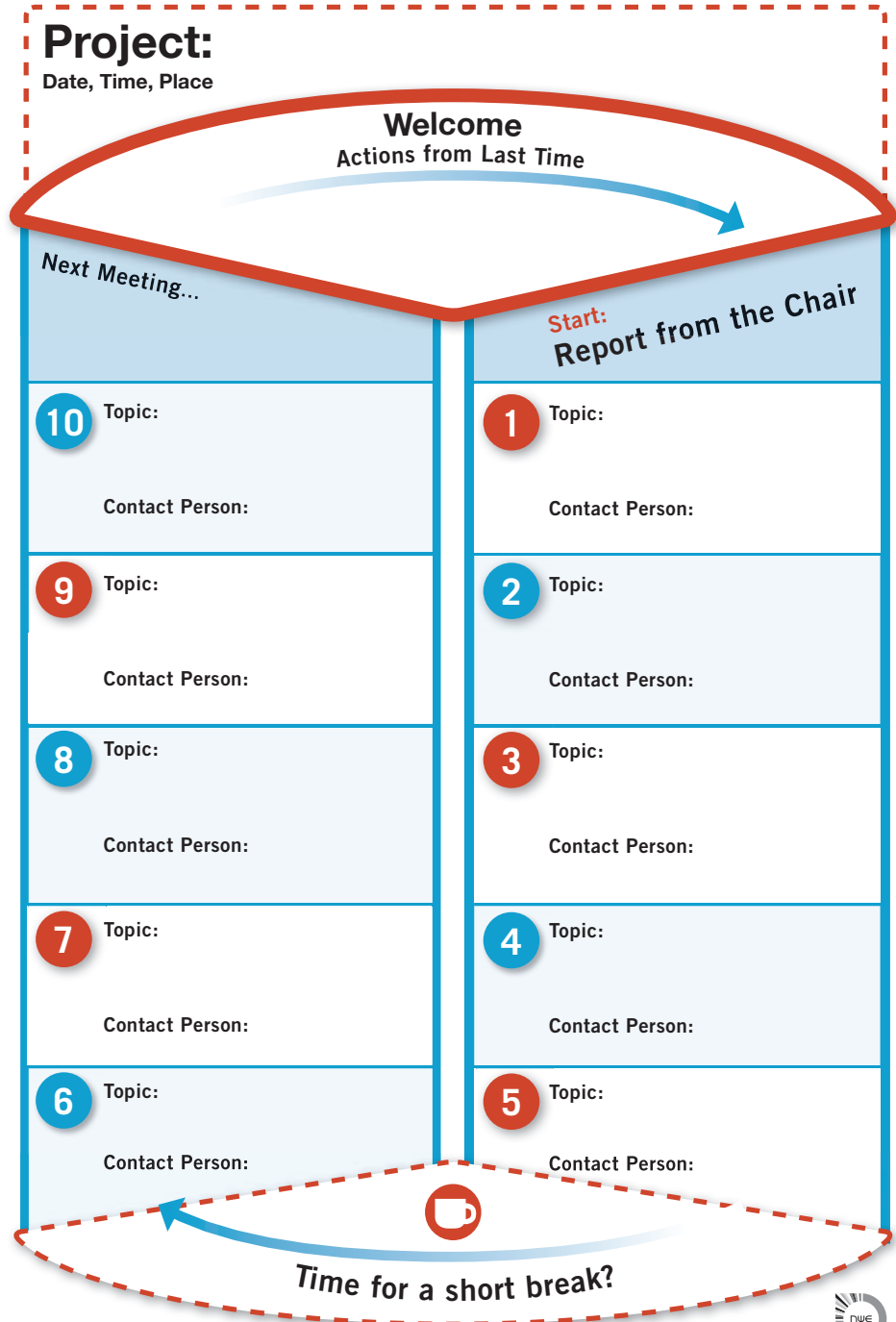
Your logo can be displayed at both ends.

Place objects onto the timeline in order to plan project details and resources.

Stickers



Meeting Organiser





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How would you use the tools?

After lunch the groups were invited to spend time considering how each tool could meet the needs of their role / organization. After they'd have enough time to go round the room, they were then asked to use large round stickers that said 'Great! I can use this as it is right now' or 'Can you change this so it...' so we could start to see if the tools could be used as they are or whether modifications are required. It was really interesting for the ImaginationLancaster team to listen to the different suggestions for different, creative ways and situations the tools might be used.

The commenters inspired an interesting discussion about whether they could be disruptive when working with young people as they are so bright and tactile you might be distracting. Mari and Paul showed that you could harness energy by using the commenters as a bat and ball and playing games. Deliberately designing moving around and playing games as part of a group session to capture their attention and have some fun.



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Ordering & Modifying The Tools

After reflection participants were asked to fill out a pro forma which asked them to select the top three tools they would like to receive either. As some of the tools are online as a digital download PROUD will email a link to these tools so people can use them as they are if they wish too. There was space on the form to tell us about the modifications you would like to existing tools, or suggest a new tool.

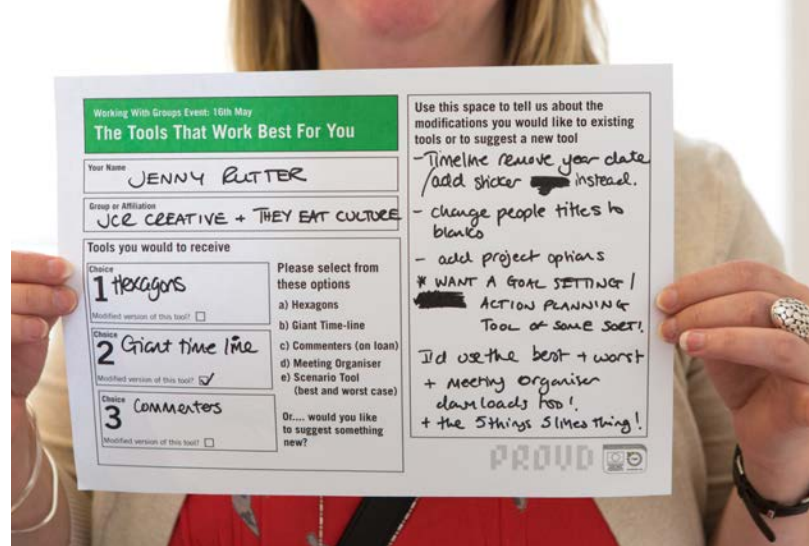
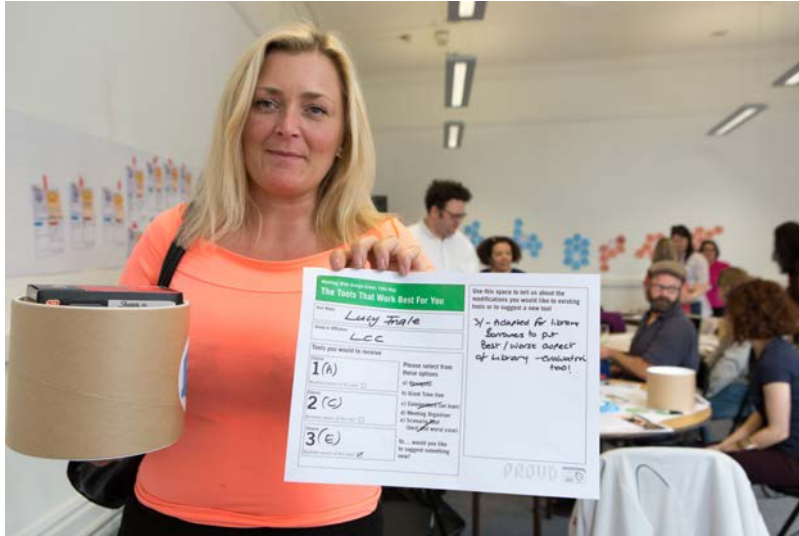
The Giant Timeline was a popular first choice with people requesting specific dates and sizes, peelable stickers so you can re-use them and black people icons to use with the timeline. Many people said they would like to be able to modify every text box in the Scenario Tool so you could use it in different situations, for example so it could be adapted for library users to state the best and worst aspects of the library service and suggest improvements. Wipe clean, magnetic or even digital versions of the Hexagons were suggested several times. This could be a longer term project as resource intensive, but one Imagination would be very interested in creating.



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Conclusion

After a short break for afternoon tea Leon brought the day to a conclusion with a discussion and exchange of the day, and asking the group if there were any facilitation challenges that they would like support with. From the groups response it seemed that the event had met their aims overall and they were keen to try out the tools with within their various organisations and communities. The PROUD team promised to get the tool requests delivered to participants within 2-3 weeks while the event and use of the tools are still fresh in their mind. The group were keen to keep in touch. Blog posts to the ImaginationLancaster web site with photos of where, how and who the tools were used with would be very welcome. A facebook group for Working With Groups was also mentioned as something that could be very useful for participants to post photos and stories of how they've used the tools to inspire others as to the different ways they can be used.

Thanks for being such great participants and we'll be in touch soon to arrange delivery of your tools!



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People Researchers Organisations Using Design

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This masterclass was designed and run by ImaginationLancaster at Lancaster University as part of the PROUD project which is funded by EU INTERREG IVB. PROUD stands for People Researchers Organisations Using Design for innovation and co-creation. PROUD brings designers together with public organisations, business and user communities to experience the value of design whilst working together on innovative solutions for today's real world problems. Working with partners across Europe we are developing and sharing new ways of co-designing improvements to public space and public services.

<http://imagination.lancaster.ac.uk/activities/PROUD>

<http://www.proudeurope.eu/>



