

Working With Groups

A PROUD Masterclass



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 **imagination**
LANCASTER

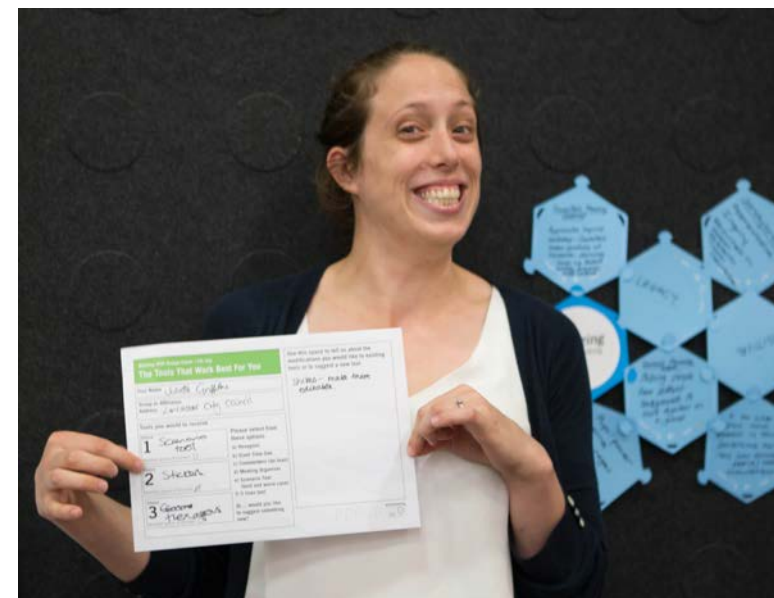
11th July 2014
ImaginationLancaster

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.



Participants

Helen Ryan	Lancaster City Council
Roy Halliday	Lancashire County Council
Lucia Murquart	Lancashire County Council
Jennifer Milligan	Lancaster City Council
Kelly Dodd	Lancaster City Council
Peter Baines	Lancaster City Council
Juliette Griffiths	Lancaster City Council
Diane Baxter	Lancashire Libraries
Mike Rawsterne	Blackburn with Darwen Council
Marie Demaine	Lancashire County Council
Wayne Gibson	Lancashire County Council
Leon Cruickshank (Facilitator)	ImaginationLancaster, Lancaster University
Gemma Coupe (Photos)	PROUD Design Manager, ImaginationLancaster



Agenda

10:30	Welcome by Leon Cruickshank
10:35	Who are you? 5 lines tool
10:40	Setting the scene
10:45	Scenario Tool activity
11:05	Amazing group work
11:25	Disastorous group work
11:35	Introduction to the tools
12:15	Lunch
13:00	Modifying the tools or liking them as they are
14:00	Ordering the tools and modifications you require
14:15	Discussion and exchange of insights
14:50	Hexagons giveaway and next steps
15:00	Close



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.



Motivations and Fears

To deliberately draw out peoples motivations and fears when running group events, participants were asked to think about the next group event they are running and 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 people had many motivations and fears in common. A major fear was that nobody turns up on the day (or too many people) and that bad weather spoils outdoor activities. Negative participants who complain or refuse to participate were a worst scenario for many. The ideal scenario is when the event has the right amount of attendees to make for a lively discussion with lots of ideas and solutions brought forward.

To avoid the worst case scenario happening it was seen as necessary to plan and market events well in advance to the right audience, and plan activities carefully - sometimes using an independent facilitator for group discussions to help produce positive group outcomes. Having clear objectives for what the event intends to achieve helps organisers work to ensure marketing is targeted and the event is interesting and worthwhile for participants.



THE PROJECT: Think about the next group event that you are running

THE WORST CASE SCENARIO...

- NO-ONE TURNS UP
- TOO MANY PEOPLE TO MANAGE (OPEN INVITE)
- TOO FOCUSED ON THE NEGATIVE (COMPLAINTS)
- NO FEEDBACK FROM GROUP.

THE BEST CASE SCENARIO...

- LOTS OF FEEDBACK, IDEAS, DISCUSSIONS
- OFFERS OF HELP. (PRACTICAL) TIME
- OFFERS OF HELP (FUNDING).
- AGREED WAY FORWARD

HOW TO AVOID THIS...

- CHOOSE APPROPRIATE VENUE
- PUBLICITY (TARGETED)
- MANAGING THE TIME / EVENTS.
- MAKE IT INTERESTING

HOW TO ACHIEVE THIS...

- REFRESHMENTS
- FINISHING / KEEPING FOCUSED ON THE POSITIVE
- MAKE IT INTERESTING
- STRUCTURE TO EVENTS / CLEAR OBJECTIVES.
- GOOD COMMUNICATION OF EVENTS.



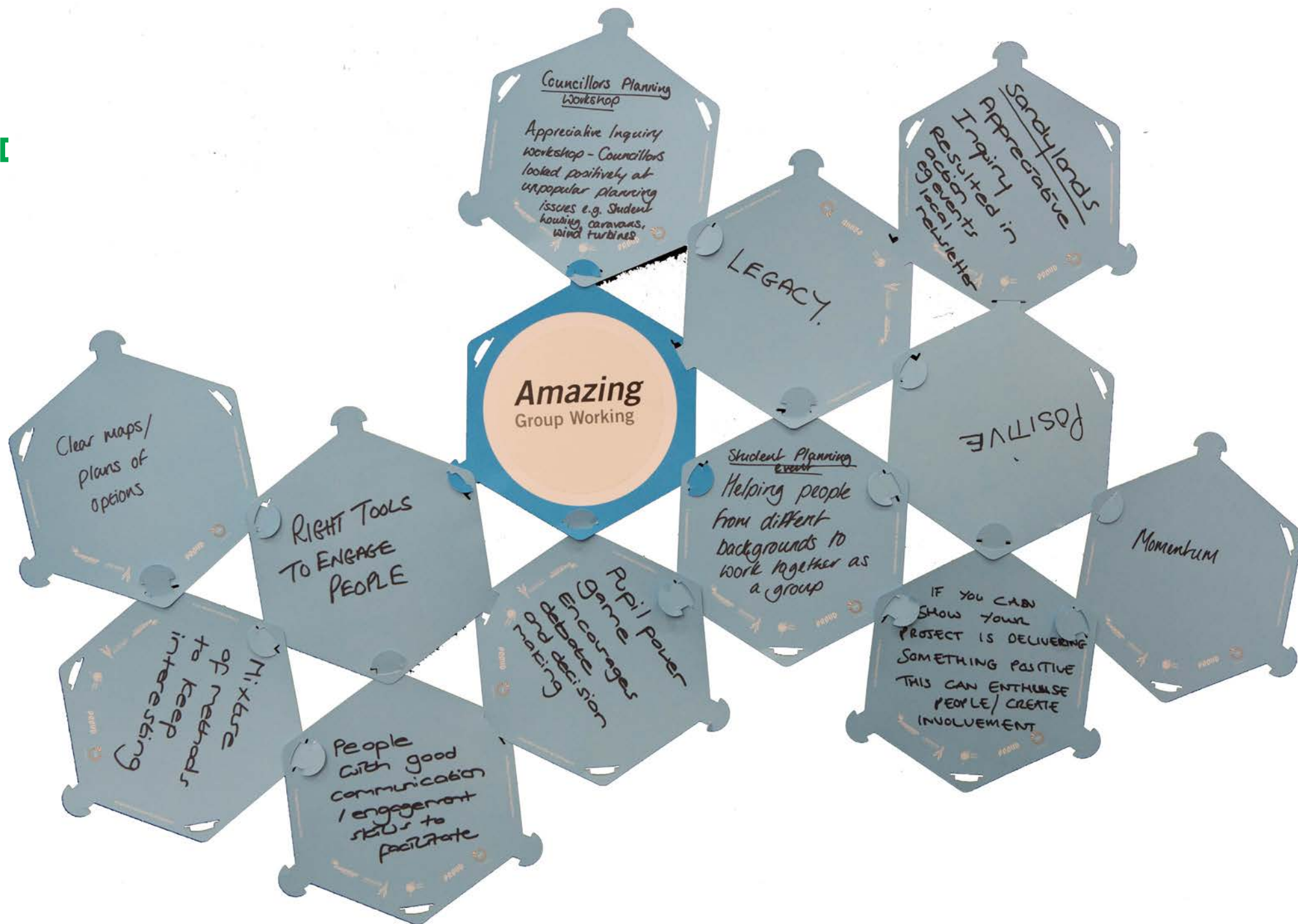
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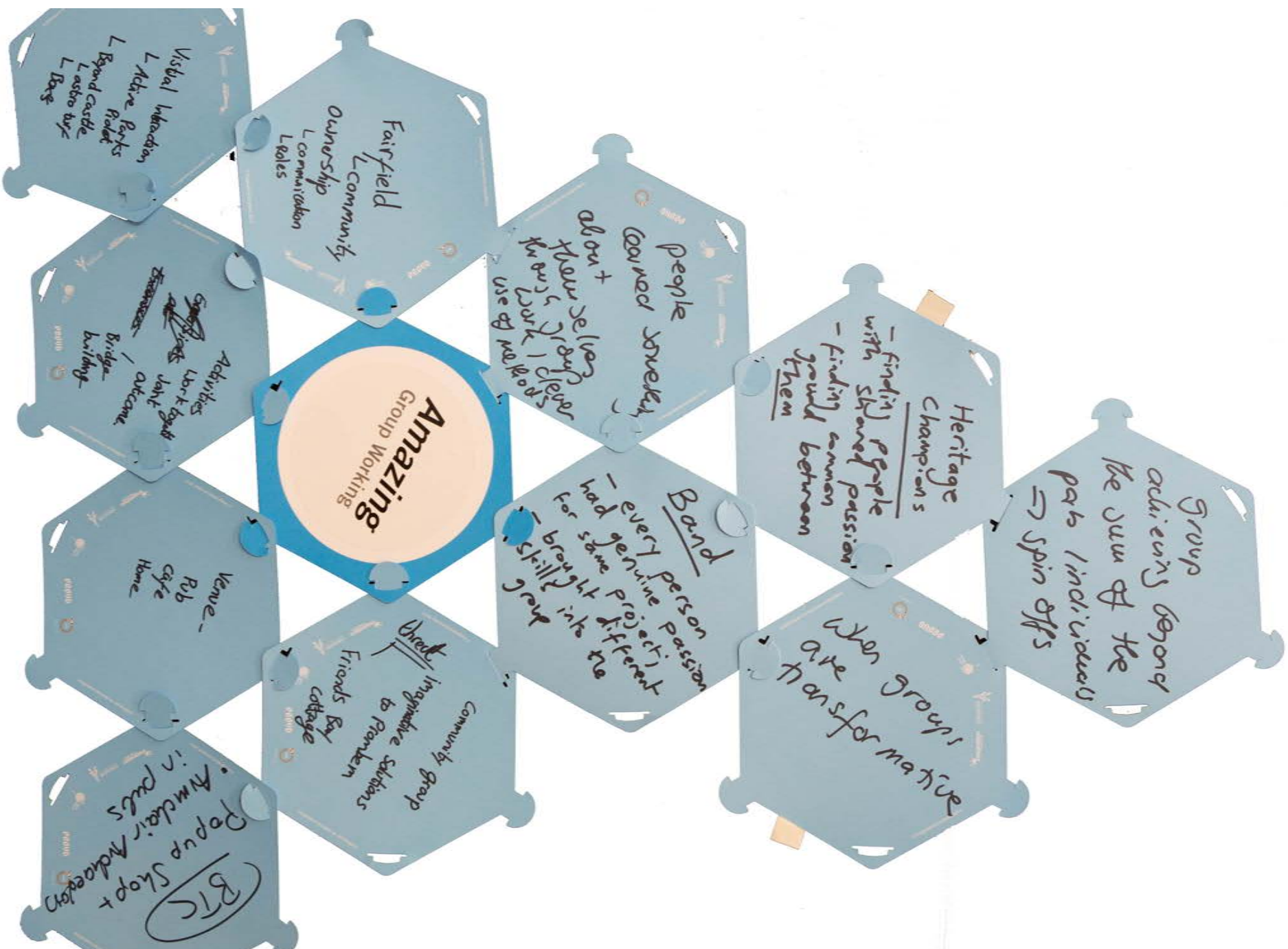
Amazing Group Work

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 with good facilitation to inspire rich conversations and debate were seen as essential. A good venue and catering helps to make people feel welcome and relaxed. Resources and tools that allow people to reflect, exchange knowledge and learn should be created in advance with activities that inspire interaction and are visual and interesting. Having clear aims for events help to ensure people leave with a clear action plan at the end of the event. 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 imaginative group solutions to problems so ultimately people take ownership of projects.







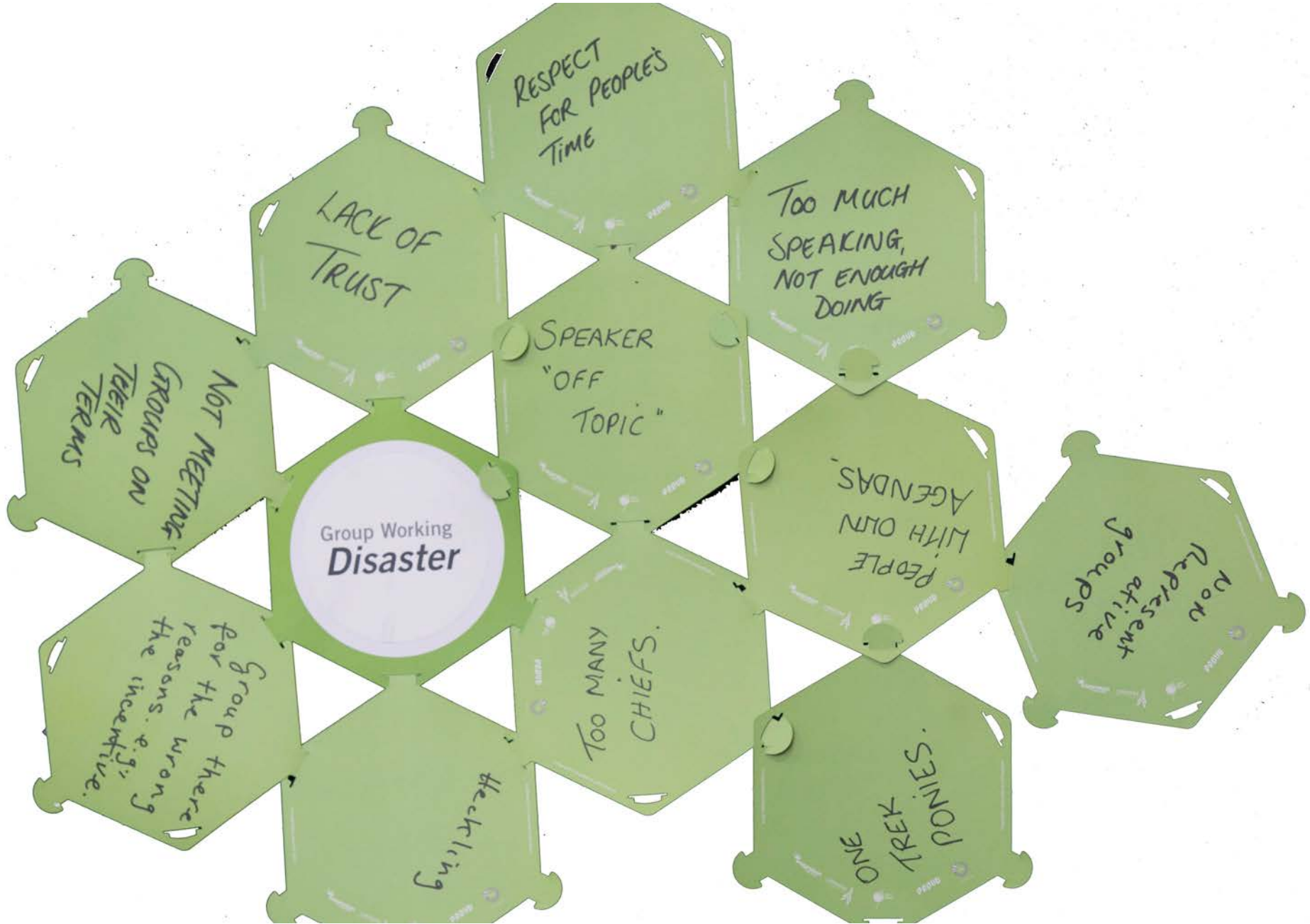


Disastrous Group Work

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 not confirming the room booking and technology failures (always have a Plan B) 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 participants being unwilling to speak up. People who constantly challenge the facilitator and try to dominate the group can adversely affect a workshop. A skilled facilitator should be able to create a situation where everyone is heard and ensure the event is not hijacked by other issues by supporting the group to find common ground and build trust between them. Other disasters involved speakers being off topic or dull, so they need to be briefed carefully beforehand. Similarly groups should be representative of the topic there to be discussed and there with the right motivations so careful communications to target groups beforehand to encourage them to attend is really important.









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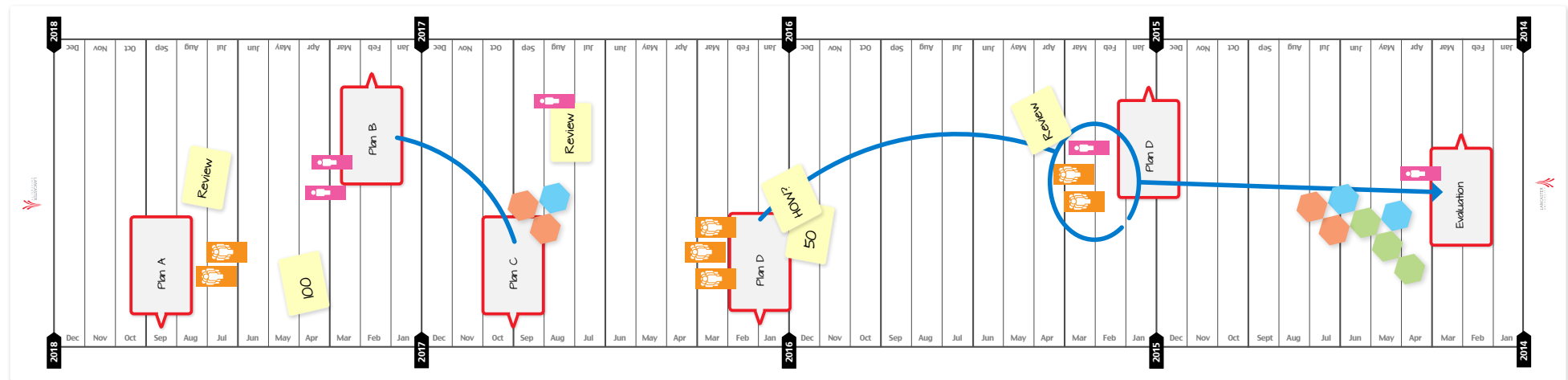
Introduction to the Tools

Leon then introduced seven tools to the group to explore before 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
- 7) Zoners - outdoor spatial markers for use at creative consultation events

NB: Please note that the Zoners and Commenters were co-designed for Helen Ryan of Lancaster City Council. Helen is happy to lean the creative consultation tools out to local government workers if they are available.

The Giant Timeline



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

Welcome
 Actions from Last Time

Next Meeting...

10

Topic:

Contact Person:

9

Topic:

Contact Person:

8

Topic:

Contact Person:

7

Topic:

Contact Person:

6

Topic:

Contact Person:

Start: Report from the Chair

1

Topic:

Contact Person:

2

Topic:

Contact Person:

3

Topic:

Contact Person:

4


Topic:

Contact Person:

5

Topic:

Contact Person:


Time for a short break?

Zoners



Commenters





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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.

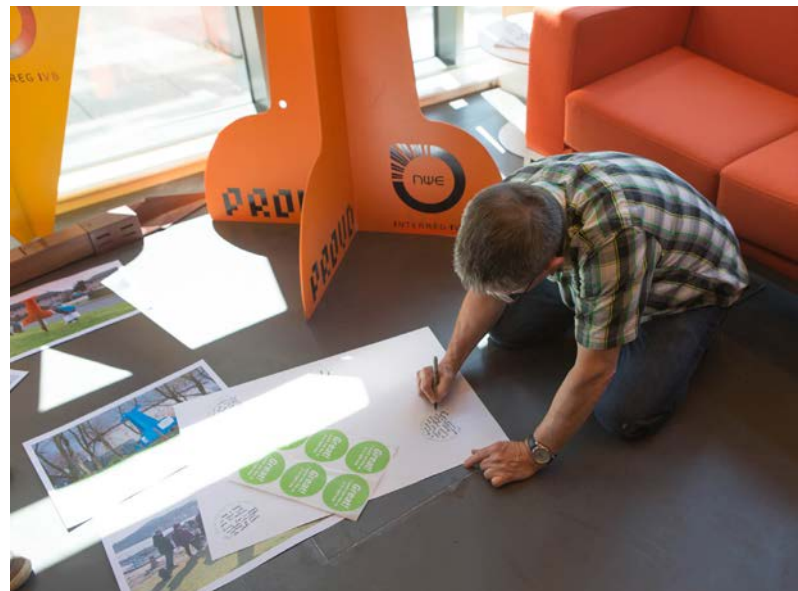


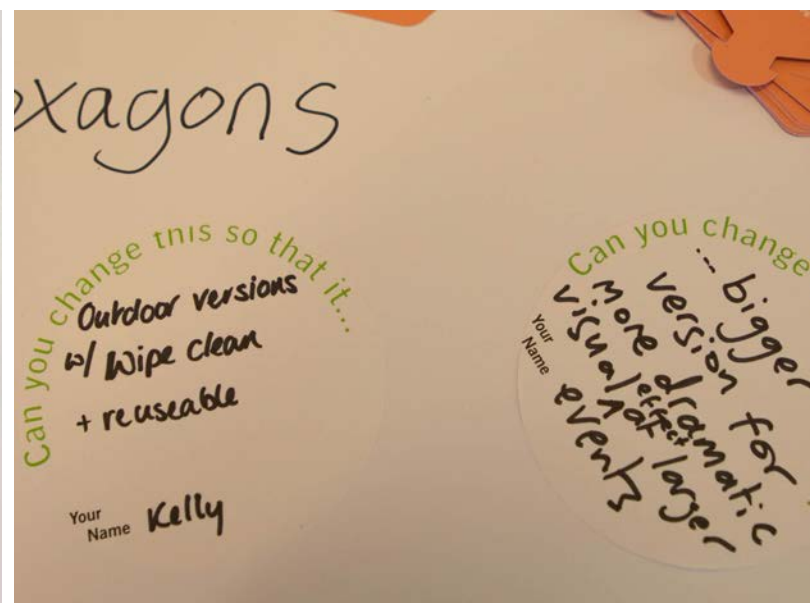
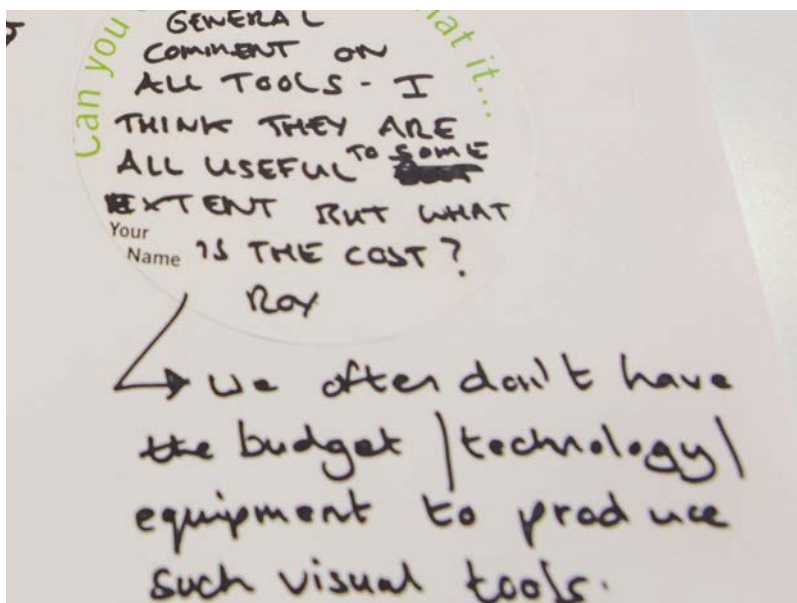
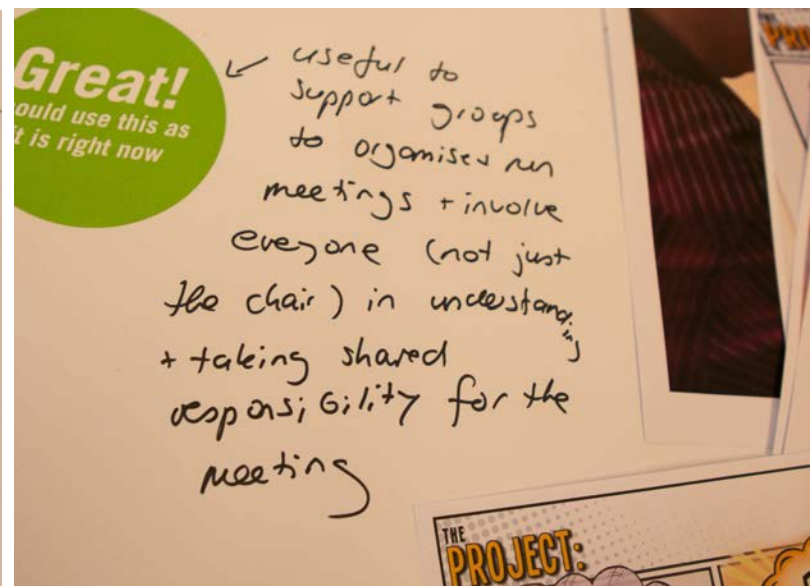


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Exchange of Insights

The day concluded with an informal discussion and exchange of insights into working with groups. 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. Listening to the groups it seems everyone working in local government has limited resources in terms of time, materials, printing and money. While people saw the value in all of the tools, creating digital versions of the current tools that can be downloaded or used for free were seen as a priority. A useful discussion over how the Commenters and Zoners could be evolved took place including ways to ask questions and signpost people.

A tool for planning which lets groups physically move houses and other objects around to see improvements in real time was discussed as it's a problem planning teams always face. Leon explained that he currently has a bid in with the Arts & Humanities Funding Council for a new project that would develop creative consultation tools and potentially be able to work with some of the people here to develop bespoke tools for their needs.



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Conclusion

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 or loan. 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 next to each tools table and on the form to tell us about the modifications you would like to existing tools, or suggest a new tool. Most people had slected Hexagons as a favourite tool so we ended the day with a Hexagons giveaway. After a great day 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 so we can learn from your experiences. Thanks for being such great participants and we'll be in touch soon to arrange delivery of your tools!



People Researchers Organisations Using Design

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/>



