



## Listening Rooms: a qualitative method for better listening

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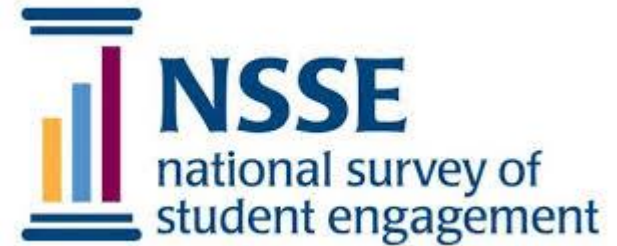
# Introductions and overview

- The need to listen hard & the need to be innovative
- What are 'Listening Rooms'?
- What is 'Round Table Analysis'?
- Shared values
- Impact
  - institutional
  - methodological
- Challenges
- Conclusions
- Any questions?
- Further reading



# Innovative listening?

- The need to demonstrate 'student experience'
- The (over-) reliance on surveys



# Two innovative methods

Listening Rooms

Dr Emma Heron



Round Table Analysis

Ms Helen Parkin



# Listening Rooms

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

## Student invitation



# HAPPINESS

Discuss together:

What makes for a happy time at University?

Does happiness change?

Who are the important  
people/events/sessions needed for this to  
happen?



# The Listening Rooms method: What do we hear?

*'Helped to feel more comfortable  
and open to telling the truth'*

*'It was better than [a]  
questionnaire because you can  
bounce ideas off one another'*

*'A chance to discuss and feedback  
in a slightly different way. Know  
that we will get listened to'*

*'I hope that some of these points  
will give insight and used to  
change things'*

*'I think it was useful because the  
students are the heart of  
university; therefore it's vital their  
views are heard'*

*'I like that the University is  
interested in my opinion and gave  
me the opportunity to discuss  
ideas'*



# Round Table Analysis

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





# The Round Table Analysis method: What do we hear?

*'I found the transcripts provided a catalyst to have a conversation with colleagues about an area of work in a way that I would not normally have the opportunity to do'*

*'I have spoken about this in several meetings and with colleagues'*

*'It made me realise that we are sitting on a huge amount of knowledge and understanding of our students that you cannot see in the metrics'*

*'It alerted me to nuances and sensitivities around BME'*



# In practice ...?



## Listening Rooms

- students, staff, parents, school children ....
- targeted or voluntary
- confidentiality & anonymity ✓
- consent ✓



## Round Table Analysis

- staff, students, external
- confidentiality & anonymity of the data
- feedback to participants
- priorities & recommendations for stakeholders
- 6 month review



# Shared values

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



# Impact - institutional



Course / Teaching teams  
induction, student support, work placement support



SHU outward-facing projects (outreach, DfE)



Inclusion in Race Equality Charter & Access and Participation  
Plan



External interest



PhD methodology



Increase in participation (students and now staff)



# Impact - methodological

## Listening Rooms

- Utilises the energy and dynamism between friends (participants)
- Deliberate disruption to the conventional interview
- Provides meaning-making for participants
- Generates deep and rich data

## Round Table Analysis

- Immerses stakeholders in the genuine voice of the student
- Shares the burden of data analysis
- Allows stakeholders to reach a consensus over the data (removal of bias and greater validity)
- Generates stakeholder buy-in at a much earlier stage than traditional approaches



# Methodological Challenges

## Listening Rooms

- Moving from enthusiasm to commitment
- Understanding of the method
- 'at distance'
- friendless?

## Round Table Analysis

- Identification of stakeholders is key to success
- Preparation prior to session is essential for all participants
- Time intensive (for a wider set of stakeholders)



# Conclusion

## Listening Rooms

- 'See' hidden voices
- Consensual 'fly on the wall'
- Embolden & empower
- Deeper understanding of how things are experienced

## Round Table Analysis

- Action as a result of shared discussion
- Evidenced-based change
- Democratic change
- Co-production of change



# Q&A

Any questions?



Any further questions:

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# Further reading

[Nancy Kline: Time to Think and  
http://www.timetothink.com/](http://www.timetothink.com/)

[WordPress site](#)

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