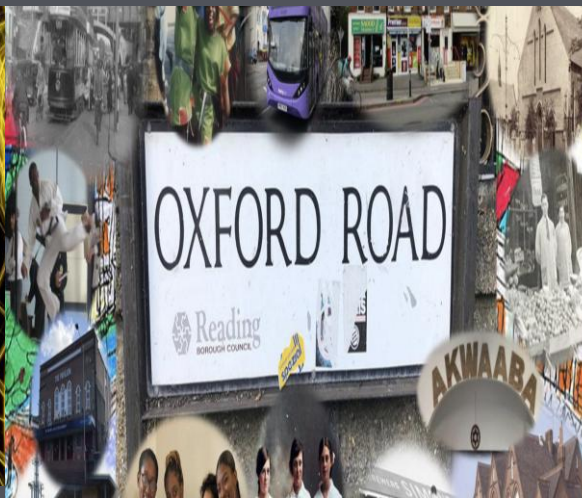


Communities, culture and cohesion: using participatory action research (PAR) to tackle social inequalities in Berkshire



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University of Reading

CLOA AGM, 18th June 2025

WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

- PAR can lead to social transformation but fraught with ethical and political dilemmas
- 'More than research', ethics of care and burden on community researchers
- Questions which methods are more authentic and valued, particularly in science
- a practice of working with communities as co-producers/leaders of knowledge generation with goal of pursuing empowerment, social justice and social action.
- Collaboration as a participatory and reflective process and disrupt/rebalance power relations
- Trust, relationships, time and equitable resources

Innovative Funding
Limited Continuation
Community Led
Mobilisation Sustainability Equitable
Empowering
Interactive Powerful Rich Trust Emotional Demanding
Time consuming Inclusive
Bottom up
Lack of Value



Creative practices

Shared journeys: process as important as research findings; relationality; power; risk; time; 'slow scholarship'; language; social justice and action; creative methods; care; emotions



Community Participatory Action Research on Health Inequalities (CPAR: NHS)



How do we build a stronger sense of connection with our surroundings, and to one another, through participatory action research?



OXFORD ROAD – putting community voices at the centre



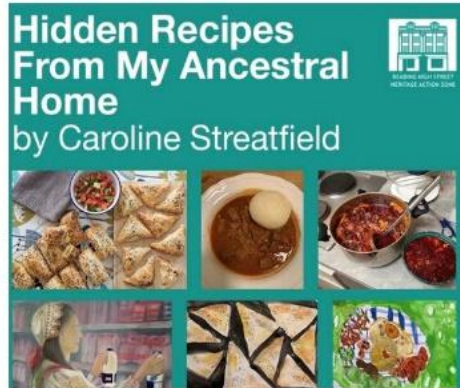
Oxford Road
PUTTING YOUR VOICES AT THE CENTRE!

The High Street Heritage Action Zone project in 2021, we are continuing the creation of a piece of visual art and diversity of the Oxford Road communities. Your participation will help bring a visual art piece to life, as well as the HSHAZ cultural programme.

THE PRISON

Supported by
Historic England

Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you



Pleased to publish #Think-Piece on Zero-Tolerance:
Reflections on race & research ethics in community
project in Reading #BlackHistoryMonth @RobynWoronka
@AliceMpotuColes @DrSallyLEvans @hshaz_reading
@UniRdg_Research @UniRdg_Diverse @UniRdg_GES
@pinman bit.ly/2XeDaMH



Lifespring Stories



The Many Faces of Oxford Road,
Reading Town, United Kingdom



British Science Association and Community Led Research Pilot (CLRP)



6 projects in Reading
and Slough

UKRI funded - empowers communities to use their knowledge to identify an issue, design and carry out research

Underrepresented communities in Science'

Puts communities in the driving seat
Challenges traditional power balance between researchers and communities – respecting expertise and insight from both

- Academics, PGRs and Community Researchers

Reflections:

- **TENSIONS**

- ❖ Challenging to set up: different agendas
- ❖ Communication and language are key
- ❖ Emotional labour
- ❖ Ethics and care
- ❖ University and funding structures
- ❖ Time!
- ❖ Power - whose knowledge and expertise count?
- ❖ Relationships are easily damaged
- ❖ Danger of exploitation and extraction

- **OPPORTUNITIES**

- ❖ Community led
- ❖ Breaking down barriers
- ❖ Widening access to HE
- ❖ Life skills and career enhancement for all
- ❖ Confidence and voice
- ❖ Higher quality research
- ❖ Two-way mentoring relationship between students and local residents
- ❖ Lasting partnerships
- ❖ Impactful and meaningful
- ❖ Trust and respect
- ❖ New experiences for everyone – journey

Thank you!

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

Creating powerful knowledge with communities for a more socially just society

YOUNG
RESEARCHERS

Tackling social exclusion, poverty and deprivation through participation

Community-based Research - Creating powerful knowledge with communities for a more socially just society (reading.ac.uk)

- British Science Association and Community Led Research Pilot - Community Led Research Pilot | British Science Association
- Oxford Road - <https://research.reading.ac.uk/oxford-road-stories/>
- University of Reading PAR toolkit
Participatory Action Research: A Toolkit - Community-based Research (reading.ac.uk)

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