

The UKPB Un-Conference

26th October 2015 at the Studio, Cannon Street Birmingham

What is an Unconference

- It's built on the principles of open space technology
- It's the best bits of a conference: the interesting conversations you usually have over coffee and lunch!
- It is not a powerpoint presentation! It is designed so that you propose something you want to talk about in relation to PB (macro or micro level) and if there are others there who are also interested they will join you to discuss it – you vote with your feet and go to the conversations that you find interesting
- There is no audience and passive engagement, just expert participants shaping debate and contributing to learning. You will need to come prepared to contribute, support and challenge what you hear

How is it structured?

It has a flexible structure to enable you to learn about what you are interested in and not to have to sit through talks which do not interest you. After lunch we will ask participants to take 30 seconds to 'pitch' the topic they want to talk about to the wider group of peers. You decide which of those topics you want to hear more about and follow that person to a space where they are comfortable facilitating the dialogue (that could be outside, in the café, or in one of the breakout rooms)

We give you a set time to discuss (40 minutes) and you return to the plenary to share the key points of learning with the wider group. Then we do it again on different (or a subset) of topics!

Are there any rules?

Yes, a few...

1. You must arrive ready to contribute to the debate – expert participation is essential. Whether your expertise is based on practice or academia, come prepared to share and learn collectively.
2. It is helpful if you read some of the news stories about PB on the PB network website to help get a steer for the focus of some of the proposed talks
3. It is not a commercial event so no selling your business!
4. The dialogue needs to develop so there isn't time to repeat previous points made – build on them!
5. When you make your pitch, try to make it compelling and creative

Why the Unconference section of the PB Conference?

We could be on the cusp of scaling PB nationally and using mainstream budgets to do so. There are so many aspects of learning and opportunity with PB that we could be here for days scheduling conversations! A good reason to hold an open space event, and an Unconference, is when you have a complex topic which requires a broad range of expert opinions to help the knowledge and practice develop further. Unconference should focus on issues of urgency. In the current climate we feel it is urgent to discuss the role of PB in shaping future services.

There's nothing more urgent than rethinking what our public sector will look like in the future. Less money, new technology, pluralism in service provision, increased diversity in the population, and changing social norms are just some of the challenges facing the sector. All that set against a general disengagement from the traditional political structures which characterize our democracy make it all the more urgent to ensure communities are engaged in defining and developing a positive democratic future.

During the Unconference we would like you to also participate as a member of a social learning leadership group. More information on leadership groups is overpage.

Leadership Groups

The learning capability inherent in groups greatly depends on internal leadership. The leadership needs of groups are diverse, from thought leadership, to social weaving, to facilitation, to connecting with stakeholders. It's everyone's responsibility to participate and if they do that makes the experience better for all.

Leadership Groups identify distinct leadership tasks that are key to social learning - and we are asking you to take on these tasks on behalf of everyone participating today in our Unconference.

- **Social reporters:** creating a shared memory of the conversations of the day.
- **Agenda activists:** driving the agenda (and so the learning) forward
- **Community keepers:** weaving the social fabric and making sure every voice is included
- **Organizational brokers:** connecting with organizational stakeholders during (and after) the event

It's important to point out that here the term "leadership" in no way suggests a hierarchy but instead leadership as an act of service, with the groups acting as custodians of one part of a learning process on behalf of the community:

They are a way to distribute leadership and encourage people to take shared ownership of their collective learning. Participation deepens people's commitment to the process in a tangible way. We believe that the sense of ownership and the collective reflection involved increase the group's capability for social learning.

Each leadership group has its own short information card that will be available on the day

Things to do in Leadership Groups

At registration we ask people to select a group, and wear a badge identifying them as a member of it.

During lunch and other breaks we would ask you to seek out others in the same group and make links with them. You might even set up a brief (10 minute) structured meeting before the start of the Unconference

- Make a round of introductions
- Read about your leadership group and discuss anything that is not clear
- Make proposals for how you are going to carry out your leadership group task
- Elect one or two of your leadership group (who might keep the group on task and feed back from it)
- Agree to reconvene for a few minutes at the end of the Unconference.

Most importantly

- Enjoy yourself!

Adapted from, and with acknowledgements to, E and B Wenger-Trayner. <http://wenger-trayner.com>

Etienne and Bev identify seven Leadership Groups but we are using four today . Each LG is responsible for stewarding one of these processes on behalf of the community. The work of the leadership groups shape the form and substance of the community's learning.