



KNOWLEDGE THAT'S CHANGING THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER

**OUR RESEARCH AND
KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE MISSION**

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OUR MISSION

Producing knowledge that's changing the world for the better

OUR WHY

At Leeds Beckett University, we're using research and knowledge exchange to address three core global challenges where our expertise, networks, and approach can effect meaningful change, both in the region we call home, and worldwide:

OUR HOW

Redefining the research and knowledge exchange rulebook



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OUR MISSION

At Leeds Beckett University, we're harnessing the power of ideas to change the world for the better.

We don't believe in research that sits on a shelf: we're driven by producing knowledge that inspires action, in turn resulting in lasting impact for people in Leeds and across the globe.

The world is becoming increasingly uncertain. New challenges require new solutions. And devising those solutions requires bold thinking from diverse thinkers.

Our approach to research and knowledge exchange brings together curious minds from a range of backgrounds – working collaboratively in the relentless pursuit of a better future for everyone.

Across our schools, centres and institutes, we are helping to address the defining issues of our times – from combatting the climate crisis, to promoting gender, racial and social equality, to pioneering new technologies in healthcare and sport so that people can stay well and active for longer.

We're doing this by re-writing the research and knowledge exchange rulebook: co-producing research with communities, businesses, and policymakers to make sure it works in the real world; putting people and purpose at the forefront of our work; and embedding a commitment to inclusion and social justice in everything we do.

THIS IS WHAT RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE LOOKS LIKE WHEN IT'S LED BY UNLIKE MINDS.

OUR WHY

The world has problems we need curiosity to solve, and universities have a critical role in providing the solutions.

Conventional wisdom no longer cuts it. The times we live in demand new perspectives and insights. We need to look at research and knowledge exchange differently if we are to respond successfully to these substantial challenges .

At Leeds Beckett University, we're using research and knowledge exchange to address three core global challenges where our expertise, networks, and approach can effect meaningful change, both in the region we call home, and worldwide:

RESPONDING TO THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES THAT AFFECT US ALL

GREENER, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

SPORT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

INCLUSIVE, PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES

These themes reflect the priorities set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both national UK government and regional institutions' policies, and the changing needs of business.

Running through these three themes is an emphasis on communities.

Driving change means understanding issues from different perspectives, especially the people who are impacted the most by those issues and are therefore in the best position to shape effective responses.

It is only by working with and for communities that Leeds Beckett University can develop the ideas that can reshape our world and create a better future for everyone.



GREENER, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Securing the future of our planet is arguably the greatest challenge we all face. That is why it is represented by multiple of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, including climate action.

These global challenges also play out on at a regional and local level, and we're based in a region whose innovation and entrepreneurial zeal was a driving force of the first Industrial Revolution.

Now, we're helping to develop innovative thinking for the Green Revolution, considering how we can address the climate emergency from many different angles, including looking back to World War II for solutions to modern challenges such as recycling.

Our impact extends from the local to the global. At a global level, we're helping to shape international development responses to support communities most impacted by the effects of global warming.

Closer to home, we're helping local councils to promote behaviours among local residents to create sustainable cities and communities, by learning those wartime lessons from the past.

We're designing and engineering the sustainable buildings of the future in the name of creating affordable and clean energy, developing new retrofit methods to help people lower their bills and keep warm in winter, while also supporting the UK government's net zero ambitions.

And we're helping businesses to stay competitive by becoming more energy efficient as well as demonstrating responsible consumption and production.

By involving as many different voices as possible and looking at the problem from diverse perspectives, we're working to secure a greener future for all communities.



SPORT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

We're supporting people to live healthy lives and promoting physical and mental wellbeing for all. Good health and wellbeing is recognised among the UN Sustainable Development Goals, encouraging healthier lifestyles for all people at all ages.

We're providing practical resources to empower people affected by major illness to take informed decisions about their treatment options; and are influencing NHS programmes to help those with long-term conditions make lifestyle changes to improve their health.

Our research is helping to address mental health challenges among schoolchildren in conflict zones, working collaboratively with educators, healthcare practitioners, and with the young people themselves, their parents and carers.

Closer to home we've also collaborated on a project to digitise a local NHS Foundation Trust's adult autism and ADHD services, to support with diagnosis and prioritisation of services while maintaining quality of care amidst unprecedented demand.

We are also leading the creation of a mental health framework for UK primary schools, creating a culture of openness and positive mental wellbeing among pupils, their teachers, parents, and support staff.

The link between mental and physical health is well-established and our world-leading Obesity Institute has helped improve an NHS programme to support people living with type 2 diabetes and obesity to lose weight.

As a university well-known for our excellence in sport, we're leading the way in opening up access to physical activity for everyone.

A commitment to tackling inequalities runs throughout our work: understanding the additional barriers to participating in sport that many people face and developing inclusive approaches to help them feel the benefits of improved wellbeing.

We're also changing the face of sport at both grassroots and elite levels, combining our research into athletic performance and injury prevention with health and med-tech innovation to help athletes train and recover better, and devising new technologies to support sports professionals and communities at large.



INCLUSIVE, PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES

Developing strong, successful economies that enable everyone to prosper, while also tackling deep-seated inequalities, is a significant policy priority for national, regional and local governments.

It also relates to the UN Sustainable Development Goals of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, reducing inequality within and among countries, and making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

We're contributing to a strong, inclusive economy by sharing knowledge to help businesses and communities grow, innovate and diversify, and supporting policymakers to respond to the most pressing issues in society - from cybercrime and globalisation, to communication in global crises.

This approach to building inclusive, prosperous communities starts with people and places. Our Knowledge Transfer Partnerships with business, for example, take a business-first approach – looking at the needs of individual businesses and building long-term relationships to help leaders address them.

One such partnership aims to help retailers dramatically speed up the stock counting process through the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology, increasing cost and time efficiencies for businesses of all sizes. Many of our other partnerships are giving fantastic career opportunities to graduates across sectors as broad as gaming, pet care, web design and manufacturing, and everything in-between.

We're also helping to shape the places of the future, considering the ways in which how people live, work and play is changing and how our built environment, technologies and policymaking need to adapt in response.

And we're working to shine a spotlight on injustice so that structural inequalities can be properly addressed, upending accepted narratives about issues such as race or gender by providing different perspectives and understandings.

OUR HOW

REDEFINING THE RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE RULEBOOK

Our research and knowledge exchange approach isn't about ticking boxes; it's about breaking new boundaries to find the right solutions to a known problem.

We're based in a region with a reputation for shaping the future according to its own rules - and doing so with a firm commitment to fairness and compassion.

As well as the quality of our research and knowledge and the outcomes that we deliver, it's how we conduct this work that sets us apart.



COMMUNITIES

Ultimately, producing knowledge that drives action starts with people, which is why communities are at the heart of everything we do.

We work in partnership with the communities that our knowledge is intended to benefit, ensuring research is conducted on their terms and will make meaningful contributions to their lives.

We build trusted, two-way relationships at every stage, allowing those we work with to take an active role in the design, development and delivery of our research and knowledge exchange programmes so that the outcomes have the best chance of working in practice.

Whether that's local charities or businesses, government institutions, global movements, or major sports bodies, we've shown that working with partners for the long term is the best way to create lasting impact that addresses the real issues.

CO-PRODUCTION

We go beyond collaboration. Our research and knowledge exchange work is built on meaningful co-production with communities, policymakers, businesses, and other research partners, so that we can learn from many different perspectives and lived experiences.

Our research and knowledge exchange team is made up of diverse individuals from different backgrounds, which enables us to tackle problems from multiple angles to find new solutions.

Although each of our schools, centres, and institutes has depth of expertise in their respective subject areas, our best results are produced through teamwork: bringing together specialists from different academic fields to disrupt conventional thinking and develop innovative responses to global challenges.

Our research is multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted. It's the engineer working with the sports scientist to pioneer new technologies that are changing the face of sport and helping people live healthier lives.

IMPACT

Above all, we're focused on producing research and knowledge that has real-life impact.

We approach every project with purpose, pragmatism and ambition. We're driven by creating change that makes a real, practical difference to people's lives.

We do the right things to get the right results, even if that means going against conventional or accepted wisdom.

We know that impact isn't generated in a vacuum: our research produces ripple effects that extend far beyond their original scope, helping to tackle the big global challenges that define our times.

This is all part of our relentless pursuit, converting knowledge into action that changes the world for the better.

INCLUSION

Our purpose-driven approach includes a deep commitment to social justice, and we work with community partners to provide a voice for those who are often under-represented in academic research.

We know that a one-size-fits-all solution can often end up fitting nobody, and that unique solutions and discoveries often come from unexpected collaborations. That's why we endeavour to create change through including as many perspectives as possible.

By involving under-represented voices meaningfully in our research, we can deliver better outcomes and play our full part in building a better future for everyone.



WAR ON WASTE

APPLYING PUBLIC HISTORY
TO SOLVE TODAY'S ISSUES

GREENER,
SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES

How can we learn lessons from the past to address the challenges of the future?



Research by Dr Henry Irving, senior lecturer in public history at Leeds Beckett University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences, is helping local and national government bodies in the UK develop policies to combat climate change, learning from the rapid upturn in recycling among British households in World War Two.

Around 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions come directly from waste disposal. Recycling and reusing materials helps to cut emissions, as it uses less energy than extracting and processing new materials.

However, England's recycling rate has remained stubbornly at around 45% for more than a decade, and a 2023 National Audit Office report made clear just how far the UK government's Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs has to go before realising its ambition to virtually eliminate the disposal of biodegradable waste to landfill by 2030.

Dr Irving's work highlights how the experience of British people during the World War II can provide learnings for today's policymakers looking to increase recycling habits and develop a circular economy – one that minimises waste and emissions by re-using resources and materials.

The onset of war in 1939 required rapid behaviour change among British people so that household materials could be salvaged and recycled to support the war effort, as well as ensure ships had the capacity to carry critical supplies, rather than waste.

The outcomes of Dr Irving's research – conducted in partnership with environmental charity WRAP, and funded through a British Academy Innovation Fellowship – have helped inform Scottish legislation on waste management and the circular economy. They have also supported efforts by Leeds City Council and authorities in Wales to engage schoolchildren in the recycling lessons of the past, inspiring them to take action for a more sustainable future.

On the eve of war, Britain recycled no more than 2.5% of household waste. By 1943, around 80% of British households were recycling at least something. These experiences highlight how governments can see waste as a resource, and that people can adapt to new routines quickly with the right local interventions, publicity, and financial incentives.

INFLUENCING NATIONAL BUILDING POLICY

MAKING RETROFITS
SAFER FOR ALL

GREENER,
SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES

Heating has a major impact on the comfort, health and mental wellbeing of communities, but energy prices continue to be a major issue for people across the country.



The UK needs to retrofit millions of homes to support the Government's Clean Growth Strategy, as only around 40% of homes have achieved the target of an EPC rating of Band C so far.

The DEEP (Demonstration of Energy Efficiency Potential) project led by the Leeds Sustainability Institute at Leeds Beckett University, was launched to investigate how thermally retrofitting solid walled homes in Yorkshire can reduce fuel bills, minimise carbon emissions and improve their energy efficiency. The right retrofit approach can make houses warmer in winter, cooler in summer, and reduce the chance of damp and condensation occurring.

Taking a 'whole house' approach, the project is the largest and first of its kind. It was commissioned by the Government's

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and runs in partnership with Loughborough University and the University of Salford.

Working with landlords in 14 real homes, the research team delivered 41 different fabric retrofits using multiple measures, with before and after modelling and testing done to pinpoint the improvements made.

Previous research by the institute led to a change in national building regulations, resulting in hundreds of thousands of tonnes of CO2 being saved, and it is hoped that the DEEP project will have a similar lasting impact. It has already led to the development of two new European Standards on measuring heat loss, which have been adopted in 34 countries.

The research team found that insulating the solid walls of a home can achieve EPC Band C and could save as much as 30% per year on energy bill for some homes. The findings will help to ensure nationwide retrofits are delivered safely and efficiently, improving people's lives as a result.



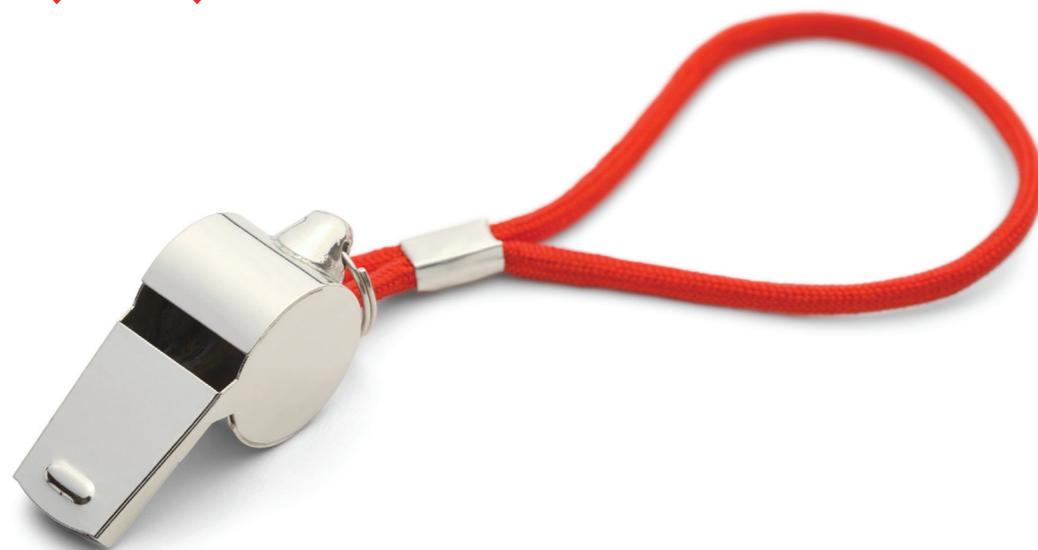
SECURING ACCESS TO SPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

SPORTS LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE GLOBE



SPORT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

ICOACHKIDS is a global initiative focused on improving youth sports around the world through community-building and free digital resources. It is run in partnership by Leeds Beckett University's Carnegie School of Sport and the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE).



The main objective of the ICOACHKIDS project is to tackle the lack of existing opportunities for coaches of children to be suitably trained and recognised across Europe. It is built upon the belief that all young people, regardless of country or background, should have access to high-quality sport coaching, which can improve their health and wellbeing by encouraging them to stay active.

With its strong pedigree in developing coaching education programmes, Leeds Beckett believes that the coach is the architect of creating positive experiences for children through sport. ICOACHKIDS uses a learner-centred, collaborative approach which maximises the most advanced techniques of open-source e-learning – ensuring that every coach has equal access to training and resources, no matter their background.

Originally scheduled to run from 2016 to 2019, the scheme's success saw funding extended beyond the initial three years.

Since 2020, ICOACHKIDS has been delivered in partnership with sportswear giant Nike, which has used its global reach to ensure thousands more coaches and organisations have access to the educational resources developed through this partnership.

It also one of the few external resources featured in Nike's Global Impact Report FY23, which highlights its efforts to promote positive, safe and inclusive sports experiences for children worldwide.

Previous Leeds Beckett studies had found that 80% of coaches in the EU were volunteers and that women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds are underrepresented in coaching.

EMPOWERING FEMALE CANCER PATIENTS

CREATING VITAL DECISION AIDS WITH
INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

SPORT
AND HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES

Loss of fertility is one of the most distressing potential late effects of cancer treatment for women. It can present difficult and complex decisions to be made at short notice before treatment begins.



This was the inspiration for a first-of-its-kind project from researchers from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Leeds Beckett University.

Patients surviving cancer will live with the consequences of the choices made about their fertility for the rest of their lives, but there was previously limited information available to enable a substantial number of women to make an informed decision.

Professor Georgina Jones and her team created Cancer, Fertility & Me, a decision aid built upon the data from a three-year longitudinal study with local female cancer patients contemplating fertility preservation.

This showed that patients wanted to receive better information sooner to feel fully equipped to have more focused consultations with fertility experts and be able to ask the right questions at the right time.

Living beyond cancer and addressing the late effects and quality of life of cancer patients is a national priority for the NHS and cancer organisations. The booklet is now available to all female cancer patients, free of charge; and has been translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish and Dutch.

“I so wish I had been offered these options when I was first diagnosed. The Cancer, Fertility & Me booklet will give women the power to help make the best decisions for themselves in conjunction with their medical teams. I hope it is adopted by all hospitals.”



A GLOBAL APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

GUIDING SCHOOLS THROUGH CRISIS IN CONFLICT AFFECTED REGIONS

SPORT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Children growing up in communities facing intense conflict and hardship creates a mental health crisis that particularly affects refugees and those with disabilities.



This makes it critical that their schools, families, communities and national organisations are able to support them with their mental health, but a lack of knowledge and experience means that this isn't always possible. This was the inspiration for a groundbreaking project by the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University.

The team, led by Professor Anthony Maher and Rachel Bostwick, was commissioned by the British Council. They worked to develop a framework including training materials to empower education leaders to better meet the needs of students and staff in schools as well as their families.

To make sure the materials were user-led, culturally sensitive and contextually relevant, the team worked alongside locally-based school ambassadors, supporting staff, leaders and officials from eight participating countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt.

The resulting materials were distributed via online training events and via social media groups offering peer-to-peer support. Children at schools in places including Gaza and the West Bank have benefitted from the additional support, helping them become mentally more resilient and able to speak about their emotions.

Alrihiya Secondary Girls School in the West Bank was one of the schools involved and reported that:

“The students are delighted to be talking about sensitive issues and psychological matters. There is now a focus on physical activities, sport, exercise, keeping hydrated, voluntary work and engaging parents more.”

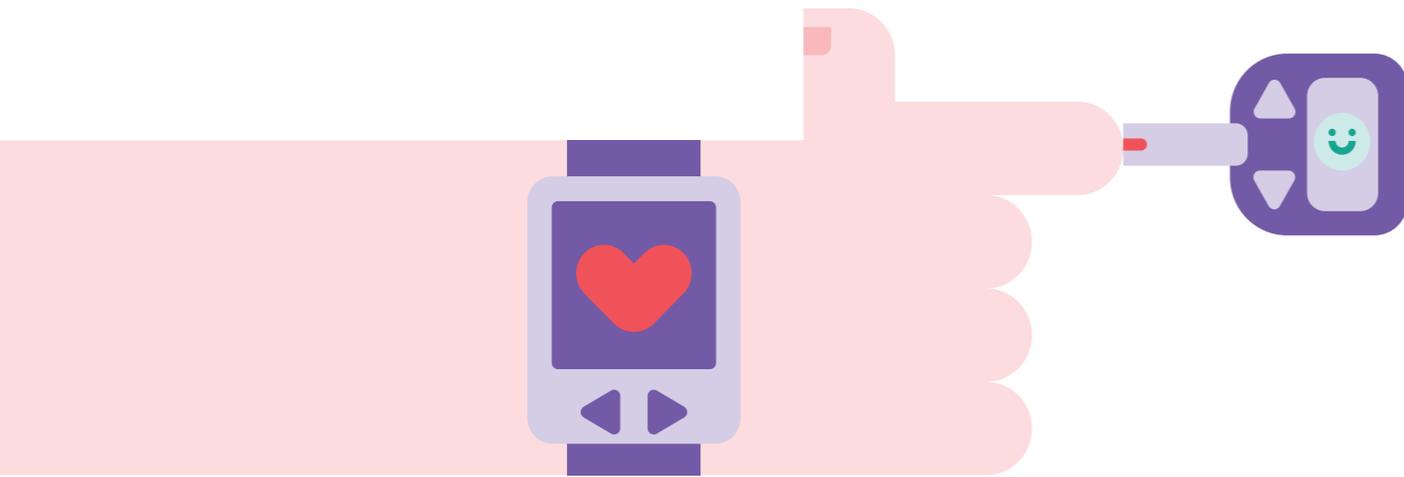
A close-up photograph of a healthcare professional in blue scrubs holding a teal glucometer to a patient's hand. The professional is using the device to test the patient's blood sugar. The patient's hand is resting on their lap, and the professional's hand is positioned over it. The background is blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the device.

IMPROVING NHS OBESITY CARE

DRIVING INCLUSION FOR PATIENTS

SPORT
AND HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES

New research from Leeds Beckett University's Obesity Institute has helped improve an NHS programme supporting people living with type 2 diabetes and obesity to lose weight, reduce the need for medication and achieve remission.



The Obesity Institute, a global leader in obesity research, brings together academics, policy makers, practitioners, and people living with or at risk of obesity and their families and carers, to co-produce innovative and person-centred advances in obesity.

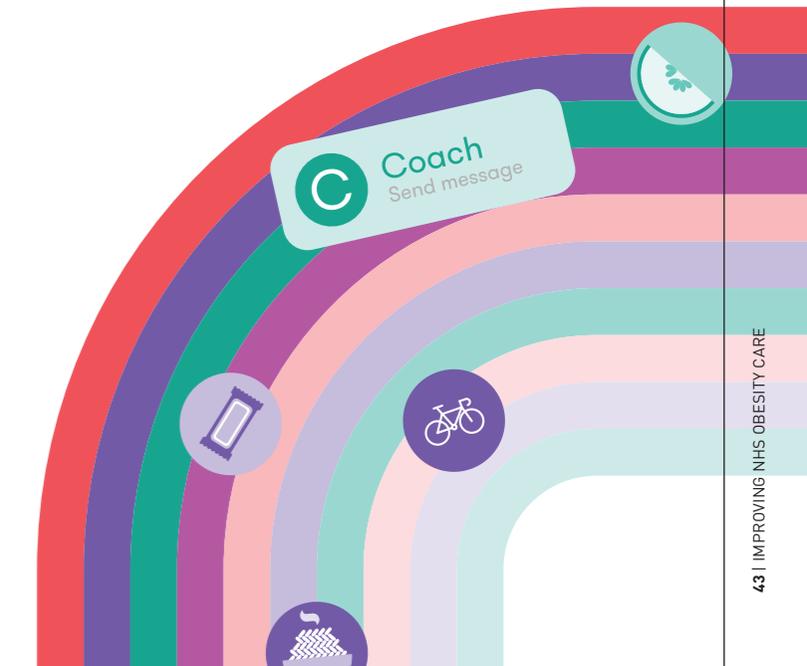
Experts led the study to evaluate the NHS Type 2 Diabetes Path to Re:Mission programme with the assistance of an expert panel of patients with lived experience of obesity and/or diabetes. A graphic journal was co-produced with colleagues from the university's Leeds School of Arts detailing the insights and recommendations.

The findings of this research found that a one-size fits all solution was not conducive, with older people and those from certain ethnic groups less likely to start the programme, and younger people and those living with severe obesity less likely to complete it.

Changes made to the Re:Mission programme as a result of the project included making it more people-focused, allowing participants to choose their preferred support method, and providing choice to help guarantee inclusion by reducing barriers to entry.

This involved suggesting a greater range of diet replacement products to avoid people being excluded due to income or location. Providing increased training for staff to highlight the importance of cultural awareness was another crucial recommendation, as well as improving the focus on using of behaviour change theory and techniques.

These recommendations have already been rolled out by the NHS across the country and will continue to provide critical learning to inform ongoing service improvements, alongside further research into the long-term effect of the programme.



A man with a beard and curly hair, wearing a grey hoodie and large black headphones, is seated in a wheelchair at a desk in an office. He is looking at a computer monitor displaying code. His right hand is on a mouse, and his left hand is resting on his chin in a thoughtful pose. The office environment is dimly lit with blue tones, and other computer monitors are visible in the background.

BETTERING BUSINESSES

PIONEERING PARTNERSHIPS FOR
LONG-TERM SUCCESS

INCLUSIVE,
PROSPEROUS
COMMUNITIES

Innovation and knowledge exchange are key for growth in any business. Leeds Business School takes a unique ‘whole systems’ approach to partnership, built on long-term business needs rather than being shaped solely by policy shifts.



This forward-thinking approach has fostered an inclusive and accessible partnership network, working within the local business community and also utilising the school’s experience and expertise to effect national change.

Through prioritising the specific needs of each project, Leeds Beckett can build lasting relationships with businesses—ones that are strategic and transformational, not just transactional.

This process happens in-person at the Knowledge Exchange, a unique city centre space for collaboration, co-creation and innovation between businesses and the university, offering meeting spaces, expert guest lectures and showcase events.

The work done with businesses includes Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) that are tailor-made to deliver positive impact and drive innovation, helping businesses build resilience, adaptability and growth. This exchange of knowledge between academics, policymakers, researchers, students and businesses is changing how industries operate for the better.

By connecting its experience with ideas and talent, the university is contributing to the creation of vibrant, innovative economies powered by lasting partnerships.

Whether it’s transforming a sales strategy or launching new products, securing grant funding, or revolutionising business culture, the university supports businesses across the country to boost productivity, foster innovation and create inclusive growth on a local, regional and national level.



BLACK BRITISH CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

CHALLENGING PREJUDICIAL NARRATIVES
AND CREATING NEW ONES

INCLUSIVE,
PROSPEROUS
COMMUNITIES

What do Peter Rabbit, West Indian Carnival culture, and a new public sculpture in Leeds city centre have in common?



The answer is Professor Emily Zobel-Marshall, Professor in the School of Cultural Studies, whose research focuses on reclaiming stories about the experiences of Black British people, and other Black people across the globe, to highlight racial injustices and promote greater cultural understanding.

Stories have the power to shape how we see the world. By telling different stories through previously unheard Black voices, Professor Zobel-Marshall shows how we can challenge the societal norms that engrain prejudice and instead write a different, more inclusive future.

Take The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter; a well-known children's story about a rabbit that frequently outfoxes other animals and humans. Less well-known, however, is the evidence that Peter Rabbit originated in African oral histories about Brer Rabbit – a classic “trickster” figure, brought to America and the Caribbean by enslaved African people.

By shining a spotlight on the origins of these stories, Professor Zobel-Marshall helps us better understand the context in which they became popular and challenges conventional narratives about Black people's lives.

Characters who turn the table on stronger opponents using brains rather than brawn, tricksters provided practical tactics to help enslaved people survive the brutality of plantation life and inspired acts of rebellion. Trickster figures have been appropriated by white authors, masking the important role they played in enslaved societies.

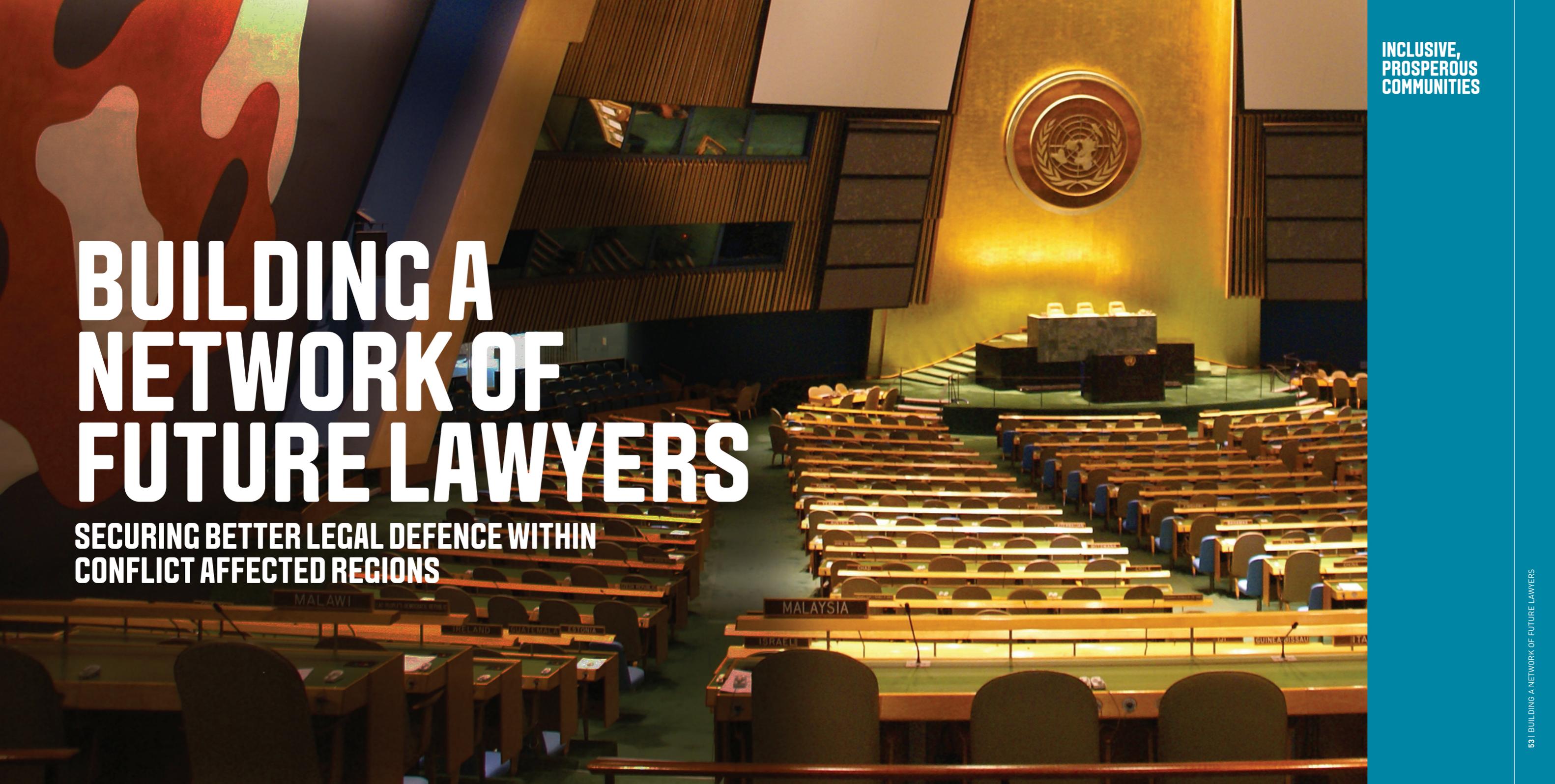
Professor Zobel-Marshall draws a straight line from these trickster folktales to the present day – examining how the trickster figure appears in modern UK Carnival culture as a subversive response to the status quo, helping Black British people – particularly women – carve out their own spaces and identities.

Closer to home, Professor Zobel-Marshall has played a key role in bringing lesser-known Black stories to popular attention, and celebrating the contributions that Black communities have made to the city. As Co-Chair of the David Oluwale Memorial

Association, Professor Zobel-Marshall is helping the city confront moments from its less tolerant past and shape a more hopeful, equal, and inclusive future.

A new sculpture erected in his memory, Hibiscus Rising by acclaimed British-Nigerian artist, Yinka Shonibare CBE RA, celebrates the resilience, energy, beauty, and creativity brought to Leeds by migrants like David Oluwale, who came to the city with bright hopes but who drowned in the River Aire at the hands of two policemen following sustained racist harassment.

The first public sculpture to reflect the cultural diversity of Leeds' people, situated at the heart of a significant city centre regeneration, Hibiscus Rising symbolises the power of art and storytelling to challenge injustices and bring communities together.



BUILDING A NETWORK OF FUTURE LAWYERS

SECURING BETTER LEGAL DEFENCE WITHIN CONFLICT AFFECTED REGIONS

INCLUSIVE,
PROSPEROUS
COMMUNITIES

Dr Fijalkowski's work focuses on understanding the implications of legal principles developed in the aftermath of World War II, particularly in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe.

She draws on archival works in countries affected by the conflict to understand how these principles influence our approach to transitional justice - a process that refers to how societies respond to human rights violations - in the present day.

The interdisciplinary nature of her work sees her using historical material, compiling biographies of key individuals to understand their personal and collective impact on pivotal moments in history, such as the Polish war crimes trials. Having completed an MA in screenwriting at Leeds Beckett, Dr Fijalkowski has also produced a number of short films to illustrate the legal issues that war and conflict can create.

Her focus on the role of the defence lawyer and the significant influence that they have had on legal principles is informed by a strongly held belief that democracy should afford everyone a right to a fair trial.

Dr Fijalkowski's work to understand how Poland has approached conflict after World War II has brought her to modern day Ukraine, understanding how structures can be put in place to ensure the country is equipped to better address the aftermath of war. She is one of three UK academics working with the Ukrainian government to introduce sociolegal studies at the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, ensuring that post-conflict Ukraine has access to future practitioners in relation to legal defence work.

Dr Fijalkowski cites Leeds Beckett's openness to embracing interdisciplinary collaboration as a key influence on her work. She is currently fostering a research community within the city, focused on the important role that archival work can play in incomplete historical, social and legal narratives, particularly within conflict-affected regions.



USING MUSIC TO BUILD INCLUSIVE CONNECTIONS

FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE COMMUNITY



**INCLUSIVE,
PROSPEROUS
COMMUNITIES**

Music's ability to bring people together and create a positive ripple effect gives it a unique part to play in building inclusive, prosperous communities. This has been exemplified by a collaboration between Leeds Beckett University's School of Arts and Musicians without Borders.

A community initiative founded in the Netherlands, Musicians without Borders pioneers societal change through the power of music, working with communities and individuals affected by war, conflict and displacement around the world.

A key activity strand for Musicians without Borders is training facilitators, educating these facilitators as to how they can build trust, create communities and provide those suffering with trauma with a safe space to regulate their emotions through music.

Dr Tenley Martin from Leeds School of Arts at Leeds Beckett University has a long-standing relationship with Musicians without Borders through her background as a percussionist. She undertook training with the organisation after identifying an opportunity during the pandemic to bring this work and ethos to a local audience.

The collaboration began with a songwriting workshop for a group of interfaith women and a project with a local choir of asylum seekers and refugees, which led to the launch of a Leeds-based training programme, titled Cohesive Harmonies.

This signaled the first time that Musicians without Borders had brought their teachings outside of the Netherlands, and was focused on how musical interventions could build social cohesion and networks, including for people experiencing displacement.

To make the training programme as inclusive as possible, bursary places were offered to those experiencing displacement, as well as current students at Leeds Beckett University, who may otherwise struggle to self-fund the course. A focus was also placed on trauma informed practice, and using non-verbal communication to reduce barriers to participation.

Around 45 people have already benefitted from the training, before returning to their own communities to share these teachings.

This ripple effect can be seen across the UK, with Leeds School of Arts now working with communities practitioners around the country. These practitioners are helping to deliver national impact from this local project, as well as demonstrating how music can play a role in social cohesion, community development and wellbeing across diverse settings and backgrounds.

Sarah Stead, who attended the training course, said:

“This course was a fantastic opportunity to increase skills and knowledge as a music facilitator, as well as understanding different techniques to make my leadership style as inclusive and accessible as possible.”

Sarah added: “After attending the course, my organisation, Vera Media, is now seeking funding to deliver music work which supports migrant communities, in particular asylum seekers and refugees living in Leeds.”



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