



University of Dundee

Oral Health and Public Engagement

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DOI:
[10.20933/100001246](https://doi.org/10.20933/100001246)

Publication date:
2022

Licence:
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Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Rodriguez, A. (Ed.), Murray, C. (Ed.), Laird, C., Biazus-Dalcin, C., Fancourt, M., Polson, S., Cairns, D., Mc Goldrick, N., Kidd, E., Galella, S., Hanlon, L., & Mackay, M. (2022). *Oral Health and Public Engagement*. UniVerse. <https://doi.org/10.20933/100001246>

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ORAL HEALTH & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Hello! My name is Andrea Rodriguez and I am a Lecturer in Dental Public Health and the academic lead for public engagement at the School of Dentistry, University of Dundee.

I am really pleased to present this comic and tell you the story behind it. I am a social psychologist working on inclusion in oral health, and a former third sector professional in Brazil. I am passionate about public engagement and love to learn from collective strategies to engage people from different backgrounds, especially those experiencing poverty and multiple exclusions, practitioners from health and social care sectors, and policy makers. I believe the ability to engage with different audiences during research and teaching is essential if we want to respond to the wider issues faced by society.

This comic is designed to provide insights on ways to engage with these different stakeholders and impact people's lives, policies and practices. It was funded by the Stephen Fry Award – Engaged Researcher of the Year, which I received in 2021 for the work with young people in Scotland and Brazil. This comic is part of the Public Engagement Strategy at the University of Dundee and aims to strength the culture of PE across schools. The content was co-designed with students and researchers from the Dental School, key partners from NHS and Third Sector and the Scottish Centre for Comics Studies.

This comic explores the challenges and the joy experienced by our team when engaging the public with our work. To start the co-design of this comic we had several collective and individual meetings when participants were asked to reflect on the follow questions:

- Which group do you engage with?
- What are the enablers and barriers to engage with this group?
- What are your key skills related to public engagement? Can you share three key attitudes or principles that base your engagement?
- What tips do you give for other practitioners to engage with different audiences?
- What do you do to overcome the challenges in engaging with them?
- Despite all the challenges, why is public engagement important and worth doing?

The script for the comic was created based on these responses and sought to address three themes: 1) the meaning of public engagement, 2) the skills required for this type of work, and 3) the importance of public engagement.

We hope you enjoy reading these stories of engagement. We hope this comic can encourage more students, staff and practitioners from different fields to strengthen their public engagement, values and practices.

Dr. Andrea Rodriguez

School of Dentistry
University of Dundee



Script by Chris Murray and Andrea Rodriguez, with Matthew Fancourt, Shannon Polson, Declan Cairns, Niall Mc Goldrick, Camila Biazus Dalcin, Evelyn Kidd, Sabrina Galella, Lynne Hanlon, and Moira Mackay.

Artwork and production by Cat Laird

Dedicated to Professor Ruth Freeman.

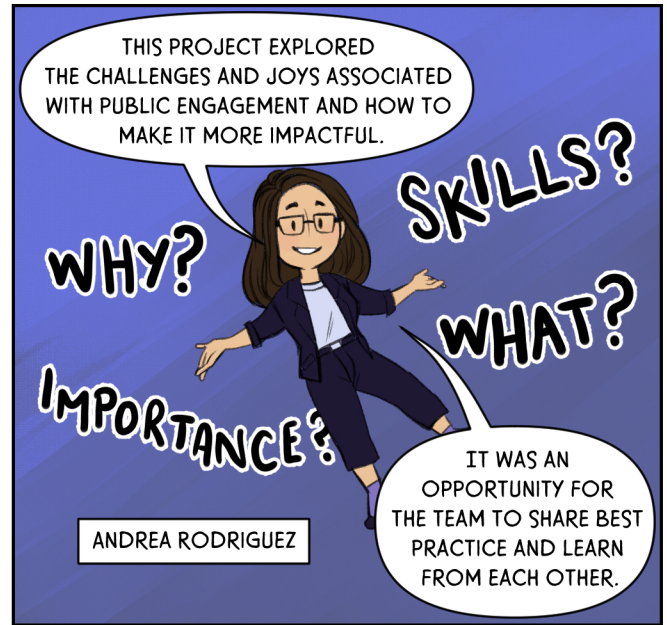
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WHAT IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?



WELCOME, READERS!
THIS IS OUR TEAM OF WONDERFUL PEOPLE WORKING ON THIS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT ABOUT PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND ORAL HEALTH.

THE AIM OF THE COMIC IS TO REFLECT ON WHAT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS, AND HOW BEST TO ACHIEVE IT WHEN WORKING WITH THESE TOPICS.



THIS PROJECT EXPLORED THE CHALLENGES AND JOYS ASSOCIATED WITH PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND HOW TO MAKE IT MORE IMPACTFUL.

WHY?
IMPORTANCE?
SKILLS?
WHAT?

IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE TEAM TO SHARE BEST PRACTICE AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.

ANDREA RODRIGUEZ



IN MY RESEARCH INTO HOMELESSNESS, ORAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND CO-PRODUCTION I NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES AS WELL THE WORK OF PRACTITIONERS AND POLICY MAKERS.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE OF PEOPLES' NEEDS AND THE SUPPORT AVAILABLE SO THAT RESEARCH CAN BE MEANINGFUL FOR THEM.

TO DO THIS I STARTED A MAPPING EXERCISE TO IDENTIFY KEY ORGANISATIONS AND PRACTITIONERS IN DIFFERENT SPHERES.

THIS WORK WAS NOT DONE IN MY OFFICE BUT TRAVELING AND MEETING PEOPLE ACROSS FOUR CITIES IN SCOTLAND.



I VISITED HOMELESS DROP-INS...

VOLUNTEERED TO SERVE FOOD AT CHRISTMAS PARTIES ORGANISED CHARITIES...

I SHADOWED PRACTITIONERS, SPENDING A DAY WITH A NURSE FROM AN OUT-REACH TEAM...

ATTENDED TRAINING AND VISITED NGOS IN DUNDEE, ABERDEEN, EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW...


AS A RESULT OF MY ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH I WAS INVITED TO BE PART OF COMMITTEES TO TACKLE HOMELESSNESS SUCH AS THE JOINT COMMISSIONING OF HOMELESSNESS AT DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL AND THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S A WAY HOME SCOTLAND COALITION.

ENGAGING WITH THE PUBLIC EARLY ALLOWED TO ME TO PLAN MY WORK TO RESPOND TO THEIR ACTUAL NEEDS, AND NOT MY OWN EXPECTATIONS. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS A TWO-WAY PROCESS WHERE BOTH SIDES, THE PUBLIC AND THE RESEARCHERS, BENEFIT AND TRANSFORM EACH OTHER.

I AM A THIRD SECTOR PRACTITIONER AT ACTION FOR CHILDREN IN DUNDEE, A YOUTH HOUSING SERVICE.

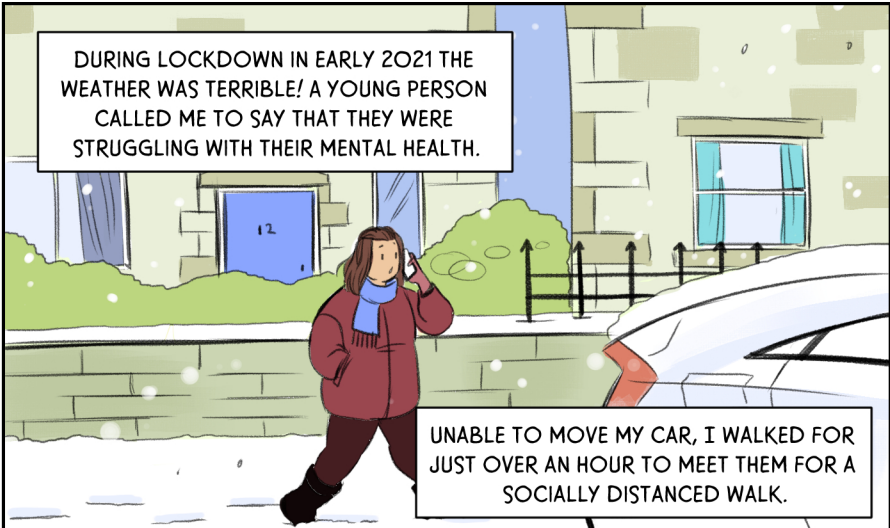
FOR ME PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS ABOUT REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE AND TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR LIVES.

LYNNE HANLON



DURING LOCKDOWN IN EARLY 2021 THE WEATHER WAS TERRIBLE! A YOUNG PERSON CALLED ME TO SAY THAT THEY WERE STRUGGLING WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

UNABLE TO MOVE MY CAR, I WALKED FOR JUST OVER AN HOUR TO MEET THEM FOR A SOCIALLY DISTANCED WALK.



I TRIED TO MAKE THE WALK AS FUN AS POSSIBLE.

IN THE END WE RAISED BOTH OUR SPIRITS AND MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE FOR THE NEXT STEPS WE KNEW WE WOULD BE TAKING TO FACE THE SITUATION!



I AM PART OF THE SMILE4LIFE TEAM AT NHS FORTH VALLEY AND I WORK WITH PEOPLE IN CUSTODY OR LEAVING PRISON, AND THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.

EVELYN KIDD

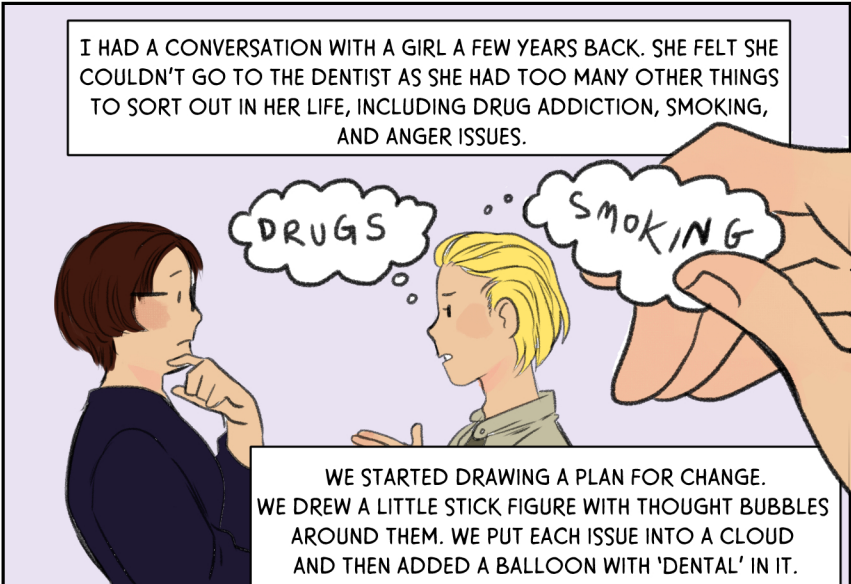


I HAD A CONVERSATION WITH A GIRL A FEW YEARS BACK. SHE FELT SHE COULDN'T GO TO THE DENTIST AS SHE HAD TOO MANY OTHER THINGS TO SORT OUT IN HER LIFE, INCLUDING DRUG ADDICTION, SMOKING, AND ANGER ISSUES.

DRUGS

SMOKING

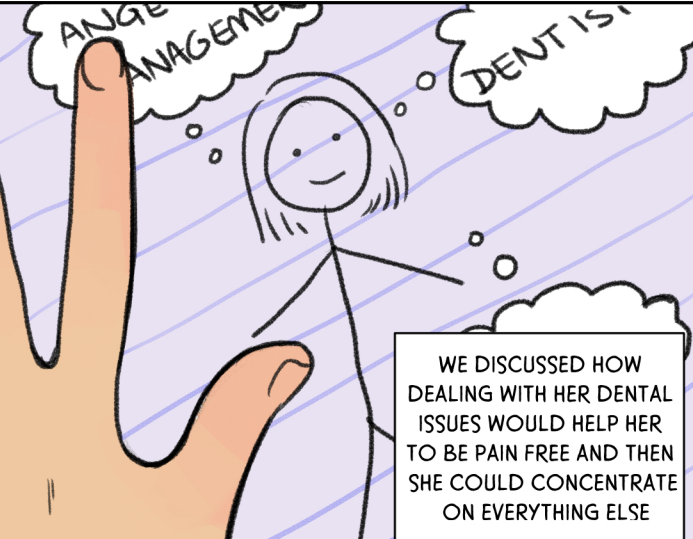
WE STARTED DRAWING A PLAN FOR CHANGE. WE DREW A LITTLE STICK FIGURE WITH THOUGHT BUBBLES AROUND THEM. WE PUT EACH ISSUE INTO A CLOUD AND THEN ADDED A BALLOON WITH 'DENTAL' IN IT.



ANGER MANAGEMENT

DENTIST

WE DISCUSSED HOW DEALING WITH HER DENTAL ISSUES WOULD HELP HER TO BE PAIN FREE AND THEN SHE COULD CONCENTRATE ON EVERYTHING ELSE



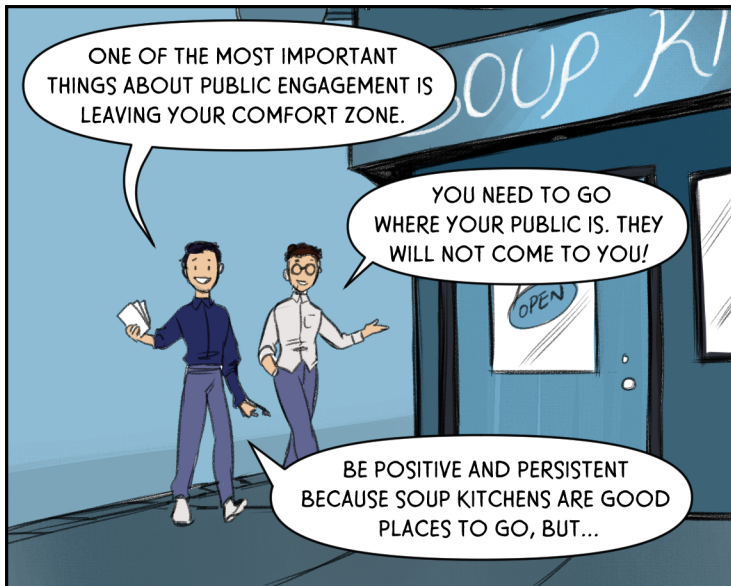
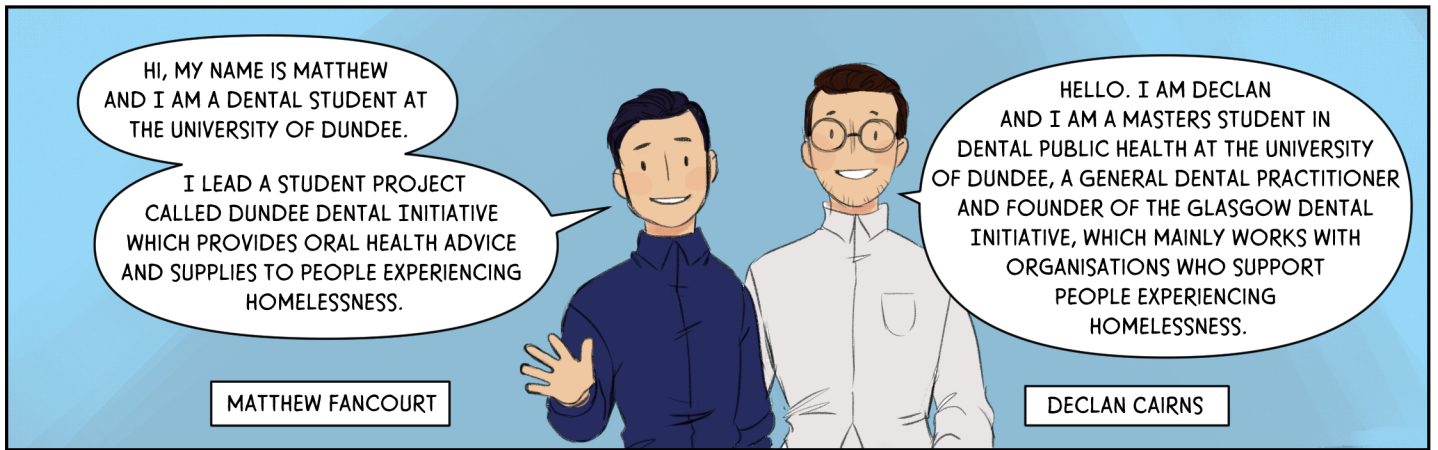
DENTAL HEALTH MAY NOT BE THE MOST INTERESTING SUBJECT TO TALK ABOUT SO I'VE FOUND A WAY TO BE MORE ENGAGING THAT'S WHY PEOPLE CALL ME...

THE TOOTH FAIRY!

EVELYN KIDD

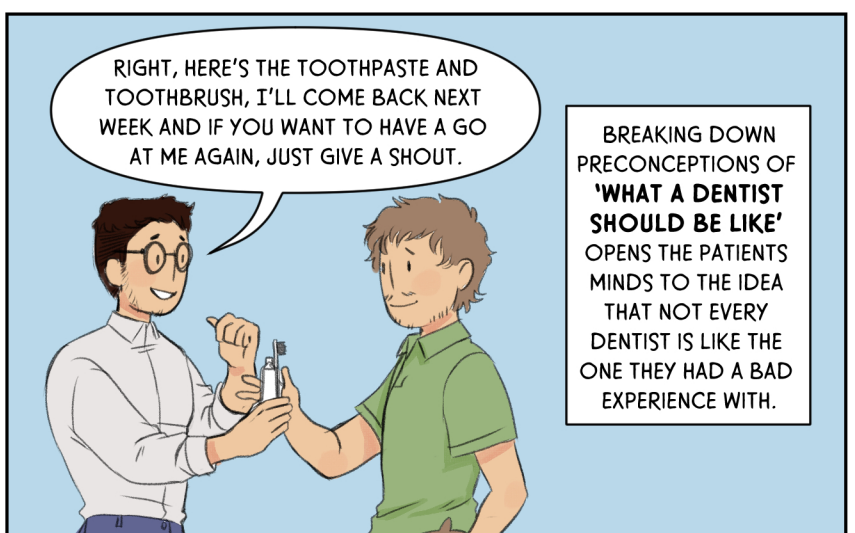
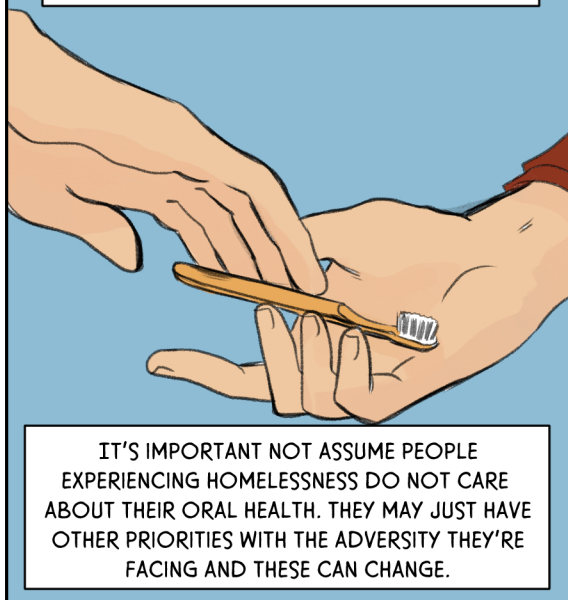
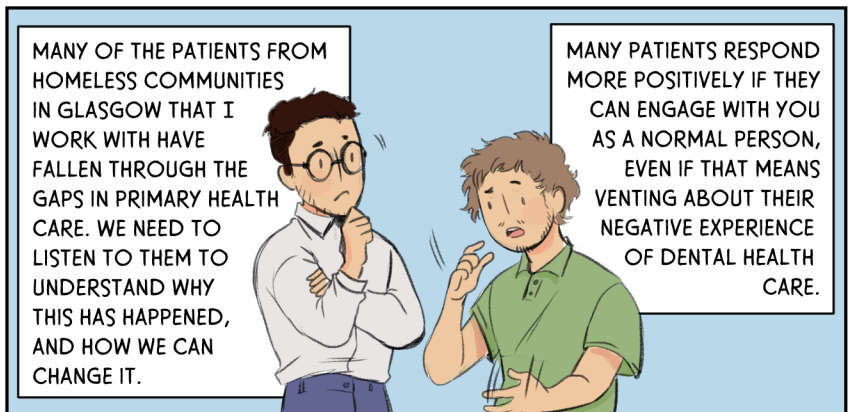


THE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



BUT I WASN'T UPSET OR PUT OFF. I CAME BACK ANOTHER WEEK AND THE SERVICE USERS WERE VERY HAPPY TO TALK ABOUT THEIR ORAL HEALTH WITH ME. MOST OF THEM NEED TOOTHBRUSHES AND TOOTHPASTE WHICH IS A GOOD STARTING POINT!

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS LIKE PLANTING SEEDS. YOU NEED PATIENCE, BUT ALSO RESPECT AND TO UNDERSTAND THE ADVERSITY PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FACE EVERY DAY.



HI, MY NAME IS SHANNON AND I AM A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE AND A MEMBER OF THE STUDENT-LED TOOTHY TIGERS PROGRAMME.

HELLO. I AM CAMILA AND I COME FROM BRAZIL. I AM A PHD RESEARCHER AT THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE.

THE PRIMARY GOAL IS TO PREVENT DENTAL DISEASE AND EDUCATE CHILDREN AGED 5-11, ATTENDING DUNDEE PRIMARY SCHOOLS ABOUT THE VALUE OF ORAL HEALTH.

MY BACKGROUND IS NURSING AND MY RESEARCH IS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH.

SHANNON POLSON

CAMILA BIAZUS DALCIN

A SMILE IS ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT ASSETS. WE HAVE NOTICED THIS NOW MORE THAN EVER. WITH THE NEED TO WEAR MASKS IN PUBLIC DUE TO COVID-19, WE NOW SEE HOW SIGNIFICANT A SMILE REALLY IS. A HEALTHY SMILE GIVES US THE CONFIDENCE TO SHARE WHO WE ARE WITH OTHERS.

THE TOOTHY TIGERS TEAM USE GAMES AND ORAL HEALTH MODELS TO SHOW ALL PARTS OF THE MOUTH, AS WELL AS PHOTOS OF TEETH IN A BAD STATE. THIS INCREASES KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF POOR ORAL HEALTH.

WE ALSO DO A SHOPPING SIMULATION TO SEE WHAT FOOD CHILDREN WOULD BUY. USING OUR COMIC STRIP RESOURCE AND TOOTHY TIGER PUPPETS TO ENGAGE THE CHILDREN. KIDS ARE KEEN TO ENGAGE WHEN YOU USE SUCH CREATIVE METHODS!

PROFESSOR PETER MOSSEY, ONE OF THE SUPERVISORS FOR THIS PROJECT, HAS NOTED THAT DUNDEE HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST NUMBERS OF CHILDREN WITH TOOTH DECAY IN SCOTLAND.

HE SAYS THAT THE INITIATIVE BY TOOTHY TIGERS HAS SHOWN FAMILIES HOW TO BRUSH THEIR TEETH AND ENCOURAGED THE REDUCTION OF SUGARY SNACK INTAKE, AND THAT THE STUDENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN TOOTHY TIGERS ALLOWED THEM TO APPLY WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED TO REACH OUT TO OTHERS IN NEED.

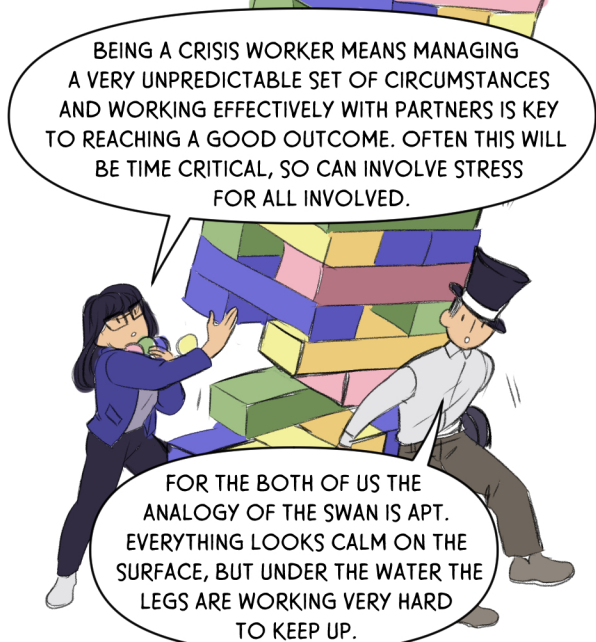
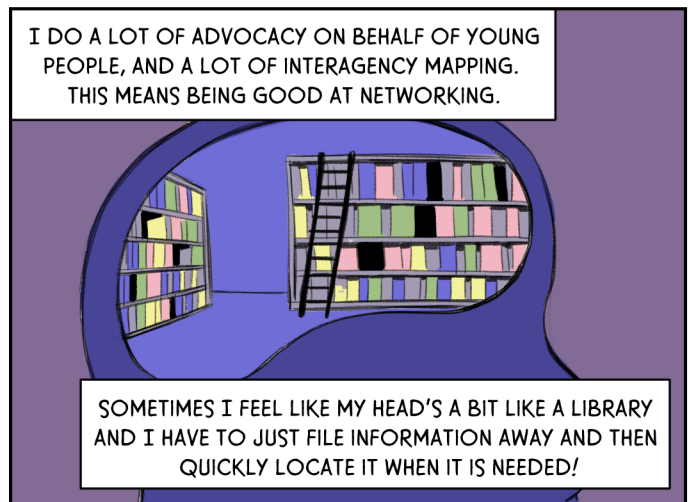
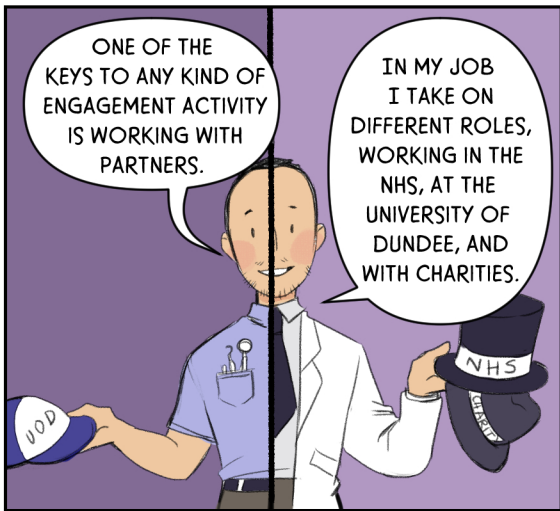
I WORK WITH AND RESEARCH YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE JUST LEFT CUSTODY.

THIS CAN BE CHALLENGING BECAUSE THEY HAVE A LOT GOING ON IN THEIR LIVES. IT IS OFTEN HARD TO ARRANGE MEETINGS.

TO TALK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE I HAVE TO BE FLEXIBLE AND FOLLOW THEIR AVAILABILITY. THAT MEANS MEETING THEM ON FRIDAY NIGHTS, WEEKENDS, AND BE ABLE TO INTERVIEW THEM IN VERY UNCONVENTIONAL PLACES, SUCH AS CAR PARKS, PARKS, AND THEIR HOUSES.

WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW THEIR LEAD AND HAVE AN UPEAT ATTITUDE.

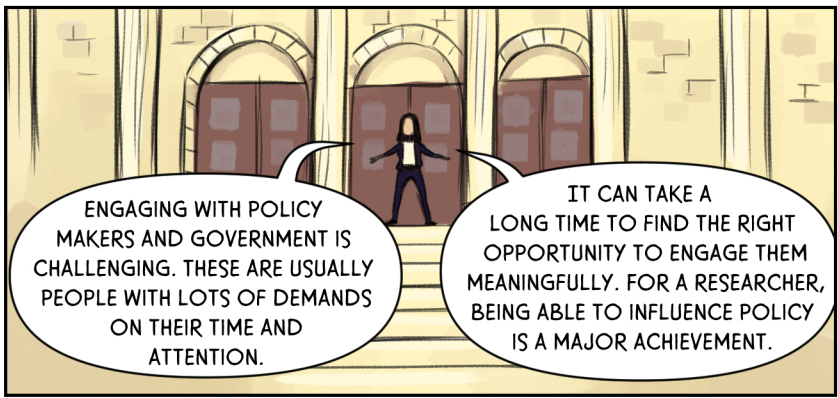
ALWAYS ENCOURAGE, SHOW EMPATHY AND PATIENCE.





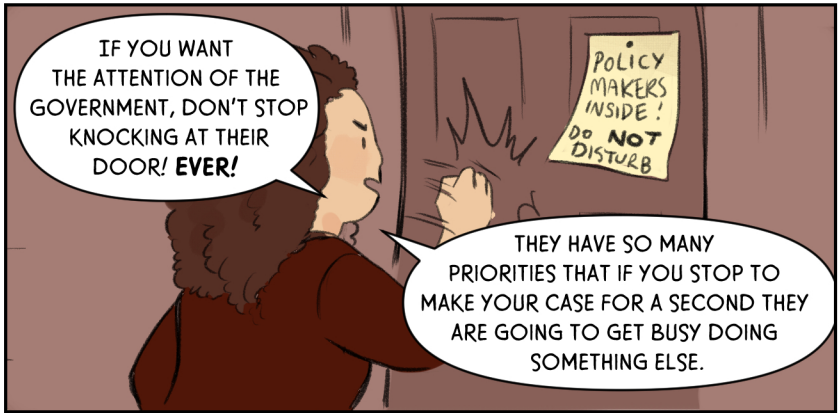
HELLO, I AM SABRINA GALELLA, A POLICY AND INFLUENCING CO-ORDINATOR AT ROCK TRUST AND A WAY HOME SCOTLAND.

ANDREA AND I WOULD LIKE TO TALK MORE ABOUT ENGAGING WITH POLICY MAKERS.



ENGAGING WITH POLICY MAKERS AND GOVERNMENT IS CHALLENGING. THESE ARE USUALLY PEOPLE WITH LOTS OF DEMANDS ON THEIR TIME AND ATTENTION.

IT CAN TAKE A LONG TIME TO FIND THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE THEM MEANINGFULLY. FOR A RESEARCHER, BEING ABLE TO INFLUENCE POLICY IS A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT.



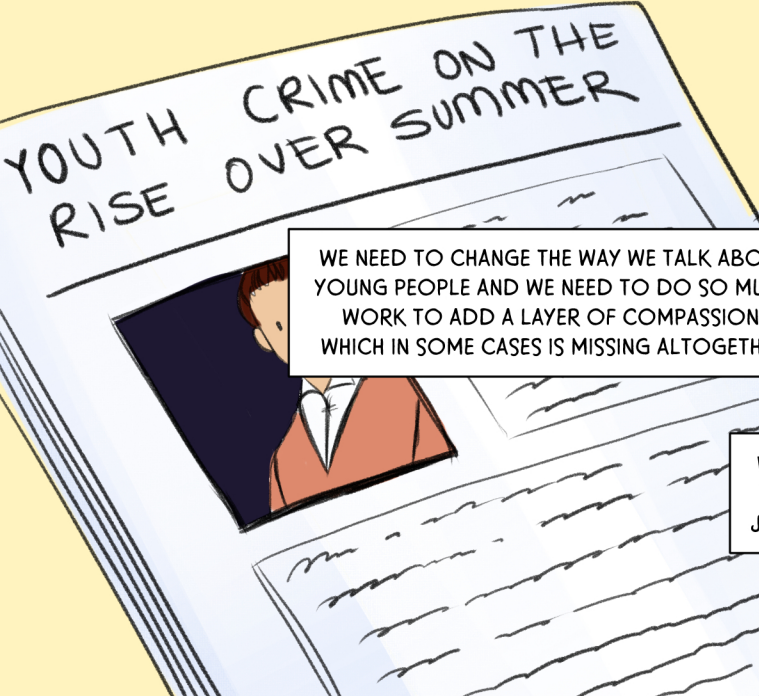
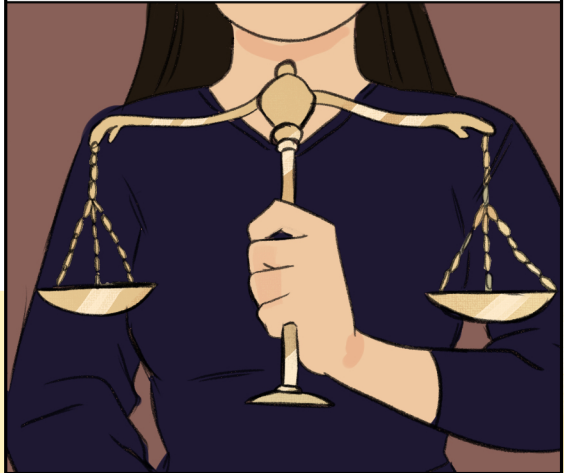
IF YOU WANT THE ATTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT, DON'T STOP KNOCKING AT THEIR DOOR! EVER!

THEY HAVE SO MANY PRIORITIES THAT IF YOU STOP TO MAKE YOUR CASE FOR A SECOND THEY ARE GOING TO GET BUSY DOING SOMETHING ELSE.

IT CAN FEEL LIKE YOU ARE STALKING PEOPLE FROM GOVERNMENT AT TIMES, BUT I REMIND MYSELF THAT OUR CAUSE IS WORTH IT, AND THAT, AS A GOVERNMENT, THEY HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT.



ONE OF THE REASONS THAT IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO TRY TO INFLUENCE POLICY IS THAT THIS CAN HELP TACKLE SYSTEMIC INEQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION.

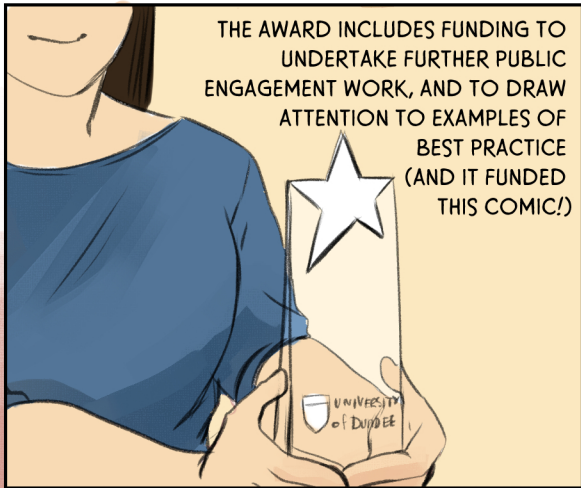
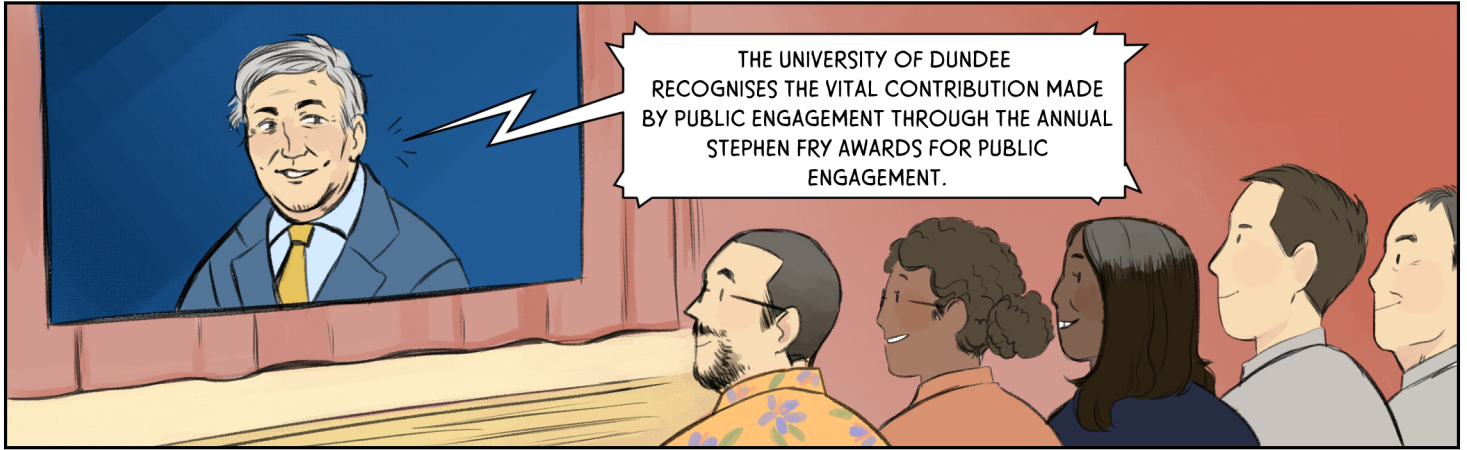


WE NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY WE TALK ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE AND WE NEED TO DO SO MUCH WORK TO ADD A LAYER OF COMPASSION, WHICH IN SOME CASES IS MISSING ALTOGETHER.



WE HAVE TO REVERSE YEARS OF PROPAGANDA THAT HAVE DEPICTED VULNERABLE PEOPLE AS JUNKIES, BENEFIT SCROUNGERS AND CRIMINALS.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



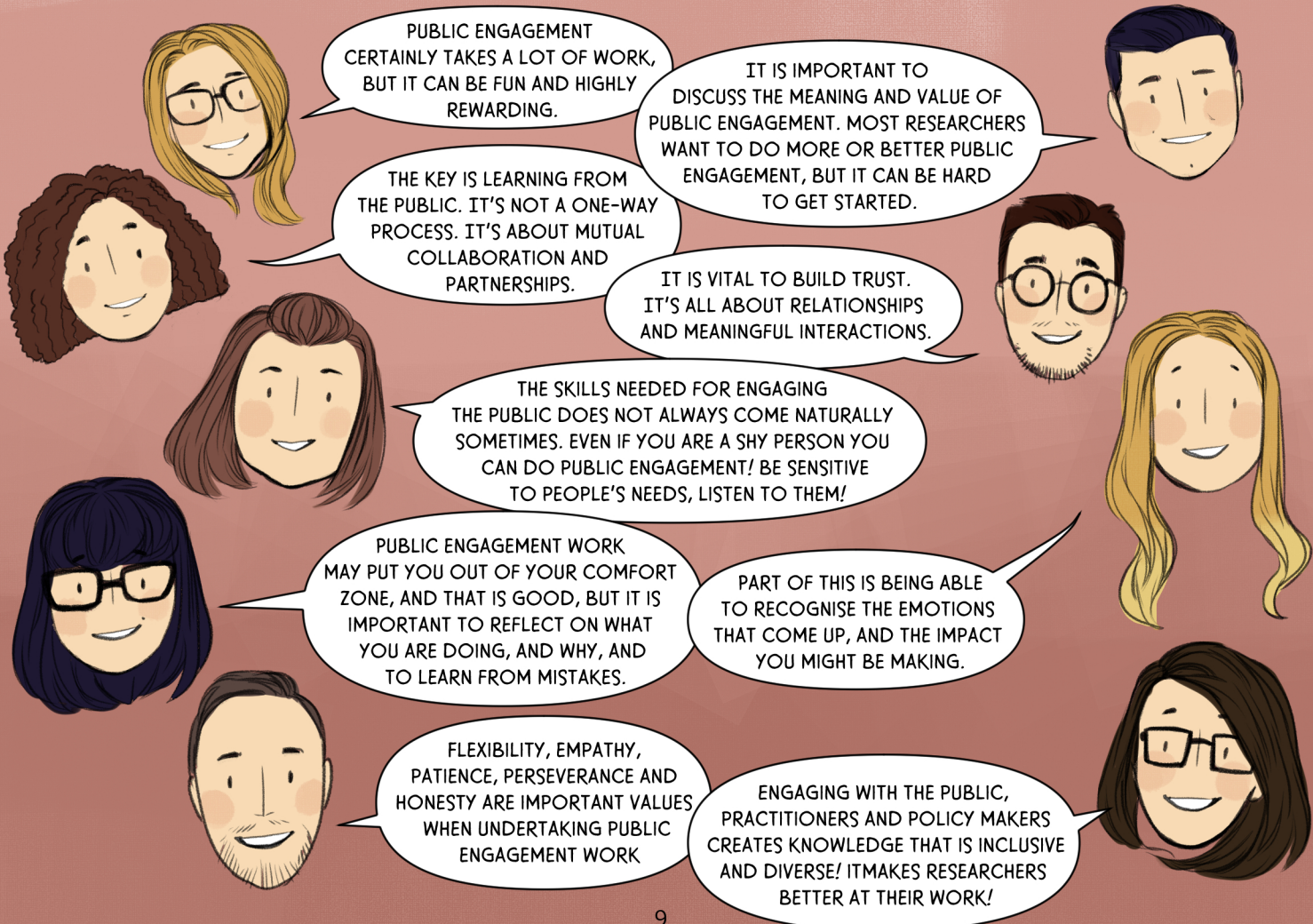
DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC THE TEAM MET ONLINE TO DISCUSS HOW TO PROMOTE AND ENHANCE THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORK.

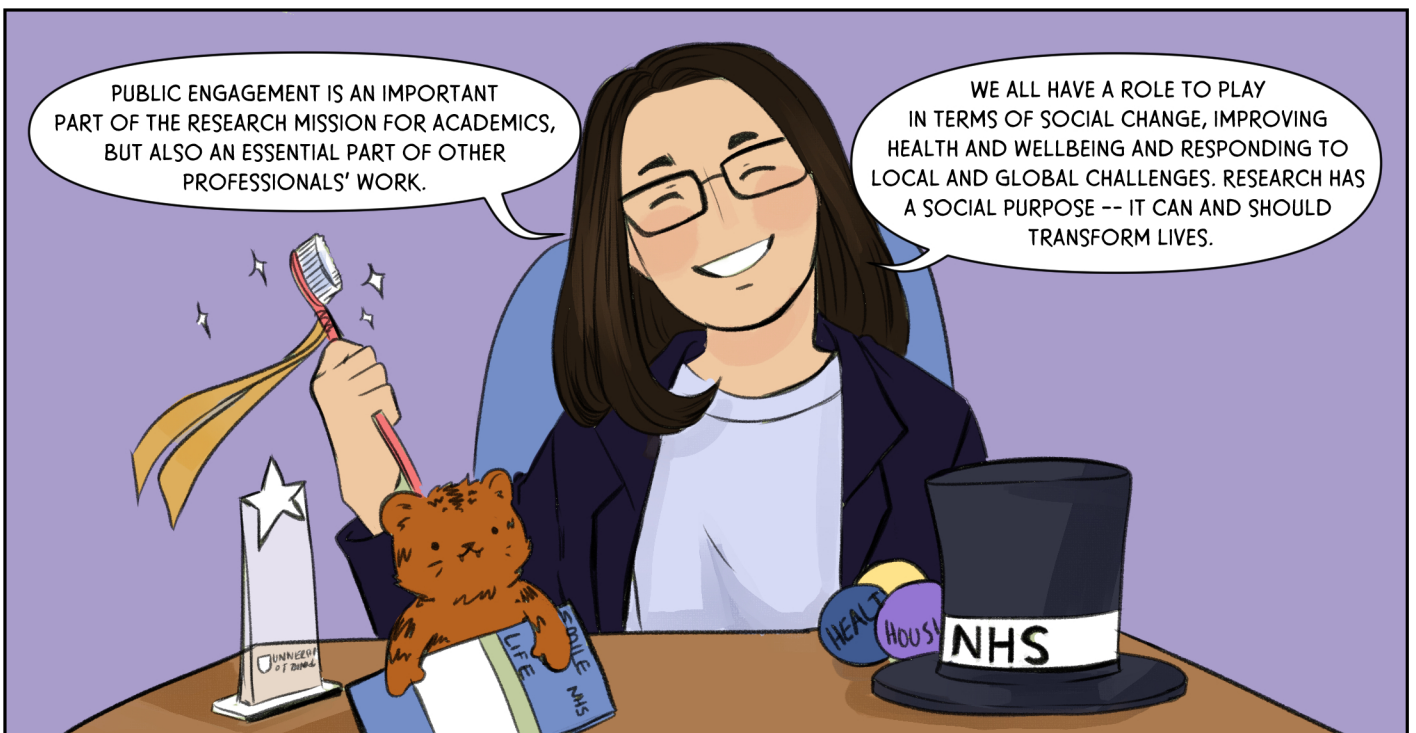
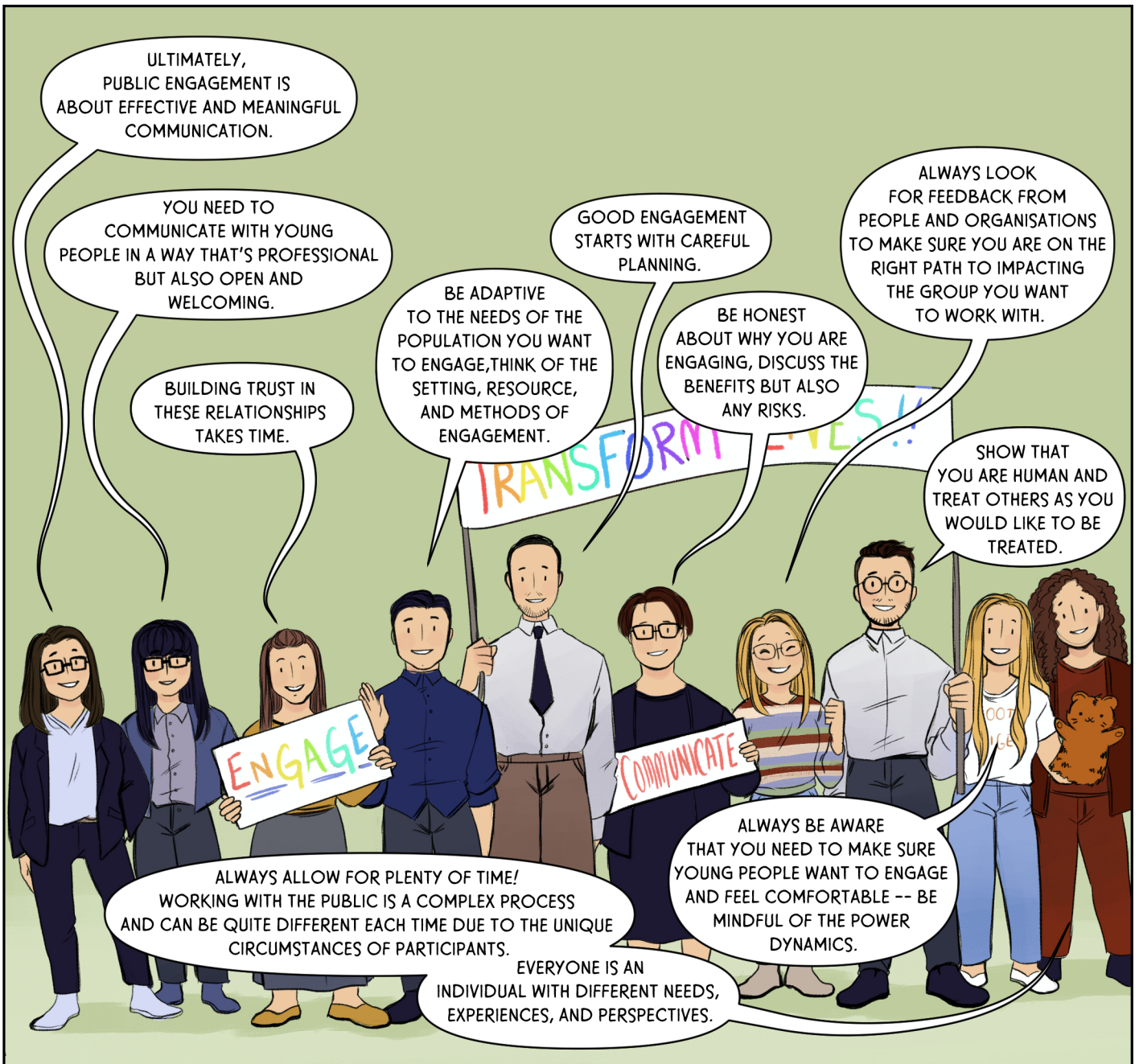
GOLNAR SAYS...
WE NEED TO ENGAGE PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT WAYS...

CHRIS SAYS...
LET'S MAKE A COMIC!

DIVYA SAYS...
HOW DO WE PROMOTE BETTER PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

ANDREA SAYS...
IT'S ALL ABOUT TRUST, PARTNERSHIP WORK AND COMMUNICATION.
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT LEADS TO BETTER RESEARCH.





Contributor Biographies

Andrea Rodriguez is a social psychologist and lecturer in Dental Public Health. She sits in two local and national groups in the field of homelessness and health - the Dundee City Council's Joint Commissioning to Tackle Homelessness and the Way Home Scotland, a national coalition to end youth homelessness. Her research focus is on community-based participatory research for health equity, policy and practice. Her current project 'Do not give up on us' aims to co-design educational materials to support professionals from health, education and third sector, engaging with young people and adults experiencing multiple exclusions.

Shannon Polson is a 4BDS student at University of Dundee and a member of the Toothy Tigers project. This is a student-led project from the Dental School. The primary goal is to prevent dental disease and to educate children attending Primary Schools located in deprived communities in Dundee about the value of oral health. Dental students engage with children from 5 to 11 years old through workshops on how to perform the recommended oral hygiene, along with dietary tips.

Declan Cairns is a Masters student in Dental Public Health at the University of Dundee and General Dental Practitioner and founder of the Glasgow Dental Initiative. The Initiative mainly works with organisations who support people experiencing homelessness, promoting positive attitudes towards oral health amongst the homeless community and 3rd sector organisations. He engages with different kinds of people looking for a general practice, especially patients who feel nervous about attending the dentist.

Niall Mc Goldrick is a Speciality Registrar in Dental Public Health NHS Fife and a Clinical Research Fellow at the University of Dundee. He is also a member of Let's Talk About Mouth Cancer - a Scottish charity which wants to improve the prognosis of patients diagnosed with Mouth Cancer through early detection. He engages with people who have experience of drugs and homelessness and has also engaged ethnic minority groups in oral health improvement activities.

Matthew Fancourt is a 3rd year dental student at the University of Dundee and leader of a project called Dundee Dental Initiative - a student led project aimed at providing those experiencing homelessness in Dundee with valuable oral health supplies and advice. He engages with people experiencing homelessness attending soup kitchens in Dundee.

Camila Biazus Dalcin worked as a research assistant on the project 'Do not Give up on us'. She is also a PhD researcher at the School of Education and Social Work. Her background is Nursing, and her research focus is on children and young people's health. She is also a volunteer at Apex Scotland - an organisation that has worked with people with criminal convictions or at risk of committing offences for over 25 years. She engages with people from a variety of marginalised groups and is doing research on young people leaving custody, experiencing homelessness.

Evelyn Kidd works as the Dental Action Plan Team Lead with Adult Oral Health programmes at the NHS Forth Valley. She works with the Salvation Army in the recovery cafés, and with people experiencing homelessness, vulnerable adults, and their children, third sector organisation staff, adults and young people in custody, older people, and people with learning Disabilities. She also engages with health and social care staff.

Sabrina Galella is a Policy and Influencing Co-ordinator at Rock Trust and A Way Home Scotland. A Way Home Scotland is a coalition of individuals, organisations and authorities dedicated to ending youth homelessness in Scotland. She works mainly with stakeholders from other organisations and Scottish Government officials. She also works with young people for the national youth Steering Group, Aff the Streets.

Moira Mackay is a Youth Development Duty worker and crises worker based at Rock Trust in Edinburgh. Rock Trust is Scotland's youth-specific homelessness charity aiming to end youth homelessness by ensuring that every young person has access to expert youth specific services to assist them to avoid, survive and move on from homelessness. It also works to ensure that the public, policy makers, commissioners and practitioners understand the issues, make decisions and take action which will end youth homelessness.

Lynne Hanlon is a Young Person's Practitioner at Action for Children, Dundee Youth Housing Service. Action for Children aims to reduce homelessness with young people by providing a range of interventions, including housing advice, conflict resolution, education in schools, group work and support for the individual young person. She works with young people experiencing homelessness in Dundee.

Chris Murray is Chair of Comics Studies at the School of Humanities, University of Dundee. He leads the MLitt in Comics and Graphic Novels course and is Director of the Scottish Centre for Comics Studies and Dundee Comics Creative Space, and editor of the journal Studies in Comics (Intellect) and UniVerse Comics. He has written many comics for research and engagement purposes, including public information comics, many with a focus on healthcare.

Cat Laird is a comic artist, illustrator, and a freelance designer at V&A Dundee, helping to run workshops, tutorials and tours on design practices. They have worked with a variety of institutions and publishers with an aim to spread awareness and joy through comics and art.

ORAL HEALTH & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

THIS COMIC SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING THE PUBLIC, PRACTITIONERS, AND POLICY MAKERS IN ORAL HEALTH RESEARCH. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS NOT JUST AN ACTIVITY, BUT A PRINCIPLE. WE ALL LEARN BY SHARING, WITH THE ULTIMATE AIM OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE AND TRANSFORMING LIVES.

Dundee Dental Hospital & School



UNiVERSE