

**Collaborative public legal education:  
a case of ‘many hands make light work’, or ‘too many cooks’?!**

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**Abstract: the following opinion piece offers views on the benefits and challenges of collaborating with other individuals or entities to deliver public legal education, and some practical tips to consider when embarking on such a venture.**

BPP University Law School’s Pro Bono Centre (“BPP”) is entering its 15<sup>th</sup> year of running Streetlaw, a free public legal education (“PLE”) project delivered by law student volunteers. The project works with a range of people in the UK including schoolchildren, prisoners and ex-offenders, people affected by homelessness, and mental health charities. In the 2017/18 academic year, over 450 BPP law student volunteers delivered over 350 hours of PLE to over 3500 members of the public, in and around the seven cities in the UK in which BPP operates.

To deliver PLE on this scale, BPP has often looked outside of the university for external support for its projects. We have collaborated with other professionals, universities, organisations and charities in a number of ways, including co-delivering discrete PLE events (e.g. a nationwide campaign to engage law students and legal professionals in

teaching young people about social media and the law, in collaboration with Young Citizens<sup>1</sup>), and ongoing projects (e.g. delivering PLE about Tribunal procedures to litigants in person running Employment Tribunal claims, in collaboration with local universities, Tribunals and ACAS).

Many of our PLE collaborations have been and continue to be successful. However, there have been times where the projects have encountered stumbling blocks, perhaps because we, or our collaborators, have been slow to recognise problems, or too polite to voice our concerns about them.

The BPP team recently met to exchange views about the various collaborative PLE projects in which team members have been involved. The outcome of that meeting is this article: a summary of the main benefits and challenges of collaborative PLE as the BPP team perceives them, and a list of 5 practical tips for anybody considering launching a collaborative PLE project. We found little in the existing literature on collaborative PLE projects; however, we have been able to draw support for our views and extrapolate lessons from scholarship emanating from the chiropractic, medical and business fields.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cleo-uk.org/product/national-pro-bono-week-volunteer-bring-law-life-local-school/> [accessed 26 11 18]

### **The definition of collaboration**

For the purposes of this article we have adopted the definition of collaboration favoured by Mattessich and Monsey (1992)<sup>2</sup>: a “mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals”. This relationship includes the sharing of responsibility, accountability, resources and rewards.

### **Benefits of collaborative PLE**

So, do many hands make light work? *True* collaboration, done well, can lead to a PLE project that is wider in scope, and higher in quality, than might have been achieved on one’s own. You may have a fantastic idea for a topic, and/or a target audience, but lack the know-how, contacts, and/or resources to bring that idea to life. This is where collaboration can really add value.

Drummond and McKeever (2015)<sup>3</sup> report that 75% of university law clinics they surveyed had formal collaborative arrangements with solicitors, barristers, advice agencies and legal charities, and that the main value such collaborations brought (from the perspective of the universities) was supervision, expertise, capacity, and support. In a PLE context, externals may be able to provide the expertise that you/your

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<sup>2</sup> Mattessich PW, Monsey BR. 53 St. Paul MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation; 1992. Collaboration – What Makes It Work: A Review of Research Literature on Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration. Wilder Research Center. Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED390758> [accessed 14 12 18]

<sup>3</sup> Drummond, O. and McKeever, G. (2015) *Access to Justice through University Law Clinics* (Ulster: Ulster University Law School). Available at: [https://www.ulster.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/132654/Access-to-Justice-through-Uni-Law-Clinics-November-2015.pdf](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/132654/Access-to-Justice-through-Uni-Law-Clinics-November-2015.pdf) [accessed 14 11 2018]

institution are lacking – whether that is regarding the legal content of your workshops, or knowledge about how to deliver that content to a specific audience. At BPP, for example, since 2016 a mental capacity specialist external to the university has provided the legal content and training to equip law student volunteers with the confidence and competency to deliver PLE workshops to dementia carer groups, focussed on their legal rights and responsibilities under mental health legislation (the ‘With Law In Mind’ project). Over 300 carers in the Greater Manchester area have now benefited from these workshops. BPP has also benefitted from numerous barristers from Carmelite Chambers dedicating their free time to check the legal content of our criminal law Streetlaw workshops, including sessions on Knife Crime and Secondary Liability. Certainly, collaborations of this kind can help support the goals of the Government’s recently launched 10 Year Vision and Goals for Public Legal Education<sup>4</sup> (“the 10 Year Vision”), which include ensuring that the legal content of PLE is accurate and of high quality.

If not their legal expertise, other potential collaborators may be able to share contacts; staff and student resource; physical space and equipment; or - our personal favourite – money to buy the tea and cakes for your PLE events (which, joking aside, can often put many Streetlaw audiences at ease)!

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<sup>4</sup> ‘A Ten Year Vision for Public Legal Education’ prepared by the Solicitor General’s Committee on Public Legal education, found at: <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/about-us/news/public-legal-education-new-vision-statement> [accessed 15 11 2018]

The result of this pooling of knowledge, resources and costs can mean much needed information is delivered to a wider audience (in line with the 10 Year Vision's aim of scaling up PLE delivery by the legal community). It can expose your law students to professionals who are willing to provide career advice, demonstrate good practice and show a career-long commitment to *pro bono* work, as well as providing students with new experiences which can develop knowledge and skills relevant to their chosen discipline, including communication, teamwork and client empathy.

Green and Johnson (2015)<sup>5</sup> cite many of the benefits referred to above in their review of inter-professional collaboration in the healthcare sector, as well as the 'reflected' benefit of associating with others who are successful.

### **Challenges of collaborative PLE**

There are, of course, potential barriers to successful collaboration – the dreaded 'too many cooks' spoiling the proverbial 'broth'. Green and Johnson (2015) comment that conflict of some degree is inevitable during collaborative projects, because in all likelihood there will be some differences in culture, attitude, value and customs between different institutions. Frustrations can rise where individuals feel that there is an unequal distribution of tasks or effort, the group lack a shared vision, or there are clashing agendas of institutions. There is also the much derided 'trial by committee' – getting everyone's comments on the minutiae of a draft document or

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<sup>5</sup> Green BN, Johnson CD. Interprofessional collaboration in research, education, and clinical practice: working together for a better future. *J Chiropr Educ.* 2015;29(1):1-10. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4360764/> [accessed 13 12 2018]

email can slow progress and foster an atmosphere of distrust. A negative atmosphere can be exacerbated if individuals sense they/their institutions are viewed as having a 'lower status' than their fellow collaborators, or territorialism exists (because collaborators may be rivals in other respects e.g. competing for funding, staff or students).

At their worst, joint PLE projects can leave you feeling exhausted, overworked and undervalued, and concerned that your own and your institution's reputation will be marred by inconsistent quality in project delivery. To make sure you reap the benefits that a collaborative PLE project can afford, and to avoid the pitfalls, we set out below BPP's top 5 tips for keeping your collaborative PLE project on track.

### **1. Agree a set of shared goals and values at the outset**

Mattessich and Monsey (1992) identify a shared vision, with clearly agreed upon objectives, as a key factor influencing the success of collaboration. Vangen and Huxham (2003)<sup>6</sup> argue that the differing resources that provide potential for collaborative advantage are, in fact, often a result of differences in organisational purpose. Therefore, organisations having different reasons for wanting to collaborate is not just a likelihood, but to be expected. For example, Drummond and McKeever (2015) report contributing to their organisation's corporate social responsibilities as a

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<sup>6</sup> Vangen S, Huxham C. Nurturing collaborative relations: building trust in interorganisational collaboration. *J Appl Behav Sci.* 2003; 39:5 – 31. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239536801\\_Nurturing\\_Collaborative\\_Relations\\_Building\\_Trust\\_in\\_Interorganizational\\_Collaboration](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239536801_Nurturing_Collaborative_Relations_Building_Trust_in_Interorganizational_Collaboration) [accessed 11 12 2018]

key driver for private corporations collaborating with university law clinics; the universities themselves may be more focussed on raising their institutions' and students' profile within the legal market, and improving graduate outcomes.

Institutional and individual agendas may be different, but it does not mean they are incompatible. It is important that all collaborators are as honest as they can be about what they/their institutions are prepared to invest in the alliance (e.g. finance; human resource) and what they hope to gain from it. Such honesty can help with trust building, and allows parties to consider if the differing aims can be accommodated. If they cannot, ask yourselves if you should be pursuing this particular collaboration.

Your agreed set of objectives and values should ideally be committed to paper, and can be revisited at pre-agreed times, or whenever you feel the project is going in a direction you did not agree to or expect. An example of this is the Key Objectives document drawn up for the Law Ambassador Programme which runs at BPP Leeds. This is a two-year programme which matches sixth form students with a local law firm and BPP students, providing them with a range of legal experiences including office tours, court visits and mock trial challenges. It seeks to improve young people's legal knowledge and skills, raise their career aspirations, and create positive perceptions of the legal profession. Specific objectives for each collaborator differ: for the law firms, a significant motivator is the provision of an accessible way for staff to contribute to their corporate social responsibility agenda, whilst refining their mentoring skills for translation back into the workplace. BPP is drawn to the

opportunities for its own students to enhance their employability skills (e.g. public speaking) and to network with / learn from legal professionals. BPP also had a particular interest in launching a project which could potentially track recipients of PLE across a period of time and thus provide the opportunity to measure the impact of PLE on its audience (in line with the 10 Year Vision's goal (number 1) of supporting PLE with a robust evidence base). The collaborators are all, however, united by two overarching objectives: to use their legal expertise to make a valuable contribution to their local community, and to promote inclusivity in the legal profession. As the project sees its first Law Ambassador cohort graduate, and enters into its annual review period, the Key Objectives document has proven pivotal in shaping ongoing improvements with the project (e.g. changes to pre- and post-programme participant questionnaire design; the introduction of one-to-one email mentoring opportunities for lawyers) and thus securing future commitment from all collaborators.

**2. Tell each other about the relevant skills, knowledge, interests, resources and timetables you/your institutions have**

Clearly delineated roles and responsibilities have also been identified as crucial to successful collaboration (Mattessich and Monsey, 1992). Such discussions should take place at one of your earliest meetings – arguably even before you agree to embark on the collaborative project. Someone might have particular expertise in relation to a legal topic, in training people to deliver effective presentations, or working with the target audience (e.g. an ex-school teacher or prison officer). Another person may have



useful contacts externally (e.g. potential venues for delivery) or internally (e.g. marketing teams; outreach and widening participation teams with established contacts in the community; lecturers in drama, technology or business faculties, whose students could contribute to content development). Others might lack experience in, for example, networking, but be looking for the opportunity to develop these skills.

It pays to be conscious that each person/institution will have different pressure points in their work calendar – for universities, this might be induction weeks, exam periods or inspections from regulatory bodies; for external professionals, this might be the end of the financial year, or conferences they regularly host or attend. Equally, you are all entitled to your ‘down time’ and don’t expect or want to be contacted about the project during those periods. Discuss these issues openly and early on, so you can plan the PLE project timetable (and scale) around this, and share the workload accordingly. You can then agree a list of tasks and deadlines and (being mindful of general workload allocation) match those tasks to the relevant person(s) – and importantly, let them get on with it; they can report back on their progress at regular catch ups. Try to share those dreary but unavoidable tasks evenly (e.g. endless photocopying!), so people remain passionate about their involvement in the project, and feel their contribution is valued.

Open discussions in this regard – and having a key person at each institution answerable for the project – have aided the smooth running of the Streetlaw in the

Cardiff Employment Tribunal project since 2017. BPP is one of four universities collaborating on this project. The PLE workshops on Tribunal procedures run on a monthly basis from November to May each year, to align with the academic year. At the outset of this collaboration, major tasks were divided up between the four participating universities according to internal expertise and resource e.g. a staff member with employment law experience developed the workshop and training content; others utilised their contacts to lead on marketing strategy; and another institution with the most central and suitable conference facilities hosted the student training. All student volunteers attend the same training and use the same presenting materials to ensure consistency and quality across the board. Valuable insight was also provided early on by Birmingham University, who germinated the idea of PLE workshops about Tribunal procedure at their local Civil Justice Centre in 2015<sup>7</sup>. An all-party conference call now takes place each August to reflect on the previous year and plan for the year ahead (although bi-monthly catch ups may be needed in the fledgling year of such a project). Application, training and workshop dates are agreed with a Tribunal Judge on this call, with universities assigned to monthly presenting slots according to their teaching and exam timetables. Whilst each university is responsible for their assigned workshops, feedback (e.g. on audience attendance or questions raised) is filtered back to all collaborators after each workshop, via an email group.

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<sup>7</sup> See further: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/law/life/pro-bono/aboutus.aspx>

### 3. Aim for “small wins” to start with

Mattessich and Monsey (1992) also identify the presence of mutual trust and respect as pivotal to the likely success of a collaborative project. However, trust takes time to build. Trust between collaborators with no shared history may be based on reputation in the market alone, and therefore will require a ‘leap of faith’ from the parties to initiate the collaboration in the first place. For this reason, Vangen and Huxham (2003) make the case for setting realistic, modest outcomes at the beginning of new collaborative projects, which can, once met, reinforce trusting attitudes, heighten enthusiasm and set the groundwork for more ambitious collaboration.

Low risk initiatives might include running a one-off PLE event or a pilot that is limited in scope with regards to, for example, the number of student volunteers, target venues or topics involved. By way of example, BPP’s Employment Tribunal PLE project (limited in scope to a single venue and topic (Tribunal procedures); and initially for a 12 week pilot) is entering its fourth year of successful collaboration with local universities, the Tribunals and ACAS in London. This successful ‘blueprint’ has then been used to expand the project to the Cardiff and Manchester Tribunals. By contrast, another collaborative PLE project initiated in Leeds with local universities and offering entirely bespoke workshops to a variety of community groups, has recently closed. Hindsight has shined a light on the overly ambitious nature of this bespoke offering, which led to difficulties in meeting audience expectations, and overreliance on one particular lawyer’s expertise (immigration law) and good nature!

#### 4. Embrace online technology

Open and frequent communication has been recognised as essential to successful collaboration (Mattessich and Monsey, 1992), but so are efficient working practices. No-one wants to return to their desk to a trail of emails debating whether you should serve garibaldiis or bourbon biscuits at your PLE project's launch event! Software and web-based platforms are available (often, without charge) to share ideas and information in a communal space, which can arrive separately to your main inbox. We mention a few here by way of example, but recommend you investigate what is right for your budget and your PLE project's specific needs.

Consider using a messaging platform for project specific communications (e.g. Slack). These platforms can often integrate other features / platforms mentioned in the remainder of this section (and can be accessed via a smartphone).

You may be a regular user of telephone and video conferencing, but do explore all the features of any facilities you have access to (e.g. Skype) – many have the ability to share files and screens, to support working on project content as a group in real time. Online polls can be used to establish best availability for progress meetings and PLE workshops (e.g. Doodle; Sign Up); event platforms can be used to centralise the organisation of student training dates (e.g. Eventbrite); and presentation editors allow staff, students and external supporters to collaborate remotely on shared documents such as your workshop materials (e.g. Google Slides). Virtual noticeboards (e.g. Trello) provide a visual journey for your project's timeline, and can be used to supervise

students' research. Tasks can be assigned to individuals, deadlines set and progress monitored.

Whichever platforms you ultimately adopt, remember you are likely to be sharing information and potentially personal data (e.g. student contact details) outside of your organisation. Be mindful, therefore, of your obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation<sup>8</sup>. Beyond password protecting documents, it would be wise to seek guidance from your internal legal team about best practice with regards to sharing project information externally via e-mail or web-based platforms. Collaborators less familiar with new forms of technology (Prensky's (2001)<sup>9</sup> so-called "digital immigrants") may also appreciate receiving training and / or support from any willing "digital natives" amongst the group (those born into the digital world and who have been comfortable interacting with it since childhood). The (now closed) collaborative PLE project in Leeds suffered early setbacks in this regard, as a lack of confidence with document sharing and communication platforms amongst some collaborators led to inconsistent adoption of these tools within the group (thus undermining the tools' intended benefits).

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<sup>8</sup> <https://gdpr-info.eu/> [accessed 15 11 2018]

<sup>9</sup> Prensky, M (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1. On the Horizon. 9. 1-6. Available at: <https://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf> [accessed 13 5 19]

## 5. Reflect, adapt, and be prepared to make difficult decisions

Revisit your shared objectives and values at appropriate and pre-agreed points in time. When exactly you do this may be dictated by the timeline of your PLE project (e.g. one-off event, term or academic year long). Evaluate the extent to which the values have been adhered to and the objectives met. Identify what worked well, what could be done better, and be honest about whether these reflections (or any recent or anticipated change in circumstances e.g. changes in personnel or resources available) mean that the PLE project should continue in its current guise, or at all.

Green and Johnson (2015) tell us that it is important to know when it is time to stop. As Professor Morten Hansen says, “the goal of collaboration is not collaboration but better results”<sup>10</sup> – and you need to regularly assess whether those results have been achieved and/or remain achievable. Closing a PLE project does not equate to failure: you will have added value to your students’ and audience members’ lives for the duration of the collaborative project, and fostered professional relationships (which may beget further collaboration). One of the biggest lessons we have learnt working in *pro bono*, is that there are more people to help - and more ways to help them - than we possibly can, so it’s important to recognise that even our collective resources are finite, and we should all direct them to where they can deliver the best value for all relevant stakeholders.

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<sup>10</sup> Harvard Business Review IdeaCast: ‘The Right Way to Collaborate (If you Must)’:  
<https://hbr.org/2010/03/the-right-way-to-collaborate-i.html> [accessed 26 11 18]

## **Future collaborative PLE projects: looking beyond the legal sphere for potential collaborators**

Whilst running *pro bono* projects at BPP, it has become evident to us that many clients and audience members experience a clustering of problems. Whilst law students may traditionally study and be assessed on legal issues in discrete subject areas, real life rarely presents legal (and associated) problems in such neat packages. For example, a person on sick leave from work due to bullying and harassment may find themselves experiencing mental health issues as well as facing financial hardship (with a knock-on effect on their employment, housing situation, personal relationships, and so forth). In 2017 Citizens' Advice reported that 82% of clients surveyed reported legal problems making them feel more stressed, depressed or anxious, and 60% felt their physical health worsened as a result<sup>11</sup>.

Given this reality, Curran (2017)<sup>12</sup> is critical of traditional courses which teach law in isolation from social contexts. The author is a keen advocate of inter-disciplinary collaboration and supervises a legal service within a community health setting at the ANU School of Law, Australia. Recognising a synergy between skills teaching in a number of disciplines (e.g. problem solving; relationship-building; interviewing;

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<sup>11</sup> Citizens Advice: Modelling our value to society in 2016/17, Technical Annex: The difference we make: Our impact in 2016/17. Available at: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/difference-we-make/impact-of-citizens-advice-service/all-our-impact/> [accessed 26 11 2018]

<sup>12, 11</sup> Curran, L (2017): 'Reflections on Practice and Recent Research to Enable Future Practitioners to Learn About Working Collaboratively Across Disciplines to Better Help the Community', *Journal of Commonwealth Law and Legal Education*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 46-64. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321878476\\_'Reflections\\_on\\_Practice\\_and\\_Recent\\_Research\\_to\\_Enable\\_Future\\_Practitioners\\_to\\_Learn\\_About\\_Working\\_Collaboratively\\_Across\\_Disciplines\\_to\\_Better\\_Help\\_the\\_Community'\\_Vol\\_12\\_No\\_1\\_Autumn\\_2017\\_Journal\\_of\\_C](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321878476_'Reflections_on_Practice_and_Recent_Research_to_Enable_Future_Practitioners_to_Learn_About_Working_Collaboratively_Across_Disciplines_to_Better_Help_the_Community'_Vol_12_No_1_Autumn_2017_Journal_of_C) [accessed 13 12 2018]

communication), she has introduced joint learning at an undergraduate level across a variety of courses, including nursing, psychology and law. She encourages law students to emerge from their traditional silos to consider the broader health, social and economic dimensions of their clients' legal problems. She argues that better client outcomes can be achieved when professionals have a deepened understanding of the contextual and interconnected causes and solutions of clients' issues, and a heightened appreciation of other professionals' roles in solving a person's problems (so they can, for example, refer clients to appropriate sources of help). In one longitudinal study, Curran (2017)<sup>13</sup> reports that 91% of clients of a law clinic in a health setting indicated that they would not have seen a lawyer about their legal problem, had they not been referred by a health professional.

Bliss et al. (2012)<sup>14</sup> have also run a successful interdisciplinary clinic at Georgia State University College of Law since 2006, providing law, social work and medical students with opportunities to learn together through joint classes (e.g. exploring each discipline's rules, ethics and beliefs) and attending rounds in both law clinics and hospitals. Bliss et al. comment that the opportunity to learn with (and from) students from other disciplines has better prepared law students for practice in a myriad of ways, including enhancing their problem solving, reflective and collaborative skills,

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<sup>14</sup> Bliss, L & Caley, S & Pettignano, R. (2012). A Model for Interdisciplinary Clinical Education: Medical and Legal Professionals Learning and Working Together to Promote Public Health. *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education*. 2012. 149. 10.19164/ijcle.v18i0.4.



developing a wider community of professionals, and broadening their understanding of social justice issues. The authors also report an increase in medics' recognition of socio-economic factors that can affect people's health and potentially engage legal issues (e.g. a lack of adequate heating exacerbating a child's asthma condition). Over time, this has led to a growth in referrals to the student law clinic, and thus positive outcomes for patients.

Bliss et al.'s findings chime with those of Galowitz (2014)<sup>15</sup>, who also cites improved student problem-solving, reflective and collaborative skills as some of the observed benefits of law and medical student participation in the Medical-Legal Advocacy Clinic at New York University School of Law (ultimately leading to better, more creative responses being provided to clients' various problems, as those problems are considered from a more diverse range of viewpoints).

Interdisciplinary collaboration naturally bring forth some challenges, with Lerner and Taliti (2006)<sup>16</sup> drawing attention to the differences in language, customs and values of the different professions creating anxiety amongst some students (particularly early on in a course), albeit ultimately providing a learning opportunity and mirror for reflection for those students. There are also logistical difficulties in scheduling

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<sup>15</sup> Galowitz, P. (2014). The Opportunities and Challenges of an Interdisciplinary Clinic. *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education*. 18. 165. 10.19164/ijcle.v18i0.5 [accessed 15 5 19]. Available at: <http://www.northumbriajournals.co.uk/index.php/ijcle/issue/view/6>

<sup>16</sup> Lerner, A & Talati, E (2006). Teaching Law And Educating Lawyers: Closing The Gap Through Multidisciplinary Experiential Learning. *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education*. 10. 96 [accessed 20 5 19]. Available at: <http://www.northumbriajournals.co.uk/index.php/ijcle/article/view/80/83>

timetables across different schools / professions. Our top 5 tips can hopefully go some way towards preparing you for such eventualities.

Universities in the UK have generally been slower to recognise and act upon the potential value of partnerships between health and legal services. However, UCL Laws (2017)<sup>17</sup> have recently taken heed of research which posits a positive correlation between unresolved socio-legal problems and ill health (particularly mental wellbeing), and which suggests that people vulnerable to social exclusion are not only more likely to develop such problems, but are also less likely to access relevant support. Their report advocates for the co-location of advice services to increase access for those unable or unwilling to seek advice (e.g. elderly; disabled) and to reduce potential stigma associated with advice receipt (and indeed, they have operated an integrated Legal Advice Clinic from a health and wellbeing centre in east London since January 2016). It is possible that similar initiatives will spring up around the UK in the next decade, in light of the Ministry of Justice's (2019)<sup>18</sup> recent review of legal aid reforms. The report floats the idea of embedding legal services into other services (such as GP surgeries) to create a 'one stop shop', with the aim of better addressing

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<sup>17</sup> UCL Centre for Access to Justice, Health Justice Partnerships in Social Prescribing International Workshop, Background Materials and Full Event Report, November 2017 accessed 15 5 19]. Available at: [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/access-to-justice/sites/access-to-justice/files/hjp\\_workshop\\_background\\_materials\\_and\\_event\\_report\\_2.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/access-to-justice/sites/access-to-justice/files/hjp_workshop_background_materials_and_event_report_2.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Justice, Post-Implementation Review of Part 1 of the **Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012** (p.104), February 2019 [accessed 15 5 19]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo>

issues (such as housing and benefits) which could exacerbate individuals' mental health problems.

In light of the above findings, we encourage you to consider whether there is scope for you to look for potential PLE collaborators within other Schools in your universities, and outside of the legal sphere altogether. BPP staff are currently developing links with colleagues in our Health School and Business School with a view to launching community education packages co-delivered by students from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, nursing and accounting. Part of the educational package is likely to involve law students and students from other disciplines educating each other on the role of their respective professions in identifying and resolving (potentially interconnected) client problems.

Law students delivering PLE workshops to women's support groups about Female Genital Mutilation ("FGM") could, for example, benefit from input from staff and students from healthcare, education and social care fields, in order to gain an understanding of the role of multiple agencies in supporting FGM survivors, and tackling the underlying causes of this criminal activity. The potential benefits of a Knife Crime workshop for youth offenders could be greatly increased if it moved beyond the legal consequences of being caught in possession of a knife, and medical students spoke of the devastating impact of a knife wound on a victim, and addressed myths about "safe" areas of the body to stab someone. Impending updates to the Relationship and Sex Education national curriculum (due to come into force in

September 2020)<sup>19</sup> include the introduction of topics such as mental wellbeing and digital resilience; the laws relating to sexting, revenge porn and sexual consent; cyberbullying; and keeping personal information private in an online environment. This surely provides opportunity for collaboration amongst law, health and technology-minded students and professionals, in order to deliver relevant relationship and sex education workshops to school aged children. These and other potential multi-disciplinary collaborations would fit well with the 10 Year Vision's goal (number 7) for PLE to be understood as beneficial, and utilised by/embedded in other sectors that do not traditionally deliver PLE (e.g. health, banks, insurance, housing).

Evaluation of the first 12 months of BPP Schools' joint initiative is planned, and we look forward to hearing about progress made by similar initiatives, such as Portsmouth University's establishment of a multidisciplinary service practice in a community setting, between the Schools of Law and Nursing (with ambitions to eventually incorporate the Schools of Pharmacy, Dentistry and Social Work). Curran et al. (2018)<sup>20</sup> report that the first stage of the pilot at Portsmouth University will involve students from a variety of disciplines working in community settings (e.g.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-relationships-and-health-education-in-schools> [accessed 15 11 2018]

<sup>20</sup> Curran C, Ryder I and Strevens, C (2018): Educating future practitioners through an Interdisciplinary Student Clinic: *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education*, Vol 25, No 2, pp 4 – 34. Available at: <http://www.northumbriajournals.co.uk/index.php/ijcle/article/view/693> [accessed 14 12 2018]

community centres and care homes) to provide educational workshops on topics such as Powers of Attorney, accommodation rights, and access to benefits by the elderly.

### **Closing comments**

Ultimately, as Green and Johnson (2015) acknowledge, building a successful collaboration cannot be reduced to a set formula. It is a somewhat organic process which requires constant nurturing. You may find some of the suggestions in this article trite, but we hope they serve as a useful jumping off point to shape initial conversations with your potential PLE collaborators. They may have equal applicability to collaborations on other *pro bono* projects (e.g. clinics), and, indeed, working on internal projects with your own colleagues. We wish you the best of luck with your collaborative PLE projects – may many hands make light work!