

## ***Bromley by Bow Centre research and evaluation project: integrated practice - focus on older people***

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**The Bromley by Bow Centre is an arts-based community organisation that has sustained organic growth over 20 years in the face of what one of its founding members calls “the Sargasso Sea of church and public service bureaucracies”. The Centre provides a multitude of activities and learning contexts for a multi-ethnic population in London’s East End who routinely contend with the effects of poverty, chronic illness, crime and the socially dislocating effects of migration.**

The report tells the story of a three-year research collaboration between the authors and the Centre, funded by the Dunhill Medical Trust. It shows how a mixture of biographical, observational and action research methods can be used in qualitative evaluation. It characterises the Centre’s model through the lens of its work with older people, and sets out its implications for policy in a number of interrelated areas including health promotion, social entrepreneurship, active citizenship, integrated working and community regeneration. In surprising ways, the Centre both exemplifies and challenges New Labour policy and practice.

The report shows how the evaluation team elaborated their research design to explore how narrative practice and visual media contribute to an interpersonally responsive organisation. It pays detailed attention to the role of the arts in engaging community members, in facilitating a reparative culture within the organisation, and in sustaining a constant flow of creativity within a regime of health and welfare regulation which has often seemed hostile to the Centre’s ethos. The policy significance of the evaluation lies in its identifying of the conditions of growth, survival and transferability of the Centre’s distinctive model of holistic care.

**Lynn Froggett** is Reader in Psychosocial Welfare at the University of Central Lancashire and has a background in social work and social policy. Her interests are in psychosocial research and practice methodologies, health and welfare organisations, and the role of the humanities in professional education and knowledge generation. Author of a psychoanalytic study of the post-war welfare state (*Love, hate and welfare*, Policy Press 2002), she is joint editor of the *Journal of Social Work Practice*.

**Prue Chamberlayne** is Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Open University. She is a sociologist with a strong policy background and has extensive experience in biographical and narrative research methods in the UK and in international settings. Among her publications in this area are *Cultures of care* (Policy Press 2000) and a number of edited books, especially *Biographical methods and professional practice* (Policy Press 2004).

**Tom Wengraf** is a sociologist concerned to develop psycho-societal research methodologies. He authored *Qualitative interviewing: biographic narrative and semi-structured method* (Sage 2001), and co-edited with Prue Chamberlayne *Biography and social exclusion in Europe: experiences and life journeys* (Policy Press 2002).

**Stefanie Buckner**, Research Assistant to the project, has a background in geography and in care for older people. She is now undertaking a PhD at the University of Central Lancashire that builds on the Bromley by Bow project by investigating older people’s perceptions of the impact of local regeneration on their lives in a comparative way.

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**Copies of the 160-page report can be downloaded from the project website:**

[www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/health/socialwork/bromleybybow/index.htm](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/health/socialwork/bromleybybow/index.htm)

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