

The Health Inequalities Academy

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Our Research Management Lead Rose Dewey reflects on the recent launch of the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership's Health Inequalities Academy, which aims to close the health and wellbeing gap across West Yorkshire and Harrogate by working collaboratively: <https://www.wyhppartnership.co.uk/our-priorities/population-health-management/health-inequalities-academy>

I was privileged to be able to attend the launch event for the [Health Inequalities Academy](#) last week. It was eye-opening and inspiring, and it fills me with optimism about the work that is being done on health inequalities in our area. It was great to see the wide range of people collaborating across the system and more widely, which highlights the appetite present in West Yorkshire and Harrogate at the moment for working together across organisations towards a common goal – including NHS organisations, local councils and the voluntary and community sector. The academy is part of the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership.

Of course it is no surprise that health inequalities exist, but seeing some of the figures is always shocking. As all the speakers highlighted, the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the health inequalities that are present in our society.

It was really interesting to hear consistent opposition to the term 'hard to reach' as speakers insisted that we need to change the focus – not speaking about 'hard to reach' as if it's their fault and something they are doing wrong. We should focus instead on what we are doing that is failing to connect with people. One suggestion was to rename the group 'need to reach', and another suggestion was to emphasise the fact that it is the services which are hard to reach for these groups.

As with so many things, research is key to understanding and finding ways to tackle health inequalities. The Bradford Inequalities Research Unit was funded as part of the CCG's [Reducing Inequalities in Communities](#) funding and is linked with the longstanding [Born in Bradford](#) research project. Both are exciting initiatives progressing work in this area.

There is also an appetite for sharing, and there is a repository (currently being revamped) to share information that is coming out of the work.

It's been really positive, and I look forward to seeing more and more outcomes from the academy as research continues. I remain hopeful for positive change, continuing and growing collaboration, and progress towards the shared goal of an equal and fair society.