# NOT-EQUAL

**EPSRC Network+: Social Justice through the Digital Economy**

**Call for Collaborative Proposals: Application Form**

We are seeking to fund proposals for Not-Equal's second call for collaborative proposals. For full guidance please see details of the call on the Not-Equal website.

Pilot research projects can be between 6-8 months in length. We expect to fund up to 7 projects of up to £40k (80% FEC) for this funding call (will consider shorter projects with smaller budgets).

Please submit this form before the deadline of **5pm, 29th May 2020** to notequal@newcastle.ac.uk, with the subject line 'Application Submission'.
Applicants will be advised on the outcome of their proposal by the 30th July 2020.

| GENERAL INFORMATION | |
| --- | --- |
| **Lead Applicant (PI):** Dr Yvonne Skipper<br><br>**Email address: Yvonne.skipper@glasgow.ac.uk**<br><br>**Job Title:** Senior Lecturer in Psychology<br><br>**Department:** School of Education<br><br>**Organisation:** University of Glasgow | **Co-Investigators (names and organisations):** Dr Daniel Jolley (Northumbria University)<br><br>**Email address:** daniel.r.jolley@northumbria.ac.uk<br><br>**Collaborative Partner(s):** Joe Reddington (eQuality Time)<br><br>**Project Title:** Tackling Fake News via Fake People: Co-creating a toolkit to help young people recognise fake news<br><br>**Project Tagline:** Can you trust what you read online? |

| WHICH CHALLENGE AREA AND TOPICS DOES YOUR PROPOSAL RESPOND TO? | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CHALLENGE AREA** | **X** | **TOPIC** | **X** |
| **Algorithmic Social Justice** | | **Recognition** | |
| **Digital Security for All** | x | **Re-distribution** | |
| **Fairer Futures for Business and Workforce** | | **Enablement & Radical Trust** | x |
| **Topics across challenge areas** | | **Proactive Resilience & Reparation** | |
| | | **Accountability & Care** | |

*Please provide a summary of your proposed research project. Please include an overview of the aims, impact, innovations, method, team and how it aligns with Not-Equal. This section should be understandable to the general public (<400 words).*

We will co-create, test, and widely share a school-based intervention for young people (aged 13) that helps them make better choices around their sources of information, and how they share information.

It's hard to feel secure if you don't know who or what to trust online. Fake news reaches more people and spreads more quickly than the truth (Science, 2018) and is believed around 75% of the time (Silveman & Singer-Vine, 2016), meaning millions of people may have been fooled by fake news (Allcot & Gentzkow, 2017). Until young people have the tools to work out the truth, they are likely to be fooled by false online information.



Worse, many young people do not trust 'experts' and authority figures such as teachers (Midgley, Eccles & Feldlaufer, 1991). However, many do trust YouTube personalities and 40% think their favourite influencer understands them better than their friends (O'Neil-Hart & Blumenstein, 2016). Our innovation is to get relevant social media influencers to lead virtual workshops directly with young people, trading on their social currency to maximise the positive impact of the workshop. Fabienne (left) is one of the influencers who will lead a workshop.

The intervention will be co-created by young people, teachers, academics and influencers. Co-created interventions are more engaging, impactful and have higher uptake (Balazs & Morello-Frosch, 2013), and this will be the first co-created intervention exploring fake news.

We will test the intervention with 360 adolescents to see how it improves their ability to make good choices around online information. This will be measured before and after the intervention, and a few weeks later. There will also be a control group who do not complete the intervention until later, to give us a baseline.
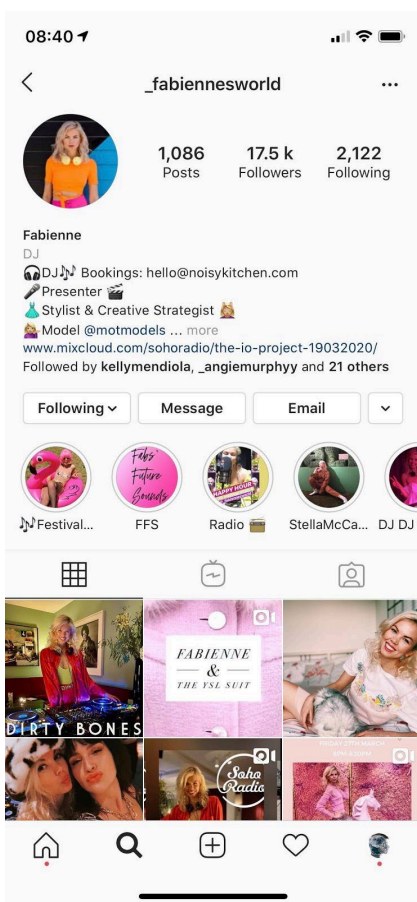
Our research team is interdisciplinary:

● **Dr Yvonne Skipper,** based in education, has expertise in co-creating interventions to achieve real-world impact.
● **Dr Daniel Jolley**, a social psychologist, is an expert in the psychology of conspiracy theories and fake news.
● **Joe Reddington** a third-sector designer and technology expert.

Our project ticks the following boxes for Not-Equal:

- 'co-create a digital security that is more inclusive'
- 'freedom and empowerment promoting trust, care and collaboration by working in partnership with educators and young people'.

We believe that this is a scalable intervention that could change a lot of people's lives and become a self-sustaining social enterprise, following rigorous evaluation.

## 2. HOW DOES YOUR PROPOSAL ALIGN WITH THE THEMES AND OBJECTIVES OF NOT-EQUAL?

*Please describe how your proposal responds to the second call for collaborations and how does your proposal enhance a cross-disciplinary way of working. (<300 words).*

We designed this project around "*Enablement and Radical Trust*". We want to enable communities to organise and co-create responses to challenges they face - for that to happen, people must feel comfortable forming digital communities and need the skills to evaluate the information and the people in those communities.

We will co-create an intervention to help young people overcome challenges associated with fake news via fake people. We are purposefully open about the final form of the co-created intervention as we want to be open to all possibilities, but our initial thinking is that it could involve developing and delivering sessions exploring fake news using group discussions, question and answer sessions with our Youtube celebrities and activities involving participants designing and spotting fake news.

In line with Not Equal, we believe that security is not just protection from harm, which suggests doing things 'to' or 'for' people rather than 'with' them.  We agree with Wrigley's (2014) stance that for knowledge to be useful for all learners it must attend to issues of power and inequality. We will use a relational approach to co-creation (Skipper & Pepler, under review) to break down power differentials and ensure all voices are heard during the design phase.  Our team has extensive experience in using co-creation to develop interventions, many of which have now become self-sustaining social enterprises, leading to long term change in people's lives.

Our team is multi-disciplinary (Education, Psychology and Digital Charity), multi-institution, and carries a wide range of interests.  With our wider network of contacts, including a large group of schools from across the UK, we have the expertise to design and test the project thoroughly, and then scale it up to benefit a wide group of people. We will disseminate the intervention via our networks and dedicated project website.

## 3. CASE FOR SUPPORT

*Please describe your proposed project. This should include your aims and objectives, the design and method of your project, context, background literature and data to be collected. Please also indicate why this research is important and for whom (<1000 words).*

**SUMMARY:** This project will co-create, test, and disseminate an intervention to help young people to recognise fake news and 'fake people' online.

**BACKGROUND:** Fake news is an intentionally fabricated article that is verifiably false which could mislead the audience (Tandoc, Lim & Ling, 2018). The spread of fake news poses serious challenges to societies. It reaches more people and spreads six times faster through online sources than the truth (*Science*, 2018). People believe

fake news around 75% of the time (Silveman & Singer-Vine, 2016), meaning that many millions of people have been fooled by fake news (Allcot and Gentzkow, 2017). Fake news also impacts behaviour, Gunther, Beck and Nisbet (2018) found that during the 2016 USA elections, fake news impacted the way individuals voted.

However, much of the work on fake news is focussed on adults and less is known about young people. This is important as many young people get their news via social media; around 44% of people list Facebook as their regular source for news, and this is only likely to increase (Gotfried & Shearer, 2016).  Social media is notorious for spreading fake news, for example, Facebook leads to referrals to untrustworthy news sources over 15% of the time compared to authoritative news sources 6% of the time (Guess, Niham & Reifler, 2020). As more than 71% of adolescents have a social media profile (Ofcom, 2019) it is vital to help young people to recognise fake news online.

The reason why fake news is convincing on social media may be due to our methods of processing.  According to the Systematic-Heuristic model of persuasion (Chaiken, 1979), there are two routes for processing information. The systematic route is where information is deeply analysed, focussing on content and argument. The heuristic route relies on cognitive shortcuts, with a focus on the source of the information, and rules of thumb e.g. 'experts are trustworthy'.  When we have time to process information, we use the systematic route, but when we are 'scrolling' on social media, we use the heuristic route as each piece is only briefly attended before moving on to another piece (Oulasvirta, Rattenbury, Ma & Raita, 2012). Our focus on 'fake people' taps into the heuristics people may use when deciding if a piece of information is trustworthy.

Focussing on 'fake people' is also likely to make the intervention relevant and appealing to adolescents. Adolescents spend more time with peers with less adult oversight, meaning they need to navigate new and more challenging social relationships (Berndt & Murphy, 2002). They are typically very concerned with the development of their own authentic identity and the identities of others (Eriksson, 1982) which means they are likely to find the focus on 'fake people' and online personas engaging.

While other interventions that tackle this issue exist, such as Bad News (https://www.getbadnews.com/#intro), Reality Check (https://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/educational-games/reality-check-game) and Fake or Foto (http://www.fakeaphoto.com/real-or-fake-photo-game/), they have not been co-created with users, meaning they are less likely to reflect the needs and experiences of the group they purport to help.  Our intervention will include young people as co-creators of the intervention to overcome this.

In addition, influencers will assist in the co-creation and delivery of the intervention.  Many young people feel that their favourite Influencers understand them better than their friends do (O'Neil-Hart & Blumenstein, 2016). Furthermore, young people are less likely to trust information which comes from those in a position of power, such as academics or unknown adults, but more likely to trust information from people they perceive to be like themselves (Bocian, et al, 2018).  Influencer and peer engagement in the development of the materials will make the intervention engaging and trustworthy for young people.

**PROPOSED PROJECT:** The intervention will be co-created so the design has not been finalised, but it will likely explore fake news using group discussions, question and answer sessions with our Youtube celebrities and activities involving designing and spotting fake news. It will also involve some CATS (Cross Age Teaching; Angelo & Cross, 1993) where students who are participating in the intervention design materials for others in their school. Evaluation will include a pre, post and delayed design. One group of participants will receive our intervention in 6 PSHE (personal social and health education) lessons, while a control group will receive their usual PSHE lessons. Comparing scores on the test over time and between the groups will allow us to explore the efficacy of the intervention.  Participants will be aged 13 and recruited from N=4 Schools in Glasgow (total children = 360).  We

are working with this age group as internet use increases on entry to secondary school and 13 is the youngest age at which young people can have a profile on the main social media sites (Ofcom, 2019). 180 students will be in the experimental group and the others will form the control group. The control group will complete the intervention half a term later than the intervention group.

We will collect both qualitative (interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) data to allow us to fully understand our participants' experiences of the intervention. Quantitative data will include psychologically validated measures such as:

- Adolescent Conspiracy Belief Questionnaire
- Ability to identify fake news
- Confidence in identifying fake news
- Trust in online networks/online information

Qualitative data from interviews will explore which elements of the intervention students found particularly engaging and helpful and their thoughts on how it could be improved.

The project aligns with national priorities as recently the Department for International Development pledged £500,000 to address the spread of misinformation during epidemics (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-to-tackle-global-spread-of-coronavirus-fake-news). In addition, Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of fake news and a rapid response unit within the Cabinet Office has been developed to remove fake news and harmful content to "to stem the spread of falsehoods and rumours, which could cost lives". However, very little is known about how young people navigate fake news online and how we can help them to do this effectively; this is a gap the current research will fill.

## 4. RESILIENCE PLAN

*Please describe how you would carry out your project with social distance measures in place. For example, deliver workshops via Zoom instead of in person (<300 words).*

If social distancing measures remain in place after the school Summer holidays, we will be able to undertake the co-creation of the intervention online. This will be done using Zoom for meetings and shared spaces such as Google Drive online to annotate and comment on documents. To ensure that the young people in the co-creation team are protected in this process, we will gain parental consent for them to be involved whether this takes place in person or online and their teachers will always attend meetings which they are involved in as an extra measure.

Furthermore, if social distancing is still in place in January, when we intend to run the workshops in school, we will be able to host these securely online so that participants can participate at school or at home. Again, parental consent for their participation will be obtained before they complete the questionnaire or the intervention. The questionnaires will be hosted securely online and the intervention can also be securely delivered on host protected Zoom meeting. Interview data will also be collected securely using Zoom, following parental consent.

## 5. INNOVATION

*Please explain the innovative aspects of the proposed research project (<150 words).*

- ✔ Our project will be *co-created* - this is when academics bring their knowledge of current theory and research and work in partnership with practitioners (teachers and influencers), and users, (young people),

to create an intervention based on this shared knowledge. This is a powerful technique and has been shown to lead to increased behavioural change.

✓ Our intervention draws together a diverse team with backgrounds in technology, education and psychology and this diversity will bring depth to our project.

✓ The focus is on young people, while much of the existing work has been conducted with adults.

✓ Our focus is innovative as instead of exploring 'fake news' we will focus on 'fake people'. This innovative take on fake news is likely to engage young people who are in the process of forming their own identities and engaging with the broader world to understand their place in it.

## 6. NON-ACADEMIC PARTNERS

*Please explain how your non-academic partners will engage with the project e.g. in-kind time, use of facilities, etc. (<150 words).*

We have three sets of non-academic partners:

- *eQuality Time* a charity, ([http://equalitytime.co.uk/](http://equalitytime.co.uk/)) is providing admin support as well as intervention design and web development, alongside contributing to Joe Reddington's time.

- *Schools* will release staff and students to spend time working with us on designing the intervention. Our partner schools provisionally include Hillhead, Whitehill and Notre Dame in Glasgow and these schools draw on a wide spectrum of young people, many of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds. This group will be finalised when there is less uncertainty around Covid-19. To ensure our project is robust if schools are not teaching face to face in September, the co-creation will be able to take place using online meetings and collaborative spaces.

- *Influencers* we will recruit influencers who have a high number of followers (more than 15,000) and whose content targets young people. Fabienne (see above) has already agreed to partner with us in this project.

## 7. SOCIAL IMPACT

*Please describe the expected social impact of your project (<300 words). This should be understandable to the general public. Please note that the community panel will consider and assess this section against the following criteria. To what extent does the proposal:*
*1) Consider and respond to the needs of a community (e.g. provide an example of the beneficiaries of your project and the value it would generate for them);*
*2) Help to overcome/reduce/avoid barriers to access and participation in technology and services (e.g. provide an example of the barriers and how your project addresses such barriers);*
*3) Support new connections between communities of interest (e.g. provide an example of how the project creates opportunities for new connections between people and/or fosters community building).*

Our project is responding to an important need currently in our community: increasing the digital literacy of young people as highlighted by the Digital Glasgow Strategy (2018). However, this will not be done 'to' our community but done 'with' them, by co-creating the intervention. At the end of the project, we will have a co-created intervention focused on helping young people detect fake news via 'fake people'. This will be freely available online on our dedicated project website for other schools and youth groups to use internationally. It will be publicized by us, our partners and potentially our influencers, thus creating reach for our project.

The project will reduce barriers to access and participation in technology as it will give young people the skills and confidence to navigate the complex world of online information, both at the local level of their networks and on the broader level of the internet.

The project will also create a community. We will convene a team of academics, educators, influencers and young people who will co-create the intervention. These will be from schools across the city of Glasgow. This will create new connections between these people. We will use the concept of "Ba" (Nonaka & Konno, 1998) a shared space for emerging relationships to achieve this. Ba is distinct from typical interactions as it focuses on knowledge creation and provides a platform where people can share and integrate their knowledge. Ba involves people actively participating and transcending their perspectives and experiences.

## 8. WORK PLAN

*Please outline the work-plan for your proposed research/activity (<200 words).*

**September to December 2020**: Co-creation of the intervention materials between academics, teachers, influencers and young people. Even if schools are not open, we will be able to co-create the intervention by meeting and sharing documents electronically. Obtain ethical approval for the research from the University of Glasgow.

**January 2021**: Pre-test pupil knowledge of and confidence in spotting fake news.

**January-February half term (6 weeks)**): Delivery of intervention during PSHE to intervention group. Control group to complete usual PSHE lessons.

**February half term**: Post-test. Pupils will repeat the questionnaires from January. Data (quantitative and qualitative via interviews) exploring their experience of the intervention will also be collected.

**February after half term:** Control group complete the intervention while intervention group complete usual PSHE lessons.

**March, end of term (6 weeks):** Delayed post-test. Pupils repeat the questionnaires.

**April**: Analysis of data and preparation of publications. Update intervention materials based on feedback. Preparation of video for dissemination. Dissemination via conferences.

Materials will be hosted on a dedicated website and will be released under an open licence for use.

## 9. HOW WILL YOU COMMUNICATE THE FINDINGS OF YOUR RESEARCH TO THE PUBLIC?

*Please outline your dissemination plans e.g. events, networking with local support groups, creating vlogs, writing blogs, etc. (<200 words).*

**Dissemination of the toolkit:**

We will develop a project website which will host the materials we create along with a teacher pack explaining their use. These will be freely available.

To promote the website, we will:

- promote it on social media
- invite our collaborators to share it via their networks
- ask Press Offices of the University of Glasgow and Northumbria University to assist us in dissemination

We will also develop a video which will outline the intervention and findings in an easily accessible way to further encourage people to access our materials.

**Academic conference:**

The project will be disseminated academically via a publication and presentation at the British Psychological Society annual conference.

**Policy impact:**

We will also produce a summary report which will be made available to members of the UK and Scottish Parliament (e.g., Culture, Media, and Sports Select Committee) as an avenue to engage policy makers.

## 10. EXISTING FUNDING

*Will any existing funding be used on this project (e.g. PhD funding)? If so, please provide information about these and how they will be used for the project (<150 words).*

There is no existing funding which will be used for this project. However, the University of Glasgow will be contributing £8000 towards indirect cost and overheads. We will also apply for extra funding from the University of Glasgow Knowledge Exchange Fund to further disseminate our work.

## 11. EXPERIENCE & INTERACTION OF TEAM

*Please indicate any previous relevant experience, qualifications and publications of the lead applicant and team. If applicable, please detail how the PI-postdoctoral partnership will be beneficial (<300 words).*

***Dr Yvonne Skipper*** has extensive experience in working with teachers and community partners to co-create impactful award-winning interventions. For example, she worked with teachers and Stoke City Council to develop an intervention to promote a malleable view of intelligence and thus enhance literacy. The intervention successfully met these outcomes and is now in use in every primary school in the city.

*Relevant publications:*

Jolley, D., Douglas, K. M., Skipper, Y., Thomas, E., & Cookson, D. (under review). Measuring adolescents' beliefs in conspiracy theories: Development and validation of the Adolescent Conspiracy Beliefs Questionnaire (ACBQ).

Skipper, Y & Pepler, D. J. (accepted). Knowledge Mobilization: Stepping into Interdependent and Relational Space. Action Research Journal.

Garnett, N. & Skipper (in prep). I think I can: A co-created toolkit to promote growth mindset and literacy in Year 1 pupils.

Leman, P. J., Skipper, Y., Watling, D., & Rutland, A. (2016). Conceptual change in science is facilitated through peer collaboration for boys but not for girls. *Child Development.*

**Dr Daniel Jolley** is an expert in the psychology of conspiracy theories and has led a funded project exploring conspiracy beliefs in young people for the first time in the UK. He has published on the social consequences of conspiracy theories, alongside having extensive experience of communicating to the public. For example, in 2020, he has been interviewed on BBC News and BBC World News and appeared in *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*,

and *Huffington Post* and appeared on BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Five Live and TalkRADIO (see https://www.danieljolley.co.uk/media).

*Joe Reddington* leads the digital charity equality time, for which he has designed and delivered a range of interventions for young people, several of which have gone on to become self-funding as a result of receiving initial starting grants (see http://equalitytime.co.uk/).

## 12. BUDGET BREAKDOWN

*Please provide a detailed budget breakdown and justification for your budget - for example: salary grade, point, duration and %FTE: specified journeys or conferences; identified items and quantities of consumables (<300 words).*

**Staffing:**
- The bulk of the funding will be used to employ a GTA at 2 days per week on Grade 6 (£10,862.12). This person will take the lead on the day to day coordination and running of the project.
- Buyout will be provided for Dr Skipper who will lead on the co-creative elements of the project and dissemination (10% of time, £5,261.82).
- Buyout will be provided for Dr Jolley who will contribute to co-creation and preparation of publications and policy briefs (5% of time, £2,205).
- Funding will also be provided to buy out Joe Reddington through eQuality Time to develop digital tools needed for the delivery of the intervention as well as the website. Joe will also be involved in the co-creation of the intervention. This rate was agreed with eQuality Time (£4,400).
- Other funding will be used to pay for the time of our Youtube celebrities in developing the intervention and delivering it (£50 per hour, £700). We have contacted several possible celebrities and they have agreed this is a fair rate for their time.

**Non-staff costs:**
- We have allocated some funding for travel for the RA to attend local schools to collect data on the impact of the intervention (£100).
- Finally, we allocate funding to produce a high-quality video which will be used to disseminate the intervention (such as Carse and Waterman, £600). In addition, we will attend two academic conferences, the British Psychological Society Annual Conference and the British Psychological Society Developmental Section to disseminate our work (£500 x 2 = £1000).

## 13. TOTAL PROJECT COST

*Please list in GBP under the headings – Overall Cost, Staff, Travel and Other*

|  | Directly incurred costs (80%) | Directly incurred costs (100%) |
|---|---|---|
| Staff | 18,183.15 | 22,728.94 |
| Non-Staff Costs: Consumables | 1,840.00 | 2.300.00 (video, Youtube celebrity, conference fees) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Non-Staff Costs: Facilities/Equipment | 0 | 0 |
| Non-Staff Costs: Travel | 80.00 | 100.00 |
| Non-Staff Costs: Estates (RA's only) | 1,261.73 | 1,557.16 |
| Non-Staff Costs: Indirect (RA's only) | 10,635.12 | 13,293.90 |
| **Overall Cost\*** | Total Not-Equal Funding Requested: £32,000 | Total for information only: 40,000 |

**Directly Incurred Posts**

| Role | Post | Start Date | Period on Project (months) | % of Full Time | Scale | Increment Date | Basic Starting Salary | Super-Annuation and NI (£) | Total cost on grant-80% FEC (£) | Total cost on grant-100% FEC (£) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RA | RA | 01/09/2020 | 8 | 40 | 6 pt 27 | 01/09/2021 | 8.251 | 2,611 | 8,689.60 | 10,862. |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

*\*Please note you are able to claim for RA time and RA relevant FTE related costs, PI/Co-I time and other non-staff costs. You are not able to claim for FTE related costs attributed to PI/Co-I time.*

**Further Information**

If you have any further questions regarding this call for proposals, please contact notequal@newcastle.ac.uk or Rachel Sparks (Not-Equal Project Manager) on 0191 2088268.

that you wish to continue to receive this information: if you don't or you do not respond, we will delete your personal details within one calendar month.

We won't share your data with anyone outside the University, unless required to by law, and it will be stored securely within Open Lab at Newcastle University.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact rec-man@newcastle.ac.uk

If you would like more information about how we manage personal data more generally, including your rights under law, and the contact details of the University's Data Protection Officer, please see our website: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/data.protection/PrivacyNotice.htm