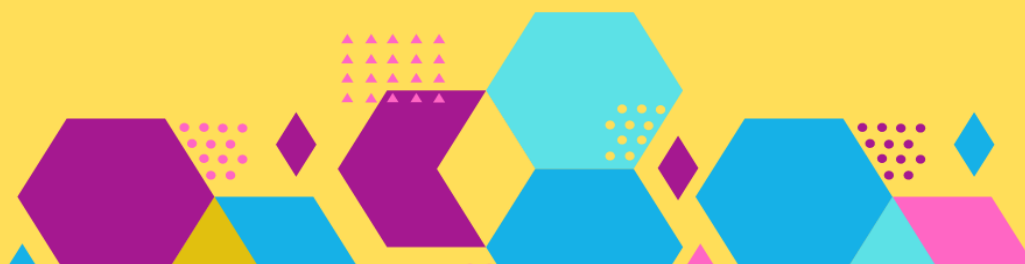# PARTICIPATION NETWORK ONLINE EVENT
Thursday 22 April
13.00 - 15.00

Trauma responsive participation

The below quotes and comments all came from across the eight breakout room discussions.

What does Trauma-Informed Practice look like in participation?

Relationship-based Practice

- Everything should be 'Done with and not to' people
- It's about building relationships and that takes time time time!
- Being unable to sit alongside someone is difficult. Giving a hug or holding a hand if someone is upset is something I will never take for granted again.
- BE A GOOD HUMAN, BE KIND AND LISTEN!
- The best way to be trauma-informed is relationship building – talking to the young people, ensuring they know they don't have to share their story, facilitators being aware and sensitive to all of this at all times – especially with new participants or guests etc!
- Recognition that trauma doesn't define who you are – recognising skills, etc and recognising sense of purpose rather than focussing solely on someone's trauma
- After face to face meetings stopped for the second time after Christmas, it has been a lot harder to engage young people. We are struggling with the relationships and keeping them intact – it just shows how important they really are, now more than ever!
- We have encouraged workers who already have an established relationship with a young person to try to maintain contact of some sort at the very very least.
- Relationship based practice is the most important thing!
- Often people might get involved based on existing social connection, so how can we create and reassure people that participation will happen in a safe place.
- Keen for all of our participation work to be relational – didn't want to be parachuting into young people's lives and asking difficult questions that may be challenging. We started with building relationships before exploring that work. Spend time, having tea, spending time with young people – didn't do any work with young people for about seven months.

- Spent time for months building relationships before starting to explore any work – having a relationship and a connection is the first priority. Not just with young people, but with the adults that are around about them too.
- Relational participation work does not feel as responsive and connected over a screen – it's really hard for all of us.

Open and honest conversation

- Being mindful of where people are at in their story
- Be prepared for discussions – preparation and set up is just as important as the work/conversation
- Understanding that every young person you are working with has their own individual history of trauma is important.
- We need to have good enough relationships with young people that they feel safe and able to have open and honest conversations about what they need.

Having the Right approach

- Preparation – speaking with significant adults who have been around the child whilst we have not, and checking in with young people before sessions about how they are feeling
- Mindfulness – Considering the feelings of all those involved in the participation cycle and approaching everything and everyone with kindness. Treading carefully but bravely.
- Use of language – Using language that the people involved want to use, not assuming that the "professional" language is the right one to use.
- Safety – Being clear about the purpose and setting agreements about how we work together, making sure that participations have the tools or people that they need to take care of themselves following the session
- Trust – Taking the time to get to know people and earing their trust through honesty and boundaries agreed together at the start of any work
- Choice – Making sure that everyone has the choice to participate or not and that everyone has a say over how sessions are run and how they participate
- Valuing people – Sending out care packages, making sure that we take the time to thank people and have quality interactions not just focussing on the focus of the participation e.g creative arts or music workshops
- Environment – Talked about participation group being offered the same room used for Looked After Children's meetings – not an appropriate and potentially triggering space. Need for ownership over their environment.
- Let young people choose if they are meeting up for work or if it's a chill night – let's not have back to back meetings
- It is difficult to plan fun activities when it is uncertain if they will be able to go ahead because of lockdown restrictions. The unpredictability is affecting everyone.
- Offering a variety of ways to interact is important as is working at a pace that is comfortable for the individual young person. There is pressure on tired workers to be 'upbeat' and creative all the time when they are tired and fed up too.
- Many young people have 'video fatigue'. Many are reluctant to appear on screen alongside others.
- Each young person needs to be given a choice about what subjects they want to talk about and how much information they wish to share. Providing support following personal information-sharing can be challenging.
- Be mindful that young people are perhaps studying/ working during the day on Teams/ Zoom and so evening meet ups should not always be online

- Keep connected – even if sharing photos on WhatsApp of nice scenes
- Sending things through the post to keep connected – e.g. seeds of change
- Chill nights: pottery making, etc.
- About creating a space where people can share or not share.
- Zoom is good – but also back to texts, calls, WhatsApp groups and not emails, let's not forget practice and tools that we know works, rather than jumping in to automatically using zoom – keep all options open an adaptable for what young people want
- Young people use a lot of data on phones – harder to get a credit score and get phone contracts – so need to be mindful of this – so helpful to offer top ups and dongles to ensure they can be part of the groups
- Could keep online space open as well as physical meet ups to allow everyone being able to connect in their preferred way – keep all options open to allow greater inclusivity!
- Important to think about the process before – during and after
- Like a lot of what we talk about senior buy in is a must
- Ring fencing time is a luxury but this shouldn't be the case
- Check in that CYP want to continue the conversation or is there a safer space or time. Home is often their only safe space and they may want to leave it untarnished
- Be comfortable with silence
- Create unplanned time. Spend time having fun, learning more from CYP
- Spend more time outside with CYP
- Choice in participation – need to appreciate how sensitive it can feel to be involved in participation, need to have options for different ways to be involved that meet their needs
- Struck by the different activities that involve the body – i.e. pottery
- Need for different mediums for involvement – to meet different needs including of age groups
- Participation work with younger children – 'doing' things means that you don't ask them to speak directly on topics that might be difficult, but conversations can arise naturally and be led by children/young people
- Respecting different needs online – zoom etc very visual, and people have different needs/feelings about use of visual medium, webcams etc.

Skills & Training

- It's a highly skilled 'thing' and often goes underappreciated – workers ability to hold space, read room and engage young people all at the same time
- We are at the start of our journey with Trauma-Informed participation. We did the NHS training on trauma with internal staff and are now thinking about how to embed it throughout our organisation with all of our policies and projects.
- Language and communications are key in combatting stigma around trauma. We need to move away from the language of 'saving' people and trauma being 'irreversibly damaging' etc
- Being trauma-informed should be the foundation of all work we do
- We hold workshops around trauma to try and help people understand what it is
- Mindfulness is so good but it isn't really taken serious. We need more research and awareness around mindfulness and its uses in relation to trauma.
- If a young person discloses something to you, let them know about the safeguarding stuff in a clear way – language is so imports
- More trauma aware rather than informed – more sensitive language
- Need to be mindful of what everyone else is feeling in the room
- STAF are inviting people to be observers to see what positive facilitation looks like – positive feedback – and learning how, why did we create this space, how do we keep it so safe and open
- Senior leaders in police going along to STAF to learn more about being more trauma informed – Glasgow specifically but nationally also
- Many facilitators tried to replicate the normal in digital which didn't always work – more focus on what digital platforms can do and lean in to these

- Understand and acknowledge what has happened to people, as behaviour as an adaptive response rather than a deficit approach to their behaviour

Being self-aware as a worker

- Don't assume anything
- Be ready and don't bring your own "stuff"
- Your response is vital – hold the safe space
- We need to always remember the importance of being trauma-informed when writing care records and other paperwork etc, because these children and young people will grow up and likely read them one day. We must not re traumatise them through the language we have used.
- As staff, we need to put our feelings aside when being trauma-informed and having conversations with young people about trauma because their safety and feelings are so important. We need to hold the space for them.
- There is an unspoken fear about doing something that is not trauma-informed, wearing a certain perfume or playing a certain song etc.
- A big part of it is supporting participants to be self-actualised and be self-transcendent – as practitioners we need to understand our own trauma and what we bring into participation spaces so we can master ourselves and be there for others. This is a journey and not a linear journey. We need our own development. Agreement for this.
- Be aware of your own response. We are experiencing this from our place of safety (our homes). Be aware of sharing content into people's homes (young people and staff)
- Understanding our own trauma is important: not all facilitators come from an educational therapeutic background or social background – what training do facilitators need for this to support this rather than just learning on the job – preparatory work before hand to support this development – need organisational culture and structure to support this and create the environment through which we can regularly receive training etc. and development around trauma – sometimes trauma can still be seen as a sign of weakness. Challenge to create organisational structures to hold and support participation where trauma is present. Don't think there is one answer, will be different for all, but key is support and supervision for facilitators – needs to understand compassion fatigue and secondary trauma (need to be alert to these dangers on workforce)
- As a facilitator, you need to understand the individual and their circumstances before working together as a group – opportunity for building relationship and disclosure, starting to feel safe
- Should not be an expectation that people need to share – just knowing there is a similar background with others in a group

What do we need to think about in order to be Trauma-Responsive as we transition back out of lockdown?

Listening to what young people want and need

- Digital whiteboards, games, YouTube, blended approach: physical resources in advance of sessions with homework so actual group is sharing and reflective space
- Ask young people: what do you want to do? What do you know is a good thing to do? Do you want to facilitate a session?
- Lockdown brought up a lot of trauma, not understanding why we couldn't see them. Feelings of abandonment and rejection. It's taken a lot to build those relationships up again.
- Our kids are struggling in general with lockdown so coming back to group is scary for them

- We have been offering 1-1 with young people who are anxious about coming back, but we are lucky that we have the capacity in our team to offer that.
- We are still solely offering digital engagement but that comes from management not the workers. It's frustrating.
- Self-care packages every month, personalised to the young person
- Lots of young people were not engaging online, didn't like it – shy. But for some (often who hadn't engaged before) found it much better to engage online. To support them, lots of whatsapp calls to check in on people
- Used zoom lots with relevant videos, polls and graphics plus breakout rooms. Sent out craft packs and resources also. With younger CYP chose simple games and activities and kept meets short. Helpful to have engagement with mums to support this, and to support their needs.
- Running perinatal group on zoom – connection was so important to mums, to see each other in same space and times – enabled more time in breakout groups because this was so important
- We have a small group who have only met online on zoom, they are concerned that no one knows how tall or short they are so will they know each other when they meet up – difference between how they know each other online and what will happen to their friendships when they meet up
- Shows that things we sometimes think they may be concerned about can be very different from what they actually think
- Trying to hold language club online, and difficulty for young people engaging as there is more pressure to speak without all the other, tangible ways of communicating

- Some of our young people have asked for our online groups to continue online when lockdown is over
- Activities like forest schools that have no expectations of outcomes, are away from screens, can support people to regulate. Developing self help resources based on these to support people to access these types of activities in different ways.

Supervision ,support and boundaries

- Don't rush people
- Create clear boundaries between work and home
- Importance of being understanding of how lockdown has affected our lives, and lives of people participating – loneliness, juggling childcare
- Supportive managers will be required
- Good supervision and supportive teams
- Safety – feeling safe will look different for everyone. Having the correct systems put in place (use of Track and Trace, hand sanitiser available, 2m distancing) will be comforting for some people, having familiar faces and meeting up in familiar places might comfort others
- We are being encouraged to go back to face to face ASAP and a lot of our staff are nervous
- Mental health and wellbeing should be of paramount importance no matter what we do
- Our office is now being closed as we have realised we don't need the office space, but we were told that and not asked our thoughts. Managers never asked if that would work for us, we were just informed. It's awful.
- Our organisation have been really good and engaged the staff team about new working patterns and what will work etc, it's been really helpful and supportive. We should take this approach with our young people too and ask what works for them.
- Colleagues- suggestions around "walk and talk" meetings, sending self care kits, keeping in touch using things such as WhatsApp groups – essentially what we would do for our young people!
- What support networks within your organisation – counselling, psychology, trained listeners – if not, can you get this externally? E.g. health assured – about dealing with coming out of lockdown and acknowledging that lockdown and pandemic has been traumatic in itself
- Feel support for young people often, but NOT always a support for professionals?

- Lockdown has been really hard for participation facilitators – engagement has fallen and they have been racking their brains for how to engage through digital platforms. A lot perhaps feel they are not good at their job because it has been so difficult
- The support to staff can be an issue – Our team have access to a counselling service, have debriefing processes after supporting someone with trauma, coffee catch ups, team meetings to have that "safety valve" to support the dealing with vicarious trauma which is hard day in day out – give the opportunity for staff to vent and share feelings and good practice and acknowledge what is not working – best practice for this space to be available for
- A best practice handbook to support facilitators on the transition back to face to face work is needed
- We are still working together positively – but about having the space to discuss and acknowledge the difficulties
- Who supports the supporters? If an organisation gets this right, the support flows onwards to the people we support.
- WCs started a community of practice for facilitators to share reflections, frustrations and worries – great support
- Useful to support people to reflect on what their experiences over lockdown have been, when people have found it hard, when they hear they are not alone can link into peer support

Training

- Also 'fear' in the room that we will have forgotten how to be youth workers
- Training might be needed to allay some of these fears – skills and ideas workshops
- How to support people during/after activities, if they find those activities hard (i.e. mindfulness). Relationship based, to support a child/adult understand their reactions and needs around which activities they want to do. Helping people understand their own responses.
- Teaching about a person's 'window of tolerance' (in age appropriate way), as you won't know every persons triggers at each moment of time, but equipping with toolbox to navigate their needs – e.g. of 'thermometer' of feelings to express.

Flexible Approach & Awareness of Changes due to Covid

- Be open to blended returns – some people may want to meet up where others may be happy to stay online. This can now easily be done and let us respond to individual needs
- Concerns about, expectation of we can just work from home – and get rid of offices as we have demonstrated it is possible
- Time – Giving everyone the chance to go at their own pace
- Bearing in mind the need not to just jump straight in to "work". One group are reconvening to do the kilt walk and will try to start to meet up again after this. A less intense focus could be helpful.
- Everyone has experienced the last year differently – mindful that some people will have had more challenging times than others. Also, some people may THINK they're happy to go back to physical meet ups but then struggle unexpectedly on the day
- Environment – as we are still largely meeting outdoors, consider what you are going to be talking about as members of the public could be around etc
- Drop In – Offering a chance for folk to come without pressure or the need to explain if they can't make it

- Conversation around balancing guidance: if someone is in distress, and the impact a cuddle for example for someone who is feeling suicidal – the risk of transmitting covid vs giving a cuddle which can be lifesaving. The option for the flexibly to break the guidance with consent and not be pulled in by management for doing so.
- Experience has been after a couple of hours in the office: I was ready to be going home!
- Keep asking the questions, no expectations from management or from or on ourselves
- Some chat about feeling 'scared' of going back into rooms with lots of people and workers might need supported to get over the fear factor – flexibility will be key
- Make this change collaboratively with groups/ individuals: do we do it in phases? Gradual?
- Currently funders expect the participation of young people will be written into proposals/bids- but young people are telling us they don't want to participate! THIS NEEDS TO BE HIGHLIGHTED TO SG.
- Funders place an onus on e.g. a Champs Board to progress projects with young people- but we cannot keep hounding the YP to meet our deadlines and timescales others have set!
- Importance of including those experiencing programmes/trauma in evaluation.
- Recognition that back to back meetings online are hard
- Victims of our own success – if offer a great service, get more and more demands with the same/ less support for facilitators/ practitioners – this is amplified by Covid which increases the strain and number of people
- Those with social anxiety- going back to normal after Covid – what will this look like and how can we support them with the next steps – become more acute due to covid and being out of practice with social interaction – and this will have implications for group work – will need to be thinking about this in preparatory work for running groups
- Need to note that some services were reduced/ changed during Covid –
- Any support service will be inundated just now – need to be so mindful of this and the strain of this
- As practitioners, we have on average slightly or significant or reduced resilience