



West Yorkshire
Violence Reduction Unit
Tackling Violence Together

West Yorkshire
Health and Care Partnership



Trauma informed co-production Guidance

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Introduction



“Nothing about us without us”

James Charlton 1998

“Co-production encourages participation, mutuality and respect for others, valuing the experience, skills and knowledge that each participant brings and providing opportunities to extend their skills and knowledge. It aims to change ‘traditional relationships of power, control and expertise’ ... this is quite different to other engagement activities”

Spencer et al (2014)

There are a variety of models of co-production and examples that can be drawn upon by a very quick search in your search engine. It is *not* the purpose of this guidance to highlight, analyse or critique any particular model or way of being engaged in and around co-production. Rather the purpose of this guidance is to set out an understanding of how to engage in co-production using a trauma informed lens. As such, this guidance offers the opportunity to be an ethical friend for those wanting to use a co-production model focusing on how to do that with full consideration to ensuring that the practice does not add to harm and holds safety at the core.

While this document offers itself to the reader as ‘guidance’, it raises considerations, reflections and questions rather than instruction. This is important as it is recognised that people, communities,

geographical locations, education settings, services and systems are all unique. Being prescriptive is in contradiction with a trauma informed framework and with co-production. Indeed, it might well be the case that the words ‘guidance’ and ‘co-production’ are the first aspects of this document to be discussed asking whether they are in fact the most appropriate words at all. It is vital that co-production is a co-creation so while this document will not tell you how to go about co-producing, it will ensure that you do it well, you do it within a trauma informed framework and that you are ethical in how you go about it.

However, understanding the difference between applying a trauma informed lens to co-production and in not doing so are helpful. This is not exhaustive but helps the reader to be reflective about how we all work together.

Regard for trauma informed principles	Disregard for trauma informed principles	Relationship to the trauma informed principles
Doing with	Doing TO, doing FOR or NOT doing anything. Everything must be thought about. It is ACTIVE not passive, so doing nothing is doing something and it can be problematic	Empowerment, voice and choice, safety, trustworthiness
Considering the environment, designing together	Working in an open space, near others, uncomfortable environment, visible	Safety, peer support
Being transparent about what is happening	Holding back information	Transparency, collaboration, mutuality
Offering compensation for time spent on project (and it might not always be about money but there does need to be an energy exchange)	Expecting people to take part in something that others are being compensated for	Trustworthiness, transparency
Cultural humility: “a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another’s culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities.”	Thinking that you know another person’s perspective, experiences and the impact of those without seeking to learn about	Cultural, historical, and gender issues

¹Cultural humility as a term was first coined in 1998 by healthcare professionals Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-García, who originally described cultural humility as a tool to educate physicians to work with culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse populations in the United States.



West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership's and West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit's adversity trauma and resilience vision

Our ambition is to ensure West Yorkshire is a trauma informed and responsive system by 2030.

To deliver our agreed ambition the approach is for all organisations and system leaders to work together as trauma and adversity cannot be prevented and responded to by one sector.

We want to:

- prevent adversity and trauma across the life course
 - respond to trauma and adversity that already exists, mitigating harm where possible
 - facilitate an integrated trauma-informed and responsive system that enables all people, including those with complex needs to thrive
 - build and strengthen resilience assets and protective factors for individuals and communities
 - reduce risks and improve outcomes for those who experience adversity and trauma
- ensure people can develop meaningful relationships with experienced professionals, who will champion on their behalf placing them at the centre of care, coordinating services around the child and family
 - provide senior clinical leadership across the system, strategic oversight, embedded reflective practice, specialist input and psychosocial interventions
 - reduce inequalities that contribute to adversity and trauma and inequalities caused by adversity and trauma
 - ensure an understanding of adversity and traumatic events and the impact they have on an individual, their life chances and opportunities
 - develop our response to adversity, trauma, and complex needs in this window of opportunity to build back better and fairer and minimise harm caused by COVID-19 and associated measures

Underpinning this work is the principle that the voice of our population and communities is at the heart of everything we do.



Aims and objectives

There is little literature that focuses specifically on how we might think about service and system co-production from a trauma informed perspective. In applying this lens, a number of areas are raised that we need to consider.

The guiding principles of a trauma informed framework are:

- safety
- trustworthiness and transparency
- peer support
- collaboration
- empowerment, voice and choice
- cultural humility ²
- These principles underpin all aspects of this document.

Aims

- Seek to ensure that the guiding principles of a trauma informed framework are at the heart of all consultation, participation and co-production processes
- Provide guidance that can be used across any sector, system or service which offers a meaningful way of understanding the process of co-production
- Ensure that ethical considerations are observed at every stage

Objectives

- To ensure that the wisdom of lived experience is central to system change
- To understand that there is an imbalance of power which needs redistribution
- To understand that a trauma informed framework seeks to ensure that we do not add to harm and that we are invited to work in ways that seeks to mitigate the impact of where there has been harm already

Language

The central means by which we can meet our aims and objectives is about communication. With this in mind, it is essential that we understand how language, left unchecked, can enforce, re-enforce and also create and add to additional power dynamics that are very much at odds with working with a trauma informed lens. In other words, language matters - what we say and how we say it.

Incorporating reflection around language and changing it, is not as easy to do as we would hope. We have adapted and shaped our thinking throughout our own lives via our own relationships and experiences and then, on top of that, in our chosen professions which will be full of acronyms, power dynamics and

²Adapted slightly from the CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR), in collaboration with SAMHSA's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC), www.cdc.gov/cpr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm

judgements. We also live in a society that is more visibly divided and judgemental than ever before. This is explored further in the section on positionality. However, with some reflection, some curiosity and some humility, we can learn to do better. We are not seeking perfection but we are making a commitment to listen, to apologise when we get it wrong and to adjust

what needs adjusting. Having a focus on language brings a number of benefits. Co-production can allow differences in language to emerge into the open, be heard and thought about and this can lead to the co-creation of new ways to phrase things that are more meaningful, inclusive, respectful and engaging. Some suggestions for considerations are:

Avoid	Consider
<p>Jargon For example: "The LAC review/TAC took place at JKS with all members of the SLT and the CIN team where the SEND application was revisited. We hope to invite PWLE to the meeting."</p>	<p>Easy to understand sentences For example: "Lots of people came together for our regular meeting which gave us a chance to think about all the best ways for making sure that (you, NAME) and (your/their family) could be best supported during this time."</p>
<p>Opinions For example: "Lisa shouldn't concern herself with education; it would be lost on her."</p>	<p>Facts For example: "When asked, Lisa said that she has found the school environment challenging but has lots of skills that mean that she could succeed in different education settings."</p>
<p>Judgement For example: "Why would you do that when you know it doesn't help?"</p>	<p>Non judgement For example: "Would you like to tell me more about what that felt like/showed up like/looked like?"</p>
<p>Speaking on behalf of For example: "He doesn't want to be involved in this project."</p>	<p>Speaking with For example: "When we spoke earlier, can you remember what you said to me about....? Are you ok saying that in the words you used?"</p>
<p>Defining experience Calling someone a 'victim' or 'survivor' for example, a service user, an offender.</p>	<p>Staying in curiosity How people choose to define themselves will not only differ person to person, it will differ across the life course.</p>

Wisdom gathering



There are a number of considerations involved in how we can invite people to take part. These are not easy areas to explore but the more we consider these areas before starting, the easier it will be to stay on course. The whole point of co-production is knowing that one person or group or system does not hold the answers. We might decide that a small focus group can work together to set the project up.

The following questions are not in any way exhaustive but are asked in such a way as to open up ideas for other questions to be explored that will be specific to your community, service and/or system.

Who are you asking to work with and why? It is important to consider the circumstances of the people you will be working with. Do they have adequate internet connection? What makes our services hard to access? Do they have a device at home they can use? Is your service 'hard to reach' and how can it be less hard to reach?

What will you do to ensure that people who want to take part are able to? For example, how will you ensure that no one will feel rejected if you have more interest than capacity? What are the funding implications if you work with more people than you originally budgeted for? How will

you consider their strengths, resources, needs and vulnerabilities relating to things such as age or developmental level. What about the communication skills and sensory preferences of the children or the adults?

How will you communicate that their contribution can be anonymous or authored? Or will it be deemed a collective contribution? How will you decide that?

How will you make sure that there is diversity across all those you work alongside? For example, what are the implications for a group that isn't diverse? How will you reach people taking into consideration cultural humility?³

How will you communicate the right to withdraw? For example, what are the time commitments to the endeavour? What will happen when someone leaves? What will happen if someone no longer wants to take part and does not want their contributions to be included? How will you manage this? Is there a cut off time to when it won't be possible to remove someone's contributions? How will you communicate this? And by when?

³ Cultural humility asks of us to engage in critical self-awareness understanding that we do not understand that which we have not lived and that we must recognise the role of history and society and the impact of those upon individuals, families and communities

Methods

There are many different creative methods (Kara, 2020) that you can use in order to gather, share and act upon wisdom to co-create and develop services and systems. Gathering wisdom needs to be humble and respectful (Smith, 2012). Again, this is by no means an exhaustive list but offers some suggestions that might be helpful in exploring what will work best in/with your community, service and/or system.⁴

- Art sessions
- Poetry sessions
- Journal writing
- One-to-one interviews
- Focus group sessions
- Photography
- Timelines
- Life stories
- Circle time
- Intergenerational sharing
- Podcasts
- Video making
- Photo diaries

⁴There are many examples of these methods being used in research. Prior to using a new method, we advise you to search for examples of how this has been undertaken.

Positionality



In understanding that co-production is about a fundamental shift in a balance of power, we are encouraged to think about the power that we hold and how that shows up. There must be consideration given to the ways that power can be shared and redistributed in the process of co-production. For example, how is the frame for the work or question to be focused on formulated and by whom? What about reviewing the decision making processes, timings, roles and responsibilities to share power in an explicit way and to acknowledge limits of this in real world contexts?

Before starting it is vital that we reflect upon an understanding of power in a meaningful way. This is an ongoing exploration and using a journal for personal reflections, harnessing individual and/

or group supervision spaces and reading around power imbalances are all essential ways of understanding that wherever we go, we go there too. Within that, working in services and systems can infiltrate our ways of being through 'othering' language, jargon and legislation that can become the 'norm' in how we approach all that we do. That we are engaging in this work tells us something about ourselves; what we believe, what we feel passionately about, what part our own experiences have played in our desire to work in ways that do not add to harm.

Services and systems with their jargon and their acronyms have a tendency to reduce a person's experience to that of 'other' which by definition removes the complexity of a life lived.

Reflection

Write out all the labels you can think of about yourself including relationships for example brother, sister, support worker, home owner.

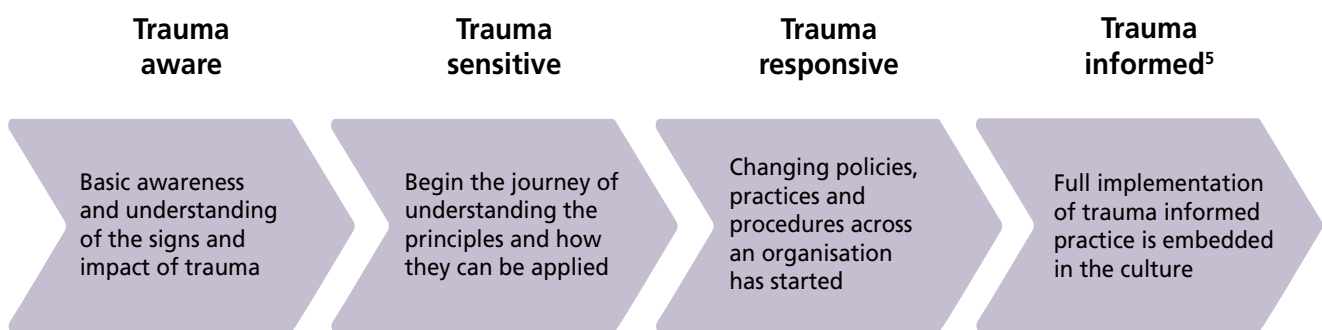
Now do the same for someone you are walking alongside right now in your work.

Was it easy? Was it complex? What questions did it raise?

We are never one thing. We are many things to different people and we have had many experiences and relationships that we have adapted within.

Demonstrating an understanding of our positionality and the skills of reflection are an essential part of how we might champion good practice around trauma informed ways of working, ways of feeling and ways of being. The art of 'challenge' is a skill; it is not about shaming; it is not

judgemental and it understands that we are all in different places. Understanding where an organisation or a person is on their journey is a helpful starting point. Becoming trauma informed is part of a spectrum of movement that will shift and change depending on who is working in the system, how much energy and focus is placed upon it and how supported the people who work in that organisation are with their own experiences of trauma.



⁵ TI Care Collective ticollective.ca

Staff support



As champions of this approach, advocating for practice that does not add to harm and mitigates effects of where harm has already taken place, it is important that we support, where we can, trauma informed co-production. Part of that is about the understanding that we too are humans, bringing our own life experiences, adversarial growth and potentially our own unprocessed embodied trauma that has yet to surface for processing.

Working within a trauma informed framework brings with it a duty not just for us and our colleagues but also for our organisations to embed a culture of wellbeing, of care and of processes that support us to be our best. Suggestions are environments that are also aligned to the trauma informed principles.

Ethical considerations



- Perspectives and experiences form the richness of this work but they can also be the most challenging spaces to hold. How will you harness that? How will you set up everything to ensure as many perspectives as possible and experiences are safely heard, held and nurtured?
- Does everyone taking part understand that there can be an impact upon wellbeing, mental health and can even trigger past traumatic events when thinking about, listening to and sharing about experiences with interventions, services and systems? How will all involved be held, heard and/or supported?
- How will you ensure that there is a budget for any associated costs including a budget that means that all people involved are paid for their time? Are there other energy exchanges built in such as connection, sense of belonging, sense of purpose and impact and gaining skills that are acknowledged formally?
- What are the conflicts of interest between the co-production group and the funder?
- How will you ensure that diverse skills that harness different strengths and courage are drawn upon?
- Be mindful that people in paid positions can leave that position. What contingency plans are in place if they do? What are the implications?
- How can you build in flexibility so for example, when life shows up for people and creates a barrier to involvement, can you find alternatives so they are not excluded?
- Can you build feedback loops into co-production activities so the process is responsive to the needs and experiences of all participants, including professionals, children and adults?
- Is the communication/planning about the co-production process reliable, open and transparent to help build trust?
- If working online, how are you protecting the safety of attendees? Are you recording events? What will you do with those recordings? How will they be deleted beyond the recycle bin? How will you make sure you adhere to data protection regulations?
- Every sector is awash with jargon, acronyms and 'othering' language. How will you navigate and negotiate a shared language? When is the right time to do this?

- We all arrive with who we are, what we know and where we stand. There will likely be a variety of experiences on the room of services and systems that can mean that there are barriers that need dismantling. How will you approach, acknowledge and recognise that? How might you use that for learning?
- How will you communicate the reasons as to why change is needed?
- How will you communicate that people's input will make a difference? How will they know it has? What will tell them that it was worthwhile?
- Time takes time. Relationships, trust, transparency, collaboration and mutuality take time. This work is a way to learn from and to make amends for the past, it helps us stay focused on the present, but the real power lies in this work making a difference for a future that is full of hope, a future that we want for our communities who can look back and thank their ancestors for the work undertaken.

Conclusion



This document is best approached as a reflective tool that couches co-production within trauma informed principles and ethical practice. The intention is that we will update and add to it regularly, including adding models of practice as case studies within the partnership. Redistributing power is not easy work. Co-production must be meaningful and deliverable. The motivations to undertake this work lie in an understanding that there needs to be change, that the people who are using the services and systems and/or live in the community hold wisdom that you don't have, that you understand that whatever is created can thrive after you are no longer there and that you are prepared to work through this during the good times and the difficult times.

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