

Bridging Gaps: co-producing⁺ trauma-informed access to primary healthcare with women with complex needs through a pandemic.



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Introduction to Bridging Gaps

- Women with complex needs (e.g. addiction, mental ill-health) have often experienced extensive trauma e.g. sexual violence and exploitation, domestic abuse, homelessness and children-taken-into-care
- Project idea developed with women in conversations with Dr Lucy Potter (GP academic and One25 GP).
- Bridging Gaps is co-produced between:
 - A diverse group of women who've experienced multiple traumas
 - One25, a charity for some of Bristol's most marginalised women
 - ARC West and primary care researchers
 - GPs and trainee GPs
- Aim is to improve access to primary care

Running the project using co-production principles - NIHR INVOLVE (2018)

- **Sharing of power** – the project is jointly owned and people work together to achieve a joint understanding
- **Including all perspectives and skills** – make sure the team includes all those who can make a contribution
- **Respecting and valuing the knowledge of all those working together** – everyone is of equal importance
- **Reciprocity** – everybody benefits from working together
- **Building and maintaining relationships** – an emphasis on relationships is key to sharing power.
- **Joint understanding and consensus and clarity over roles and responsibilities.** Value people and unlock their potential.

Work and roles of the women involved

- Women with complex needs are key decision-makers throughout project
- Women attend fortnightly planning meetings
- Have co-designed and co-delivered a training session to four GP practices (two pre and two post COVID)
- Co-create service improvements with GPs
 - E.g. Open Access clinic with 30 minute appointments
- Contribute to evaluation materials
- Currently authoring book chapter about their experiences

Digital exclusion and attempts to overcome

- Organising IT mobile tablets through University system
- Agreement template to transfer ownership (happy to share)
- Data connections costly – advance payments/ in arrears?
- Not everyone had safe and confidential access to Wi-Fi at home
- Need to ensure safe and COVID secure space to access meetings and Wi-Fi – ensuring confidentiality for all
- Women prefer socially distanced face-to-face meetings

Supporting the space for involvement

- Emotional engagement, developing relationships and trust
- Group versus individual process of getting involved
 - Facilitating and supporting peer to peer support
 - Making sure everyone's contributions are heard
- Ensuring people are treated equally with opportunity to get involved
 - Different people need different support at different times
 - Individual safeguarding procedures, can't consult group
- Currently on pause during January lockdown - not everyone can access Wi-Fi safely and securely

Working with people who are under-represented in research

- The system has often let people down – leading to lack of trust
- Changing the system needs tenacity and resilience
- Exclusion often entails poverty, less resources and opportunities to develop skills (e.g. IT)
- Projects need more time, resources and support to tackle some of these inequities
- People who've experienced trauma do not operate according to funding/ system demands

Key learning

- Sometimes members are in and out of contact dependent on what else is happening for them
- Working with community organisation to ensure safeguarding
 - Power differences can't easily be eradicated, paid staff, organisational policies
- When do we ask people to share their difficult experiences and why? What support is needed?
- Need to include funding for clinical supervision, reflective practice for team

Experiences of the women concerned

- I've noticed so much growth and change in myself. At the beginning I'd be anxious to talk and had low confidence. **The women I've grown so close to, I see so much change and growth.** I truly believe we have built a bond over the time we've spent together ... I appreciate every single one of you, **am super proud of what we have achieved and the changes we have made so far...** My growth is astronomical.
- I really enjoy working with Bridging Gaps, we are a group of diverse women. I have learnt some fantastic skills and learning to work in a group has really helped my self-esteem and helps with my mental health. **Working with Bridging Gaps has given me a real sense of pride and fulfilment, to actually see changes happening because of such amazing and strong women is fantastic.** Working with GPs to be more trauma informed in services is such a vital part of supporting women who have been through so much in their lives.

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