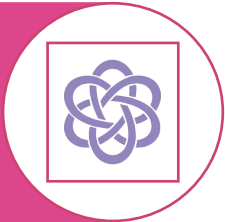




Engaging for a Trauma-informed Wales

ACE Hub Wales - Oct 2024 - March 2025



Key Words: *Communities, Trauma-informed, Underrepresented voices, Inclusive conversations*

Summary	The aim of the Engaging for a Trauma-informed Wales project was to provide a small group of communities across Wales with an opportunity to take part in conversations and explore different perspectives on how to support those living with trauma and adversity, and what it means to live safely and authentically in Wales. The objectives of the project were identified as follows: • To increase understanding of trauma-informed co-production and community engagement by mapping existing work in Wales and listening to grassroots community leaders. • To use this knowledge to develop conversation spaces and topics that work for and matter to participants by designing them with grassroots community leaders. • To enhance awareness of ACE Hub Wales within marginalised communities to support opportunities for future work.
Start date	October 2024
Key parties	ACE Hub Wales Older People’s Commissioner for Wales The Wallich Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog Chatty Cafe (Newport Community Connectors, Age Friendly Communities) The Community Wellness Company



Where did you start?

The Co-production Lab Wales designed and facilitated a creative workshop which supported the ACE Hub Wales team to:

- Clarify and agree the aims of the project.
- Agree what would make for a successful trauma-informed conversation.
- Agree what would make for an ideal community leader.
- Map current trauma-informed engagement in Wales.
- Identify key community leaders and stakeholders.
- Agree how community leaders would be approached.

Given the team's desire to focus on unheard voices, it was decided that the project would prioritise working with communities and community leaders from outside Cardiff, with a particular focus on North Wales.

The initial workshop identified two different types of potential partner:

A 'community leader' - someone who, whilst not necessarily a 'leader' in the formal sense, is known and trusted in their local community. They have the ability to bring people together and co-lead/design an engagement session for the purpose of the project. They understand the intricacies and sensitivities of the community/ies they are a part of.

A "community connector" - someone who is usually external to the community (often a professional) but who has established relationships with community leaders and can help establish links with them.

During the workshop, 8 potential partners were identified through detailed stakeholder mapping activities.





What did you do?

Following the initial planning workshop, 6 potential partners responded positively to an invitation to join an online conversation exploring:

- A brief introduction to the project
- Magic moments - 'Tell us about a time when your community has felt listened to or valued. What happened?'
- What does 'trauma-informed' mean to you and in your community?
- What do compassion and kindness look like in your community?
- Would you like to join us for a workshop to explore and plan a conversation in your community?

In reflecting on these conversations, the project team identified a few emerging shared interests and themes. These were developed into three questions that were adopted as a guiding framework for unique conversations in different communities:

- What does trauma/adversity look like in your community?
- What are the resources and relationships that help people live well with trauma?
- What does your community need to strengthen these resources?

It was felt that these questions create a positive and strength-based context in which to explore sensitive issues of trauma.

Next, a planning workshop drew together 'community leaders' interested in facilitating trauma-informed conversations in their communities. The session happened online and used creative methods and breakout groups to explore the following factors:

- Why might people and their communities want to take part?
- How do we feel about the word 'trauma'? Are we happy to use it? What are the alternatives? How do we shift to 'strengths based?'
- What is the conversation that needs to take place in your community? (Is there a shared story of trauma? What are the resources and relationships that help people cope?)
- How will your conversation take place (including who, how, where, when, what, evaluation etc)

Ultimately 3 trauma-informed conversations were co-designed and delivered with partners in communities, each one with a unique theme specific to their circumstances.

The Co-production Lab Wales facilitated evaluation and reflection sessions with partners and ACE hub Wales staff to identify and discuss key learning from the project, including using Ripple Effect Mapping.



Quantitative Evidence

1-2-1s held with 'community leaders' and 'community connectors': 8
Trauma-informed conversations held in communities: 3
Participants in trauma-informed conversations: Approximately 80

Qualitative Evidence

The project aimed to pilot, and learn from, a series of co-designed trauma-informed conversations in communities. In order to support this learning, a number of methods were used to gather feedback and information from the sessions, as follows:

- Community leaders were asked to take notes during conversations and provide to the team or, alternatively ACE Hub Wales or Co-production Lab team members took notes.
- Lead organisations conducted their own evaluation of the activities using their own tried and tested methods. This information was shared with the team.
- Online follow-up interviews were conducted with community leaders reflecting on their learning from designing and facilitating the conversations.

In addition to the above, the ACE Hub Wales and Co-production Lab team used Ripple Effects Mapping and team reflection to gain as much learning from the project as possible.

The Ripple Effects Mapping plotted key events on a timeline. Team reflection used the following prompt questions:

- What have we learnt about the different approaches to a trauma-informed conversation? What 'works'?
- What is a trauma-informed conversation?
- What have we learnt about language and labels?
- What have we learnt about the resources and relationships that help people cope with trauma?
- What are the key relationships that have developed and why?
- What have we learnt about the role and priorities for ACE Hub Wales? What next?

The key learning from the project is summarised on the next page. The full evaluation report can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qeSumLQrd80ZehhrkC8yF9ligP7raU8l/edit?usp=sharing&oid=114626989175247263285&rtpof=true&d=true>



Hurdles and challenges

The following challenges were experienced in the delivery of the project:

- Community leaders are often facing significant challenges of all sorts in their own communities and organisations. Making the time to participate can be difficult.
- One partner organisation very sadly lost a key team member during the process, thus experiencing a new and immediate shared trauma. The need to confront the resulting fallout prevented them from completing the project with us, despite their enthusiasm. The impact of personal and communal trauma itself makes engagement difficult. Sensitivity and flexibility is needed.
- Often leaders that are embedded day-to-day in their communities don't have time to engage in networking and collaboration and can be difficult to 'locate'. Effort is needed to go and find them!

Key learning

Designing safe, creative spaces and framing conversations around community trauma and strengths enables people to share personal trauma and to form new connections of support. People don't want to be defined by trauma but they don't want to ignore it. Staff need to 'show up' in the right way, being 'present and real'. 'Trauma' is a complex and contested term. Consciously using a trauma-informed approach in co-production enables a balancing of strength/assets and challenges.

'Working with the Co-production Lab Wales was refreshing and insightful. Dave and Becky introduced us to new co-production and participation practices that allowed us a chance to explore fresh perspectives on what a trauma-informed approach to engagement could look like for different communities. We learnt a lot about how to structure conversations and wider meetings and workshops in a way that enables everyone to have their say without being prescriptive or tokenistic. Practically, we learnt new monitoring and evaluation methods like the 'magic moment' and 'most significant change' – these will be so helpful to us not only for this project but in other areas of our work to ensure we are able to gather qualitative insight into how our approach to engagement is felt by those working with us. Through their expertise, gentle leadership and compassionate approach, we were able to work with new partners, listen to new experiences and further develop our approach to trauma-informed engagement in Wales.' - Bryony Parry, ACE Hub Wales



Why is this co-production?

The Engaging for a Trauma Informed Wales project explicitly built on the 5 values of co-production:

- Value all participants, and build on their strengths
- Develop networks across silos
- Do what matters for the people involved
- Build relationships of trust and share power
- People can be change makers and organisations become enablers

The project worked with 'community leaders' who are embedded in day-to-day work in their own communities and who share in their community's collective trauma (and thus have lived experience). Relationships of trust were formed and supported.

Creative approaches were used to work with these partners to co-design, co-produce and co-evaluate trauma-informed conversations. These were unique to each community and based on 'what matters' to them with their particular experiences of shared trauma.

Partners co-delivered conversations with colleagues and community members and designed creative and participatory activities that opened up space for participants to share communal and personal experiences of trauma and to co-create new knowledge about the experience of trauma. Concern for the resources participants possess to help cope with trauma enabled a focus on supporting these strengths. Participants were supported by partner organisations to build new mutually supportive connections, thus enabling them to 'make change' by taking shared responsibility for trauma.

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Links: ACE Hub Wales <https://acehubwales.com/>