



TALKING HOPE: BUILDING BRIDGES

Dr Emma Miller

University of Strathclyde

And Dr Katherine Baxter, now back in the USA



CRITICAL THINKING WITHOUT HOPE IS CYNICISM. HOPE WITHOUT CRITICAL THINKING IS NAÏVETÉ

In order to survive — both as individuals and as a civilisation — and especially in order to thrive, we need the right balance of critical thinking and hope. **Maria Popova**

Overcoming hopelessness can be the first step however
When we ask [young people] what is your hope, they have no hope, sometimes even struggle to understand the meaning of hope (GSC staff)

Talking Hope project



- Wanted to progress work in/around secure care (SWSP and CYCJ)
 1. Better outcomes for young people through increased voice
 2. More hopeful and collaborative conversations between agencies
- Ayrshire and Arran CAMHS, EA HSCP, GSC, Strathclyde
- EU Social Fund: Social Innovation Fund = Phase 1 = SG and GSC = Phase 2
- All partners wanted to focus on transitions
- Increased focus on collaborative conversations
- Maintain distinct focus on *hope*

Understanding context in researching service land



- Exploring structure, processes and *culture* on fast moving trains
- Trying to capture a snapshot in one location, or set of locations, during a short period of time
- Concept of journey helpful to understanding both the moving context and the lives of all the people who come on board
- Qualitative research - multiple stories to tell a bigger story – nobody has all the answers (Parallel to formulation workshop)
- More on the structure and culture of the services in our report (Summer 2019)

Voice, Agency, Recognition And Hope

- Voice of young people central
- Also acknowledging that many people working amidst high risk feel constrained, voiceless and that their experiences aren't well understood
- Thinking about how to communicate these experiences to a diverse audience, to empower both young people and staff to challenge stigma, gain recognition and have their perspectives heard and respected – creating a *sense of hope*



Recording, being judged, identity and hope

Focus on *Recording as well as Conversation*

Common experience of feeling judged on the basis of service records

The record as a self-fulfilling prophecy?

- *They like read everything about you and then would take precautions, like moving away and taking everything away from you*
- *I know right like moving all the stuff off the table like you're going to throw it, and you're like well now you've put that idea in my head I might*
- *Yeah exactly (mixed group conversation)*

Centrality of relationships:

Working with diverse family relationships, or none

- My family are the centre of my life. Social work are social work. They've got 40 cases.. (female, 17, mixed group conversation)
- Going back to my mum's wouldn't happen. She has been off drink for 3 months now but she is an alcoholic.... So they wouldn't want me to be around that... Maybe in future... (female, 16, interview)
- From my experience in the Good Shepherd Centre... of working with young people who had lost connections within the community, the levels of hopelessness were beyond comparison. The ones that had relationships, had intensive support workers, or social workers coming to visit, those were the ones that *more of a hope* of leaving, of better times, of improvement for themselves, that maybe engaged in the programmes a little bit better (IST female practitioner)

Relationships with professionals: hope, trust and time

Relationships between staff and young people

time within each encounter

- The intensive support team identified their unique position in being able to spend time, compared to the lead professionals

engaging over time / stickability

- “It is absolutely an unwritten rule of our team that we do not give up on a young people “ (EA Intensive support team)

Both concepts of time were valued by GSC staff.

Stickability is disrupted by transitions = new initiative

- CAMHS average 8 to 10 sessions but a wide spectrum, trying to work around targets to be flexible

Every interaction is an intervention



Transitions in, through and out of secure care



Consideration of: -

- Transitions in (and impact of secure care as a threat)
- Transitions within (progressing through the units, close support, role of education)
- Transitions within (in developing identity, becoming an adult)
- Transitions out of secure care
- Transitions from child to adult services

Hannah: “It was like boiling an egg, you either take it out early and it’s going to make you ill. But they overcooked me that time and there were too many transitions”

Building bridges with diverse agencies – community

Building of WSA since 2011 – navigating life's demands – obtaining essential resources

- Examples of working with employability and with the college to avoid early sanctions for non-attendance - arranging to have letters sent to social work rather than to the young person – avoiding hopelessness
- Staff described the difference made by having good relationships with some sheriffs and the different understanding of potential when intensive support is in place

“We have moved forward leaps and bounds with housing, and the response they now have to our more challenging young people who have been traumatised.”

- Also police, voluntary sector and others



Interagency relationships



- Evidence of the different kinds of changes that can happen when conversation is valued
- Assumptions can be challenged and new understandings emerge
- Combining knowledge, skills and experience a powerful antidote to hopelessness
- “...when you feel you are losing hope and the other worker was saying I was thinking about trying this. And you think I hadn’t thought of that before. Right, let’s get that in place let’s try that (Lead professional)”
- Working as a team around the young person sends important signals to them about hope for them

Reflections and outputs

- Intermediary role of relationships in both material and relational factors in transitions
- Trauma informed approach has to include practitioners as well as young people
- Links between recording, being judged, identity
- Appreciation of the complexities and ethics involved in supporting young people at high risk, often underacknowledged
- Acknowledge contribution, time and openness of young people and partners
- Conversation challenges assumptions – builds common purpose
- Wendy – prison suicide - reduce isolation and increase interagency communication
- Report in progress and hope framework to support hopeful conversations and transitions – mapping to SHANARRI and care standards - available late Summer 2019



Last word to Gemma, young woman with secure care experience

'Yeah I think especially at times when someone has completely given up on themselves it's so important for someone to kind of hold that hope for them.... For me the most helpful thing has been not just people who believe that I could have something better in my life, but also that I was capable of looking after myself and keeping myself safe and kind of putting more trust in me and helping me build up that trust in myself that I could be more responsible'

Further information, contact and partners

- e.miller@strath.ac.uk
- @Talking_hope
- @personaloutcom1

