

Introducing the Reflection and Action Learning Forum (RALF)

Video Transcript

Featuring:

Sarah Deeley, CELCIS

Chris Docherty, Kibble

Kate Frew, St Philips

Michelle Howard, CrossReach

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Gemma Watson

The co-design and roll out of the Reflection and Action Learning Forum known as RALF has been possible due to the commitment of the members of SPRAG and funding from The Promise Partnership. The aim of RALF is to provide practical and evidence-based approach that supports members of the residential childcare workforce to develop the necessary habits and skills associated with genuinely reflective practice.

In this video, you will hear from some members of Ralf about their experiences of being involved, some of their highlights to date, and how they have overcome challenges in implementing and supporting RALF.

Kate Frew

I think the process itself of RALF lends itself to us not trying to give advice to each other, trying to rescue each other from difficult feelings or situations, and just being able to really listen. And I think we speak about active listening in residential child care a lot, but I think it's a skill building... yeah, a skill, a skill that needs to be built. And I think the role of active listening has become really present in the set group.

Michelle Howard

What we're now starting to see is a change in culture, a change in culture and attitudes, particularly around this context of restraint and the complexity around it, and how the values that it triggers in people were always really binary of it should or shouldn't happen, and I don't think we ever really allowed for more nuanced discussions and considerations. So, I think what it's really helped us to do at CrossReach is start to really build and cultivate learning and reflective cultures where experiences and emotions are valid, processed, thought about, considered.

Frank Slokan

Establishing this group has really allowed people to tap into those emotions, discuss them in a safe space, and start thinking about, what does that mean for us? What does that mean for other staff members, and where do we go from here? Where do we move next? And what has been really interesting is that while most of the impact has been for people in the group, I can see conversations starting to take a different path. When group members are talking to officers, when group members are talking to senior management teams about restraint, and really starting to change the way they talk about it, not as something that's inevitable because there's violence in the prison, so there's always restraint going to happen. It's about that prevention is becoming predominant because we don't want to do it because actually it's traumatizing people, not just the people in our care, but the staff as well.

Chris Docherty

My hopes for becoming involved with RALF is to create a safe, reflective space for people who are working with challenging behaviour in crisis, and particularly restraint and restrictive practices, to come together and discuss how they're feeling. You know, their thoughts, their feelings, their actions, the consequences from the from the actions that they take. Looking after young people with challenging behaviour.

Frank Slokan

I think anyone that works in the area of restraint, restraint reduction and managing individuals in distress will know it's a really hard area to sometimes push the agenda, particularly if you have a very specific agenda you want to push. And actually, RALF has allowed me, from a personal point of view, to have that impact in an area where that wasn't usually the conversation. And on top of that, I think rewarding for the organization has, the reward for the organization has been that there's now, again, more enthusiasm to understand that we're

moving forward, and actually we're seeing real change, which I think sometimes, particularly in large organizations. It can be really difficult to see change happening in front of your eyes, because it works so slowly. We're seeing a real shift in the way people are talking about things, and the biggest reward is being able to see that shift in our lifetime, almost I think sometimes.

Sarah Deeley

RALF is here because members of SPRAG came together and sat and designed a process, piloted a project, and then were really, really tenacious in making sure that that project grew to where it is today. And it's been designed by members that are on this call today, and it's been designed by members of SPRAG, and we're seeing we've paid real attention to how we designed RALF. A really rewarding part of the process is seeing how that's all developing, and it's early indications that things are working, and it's making impact, and not just small pockets of impact, but we've got the potential for transformational change here, and that's come from a collaboration and a co productive process, and it's just wonderful.

Kate Frew

I mean, other things are probably just watching the development of the group as a facilitator, being able to gradually take more and more of a step back still being really, really strongly holding on to the process, but letting them develop it in themselves, watching the skill of the them, being able to ask each other the right questions and be really leaning into like, really vulnerable places and really challenging discussions. I think that that takes a real length of time. I think that folks show really a lot of personal, professional courage to do that.

Adam Moffat

So, what's been most rewarding in my involvement in RALF has been as part of the oversight group, building up that relationship with my facilitator in the groups that we've had and seeing her development was probably most rewarding thing for me from going into being anxious about delivering that first session to the growth and the confidence that came with every session.

Michelle Howard

I think when we talk about restraint and we talk about policy, we always come at it from an organizational standpoint. You know, as an organization, we believe this. As an organization, we believe that. And I think RALF has really allowed us to engage with the workforce, because ultimately, it's those people that are tasked with the decision. You know, we can have policies in place, we can train

people. We can have all of these things, relating to restraint and restrictive practices, but ultimately, it's the individual human beings at a really fundamental level that are tasked with making that decision as to whether restraint does or doesn't happen in a split second. And what's been really rewarding for me, I think part of this process is that investment at a practitioner level, allowing them to take a bit of that ownership of this discussion in consideration within our organization, it would be really easy for us to lead it from the top down, but what RALF project has allowed us to do at CrossReach is to really engage with the workforce. Actually, we need to hear from you, what are your experiences of this, what's what do we expect of you? And is that fair? And I don't think up until that point, we really had permission to have those spaces and have those really frank discussions about, you know, here's what we're asking of you, but by the way, have you ever checked in that you're okay with this? You know, how do you actually feel about the prospect of having to intervene in this way, of having to carry out these interventions? What impact does it have on you? Quite rightly, the focus for so long has been on the impact on children and young people. And I think what RALF project has really allowed us to do in our organization is consider impact on practitioners.

Chris Docherty

So, I think RALF will help directly impact my current role within the organization here at Kibble, as well as Safe Crisis Management Europe to inform staff of the process and the importance of reflection. You know, it's important that we provide space to understand the use of physical intervention, and where it's most important, in terms of understanding the development of the children, the young people we support, but also how that might impact you as a practitioner.

Kate Frew

What I found, what helped was just people actually coming along and experiencing it, and then once they'd experienced that, they wanted to go again. So, people were then quite actively protecting the time and space for themselves. I mean, I probably would want to lean into when I reflect back starting my set here was that people were going to be experiencing me in a different way because of how the process is facilitated. And I really wanted to really utilize my training, put my training into practice and facilitate it, and hold the space in the way that I needed to. And at the beginning stages, I had to intervene quite a lot, and probably with people that I have close relationships with, and so I probably felt a bit of the tension around that about people experiencing me as being far more assertive than I usually would. But I guess over time, that's just become a real understanding. And actually people in my set group, like the fact that I'm like that in that space.

Michelle Howard

What I probably found, certainly initially a wee bit more difficult, was actually holding and containing the group in the reflective space, as opposed to the set itself. The set, the set allowed quite clear structure, guidance parameters. And everybody you know kind of got on board with that really, really quick. Probably what I underestimated was what would need to be held and contained in the reflective space thereafter. And that initially presented quite a wee bit of a challenge. As you can imagine, lots of things were coming up in those spaces. And what initially helped me with that was my oversight member. So actually, being able to go somewhere and have that contained for me was really, really helpful. Because sometimes I was coming out of this space just feeling a wee bit kind of overwhelmed with, you know, that that was a lot. I wasn't expecting that.

Frank Slokan

Another difficulty was, not necessarily a difficulty was, the initial hesitancy of individuals when they go in, they don't know what, what to expect. Maybe looking a little bit sceptical at that, but I think that was something to be expected beforehand, and what really helped was letting people experience it, letting people go through it, letting them go sit through a couple of sessions and really know what does this mean for me? And pick it out and pick that up and run with it. The biggest supports, certainly for us, has been one, not just having the support from senior managers, and that they see that this is something important, but actually having the active support of them going the extra mile to make sure that people could be freed up, going the extra mile to make sure that space is there and reflecting back that we're willing to invest in this.

Laura Steckley

I think one of the challenges for the RALF project overall, is how much is in the way that the current project is set up, how much sits with the facilitator. And we knew this when we were co-designing the rollout. We knew that that the greatest demands at this stage of the project's evolution will be, would be made on facilitators. And one of the biggest learning points through the process has been real consideration of how to make this sustainable, and that really needs to revolve around how to have a sustainable support for facilitators. You know, some people talked about how important this is. It's rolling out across Scotland, but how do we create something that's durable, that's resourced, that supports facilitators going forward? And we haven't figured that out yet, but we know that it's far more than just the training and in listening to people today talk about some of the other elements that are involved in supporting facilitators, like the Community of Practice, like their paired person from the oversight group, we've recently been looking at how to help people through that transition from trainee

to facilitator. And so, these are still things that I think are the most challenging to figure out going forward to make sure that that RALF continues to grow and have further reach across the sector.

[Gemma Watson](#)

The final formal question is for you, Chris, do you have any fears as you are about to begin your RALF training?

[Chris Docherty](#)

The intention of the reflective space or the perception that current staff members might have for that. Do you know to look at what time they have available and how that information might be used or shared could start to potentially cause people to discuss things with a more protected lens, rather than being truthful, open and honest about their own practice and what their hopes and fears are for the future as a result of that. So it almost turns into a hope that through a consistent approach of providing these spaces where there is that lack of motivation or understanding of the intention, through that consistent approach and supplying that safe place that people do start to realize the positives that it will have on their practice.

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