



2024
Review

Looking back and looking forward

SPRAG Looking back and looking forward 2024 review

Video transcript

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Welcome to the Scottish Physical Restraint Action Group, looking back and looking forward video. Each year, members of the Scottish Physical Restraint Action Group, or SPRAG, like to pause and reflect on their collective activity over the previous 12 months. This year, part of our work together involved members of SPRAG meeting together in person for the first time since before the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time together, we invited members who attended the in person meeting to offer some reflections on why being a member of SPRAG is important to them, and to reflect on some of the work we've done together in 2024.

Jennifer Muir

I think when you come into, you know, children and young people, services, we've all got the same goal, the same outcome, and that is for the best intentions, for the young person, the best outcome. I think we have a recognition of the significance of restraint for a young person, the impact that that has on them and how things have to change.

Liam Feeney

Being a member of SPRAG's been really important to me because it's really been the catalyst for my organisations, my own journey, as well into looking at ways that we can reduce restrictive practices and try and eliminate restraint in practice. What started from membership in the RALF (Reflection and Action Learning Forum) pilot, looking at how we can make a difference for one young person, was then replicated with other young people, and then we were able to use that learning to inform policy, to inform procedure.

Craig Paul

I think the work is important to bring us all together in the professional context that has seen us be respected nationally, with our influence to quite a complex area, and I think it also helps to share the research that has been developed and how we work with our really complex young people and how we support and care for our adults who are looking after them.

Karen Eastwood

SPRAG is important to me because it's a really good opportunity to meet lots of people - some people who work in the same sector, but other people who have connections like The Promise or the Care Inspectorate.

Cecile Remy

Well, I moved to Scotland, back from England just about a year ago, and actually I came to work around the reduction of physical restraint, and it's been great to just get to know people outwith the service I was working for, and to experience also how well I don't, I don't know if I want to say that, but how

different Scotland thinks about residential care services and vision and actually, yeah, finding kind of like-minded people. So that was really important.

Phil Coady

SPRAG's important to me for two reasons. The first one is, it's a community of practice for residential childcare. So regardless of what issue it was discussing, it feels like a kind of unique moment to me, when residential childcare has come together as one community with the aim of learning from each other, disagreeing with each other, discussing the complexity of the work that we do, and we've not done very well with doing that in the past, so it feels like something really unique that we might learn something about for other areas of our work as well.

Michelle Howard

I really appreciated having space to come together as part of a group, surrounded by like-minded people, where we're quite happy to get involved in the kind of intricacies of a more in-depth discussion around the impact of restraint and restrictive practice, where probably previous to SPRAG we didn't really have those spaces available to us. So it's been really, really important to be able to kind of roll our sleeves up and get involved in discussions at a much deeper level where previously they had been really binary - restraint should or shouldn't happen. So it's been crucial.

Phil Coady

It feels really important for us to have a forum when we can talk about something really complex and not let it be reduced to oversimplification and to something that would benefit from simple answers.

Laura Steckley

In looking back on this last year and listening to what people have had to say about their experiences of SPRAG, I'm again really struck by the importance of relationships, not just in terms of the shared commitment and support in doing this work, and that is important, but also relational spaces in which we are deepening our understanding of related complexities and how to address them, and really changing our thinking, because we know that practice and cultures won't change if we don't change the way we think.

Jennifer Muir

I think sometimes we can be kind of sitting in isolation, kind of recognising this, but not sure where to go. So SPRAG just offers the opportunity for everybody to come together, who does have the same goals and agenda, and that kind of collaborative working is our way of making progress.

Liam Feeney

The difference that that's made to our young people has been tangible. The data that we were able to collect reflects the difference that that's made to the young

people, it hasn't just been about reducing physical restraint, eliminating things like seclusion, but actually things like blanket restrictions, chemical restrictions, communicative restrictions, they've all reduced as a result of that. So what SPRAG's meant to me, is that I've seen young people go on a huge journey from a restricted life to one that's full of more freedom, more autonomy, more love, and young people who have become more autonomous, confident young people at the end of our journey.

Gemma Watson

2024 has been another great year for RALF. It took us into our second year of Promise Partnership funding. We published a sector update with some learning of the first year. There were some key messages that included the importance of planning, prioritising and protecting time, maintaining open and active feedback loops and promoting co-ownership of the RALF work. We now have a total of 32 facilitators trained. Most are facilitating groups in their own organisation, but some are facilitating groups in other organisations or are developing cross organisational groups.

Phil Coady

Over the past 12 months that have been two aspects of what I have been involved with in SPRAG that have been really important. One of those things is that it feels there is a continuing development of our ability to use the forum to have difficult conversations and to look at things that are complex. We have also been able to meet in person again for the first time in a long time. Even more important for me this year has been becoming involved in RALF - the Reflection and Action Learning Forum - that has been really important in our organisation because it is starting to give us a really good and really structured - but also flexible - way of offering peer support to each other. And so in some of the meetings that I am involved in at work there is a new sense of structure to how we support each other and we are able to give each other better opportunities to be supported, to develop their thinking about complex issues.

Michelle Howard

And also, just the last 12 months, being able to have a space, particularly we've been involved with the RALF work where - really having an opportunity to contain others, but also be contained myself in relation to this area of practice, because we were just having a discussion today about catharsis and optimal distance, and really thinking about, does the action learning set approach really promote optimal distance for the workforce, where the difficulties, the intricacies, the nuance, can be held and contained by others? So that's been really crucial, I think.

Jennifer Muir

So SPRAG just offers the opportunity for everybody to come together who does have the same goals and agenda in that kind of collaborative working as our way of making progress.

Karen Eastwood

The work of SPRAG in the last 12 months, I've been part of RALF, which has been really useful, and we've had some really good outcomes from that, and just being a member of SPRAG in general, over the last - since it started in 2019, we've halved our number of restraints at Harmeny (Education Trust), which is really, really good. And in education, just in the last year, we've halved again the number that we've had in education. So the work that they're doing is brilliant, and it's really good to be involved.

Gemma Watson

Looking forward into the first quarter of 2025 we have lots to look forward to. We have a Share the Learning event planned for March and the save-the-date has gone into diaries for that already, the research will be published, and our groups will continue within organisations across Scotland.

Liam Feeney

A reflection on our work in the last 12 months has been that we have been privileged, at SPRAG, to hear from a number of really informed speakers. And they have come from different backgrounds, some practice-based backgrounds, some academic ones. And the information that we've been able to get, that we've been able to share, some of the working groups that we've participated in with people who belong to a similar profession, has meant that we've been able now to move on to not just thinking about what reducing restraint and reducing restrictive practices means for the young people, but actually the impact that that's had on the staff.

Sarah Deeley

One of the highlights for me this year was the post-incident resources event that we co-hosted with The Promise Scotland. This event was a shining example of how SPRAG members can lead the direction of the group and choose the topics that we dig a bit deeper into. The event was so well attended by people all across the sector who wanted to think a bit more about what happens in those moments after an incident occurs.

Cecile Remy

I came along to the post incident support, event, and that to me, that was an example of how hearing from other services is so important, and how it's very easy to walk in silos. It's very easy to just be caught up in the everyday. And I think residential care is very much like a kind of, this is happening now, and I have to deal with it. And actually, just to be able to hear and listen and, oh this is how you're doing it... And that helps very much to make distinctions between how to do things, would it be good to have different spaces for different types of debriefs and just getting to think about things a bit differently.

Liam Feeney

And staff can experience the compassion fatigue, moral injury, exhaustion. We know that there's a sector wide issue in terms of retention and staff turnover, and the last 12 months have really given us the opportunity to explore, how do we minimize that impact, how do we sustain the relationships for the young people and the staff who adore them? And the last 12 months has given us a real focus about how do we build a resilient workforce that want to stay in the sector when they're not relying on traditional methods of intervention.

Laura Steckley

As we train our sights on 2025, I think it's important to stress that the spaces for this work must be prioritized and resourced. This is a long endeavour, and there is still much to be done. SPRAG has shown itself able to meaningfully contribute to an inadequate but growing knowledge base. And by knowledge, I don't just mean formal research and theory development, but practice innovation, and especially the place where those three inform each other well. SPRAG also is committed to practice beyond its membership and making change there. And for all of this to be possible, we need knowledge base and knowledge mobilisation that is equal to the task for residential child care in Scotland.

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