

# The Scottish Physical Restraint Action Group review 2023

Looking back and looking forward audio transcript

This records the contributions of SPRAG members who took part in an online discussion. The recording features:

Sarah Deeley from CELCIS,  
Karen Eastwood from Harmeny Education Trust,  
Kenny Fleming from The Promise Scotland,  
Craig McCreadie from CELCIS,  
Dr Laura Steckley from the University of Strathclyde,  
Gemma Watson from CELCIS,  
Charlotte Wilson from the Care Inspectorate,  
Derek Wintour from Action for Children.

## [Craig McCreadie from CELCIS](#)

Hi, everyone. Welcome to the Annual Report video for the Scottish Physical Restraint Action Group or SPRAG for short. My name is Craig McCreadie, and I'm a consultant with the improving care experiences team at CELCIS. With me today are a number of members of SPRAG, who will share some of their perspectives and experiences in relation to the work of SPRAG over the past year. To briefly say that the Physical Restraint Action Group is a large network formed from a call to action at the SIRCC conference in 2019, in response to the way restraint was being understood, and talked about in the mainstream press at the time. The work of the group was strengthened by the aspirations of The Promise, which was published the following year. SPRAGs purpose is to co-productively reduce and where possible, eliminate restraint in residential childcare. To start us off, we are going to think about some just general reflections about the work of SPRAG over the past year. Derek, can I come to you first? Can I ask you to offer some thoughts on your experience have been involved with SPRAG this year?

## [Derek Wintour from Action for Children](#)

Certainly, Craig, I think, most importantly, this year is one of reflection in regards to the achievements that SPRAG has summarised in terms of being able to produce actions from a lot of the discussions and debates that it has been involved in over the last year. And with that, it was also one to think back on and reflect on the celebration of our membership

growing to one of a very dynamic and supportive community. That itself was something I believe SPRAG would hopefully achieve, and it has certainly done that. So, this year, for me has been one of that has been a part of that has been able to reflect over this last 12 months. In particular to look at four pivotal points. The main one being for me was the involvement from the outset of SPRAG of the Care Inspectorate. I think this has been a hugely valuable contribution throughout SPRAG – its involvement - work alongside Charlotte in regards to the idea of, in particular, the specific notification process for restrictive processes in terms of physical restrictive intervention. This was a very thoroughly thought out process with the Care Inspectorate and ourselves and SPRAG with many, many other professionals. Laura Steckler was very, very supportive of the idea of trying to really identify the idea of what we're trying to measure what we're trying to achieve in regards to our understanding of the use of physical restraint. And then that work with Care Inspectorate also fully onboard, we had this wonderful framework to work alongside. Something that was really guiding and yet celebrating the idea that we're working with young people. From that extended the idea of the self-evaluation tool for the use of restrictive practices. And that itself, again, was a hugely influential framework in which I, in terms of my role for a large organisation could go back, work on management platforms, run workshops, in regards to what we were trying to identify, how we were trying to work towards relationship building with the Care Inspectorate in regards to, you know, understandable transparency in regards to how we work with young people. And so that itself, in 2023 allowed us to come to a point where we can shape these vehicles with the use of SPRAG, and again, the Care Inspectorate, you know, a very valuable member. And we then therefore had a chance to reflect on its data capture this year, in terms of the specific notification process, and that for me, was absolutely astonishing in terms of positively - we did see a measurement, we did see a decrease in a sense, but we saw it as an evolving pattern of one of positivity, and that we were definitely on the right track, in terms of our understanding of the use of restrictive practices, but ultimately, our understanding of restraint and where we could effectively, not just idealistically talk about it, but to actually work with it with many professionals over SPRAG and I felt that that was truly empowering. And also I believe that really cemented personally in my organization, it really allowed us to work with relationship building teams, other professionals, but equally with the Care Inspectorate and what it does its actual job and real data coming back and having a centralised platform to measure that from, I thought that was an absolutely pivotal achievement for SPRAG and something that I really believed we could do. But we did it and I'm really proud of that. And other reflection would be the idea that The Promise group came in and we had another extended

membership to them, and they became a part of SPRAG. And that allowed me therefore to again to go back on a management platform in terms of my role and work with managers in my organisation across pan Scotland and work with our Promise Keepers to ensure that we were keeping The Promise. I now had a very safe and yet dynamic, multi professional platform to put that back to being SPRAG because The Promise was a part of that. So again, I felt that was a really good gateway, it opened the door for other professionals to understand that we are absolutely committed to The Promise in working in the right direction. That we could dynamically discuss safely and look at problem solving, which I thought again was a huge bonus of SPRAG. SPRAG allowed us to do that. The framework allowed us to positively, yet professionally challenge. And that itself brings its own rewards because again, it's not just rhetoric it's action. Again, we also had a very good summary point within 23 of the Kibble/Aberlour joint report process in terms of their idea of restraint. And I thought that was a wonderful delivery. And it was a great place for it to be delivered within SPRAG again, John Ryan etc, being pivotal members of SPRAG. And again, I thought that was a wonderful process in which to be able to share with a multitude of professionals with the same working ethic in regards to reducing restraint within Children Services, young people services. And really, just to kind of summarise the whole idea of kind of the notion of the question - reflection on the past 12 months, it was actually something that Sarah Deeley said, and it really inspired me, which was we are an action group. And it just blew me away, I thought we are, SPRAG is an action group. We ensure that what we discuss, what we talk about which we bring to the floor, which we build with immense detail and a strong framework of supportive work is that it doesn't just remain rhetoric. That we pride ourselves on generating action. And that's why it's part of the framework. SPRAG, you know, it's the reduction Action Group and I thought that, for me again, when Sarah said that during our last meetings it reminded everyone in the meeting day - that's why we are here. We are here to be the action, to support the young person, to advocate for them to work with them to work with ourselves, to keep ourselves on track. And yeah, for me that really summed up what it felt like for me over the past few months, it's been positive, industrious, intensive, but absolutely worthwhile. And I'm very, very proud to be a member of SPRAG and, and what it may offer in the future.

### [Craig McCreadie](#)

Derek, thank you. There is so much in what you said there, that could easily be unpacked probably over a two hour session. There was a couple of things that just stuck out to me that don't surprise me that there were things that emerge. There was this, the importance of the tone of collaboration, and the way of being with SPRAG that is member member

led and member informed activity and member led sense of the action. Thanks, Derek. I'm going to come across to the inspirational Sarah Deeley. Sarah I'm going to ask you at this point, just from your own perspective, you've got a very particular lens on the work of SPRAG. Are there particular reflections, you'd want to share over the last 12 months worth of activity.

### Sarah Deeley from CELCIS

Thanks very much, Craig. Yes, some reflections. What a year 2023 has been for SPRAG. Our membership has continued to grow. We have leaders, managers, policymakers, governing bodies, individuals with experience have and, or connections to restraint in all its forms represented on the group. And we've continued to galvanise as a group. So, we designed and voted on a logo this year to aid that sense of identity, you know, that belonging to a collective. And we've been represented by members of the group at local and international conferences. We have continued to grow our sphere of influence. So we've contributed to policy consultations. We represented the residential childcare, or we do represent the residential childcare perspective at restraint reduction Scotland and cross country at the district adoption network. We've seen members continue to work collaboratively with the Care Inspectorate, directly influencing policies and procedures from the perspectives of those who are working within the systems that have been regulated. Residential Child Care is highly skilled relational work. And we've contributed to an evidence base that supports practice this year by publishing research, and we've got aspirations to build on this. We know that space and time for reflection is key to supporting our workforce. And we were awarded funding from the promise Scotland to grow and develop our Reflection and Action Learning Forum. And during our meetings, regular six weekly meetings, we've progressed our priority areas with focus sessions, guest speakers, we went deep with data, we've reviewed policies, we've made connections, we've shared research, learning and examples of good practice. And we've thought meaningfully about participation and lived experience. We've used our heads, our hearts and our hands throughout. It's been busy, it's been fast paced, and it's been an absolute commitment from everybody involved. But I'm incredibly proud, like Derek said, incredibly proud of all that we've achieved. And as we vote, just know, for next year's priorities, and what our leverage points are going to be, I cannot wait to see where the momentum takes us next.

### Craig McCreadie

Thank you, Sarah. The incredible thing is that whistlestop tour just doesn't even really do the kind of the fullness of the activity and the

intensity of the activity that justice has been such a phenomenal year. But what a brilliant overview, and Derek and Sarah have pointed really helpfully towards something that I wanted to drill down into just a little bit more for this next part of the conversation, which is one of the themes that emerges regularly through the ongoing conversations with members of SPRAG is the impact of everyday practice in a variety of ways. And Derek and Sarah started to evidence that and we know that the complexity, which is inherent in any changes of language thinking and behaviours in relation to restraint, is ultimately informed by and demonstrated through practice. Karen, if it's okay, I want to come across to you at this point, and could ask you to share some reflections on the impact of the work of SPRAG has had in relation to practice and the use of restraint.

#### [Karen Eastwood from Harmeny Education Trust](#)

Yeah, I've been a member of SPRAG for a number of years. And one of the key things for me, it provides that forum to network with other professionals. And so you get a real feel for what's going on out there. And not just in within your own school, your own space. And you can see what other professionals are doing. And exchange views with them on that. It also gives you an opportunity to speak to people from different organisations such as education, Scotland, and it's been really good, particularly as I work in the education side, that it's not just all based on the residential care side, for the children in Scotland, it is looking at both things there, and the Care Commission as well. So getting that real forum to put your ideas across to people in these spaces. But the difference that has made in the place where I work is that we have seen again, another year, a real reduction in the amount of restraints that we've had. And that comes from a number of things, but one of them is our involvement in SPRAG and taking on board things decisions that are made, looking at frameworks that are put forward, helping to reflect on that, and sharing some of the expertise. I really love the way that I brought up - we're looking at physical intervention forms, and what we're doing - and I brought that up at one of the meetings and it was straight away yeah we can have a subgroup on that. So it does lead to real practical ideas of sharing this is what we do is this best practice, what do other people do? How can we get the best of what everybody is doing in Scotland about restraint reduction together, and so we can really focus on what's working well, and that sharing of good ideas, so it's not working in isolation anymore. It's been able to work with others.

## Craig McCreadie

Karen, thank you again, there are some really lovely examples, really powerful examples in there about the operating that allows members to drive the activity and to drive the direction of the work. So, thank you.

This year there has been a number of bespoke areas and relationships which SPRAG has continued to make progress with. One of those key relationships has been the ongoing work with colleagues at the Care Inspectorate. At this point, I'd like to invite Charlotte to reflect on the importance of the relationship between SPRAG and this Care Inspectorate, and to talk about any areas of progress made this year, Charlotte.

## Charlotte Wilson from the Care Inspectorate

Thanks, Craig. So I think the thing for us with our involvement in SPRAG is that we've been involved right from the start. And that has really shown our commitment to develop and progress in this area of practice. The collaborative working that we have with the sector through this group is just here beneficial in the fact that the group is really led and driven by the sector means that we can work alongside that and be a part of that. But we're doing that with the sector rather than doing it to them as the regulator. So I see real benefits in that approach. In terms of progress that we've made over the last 12 months SPRAG have always been a really helpful group in giving feedback and being involved in any kind of developing areas of practice. You know, when we've developed guidance, people have mentioned, the development of the new notification. At the start of 2022, we launched the new self evaluation tool, which had been developed very much along with SPRAG and had been piloted by SPRAG members, and some of them were involved in the launch of it as well. And this year, we've been reviewing that, and we held some webinars to seek feedback on how people have been using it. And, you know, if they found it useful, and any developments that we need to make on improving that. So we've been working on an updated version. And we've also, through SPRAG, sought out some organisations to provide kind of case study examples as well to support the updated version of the tool, because we found that those real life examples are much more helpful than the Care Inspectorate dictating that, here's a document that everybody should use if people can speak to how that's worked in practice, services find that really helpful. We've also had the opportunity to be involved in discussions around the reporting of restrictive practices that occur in education settings. And for us, we have a particular interest where the education setting is part of a school care accommodation service. And we know that that's been quite confusing for services. But to be able to be a part of

those discussions and try and enhanced clarity for the sector around those expectations has been really helpful and obviously helps to improve the data that we collect as well, which we know is really important. We developed a position paper on depriving and restricting liberty for children, young people in residential childcare settings. And we were able to share the draft of that document for consultation through SPRAG. So the aim of that paper really was to set out our attitudes, expectation and actions around the restriction and deprivation of liberty for children in those residential childcare settings. Although we understand that services are treading a really delicate balance between taking necessary action to keep children and young people safe, but also not unnecessarily restricting their liberty. SPRAG has also been a really useful group just to keep us connected with those kind of key developments, somebody mentioned earlier, a bit networking, but being aware of who the kind of key partners are, and just being sighted on some of that progress. And as part of that, we were delighted to welcome Aberlour and Kibble along to a session on our recent team meeting. And they were able to share reflections on the work that they have been doing in relation to keeping The Promise and striving to become a nation that doesn't restrain its children. So that was really beneficial for us in equipping our inspectors with the right knowledge and skills, and play our part in helping to keep The Promise. And we featured that in our recent peer news publication as well as one of our promising practice examples. So yeah, overall, I would say it's, it's been really beneficial. And I always say to people, what a great group this is and how supportive they've been having engaging there.

### [Craig McCreadie](#)

I think what a brilliant way to start that response, Charlotte to be able to say we've been here from the beginning. We've always been in the conversation. We've always believed in the conversation we've always wanted to contribute. That wasn't something that I had held in mind, so it's one a big way to start to frame that response and also a really important way to frame the level of complexity and nuance that's involved in this work, and in the collaboration and you're in a constant reiteration of we're doing this with, we're doing this together. So Charlotte thank you for that. We will also continue to recognise and understand the importance of the place of both the aspiration of The Promise and the role of The Promise Scotland as an entity to support those aspirations. The Promise Scotland have been members of SPRAG for some time. And unfortunately, we weren't able to have our regular Promise Scotland representative join us for this conversation. But we're really grateful to have Kenny Fleming here with us today. Kenny, thank you so much for joining us. At this point, Kenny, I'd like to invite you to offer some

reflections on the importance of The Promise Scotland being part of the work of SPRAG.

### [Kenny Fleming from The Promise Scotland](#)

I think obviously, you know, I won't have the same kind of insights and expertise as other people who are speaking to today. But I almost think it's going to be manifestly clear just from having the chance to listen to the conversation we've had today, why it matters, why it's important that The Promise Scotland does engage with SPRAG. And why it's important that SPRAG does, you know the work that it does. You know, as Charlotte mentioned, The Independent Care Review sets a very high bar for Scotland as a nation that should strive not to restrain his children. That's a high bar. It's a challenging bar. It's a challenging ambition. And but it's worth one seeking to achieve. But as The Independent Care Review also notes that will only be a statement of intent, if it's not fulfilled with action or changes. And what we've heard today is SPRAG is doing these things. As The Promise notes, it's really important to support the workforce, the work that you're taking forward, the way you're doing it is seeking to support and nurture the workforce to make those types of changes in a thoughtful and a trauma informed sort of way. I think that the points we have about collaboration, as our organization, as an organisation is only here to 2030 and has no formal powers, it's really important for us to engage with the experts that are here before us that are here with us, and ultimately will be here after us. And that's our vital thing, that collaborative and convening place where people can come together and can bridge and can share new ideas and can share innovations. That's why it's really, really important for us. But ultimately, the most important thing is SPRAG is delivering for Scotland, most importantly delivering for Scotland's children. If you hear about what Karen said and hear about what Derek said, they have managed to measurably meaningfully reduce restraint. That is lives being changed, and as much as works like nurture, and bridging and convening are all important and they all really matter. The thing that really will keep The Promise is a meaningful change for the better for the lives of Scotland's children and families, so that they do grow up safe, loved and respected. Absolutely reducing restraint is a vital part of that. And SPRAG has been absolutely invaluable work in making that happen.

### [Craig McCreadie](#)

Kenny, thanks for that there's something really illuminating in that, particular pointing out the high bar. And understanding the work of SPRAG as a space that connects the high bar with the everyday and the progress it's made in the everyday with the high bar in mind. And with that in mind, I'd like to come across to Laura Steckley, to speak about a



particular piece of work. Laura has been a key person in this conversation and indeed, was the person who has been there since the inception of SPRAG, which came about as a result of her contribution to the SIRCC conference in 2019. Laura, I know a key piece of work you've been doing this year has been the Appreciative Inquiry research. And I wonder if I could ask, you know, just to talk a bit more about that area of work.

#### [Dr Laura Steckley from the University of Strathclyde](#)

Sure, thanks, Craig. I think I probably did talk about it a year ago. And so I was thinking about who might be listening to this and what would be useful. So, I'm just going to give a very brief recap of what it was in case some people won't have seen the previous video, but we set out to create a research agenda in SPRAG in the early years. And from that, probably the top piece of research on that agenda was to capture what's going well, or what's going right in restraint reduction and potential elimination. And sometimes it was referred to as like we don't record the near misses and how people manage to avert the need for restraint. So, with a little genius of Sarah Deeley saying, why don't we do an appreciative inquiry? We put in for some what they call in academia, seed corn funding, and that's funding to do a pilot that then hopefully leads to larger funding for properly sized study. So, we were successful with the seed corn funding, and probably last year, this time, we were finishing up analysis and starting to write up. And so in the last year, we have published a freely available report with our findings. And I think, at this point, just there was some things that won't be a surprise to anybody who knows anything about physical restraint and Residential Child Care, like, relationships are important. But also it was an opportunity to kind of look under the bonnet, if you will, in terms of what makes for the kinds of relationships that enable the adults to hold children more metaphorically so that they don't have to resort to the more formal physical restraint. And, and I think that's a really valuable part of the study. I think there were some surprising things as well, I think probably last time, I talked about the dyadic interviews, which again, is just a research term for interviewing two people together. And we interviewed care experienced young adults, (young to me, nowadays, anyway) and a carer who they had chosen to be interviewed with, looking back on their experiences of restraint and on their experiences of coming not to need to be physically restrained anymore, and what was successful in that process. And also we had a focus group, where we talked with several parts of a service and across a few different focus groups, about how they reduced, significantly reduced, the distress behaviour, and therefore the need to physically intervene and physically restrain a profoundly disabled child. And across both, there were instances in which, in the discussions, people came to realise that

what one person meant by physical restraint was different than what another person meant, like the most, for me with the most compelling was a young person was like, Yeah, but I was never physically restrained. And by the end of the interview, the carer kind of gently said, I remember physically restraining you and it kind of turned to like what that all meant. And I think it's important for us to step back and say, you know, we need to take time to make meaning around what does it mean to physically restrain? What does it mean to physically intervene, which is a much bigger, broader kind of collection of things that we do, some of which may also reduce someone's liberty to use the language from the report Charlotte was mentioning. Others, which may not at all, and, and look at how we better can better hold children and young people, but as importantly, if not, more importantly, how we hold the adults who care for them, so that they can be equal to that task of getting kids through sometimes their most painful moments, without it having to be a recourse to, to what often people mean by physical restraint. So, I guess that would be - but I would encourage people to read it. It's freely available on our website. So go have a look and come to SPRAG and talk to us about it some time if you want to.

### [Craig McCreadie](#)

Laura, thank you. It is absolutely a piece of research worth spending some time with and it just made me think your reference at the start there Laura, about you were sure that you talked about this last year. I think that's the perfect indicator of this and so many other bits of the work of SPRAG being iterative, each year there is progress made and adaptations made and new directions set, because there's new learning constantly. So I think that's been a great illustration of that, so thank you Laura.

A key priority area and a piece of work which has taken the most significant amount of time this year has been the Reflection and Action Learning Forum, affectionately known as RALF. The Promise emphasises the importance of reflective relationship based practice, the Scottish Physical restraint Action Group has identified reflection as a key priority in the aspiration to become a country that does not restrain its children. The rhythm of the work means there may not always be regular safe opportunities to reflect, learn and build solutions and alternatives to restraint. A workforce supported through reflective practice can respond, react and build more supportive loving relationships with children and young people. This knowledge is supporting the development of the Reflection Action Learning Forum approach. RALF is a structured facilitated space that uses reflective processes to challenge and creatively expand members perspectives, and problem solving capabilities. SPRAG

successfully submitted a consortium bid to The Promise Partnership Fund at the end of 2022. And the work began in early 2023 to establish this work. Gemma, can I come to you? Could you offer some reflections about the initial phase at the start of this year, especially in relation to the design work which was undertaken?

### Gemma Watson from CELCIS

Yeah, sure, Craig. So earlier in the year, we put together a design team that was made up off the SPRAG membership. We asked for volunteers and were absolutely overwhelmed with the response. And it really spoke to the need for SPRAG, I think, the number of people that came together to design what would be the rollout of SPRAG to the residential childcare sector. We had some learning to lean on – there has been a RALF pilot, quite a small RALF pilot, but still we had some learning that we brought across with us into the design phase of this work. We were really intentional, in our approach during the design phase, and each and every person became an active member in the process, bringing a unique set of skills, experience and knowledge that really helped and supported to create an approach that meets the needs of the residential childcare sector. We paid attention to four main principles during the design; we paid attention to power in the room, we shared power in the planning and designing and deciding what would be implemented. We paid attention to relationships and trust, which is a follow through from SPRAG, you know, the ethos of SPRAG. We know that with better connections comes with our co-design processes for all. We utilized different approaches and methods to ensure that everyone was an active partner in the process. And we remained a participative process throughout. And we were really mindful that everyone has something to teach and something to learn in this space. And that we would come together in a really equal setting as we designed RALF and the rollout of RALF. The design team came together three times over the design phase and the commitment from individuals and organisations was equivalent a day each. And we know how busy people are, it really again spoke to the need for RALF that people could free up some time that was equivalent to a day to come together. At times, it felt messy and uncertain. But we sat together in that uncertainty and understood that designing something sometimes can. And the level of uncertainty allowed us to pick apart the design and come back to RALF with a model that was really fit for purpose. We also had the opportunity to attend The Promise design school. And it helped shape some of our thinking together as a design team, but also offered us some tools that were really helpful to the process that we use them embedded through.

## Craig McCreadie

Thank you, Gemma. The reference to the messiness of the design process was one of the things that just naturally stood out for me. I think what you've done is tell a story that makes the very messy sound, very simple, because I know that won't have been the experience of it. And I'd like to come across to Derek. Derek, you became part of the process through the oversight group. And I wonder if you could just share some of your experience of what it was like to become part of the group at that early stage.

## Derek Wintour

Certainly, it was a moment again, of looking back and thinking we've done it, we're here. It was that kind of moment when you're going too fast in a car and you kind of think well, am I going to manage this and it was exciting. And it allowed me at that moment of reflection to think right well if we are here at this launch point. I reflected on, as Gemma mentioned, the RALF pilot, the continual kind of process of design, which was very thorough, very professional, but at times, as Gemma mentioned, messy, but functionally so. A kind of organised clutter at times. But one that was welcoming and one that was inclusive, and one that generated, again, action. So we got to launch point we got through the design phase, we were excited as a group, we realised we had a sense of responsibility to put that into working action, and the framework was there. So I was very, very happy to be able to apply for a membership of the oversight group. I really believe that from the design phase that in organisation that I work for, we had invested heavily and reflective action learning sets pre-COVID. So meeting in rooms, looking at an idea that could improve supervision and, and processes of debrief, etc, etc. So when I saw that what that had done for us in terms of an organisation, I then visualised would we be able to use this process as a means of a more generic agency-wide support resource, and oversight group allowed me to put that in place, it allowed me to think well, if I'm joined with these other professionals, who I have got an absolute total respect for and I've worked with them - and that itself was quite daunting, but one that I felt excited and eager to really grasp. And I had a successful application, I then, again, was at a very, very privileged process to allow other parts of my organisation to put people forward for facilitators in waiting. And that, again, was an added strength. Having then watched the process of people, as Karen mentioned earlier, you know, go through the process of being trained and then putting in place facilities meetings. And then all of a sudden, this process of me being a part of that group meant that my linking to the facilitator was then up and ready to engage. I've just done that. And it was a moment of not that we've done it, that we are doing, it that we are doing it. So it was it was one again, of excitement. Yet, again,

I understood very clearly my professional role in terms of being in the oversight group and being the link. And I extended that support mechanism forward. And it was it was certainly a moment when, again, I felt immensely proud that we were doing what we had set out to do. And I absolutely was convinced that this vehicle of support, is going to go forward and provide the support mechanism that it was set out to do, it will be a point where professionals can meet and discuss professionally, confidentially in a shared environment, about situations which are very difficult to work through. But that itself can be a shared resource. And that, again, is very much a part oversight group, I can then have a role in how we actually then measure that and take that data forward, to make RALF a continuous process.

### Craig McCreadie

We've arrived, we're doing it we're doing the doing, the spirit is very tangible, there Derek. Thank you for that. And that gives us the opportunity to bring Karen into the conversation because Karen is one of those people doing the doing. Karen, if it is OK, I'd like to ask you to talk about your experience of taking part in the training to act as a facilitator. And then if you can, to tell us a bit more about being at the point where you're actively putting that training into practice with your own action learning set.

### Karen Eastwood

Yes, certainly, Craig. I was part of the RALF design process too. And then I was very excited after I had applied to find that I'd been accepted to be one of the facilitators in the first group, the first cohort going through. And one of the things about it, it's given me a whole new set of skills as well that I've been able to take away with me. But that first training session, it was an online training session, I wasn't quite sure - I'd heard of action learning sets, I didn't know quite what they were about. I wasn't quite sure what I was in for, but I was really impressed with the way that course was run. There was a couple of people who were on the course that had done it before with the previous thing that had gone on that had been rolled out. And they've got one or two different ideas that how it was slightly different. But it was a really, really good day. We then came and there was some discussion about one or two bits that were slightly different from the first rollout to what was happening now. So we had another meeting. And that was really great because that one was actually face to face. And that put to me how important that face to face, all being in the same room was and the different feeling that you got from that. So that was sort of one of my aims to make sure that when I was running my group, that it was a face to face group. But we managed to iron out, as was said before about one or two of the difficulties and the changes that

went on. And I was then really excited to take this forward. And after having the training, listening to people speak being in each of those roles, I think that was really important. Because that then gave me that first-hand experience of what it was like to be a facilitator, what it was like to present and have people listen to what it was like to be part of the action set. So you're asking those questions, and desperately not trying to give advice, and sit on your hands and just ask those deep questions to allow the person to explore themselves. And then I've now gone on to do my own action learning set, my own RALF group, and it was brilliant, it was really, really rewarding. I took a bit of time deciding which group it would be together, we could do external or internal, and I've chosen internal, but as I've mentioned before, it's a school and a residential care setting. And so what I've done for my group is focused on a particular group of children that were having restraint and thought, well, we'll look at the staff around those children. So for my group, I've got people from education, who teach the children and people in care who do it. And I think that's provided a really good group for that crossover of experiences, because care and education are working quite differently. But for - and it was one of the care people who spoke first, but there was some real overlap. And some really good questions from somebody who's just slightly out of that setting, could ask a question. And that really provoked some thought and that real deeper level thinking from the person who was presenting. And then of course, at the end, you get that reflective space where you can then - and everybody sort of breathes a bit because they can say things that they weren't doing when it was all focused on the presenter. And there was some really good conversation that was got out of that. And everybody's really looking forward to the next meeting that we'll have in January. So yeah, I've really rewarding experience, and really good on that reflective capacity. And I think it will improve everybody's reflection, I could already see what they were taking away. And that thought process that it's set off of right, yeah, how could I maybe do things differently? How can I reflect more with people in my group and get my points across. So we do really look at reducing restraint. So yeah, it is an amazing programme. And I feel very privileged to be part of it.

### [Craig McCreadie](#)

Karen, that was such a great illustration of both how it can be experienced and the difference that it can begin to make and the notion that you initially weren't quite sure what you were arriving in to. And that there are moments when you feel you might need to fight your natural instincts, to not do a certain thing that would feel normal and other spaces. Again, I think those are things that maybe people can connect to. And on that, Gemma, I just want to come to you for a final brief reflection

on that, as a member of the CELCIS supporting this work, what was your experience of coming alongside the RALF approach for the first time at the start of this year?

### Gemma Watson

So, I was the newest person within the CELCIS team and also within some of the design team. I was the newest person to come alongside others around RALF. I wasn't involved in the pilot like some others were. But the energy and passion that I was feeling from people during the design phase was absolutely infectious. So, I was really enthusiastic to step in alongside others and really get involved. And while I knew there was a real need for structured reflective spaces, for those caring for children in Scotland, I was really unsure of what a RALF session might look and feel like for people. So I also got the opportunity to sit in in the session that Karen's just spoke to the in-person session. I got the opportunity to sit in a facility to draft session alongside the five facilitators, the cohort one and it was such an important part of my learning around the RALF experience. RALF creates safe facilitated spaces, but really held spaces where people can be open, honest and curious. And at times quite emotional around the topic of restraint. And the role of the trained and skilled facilitator is what makes RALF a really unique, safe space for people to come and be involved in. And being involved in that session alongside Karen and the other facilitators really affirmed for me why SPRAG has been championing this work for such a long time. It was a real light bulb moment for me and I was absolutely delighted that you let me step into that space alongside you Karen and the other facilitators.

### Craig McCreadie

I think being able to have the space to articulate the really important experiential nature of this work and being able to try to communicate that with people is so important. So Gemma, thank you for sharing that.

So Derek, if I can, I just like to come to you at this point and ask if you've got any summary reflections that you would like to offer about this experience of being a member of SPRAG.

### Derek Wintour

I think to summarise my involvement of SPRAG to date, which was from inception to date - a very privileged position - is its importance, and its relevance of being now. SPRAG is current. SPRAG continues to push the boundaries. It does so, as I've mentioned earlier, in a safe and inclusive framework, it's never been more valuable than it is now in terms of where we see ourselves as a society. And I could spend a whole day discussing that. But really, as we feel the pressures - professionals within our social

care setting - delivering services, we feel the pressure of that, we feel the pressure of increased service delivery mapped against reducing resources. So it has never been a more important time to be within SPRAG. So I would just say that, if you feel you want to be a part of this, then be so - come along, join us, contribute, because everybody's contribution is welcome. But it's also helpful. And my own personal experience is that you will be welcomed, that you will have an idea that your contribution will be listened to. And you can come along on that vehicle of support for professionals working with supporting the young people and the idea, hopefully moving towards the realisation and reality of a nation of non-restraint. So yes, SPRAG is important. But what's equally as important, as the people who join it, and the young people that we support and work with.

### Craig McCreadie

Derek, thank you, as another member of the group has been there from the beginning, it's so evident just that your passion has never changed, that your enthusiasm that you bring for the conversation now is the enthusiasm that you've always brought. So thank you. And I'd like to come across the Sarah just to further enhance that a little bit, Sarah you've played a pivotal role in the facilitation of and the support to SPRAG for a significant period of time. Now I can ask you to offer a bit of a summary and reflection based on the work of SPRAG from the past year.

### Sarah Deeley

Thanks, Craig. So it's a personal highlight and a privilege to work alongside members of SPRAG and contribute to the efforts to reduce restraint and restrictive practice in Scotland. Our members are currently working and operating and often challenging, complex and cluttered landscapes. And we know that the demands on their time and their resources are significant. But they show up, they show up regularly to meetings, they take part they're present. They contribute fully and meaningfully to debate, discussion and shared learning. And we do not underestimate that commitment. Our members, they tell us that they prioritise SPRAG meetings in their working week, because they value the space and they feel able to individually contribute and make a collective difference as well as an individual difference. Looking to the future, my personal aspiration for the group is that we can influence whole systems, that collectively we show leadership in Scotland's journey to reduce restraint as is SPRAG's vision, and which was later supported by the publication of The Promise in Scotland. In SPRAG, we have people who are leaders at all levels across key areas in Scotland. And all of those people are focusing on what it will take to reduce restraint. This group absolutely have the potential to support and with the right enablers, lead



and play a key role in implementing transformational change across residential childcare in Scotland. It's an absolute privilege to be part of.

### Craig McCreadie

Sarah, thank you and the important reflection that SPRAG members continue to show up. Just to augment that further - they show up in increasing numbers. You know, we we've seen that continually over the lifetime of SPRAG that the numbers continue to grow, the level of engagement continues to grow. And we also recognise that Sarah, you do a lot of work behind the scenes to create the spaces for them to turn up to. So we want to acknowledge that and Laura, given the substantial body of work generated by the members of SPRAG and the progress made in conversations relating to restraint in residential childcare. And recognising that you've been steeped in this conversation since SPRAG's inception, I wonder if I can ask you to offer a view of what you think the future of this work might be.

### Dr Laura Steckley

The future's bright, I think. Partly that future's co-created together, I think Sarah earlier mentioned, the use of online software to collect member views about the coming year. And we're right now in the process of doing that to kind of set our priorities for the coming year. My own view is that I think we might be in danger of being the victims of our own passion and serious commitment and enthusiasm in terms of the potential to overextend ourselves. And we have quite a lot of plates spinning at the moment. And I know that members kind of fit this in, in addition to their other work. And so I think we are faced with challenging decisions about what to prioritise and what to hold off. And that's really hard, because, I'm sure I'm not alone in that I just want to do it all. And I can see the connections between the different parts of the work and how they all are necessary, because this is a really big change that we're working toward. And just to drill down just a little bit like this last year has been a lot of doing, right with the reference to it being an action group. It isn't just a talk shop. And it isn't just about rhetoric, as Derek had said. People turn up because they want it to be better for children and young people. And so, thinking about how SPRAG started was, if you wanted to put it simply, it was to kind of create a space for more thoughtfulness in considering the complexities and the realities that surround residential childcare and, and the place of restraint in that. And that wasn't happening in some of the representations of restraint. And that's probably why that presentation happened. And so, there's a tension between a space for talk shop, for thoughtfulness, and then how that informs the doing. And I think that for me is what we need to keep our eye on going forward. And what we need to do in terms of the knowledge base, which is partly the research, partly

imparting a knowledge base, to sharing the expertise that's in the room in a way that then imparts that more comprehensively to the sector. Rather than it being patchy in terms of how practices inform some places as opposed to others. Then there's the skills and that was already talked to in a really nice way in relation to RALF (**Reflection and Action Learning Forum**) and the skills around reflection. I think there, there are quite a few other skills, but I think it was right that we really put building reflective capacity and the skills related to that front and centre. And then I think that all kind of contributes to the being, so knowledge skills, and being - who and how we are with children and young people, and how we support adults to be equal to that task, and so creating spaces. And I'll end with just a little bit of a bird's eye view into one of our recent **SPRAG** session in which someone at the very last minute had to call off sick and they were going to present some information. And Sarah the driving force to make sure that we are well prepared to use people's time very well in the service of creating change around restraint reduction, because we know how much pressure is on people's time. So we were a bit nervous about like going ahead with the meeting. But we did and we just created a bit of space and I was reminded that we originally set up SPRAG so that there was spaces and I think Karen talked about having that space to talk to other people and what she didn't say but I think was implicit in there as like the potential for groupthink and the ability to ventilate that by coming together and just reflecting together and that session had that quality really strongly. And, I think we'll probably be creating more opportunities for that kind of space as well as the more doing and the more bringing in experts in certain areas and presenting and stuff. So yeah, the commitment continues to grow - this kind of coming together often fizzles out, and it hasn't. We made it through the pandemic, we are still going strong and doing even more. And the future's bright.

[Craig McCreadie](#)

Well, thank you. My intention was to finish where you ended and you ended in the same place. And I think there's something really beautiful about being able to say both the future is bright, and we run the risk of overreaching. That could be interpreted as a paradox, but I think one of the reasons that the future is bright is because the ambition is so great, and the drive is so great, and motivation is so great and any overreach will be self-imposed. Because there's such a strong desire to achieve so much for children in Scotland and the settings across Scotland and the thing that insulates it all as the wisdom, the skills, the knowledge and the insight in the room every single time SPRAG gets together. So, Laura, thank you so much for offering that reflection.

The End  
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