OPEN DIALOGUE:
Transforming Mental Health Care In Scotland
Purpose

On Wednesday 5 September 2018 people from across the UK came together in Edinburgh to discuss Open Dialogue, a potentially transformational approach to supporting people with mental health problems. Open Dialogue was the subject of a previous Health and Social Care Academy paper which considered its potential in Scotland. This report seeks to summarise the key points of the day.

The purpose of the event was to learn more about Open Dialogue and how it might be applied to the context in Scotland. In particular studying how the Open Dialogue approach and principles can help drive radical change in health and social care in Scotland. The objective was to generate discussion and momentum around Open Dialogue and how it can specifically support people living with mental health conditions.

Open Dialogue is a model of mental health care researched and pioneered in Finland and subsequently delivered in other countries around the world. The model emphasises the inclusion of the person’s family or social network in decision making alongside a consistent team of staff who are trained in family therapy, mindfulness and related psychological skills.
A two year follow up with those using Open Dialogue in Finland found that 76% of them had not relapsed. In the UK, only 7% of people, treated without Open Dialogue, did not relapse in the same period.

People using Open Dialogue report 23.5% higher satisfaction with their experiences than the national average for mental health care\(^1\)

\(^1\) Comparing NHS Medway and Kent’s and the national average in the 2017 Community Mental Health Survey

\(^2\) Based on 2017 comparison of the total bed day costs between NHS Medway and Kent and neighbouring non-Open Dialogue trusts

£221,154 saved in bed costs with Open Dialogue\(^2\)
Quotes from the day

The following area flavour of the information shared and conversations on the day. All are taken from the discussions and presentations.

When someone is having a breakdown, communication is the first thing to go. That’s why the emphasis on talking and equality in Open Dialogue is so important.

Louise Jessup

I want a “nothing about me, without me” approach to decisions about my mental healthcare.

Delegate

Open Dialogue represents a fundamental culture change in the way we talk to and about patients. All staff are trained in a range of psychological skills, with elements of social network, systemic and family therapy at its core and the result is service users getting more support.

Dr Russell Razzaque

How long will it take until all of the people involved with a mental health crisis are speaking the same language? As long as all the actors are in silos, there’s a lot that gets lost in translation and it’s my son who suffers because of that.

Delegate

You cannot transform and sustain at the same time, to make transformation you have to be comfortable with radical changes.

Yasmin Ishaq

I want to see recovery being the main goal, not just the treatment of symptoms.

Delegate
The event enabled a unique crossection of people with interest in the open dialogue approach to come together and included people who use support services, national improvement organisations, statutory health bodies, and the third sector. The event was coproduced by **See Me, Support In Mind and the Health and Social Care Academy (a programme of the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)).**

The event was chaired by **Dr Andrew Gumley**, Professor of Psychological Therapy at the University of Glasgow. The speakers included; **Viv Hamilton** and **Maggie Clark**, two carers from Scotland with experience of working in health services themselves, Dr **Russell Razzaque**, a psychiatrist working with North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) in a pioneering multi-centre Open Dialogue pilot in England, **Yasmin Ishaq** and **Louise Jessup**, the service lead and peer support lead for NHS Medway and Kent’s Open Dialogue pilot.

The event was oversubscribed, which reflects a broad level of interest and passion for trying new things in this area. This would suggest that there is a need for further opportunities to continue the conversation.

Many of the attendees were learning about Open Dialogue for the first time. The event served as an opportunity to examine the value of this approach and to identify if Open Dialogue has the potential to rebalance the power dynamic in Scotland’s mental health support and services.
What did we learn?

Evidence: empirical and from lived experience

We heard from a broad range of speakers on the day, each bringing different expertise and perspective to their talks. Most persuasive of the need for change was hearing the moving stories of carers and people with lived experience of mental health conditions in Scotland. Alongside that the information on the dramatic improvements that have been made through pilots of Open Dialogue elsewhere in the world, was a compelling argument for new approaches.

Viv Hamilton and Maggie Clark both discussed their experiences as parents and carers of children who have had challenging experiences with mental health, and the Scottish mental healthcare system. The bravery of both speakers, and of their families, set the stage powerfully and contextualising why change is needed.

Dr Russell Razzaque provided a thorough picture on the practice and principles of Open Dialogue. He presented findings that indicate that for people with mental health conditions, having friends and a social network is associated with more favourable clinical outcomes and a higher quality of life. He then went on to highlight some of the remarkable outcomes associated with Open Dialogue’s rollout in Finland, where 78 per cent of participants returned to full time employment or education without relapse.

He also noted the value of alternate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for mental health services, such as involvement of people that matter to patients, and clinicians being driven by what people feel is important to them.

Presentations were then given by NHS Medway and Kent’s Yasmin Ishaq and Louise Jessup. Yasmin covered the planning that had been required for their Open Dialogue pilot to commence, highlighting the need for perseverance and finding a champion to continue to push for approval of the approach. She followed this up by demonstrating the value for money that Open Dialogue approaches offer in their own experience.

Yasmin was followed by Louise, who spoke movingly of her own experience of receiving mental healthcare, and why that has made her proud to work on a radical alternative. She summed up the difference as moving from her experiences of being asked “what’s wrong with you?” to being able to better support others by asking “what has happened to you?”.

These presentations were followed by challenging questions and rich discussions facilitated by Dr Andrew Gumpley; here are some of the themes that emerged.
Passion and progress

Dr Razzaque was asked about the resistance that Open Dialogue trials have faced from healthcare professionals, some of whom may be cautious about radical changes in their practices. He acknowledged that some practitioners had been wary and needed additional persuasion, but that the feedback following the launch had been very positive. This was reflected in a later Q&A session where Yasmin Ishaq noted that staff retention in her Open Dialogue team was higher than non-Open Dialogue practicing teams in neighbouring NHS trusts doing comparable but different work.

The first group discussion was an opportunity for delegates reflecting on their own experiences with mental health support in Scotland. They were asked to focus on what had worked well and what could have been improved upon. Common themes recurred across the tables; most positive experiences related to when there was a sense of continuity in care, a particularly appealing aspect of Open Dialogue appeared to be that people wouldn’t have to endlessly repeat their stories following a crisis. Other key positives involved practitioners helping people feel listened to, and times where there was a good range of services and networks available to help reduce isolation for people living with a mental health conditions, and for those caring for them.

The delegates then considered areas that they would like to see more improvement in. One recurring idea was the desire for more joined-up services with improved communication between the various actors involved in the provision of support during and after mental health crises. During a discussion after this activity, the flexibility and adaptability of Open Dialogue was discussed, in light of how it is designed to address these issues with its core value of creating parity within relationships.

Another topic that came up during the discussions and the Q&As was how to encourage the possibility of trialling Open Dialogue in Scotland. The representatives from NHS Medway and Kent stressed the importance of having a champion, in their case someone in a local NHS partnership, who will push for trying something new.
Next Steps

It was both encouraging and hopeful to see so many people and organisations connecting and discussing ways to promote and explore transformation in mental health service provision in Scotland, in a way that will carry forward the principles of communication and cooperation that Open Dialogue promotes.

In order to continue to drive forward work that can transform health and social care for people experiencing mental health crises, there is a need to keep up momentum.

How could you get involved?

- contact academy@alliance-scotland.org.uk if you wish to be notified of further group meetings regarding Open Dialogue in Scotland
- Organise a local event to explore opportunities for raising awareness of this approach and identify ways in which local health boards and health and social care partnerships can be encouraged to look into piloting Open Dialogue

- let us know about other approaches aimed at improving the quality of support for people experiencing mental health crises
The lyrics below are from a song written by Emma Clark, representing her experiences with living with long term mental health conditions. This was referenced on the day of the event by one of the speakers, Maggie Clark.

Emma wrote this song to express her experiences with accessing mental health care in Scotland, and the strength required to navigate those systems whilst also managing long term mental health difficulties.

We are grateful for her bravery and generosity in agreeing to let us share her words, that articulately outline the challenges that so many people face. The power of this message will help to keep the momentum for transformation in Scotland.

The mornings come and all that’s left are these empty memories in my bed. All I see is despair following me around everywhere. Oh you don’t see it and oh how I feel it its crawling up my spine. You don’t know it but god how I feel it, it’s with me all the time.

I wake up in the morning, I take my medication that should keep me going. I feel it in my head, I feel it in my chest I’m over sensitive.

All the ghosts from all the yesterdays they hang out in my head, it’s like a social convention. You could say its chaos, why do you think I’m like this? Did you really think i had a choice? Oh you don’t know it because you’ve never seen it, Never felt it from the inside. And yeah you don’t know me and you’re still ignoring me thinking you know what’s right.

This is how I live, everybody always asking what happened to your wrist, But I have danced along the knifes edge, Grew up fast but stronger than expected.

I wake up in the morning, I take my medication that should keep me going. I feel it in my head, I feel it in my chest I’m over sensitive.
Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

The ALLIANCE is the national third sector organisation for health and social care. The ALLIANCE has over 2,500 members including large, national support providers as well as small, local volunteer-led groups and people who are disabled, living with long term conditions or providing unpaid care.

Our vision is for a Scotland where people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well, as equal and active citizens, free from discrimination, with support and services that put them at the centre.

www.alliance-scotland.org.uk

Health and Social Care Academy

The Academy, a programme of the ALLIANCE is a cross-sectoral platform for transformational change in health and social care using the voice of lived experience.

www.alliance-scotland.org.uk
See Me

See Me is Scotland’s Programme to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. They are funded by Scottish Government and Comic Relief and are managed by SAMH and The Mental Health Foundation.

www.seemescotland.org

Support in Mind

Support in Mind Scotland seek to support and empower all those affected by mental illness, including family members, carers and supporters.

www.supportinmindscotland.org.uk