To those who have been on this journey with me…

My Research – The Voyage

- Thesis Title: Surfing the Waves of Accountable Compassion: A qualitative study of the emerging trauma-informed culture within North Wales Youth Justice Service
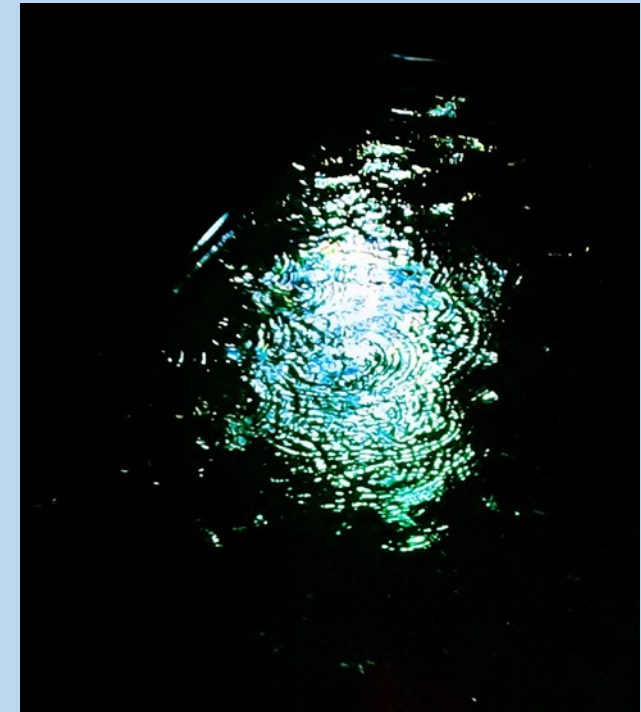
- Started in 2018

- Visualising Research Photo

- Presented at ACE Hub Wales Conference in 2019 – the start of Navigating the Storm!
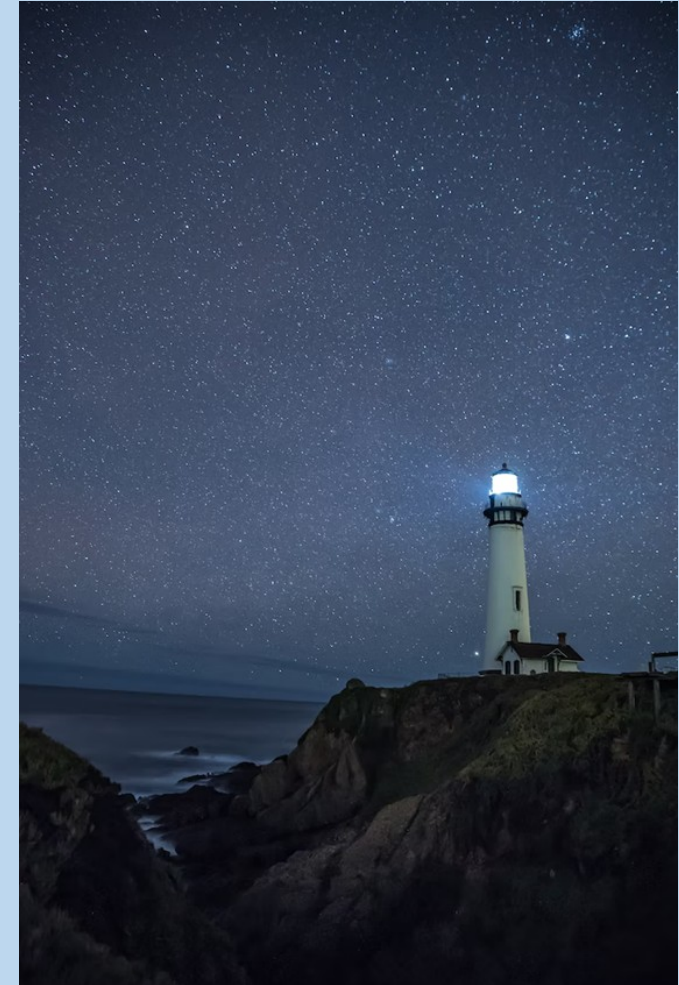

'The Serene Storm Within' 2019

What does trauma-informed mean?

➤ Similarly to trauma, trauma-informed practice lacks conceptualisation (Champine *et al.,* 2019)

➤ Trauma-informed is about embedding a culture of understanding, curiosity and reflection instead of reaction. It is relational, attachment and connection focused

➤ 5 Practice Principles 'Trauma-Informed Wales: A Societal Approach to Understanding, Preventing and Supporting the Impacts of Trauma and Adversity' (ACE Hub Wales and TSW, 2022):

  ➤ Universal Approach that does no harm
  ➤ Person-centred
  ➤ Relationship-focused
  ➤ Resilience and strengths-focused
  ➤ Inclusive

➤ Becoming the lighthouse

Compassionate Accountability

- ➢ Confinement within the CJS is designed for those who offend rather than those who have experienced adversity (Miller and Najavits, 2012).
- ➢ The challenge in weaving trauma-informed approaches into the criminal justice system lies in managing perceptions of a trauma-informed lens as overly sympathetic whilst disregarding the victim. Instead, the context of offending should be considered alongside trauma histories (McCartan, 2020).

Behaviour as Communication

"I was bullied all through primary, I had an abusive dad, an abusive step-dad and… when I was in my dad's, if I didn't drink with him at a stupid age, I would get beaten up so yeah I let people like control me a bit" (YP4).

YP5 opened up about their mum going to prison which *"triggered a lot of stuff for me"* which they stated contributed towards their offending.

Emotional dysregulation resulting from psychological distress was considered in relation to police call outs where *"aggressive youth"* (SP36) presenting to police officers were *"actually probably a traumatised, scared, fearful, anxious individual"* (SP36).

Communication via Distress Flares

➢ Behaviour is already understood as a form of communication (Dobrikova, 2019)

➢ *Criminal* behaviour can also be understood as a form of communication signalling unmet needs/struggles to regulate emotions

Connection over Criminalisation

"the relationship with staff is the most important thing" (YP1)

"there's that much trauma, they don't know a relationship like we know a relationship" (SP11)

Mooring at the harbour

Therapeutic relationships which involve the re-telling of trauma narratives has been considered beneficial with regards to enhancing reflexivity and self-evaluative processes (Giddens, 1991).

Trauma Narratives – Healing

"it was just a really bad period in my life really and then I dunno, coming here, I dunno, it did help sometimes and having someone to chat to and that, do you know what I mean? And someone to like help you out" (YP3)

What comes into your mind when I say cat?

What comes into your mind when I say work?

What comes into your mind when I say vicarious trauma?

Trauma Narratives – Vicarious Trauma

Practitioners *"feel their [children] distress…it's painful"* (SP32)

"…people will have those conversations to support each other but it is a time intensive process that really isn't allowed to happen sometimes" (SP12)

RE-LIVING THE STORM ?

➢ Vicarious trauma occurs through a transference of emotional residue from those who have experienced trauma on to those who engage them in an empathic relationship (McCann and Pearlman, 1990).

➢ Vicarious trauma is directly connected to typically detailed, and in some cases graphic, disclosures of trauma (Possick *et al.,* 2015).

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Vicarious Trauma

- Vicarious trauma may occur where there is an empathic relationship built with individuals (Iqbal, 2015). It has mostly been applied to counsellor relationships; however, youth justice practitioners may be at risk due to the empathic relationships they build with children which they are in contact with.

- Experiences of vicarious trauma may thus, hinder ethical practice via blurred boundaries between personal and professional life, inadequate decision making and emotional displays relating to exposure of trauma narratives (Iqbal, 2015).

Trauma Narrative – Vicarious Trauma

Practitioners *"feel their [children] distress…it's painful"* (SP32)

"…people will have those conversations to support each other but it is a time intensive process that really isn't allowed to happen sometimes" (SP12)

Trauma-Organised Culture

- Organisations who provide intensive support for individuals with trauma histories, may start mirroring trauma symptoms also known as trauma-organised (Bloom, 2010).

- Much like individuals, organisations can display trauma responses such as fight where conflict is rife and punitive measures are relied upon to maintain control, flight whereby there is avoidance of certain role aspects and absenteeism and freeze which involves a disconnect between colleagues and systems (Tyler, 2012).

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TRAUMA INFORMED CULTURE – NORTH WALES YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE

Some of the findings in this study include:

➤ Some offending behaviour is perceived as a strategy to communicate distress. It may also relate to occasions where powerful emotions are difficult to articulate, therefore, expression occurs through behaviour.

➤ In order to work through a trauma-informed lens, a cultural shift is required in order to embed values, policies and practice across all levels of the YJS. A further practical concept includes the need to work through a Child First and trauma-informed lens which complement each other through the shared strengths-based foundation.

➤ The space and relationship shared between children and practitioners involves elements of therapeutic processes and techniques often used by counsellors. However, also considered was the repercussions of forming healing relationships including the risk of vicarious trauma

'We are not the survival of the fittest, we are the survival of the nurtured...'
Louis Cozolino

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