



Invitation to tender: Reflective Practice at Respond

We are looking to commission regular ongoing group reflective practice for all staff working at Respond. We work with a trauma informed, psychodynamic and systemic approach.

Regular reflective practice has and will continue to be an embedded part of our organisational functioning, as a charity that works with both those who have been hurt and those that can hurt others, and what the organisation is being tasked with. We believe that having a regular and consistent space for staff to consider their role in the system and the impact of the work on themselves as individuals, is essential to create a healthy workplace.

Overview of Respond

Respond is a national charity which has been running for over 30 years. For many years we were a small charity providing psychotherapy from our clinic in London and providing training and consultancy nationally. Originally, we supported people with learning disabilities who had experienced abuse, then we expanded to include autistic people without learning disabilities. Respond practices a “trauma informed approach”. This means that we consider the impact of trauma in the lives of people with learning disabilities and autistic people, on individuals, families (or networks) and the whole social and political system. Respond has a psychodynamic and systemic approach to service delivery. This approach enables space for reflection specifically considering that the experience of living with a disability and societies response to this can be traumatising. Therefore, the trauma informed approach ensures that we’re not continuing the cycle of trauma individuals or families, rather we have a space to think.

Our services have grown, and now as well as psychotherapy we provide advocacy and other support. We have developed into a medium sized national charity, working with children, young people, and adults, who have a learning disability and/or who are autistic and have experienced trauma. We also work closely to support their families who are themselves experiencing trauma. We have a Head office in London and a base in the Midlands and since 2017 have grown from an organisation with a turnover of c£700k per annum to this year £2.1m.

Our vision is that all people with learning disabilities and autistic people who experience trauma are empowered to thrive.



And our mission as an organisation, that we reduce the impact of trauma in the lives of people with learning disabilities and autistic people, by developing trusting relationships, through psychotherapeutically informed services.

To achieve our mission and maximise our impact we have set ourselves the following five strategic objectives -

1. Increase public understanding and knowledge of the psychodynamic trauma informed approach
2. Provide a whole system approach when supporting children, young people, and their families
3. Improve the wellbeing and social integration for people moving out of long stay institutions into the community
4. Reduce the risk of offending for those who may cause harm to themselves or others
5. Reduce isolation, increase coping mechanisms and prevent further abuse

Our **values** underpin our behaviours and support our approach to our mission.

Respect - We are considerate about the thoughts, feelings, rights and opinions of everyone we connect with

Safe - We build and develop ongoing professional relationships based on trust

Inclusive - We bring together and reflect on a broad range of diverse contributions to drive our unique approach

Compassionate – We listen and understand that people’s experiences may impact the way they relate to others

Empowering - We enable people to build on their strengths in order that they can achieve their goals.

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Summary of Work

We aim for all staff to engage in regular group reflective practice to support them in their roles to process the impact of the work on them as individuals. Reflective practice is an essential part of running a trauma informed organisation. An important way of ensuring that this approach is embedded within Respond is through holding reflective practice groups attendance at these is not optional as it is intrinsic to how we function. These groups are an important part of supporting the organisation and those working in it to reflect on what is projected into the organisation, what we are being asked to contain by society, and how this may impact on the way we all behave as a group. The purpose of reflective practice at Respond is to support us both individually and as a team to reflect on the team dynamics in the context of the difficult work we do at Respond, it is a space to take a step back and reflect together on what might be happening, be curious to enable better communication and good working relationships.

Scope

Respond for nearly 30 years had monthly “Team Dynamics” for 90 minutes in person in its group room in Respond’s Clinic in London. One external consultant was contracted to facilitate/conduct the group to reflect on its own interpersonal dynamics (Hopper, 2012) and to reduce the risk of staff enacting the material that was projected into the organisation and brought in the task of making sense of the societal problem of the increased instances of abuse to and by people with learning disabilities, and autistic people.

The first group conductor was Earl Hopper, a psychoanalyst, group analyst and organisational consultant who has written extensively on the social unconscious and trauma in organisations. The team were consulted to by a process-oriented consultant that lasted a brief period. There followed a period of time where the group ran without a facilitator. Followed by the recruitment of another consultant from the Tavistock group relations approach, who retired and a brief period going into covid and team dynamics via zoom with another group relations approach facilitator. During the period 2018-2020 the staff team at Respond grew from around 20 to over 30 staff. The group room at Respond would not have physically contained this number of people, nor did one “zoom screen”. Staff reported feeling unsafe in team dynamics online, and the decision was made by the directorate to pause this approach and commission Philip Stokoe and Associates for 10 seminars and reflective groups on their “Healthy Organisations” model, over a period of 10 months from March 2021- March 2022. Meanwhile an internal working party was set up to review what was needed alongside an anonymous all staff survey conducted via survey monkey in February 2022.



Philip Stokoe and co also evaluated their work with an attitude survey.

At the risk of stating the obvious it is important to note that we have all been living through trauma, where we remain under mortal threat with the covid pandemic, war, and other pending natural disasters due to climate change and the threat of massive social upheaval. The social fabric and human connectivity feel as if it has changed forever. The relational approach and model of change that Respond utilises both for the change it seeks to make in the world and its modus operandi for 3 decades is therefore called into question.

Meanwhile Respond has also been undergoing significant organisational change; with two office moves, changes in staffing, and expansion and change within the leadership team.

We have recently conducted an internal review of our reflective practice at Respond with an internal working group with representation across, services, roles and regions. The working party met three times between January 2022- March 2022 (Q4), each meeting lasted 75 minutes. The meetings were chaired by the Clinical Director, Rosie Creer. At each meeting attendees checked in and out of the meeting. We reviewed our brief and had a chance to feedback our thoughts from our parts of the organisation. Reviewed the compiled anonymous results from the all-staff survey. Shared our combined hopes for the future of reflective practice at Respond and brought together our thoughts as to a way forward as detailed below. Clarity of purpose

To enable the effective use of these spaces all participants and facilitators need to be clear on its purpose, understand it and be in agreement.

Reaching agreement and ground rules

As an organisation we reach an agreement with a contract or ground rules around our participation. This could be done with the facilitators.

- Induction

A briefing on the purpose and function of the reflective groups and spaces within the organisation to be part of the induction process. Reflective practice should be part of the recruitment material, including advertisement and interview process.

Consideration and guidance for line managers regarding when new staff join reflective practice, eg. How soon into their employment, how many colleagues they have met first.

- Facilitators approach

As a trauma informed organisation our understanding of the activation of trauma responses such as flight, fight, freeze and flop bring the rational part of our brain



“offline” when we are feeling under threat. Therefore, creating a space where reflective thinking is possible will require all participants to feel safe and secure. This we suggest will enable better communication and improve relationships.

Our recommendation that whilst psychoanalytic theory is extremely helpful to understand the unconscious processes of individuals, groups and organisations, the openness of the psychoanalytic frame needs to be more frequent than monthly to enable the groups to make links between sessions.

Having more structure around checking in and out may contain some of the anxiety, particularly if sessions remain online. The working group felt that a more active and potentially directive approach to facilitation is also necessary to contain staff during this ambiguous time in history and whilst the organisation undergoes significant change

The working party hoped that facilitators may support some resolution within the group, there was a feeling that staff did not feel safe in the reflective practice sessions, and then they would have to wait a whole month to meet again, where the context had been forgotten. Therefore, increased frequency may allow enough space for individual reflection between sessions to enable more connection and links to take place between sessions.

The pressure on this space as one of the only times all staff meet could be countered with other types of informal social contact and organisational task focussed away days.

The total current staff team at Respond is 36, including:

CEO, 3 Directors, 3 Senior Managers, 5 service managers, one office manager, one administrator (2 more to join), 4 Advocates, 7 senior therapists, 3 therapists, a circle coordinator and two relational workers.

8 staff are based in Birmingham and 28 in London. There is a mixture of full and part time staff (18/18). Staff are working both in person and remotely, with a maximum number of days worked from home depending on days contracted.

Ongoing requirements

We are recommending that a mix of small and large reflective spaces be created to allow space for voices to be heard, and cross organisational conversations to take place.

Potential structures could include:



Fortnightly team small reflective practice groups, these could be clustered via services eg. Forensic/survivors, advocacy/therapy/cosa, regionally, across frontline/EMT, or randomly selected groups from across the organisation.

Monthly/bi-monthly or quarterly all staff reflective sessions or if less frequent all-day events with a mix of large and small group work.

We recommend that all groups happen in person unless there is a lockdown. We do not recommend a hybrid approach where some people are in person, and some are online.

Fortnightly groups could last for 75 minutes.

Monthly or less frequent groups could be up to 2 hours with a break.

Time of day

We recommend that sessions do not take place at the end of the day. All staff are available on the second Monday of the month in the afternoon. However, depending on group make up reflective practice could take place on other days of the week with forward planning.

Recommendations on review

The effectiveness of reflective practice should be reviewed six monthly with a staff survey and working group to review result. Consultants will feedback themes to the Senior Leadership team and share any concerns if necessary.

Criteria

In your tender, please propose how you would approach structuring reflective practice at Respond in collaboration with staff.

Please also include how you manage the boundaries between confidentiality in the reflective practice groups and feedback to the Senior Leadership Team.

We are looking for group or consortium consultants with experience and skills in providing reflective practice or organisational consultancy to organisations and teams who deal with those who have experienced trauma.

If your tender reaches second stage, we will offer an initial meeting with the Senior Leadership Team in early July 2022 followed by a meeting with members of the Reflective Practice Working Party in late July 2022.

**Budget range**

Respond has a budget of £10000 per annum

Team responsible for leading tendering process

Rosie Creer, Clinical Director

Noelle Blackman, CEO

Internal reflective practice working party

Deadlines and milestones

Please provide expressions of interest by 30th June 2022 to rosie.creer@respond.org.uk any questions should also be directed to Rosie.

We are aiming for Reflective Practice to commence September 2022