

Presentation: Spaces for listening

This session introduced a simple, lightly structured approach, something which a group of peers - any group of 7-8 people - can do with & for each other with little preparation or fuss.

The aim is that this will give you the opportunity to consider whether it is something which you would like to experience yourself, and also possibly to bring into practice locally in your organisation, community, or network.

Speakers: Brigid Russell, Charlie Jones, Kirsty Brightwell, Kirsty Shires, Bethan John

Brigid Russell is a self-employed coach and consultant working with people across public and third sectors. She believes in a relational approach to coaching and development, and that's why she's so drawn to finding and creating more spaces for listening to each other, and having more open conversations.

@brigidrussell51

Charlie Jones is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist in North Bristol NHS Trust. He is based in the medical directorate working alongside people living with long-term medical conditions. He is passionate about working relationally, and in understanding people's lived experiences of their health conditions in the context of their lives.

@charlie_psych

Kirsty Brightwell, GP and Medical Director, and is a BASICS trained Remote and Rural GP by trade. She has undertaken a variety of Clinical Lead and GP roles in the islands. Following 4 years as Cluster Quality Lead and Associate Medical Director for Primary Care in the Western Isles Health and Social Care Partnership, in 2020 she was appointed as Medical Director in NHS Shetland. She was in cohort 1 of Project Lift's Leadership Cubed programme and strives to connect the system to more of itself.

Kirsty Shires is a salaried GP. She was head of GP undergraduate teaching at Birmingham Medical School from November 2016-December 2021. She believes that kindness and compassion are the cornerstone of healthcare and is exploring how we can create more space for this in the pressurised world of the NHS.

Bethan John is a GP Trainee, having recently joined the GP training programme. She was previously a neurosurgery registrar. She has experienced *Spaces for Listening* with us a number of times, and we've been wondering with Bethan how wider use of *Spaces for Listening* might be helpful for doctors in training in particular.

[Understanding and experiencing *Spaces for Listening*](#)

There is more information on page 2 about the process of *Spaces for Listening*. It's really very simple. Our view is that anyone who comes along to experience a session is then able to go ahead and facilitate sessions in their own local context.

If you would like to hear more about the approach, you can access the webinar 'Spaces for Listening' which we did for the Scottish Government National Well-being Hub in

August 2021 via this podcasts & webinar page on the [hub](#). It includes a short video clip which is an excerpt of a *Spaces for Listening* session, followed by a conversation with several people who have experienced the approach and used it locally.

If you would like to read more about the approach and its impact, here is a blog we wrote in November 2020: [Spaces for Listening](#). And here are a couple of other blogs which explore further aspects of the power of listening: [Still listening](#) (June 2021) and [Trust in the spaces between us](#) (October 2021). Follow #SpacesForListening on Twitter for more direct feedback from people who've experienced it.

The best way to understand the approach is to experience it. If you'd like to experience a *Spaces for Listening* session, you are welcome to join one of our weekly sessions which are publicly available (we host 1 or 2 sessions per week). Email [Brigid Russell on brigidb@btinternet.com](mailto:brigidb@btinternet.com) for the forthcoming dates and to book a place.

[Spaces for Listening – information sheet](#)

[A chance to be heard](#)

Many of us are seeking to understand more about what's going on, a chance to be heard, and to consider where we might go next. If we are going to find more sustainable and humane ways to move forward from the Covid-19 crisis, then we need better quality conversations.

What if we gathered together and shared with each other: how we are feeling, and what's on our minds? Such space for listening gives us the breathing space: to find out and share what is going on for each of us; and, to hear where others are too.

[A structured space](#)

A simple, structured process creates a space in which we each have an equal opportunity to share and listen. There is no hierarchy. We all need to be aware to look after our own selves in this space, as we might find it enables thoughts and feelings to be expressed in ways that can feel moving, or even a little unsettling.

The structure of three rounds of timed contributions (2min per person, in each round) provides a safe, confidential space in which we can each choose to open up and explore our ideas and feelings. It's always okay to pass in any particular round. Given that we are each sharing our personal experiences, it is really helpful if we join the call from a quiet space where we won't be interrupted.

[An experience to spark change](#)

We believe that the best way to understand the quality of this simple, structured approach is to experience it. Each Space is a one-off. However, our experience is that *Spaces for Listening* enable us to go on and have conversations elsewhere which are purposeful and meaningful.

[An outline of the structure](#)

The facilitator is also an equal participant in the process. Each of us has 2min in turn, timed by the facilitator. Each of us can use our time to say whatever we like.

We do not interrupt each other or open up into a general conversation.

- Round 1: *How are you and what is on your mind.*
- Round 2: *An invitation to share your reflections and feelings now, and in the light of what you have heard in Round 1.*
- Round 3: *An invitation to share something you might take away from the call, and also to offer some appreciation to any aspects of the call that have resonated with you.*

At the end of Round 3, the session ends.

Further information

If you would like to find out more, or offer any feedback following on from the experience, please contact **Brigid Russell** (brigidb@btinternet.com / @brigidrussell51) or **Charlie Jones** (charlie.jones@nbt.nhs.uk / @charlie_psych)