



CENTRE FOR
URBAN WELLBEING



Feeling at Home:

Changing the Story of Domestic Abuse



December 2023



Foreword:

Welcome to Feeling at Home: Changing the Story of Domestic Abuse.

I am delighted to introduce this comprehensive resource born out of TAROE Trust's commitment to excellence in centring the experiences of regulated housing tenants and residents in policy and practice. This report is the result of extensive research, hands-on experience, and a dedication to sharing practical insights that can be applied in real-world scenarios.

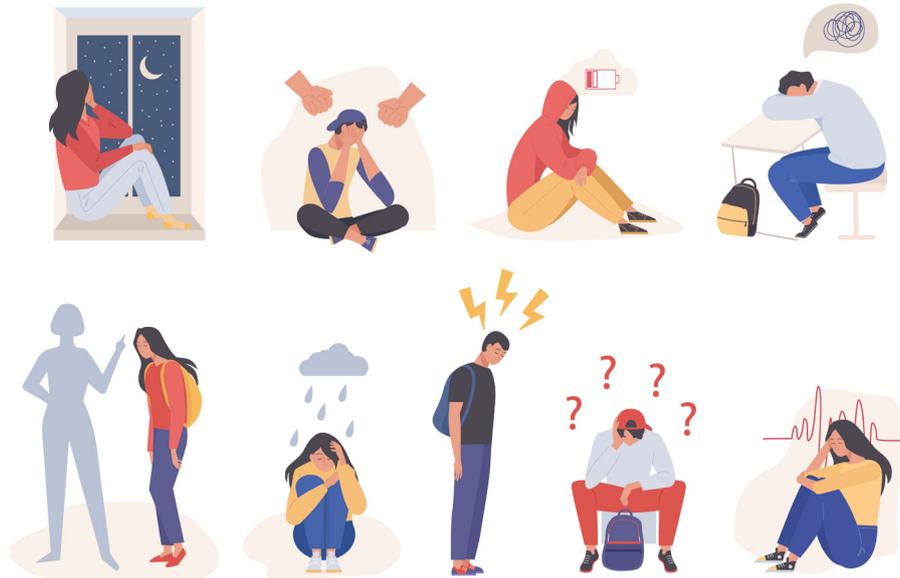
In the following pages, you will find a step-by-step guide to creating a localised domestic abuse plan in partnership with tenant and neighbourhood volunteers. The approach is inspired by the government's call to understand domestic abuse as 'everyone's responsibility'. Furthermore, it reflects the perspectives of tenants involved in a research partnership between TAROE Trust and the University of Birmingham's Centre for Urban Wellbeing.

Tenants described playing a pivotal role in identifying domestic abuse and supporting victim/survivors to safely exit abuse and recover from the harm caused. Tenants thought that regulated landlords could do more to engage with domestic abuse at a community level and restructure services to identify and reduce the problem effectively. This resource translates ideas from relational policymaking into practical steps that build individual capacity, strengthen community ecosystems and recircuit interagency relationships.

This resource also reflects TAROE Trust's commitment to evidence-based approaches and our view that relational and emotionally informed practices are the future of professional standards across the regulated housing sector. This resource evidences the feasibility of this position.

Key features of this report:

1. Plain English introduction to relational ideas: The resource is carefully structured to introduce you to key ideas from relational thinking and how they translate into practice.
2. Step-by-Step Guidance: Whether you are a housing or local authority practitioner or a tenant or resident concerned about domestic abuse, you will find step-by-step guidance that simplifies complex processes, making them accessible and manageable.
3. Storytelling as a technique: Storytelling is utilised in three ways: to build team bonds and trust, as a knowledge mapping technique, and as a means to imagine an alternative future grounded in evidence.



Why this report matters:

In regulated housing and local authority practice the landscape is ever-evolving, presenting both challenges and opportunities. Domestic abuse is a complex topic and this resource represents an innovative approach. It makes a case for and provides a roadmap for collective, emotionally informed working. Furthermore, it showcases storytelling as a key approach for engaging with and changing complex real-world problems. Whether you are a seasoned professional or a newcomer, the approach and insights contained within these pages are designed to enable you to take a different approach to working with communities to reduce domestic abuse.

I urge you to immerse yourself in the practical wisdom offered here. **Feeling at Home: Changing the Story of Domestic Abuse** is more than a guide; it is a challenge to rethink how the regulated housing sector thinks of and acts on its social purpose. It is a call for evidence-based action, emphasising how safe and secure housing, coupled with thoughtfully designed services, can save lives and reduce harm.

Thank you for trusting us with your learning journey. May this report be your valuable resource as you embark on changing the story of domestic abuse in your locality.

Best wishes,

Darren Hartley

CEO TAROE Trust.



Introduction:

Domestic abuse, defined as abuse by a partner, ex-partner or family member and often occurring in the home, is a complex problem. Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2022, **470 deaths, including homicide and suspected victim suicide** occurred in a domestic setting or following domestic abuse. Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending March 2023 showed that **4.4%** of people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year (across England and Wales). For the same period, the CSEW estimated that **5.1%** of people aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year (this equates to an estimated **2.4 million adults** (1.7 million women and 699,000 men).

This resource is designed to aid housing and local authority practitioners in collaborating with tenants and community volunteers to create a local domestic abuse plan. Developed through research in partnership with TAROE Trust and the University of Birmingham's Centre for Urban Wellbeing in 2023. The research explored the utility of psychological and emotional insights for building more effective and trusting relationships between tenants and regulated housing providers in England.

Housing is one of the crucial factors in exiting an abusive relationship. Yet domestic abuse is rarely a central focus in regulated housing practice and policy. This is despite this weight of evidence, sector campaigns such as Make a Stand and the recognition of the central importance of housing in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Domestic abuse is everyone's responsibility. This resource aims to facilitate collective working with local communities and services such as the local authority, housing and police. Collective working requires relationship building to develop a shared understanding of the problem of domestic abuse. Through this shared understanding, an alternative future is imagined and this forms the basis of a local domestic abuse plan that is everyone's responsibility.

This resource is composed of five sections. Section one introduces key concepts and sections two, three and four are 'how to' guides. The resource concludes with supplementary notes.

Page 9 - Section one: Getting ready for co-production methods. Expedition teams and storytelling.

Page 13 - Section two: How to plan your expedition

Page 23 - Section three: How to investigate domestic abuse in your locality.

Page 40 - Section four: How to tell your story of change.

Page 43 - Supplementary notes: Research methods and contribution to innovation.



Key points from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The 2021 Act makes broad-sweeping changes to the definition of domestic abuse and how institutions such as the legal system, police and local authorities should act.

Key points of relevance to this resource are:

- A definition of abuse that includes physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional and other abuse¹.
- There must be a personal connection between the abuser and the abused. This ensures different types of relationships are recognised, including ex-partners and family members².
- Recognition that children are ‘victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience abuse and fall under the parental responsibility of the victim-survivor and/or perpetrator of the domestic abuse’.
- Creation of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner role to map and monitor the provision of services, make recommendations to public bodies about their response, conduct research, work jointly with public authorities and voluntary organisations, and raise public awareness of domestic abuse³.
- Creation of a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme that permits an individual or third party to ask the police to check if a former or current partner has an abusive past⁴.
- Local authorities are to grant a new lifetime tenancy to a tenant or a member of their household where the applicant is on an existing lifetime tenancy⁵.
- Some local authorities have an enhanced duty to provide refuges, sanctuaries and accommodation schemes. Local authorities in general, must provide domestic abuse support, including counselling and therapy, recognising the signs of domestic abuse and housing-related advice and support⁶.
- Landlords must work with local authorities and other bodies to develop domestic abuse strategies.
- At the point of writing this resource (September 2023), the Regulator of Social Housing is consulting on how the regulated housing sector can contribute to tackling domestic abuse.

¹ The Law Society (27 June 2023). “Domestic Abuse Act 2021.” Retrieved 18 September, 2023.

² Gov.uk (11 July 2022). “Statutory definition of domestic abuse fact sheet.” Retrieved 18 September, 2023.

³ Gov.uk (11 July 2023). “Domestic Abuse Commissioner fact sheet.” Retrieved 18 September, 2023.

⁴ The Law Society (27 June 2023). “Domestic Abuse Act 2021.” Retrieved 18 September, 2023.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Focus on: What is domestic abuse?

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if — **A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.**

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse;
- psychological, emotional or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/ or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so-called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

What does a good local domestic abuse plan look like?

A good plan will focus on the four core problems identified by government⁷. These are:

- To reduce the number of victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
- Reduce the number of deaths from domestic abuse.
- Ensure the right help is available to victims/survivors of domestic abuse from the courts, the police, the local authority, housing providers and the local community.
- Help more cases of domestic abuse to be spotted.

A good plan will identify the resources needed to tackle these problems and outline a plan for how the resources will be effectively put to work.

Progress measures must be clearly defined, and ‘review and assess’ moments built in to identify unintended effects.

⁷ HM Government (March 2023). ‘Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan. This is everyone’s responsibility. Let’s stop domestic abuse now’. Retrieved 7 November 2023 from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/627e2f06e90e0721b1444ac2/TacklDomAbusePln-V1_06-05-22_.pdf

Section one: Getting ready for co-production methods, expedition teams and storytelling.

“If you always do, what you’ve always done, you always get what you’ve always gotten”.

- Jessie Potter, Educator and Counsellor, 1981

This section introduces two ideas that enable the effective co-production of a local domestic abuse plan. The first idea is to approach creating a local domestic abuse plan as a journey or ‘expedition’.

The second is to use storytelling as a technique to think with our ‘hearts and minds’ when working together to create a plan. This section will outline the case for using expeditions and storytelling as valuable tools for creating local domestic abuse plans and will describe how they are applied in this resource. Furthermore, what is meant by ‘locality’ is clarified, and why working at a localised level is important for developing effective domestic abuse plans.

Expeditions: What is an expedition?

The term ‘expedition’ is used as a metaphor and a structuring device. As a metaphor, it captures the spirit of a journey into the unknown. As a structuring device, it helps to outline the ‘steps’ of working together to investigate and imagine a domestic abuse plan without the idea that there is a strict formula to follow to guarantee ‘success’.

Why undertake an expedition?

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 mandates local authorities to create a safe accommodation strategy.
- A review is underway for a similar expectation on registered social housing providers.
- Traditional domestic abuse planning is often bureaucratic and compliance-focused. This approach does not capture the complexity of domestic abuse as shaped by culture, history, and psychology.
- An expedition mindset recognises and helps navigate the challenges of collective working across agencies and communities.

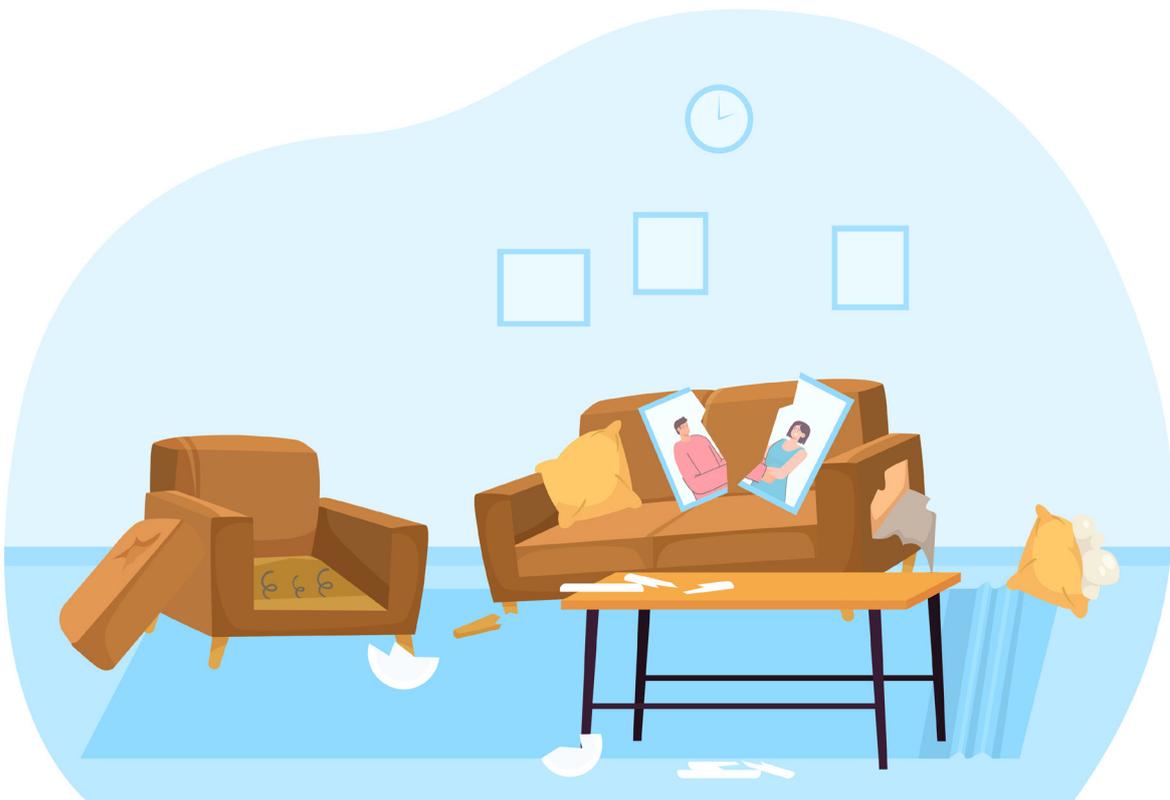




Key ingredients for an expedition

- Assembling a diverse, core team of volunteers, practitioners and experts, with additional expertise available as the journey progresses.
- Securing sponsorship from a funder that shares expedition values (see page 13).
- Careful planning and adaptability to changing plans.
- Bravery to take calculated risks and engage with uncertainty.
- An openness to surprise and acknowledgement of the diverse routes to a destination.
- An emphasis on relational working to foster relationships and trust.
- An openness to transformative effects for individuals and organisations.
- A commitment to working with discomfort and surfacing this whenever it is present.

An expedition is an approach that requires bravery to start the journey, humility to accept the uncertainty, determination to keep going and the wisdom to know when to stop. Expeditions can be personally transformative, which can be unsettling but rewarding. Section two will help you determine if an expedition is the right approach for you.



Storytelling for change

Storytelling is a deeply human activity so woven into our existence that we don't see it. As a method, storytelling is flexible and powerful, with a history of being applied in research and as a creative approach to recovery⁸. It is found in unexpected places like business consultancy, where it is practised to effect behavioural and cultural change⁹. The power of storytelling lies in its ability to simplify the complex without losing nuance and to produce new perspectives that can be shared through the simple act of telling a story. Storytelling is a little-used method in housing work. This resource seeks to change this by evidencing the power of storytelling in understanding complex problems and effecting meaningful change.

How storytelling is used in this resource

- To build strong relationships within the expedition team and with stakeholders invested in the domestic abuse plan. Soft skills like active listening and asking questions are developed through this work.
- As a research method to map the expedition team's knowledge and unknowns about domestic abuse. Myths and false narratives around domestic abuse are challenged as part of this process. Harder skills, such as working with data and evidence emerge as part of this work.
- To unlock the imagination as a powerful means of change. This draws out powerful emotions such as hope and skills such as creativity.



⁸ Bird, J. (2017). "Art therapy, arts-based research and transitional stories of domestic violence and abuse." *International Journal of Art Therapy* **23**(1).

⁹ Griffiths, G., et al. (2021). "“Once Upon a Time...” – the Use of Storytelling in Consultancy Leadership to Influence Behaviour Changes Post 2020." *Journal of Intercultural Management* **13**: 1-28.

Locality and domestic abuse

A locality means a place. How the place is defined will vary based on factors unique to that locality. For example, a locality could mean one village or a town. It could mean a postcode or a street. It is quite a flexible concept that helps anchor the expedition to a specific territory.

For some expedition teams, their locality might be pre-defined. For others, it may be more fluid. It is likely that during the expedition, the place that you initially start exploring changes as you develop a more nuanced understanding of its contours and boundaries.

Locality matters regarding domestic abuse, as there can be a 'postcode lottery' regarding available services. Also, different groups of people gather in different places. For example, a locality with a high concentration of young families with children will need different service provisions and approaches to a locality with a higher concentration of people from the LGBTQ+ community.

Working at the local level is tough. It means dealing with the harsh truths about domestic abuse, the harm it causes, and how well local services are dealing with it. Also, engaging with local communities to research and develop domestic abuse plans can challenge a toxic cultural narrative that excuses perpetrators and blames victim/survivors. Lastly, working at a local level can reveal the hidden work of tenant and community volunteers. It ensures that their experiences are made visible, and they have the resources and support to effectively and safely tackle domestic abuse.

Section reflections

This section has introduced new ideas of expeditions and storytelling. It has outlined the relationship between locality and domestic abuse, highlighting that working at a community level can effectively tackle domestic abuse.

Working collectively at a local level is challenging. The following sections focus on the practical aspects of planning and undertaking your expedition, working towards creating a domestic abuse plan that can save lives and reduce the trauma.



Section two: How to plan your expedition

This section outlines the steps for planning your expedition. It is the most involved of the ‘how to’ sections, as time is needed to plan the journey and build relationships that are resilient to the challenges of investigating and understanding domestic abuse.

The section is structured around five steps:

- **Identifying key stakeholders**
- **Organising base camp**
- **Setting ground rules for meetings and activities**
- **Getting to know each other**
- **Developing roles and responsibilities**

Moving through the steps will be iterative and messy, with structure emerging from group work and discussion. The steps aim to encourage reflection and assist you in asking useful questions to aid the planning process. This section will help you understand the resources and commitments needed to co-produce a local domestic abuse plan and help you decide if this is an approach you can effectively undertake.

Expedition values¹⁰

Shared ownership – Everyone taking part in, or supporting the expedition needs to feel ownership of the journey and work together in a spirit of understanding and support.

Culture of openness and honesty – The expedition team needs to work towards these values and the hosting organisation needs to express these values too. Uncomfortable truths may be found and expedition sponsors need to be capable and ready for this.

Sharing decision-making power – Reflecting on how decisions are made and where accountability lies is a key part of the process.

Clear communication – Avoid jargon and make it easy to ask for clarity.

Value and respect – People partaking in the expedition, supporting and hosting it need to express these values. This can sometimes be challenging in the context of regulated housing, as the sector is stigmatised and stigma has webs of influence that are hard to see.

If your expedition cannot be underpinned by and work towards developing and maintaining these values. We suggest that you take another approach, and TAROE Trust can help you with that.

¹⁰ NHS England (2023). “Co-production.” Retrieved 18 August, 2023.

Step one: Identifying key stakeholders

It is helpful to think of the different ‘stakeholders’ in the expedition, their roles and how to communicate with them as the expedition unfolds. Key stakeholders will include:

The expedition team

This is the core group undertaking the expedition activities. Determining roles within the expedition team is a key planning activity and one that will be revisited as your journey progresses.

The support team

These are the people and organisations on the periphery of the expedition. They may be people who need to be kept informed of expedition progress and findings. They may have expertise and perspectives that can guide the expedition. It is helpful to acknowledge that the support team may be impacted by findings and may have mixed or negative feelings about the expedition. Planning how to communicate with the support team and engage with their knowledge, expertise and perspective is a core task.

The expedition sponsor

This is likely to be a regulated landlord or a local authority. They may be funding the expedition directly or have secured funding from external grants. The expedition sponsor will need to ensure a person with suitable seniority and budget responsibility is a key contact. They will need to have the authority to enact the change identified through the expedition.

The sponsor will want to be kept informed as the expedition progresses and they will have a role in ensuring the expedition is well planned and focussed on producing new knowledge and ideas for a localised domestic abuse plan. In turn, the expedition sponsor needs to understand that an expedition is a journey into the unknown and is likely to challenge established organisations cultures and practices.

Potential sponsors are asked to reflect on the values underpinning an expedition, the resources required, the resulting change and their ability to commit to these.



Focus on: The expedition sponsor

Starting with the **expedition sponsor**, note down who the sponsor is and the details of the nominated representative and discuss the following questions with them:

- What are your expectations of the expedition?
- What are your thoughts on the values underpinning the expedition?
- What are the non-negotiables that will inform expedition planning?
- Are you committed to supporting the expedition even if it challenges current practices and culture?
- What actions can you take to ensure the wider organisation and other invested stakeholders support the expedition?
- What are the timescales and budget the team is expected to work to? Is there scope for any flexibility?
- Can you introduce me to people and organisations who might constitute the expedition or support team?



Focus on: The support team

A diverse and well-informed support team will contribute to the expedition's success. Here are some ideas of where to look for team members and questions to explore with them.

Some ideas of where to find support team stakeholders include:

Researchers and academics: Some academics will be knowledgeable about domestic abuse. Others will have skills in participatory research methods and other modes of collective working. Most academics and researchers from the social sciences and humanities will have sound knowledge of research design and techniques. Many universities and research institutions will have a public engagement team, and they can help you find suitable researchers.

Community stakeholders: They bring local knowledge and perspectives that can be drawn upon as the expedition progresses.

Practitioners: These can be from housing, schools, local authority, the NHS, police and domestic abuse support organisations. Practitioners play dual roles as contributors to and recipients of the expedition.

In their contributing capacity, they offer valuable experiences and perspectives. However, practitioners may pose a challenging audience, given that the expedition questions current practices and assumptions while proposing alternatives. It is crucial to ensure practitioners are actively and meaningfully engaged throughout the entire journey.

Facilitators and mediators: An expedition, especially into difficult topics such as domestic abuse, can produce conflict. Having a third party help to facilitate is highly recommended. You may need to call upon different facilitators and mediators as the expedition progresses.

Questions to explore with the support team include:

- How regularly do they want updates, and in what format?
- When and how might you need to meet with the support team, and why?
- What are their concerns and hopes for the expedition?
- Who is the single point of contact to whom they can ask questions and discuss their hopes and concerns for the expedition?
- Are there protocols around anonymity and safeguarding that you need to be aware of?

The aim is to keep the support team up-to-date on the expedition's progress and develop a network with expertise and experience that the expedition team can approach for help.



Focus on: The expedition team

This is the core team who will work together, researching and ideating a localised domestic abuse plan.

Key members of the expedition team will include:

Tenant and neighbourhood volunteers: Acknowledging domestic abuse as ‘everyone’s responsibility’ underscores the importance of including community representatives. This becomes especially relevant when considering that victim/survivors of domestic abuse may find it more comfortable reaching out to peers within their neighbourhood. Additionally, communities are likely to be attuned to hidden abuse, making their role crucial in reporting instances of abuse.

Practitioners: The focus here is practitioners from regulated landlords and local authorities. It is better that practitioners volunteer to participate and that involvement in the expedition is understood as a core work activity and time is allocated to it.

An independent facilitator: We recommend that a core team member is an independent facilitator with expertise in co-creation and project management.

Who else? We suggest a core expedition team of between 6-12 people who have actively chosen to take part. The aim is to have a diverse group open to learning, reflection and respectful disagreement. The team will likely change a little over time so building in flexibility and natural ‘jumping off’ points will be helpful.

Reflection activity - Do we include victim/survivors of domestic abuse?

There is no straightforward answer to this.

Due to the prevalence of domestic abuse, your expedition will likely include people with experience of abuse. We caution against seeking to recruit people to the expedition or support teams with recent or ongoing experiences of domestic abuse but instead to work with specialist support organisations who have the skills, safeguarding policies and expertise in working with victim/survivors.

Due to the complex nature of working with victim-survivors, and the lack of funding and resources available to such organisations, we recommend speaking to them early on in your planning. This is so they can work with you to support or take part in the expedition without taking away from their core work of helping victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

A second point to consider is whether such organisations stand to financially benefit from service commissioning. This may be another reason to locate such organisations in the support team space. That way, they can advise the core expedition team but maintain a professional distance from recommendations.

Step two: Organising base camp

Your base camp is the place where your core expedition team meets. The aim is to create a welcoming and inviting place with all the resources you need for a successful expedition.

Reflection activity

Is your expedition team going to meet in real life, will it be a virtual team, or will it be a mix of the two? There are pros and cons to both.

- How accessible is base camp?
- How can you explore accessibility with the expedition team?
- Can your base camp accommodate people who can't commit to a fixed date and time, or is a fixed date and time essential?
- How can base camp feel like a place people want to visit?
- How frequently does the team need to meet at base camp?
- How can resources that help with the expedition be kept safely at base camp? (For example, contact lists, meeting notes, and other resources the team might want to refer back to).

The aim of setting up a good base camp is to provide some structure and a place for storing the 'tools' and findings as the expedition progresses. It is a space that will evolve as the expedition progresses, the key point to make is that base camp needs planning consideration.



Step three: Setting ground rules for meetings and activities

As outlined, domestic abuse is a challenging topic; discomfort and disagreement should be anticipated. Setting ground rules can aid in navigating these tensions so that they contribute to creating an effective local domestic abuse plan.

Reflection activity

- How can we ensure everyone can have a fair say in discussions?
- How can we make it easy to say 'I don't know' or 'I've changed my mind'?
- How can we ensure people are confident to express a different opinion?
- How will we deal with conflicts and hard decisions where it is not clear that there is a 'right answer'?
- How can we support each other if the expedition surfaces negative emotions, past experiences and the like?
- How can we recognise when someone needs support that we can't provide? Where can we find such support?
- How do we hold ourselves and others accountable to the ground rules and the aims of the expedition?
- How can we keep the ground rules in mind during our expedition?

The appendix has ideas for experimenting with meeting structures and we recommend trying the **1-2-4-All** technique to develop your expedition ground rules.





Step four: Getting to know each other

Spending time getting to know each other is essential. The expedition team must develop trust in each other and the expedition process. Furthermore, getting to know each other will help with developing roles and responsibilities and in supporting each other take on new tasks and learn together. Ultimately, strong foundational relationships will increase the chances of a successful expedition.

Recommended exercise – What is your story?

As storytelling is a key technique used in this resource, starting with smaller stories and building towards more involved storytelling is essential.

Before sharing your stories, review the ground rules and ensure they inspire confidence and a feeling of safety. This facilitates sharing personal stories.

Story prompt: What is the story of why you are taking part in this expedition?

We recommend a few minutes of quiet reflection and providing resources such as pens, paper and drawing equipment. Some people may be comfortable writing out their stories. Others may prefer to tell their story in conversation.

The aim is to share stories within the expedition team. The stories must stay within the expedition team. It may be helpful for an expedition leader or facilitator to make notes, as agreed with the team, as the stories can inform the next step, developing roles and responsibilities.

If you hire a creative writing expert, add them to your support team information and keep them informed as the expedition progresses.



Step five: Roles and responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities help to keep the expedition on track and ensure accountability. The questions below will help you discuss and decide on roles and responsibilities. You will need to review these as the expedition progresses.

Role development exercise

Be clear on the overall goal of the expedition, to create a localised domestic abuse plan with involved tenants and neighbourhood volunteers. Role development explores the required activities to fulfil this goal.

- Who will be the expedition leader(s)? Research suggests that having named leaders with clear responsibilities and veto decision-making authority can contribute to better collective working.
- What roles are needed from the start and run throughout the expedition? These leadership and administration roles are structuring roles.
- What roles can be more flexible? These might be more task-orientated. Having flexible roles can help ensure the expedition team is inclusive to a diverse range of perspectives and experiences.
- How can the roles be accountable to the expedition team and wider stakeholders?
- Check that responsibilities and tasks contribute to the expedition goals.
- What rewards and recognition will help keep the team motivated and supported?

Once you have decided on your role titles, break out into smaller groups, assigning one role per group.

- Discuss the specific tasks and responsibilities for each role.
- Consider the skills, expertise and interests required for each role.
- Explore how the role contributes to meeting the expedition's aim.
- Estimate the time commitment for the role and double it!
- What training and support might be needed, and where can this be sourced.

Discuss roles as a group. It might be some roles are similar and can be merged. Tasks might need to be shared to make smaller, simpler roles that can work around other commitments.

We recommend consulting with the expedition support team. Can someone with a human resources or volunteer management background help with role development? Who can advise on training and skills development?

The aim is to develop roles for the expedition team. If you find that there are gaps, you can recruit new team members. You may find that developing roles and responsibilities is a point where people change their minds and no longer want to participate. This is all part of the process and nothing to worry about.

Each expedition is different and having a mix of fixed structured roles and flexible roles ensure people take part in ways that work for them and their life circumstances.

Section reflections

This section has outlined five essential steps for planning your expedition. A crucial takeaway is the importance of securing organisational commitment for the journey and the challenges it will uncover. Without this commitment, it is advisable not to embark on the expedition, as a failure to commit to change is ultimately a failure to commit to the entire process.

During this stage, storytelling serves as a tool to build robust team bonds, forming a foundation of resilience and support necessary for navigating the complexities of domestic abuse. Additionally, a compilation of tips that didn't neatly fit into the steps is summarized in the appendix.



Section three: How to investigate domestic abuse in your locality

This section is a guide for exploring domestic abuse in your community. It's designed to help you gather information and build a strong foundation for your plan. The process begins by mapping local services related to domestic abuse, giving insight into how these services function in your area. This map will guide your research, and the section includes tips on crafting good questions and finding reliable information.

In addition, to support your expedition team get used to interrogating data and discussing findings, insights from a review of domestic abuse and housing literature are summarised, along with questions to help you interpret the findings. Finally, guidance is provided on sharing and discussing your investigative results. By the end, you'll have a comprehensive 'knowledge map' of domestic abuse in your area, broader perspectives, and ideas for potential changes.

The knowledge expedition is challenging work; the four steps are summarised below.

Step One: Mapping our current understanding of domestic abuse in our locality

How? Create a visual map (or two or three...) that tells the story of domestic abuse services in your locality and how they are experienced at a community level.

Step Two: Investigate and find new knowledge

How? Undertake traditional research. This develops the expedition team's understanding of domestic abuse as a complex issue and helps to find ideas that might work in your locality.

Step Three: Practicing interrogating data and discussing findings

How? Work through the domestic abuse and housing literature review insights on pages 33-38 and reflect on their impact on your individual and team thinking.

Step Four: Establish our new understanding

How? Report back on findings from step two and three and discuss these as a team. Integrating your findings into the mapping work from stage one will result in a solid evidence base to inform a new domestic abuse plan.

STEP ONE:

Mapping our current understanding of domestic abuse in our locality

Understanding domestic abuse in your local area is a bit like crafting a map. It encompasses gathering information from diverse sources, employing various methods, and synthesising these to construct a comprehensive picture. Storytelling contributes to the mapping work in two ways. Initially, it captures individuals' experiences and insights into domestic abuse services within their areas. Additionally, visual methods are utilised to depict the overarching narrative of domestic abuse services and how they are experienced. Combining storytelling with visual methods helps to capture the complexity of the 'big picture' in a way that is easy to communicate and understand.

It is challenging to outline prescriptive steps for this mapping process. A lot will depend on the enthusiastic engagement, or not, of local service providers. The steps below assume you are dealing with less than enthusiastic organisations. If you are fortunate to be working with mostly supportive and engaged organisations, you may be able to create the visual map(s) over a day or two with the facilitation of a visual storytelling expert. Whatever the context you find yourself in, this stage will reveal tensions, assumptions and problems that need to be engaged with carefully and respectfully.

Identify and map all local organisations handling domestic abuse by collecting publicly available information.

During the planning stage, you should have already identified local organisations. However, it's beneficial to review the list. The first for the expedition team involves conducting 'desktop research' to gather publicly available information about these organisations and their approaches to domestic abuse. This process helps determine what information is accessible to the community, assesses the ease of finding this information, and compares it to the data discovered during the mapping stage.

Approach each organisation for more information.

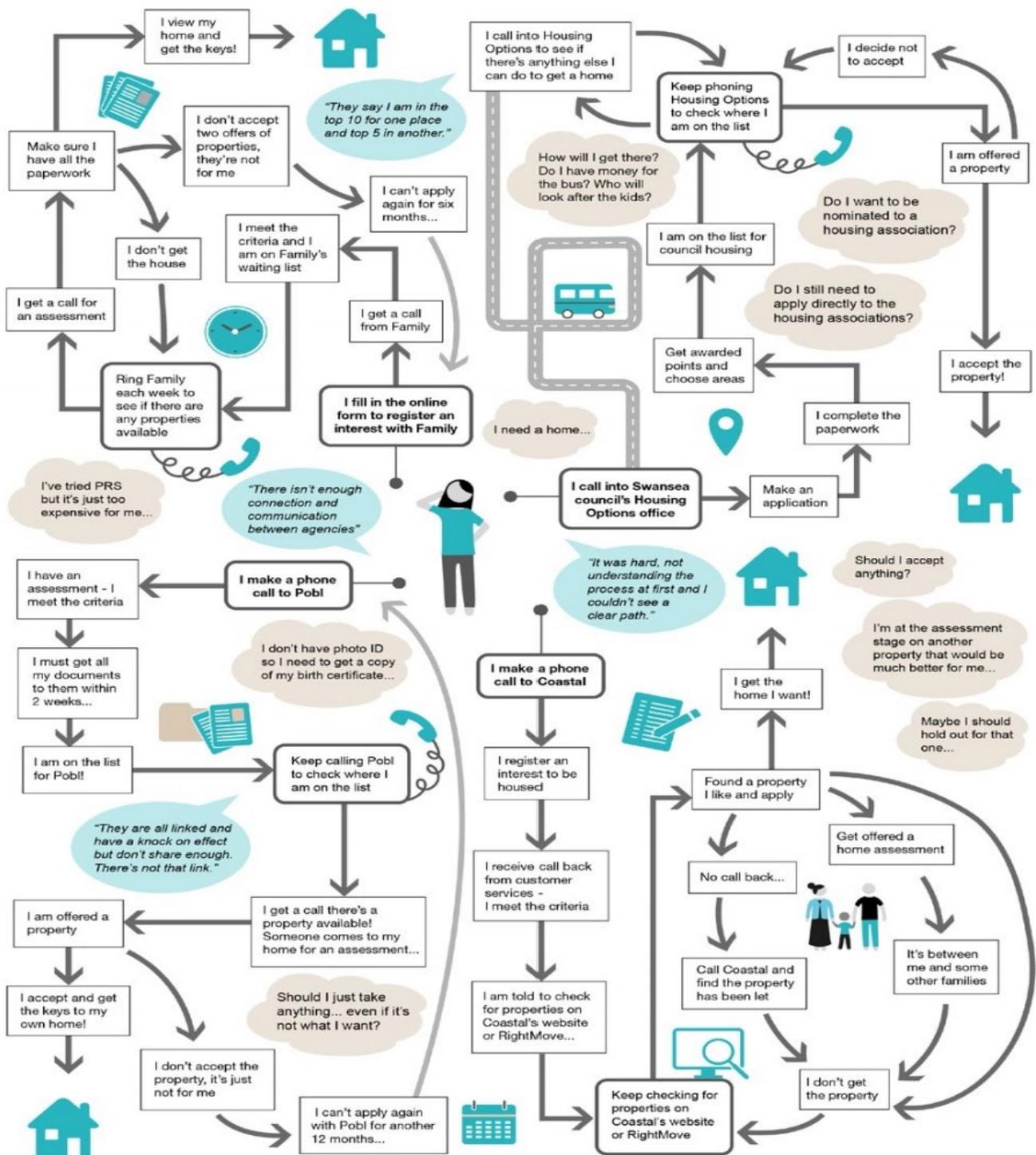
In the planning phase, securing funding and sponsorship establishes the legitimacy of your expedition. This credibility is valuable when approaching organisations to request detailed information about their services. While some organisations might be hesitant to share, others may offer resources such as service agreements, flowcharts, and user statistics. Ideally, engage with a knowledgeable representative from each organisation who can provide insights into what's effective, what's not, and what requires change within the services and community. If you speak with an organisation representative, ensure you obtain their written consent and confirm your notes with them, demonstrating ethical conduct and respect.

Tell the expedition team's collective story of their experience and knowledge of local domestic abuse services.

Utilise the storytelling methods outlined in section two. The team's diverse perspectives can enrich the account, offering varied insights. For instance, Angela's narrative on pages 27-28 demonstrates how multiple stories can interweave to form a collective account. The goal is to create a relatable depiction of how a community encounters the impact of domestic abuse and the services aimed at addressing it. Reinforce the ground rules, emphasising confidentiality and the importance of sharing only what each individual is comfortable with. Also it is important that the collective story is anonymised and that no information that will identify real people is shared. Given the potentially distressing nature of the stories shared, ensure there's adequate support available for the team throughout this process.

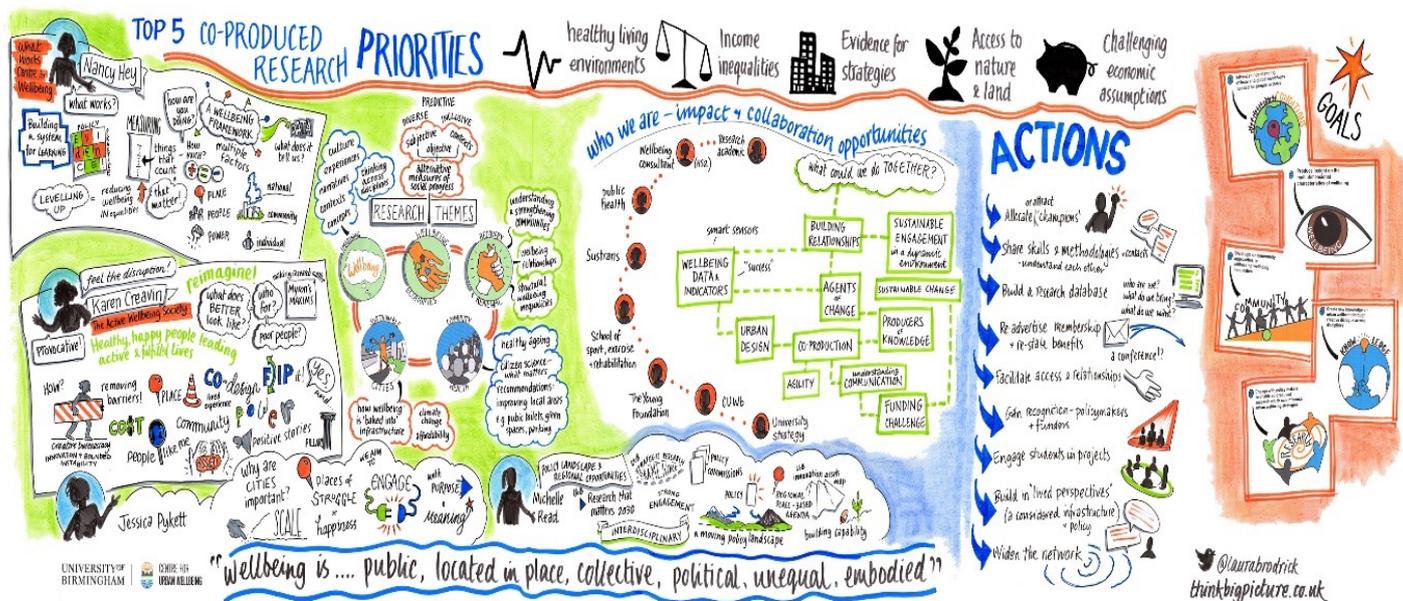
Work with a visual artist to tell the story of your data.

You may also want to work with a research expert to help you organise the information you have collected so far. The visual artist will work with you to identify themes and ideas and turn these into visual resources. The following pages show and describe two examples to give you a sense of the type of resources produced through visual work.



This image is from a **Shelter Cymru** report 'Allocation of social housing in Swansea' (2020). It is an experience map that shows how 'simple' organisation processes combine into a confusing map for the housing applicant.





This is a visual map of the priorities and actions for the Centre for Urban Wellbeing research centre. It uses colour, images and text to communicate the plan for the year.

Sharing your knowledge map(s)

It is recommended that you share the resulting visual maps with care. Show the support team and gain their feedback on the maps you have created. Be sure the visual artist is aware of this final review stage so they can refine the final images.

Crafting visual maps generates a powerful narrative that portrays the intricacies of domestic abuse services and how they may be experienced. While challenging, this stage is essential, as it is the groundwork for the 'storytelling for change' described in section four.



Example of a collective story – Angela’s Story

Hi, I’m Angela and I’ve been a tenant rep with Research Association Homes for I think, four years now? I became a tenant rep as I wanted to give something back, you know? I ended up in social housing after owning my own home for a bit and having to leave as my then partner’s behaviour got weird and scary after I got pregnant.

I want to tell you a bit about some of my work as a tenant rep that involves domestic abuse. I think because I came into my house because of my own experiences of this, experiences I’m happy to talk about, after a bit of help from Women’s Aid, people know they can come to me. I’ve had some great help from the council, but also some right problems caused by them and the housing, so I think that’s another reason people come to me sometimes, because they’ve had bad experiences trying to get help.

One of the things about being a tenant rep is that I’m here a lot! I’ve had people come to my door asking for help. I don’t mind as I tell people to come round if they want to chat. I do worry sometimes though that the abusive partner may come round to have a go, thankfully it’s not happened yet but it is a worry. Sometimes I’ll try to arrange chance encounters – I managed to bump into one lady at the supermarket, it was a bit of a sting operation.

We knew something had kicked off as we could hear the arguing, my neighbour told me when this lady was going to the shops and I might have arranged to go there at the same time... Anyway, I bumped into her, and could see she had an injured hand, so that gave me the in to ask if she was ok.

Of course, she said everything was fine, but it lays the groundwork, you know? One thing I don’t think people who have not experienced abuse understand is that it’s not the abuse or violence you fear, it’s the unknown of change. It’s the fear of ‘where will I go next?’ More than the fear of bullying.

This uncertainty is destabilising, you can’t imagine far into the future and your focus is on getting through the now. It’s made harder by not knowing where to get help, or how good the help available is. This is where I think I can help the most, when people are ready to try to leave, I know the services that helped me and I can tell them this, and go to meetings and such like if they want.

I don’t want to make out where I live is some hotbed of abuse, it’s not! Don’t forget I was having a terrible time behind closed doors when I lived in my owned house. Oddly enough a good community kind of makes the abuse stand out? It also makes it easier to bump into people and ask how they are.



On the topic of community, I got a lot of my 'self' back after leaving my ex by going to art classes and writing groups run by Women's Aid. I've also organised a women's art class at the local community centre. It's not specifically for women who have survived abusive relationships, but these stories seem to come out anyway.

At these classes I've also been told of some creepy behaviour by some repair staff. They don't seem to understand that flirting with someone in their home can feel really threatening, we're not at the pub! I know some of the people I've spoken to, including a young man actually, have had horrible experiences of a private landlord offering 'free' rent for sex.

I've not got any statistics or anything but I do know residents are not telling landlords of these experiences – why would you? Your last landlord tried to manipulate sex from you! I think what with the cost of living crisis, there might be more people coming into housing having experienced not just partner abuse but there's a few who will have experienced sexual abuse from supposed 'landlords'.

I have to say I'm a bit disappointed in my Association. I've had some great training on diversity and equality, but it kind of skates over really complex stuff like what help is there for people who have experienced sexual assault. Also, my housing officer has 800 homes to manage! That's just bonkers! Of course, they're not going to have time to get into these cases. One of the women I tried to help also had an awful time with the council.

She'd managed to get on the waiting list in secret, and get this, the council did a home visit when her then partner was there. Can you believe it! You are on a list 'cos social services and the police are concerned that you are at risk, and the council does a home visit! The police were horrified, I see the local officers every couple of weeks. They pop round for a cuppa.

One of them told me their training tells them that domestic violence calls should be seen as murder prevention! I'd not thought of it like that before. They also told me that domestic abuse can happen in a family as well, like if an adult kid is being abusive towards their parents, or vice versa.

It was helpful to know this as sometimes things can get explained away, 'oh he's just a bit immature, he's always rude to his mum'. Now I'm thinking, 'Is his mum ok? He's a big lad now and not really a boy anymore'. I think there is more that the housing could do.

Sometimes it's small things, like a spy hole or one of them doorbell cameras, so you can see who it is at the door. Fences are important too. You want to be able to have some control of who can look into your home and the garden. I know of one person who was scared to use their garden because they knew their ex was driving around and looking for them. Stuff like that. I'm not sure how much the landlord should do, and how much needs more specialist input, I mean if you think of it as murder prevention, it makes it a bit more serious, you know? But it also means that maybe the housing needs help to get it right.

But yeah, I love being a tenant rep and being able to help. I like to help you know? But yeah I think I like to help on things that have made me angry and scared, and still do.





STEP TWO:

Investigating and find new knowledge

The visual mapping provides a baseline for investigating what you don't know about domestic abuse and ideas for change. You may find it helpful to think in terms of general and local knowledge about domestic abuse as you work through this step. You are guided through the process of asking good questions and a breakout box helps you to assess the quality of information sources. The step concludes with tips to guide your investigative work.

Group activity, generating questions

Investigations are fundamentally about answering questions, so starting with good questions is essential.

Discuss as a group: What curiosities or questions you have about the knowledge map and the topic of domestic abuse at a general and local level. This will help develop topic areas of interest to team members.

Ask 'what' 'where, why and 'how' questions about the topics: There is no such thing as too many questions, at this stage; note them all down. Ensure the group gets to feedback and suggests questions for each of the topics.

Take a break – generating questions is tiring work.

Narrow down the questions: Explore what is possible within the expedition's resources, time and scope. This can be a bit frustrating, but it is better to be realistic than to find out later that you have taken on too much.

Develop open-ended but specific questions: Open-ended questions help you to explore a topic. Being specific helps you to focus. For example, 'what are the domestic abuse statistics?' is too open-ended. 'What are the domestic abuse statistics in England and how do they compare with our locality?' Is open-ended and specific enough to give you a focus, ideas where to look and the hope of finding a useful answer.

Discuss real-life impact: As the focus is on developing a localised domestic abuse plan, it is important to consider real-life impact. This will help ground your questions and reflect on where you need to look for information and who you may need to speak to.

Take another break. Yes. Generating questions really is tiring work!

Refine, clarify and prioritise your questions: By this point, you should have a good collection of questions for each topic. Go through the topics and questions and ask as a group, 'does this contribute to our aim of developing a localised domestic abuse plan that accounts for the experiences of tenants and neighbourhood volunteers?'. This can be a hard step, so it might be helpful to use a traffic light system, with red for rejected questions, amber for it needs to be thought about more, and green for yes, this is a key question.

Identify where to look and how to look for answers to your questions: This is where your expedition support team can contribute. Speak to them for advice and input on how to answer your questions. We strongly recommend working with a university or research expert if you are undertaking original research. Original research is where you use methods such as interviews, surveys, and focus groups to produce new data for analysis. It is ethically complicated and technical work that requires advanced specialist training to do it properly and to help others design.

Assessing the quality of your sources

As domestic abuse is such a polarised topic, it is important to consider the quality of the information you find. The points below will help you to assess the quality of information.

Check the Source:

- Look for reputable authors or organisations.
- Watch for bias or hidden agendas.
- Prefer reliable sources from established institutions.

Ensure Accuracy:

- Compare with other trustworthy sources.
- Check for proper citations and references.
- Be mindful of outdated information.

Peer Review:

- Trust peer-reviewed articles and research.

Be aware of bias:

- Seek a balanced presentation.
- Beware of one-sided perspectives.
- Be aware of information being interpreted to fit a political agenda.
- Check if limitations are discussed; it is good if they are.

Identify Inconsistency:

- Inconsistencies may indicate problems.
- You may not notice these until you discuss your findings together.
- Note down inconsistencies as you find them.

Be Relevant:

- Ensure information fits your needs – does the information contribute to answering your research questions?

Check Citations:

- Reputable sources provide solid references.

Consider Context:

- Information will be produced with different aims in mind.
- Consider how relevant the information is to your questions and context.
- Be sure to evaluate each source you use for their quality. Domestic abuse is a polarised topic, and some online resources are particularly terrible.





Top tips for a successful knowledge expedition

Searching for new knowledge is not easy. It is common to feel a bit overwhelmed or lost. Sometimes you won't find the answer no matter how hard you look. It is important to be able to discuss problems as they arise and seek support from your expedition team. This section includes a few tips that might help make your knowledge expedition a bit easier.

Have a named person to speak to in case of challenges and difficulties - This person must be responsible for steering the investigation and keeping it on track. It is better if they have experience of researching as they can help with advice and support.

Keep notes - It is helpful to keep a diary, noting the date and time you undertake a research task, summarising what you found or did not find, your reflections and impressions, and how it made you feel. It is really important to keep a track of sources and score or make a note about how reliable you think they are.

Let people choose tasks that they are comfortable with and will enjoy - Some people love the numbers; others hate them. Others find reading easy, and some people struggle. It is important that investigation activity matches interests and skills. If expedition team members want to develop skills, ensure individual training and mentoring are available.

Don't take it personally if some people are resistant to sharing information - Note it, seek advice from the named person and review your approach.

STEP THREE: **Challenging our assumptions**

This step provides a selection of insights from a literature review of domestic abuse and housing. You may find it helpful to work through the insights and reflective questions alone. This helps you collect your thoughts and make notes. You can then meet with your expedition team to discuss the insights together.

Insight topic one: Psychological insights into why it is so hard to leave an abusive situation.

The insights here focus on the psychological and emotional aspects of why it is so hard to leave an abusive relationship. The literature on the psychological and emotional harm is broad, and only a few key highlights have been selected.

Transitions are destabilising

Experiencing domestic abuse can induce a range of emotional responses, including feelings of shame, guilt and low self-esteem¹¹. When a person subject to violent abuse tries to leave, the situation becomes even more complex due to issues such as financial dependence, a real fear of retaliation and a lack of social support¹².

In Angela's story, we can see this complex interplay of the personal difficulties of domestic abuse and the importance of social support from the tenant rep, a community aware of the abuse, and formal and informal support through Women's Aid and community activities. Angela also outlined where she thought support was missing from the local authority and the landlord.



¹¹ Goodman, L. A. and D. Epstein (2008). "Listening to battered women: A survivor-centered approach to advocacy, mental health, and justice." [American Psychological Association](#).

¹² Ibid.

Difficulty imagining a future without abuse

Leaving an abusive situation requires the ability to imagine a better future. A complex interplay of 'in the now' factors often inhibit this. Victim/survivors of abuse often feel a sense of attachment to their homes and leaving can induce a sense of grieving and loss.

This sense of loss is also extended to the community, not just the home¹³. In addition to the violence they have experienced, the loss of home is a serious part of the trauma that people who have experienced abuse suffer. The home can be further compounded by the uncertainty of re-housing if they decide to leave.

Key elements in imagining an alternative future are having hope¹⁴ and developing self-efficacy¹⁵, meaning a belief in one's own capacity to exercise some control over traumatic adversity. Social support is also emphasised as a mediating factor in developing self-efficacy and hope about the future¹⁶.

Reflection questions

- What does your landlord currently have in place to aid with the transition out of an abusive situation?
- What is missing in your locality that could help with transitioning out of an abusive situation? This can include support and services for victim/survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- What might a service look like that helps people to imagine and have hope for an alternative future?
- Who can you ask to get more insight into the psychology and emotions of why it is so hard to exit an abusive situation?
- What questions have these insights created for you?



¹³ Bard, M. (1994). *Organizational and Community Responses to Domestic Abuse and Homelessness*. London and New York, Routledge.

¹⁴ Munoz, R., et al. (2017). "The Relationship between Hope and Life Satisfaction among Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence: The Enhancing Effect of Self Efficacy." *Applied Research Quality Life* **12**: 981-995.

¹⁵ Benight, C. and A. Bandura (2004). "Social cognitive theory of posttraumatic recovery: the role of perceived self-efficacy." *Behaviour Research and Therapy* **42**(10): 1129-1148.

¹⁶ Karademas, E. (2006). "Self-efficacy, social support and well-being: The mediating role of optimism." *Personality and Individual Differences* **40**(6): 1281-1290.

Insight topic two: Insights from the field of Trauma Informed Design (TID)

The field of TID is vast and continues to develop. The insights described here indicate what the field can offer and are not a prescriptive list. TID draws attention to the value of design in different domains, such as:

The built environment: TID emphasises the central importance of a safe and secure environment. This can be prescriptive, such as fitting locks and alarms and ensuring that there is good lighting¹⁷. These can be tailored with the tenant by ensuring there is choice in safety measures. Each person's situation will be different. Expressing choice contributes to developing self-efficacy and the psychological security described earlier.

The design of services: Being able to offer choice and personalisation over the home environment can contribute to a successful transition out of abusive contexts. This can extend into day-to-day housing services, such as choosing when repairs are carried out and by whom. Providing photos and names ahead of time of visiting operatives is an example of a small service change that can make a big difference.

Some excellent work is already underway in the sector at increasing the number of women repairs and maintenance operatives¹⁸ and this may contribute to feelings of safety for women and children who have exited abusive situations¹⁹.

Reflection questions

What does your landlord currently do to:

- Design safety into built environments.
- Work with tenants to enable choices over safety and environment personalisation.
- Recognise and respond to domestic abuse when undertaking repairs.

Repairs and planned maintenance are key sites where domestic abuse can be identified and victim/survivor's helped to leave the abusive situation.

- What has your landlord done to change these services so that they contribute to reducing domestic abuse?
- What other service areas could be reviewed from the perspective of aiding successful transitions from abusive environments?
- What other groups of tenants might benefit from services that consider aiding successful transitions out of domestic abuse in their service design?
- What questions have these insights created for you?

¹⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government (2014). "Domestic Abuse and Housing: Good Practice Guide." Retrieved 3 April, 2023.

¹⁸ Women into Construction (2023). "Women into Construction." Retrieved 3 April, 2023.

¹⁹ It is recommended that independent research is carried out to test this hypothesis.

Insight topic three: Cultural attitudes and myths

Cultural attitudes and myths are often deeply ingrained and hard to change. Challenging deeply held beliefs and ideas can undermine our sense of who we are and or our understanding of how the world works. This ‘foundational challenge’ can trigger psychological defence mechanisms such as reactance and denial.

This is why learning to engage with negative emotions in the expedition work is an essential early step. Challenging foundational beliefs undermines psychological safety and it is okay for team members to step away, or for expedition leaders to ask a team member to step back from the uncomfortable self and cultural reflection this level of exploration can bring. With these provisos in mind, let’s explore insights into cultural ideas about love and romantic relationships, and how these may contribute to sustaining abusive situations.

Cultural notions of romantic love²⁰

This section is based on one research paper that focused on heterosexual cultural notions of romantic love and undertook original research with housing practitioners. This means its insights are partial but useful for helping us to question taken-for-granted assumptions about relationships.

Beliefs about love tend to present it as ‘mystical, magical and unexplainable’ and that it is something that finds us. Love is also framed as making us vulnerable and exposed and having an element of volatility. Extreme jealousy that turns to violence can be presented as evidence of love and of the strength of a relationship. Love is also framed as a rescuing force, saving people from previously troubled lives.

Again, this can create a justification to be abusive and stay in an abusive relationship. Culturally we may have shifted away from an expectation of marriage, but we still tend to hold being ‘in a couple’ with high regard. There is still also a tendency to expect women in heterosexual relationships to put more emotional effort into maintaining the relationship.

This can produce a tendency to hold women more responsible when a relationship breaks down and for friends and family to encourage women to stay ‘for the sake of the relationship’ at the expense of personal well-being. Women will also tend to blame themselves for relationship breakdowns, and this can increase pressure on women to take problematic partners back.

The influence of cultural norms about romantic love on service providers

A key finding concerns the perceptions of service providers of the legitimacy of the person trying to exit abuse. Tensions were also found among staff tasked with working with those trying to leave abusive situations and housing and local authority staff administering housing claims.

This sub-section explores some of the negative perceptions of those trying to exit abusive situations.

²⁰ Little, J. (2023). “Caring for survivors of domestic abuse: love, violence and safe space.” *Social & Cultural Geography* **24**(1).

Choosing badly: There is a cultural norm that some women prefer ‘bad boys’ and are so attracted to forms of ‘bad love’. This links into assumptions, particularly for women, that real love involves pain. This is also evidenced in the cultural norm in abusive pornography that tends to focus on female suffering for male pleasure. Furthermore, the idea that love has transformative power feeds into this cultural framing of women suffering to ‘rescue’ and rehabilitate poorly behaved loved ones.

Making the same poor choices: There is an assumption that women will keep returning to their abuser or pick another violent man. This assumption may erode the value of building choice into the services described in the TID section.

Chaotic behaviours: There is a tendency to frame people trying to exit abuse as chaotic rather than considering that the abuse and lack of housing and support services are significant contributors to the chaos. This perception is underpinned by an Anglo-American tendency to focus on individual behaviours as causes rather than environments and structures as significant contributors to behaviours and personal problems.

Reflective questions

- How might our assumptions about heterosexual romantic love influence our perceptions of love and relationships?
- This insight focuses on cultural norms about heterosexual relationships. What might be similar and what might be different for different types of relationships? For example, caring for an elderly relative, being part of a blended family, belonging to a community with different relationship norms, and living alternative relationship patterns such as gay and lesbian relationships.
- Changing the influence of cultural norms takes more than one-off training or policy. What ideas do you have for maintaining an awareness of the influence of assumptions about romantic love and how it influences services?
- What is in the gift of the landlord to do now to change the context of services and support, and what is a topic for campaigning and wider social change?
- What can happen locally to account for cultural norms’ influence on relationships and create environments that can aid in leaving abusive situations?
- What questions have these insights created for you?



Insight topic four: Emotional labour

The final set of insights concerns emotional labour. Emotional labour refers to the effort and energy individuals expend to manage and display emotions in a way that is socially expected or required, often in a professional or service-oriented context. The research that underpins this resource suggested that involved tenants and neighbourhood volunteers may be undertaking hidden forms of emotional work.

The literature described three types of emotional labour undertaken by people in public-facing roles:

- **Surface acting**²¹ – Performing emotions one does not feel.
- **Deep acting**²² – Channelling emotions one does feel.
- **Natural and genuine**²³ – In-the-moment responses to the situation.

The literature focuses on the emotional labour of paid staff, emphasising surface and deep acting. Noting that ‘surface acting’ is associated with poor well-being and ‘deep acting’ with more positive outcomes for the employee and their work.

There is little research about the emotional labour of volunteers²⁴. What research there is focuses on the volunteers’ relationship with the organisation they donate their time to. This suggests that emotional labour undertaken by involved tenants and neighbourhood volunteers is under researched. Exploring emotional labour can help recognise the work that involved tenants and neighbourhood volunteers may already be doing and how this can be supported. It may also help explore the creation of new roles that make explicit volunteer work on domestic abuse and ensure support is in place.

Reflection questions

- Have a re-read of Angela’s story, what type of ‘emotional labour’ is she undertaking? What type of emotional labour is the Housing Officer undertaking? What factors might be driving the different types of emotional labour undertaken by Angela and the Housing Officer?
- Do organisations tasked with reducing domestic abuse account for the emotional labour of staff, involved tenants and neighbourhood volunteers?
- What types of working practices need to be in place to ensure the emotional well-being of staff, volunteers and involved tenants?
- What questions has this insight created for you?

²¹ Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: commercialisation of human feeling*. Berkley, California, University of California Press.

²² Ibid.

²³ Humphrey, R. H., et al. (2015). “The bright side of emotional labor.” *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* **36**: 749-769.

²⁴ Allen, J. A. and T. Augistin (2021). “So much more than cheap labor! Volunteers engage in emotional labor.” *The Social Science Journal ahead-of-print*: 1-17.

STEP FOUR: Sharing your new knowledge and understanding

Step three provided some insights from the academic domestic abuse and housing literature and provided an opportunity to experiment with private reflection and group discussion. Step four concerns sharing and discussing your knowledge expedition findings as a team. There are different ways to share the new knowledge your team has discovered that can inform the creation of a localised domestic abuse plan. Ideally, your expedition team will have access to research expertise, and we encourage you to gain the input of such expertise throughout the knowledge expedition.

If your expedition team is confident and open to challenge, one option is to present your findings in a brief presentation to each other. So, questions can be asked, and similarities and differences in findings can be noted. This can be scary, and we suggest that if one expedition member is unhappy with this, use a more depersonalised approach such as **1-2-4-All** (see the appendix for a description) where you can explore the question, ‘tell me about your top three findings’.

Your knowledge expedition will likely find gaps where there is missing or poor-quality information. This is a useful finding in itself, and you can make recommendations for further research to the support team and expedition funder.

Section reflections

This section has outlined how to research and visually represent domestic abuse services in your locality. It has provided examples of visual maps, a collective story and insights from a domestic abuse and housing literature review. This work underpins the final stage, telling your story of change.



Section four: How to tell your story of change

In this final stage of your expedition, the goal is to collectively envision a future where services and communities work in harmony to reduce domestic abuse and provide support for victims and survivors in their recovery. If you've followed the previous stages outlined in this resource, you should already have a good grasp of storytelling.

You've used different story-based approaches to strengthen your team and assess and visually represent, the current state of domestic abuse in your local area. In this last stage, storytelling plays a more intricate role. Here you will craft a compelling vision to inspire hope and facilitate change. The steps below will outline how to create your future narrative, and this section will end with a summary of the resource and a discussion of potential challenges that may arise during your expedition.

Steps for telling your collective story of change

Step one:

Ensure the environment is comfortable and that open discussion and creative thinking are encouraged. Revisit ground rules for respectful communication. This final workshop will likely be long, so plan for regular breaks and ensure food and refreshments are available. You may find a professional storyteller can make the process focused and enjoyable.

Step two:

Your imaginative work needs to be grounded in the reality of your knowledge expedition findings. Familiarise yourselves with the findings and draw out key themes. Keep focussed on the aim of telling the story of how domestic abuse can be effectively reduced in your locality. Later stages will explore the feasibility or not of the ideas. Take a break after this step.

Step three:

Outline the elements of a compelling story, such as characters, setting, challenges and overcoming challenges. Explore these elements one at a time. This is useful in weaving together the story of change that will inform the domestic abuse plan.

Step four:

Take turns in sharing thought-provoking insights and note these down. If referring to real-life examples, be sensitive to sharing personal information. Draw out what resonated for you, what was surprising, new, emotive and thought-provoking. If it stands out in your mind, share it. Use the elements of a compelling story to frame the insights and explore how characters, processes and settings all contribute to the story.

Step five:

Ask open-ended questions 'to the room' about the emerging story of change. There are no right or wrong answers. The idea is to explore your findings and thoughts together and to create space for new understandings to emerge. Take another break.

Step six:

Once you have the story's elements, take turns building the story. There is no right or wrong way to do this. You might want to write stories individually, as small groups or collectively, experiment and find what works for your expedition. Using visual aids may be helpful and encourage the expedition team to immerse themselves in the story and describe vivid details.

Step seven:

The story does not have to be complete. Success is capturing the core ideas generated from your knowledge expedition and imaginative work, producing a tentative narrative to be crafted and refined.

Step eight:

Reflect on the storytelling process. Storytelling is a ‘head and heart’ approach to working and comes with its own challenges and rewards. Reflecting on these develop your skills and confidence in using storytelling methods and in understanding the complexity of changing the story of domestic abuse. Be sensitive to how the storytelling process makes participants feel and the support they may need if the experience has been challenging.



Tips for telling your collective story of change

Be prepared to encounter cynicism about the storytelling for change process. As mentioned earlier in this resource, storytelling is a new method to housing, and this collective storytelling work contains the explicit expectation of change. Organisations can resist change, so securing commitment before you start the expedition is essential. Without organisation support, the hope and enthusiasm activated during this stage can quickly turn to feelings of mistrust, cynicism and resentment.

A sense of collective ownership is a key element of a story's power. The power of your story will be enhanced by ensuring a diverse range of perspectives are included. Be sure to share your story with the expedition support team and funders so they can contribute their perspectives. Be cautious about sharing it more widely at this stage, as it is an ideal, not a reality. Later evaluation and resource allocation stages will craft your collective vision into an actionable plan that can be shared.

Concluding reflections

This resource takes the government's call to approach domestic abuse as 'everyone's responsibility' seriously. It outlines a practical approach to developing localised domestic abuse plans, acknowledging the challenges and complexities involved. To simplify the process, it was divided into three stages:

Stage one, **planning the expedition**, is crucial as it involves securing support, funding, and essential resources for embarking on this challenging journey. Selecting the right expedition and peripheral support teams is vital to this planning work. Furthermore, setting the conditions for a successful expedition is essential to the planning stage. Storytelling is used during this stage to build team bonds, explore motivations, and practice effective communication that combines both logic and emotion.

Stage two is the **knowledge expedition**. Recognising that domestic abuse is a polarising and emotionally charged topic, this stage aims to separate fact from fiction. Working together to navigate through these complexities can be intense and may reveal deep-seated disagreements, tensions, and problematic practices within organisations committed to tackling domestic abuse. Careful planning and strong team bonds established in the first stage can help alleviate the challenges of the knowledge expedition. Storytelling is woven into the knowledge expedition in two ways. It is employed to visually map local services and to capture the community's collective experience and knowledge of domestic abuse services.

The ultimate phase of the expedition, called "**Storytelling for Change**," may give the impression of simplicity: collectively envisioning a future rooted in the knowledge expedition's findings. However, this stage carries its own set of challenges, as it involves kindling hope and crafting a vision. Hope serves as the emotional catalyst for change, which can be unsettling, particularly when confronted with a well-researched vision of the future that accentuates current shortcomings. It's at this juncture that an organisation's commitment may waver, or it may give rise to an authentic commitment to change. If a genuine commitment is secured, subsequent stages that are not the subject of this resource will determine resource allocation, action plans, and the processes for monitoring and evaluation.

This resource presents a novel 'hearts and minds' approach to tackling the issue of domestic abuse. The expedition and storytelling methods introduced within can be adapted for other topics, such as repairs, service reviews, and complex problems like addressing loneliness and online scams. We value your feedback on your experiences with these ideas and methods during your journey. We wish you the best of luck as you embark on your own expedition.

Supplementary notes: Research methods and contribution to innovation.

Method of research

This resource is broadly underpinned by an ESRC-funded PhD project (reference 1058647) and ESRC Impact Acceleration Account grant 22-23 PO128. Findings from the PhD research suggested that there was value in understanding the home as an emotional place and that this understanding could form the basis for re-imagining services and homes in the regulated housing sector. These ideas were explored with 37 involved tenants who participated in a research project called 'Feeling at Home'.

During this research, tenants asked for a workshop to tell the stories that made them angry and fearful about the home and landlord services. This resource has evolved from that session. This resource has been further refined through additional co-creation sessions with involved tenants and experts on the topics of domestic abuse and co-creation.

Further research and experimentation have informed the development of this guide. This includes a systematic literature review of 'public encounter' publications for Dr Koen Bartels, University of Birmingham. This literature identified key papers concerning the role of emotions in policy and practice and collaborative ways of understanding problems.

A second round of research involved contributing to an annotated bibliography of co-production in academic research for Prof Liz Richardson, (University of Manchester), Prof Catherine Durose, (University of Liverpool) and Prof Beth Perry (University of Sheffield). This aided in identifying key themes and lessons from co-produced research and identifying helpful sources that have been woven into this resource. Regarding experimentation, a storytelling for change workshop was hosted with the Birmingham Settlement organisation. This was funded by the University of Birmingham and facilitated by Spoz (Giovanni Esposito), former Poet Laureate of Birmingham. This brought home the value of storytelling for relational research and as a connective practice. Thanks to Prof Jessica Pykett for facilitating the storytelling workshops and for her mentoring throughout the thesis and Impact Acceleration Account research.

Contribution to research and innovation

This guide is inspired by and contributes to the research field of 'relational public policy'. Broadly speaking, this field understands humans to be inherently relational, in that part of being human is about being interconnected with other humans and with non-human 'things' such as the home, and ideas such as 'services'²⁵. This perspective highlights the importance of human emotions such as empathy and trust. Emotions complement and inform rational ways of working²⁶, and help give us a more complete view of complex topics such as domestic abuse.

²⁵ Within this field is an interest in how we are interconnected with the non-human, such as technologies, animals, environments histories and institutions.

²⁶ Edlins (2021). *Developing a model of empathy for public administration*. *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 43(1). DOI 10.1080/10841806.2019.1700459.

Relational public policy is a developing field, and there are gaps as to how to translate the ideas into practice. This is because the field is concerned with ideas of uncertainty, emergence, openness and exploration. It is why an expedition metaphor and structuring device has been used to capture these concepts, translate them into a workable approach, and contribute to bridging the gaps between relational theories and practice.

Domestic abuse is understood throughout the resource as a social problem that requires an approach that can engage with complexity. Domestic abuse is, at its core, a relational problem, so ideas from relational theories seem likely to reduce the very real harms, including murder and suicide.

Finally, it is the position of this report author and of **TAROE Trust** that relational theories and practices can inform the professional practices of the regulated housing sector. Home is fundamentally an emotional place. Thinking relationally about the home, localities, services and how regulated landlords and tenants relate to each other is the foundation of innovation grounded in a clear understanding of the sector's purpose.

We call for a long-term expedition to turn relational ideas and practices into a reality in the sector.



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Further thanks to Dr Kelly Henderson, Managing Director of Addressing Domestic Abuse (C.I.C). She is an expert on housing and domestic abuse and worked with tenants to train them on the topic. She offers training and consultancy services to organisations on the topic of domestic abuse.

Author bio:

Dr Hannah Absalom is a dedicated scholar whose lifelong commitment to housing work stems from a profound understanding of the intrinsic value a home holds in both individual lives and broader societal contexts. Raised in a Leeds council housing estate during the 1980s, Dr Absalom embarked on an extensive career as a housing practitioner spanning 18 years. Her academic journey includes the pursuit of an ESRC-funded Ph.D., wherein she critically examined behavioural insights within the English social housing sector.

Dr Absalom's scholarly pursuits extend to the realm of relational public policy, focusing on the intricacies of fostering positive interdependencies within housing systems. Additionally, her academic inquiries delve into the ethical applications of proptech within the regulated housing sector. With a wealth of practical experience and a dedication to advancing knowledge in the field, Dr Absalom is positioned at the forefront of academic exploration of psychologically and emotionally informed housing studies. You can contact her at RT.Homes@trainandconsult.co.uk



Thoughts and reflections for stage one, planning the expedition

Planning an expedition is an iterative process. This appendix provides insights and ideas to help you plan and steer your expedition.

Rewards, recognition and motivation

When it comes to reward and recognition, it's beneficial to start discussing these early on. It's advisable to seek advice on how reward and recognition might affect benefit claims. Additionally, it's crucial to understand that 'motivation' is a complex concept. Ideally, expedition team members should be 'intrinsically' motivated, meaning their drive comes from internal factors like wanting to do a good job or contribute to a socially useful activity.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivations, such as payment and training, come from external sources. The goal is to nurture intrinsic motivations while judiciously applying extrinsic motivations, without letting the latter replace the former. It's worth noting that extrinsic motivations can have unexpected consequences; for example, recognising individual achievements through awards may prove divisive and harm the intrinsic motivations of others involved in the expedition.

Running reflective and effective meetings

We recommend experimenting with different meeting structures and ensuring emotions are part of expedition team meetings. There is growing recognition that emotions influence our decision-making and there is a tendency to frame emotions as a negative influence in decision-making.

This position is gradually changing as the role of emotions in making good decisions and forging relationships is becoming increasingly recognised. Furthermore, domestic abuse is an emotional topic.

Failing to engage with emotions is a failure to engage with the realities of domestic abuse. Working with emotions is new and will likely feel awkward and induce feelings of vulnerability. It is helpful to acknowledge this challenge and to experiment with techniques that engage with emotions. The next section outlines emotional meeting ideas that can be introduced easily to meetings.

Emotional meeting ideas

Emotional check-ins at the start of the meeting. This can be a few minutes in silence, reflecting on your own mental state and jotting down where you are now. This could also involve sharing with the team. Emotional check-ins draw attention to our emotional state 'in the now' and how this may influence our decisions.

As a team, **reflect on what has been going well and what you have struggled with** during the expedition. Let this be judgement-free, without suggestions for correcting things, unless such input is asked for. Empathetic listening is a key skill, Dr Hannah Absalom has a training module on this topic.



Don't be afraid of negative emotions. These can be helpful moments. For example, it is common to feel frustration at a person returning to an abusive relationship. This frustration could fuel an investigation into understanding why this happens. It is also not unusual to feel shame or embarrassment as one engages with new information that challenges preconceived ideas and understandings of how the world is. This challenge to preconceived mental frameworks may produce reactance, a form of 'doubling down' on established ways of thinking of the world, as it is too unsettling to incorporate the new knowledge.

Working with negative emotions is not easy, but it may be better to draw these out than have them simmer away, causing hidden problems that distract from the expedition's aim.

What is 'in your gift to give'? This idea works at different levels. At an individual level, it can help you be realistic about what you can and can't do to contribute to the expedition. This can help head off burnout and to ensure you are looking after yourself as you navigate through this challenging topic.

At an expedition level, it can help to reflect on what is realistic for the expedition, the support team, and the expedition sponsors to achieve. Some of your findings might call for deeper structural changes, such as new laws and funding. Being realistic can help direct energy to what can be changed now and what are bigger aspects of the complex problem of domestic abuse that are out of your control.

Experimenting with meeting structures

There is no correct script for running effective meetings. We find the website www.liberatingstructures.com to be a great source of meeting micro structures. Artificial Intelligence ("AI") software such as Chat GPT can help identify other ideas.

We suggest that two expedition team members have 'organising and structuring meetings' as part of their role description. It is the responsibility of the rest of the expedition team to be open to experimenting with new techniques and feeding back on how they have found the experience. Experimenting involves taking risks and being comfortable with things not working out as expected. It is quite fun when embraced with an open mind.





We have listed a few of our favourites from the Liberating Structures website.

1-2-4-All: This is a flexible technique that ensures everyone has a say and identifies what is important quickly. It is great for sourcing new ideas and discovering and capturing a range of perspectives.

Wise Crowds: Is a means to get help from the expedition team and the support team through breakout consultations. It complements an emotionally informed approach to running meetings and develops the skill of asking for help.

25/10: This is a way to crowdsource bold ideas quickly. It is a great way to unlock the imagination and capture creative ideas.

Wicked Questions: This uses paradoxes; these are statements, situations or concepts that are self-contradictory or absurd. They often reveal flaws in common sense approaches and are a means to think differently about problems. An example paradox is ‘Why do organisations approach domestic abuse as a rational problem when it is also an emotional and cultural problem?’.

Different techniques will suit different phases of the expedition. For example, 1-2-4-All is a good all-around technique and would be useful in setting ground rules for the expedition and generating ideas. Experimenting with meeting structures may make meetings more engaging, inclusive and effective.

Have fun and experiment!

Planning for the end

Expeditions are bonding with relationships and trust built throughout the course of the journey. This makes the end of the expedition a challenging time as there is more emotional investment. It is helpful to be clear about the expedition’s likely end.

Additionally, building in stages that allow people to step away under their own steam, or choose to commit to the next stage are helpful. It is also important not to let an expedition carry on for the sake of it. Having a well-thought-out ending is better than letting an expedition peter out or ‘zombie on’ without aim or purpose.

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