

Workshop: identifying and supporting public service users in vulnerable circumstances

Facilitator Instructions



Introduction

The purpose and approach of the workshop

- These workshop materials have been designed to **help organisations have internal discussions with colleagues** about how to ensure that services are designed and delivered to meet the needs of service users in vulnerable circumstances.
- The workshop could be delivered to **groups of between three and thirty staff members**, depending on your organisation and its needs. The aim is simply to provide a structured opportunity for discussion and reflection, with the materials providing some “jumping off points” and prompts for your own discussions.
- The materials can also be used for self-study and individual reflection.
- The workshop is not prescriptive except in one respect: it has been designed on the assumption that doing more to help identify and support service users experiencing vulnerability is a worthwhile endeavour that can lead to better, more responsive public service delivery.
- The workshop does not therefore suggest there is only one way of defining vulnerability nor that organisations should all follow the same approaches in trying to meet the needs of service users. **The materials merely provide the basis for your own discussions** on these issues.

Who should run this workshop?

- **You do not need to be an experienced trainer** or facilitator to run this workshop! With the exception of the first few slides, which will require the facilitator to set out some content, the rest of the workshop simply involves showing a video, directing participants to read from the workbook, and asking participants to discuss particular questions.

Before the workshop

Preparing for the workshop

- This workshop is best run in a **face-to-face format**, to allow colleagues to engage meaningfully with each other. However, there is nothing preventing you from running the workshop online if you have the technical capacity and this suits your organisation.
- We would recommend **setting aside around two and a half hours for completing the workshop**. The exact timing of the workshop will depend on how many participants there are and also how chatty your colleagues are!
- If you are holding the workshop face to face, you will need to identify a suitable room in which to hold the training. If you have a group of more than eight people, we recommend a space which allows smaller groups to form around tables, allowing for more in-depth discussions.
- Subject to resources, you may want to organise tea, coffee, lunch.
- You should also ensure that the room you select has the **following facilities**:

PowerPoint facilities/ projector

Sound

Flipcharts and flipchart markers to record key points/ conclusions

Post-it notes to record thoughts as the session progresses

Pens

Internet access

- In order to access the videos throughout the workshop, you will need access to the internet. Links to the videos appear at relevant points in the slides. **You should test the links before the workshop** takes place to make sure that there are no issues (such as firewalls preventing you from accessing external content). This will give time to seek support from your IT team to resolve any issues.

Joining instructions

- The timing and location of the workshop should be notified to participants, ideally around a week ahead of the workshop taking place. We recommend that participants are emailed the workbook along with the joining instructions and encouraged to read it before attending. This will make for a more efficient use of time during the workshop itself.

Adapting the materials

- The workshop materials have been designed to be useful across a wide range of public services contexts. However, there may be some aspects that do not work well in your particular sector or organisation. Please therefore feel free to amend, omit, or add to the materials in whatever way works for you and your colleagues.

Printing materials

- It would be helpful if a copy of the workbook is printed for each participant. The workbook contains helpful resources, as well as a space in which to make notes that participants can refer to in future.

Running the workshop

Setting up the room

- We would recommend the facilitator **arriving to set up the workshop around thirty minutes before the start time**. This allows time for the room to be set-up and technology to be tested.
- The workshop is designed to facilitate discussion. If you have a small group (eight staff members or less) you should set up around a single meeting table). For larger groups, it would be better to have several tables in the room allowing participants to engage in small group discussion of between 4 and 8 people depending on room size, number of participants, etc.
- For each participant, please provide a pen and a copy of the workbook. Some post-it notes should also be available on each table. The facilitator should have access to a flipchart and flipchart pens to record key points from the discussions.
- Before participants arrive, please **test that the slides and videos are working** (including sound levels), leaving enough time to seek IT support in case of any problems.
- The rest of these facilitator instructions set out what the facilitator should say and/ or do during the workshop itself. Instructions are given for each slide. The facilitator should print out a copy of these instructions and use them as a reference point for running the workshop.

Slide 1: Title page

- Introduce yourself and thank participants for coming. Explain that to get the most out of the workshop participants will work together with colleagues, do some reading, and reflect upon their interactions with clients and colleagues.
- Depending on how many people are in the room you might want to divide into groups of 8 (max) per table. Please ask them to introduce themselves at their tables and give them a bit of time for that.
- Participants should be introduced to the workshop with some basic information about what to expect:

Timing and length of workshop (we suggest around 2 ½ hours)

Approach taken in the workshop:

- Participants will be shown a series of videos featuring third sector and public service providers.
- Participants will be asked to read short extracts in their workbooks.
- Participants will engage in group discussions.
- Aim is for workshops to generate discussion – not a passive exercise!

Fundamental purpose of the workshop:

- Facilitate internal discussion among colleagues about how best to support service users experiencing a range of needs.
- Exploring the concept of vulnerability – which in brief, involves looking holistically at service users' needs and going beyond basic statutory requirements.
- Thinking about whether and how your organisation could do more to identify and support service users in vulnerable circumstances.

Slide 2: Background

- Provide an overview of the workshop and its origins:
- This workshop, the workbook and the presentation are designed to be used as part of the workshop on Identifying and Supporting Public Service Users in Vulnerable Circumstances. These materials have been produced by Prof Gill (University of Glasgow) and Prof Creutzfeldt (University of Kent) in collaboration with the SPSO and NIPSO.
- The overall aim of the workshop is to create an opportunity to share experiences and influence the development of more person-centred public service provision, which is more attuned and responsive to people's individual circumstances and the wide range of circumstances in which users of public services might experience vulnerability.
- Two events were held in 2023 to help develop the workshop materials: one in Edinburgh and one in Belfast, where a range of colleagues with first-hand experience of supporting and working with people in vulnerable circumstances, including public service providers, advice and advocacy bodies, and charities and NGOs working with particularly vulnerable individuals and groups, met. The aim of these events was to better understand lived experiences of vulnerability and the strategies that may be effective in helping public service providers to identify and support those who are vulnerable.
- You also want to touch on the following points:
 - The fundamental aim of this workshop is to think about vulnerability, by which we mean something beyond what public services are already doing in terms of meeting fundamental statutory duties (such as under equalities legislation, for example).
 - The idea is to think more holistically about people's needs and to think about the range of situations people may be in that may require sensitivity, empathy or adaptation in the delivery of public services.
 - The starting point for the workshop is a view that people's needs are often complex, and that the better they are understood and responded to, the more likely services are to be delivered fairly and in a way which fulfils their purpose.
 - Of course, not all needs can be met and there need to be practical discussions about what public services can reasonably do within their resources – however, there is a growing expectation that services will be responsive to needs and adopt rights-based approaches to public services, and in this context thinking about how to meet the needs of people in vulnerable circumstances is an important avenue to explore.
- This is an interactive and engaged workshop, so if at any time anyone has a question or something comes up please let the facilitator know.

Slide 3: The context for this workshop

- Click on the link to play the short animation which provides some context on vulnerability and why the workshop materials were developed. Please note that the video may initially be muted. If this is the case you will need to unmute the video and then return it to the start.

Slide 4: To be human is to be universally and constantly vulnerable

- The aim of this slide is to get across the idea that vulnerability is part of who we all are as humans.
- There can be a tendency to think of vulnerable people as exceptions to the rule, but Martha Fineman suggests that the opposite is true.
- The reality is that anyone can be in a state of vulnerability or dependency depending on what stage they are at in their lives or what circumstances they happen to be in at any point in time.
- Martha Fineman argues that public services have often failed to take account of this in how they are organised and designed.
- Rather than seeing everyone as sharing vulnerability, public service providers often design services on the assumption that users are capable, knowledgeable, able to make good decisions unassisted, and able to navigate technology and bureaucracy without undue difficulty.
- One of the questions that we will be exploring in this workshop is whether recognising vulnerability as something fundamental that we all share is a helpful way of trying to identify and meet people's needs when delivering services.

Slide 5: Why it matters

- One of the difficulties with vulnerability is that people are often unwilling to see themselves as vulnerable.
- As the quote from Martha Fineman on the previous slide suggests, people can feel “deficient” or “aberrant” if they think of themselves as being vulnerable.
- However, Brene Brown’s quote here gets at the fact that admitting that we are vulnerable is both difficult and an aspect of seeing ourselves as we really are (rather than how we might like, ideally, to see ourselves).
- No-one likes the feeling of vulnerability or dependence, but the reality is that we often are, whether that is in our daily lives or in interactions with public services.
- Rather than weakness, therefore, recognising one’s vulnerability is an act which takes courage and can be uncomfortable.
- This can be a helpful way of thinking about things, especially if your first response to the idea of vulnerability is that it is disempowering and something to be avoided.
- The diagram on the right of the slide shows the vicious cycle that can occur when people’s needs are not recognised and potential vulnerabilities remain unexplored (Step 1).
- Services can only meet needs that they are aware of (or, indeed, refer users to other services where appropriate) and so not recognising needs can lead to needs remaining unmet (Step 2).
- Unmet needs will often get worse and, very often, will generate further problems – we know that people’s problems tend to cluster and that, for instance, a bereavement may lead to mental health issues, which may lead to job loss, which may lead to financial and housing difficulties, which may lead to family problems, etc. (Step 3).
- The more unmet needs exacerbate and cluster the greater the likelihood that individuals will feel hopeless, unable to act to improve their situation, or even resentful and distrustful of potential sources of assistance (Step 4).
- This in turn leads to a failure to seek help or raise issues (Step 5), starting the cycle again (Step 1).
- Before introducing the workshop content and tasks, introduce a short activity.

Activity: Ask the participants to write down on a post-it note (or in their workbook) what vulnerability means to them - in their daily job. Just in a few words or sentences, whatever comes into their heads first. They do this on their own, not as a team. At the end of the workshop participants will have the opportunity to return to their definitions and reflect on whether they see things differently following their discussions with colleagues.

Slide 6: Introduction workshop content

- Explain that the workshop is interactive – everyone will all have received a workbook in which they can take notes on the tasks that will be completed throughout the workshop. Each task involves discussing questions, watching a video and doing some group work. The workshop is structured around 4 tasks.

Task 1: What do we mean by vulnerability?

Task 2: Identifying service users who may be in vulnerable circumstances

Task 3: Providing support to services users identified as being in vulnerable circumstances

Task 4: Reflection on learning and planning for change

- We suggest budgeting around 30-35 minutes for each task and setting aside 10-15 minutes for a break in the middle.

Slide 7: Introducing our video speakers

- Click on the link to play the video, which provides an introduction to the speakers who will be appearing in the videos throughout the workshop.

Slide 8: Task 1 what is vulnerability

- Refer to the slide for the sequence of what participants will do during this task.

Slide 9: Definitions of vulnerability

- Click on the link to play the video.

Slide 10: Vulnerability and public services

- Click on the link to play the short animation which gives an overview of the potential benefits of thinking about and defining vulnerability in public service settings.

Slide 11: Group discussion

- Ask the participants to turn to their workbooks and complete the reading for Task 1.
- Once they have finished reading, the facilitator should go through the four questions on the slide. If the workshop has small number of participants and has everyone in a single group, the facilitator should lead the discussion, taking each question in turn and writing up key points on a flipchart.
- If the workshop has a bigger number of participants, with several small groups, then each group should take responsibility to go through the questions, writing up their thoughts on a piece of flipchart paper. Each small group can then feedback on their thoughts to the whole group at the end.
- The aim of writing up notes on flipchart paper is to ensure that at the end of the workshop you have captured your colleagues' thinking and can use this to shape any actions that emerge from the workshop.

Slide 12: Task 2 identifying service users in vulnerable circumstances

- Explain that you are following the same pattern as for Task 1. First watch a video and then do a bit of reading and then a group discussion.

Slide 13: Video identifying vulnerabilities

- Click on the link to play the video.

Slide 14: Task 2 discussion

- Ask participants to read the workbook extracts for Task 2 and then discuss the questions. Please use the same approach to facilitating the discussion and taking notes as recommended for Slide 11 above.

Slide 15: Break

Slide 16: Task 3 supporting service users in vulnerable circumstances

- Explain that you are following the same pattern as for Tasks 1 and 2. First watch a video and then do a bit of reading and then a group discussion.

Slide 17: Video supporting service users

- Click on the link to play the video.

Slide 18: Group discussion

- Ask participants to turn to the workbook and complete the reading for Task 3 and then discuss the questions. Look at the workbook extracts for Task 3 and then discuss the questions. Please use the same approach to facilitating the discussion and taking notes as recommended for Slide 11 above

Slide 19: Reflecting on learning and planning for change

- This task involves watching a video, doing some individual self-reflection, and then having a group discussion.

Slide 20: Video reflecting on learning and change

- Play the video.

Slide 21: Individual reflections

- Ask participants to write down their individual reflections in the workbook. Ask them to look at the post-it note they completed at the start of the workshop and see what has changed and what they have learned.

Slide 22: Group discussion

- After the individual discussion ask participants to discuss the questions on the slide. This discussion should focus on the second and third questions and the aim should be to note down a set of possible actions for further consideration following the workshop.

Slide 23: Feedback

- Before closing the workshop, please encourage participants to email feedback to

Prof Chris Gill

chris.gill@glasgow.ac.uk

As the facilitator, your own feedback on the materials would also be very much appreciated!