



Responding to the Resilience Risk

Executive summary

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“People in healthcare settings get access to professional supervision by a qualified psychotherapist to help them to deal with the challenges of their role. Why don't we? Our frontline workers have to cope with trauma and crisis situations on a daily basis, just the same as they do.”

The Responding to the Resilience Risk project was inspired by this comment made by someone at a charity funded by City Bridge Trust on a visit by their Funding Manager. This project set out to address that discrepancy by providing funding to develop and test different interventions to support the resilience of workers in London's charity sector.

City Bridge Trust funded six organisations between October 2019 and March 2020 to design and deliver a pilot project to support the resilience of their staff and/or volunteers. Each project was unique, tailored to the specific circumstances of their workforce.

The organisations funded were [Fine Cell Work](#), [Just For Kids Law](#), [The ClementJames Centre](#), [The Listening Place](#), [Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest](#), and [Toynbee Hall](#).¹

The following types of activities were delivered across the pilots:

 Workshops –
internal facilitator

 Reflective practice –
external facilitator

 1-2-1 counselling

 Workshops –
external facilitator

 Reflective practice –
internal facilitator

 Peer-mentoring

Key findings

Generally, participants were positive about the resilience intervention and **77% of participants were either satisfied or very satisfied** with the activities provided.

¹ The Toynbee Hall pilot project could not be delivered, and therefore this research is based on the other five pilot projects.

“This has been the most helpful single thing we have ever done as a team. As a result we have a happier and more resilient [team].”
(Participant, FCW)

Positive feedback from participants

- Having **dedicated time and space during work hours** to focus on personal and team resilience
- Focussing on **prevention instead of being reactive**
- **Sharing a reflective space** helping to increase understanding within the team
- Having an **external expert facilitator or counsellor** to share best practice
- **Learning about resilience tools** and receiving information to use both in the workplace and beyond
- Trying out **different types of resilience activities**
- Having some **peer-led activities** enabling participants to build stronger bonds.

What participants found challenging

“I found it difficult as there were things that I did not particularly want to address in front of junior members of staff and I am sure the feeling was mutual.”

“I am very reflective and resilient in my day/life, so I did not find it useful in that setting.”



“The idea of engaging in this makes me anxious.”

“Occasionally, the reticence of some members of the group to participate made me uncomfortable.”

- **One size does not fit all** – the types of activities offered did not suit everyone
- Feeling **uncomfortable speaking about personal resilience** in the workplace
- Not the right **group composition**
- Finding the project too **time consuming** to fit in busy schedules
- **Change of staff and/or facilitators** disrupting the consistency of the project
- **Managing a negative atmosphere** during the resilience activities.

“I am grateful to City Bridge Trust for funding this project, and I hope the general idea of examining and developing resilience becomes available to more frontline volunteers.”

“I have only praise for the pilot. It has helped me in both work and my own personal life.”



“I enjoyed taking part in the pilot and personally found the activities very useful. I hope to continue with most of them going forward.”

“I really appreciate being given this opportunity through my workplace.”

What participants learnt about resilience

94% of participants felt that they learnt something about resilience through taking part in the pilots. Common themes included:



Impact of the pilots on resilience levels

We used the [Connor Davidson Resilience Scale](#) (CD-RISC) to assess participants' resilience levels over the course of their involvement in the pilot projects. CD-RISC asks respondents to rate themselves from 0-4 in answer to 25 questions, giving a total 'resilience score' between 0 (no resilience) to 100 (very high resilience).

Overall, there was little change in the median and distribution of scores between the baseline and first three rounds of data collection. The cohort's resilience levels diverged in the fourth and fifth rounds: most participants' scores improved, but some noticeably dropped. This timing coincided with the developing COVID-19 crisis and lockdown; we cannot separate these results from that context.

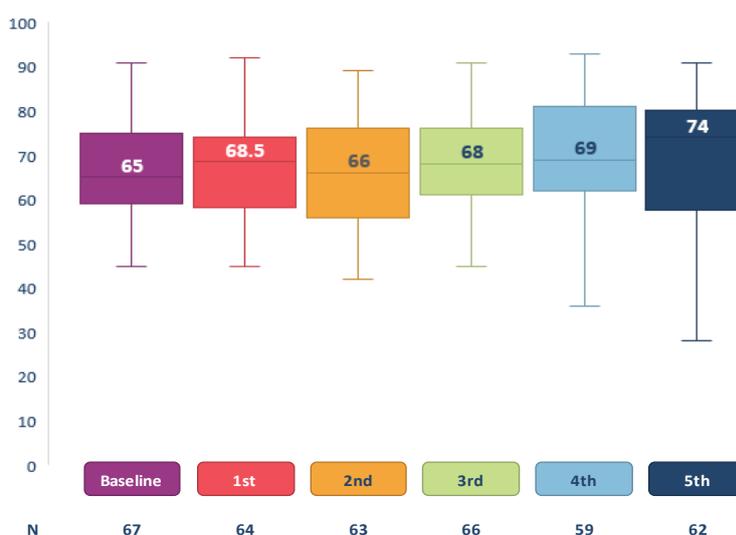


Figure 1: Boxplot showing total cohort's resilience scores by round of data collection. Numbers show median scores.

The group's resilience levels at one project, The Listening Place, noticeably improved with the median score increasing consistently from 67 to 80.5 during the pilot period. The other projects' impact on resilience was less clear. The Listening Place's results stand out as being particularly positive and showing potential, however some key features of this pilot project varied substantially from the others:

1. It was delivered exclusively for volunteers;
2. The activities were delivered by a practitioner who had the unusual status of being both an expert in this field, and a fellow volunteer;
3. The intervention was simple, focused and followed a clear structure, and had the most consistent attendance of all of the projects.

Note that these findings should be interpreted with caution, because the sample size is very small and many factors are likely to affect participants' resilience scores other than the resilience project itself.

Conclusions

The findings from this study are only partial, and present a mixed picture. On the one hand, feedback from participants was generally positive and suggest that the resilience interventions did add value, despite some challenges. On the other hand, we did not observe a measurable improvement in participants' resilience levels as a cohort, with the exception of one project which took place in a very different context to the others.

This does not, however, suggest that there is no value in nurturing charity workers' resilience as an essential competency in their work. It means that there are still questions about *how* to achieve this, and also how it can be 'measured' or objectively observed. This research has taken us a step forward in understanding some promising features of resilience interventions and some features to avoid, but there is further work to do to understand:

- How to overcome challenges of delivering resilience interventions in a workplace context, and ensuring that everyone feels comfortable to participate;
- The relationship between individual resilience and team or organisational resilience, and identifying how interventions support both or either;
- Whether certain features can be 'packaged' to make it easier for organisations to develop resilience interventions that work in their context, particularly where they do not have access to expertise on this topic.

Although the bulk of the research took place before the Covid-19 pandemic, the effects of this crisis have only served to underline the importance of building resilience in the charity sector, as organisations, teams and as individuals.

Recommendations for funders

Further detail about each recommendation can be found in the full report.

1. We recommend that funders consider whether to provide more dedicated support and funding to organisations to enable them to support the resilience of their workforce.
2. We recommend that funders consider how to embed support for charity workers' resilience in their Covid-19 response.
3. We recommend that funders consider how to work collaboratively with each other to support the resilience of the charity sector workforce.
4. We recommend that funders consider how they can provide non-financial support to organisations to enable them to develop and deliver resilience interventions for their workforce.
5. Finally, we recommend that funders provide organisations with guidance and advice on how to develop resilience interventions that work in their context.

Appendix 2 of the full report provides a checklist for organisations who want to design and deliver resilience activities, which could serve as a starting point for those interested in this topic.