

Towards Recognition of Abuse, Understanding, and Mutuality  
through Arts (T.R.A.U.M.A.)

Arts Collective Information Pack



## Arts Collective

Survivors of abuse and trauma who practice as artists and/or researchers are invited to join an Arts Collective (AC) to work with us on this exciting new project.

**We are seeking two Artists and two survivor Researchers – all with lived experience of abuse/trauma.**

We warmly welcome applications from people who identify as being from marginalised or minoritised groups.

## Background to our Project

Globally, it is estimated that over half of all children experience abuse each year, yet it is vastly under-reported. Though child abuse is highly prevalent and harmful to individuals and societies, it is scarcely discussed and largely unaddressed. A critical barrier to public understanding and effective interventions is the difficulty in recognising abuse: survivors and non-survivors alike typically lack the knowledge and skills to identify signs of abuse in themselves and others.

The Violence and Mental Health Network (VAMHN)'s *Survivor's Priority Themes and Questions for Research: Consultation Report* found that a key issue for survivors is recognising what happened to them as abuse and ensuring that professionals have the tools to recognise abuse. This was confirmed in our *Safe, Seen, Supported (SSS)* research project on reaching and helping children and young people experiencing abuse in their households. 94% of participants considered a better understanding of abuse – how to recognise it, talk about it, and respond to it – to be vital. We found that abuse recognition requires: 1) a language to describe abusive versus healthy relationships; 2) educational materials for communities and professionals; and 3) wider awareness-raising societal conversations.

T.R.A.U.M.A. aims to build on SSS by meeting this need. We will use art to do this, because it can best convey abuse beyond verbal narratives, raise awareness and engage wider public debate.

## Project Team

We are an interdisciplinary survivor-only team with expertise in survivor-led research, art, and the intersection of scientific and creative methods.

**Academic Lead:** Angie Sweeney, survivor researcher and mental health services researcher from [SURE](#), King's College, London.

The *Service User Research Enterprise (SURE)* is a research group that conducts, supports and teaches research from the perspectives of people with direct experience of neurodiversity; trauma, violence and abuse; mental distress; and/or using (or refusing) mental health services.

**Art Lead:** Laura E. Fischer, interdisciplinary artist, activist, and survivor researcher from [Traumascapes](#).

*Traumascapes* is a survivor-led organisation dedicated to changing the ecosystem of trauma and creating new horizons for survivors through art and science.

**Involvement Lead:** Jane Chevous, survivor researcher, activist and writer from [Survivors Voices](#). *Survivors Voices* is a small, national peer-led organisation run by and for adult survivors of abuse and inter-personal trauma and those who support them.

## Project Aims

The **aim** of this project is to use art to increase awareness of abuse and develop and pilot an arts-based card deck that can be used to facilitate discussion around abuse recognition.

Our **objectives** are:

1. To work with abuse survivors to create, safely and ethically, new artwork that explores the nature of abuse and its imprint on survivors and develop a card deck that includes a) images of the artwork and b) talking points about abuse with the aim of generating discussion and facilitating recognition.
2. To run a discussion group with a range of stakeholders to test the utility of the card deck in facilitating abuse recognition and discussion.
3. To engage the general public, academics, and practitioners with an exhibition showcasing the artwork and a reception to launch the card deck.
4. To reflect on the process and share learning through formal and informal evaluation methods.

## Overview of Project and the Role

The project has five phases, with the Arts Collective involved in each phase:

### 1. [Forming](#)

**We are forming an Arts Collective (AC) with the project team, two survivor artists, and two survivor researchers with an interest in art-making.** We are aiming to ensure that we reflect as much as possible a range of survivor perspectives, including different generations, gender identity, sexual orientation, racialisation, culture, faith, disability, and neurodiversity.

The AC will work collaboratively throughout the project, informed by the ethos and ethics of survivor research and trauma-sensitive arts practice.

### 2. [Creating](#)

We will facilitate creative workshops with possibilities for the Arts Collective to use a range of artforms, with our support where needed, including (but not limited to) poetry, drawing, painting, photography, filmmaking, creative writing, textile art, live art, and dance.

Together, the AC will produce:

- 12+ artworks on the nature, characteristics, and impacts of abuse.
- A pilot deck of 6-12 cards composed of artworks and talking points.

We will guide the AC in ways that support mutual development, with everyone gaining from the cross-fertilisation of ways of thinking/working and engaging with audiences beyond their fields. We will support artists and researchers to learn new skills and we hope to provide guidance to further develop your trauma-informed survivor-led practice.

### 3. Testing

We will invite ten practitioners from a range of sociodemographic and disciplinary backgrounds to take part in an online discussion about the card deck. The card deck and talking points will be revised as a result.

### 4. Engaging

The artworks created by the AC will be presented at an exhibition aimed at encouraging engagement with the topic and launching the card deck. Survivors, artists, researchers, practitioners and allies will be invited to the launch from our wide combined networks.

We will also create an online repository of the artwork and make the card decks available for purchase.

### 5. Reflection

We will hold a final meeting of the Arts Collective to reflect on the process, celebrate our achievements and identify learning. Together, we will produce a final evaluation report and blog post.

## Honorarium and Terms

Each Artist/Researcher will receive a £700 honorarium for;

- Attending three in-person creative workshops (held in London) to produce artwork and talking points for the card deck
- Attending virtual meetings (we anticipate holding three: a welcome meeting, a meeting to review the design of the card deck, and a meeting to plan the exhibition)
- Showcasing the produced artwork at the T.R.A.U.M.A. exhibition and in the online repository held on the Traumascapes website
- Attending a final reflection workshop and providing input to the final report

We will also cover travel costs, supply art materials, and provide light refreshments during workshops.

All Artists/Researchers are expected to produce artwork that will be used in the card deck and showcased in the exhibition; however, each Artist/Researcher retains copyright and ownership of their artwork. Artists/Researchers can choose whether to be credited for their work or to remain anonymous.

## Person Specification

- Personal experience of violence, abuse, trauma (self-defined) *(Please note that at no time will you be asked about your personal experiences of these.)*
- Practice as an artist, interested in research; or as a researcher, interested in arts and/or creative research methods

- Interest in applying lived experience of trauma to educate and raise awareness
- Interest in using art to open public conversations around abuse
- Available for the period of the project (see Key Dates)
- Commitment to promoting inclusion and involvement for individuals and groups that have been subject to discrimination or disadvantage
- Commitment to maintain safety and confidentiality, and able to hold sensitive information and conversations safely
- Able to provide feedback supportively and constructively
- Able to take part in online meetings and in-person workshops

## Safety and Support

All our work will be guided by our survivor ethos:

- the inclusion of all, in all our diversity (including gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, culture, faith, experience, ability);
- safe spaces based on a culture of mutuality, respect and co-operation;
- removing barriers that divide people, encouraging everyone to participate as much as they want or feel able to; and
- epistemic justice that values the wisdom of lived experience equally with other forms of knowledge.

We aim for the AC to be a mutually supportive space.

Additionally, peer support workers will be available for the discussion group and exhibition. AC members will be invited to join the Traumascape Community of Thought and Action and Survivors Voices peer networks and peer support groups.

## Key Dates

Information session (at Changemakers virtual network meeting): *Tuesday September 20<sup>th</sup> 12.30pm*

Informal discussion with the team: *7<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2022*

Project start date: *October 2022*

Project end date: *February 2023*

Creative workshops:

- *31<sup>st</sup> of October from 10am to 5pm*
- *7<sup>th</sup> of November from 2pm to 5pm*
- *10<sup>th</sup> of November from 10am to 5pm*

Exhibition dates: *December – February (TBC)*

Reflection workshop: *January or February (TBC)*

## How to Apply

Please complete the Application Form provided and submit with examples of your work as indicated. To assist selection, based on suitability and ensuring a diverse group, we will invite shortlisted applicants to an informal discussion.

Please send your submission to Jane ([connect@survivorsvoices.org](mailto:connect@survivorsvoices.org)), Laura ([laura@traumascapes.org](mailto:laura@traumascapes.org)) and Angie ([angela.sweeney@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:angela.sweeney@kcl.ac.uk)) with the subject line “T.R.A.U.M.A. Arts Collective” by Midnight on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2022.

We are committed to diversity and inclusion, and encourage people from all backgrounds, including persons living with disabilities, to apply. Please contact [connect@survivorsvoices.org](mailto:connect@survivorsvoices.org) if you wish to discuss an alternative method of submitting an application (e.g. verbal/video-recorded rather than written) or have specific access requirements. We welcome all such applications.

## Thinking about Safety

The project focusses on creating artworks and talking points to find ways to identify, talk about and raise awareness of abuse and trauma. While no one is expected to share their personal experiences in any detail, the content is likely to be emotionally charged. **Please think carefully about whether this role is something that you want and feel able to contribute to.** We are happy to help you think this through when you apply, if that would be helpful. While involvement can be inspiring, it is also challenging, and it can cost us when we engage in these spaces. We are committed to ensuring that the Arts Collective is a safe space and that members have access to the support they need.

We will put several safety measures in place for the AC, including agreeing safety guidelines and group and individual safety and support plans. For further general information on support, please visit: <https://survivorsvoices.org/support/> and/or <https://www.traumascapes.org/self-care>