Evaluation Phase 1

Implementation and Feasibility of Team Time – A report for the Health Foundation

8th July 2020

Introduction

Following the success of the Team Time pilot session in April 2020, over 500 trained Schwartz facilitators have now been trained to implement and run Team Time sessions in their organisations. As part of phase 1 of the Team Time project, this report seeks to evaluate the feasibility of running reflective practice sessions for staff online.

Method

As part of the evaluation of phase 1 of the Team Time programme we have interviewed several Team Time facilitators to discuss the feasibility of running reflective practice sessions for staff successfully online. 18 facilitators have been interviewed with written feedback provided from one other. We also sat in on a Schwartz Round and Team Time Network meeting in which around 30 Schwartz Round and Team Time Facilitators and Mentors met virtually to discuss their experiences so far with implementing online reflective practice in their organisations.

A list of facilitators from around the country who were known to be engaging with Team Time was provided by the Team Time Mentors and facilitators were contacted randomly from this list and from the list of trained Team Time facilitators. A total of 70 facilitators were contacted via email but only 18 were interested in and/or available to be interviewed.

Facilitators Interviewed:

Type of organisation	
NHS Trust	13
Higher Education Institute	1
Hospice	1
Children's Social Care Services	1
Vets	1
Ireland Health Service Executive	1

Findings

Flexing the Team Time model

One of the key findings from the interviews with facilitators is that organisations have chosen to adapt the Team Time model to suit the needs of their organisation.

The major differences between Schwartz Rounds and Team Time are that Rounds are offered at an organisational level to all staff, held in a physical environment and often present stories from the past. In contrast, the Team Time model prescribes sessions to be run virtually in small team groups (max 30 participants) to help create a more contained, safe space for dealing with the raw unprocessed material which may present given the landscape of Covid-19.

Organisations have chosen to adapt the Team Time model in different ways. Some have decided to open the sessions out to the whole organisation whilst still calling it Team Time. Others have branded the sessions as 'virtual Schwartz Rounds' but still focus on the live issues surrounding covid-19. Some have tried a mix of virtual and physical sessions, having facilitators and storytellers attend virtually, whilst the Team are all in the same physical space.

Other organisations have decided to stick with the prescribed Team Time model.

Reasons given for not sticking with the prescribed 'team' model and instead offering the intervention at an organisational level are: feeling as though they could reach more people this way; not having any individual teams come forward when Team Time was first offered out; and feeling as though teams can sometimes be too insular:

"*Sometimes smaller teams have already talked so much about the issues that they almost need a sort of fresh perspective*"

Concern about how to choose or prioritise teams were also stated: "*We felt that there's a risk of making one team seem more important than other*".

Some organisations have tried a mix of both and have not "*noticed that any one is better than another*".

Confidence

Following the Team Time training, the majority of facilitators felt confident that some form of the Team Time model could be implemented within their organisation, and there was a strong sense of willingness to give it a try and see what works:

"*I was really keen just to get going with it and to see how it would run*"

"*We were quite open to it being a learning experience so we just rolled with it*"

"*It feels a little bit, a few grains scary but much more grains of let's try it, let's give it a go. We really need to do something.*"

This confidence often stemmed from the success of Schwartz Rounds previously in their organisation and their trust in the Point of Care Foundation.

"*I knew as soon as I got the email no I'm going to do it…Because POCF is very well organised, I feel like it's well organised, it's safe, so I knew that it would be something that would be safe to develop and move forward with*"

There was a lot of praise and gratitude for the Point of Care Foundation for reacting so quickly to the way the covid-19 pandemic stopped Schwartz Rounds at a time when it was felt that staff support and reflective practice was needed more than ever.

"*We were really delighted when Team Time was offered…. A viable option in the new landscape which we're working*"

"We didn't really know what to do to be able to provide that emotional support for staff so when we heard about Team Time we were really excited because we thought this could be something which could really help us."

"I was very much convinced by it and impressed by the detail that had gone into the preparation and planning of the materials in such a short period of time so people have clearly worked very hard and done a really good job from my point of view"

A widely stated initial barrier to confidence was the switch to online and trepidation around the use of IT which some facilitators found "*really scary*".

As one of the main moves from Schwartz Rounds to Team Time is the change from a physical to an online space it is unsurprising that concerns around IT were at the forefront of facilitators minds. Concerns centred around lack of technology to enable staff to access the Team Time sessions, unfamiliarity with IT systems, and IT equipment not being sophisticated enough.

"Our only fear was the whole IT side of thing, because we don't have a great IT system within the organisation, and… a lot of our staff wouldn't be very IT savvy either so it was trying to wonder whether they'd be able to even access the sessions"

"This presumption that everyone who works in the hospital has an email address is not correct for a start because not everybody does. Some people who do don't access it, some people's accounts aren't live, lots of different things"

Others however did mention that as time has gone on, even in the couple of months since training, many staff are getting used to working in a virtual realm and that it is becoming less daunting running things online:

"I think because of having so many meetings now the technology is becoming a lot easier and a lot more natural and less intrusive"

In addition to these concerns, there were also a worry that both clinical and non-clinical staff may struggle to find space to join sessions. For example, whilst non-clinical staff may have access to IT, this may only be a desktop computer in a shared office where they may not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings where colleagues not taking part in the session may overhear. This was similarly a concern for clinical staff, for example the difficulty for potentially up to 30 ward staff to individually find a quiet room from which they can log on to the session.

"Those who are in a shared office or who don't have easy IT access will be dis-enfranchised which of course has an impact on equity, equality, diversity and all of those kinds of things"

Accessibility

Despite these initial concerns and the ongoing barrier of IT, nearly all of the facilitators interviewed spoke of how the virtual format made the sessions more accessible, and that they were reaching people who would not ordinarily have attended Schwartz Rounds which they saw as a definite positive.

"There's an accessibility to offering it virtually that is preferable."

"They probably were a group of people who often would have been too busy to normally go to a Round but the Team Time format meant that they could fit it in"

Reasons given were the ease of being able to log on from any location - particularly if working in the community -, when working from home, or on a day off. This was a real challenge for running Schwartz Rounds, particularly for geographically diverse organisations, or for example night staff who would not normally be able to attend a Round.

"One of our biggest challenges with Schwartz Rounds was the geography of our area… Team Time is a better way to deliver"

"I think just more people came actually from a variety of settings you might not normally get."

Some also reported that they felt offering the sessions to specific teams gave people permission they might not have felt they had to attend a Schwartz Round:

"If they're not encouraged to go to a Schwartz Round they won't go because they're worried it looks like they're taking an hour out of their day to go and sit, and they're so busy you know"

Despite these gains, in one organisation where the sessions were oversubscribed, the facilitator felt that limiting sessions to 30 people meant accessibility was lost, as not everybody hoping to attend from a specific team was able to. This is something which can potentially be managed by playing with the boundaries of a 'team'; something several organisations have done when implementing Team Time.

Other concerns affecting confidence following the training relate to timing and knowing when to roll out Team Time. Despite attending training in April, many organisations have only just begun implementation - four of the interviewed facilitators had not yet run their first session. This was partly due to lack of resource amidst an increased workload during the peak of the covid-19 outbreak. For some however this was a conscious decision:

"It wasn't the right time to add something new to mix for any of us"

Concerns over the amount of change and upheaval health and care staff were undergoing left a feeling that headspace was needed and that the *"firefighting, planning, surviving and responding"* needed to pass. Only one facilitator mentioned that there was an organisational barrier to reflective practice in the peak of the pandemic where they had strong guidance that the immediate response should be solely psychological first aid.

Scalability

One concern with the implementation and the feasibility of Team Time is the scalability of it. Several facilitators commented that whereas Schwartz Rounds were open to the whole organisation with unlimited numbers, the nature of Team Time means they are not able to reach as many people with one session.

"The scalability of it bothers me because it's not equitable"

"The other thing is because we were thinking it's a team thing rather than a monthly round, ideally we need to do it more than once a month because if you're only going to one team that's not a lot of the hospital you're reaching"

"It just feels like a drop in the ocean to be truthful"

"We are a very finite resource so the advantage of Schwartz Rounds is that you can bring together lots of different people from lots of different places in one place."

This largely comes down to resource and being realistic about the number of sessions which can be run, and the reach possible. Whilst some organisations have very large numbers regularly attending Schwartz Rounds, others only have 20-30 therefore, as discussed above, Team Time can actually help reach more people.

Rolling out to teams

A popular trend with rolling out the Team Time sessions seems to be doing an initial session with a known team to allow for a safe space to trial the programme.

"We started with a safe group at the start, we decided to start small just to trial it for ourselves, to see what it would be like and how it would transfer to video-conferencing."

"We ran our first round almost like a test with a friendly audience"

"The first time we did it we did it with our own team so we knew that if it all fell apart it was a supportive place"

Organisations have taken different approaches to rolling out Team Time more widely. Some have chosen to advertise Team Time to the organisation and wait for teams to approach them. Others have hand-picked teams to approach

"We've kind of picked teams that we think would be good for it"

"The Schwartz steering group has thought about which teams might be appropriate and might benefit from it, and so now we've gone out to those teams to ask if they'd be interested"

This seems to have been largely down to caution with implementing a new way of doing things and wanting to do it in a safe environment where participants will gain the most benefit, and also being wary of the limit to the number of teams who can be reached and wanting the intervention to be as influential as possible.

Ease of running the sessions

Several facilitators noted that Team Time sessions were more straight forward to run in their organisation compared to Schwartz Rounds. This is due to a reduction in logistics to consider such as room booking, setting up the room, organising refreshments, choosing a suitable location, etc.

"I find Team Time far more straight forward to run. Because we're a community trust we lack rooms… we've had to hire village halls, all kind of things in the past to run Schwartz Rounds, so being able to run them virtually, it's dead easy".

Others have also noted that they have found the facilitation of the sessions easier in terms of managing the conversation as people are more likely to wait their turn to speak:

"People have to kind of take turns perhaps in a way that they otherwise wouldn't, we don't get people talking across each other"

Generally facilitators have found that participants have been generous in sharing the time and not monopolising the airtime and were reassured by the presence of the 'mute' button should it be needed.

Preparation and having a plan

Despite this ease some have felt with running Team Time, there has also been a sense of the importance of preparation and having an in-depth plan for each of the sessions run. Facilitators felt preparing the storytellers was especially important for Team Time due to the virtual forum in which they are sharing their experience:

"I think it's really critical that we don't shortcut the preparation of storytellers because that's your safety net isn't it to check where is somebody with their processing"

Facilitator preparation and confidence using IT was also deemed to be crucial in the smooth running of a session. Several organisations have opted to use three facilitators so that one can solely focus on managing the IT. Facilitators also mentioned having back-up stories and talking points in case connections drop, and plans for if storytellers or audience members get upset. Several also strongly advised signposting at the beginning and/or end of the sessions where participants can go and who they can contact if they are affected, or do want to follow up with anyone, following the session. Similarly, having a de-brief for facilitators and storytellers was deemed important.

Cameras

The Team Time training provided suggested that audience members should have their cameras turned off, and only facilitators and storytellers should have cameras on during the session. This has proved to be an area of contention among facilitators and participants, many of whom have chosen to allow audience members to also have their camera on.

"People didn't like the cameras off thing. They felt it was an obstacle to people talking"

Some found that having the facilitator cameras on as well was enough for the storytellers to feel supported and heard, whereas others felt that some of the human connection was lost with so few faces visible.

"We sort of feel that part of the connection is actually being able to see people"

One facilitator who took part in the Point of Care Foundation pilot Team Time session as an audience member found that having the camera turned off made it less daunting:

"It was helpful not having lots of people looking at me when I was sharing a little piece of my soul"

Others have chosen to stick to cameras off for audience members, but to ask everyone to turn their cameras on briefly at the beginning and/or end of the Team Time session so that the group can all see each other's faces.

Some facilitators have chosen to give audience members the option, and found that some choose to turn their camera on when they participate, others choosing to keep it turned off.

Furthermore a number of facilitators commented that they found more people participated via the virtual format with cameras turned off compared to in a physical Schwartz Round, reflecting that this could be due to feeling safer behind the screen:

"They might be more open because they feel more safe not having people look at you and you're not exposed"

Indeed three facilitators commented that they felt this option of not having to have the camera on could have contributed to the wider reach of the sessions as it meant they could *"sit and listen in, and see what it's like without feeling exposed"*.

Similarly, there were mixed feelings surrounding the chat function. Some wanted to keep it purely for people to write their names in when they wanted to speak, whereas others found that using the chat function to leave comments meant feedback was left for contributors which might not otherwise have been said. This meant that the contributor felt supported and heard, but also the person writing was able to contribute in a way which felt safe for them.

"It's nice for the person that might have been hesitant in a real-life situation to feel that they've actually said something"

Virtual space vs physical space

All facilitators interviewed felt that a key component of a Schwartz Round was being in a physical space together therefore the shift to a virtual space, whether as a Team Time or a virtual Schwartz Round, was significant.

A central part of this was facilitating the session without having any non-verbal cues from their co-facilitator, and from the audience. Particularly not being able to read the room and seeing how the session was landing with the group was a concern for facilitators, particularly those who hadn't yet run a session:

"Not knowing how it's landing how people are responding will be harder for me as a facilitator"

"Not being able to read a room is tricky"

The concern that members of the group may be distressed was also common:

"That's the bit that feels uncomfortable for me potentially the thought that there might be people at the end of the phone who are upset who you can't physically reach out to"

"You've got the added dimension of you can't get to somebody if they do become upset, or actually my biggest concern is what if somebody is upset and you don't even know"

This can be caveated by the aforementioned signposting and offer of support and follow up to participants, but the thought of this especially didn't sit well with facilitators who had not yet run a session and felt somewhat daunted by the potential that this could happen.

Not being in a physical space almost means that elements which have become very much part of the Schwartz Round model were also lost such as refreshments, and the social aspect:

"You don't have the… refreshments at the beginning and that kind of bonding time where people sort of sit and say have you been to a Round before or where have you come from today and things like that. I kind of miss that. Yeah, it's that bit about looking after people."

"I think we'll all miss out on the fact we usually get some tea and cake and a bit of a hug from each other"

For some, the benefits of a wider reach outweighed these losses however others felt their organisation was itching to get back to a physical Schwartz Round and that these aspects were all part of feeling human and the power of the Rounds.

"The connectivity translates but I'm not sure that, when you're in a room and there's a collective sigh and a collective intake of breath, you don't get that"

Feeling connected

Despite this, there was resounding agreement from all interviewees who had run a Team Time or Virtual Schwartz that there was still a palpable connection holding a reflective practice online.

"Everybody felt that it has translated, the meaningfulness of it has really translated across the video platform and people have felt really connected"

Particularly for staff who were working remotely, it was a good way for teams to reconnect with each other and with the meaning behind their work:

"It reconnected them with the why in terms of what they were doing, and it made them feel more motivated"

Those who are running sessions in a team format have found that it is a great way of reconnecting a team, allowing them to be together in a different environment, and relate to one another:

"They didn't realise how isolated people had been feeling because it's a different type of conversation that you're having in a Team Time than you're having in your normal meetings"

"It's brought everyone together into a really lovely caring are you ok way"

"Being able to facilitate a team conversation felt quite lovely in some ways. The team format, there's something really nice about that."

"Delivering something like this for a team brings the opportunity for a team to express, in a very safe way, how team practice makes them feel."

Facilitators reported that the feedback they had received from both storytellers and other participants in the sessions suggested people found it therapeutic to be given the time and space to have conversations about how they are feeling:

"In general people have found it therapeutic to be able to just let off steam, just unburden what it's like, and to be able to do it in this space which is safe and confidential."

"Their experiences at work but also how it's affecting their family life and their social life and the impact things are having on their general wellbeing"

Psychological Safety

Concern about the psychological safety of holding this kind of intervention in a virtual space were widespread:

"[We have] concerns about the risk of psychological harm to people"

"I think perhaps actually there is more risk in the audience and... you've got the added dimension of you can't get to somebody if they do get upset"

However, it was felt that something is needed to help support staff. Several facilitators sought the advice of psychologist colleagues who felt that not doing anything had a greater risk. By and large facilitators have found that providing this space for staff has been invaluable:

"From the two sessions we've run so far is that people afterwards have said oh my god it's so good to be back in a reflective space. They'd forgotten how important it was in the midst of the frenetic pace"

They key reason for this concern about psychological safety was the rawness of the emotion that would come with discussing a live topic, particularly one so widespread, political and consuming as covid-19.

"Members of staff are experiencing… moral injury where they are grappling with the aftermath of having to do things that they wouldn't normally have done and has run very much against the grain in terms of their ethical view of things and their personal values"

Those facilitators who have run sessions have found this aspect difficult, but appropriate:

"We dealt with a lot of really difficult – I think it was appropriate – but I think it was very difficult emotions they were talking about"

"In general people have found it therapeutic to be able to just let off steam, just unburden what it's like, and to be able to do it in this space which is safe and confidential. All of our kind of fears were pretty much unfounded."

Careful planning, starting with a known group, and offering follow up support are all key ways facilitators have managed this concern so far, and generally facilitators have found running sessions extremely useful:

"Anything that's providing an opportunity for staff to reflect on and to share the emotional impact of work is just invaluable really, and is invaluable for the ripple effect on their ability to deliver compassionate care"

Resourcing

One of the key barriers facilitators have faced in implementing Team Time is resourcing. Some facilitators have found that getting Team Time up and running has required a great deal of work and a few have found that the day-to-day running of the sessions involves a disproportionate amount of work to the number of people they are able to support in each session:

"This has been a huge amount of extra work"

"You would need much wider resource to implement enough sessions to have an impact"

Some facilitators have also found that there is a requirement for the specified team to do some preparatory work which has proved to be a barrier to them continuing:

"The moment you expect some involvement from people or people to speak out sometimes that's when it dries up."

"They were very interested but when they realized that it wasn't us setting up a Schwartz Round and that they would have to invite people and make decisions they backed away"

Well-resourced organisations have been able to get into a rhythm and have found that once the initial set up was established, they have been able to set aside time to ensure sessions are run regularly:

"So we offer two slots a week and we have quite a good process, our admin is now very good at facilitating the process, and so we've got it streamlined so that it shouldn't be taking any of us more than ½ day a week because that's the only way we can do it"

Looking forward

Looking to the future, several facilitators saw a place for Team Time in their organisation, potentially to sit alongside Schwartz Rounds.

"I think actually there's a role for both, and I would see that as probably where we're going."

"We could use Team Time as well as Schwartz Rounds and hit as many people as possible, because definitely some people came who wouldn't usually come to Schwartz Rounds"

"I think it's still something we'd like to continue along with the Schwartz Rounds, just because of the nature of the fact that it's portable, you can be anywhere and join the conversation"

Others have said they are keen to get back to physical Schwartz Rounds and that they wouldn't be able to sustain Team Time as well without additional resource.

"We're looking at it very much as a sort of bridge until we can run Schwartz Rounds again."

"I would definitely see a role for Team Time within teams but logistically and feasibility wise it wouldn't be possible for us to run both, absolutely no way"

Others have suggested returning to regular Schwartz Rounds but keeping Team Time as a tool to *"helicopter in"* when needed:

"It just feels like it would sit in a toolbox and if a team has got certain issues, a Team Time might be good for that"

This would however require careful management to ensure the sessions were not used as a de-brief or to problem solve:

"Going forward I would be very clear about what the function was and I would be very adamant about not going into problem solving, nit-picking, criticism of colleagues, because I think that would have the potential for it to be very detrimental"

It was also suggested that Team Time could be a way of introducing people who haven't before experienced a Schwartz Round. There was however trepidation about facilitators who were new to Schwartz Rounds running Team Time Sessions:

"I think the fact that we had Schwartz experience really helped. I think if you were going in new on the Team Time training it might be difficult."

Only one organisation resolutely felt that there was no place for Team Time going forward. This was due to the amount of work which was needed to set up a session due to the lack of IT infrastructure, and the problems they had during their first session, both with regards to IT and their stilted conversations.

Quantitative Feedback

In addition to the interviews with facilitators, we have also received 387 online feedback forms from people who have attended a Team Time session across 34 organisations.

	Completely agree	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Completely disagree
At least one of the stories was relevant to me	83%	14%	2%	1%	0%
I gained insights that will help me to feel more supported / calm	55%	34%	11%	1%	0%
Today's Team Time will help me work better with my colleagues in our team	49%	36%	13%	1%	0%
The group discussion was well facilitated	84%	13%	3%	0%	0%
I have a better understanding of how my colleagues feel about their work	68%	26%	6%	0%	0%
I have a better understanding of how I feel about my work	41%	44%	13%	2%	0%

	Yes	Quite Likely	Not sure	Unlikely	No
I plan to attend Team Time again	74%	18%	7%	1%	0%
I would recommend Team Time to colleagues	79%	16%	4%	1%	0%

	Exceptional	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Please rate today's Team Time overall	26%	49%	24%	1%	0%

It is clear from this feedback that participants are finding Team Time sessions useful and the vast majority would attend a session again and recommend the sessions to their colleagues. Comments which were included on the feedback reiterated the sense of connection felt and the importance of having a space to reflect on and share the emotional impact of what staff have been dealing with. There was some acknowledgement of the alien-nature of having these conversations online but also agreement that this was the best option given the circumstances and still helped people feel less isolated. There was wide praise for the facilitators and the safe, welcoming environment that they created which encouraged people to share. A few participants felt that they already have these conversations in their teams and that the sessions did not add anything for them.

There is a sense that a briefing for staff on the purpose of the session is crucial so that participants can join knowing what to expect. Also making it clear that participation is not compulsory as some participants voiced concern they were being judged for not speaking. It is also important for people to understand that the sessions are not a forum for problem solving, but instead purely for sharing and supporting each other. Some expressed discomfort with having their manager there.

Feedback from groups where some participants have been in a room together suggests that people would have felt more comfortable either with everybody in a room together or everybody individually joining virtually.

There was a clear split of people who preferred having this kind of reflective practice in an online space and those who prefer being in a physical room. Similarly there were differing opinions as to whether smaller groups or larger groups are more effective depending on how "active" participants are, and whether having cameras on or off is better.

It is important to note that facilitators have reported the proportion of participants completing feedback is low so it is unclear how biased or representative this is of all participants.

Conclusion

The snapshot of Team Time which has been viewed from this evaluation suggests that the programme has been very well received across a variety of organisations. Although some organisations have chosen to adapt the model and create a hybrid between Team Time and Schwartz Rounds, there is widespread recognition that there is a strong need to continue some kind of reflective practice despite the barriers which social distancing and lack of resources bring.

The timing of implementing Team Time seems to have varied across organisations and for the most part this does seem to be down to resources. Whilst organisations were obviously hit by Covid-19 at different times and to different extents, it appears that where organisations have heavily invested in Schwartz Rounds and staff support and wellbeing, and where the Schwartz team are well resourced, Team Time was able to be implemented much more quickly. These observations however are only from a small sample and not necessarily reflective of the wider reality.

Full support from the executive level and appropriate funding and resourcing will be key to ensure organisations are able to continue to run Team Time, or any other form of online reflective practice, and to run them at a level in which they are able to reach enough people.

The facilitators interviewed for this report feel supported and grateful for the resources which the Point of Care Foundation have provided to enable them to roll out Team Time in their organisations.

One area facilitators are keen to be developed is the feedback function for online sessions. Feedback is a very valued part of Schwartz Rounds where often facilitators are able to get feedback from 100% of the audience by ensuring to collect the physical form off each person as they leave the room. Several facilitators commented that the feedback rates whilst running sessions online are very low and that this is difficult for them to know how the sessions are going, particularly as they are very much in the learning stages. This is something the Point of Care Foundation will look into over the coming weeks.

Overall Team Time and other variations of an online reflective practice seemed to have been well received. There has been a real mix of people, both facilitators and participants, who have preferred having this kind of intervention run in a virtual forum, and those who miss having, and would prefer to have, these sessions in a physical space. Facilitators interviewed have thus far not experienced any fallouts from guiding these emotive conversations in a virtual realm, nor from focusing conversations on live topics which deal with much more raw and unprocessed emotion. They have however expressed concern that they will not necessarily know if people have been particularly distressed unless they reach out for support following the sessions. Most facilitators spoken to hope and/or intend to continue on with some kind of online reflective practice alongside physical Schwartz Rounds once these are able to be run again.

Acknowledgements