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**OCTOBER
SALON**

asked:

a report from
a free
workshop
on
transformative
justice
and
community
safety

**HOW
DO
WE
KEEP
US
SAFE?**



On Saturday 10th January 2025, five of us met to learn about transformative justice, and discuss issues of safety in our communities here in Central Lancashire. In this report, we will share with you why we held this event, what happened on the day, what we learned, and what we think the next steps could be for a local, networked community safety practice.

The *How Do We Keep Us Safe?* workshop was facilitated by **crackle** and Stella Aster, who also authored this report. The physical space was provided by **October Salon** and held by Hans Browne.

Background

Transformative justice refers to a history of approaches to dealing with social problems outside of the typical mechanisms given to us by the state, such as policing and prisons. Rather than trying to punish someone and exclude them from the community when they cause harm, transformative justice instead asks how we can create accountable communities where we can heal from and prevent harms by working together.

Community safety considers these things more generally. How do we keep ourselves safe? To ask this question, we assume that we are the ones doing the work, rather than outsourcing that to a separate group.

Stella wanted to run a workshop about these ideas in response to a few incidents that had happened in 2025. Across different communities, we are seeing similar needs for grassroots approaches to community safety, where we are being failed or attacked by police, denied access to healthcare, experiencing interpersonal abuse within our communities, or where the resources we need simply do not exist. The aim of this workshop was to bring together people doing 'community safety' work in its widest sense, from across otherwise-disconnected groups across Central Lancashire, in order to explore these ideas together, and initiate a networked response to community safety through and across our different communities.

We wanted to consider these questions together:

- **How do other people keep themselves safe?**
What can we learn by looking at examples of transformative justice and community safety projects from elsewhere in the UK and around the world?
- **How do we already keep ourselves safe?**
What sorts of issues are already happening in our communities, and how are we responding to those issues?
- **How can we keep ourselves safe?**
What are we learning that we can apply locally?

Setting up the workshop

We set up a station for each of these questions. For the first two questions, we used free text cards to represent examples of community safety practices. Each card broke down an example or an event into three sections, prompted by the questions:

- What happened?
- What did you/they do?
- What happened next?

These questions were chosen because they work well for both explaining an example of an established community practice, and for sharing lived experiences in our communities.

What happened?

To activate the space, we initially populated the tables with 11 examples from elsewhere and 4 examples from the local community. In total, 5 people participated in the workshop, excluding the facilitator: 3 people came directly to the workshop, 1 person got drawn in to a conversation while visiting the space for another reason, and Hans was holding space¹ and got drawn into the workshop due to an incident which happened in the space. As a result of discussions in the workshop, we added 1 more card to the local examples and 1 more card to the examples from elsewhere. A full list of cards and some full examples are provided later in this report.

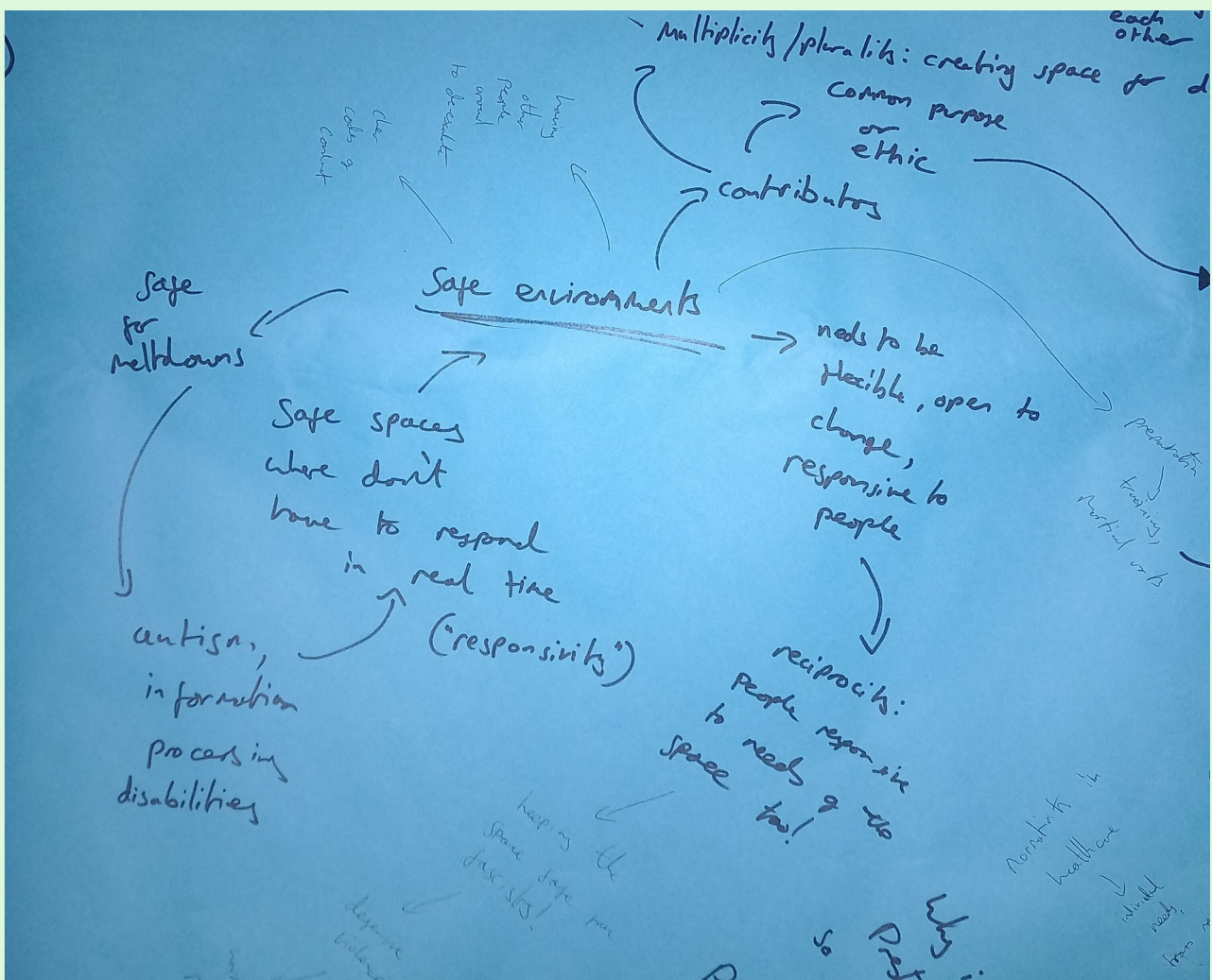
Stella welcomed participants into the space and verbally introduced them to the ideas, aims, and structure of the workshop. We moved around between the different tables throughout the workshops so we could discuss different examples, and bring other people's practices in conversation with our own experiences and local issues.

Around 90 minutes into the workshop a community safety incident occurred in the space. Person A entered the space without the intention of joining the workshop, but ended up joining in a discussion between Persons B (a trans woman) and C. The discussion moved onto the issues of safety and inclusion of trans women in sports, which Stella (also a trans woman) and Persons B and C engaged in out of good faith, in an attempt to inform Person A and fold the discussion into the workshop. However, Person A continued to use transphobic language, including the term

¹ 'Holding space' is a term used within October Salon to refer to the practice of being present and available in a space in order to welcome people into it, and enable other people to use that space for their own purposes. October Salon is an artists collective making use of temporary space around Preston.

"biological man", and repeatedly misgendered Person B. This occurred despite being asked repeatedly by the facilitator and Person B to stop using this language, and us explaining why this language was both offensive and scientifically incorrect.

This led to Hans having to step in to initiate a deescalation process, which they managed gracefully, and then Person A was asked by Hans and Stella to leave the space for today. After catching our individual and collective breaths, we discussed what had happened, and turned towards constructive reflection on the incident. In this way, we were able to recover from the incident and reframe it as an unconsensual "live demo" for the workshop. As we discussed this for the remaining hour or so of the workshop, we continued to add notes to the mindmap.



Findings

One of the first concepts we put down on the paper was that of **safe environments**. This refers to the idea that spaces have to be configured for safety ahead of time, because people cannot be expected to figure out how to respond to a situation in the moment, without any tools around them. We discussed this in the context of the needs of autistic people, and what is needed to enable someone to have a meltdown safely.

Just as someone's **responsivity** can be compromised in the middle of an incident, we also discussed the need for **reciprocity**, and to ask what the space itself needs in order for it to keep us safe.

Participants noted various interesting things about the examples from elsewhere. One participant was not aware of the relationship between the Quakers and the restorative justice and harm reduction movements in the UK. We also discussed the role that **mutual aid** plays within Christian church communities. Groups such as churches, which sit at the intersection of faith and place, often act as very effective support networks for their members, and we wondered how they could become more networked with other local communities and other kinds of local communities.

This led to a discussion on the importance of **solidarity** with other struggles. We discussed how we can take action locally to support struggles elsewhere, like supporting Palestine by blockading arms factories. We talked about both staying safe at protests and actions, and **safety as an action in itself**. One example given for that was self defence training.

Circles of Support and Accountability

A community based approach to support and management of people with harmful sexual behaviours living in the community.

In 1994, Reverend Harry Nigh set up the first Circle support network for an offender with a long history of sexually abusing children, who was leaving prison without statutory supervision, and assessed as high risk of reoffending.

Circles was introduced to the UK in 2002 by the Quakers, and as of end March 2024, 1340 Circles have been delivered in the UK.

BENT Collective

Back in 2020, we started Leeds Queer Wrestling, to provide classes to the local community (now BENT Collective).

In 2023, one of our members became a qualified self defence instructor, so we added that to our curriculum.

We provide trans-led pay-what-you-can self defence classes to the Leeds queer community.

We considered what are the **contributors** to creating a safe environment. We discussed the importance of having a common ethic, but also about how this has to be open, and how we have to hold space for difference. We also discussed that while intentions may be important, action and impact are much more important when it comes to understanding and addressing harm. This led to the idea that we should aim to **promote freedom within a shared framework of accountability**, which makes it clear what is expected of people, and how we'll handle things *collectively* when people hurt each other. Tekmil was cited as an example of this process, and a card was written for this.

Someone mentioned the need for **trauma informed** practices to ensure that the way we respond to incidents is appropriate for different people, and we agreed that it's important not to make assumptions about what people need, but to ask them and prioritise their agency. We said that **processes of accountability should not cause harm**, and someone quoted David Graeber's observation that there should be separation between systems of violence and systems of care.

Tekmil

This is a tool for collective reflection. It traces its origins back to authoritarian communist traditions, but it has been adapted by anarchists in Rojava. In the context of Rojava, teknil roughly translates as "report".

In a teknil, people sit in a circle as equals, and take turns to speak only twice: once with items of criticism and self-criticism, and once more with suggestions. A moderator manages the process.

The purpose of this process is to enable groups to treat criticism as a gift, while managing the social and emotional difficulty that personal and collective critical work can entail.

Information sharing in local SUTR chats

Muslim members of Stand Up To Racism Preston where being harassed by plainclothes police. In a separate incident against non-Muslim members, someone threw rocks at our window.

People shared info in the group chat about the police harassment. When our flat got attacked, we recorded video of the person and shared that in the chat.

Someone else identified the aggressor. Information got shared across our different communities.

Someone shared an example of an incident where they were attacked, and this led to the creation of another card documenting the importance of **information sharing**. We discussed the idea of community surveillance and 'sousveillance' or 'surveilling from below', as we identified a need to avoid replicating the same harmful surveillance culture that the state uses to clamp down on activists and minoritise communities.

As we compared more examples, we noted the importance of **intersectionality**, and the different ways this can operate. In some cases, groups like trans people and injection drug users share similar material needs for healthcare, and so there are opportunities to create projects across lines of identity. In other cases, such as with trans people and autistic people, we are not trusted about our identities or our knowledge of ourselves, and so there are opportunities to develop **mutual allyship and accompliceship**.

In response to the transphobia that occurred in the space, we revisited the question of what contributes to a safe space, and said that **having other people around** was really important. One person shared some past history with the agitator and that they already felt unsafe around this person, and this led us to explore the **difference between feelings of discomfort and unsafety**. We agreed that feeling uncomfortable is not the same as feeling or being unsafe, and that we need to explore this more, because we want to **hold spaces for dialogue, not debate**. This idea was connected to the work the local Stand Up To Racism group does, and the work of Ella Baker School of Organising, with countering narratives of division.

We felt that Preston has a bit of a **standoffish** vibe in general, and we wondered if that comes from a place of

intergenerational trauma occurring within and between different community groups.

Someone cited that **aftercare**, and being able to be with people safely in the community, and talk about what happened, after a traumatic incident, is the number 1 most important thing you can do for preventing development of PTSD. We agreed that we need **an ethic and culture of care**, and that we need to make sure this work isn't left to one person or a small group, in order to avoid burnout.

We also said that **deescalation training** would be useful to have as a general skill in our communities, just like self defence.

In the past we have discussed the importance of entrypoints for bringing people into community, and here we identified the need for **off ramps** and exit points, ways that people can leave a situation or a space while saving face. We also said that once something happens in a space, it leaves an **emotional residue** for the day, because people are still at the site of the incident. We discussed the idea of **ritual cleansing**, and we performed a pagan rite to help 'cleanse' ourselves and the space, once we had been discussing the situation for a while. This included us washing our hands in some warm water, and we did feel better afterwards.

Next steps

Given the scope of the discussion, it's clear that there is both a substantial amount of work that needs to be done here, and that it is a much wider issue than can be addressed by the small group that participated in this workshop. We believe that a suitable next step would be to **convene a working group** to continue documenting and discussing community safety practices, so that we can start to establish this work as an ongoing cultural process, and something networked across different communities and groups here. Within the context of October Salon, we will be feeding these ideas into our processes for how we hold and manage space, to ensure that we always have sufficient people in the space, and we will look into a deescalation training workshop for members. As an unexpected outcome of the workshop, two participants agreed to share resources on trans allyship and accompliceship. We encourage local community groups to consider the following questions for reflection:

- How do we keep ourselves safe?
- Which other groups do we work with to keep ourselves safe?
- Is that a reciprocal relationship?
- Who's not present in our group? Why?

This work is ongoing. If you would like to contribute anything to these discussions, please email communitysafety@centrallancashire.co.uk.

Full list of cards

Examples from elsewhere	Local examples
Circles of Support and Accountability	Responding to abuse in a community support group
BENT Collective	Stand Up To Racism Preston & South Ribble
Copwatch	ACORN Preston
Creative Interventions	Leyland Trans Group
The Cowley Club	Information sharing in SUTR chats
Reclaim Blackpool	
Opioid Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution	
Dandelion HRT	
Maryland Street Needle Exchange	
Reclaim The Night	
Street Angels	
Tekmil	