



Holding Together

BY KATE CAIRNS



THE CHALLENGE

When we are overwhelmed, we humans tend to seek to change whatever triggered the overwhelm, having lost the capacity to change our own inner state. We become focused on changing the behaviour of others and improving our own wellbeing; when the healthy response, (accessible when not overwhelmed), is to focus on changing our own behaviour and improving other people's wellbeing.

When teams become overwhelmed, they follow a similar pattern. A team around a vulnerable child, for example, may become focused on changing the behaviour of the child, rather than exploring what the adults can do to reduce the distress which is causing the behaviour. Or a team of practitioners, overwhelmed by the chaos of public service provision in the 2020s, may become focused on the behaviour of managers, or colleagues in other services, rather than being able to focus on their own essential and valued contribution to service provision.



OUR APPROACH

KCA provides a Holding Together process to enable teams when overwhelmed to rediscover their power and efficacy, through the facilitator creating a safe space for the team to explore the situation together in the light of the KCA knowledge base.

The process involves:

- 1** A preliminary telephone call with the commissioner to clarify the issues
- 2** A first meeting of the whole team, in which the facilitator:
 - Models radical (whole person) listening
 - Explores issues with compassionate curiosity
 - Supports emerging ideas in the group
- 3** A review meeting in which the facilitator:
 - Again models radical listening
 - Explores what has changed since the first meeting
 - Supports emerging ideas and plans

THE IMPACT

Every Holding Together process is different, but the outcomes are remarkably similar. Experiencing a safe space, in which being overwhelmed is set in the context of a model that makes sense, enables teams to shift from the fear state of overwhelm to the flow state of energy and efficacy. Holding Together works, and, once experienced, is sustainably replicated by the team itself when needed.

