

Led by Lived  
Experience:  
What Happens  
When We  
Prioritise  
Relationships  
Over Traditional  
Approaches

## **Sifa Fireside Peer Support Worker Service**

Logan Rainbow – Peer Support Worker

*loganrainbow@sifafireside.co.uk*

Sarah Copsey – Peer Support Service Lead

*sarahcopsey@sifafireside.co.uk*

**SIFA**  
fireside



# Purpose of this workshop



Explore what changes when services are designed around relationships



Contrast relational practice with traditional system-led approaches



Understand implications for system design and commissioning



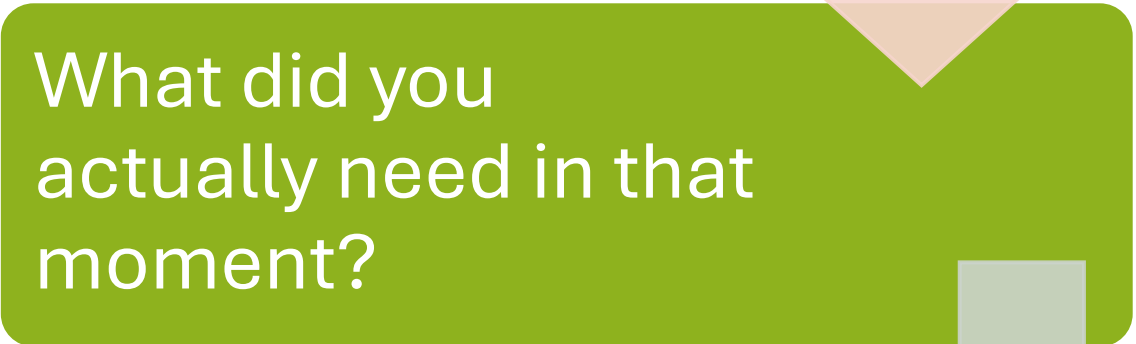
Learn from lived experience and frontline practice

Icebreaker:  
When systems  
didn't meet your  
needs

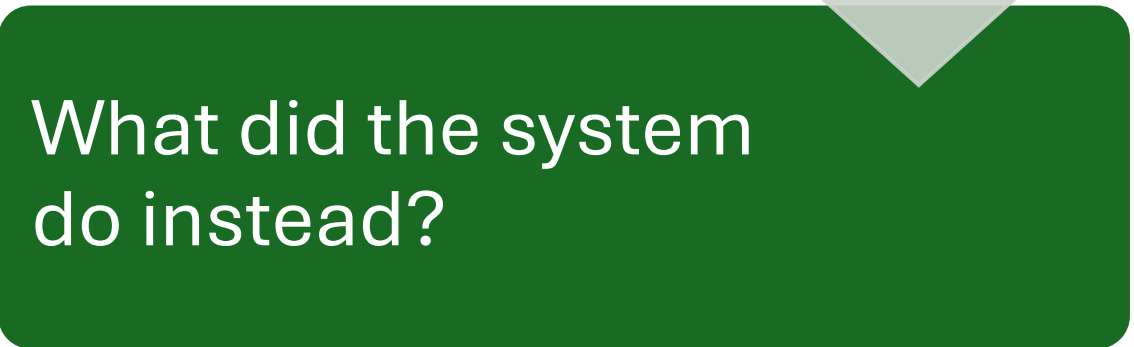
Reflect on a time a  
system didn't meet  
your need



What did you  
actually need in that  
moment?



What did the system  
do instead?



# Activity 1: Community Mapping

On A3 paper, map:

- Real sources of support (formal + informal) – what is the daily lived experience of a client:
  - Where do they go?
  - Who do they see?
  - Where do they sit?
  - Where do they sleep?
  - Who is there when things are difficult?
- Now locate the system's support onto the map – agencies, places
  - Where are they meant to go?
  - Who are they meant to speak to?



## Activity 3: Immediacy vs Navigation

- On your table there are cards with 'Client' and 'Navigator'

Role play being a 'client' and being a 'navigator'.

What happens? What do you notice?

- Would it be different if you approached this as a 'person' with another 'person' – would anything change?





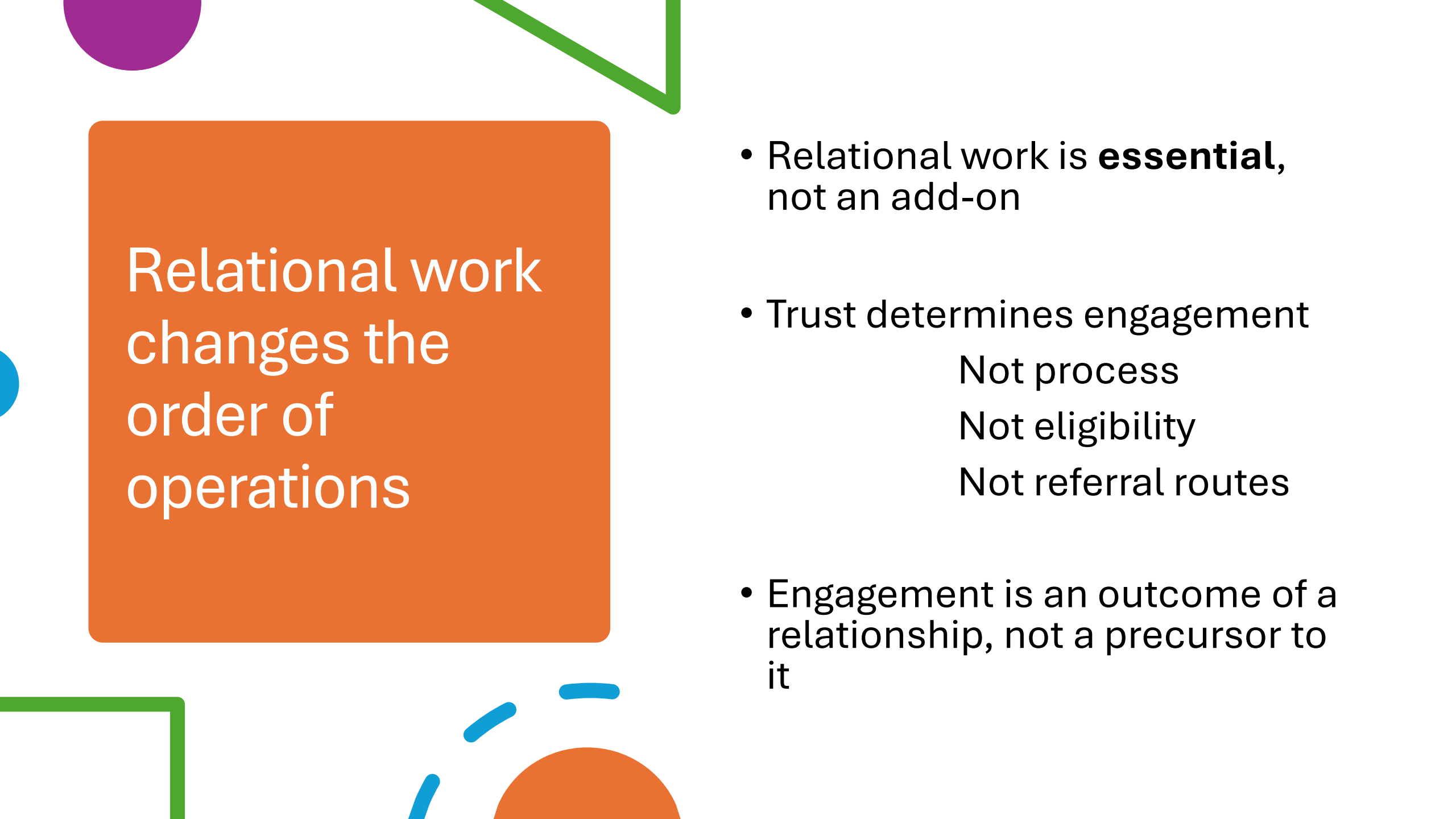
## What have we learnt?

- Mismatch between lived experience and system design
- Support exists in **relational networks**, not just services
- You cannot build trust without responding to immediacy



## What does this mean?

- 'Outcomes' never happen in isolation
- Outcomes are the client's outcomes – they are not the service's
- Relational work cannot only happen for clients, it needs to happen between services



Relational work  
changes the  
order of  
operations

- Relational work is **essential**, not an add-on
- Trust determines engagement
  - Not process
  - Not eligibility
  - Not referral routes
- Engagement is an outcome of a relationship, not a precursor to it

Relational  
work  
produces  
**sustainable**  
outcomes

---

Fast, measurable outcomes  
often miss complexity in high-  
risk, complex need cohorts

---

Real change emerges from  
sustained relational  
engagement

---

Outcomes are an *effect* of  
relationships, not a driver

Relational  
work is  
**preventative**  
system  
intelligence

---

Risk trajectories are dynamic,  
not static

---

Frontline relationships detect  
change earliest

---

In high-mortality contexts, this  
is critical system intelligence

# System implication

- Relational work needs to be embedded into SMD services as the key protective factor in high-risk contexts.
- Relational work supports interpretation of complexity.
- Commissioning often underestimates relational labour, and commissioning patterns disrupt trust
- Lived experience intelligence is fundamental to understanding system failure and barriers.