

# What does it mean to be a resilient research team?

Dr Brian Moss

User Research Lead, Sopra Steria

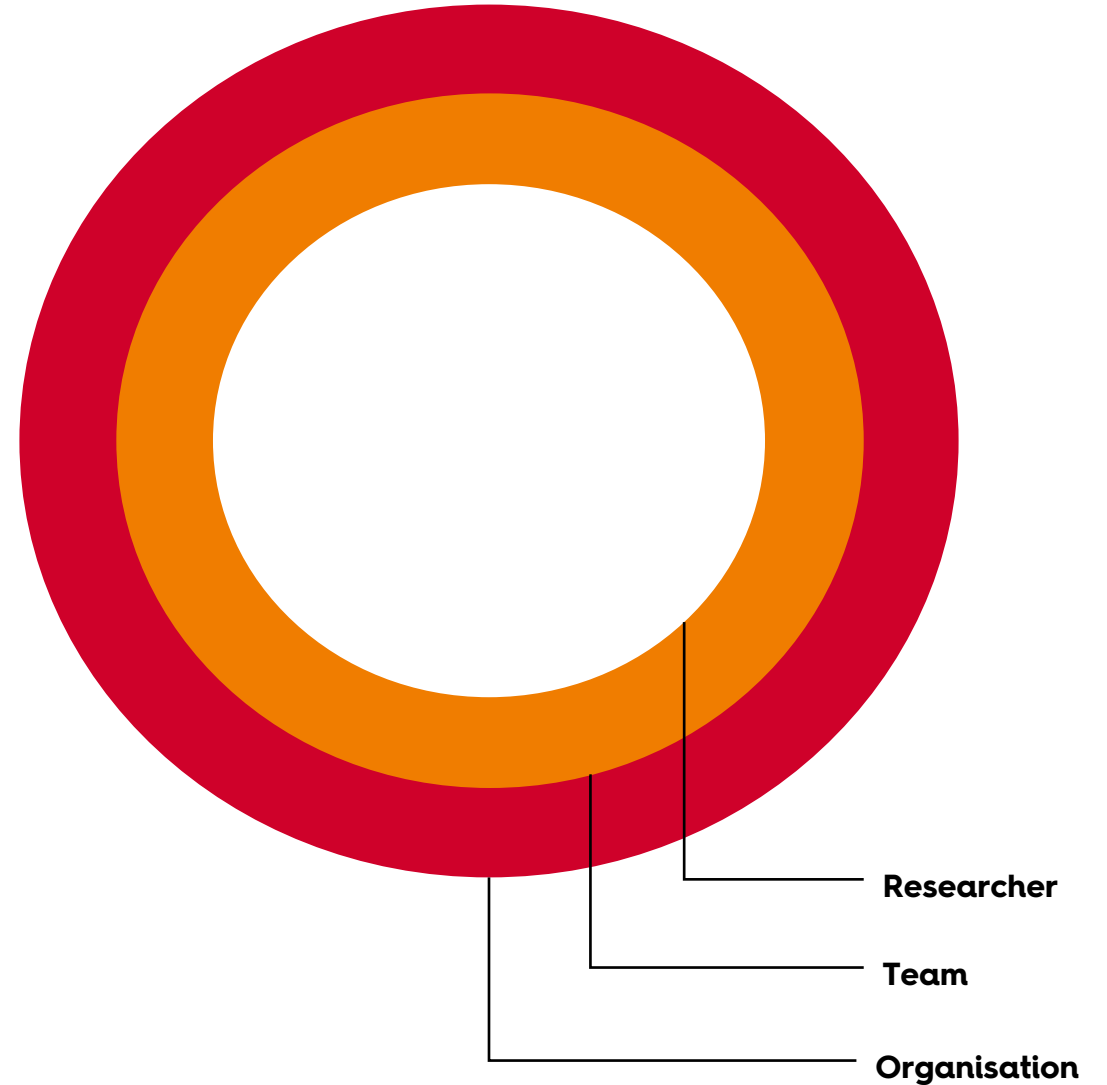
# Why I want to speak about this today

- Leading a team of user researchers to work on highly sensitive public/civic services
- Frustrated by current discourse that resiliency is a personal responsibility
- Our empathetic approach is our greatest asset, but it is also emotionally demanding and draining – fear that we give too much of ourselves
- Striking the balance –
  - Job vs vocation
  - Passion vs sustainability

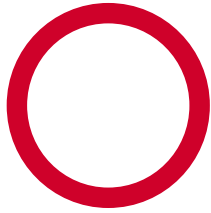


# Bringing different lenses to the challenge

- These are the 3 primary lenses to consider:
  1. The researcher as an individual
  2. The team as a collective
  3. The organisation as a provider
- None of these factors can be fully subtracted from the other, there is a symbiotic relationship at play

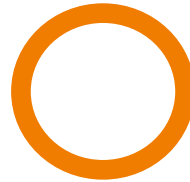


# Some of the current measures in place



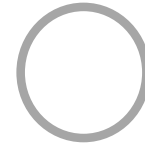
The **organisation** as a provider

- Employee assistance programs
- Counselling support
- Mental health first aider
- Breaks between projects



The **team** as a collective

- Specialist training
- Access to clinical supervision
- Team debriefing sessions and huddles
- 'No explanation needed' approach to assignments



The **researcher** as an individual

- Flexibility over working pattern
- No lone working
- Informal comms/support
- Remove themselves from assignments

**What is working, what isn't, and what did we learn?**

# What is working



## Providing options

There is no one size fits all

## Support net

Reassuring to know it is there if needed

## Autonomy

On assignments and working pattern

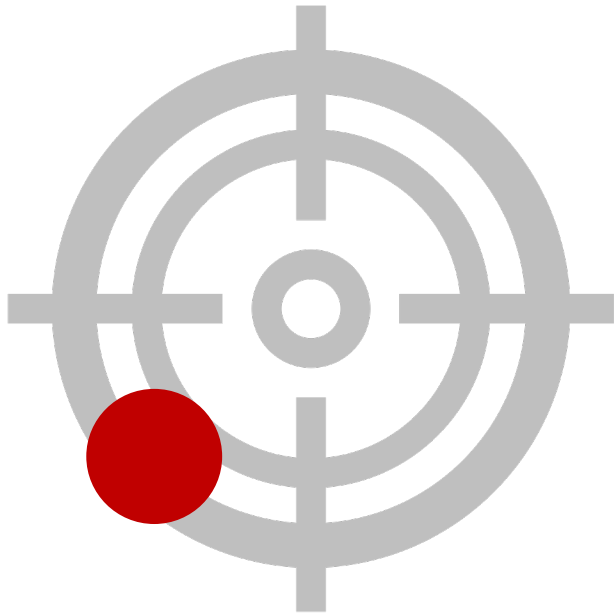
## Awareness

Specialist training helping to avoid pitfalls

## Close-knit team

A team that looks out and supports each other

# What isn't working



## **Reactive not proactive measures**

Stopping challenges before they exist

## **Emotional labour**

An unseen cost in an already demanding role

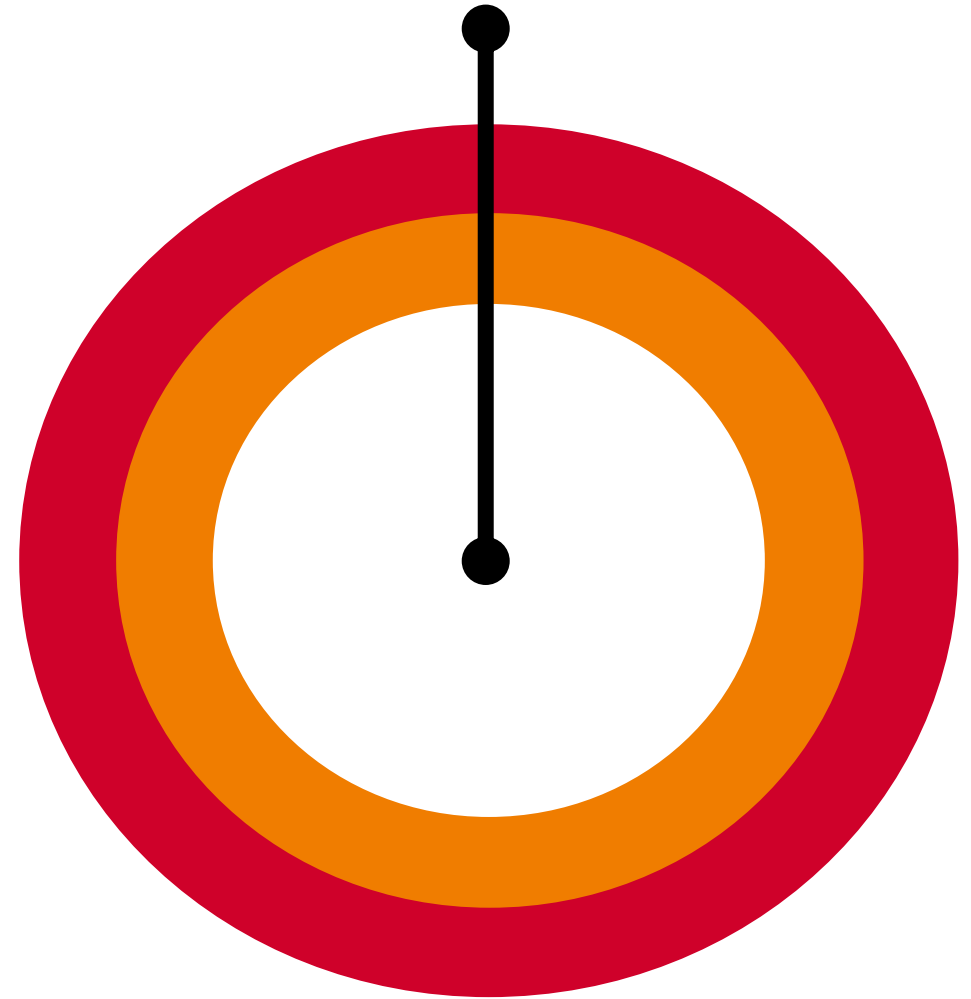
## **Silently persisting**

Not speaking up, and why not?

## **Finding breaks**

Demand for skills preventing opportunities to slow down

**It isn't on a researcher or a team to be resilient,** it is on those making decisions to avoid this need.





# Key learnings

## Keep communications open and transparent

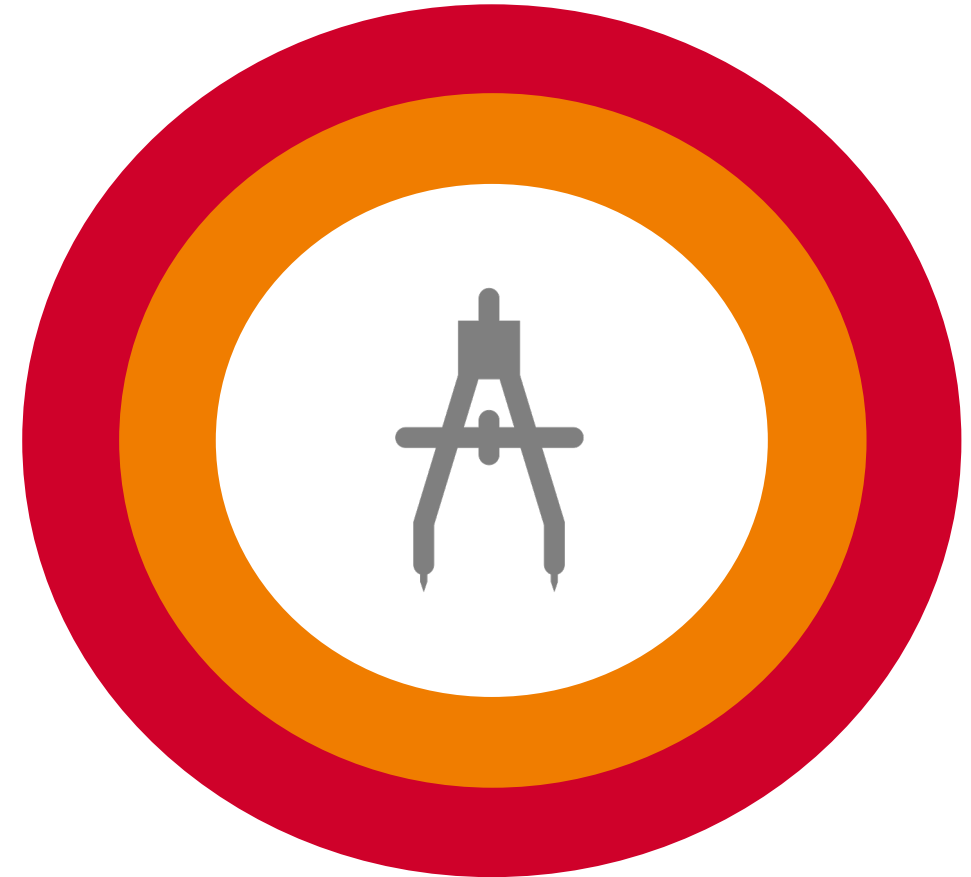
- Provide multiple avenues for communication, be that 1-2-1, group or anonymous feedback
- Make sure communication isn't lateral, it needs to reach decision-makers influencing the work of the researchers
- Clearly outline expectations of the researcher/s in an assignment so they can manage their approach accordingly



# Key learnings

## Scope and resource effectively

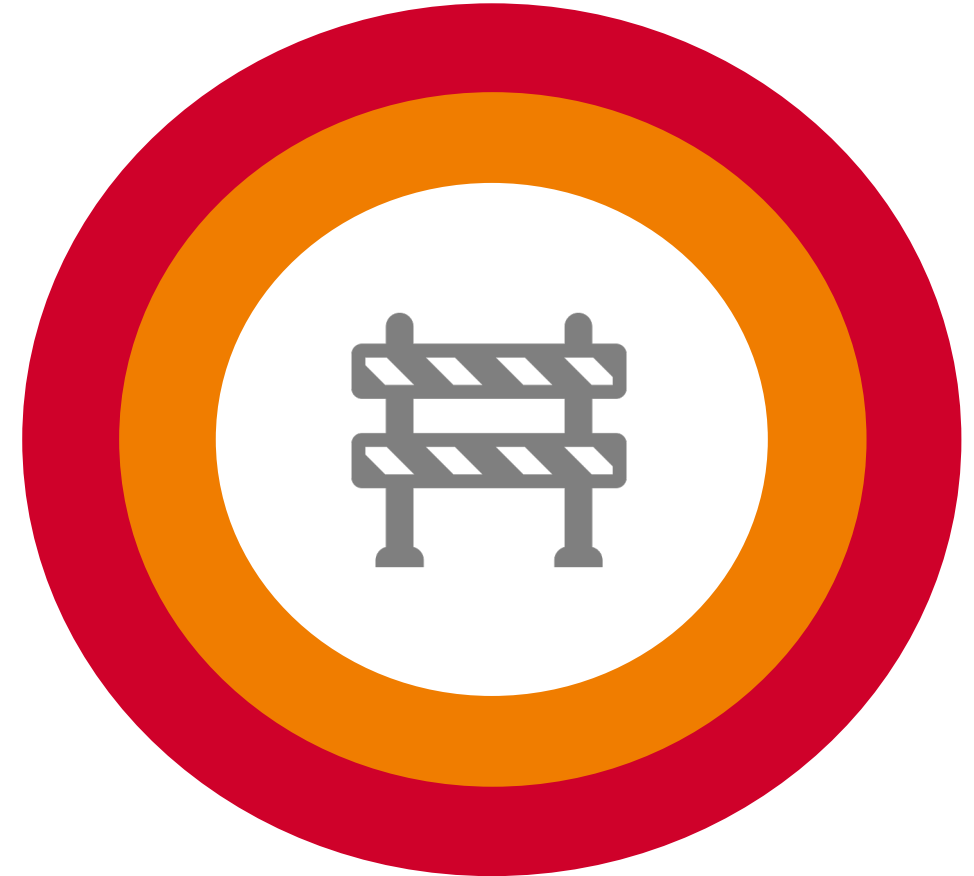
- Give researchers the time to deliver, it shouldn't be on them to shoulder tight timescales
- Keep a track of past projects, hold retrospectives and look at patterns in issues - then respond
- Promote and recognise - bring that experience to the decision table
- Where possible get the team involved in scoping - it can be too far downstream to rectify by the time the researchers begin
- Do not push new projects where capacity is limited



# Key learnings

## Set clear boundaries and don't cross them

- Sometimes good enough, is good enough - we can't always give 110%
- Give people the space to let them do their jobs - which tasks are critical, and which are not
- Respect the individuality of each member
- Ensure that researchers are aware of the autonomy they have over their work - and that this is respected
- Hold firm on time between projects, decompression time and development time



**It isn't on a researcher or a team to be resilient,** it is on those making decisions to avoid this need.



---

# Thank you!

Let's chat! I would love to hear your thoughts  
and discuss this further.



**Brian Moss**

Research Lead

Sopra Steria, Government Consulting

[Brian.moss@soprasteria.com](mailto:Brian.moss@soprasteria.com)