

Reflections on Reflective Practice

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Introduction

This table top discussion will explore what we mean by reflective practice, how do we encourage it and how to do we evidence it in our practice? The discussion will focus on a number of ways reflective practice can be encouraged and sustained in children's service organisations.

Learning to Change?

- Social work often intervenes with families at points of crisis when they are struggling to manage and often our assessments are weighted towards that struggle.
- To achieve change we need to give weight to how the family manage when they are not in crisis.
- Instead of always learning from our mistakes we need equally to learn from our success.

What is Reflective Practice?

There is substantial literature on reflective practice and critical reflection and the terms can are often used interchangeably. It can used as a learning tool for newly qualified social works; linking practice to theory; it can be used as a supervision or consult tool; or a way to explore the strengths and abilities of our families and our own practice.

So how do we do it Safely?

- By its very nature, critical reflection requires us to dig deeper, challenge ourselves, our assumptions and sometimes our practice.
- We need to avoid getting defensive or disengaged but rather see it as an opportunity.
- That takes skill and a degree of trust in the person facilitating the reflection
- Appreciative enquiry as part of a Signs of Safety framework is a strengths based approach that workers can use in their work with children and families. It is also a model we can use to consider our own thinking and practice

Appreciative Inquiry

“Appreciative Inquiry is a way of looking at ... change that focuses on doing more of what is already working.

So instead of starting with ‘what’s the problem’ and looking for fixes it starts with ‘what’s already working’ and how can we build on that?”

SSSC (2016)

Harnessing the power and potential of questions

“One appreciative inquiry author describes the approach as ‘change at the speed of imagination’ (Watkins and Mohr, 2001). Perhaps the title would be more accurately framed as ‘change at the speed of grounded, detailed and shared attention to best practice’.” (Turnell et al 2017)

“We need to be mindful of the impact being questioned, mentored, ‘helped’ can have (positively or negatively). Take a moment to reflect on the times your help has not been received well. Could it be that your focus drifted from strengths towards criticism, advice or old-fashioned bossiness?” (Aldrige, 2017)

Appreciative Inquiry Guide

1. Eliciting Questions - e.g. tell me about a time....
2. Amplifying Questions (e.g. who, what, how)
3. Reflection Questions (e.g. what have you learned from this experience, how might you use this learning in the future?)
4. Start Over