

Principal Social Worker's Practice and Learning Bulletin

December 2021



Welcome to December's Edition of the Practice and Learning Bulletin

Our Practice Focus for this month is Motivational Interviewing, which can also be referred to as Motivational Conversations.

The following articles are also included -

- Developing Cultural Competence
- What does Good Performance Mean?
- Learning from internal Complaints



As usual there is lots of training available - book a date!

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A LITTLE PROGRESS
EACH DAY ADDS UP
TO BIG RESULTS.



As always please let me know if you want to see something in the bulletin or want to contribute.

Best wishes

Traci Taylor

Principal Social Worker/Service Manager

Motivational Interviewing

What is Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a process of communication that is used as part of conversations for change; it is often also called **Motivational Conversations** which does fit in better with how we practice if you think about this in the context of **The Bradford Practice Model**, which is promotes building relationships and being strength based in our practice.

It is a particularly useful approach when people are ambivalent to the change; ambivalence is a state of mind when an individual has conflicting feelings about something. When difficult changes are needed ambivalence is a normal part of the change process. It is important to remember this in our day to day work as we often expect people, particularly young people and parents to make significant changes and often quick changes without really considering the process of change and how to assist with those changes.

This person-centered approach helps individuals to explore how they feel about the change through the following process known as the OARS process

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS: Encourages thinking by asking relevant questions that allow the individual to explore their views and feelings about the change. Avoid using WHY questions as this can lead to a defensive position and is not conducive to open supportive conversations.

An example of changing a closed question in to an open one: “**Do you have anyone that supports you with the children?**” Vs “**Tell me about who supports you with the children?**”

AFFIRMATION: These are strength based acknowledgments of things that are going well. Pointing out what individuals do well is a way of building confidence and a feeling of value and worth. It is really important that we do not just focus on the things that are wrong, a concern, or need to change but that we balance this with the things that are positive.

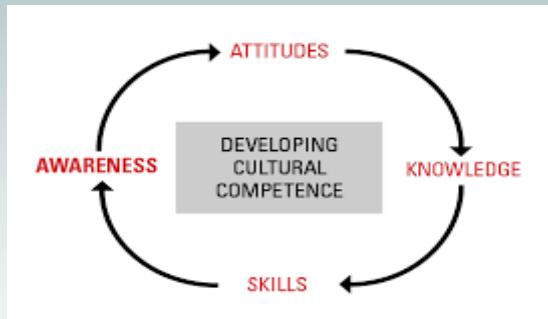
REFLECTION: When we are having conversations, one way of showing that we have listened is to reflect back what we have heard, what was said or meant. This is said back using different words; “**If I understand you correctly, it sounds like...**”

SUMMARY: Summaries provide an additional way to help guide the conversation (toward change talk) while making sure you've heard and understand what has been said; it shows that you have been interested and really heard. “So, what you have told me is that is that right?”

Learning for improving practice

cultural
competence

What is cultural competence and what does this mean in practice?



Cultural competence is the ability to create and interact with other individuals or groups who are different in some way to you. This is, at times, mistakenly taken to mean from different ethnic groups but, it refers to any difference including socio-economic backgrounds too.

In a global world of difference it is really important that we all develop skills in cultural competence; think about the city we live and work in and the diversity all around us. In our work with children, young people and adults, and each other we need to ensure that we assess/look at our own cultural competent skills. If those from a different culture from ours do not feel that we have those skills they will not feel valued or respected. Think about how this all links into our model of practice which is based in developing relationships with others to influence positive changes.

So, what does cultural competence look like in practice?

- **Practice openness:** by demonstrating acceptance of difference.
- **Be flexible:** by demonstrating acceptance of more than one interpretation.
- **Demonstrate humility:** through suspension of judgment and the ability to learn.
- **Be sensitive to others:** by appreciating cultural differences.
- **Show a spirit of adventure:** by showing curiosity and seeing opportunities in different situations (we would describe this as professional curiosity in our work).
- **Use a sense of humour:** through the ability to laugh at ourselves.
- **Practice positive change or action** by demonstrating a successful interaction with the identified culture.

There is some training in Evolve that will help you to develop cultural competence and we will be exploring this in a workshop in 2022. The e-learning '**'Unconscious Bias**' is a really good starting point; all of us would like to say we are culturally competent, this e-learning explains how the brain works and processes information in a way that we form immediate judgements based on how someone looks or sounds, but also explains how we can address that so that we are actively avoiding our own bias. This is part of our mandatory training so please ensure that you have completed this.



EQUALS



In my role as the Principal Social Worker, I complete exit interviews for practitioners leaving the authority. I frequently hear concerns expressed in those interviews that Bradford is a "tick box organisation and children are not at the heart". I also hear this said from lots of different sources. However, I want to turn this on its head and hopefully link how performance actually is designed to be child focused as it is our evidence that a child or young person is getting the right service from us, at the right time, based on an assessment of their needs.

If we used child focused language this would lead to a better understanding of why we look at performance and would lead to us always linking what we do, or don't do always making a difference to a child or young person. For example, instead of saying "I am worried about your performance figures this week" saying what is meant would be more meaningful, "I am worried that some of the children have not had a good service this week, can we talk about this?".

The word performance seems to have negative connotations when actually we can use more positive language to change this perception, "your performance figures for your visits shows that you have seen all of your children this week" because this is what we mean by this performance indicator.

Demonstrating Empathy: putting yourself in the families shoes we work with.

Assessments completed on time mean children and families get the right service from us at the right time.

If someone was assessing you, your child or a family member for something and that service or support could not be in place until the assessment was completed you could be left frustrated and angry or upset if this was not done in a timely way. In fact we are more likely to complain about this. This is exactly the same for our families who can be left without the right intervention for long periods of time.

Plans completed on time mean that children and families have a clear plan of action; they understand what needs to happen and how it is going to happen; who is doing what and when

If someone told you that you had to make some big changes but you would be helped to do it - you would want to know what needed to change, how you would be supported to make the changes and who was going to do what by when.

Visits completed on time mean that we can be more confident that children are being seen regularly and are safe; we are confident that we know what is happening to them and families know they have the right support

The above does not seek to criticise anybody, everyone wants to do the best for the children and young people that they are working with and everyone is very busy. However, what I wanted to do is to highlight the meaning of performance when this is being discussed, to change the narrative and understanding.

Our Practice Model underpins all of our work by:

- **A commitment to delivering high quality children's services that are effective and have a positive impact on children, young people and families lives in Bradford.**
- **A vision to ensure that children are given the best start in life to be safe, healthy, happy and resilient.**

- An aim to consistently deliver services with care and compassion to strengthen families through a positive working relationship
- A mission to always put children at the heart of all that we do.



You are supported in practice to provide a good service to families through -

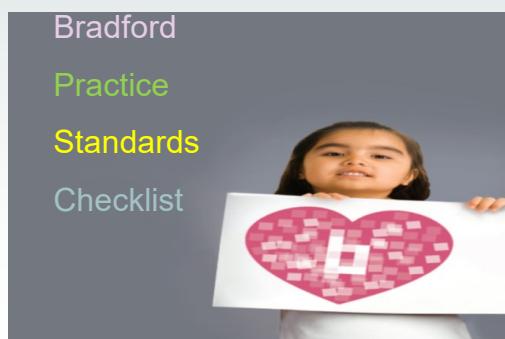
Skills - Training and development

Knowledge - Practice Guidance, research, lessons learnt

Process - Practice Standards, Policies

Values and Ethics - wanting to do a good job, building

Relationships with others, cultural competence.



We have a practice standards checklist so that:

We have a consistent approach to work with children, young people and families.

Everyone knows what is expected of them, by setting this out clearly.

It is your responsibility to be aware of the contents of the guidance and/or to access this if you are unsure; the practice standards can be found in Tri-x

Performance conversations should be child focused and thinking about the difference that our work is making to that child or young person.



LEARNING FROM



As part of our ongoing development as a service to children it is really important that we learn from the outcomes of compliments, complaints, audits etc. as that is a measure of our practice.

This month we have learning from two separate complaint outcomes to consider from investigations into complaints made about our services or practice.

Complaint 1—this was a Stage 2 complaint outcome.

The Importance of Inductions: As a learning point for Children's Social Care, it should be ensured that all workers, including agency staff, receive the recommended training to deal with families who may not have had experience of Children's Social Care and that they fully explain the relevant processes and seek to build and maintain an effective relationship with families.

Our induction process introduces our Model of Practice which underpins all of our work with our children, young people and families. The model emphasises relationship building and working in partnership together. This includes, explaining why we may be working with a family and what this means, explaining what will happen, and what process we follow. Keeping people informed and sharing information shows that people are valued and respected.

The second learning point from this complaint investigation is for managers who complete complaints:

Completing the Investigation Fully: When a complaint has been made about a worker or workers who have left the authority to the investigating manager dealing with the Stage 1 complaint should try to make contact with the worker who has left in order to complete the investigation; it is important to record the attempts made in case the complaint escalates into Stage 2.

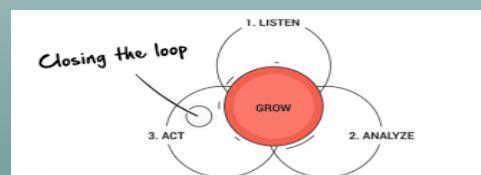
Complaint 2 - this was also the outcome from a Stage 2 investigation.

Providing Minutes to Individuals/Families: The recommendation from this complaint was to ensure that all minutes are provided in the agreed timescales.

We have Practice Standards that outline the expectations of practice; it is really important that we do the things that we say we will do when they should be done. This especially important as we have SMART plans in place for children where we hold parents/carers accountable for things that they have not done when they said they would. Additionally, if we go back to our Practice Model, building relationships means being open, honest and reliable.

Learning and taking action from the recommendations of complaints is closing the loop

(or evidencing how and what we have learnt).





Please see the training available this month

December Practice Focus – Motivational Interviewing

Available to book on Evolve – dates as follows:

- Thursday 02 December 9.00 – 11.00am
- Tuesday 07 December 9.00 – 11.00am
- Monday 13 December 3.00 – 5.00pm
- Monday 20 December 9.00 – 11.00am
- Wednesday 12 January 9.00 – 11.00am
- Tuesday 18 January 9.00 – 11.00am
- Thursday 20 January 3.00 – 5.00pm
- Wednesday 26 January 09.00 – 11.00am



DECEMBER Induction: For all new staff in Children's Social Care Service – bookable on Evolve

Day 1 - Wednesday 1 December 9.30am – 4.30pm

Day 2 – Wednesday 8 December 9.30am – 3.00pm

Day 3 – Wednesday 15 December 9.30am – 3.00pm



JANUARY Induction :

Day 1 - Wednesday 5 January 9.30am – 4.30pm

Day 2 – Wednesday 12 January 9.30am – 3.00pm

Day 3 – Wednesday 19 January 9.30am – 3.00pm

For anyone who has missed sessions or want to refresh, they can book the following courses on Evolve:

- The Bradford Practice Model/Signs of Safety Approach – Wednesday 1 December 10.00 – 11.30am
- Voice of the Child - Wednesday 1 December 1.30 – 3.00pm
- Section 47 and Strategy Discussions – Wednesday 8 December 09.30 – 11.15am
- Life Story Work - Wednesday 15 December 1.30 – 3.00pm

We are also repeating some sessions of the October Practice Focus: '**Working with Men**' and the November Practice Focus: '**Professional Curiosity**'. Dates are on Evolve

Early Help Modules covering **Assessments and SMART planning and Team Around the Family** are available and the **Court Skills Training** continues throughout December including modules on **Care Plans, Court Statements, Permanency Planning and Assessment Planning in Court Proceedings**.

Please also consider the full day **Infant Mental Health Workshop** delivered by Little Minds Matter on **12 December** and the two-day **Adoption Law and Practice Training** by One Adoption on **15 and 16 December** – all bookable on Evolve.



Research in Practice workshops are also bookable on Evolve:

Neglect and Poverty Aware Practice is running 3 times at 10.00, 13.00 and 15.00 on **Thursday 2 December** with 12 places at each session.

RiP are also offering some additional seminars – we only have 4 places on each one, so these will go quickly. Colleagues need to register with RiP to book these courses:

- [Social Work Organisational Resilience Diagnostic \(SWORD\) and learning from the pandemic \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](#)
- [The social gradient in children's social care: what it is and what to do about it \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](#)
- [Understanding suicide and homicide risk in family carers \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](#)
- [Life story work: making life story books and explaining difficult stories \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](#)
- [An introduction to the Power Threat Meaning framework \(researchinpractice.org.uk\)](#)

Training for Managers and Practice Supervisors

The **Managing Our Performance** training is available on teams on **8th December** and the **Manager's Practice Focus** for December is **Courageous Conversations** - the dates for this will be added to Evolve shortly.



If you have not already done so please set up your learning accounts with the following; both are excellent sources of information, resources and webinars. There is training that you can book on also.

Research in Practice: www.researchinpractice.org.uk

Children's Social Work Matters: www.childrenssocialworkmatters.org

Finally, as a learning organisation feedback is really important to us to make sure that we are getting things right. Please have your say about the training and development being offered via your evaluation forms as we are using this feedback to adapt our workshops.

Thank you to everyone who has sent responses, feedback and suggestions for Practice and Learning Bulletins. Keep them coming in

For those of you who are celebrating Christmas have a lovely time.



If anyone wants to contribute an article to the next bulletin, or indeed future ones, please let me know at traci.taylor@bradford.gov.uk

