
INTRODUCING RETHINK FORMULATION

A restorative and relational way of thinking about the families we work with

Newcastle has partnered with Leeds City Council and the DfE's Strengthening Families Protecting Children Programme to embed relational and restorative practice as our approach to our work with children, young people and their families. Rethink Formulation is a key component of the restorative and relational approach in practice and it is through collaboration with Leeds that these documents and practice guides have been developed. These documents are for anyone who works with babies, children, young people and their families.



RETHINK FORMULATION

Understanding the needs and experiences of children, young people and families to inform our practice.

Rethink Formulation uses an evidence based model of case formulation to help us organise information and structure our conversations to reach a shared understanding from which to base our plans. Research has shown that many young people and their families experience repeated contact with services.

‘Rethinking’ how we work with such cases, with a shared language and deeper analysis, helps us understand why progress isn’t maintained and guides us towards more effective interventions and sustainable outcomes.

WHY RETHINK FORMULATION

When working with families, services can get into a pattern of assessments and short term interventions that end when there have been improvements. However, families often need help again.

If we can understand better why previous interventions didn't sustain positive change, we can avoid trying similar interventions again, which can result in the risk of families disengaging if these don't work.

We want to try a new way of thinking, giving practitioners across services the time, space and tools to thoroughly and robustly work with families to analyse the information we already have about their circumstances, and to focus on addressing the presenting issues, rather than past ones.

Rethink Formulation provides a consistent and clear model for developing a shared understanding of a family and their presenting issues. As well as supporting practitioners to become more aligned and have a deeper understanding of where and why we become 'stuck' with cases.

This formulation can travel with the family into different services, and should reduce the number of assessments they have by providing an effective way to analyse the information we already have about their strengths and needs, as well as the role, influence and impact of the professionals working with them.

Rethinking what we know about a family, and what we then do with that knowledge, is key to working with that family in a restorative and sustainable way.



LET'S TALK THEORY!

What is the thinking behind rethink?

It is intended that working restoratively with families through the use of the Rethink Formulation, leads to **improved analysis of the presenting issues** and shared understanding between practitioners and families.

As a consequence, **families feel listened to, respected.**

This **improves our understanding of a families engagement** with services and supports us to promote an investment from everyone in shared solutions.

Co-creating goals for intervention **helps families to feel part of the decision making process**, taking on more responsibility and increasing their ownership of the outcomes of support.

The goal is to work together to achieve outcomes where families are managing their lives effectively and **reduce involvement from services** which ultimately, reduces the pressure on resources and reduces costs.



THE SIX P'S

Presenting issues – What is happening right now that is causing concern?

Precipitating issues – what happens / has happened that triggers the presenting issues?

Predictive factors – what is likely to happen if presenting issues not addressed effectively?

Pre-disposing factors – what challenges / adverse experiences family faced (current/past)?

Perpetuating factors – what factors are maintaining the presenting issues?

Protective Factors – strengths & positive factors are there to use to impact of current situation?

Using the 6P's we can support each other to really rethink and understand the challenges and issues a family are facing and how this impacts what we see, hear and experience when working alongside them. The 6Ps are a way of thinking about the information we have in a way that supports us to see the bigger picture.

The 6P's help us as practitioners to reflect on what we know in terms of a families strengths and the presenting issues but also act as an opportunity to challenge ourselves to explore what we don't know and what we need to know more about to move things forward and support progress for the family.

Using the 6Ps as a way of talking with families and each other, supports us to form a deeper understanding of what is happening right now.



SO HOW DOES RETHINK WORK?

Formulation can be used in many different contexts. To undertake a formulation you can meet as a care team or core group or Team around the child/ Family. You can also formulate on your own, or with a peer as a reflective exercise or way to think about a family you are working with and question or unpick a presenting issue. You cannot get Formulation wrong and we would encourage you to have a go with peers and colleagues! There is a formulation template we have put together with a Practice Guide to help you get started. Someone will need to lead on sharing information about the family to begin to populate the template and if you are doing this in a small group everyone can should support the formulation by asking questions and considering hypothesis as to why things are the way they are and what we might need to explore or gain a better understanding of.

The systematic unpacking of different factors families are presenting with or experiencing using the 6 P's in formulation, helps to prevent leaping to a 'solution' or 'intervention', before the steps required to achieve change are clearly understood and agreed.

