**Key questions for multidisciplinary teams**

**Methods**

Suitable for self–directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

Learning Outcome

Review your understanding of multidisciplinary working and identify actions that can improve its effectiveness.

**Time Required**

Two sessions of 45 minutes

**Process**

Thinking of current multidisciplinary team working, answer the following questions:

* Who are the other key professionals who contribute to the health and well-being of the child?
* What roles do they have?
  + How can their skills and input be put to best use in the multidisciplinary team?
* What tensions exist between these roles?
  + What impact do these tensions have on the child, the team and the outcomes that can be achieved?
* Reflect on a situation where there was confusion over someone’s role or responsibility: why did this happen and what could have been done to prevent it from happening?
* How can you ensure that others are clear about what you can and can’t do?
* Foster carers and adopters are rightly considered to be core members of the team (DCSF, 2010).
  + How might perceived differences in professional status impact on team decisions and information sharing?
  + Is some knowledge more valid than others? (Finlay, 2000 in Stone and Rixon 2008). If so, what is that based on?
* Issues around contact (Neil, 2010) and delegated authority are often areas of conflict between carers, social workers and birth parents.
  + How can you ensure that every perspective is considered with the best interests of the child guiding the decision making?
* Who brings or represents the child’s voice?
* What conflicts might occur depending on who represents the child or interprets their views?

**Key questions for the child’s and family’s social worker**

**Methods**

Suitable for self–directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

Learning Outcome

Review communication between the multidisciplinary team and identify actions to improve it.

**Time Required**

30 minutes

**Process**

Thinking of a child you work with, answer the following questions:

* How can you ensure that the child’s IRO and foster carer get all the information they need to do their job?
* Foster carers often say they do not get the feedback they need from social workers to support the child after a contact visit (focus group discussion RiP/AfC and TACT for DfE Fostering and Adoption project November 2013).
  + Why might this happen and what steps could be taken to improve this?

**Key questions for IROs**

**Methods**

Suitable for self–directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

Learning Outcome

Review how the IRO can maintain independence and manage tensions across the multidisciplinary team.

**Time Required**

30 minutes

**Process**

*IROs are part of the team of professionals working around every child in care, seeking with other team members to promote the welfare of that child. However, IROs are in certain important respects, independent of that team and have particular duties and powers arising from that independence* (NAIRO, 2013).

* How can IROs maintain their independence?
* What are the tensions between the different roles/perspectives?
* How can these be managed?

**Key questions for foster carers and adopters**

**Methods**

Suitable for self–directed learning or small group discussion.

Learning Outcome

Review your understanding of how multidisciplinary groups work and communicate.

**Time Required**

30 minutes

**Process**

Thinking of the members of the multidisciplinary team you meet, answer the following questions:

* Who are the other key professionals who contribute to the health and well-being of the child?
* What roles do they have?
* Who brings or represents the child’s voice?

**Active Listening to promote communication and multidisciplinary working**

**Methods**

Suitable for work in groups of three, within a team or as a facilitated exercise in a workshop.

**Learning Outcome**

To support the development of skills in active listening.

**Time Required**

60 minutes (15 minutes to read the summary and 45 minutes practice and feedback).

**Process**

* Split into groups of three and read the summary on active listening.
* Each group practices active listening by:
  + One person talks about a piece of work they are doing for 10 minutes.
  + One person actively listens and uses verbal and non-verbal techniques in response.
  + The third person focuses on the listener and makes notes about what they observe and hear.
* 5 minutes feedback to be provided by the observer and then swap roles so each person has a go.

**Active listening summary**

Active Listening uses:

**Non Verbal techniques**

* Silence
* Nods
* Facial expression
* Appropriate eye contact
* Body language

**Encouraging and Eliciting Techniques**

* Tone of voice
* Minimal encouragements “uh-huh” “go on “ “I see”
* Door Openers “I’d like to her more “ “Tell me about that”
* Closed questions “Do you like your teacher?”
* Open Questions “How did you respond?” “What happened next?”

**Reflective responses for example**

* “You are angry about the visit being cancelled; I would be upset too”
* “You feel uncomfortable when we talk about your family”

**Summarisation**

* “Here’s what I think you said….”
* “So because this happened you thought …..”

Active listening isn’t - agreeing, giving permission, giving advice or jumping in. Don’t be afraid of silence.

**Working as a team to support a child**

**Methods**

Suitable for self-directed learning or a facilitated group discussion between key members of a group with responsibility for a child.

**Learning Outcome**

To support effective multidisciplinary working.

**Time Required**

45 minutes.

**Process**

Consider a child you are working with and reflect on the effectiveness or otherwise of how the multidisciplinary group around the child is carrying out its roles and responsibilities. Use the questions below to guide your reflection.

Or

Bring together key members of the group and collectively discuss the effectiveness of co-working. Use the questions below to guide the discussion. Use a facilitator if an outside perspective to support the group process is indicated.

John Adair (1987) describes groups as having three types of needs:

* The task - the thing to be accomplished.
* The maintenance of the group - the need to maintain working relationships.
* The individual needs of each member.

**Task**

* Who are the key members of your group? (e.g. foster carer, social worker, supervising social worker etc.)
* Describe the overall task of your group and the sub-tasks?
* Is everyone clear about their roles and responsibilities?

**Maintenance**

* How does your group maintain relationships with each other?
* What interpersonal skills are needed?
* What is in place to assist day to day communication?
* Can members challenge each other?
* Who gets the final say?
* What would make working relationships better?

**Individual needs**

* Are individual needs getting met?
* What do individuals find supportive or difficult?
* Do individual needs get met at the expense of the group?
* Is someone feeling they aren’t being heard or that they don’t have a say?

**Promoting Positive Partnership Working**

**Methods**

Suitable for self-directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

**Learning Outcome**

To explore and overcome barriers to effective partnership working.

**Time Required**

30 minutes.

**Process**

Reflect on a child in placement where you have a role.

* Identify existing or potential areas of tension, role confusion or conflict in your partnership working on the table below (not all will be relevant)
* Write down what is already in place or is needed to promote positive partnership working?
* What actions can you take?

You can record your ideas in the table.

| **Roles** | **Key tasks** | **Areas of tension, role confusion or conflict** | **What is in place or needs to be in place to promote positive partnership working?** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Child’s social worker (CSW)** | Collecting and analysing information, monitoring progress, plans and well-being of child; working with the birth family. |  |  |
| **Supervising Social Worker (SSW)** | Supporting the carer practically and emotionally; offering guidance, training and supervision so that they can provide the best quality of care possible. |  |  |
| **Foster Carer** | Providing safe therapeutic care for children who are not able to live with their birth families. |  |  |
| **Adoptive Parent** | Providing a permanent family and lifetime commitment to children whose legal ties to their birth family have been terminated /acknowledging and nurturing the connections the child has to their birth family. |  |  |
| **Social Work Manager (SWM)** | Quality assuring the work of the social work team, acknowledging the contribution of all those involved in the team around the child, managing workloads and systemic processes to enable social workers to achieve a high standard of work. |  |  |
| **Independent Reviewing Office**r **(IRO)** | Chairing meetings of the team around the child, consulting with the child and their family, protecting and monitoring the child’s interests throughout the care planning process; challenging the local authority when plans are not responding to children’s needs. |  |  |
| **Birth Family** | Supporting the child, making changes to facilitate reunification or support placement. |  |  |

**Working together to facilitate positive reunion contact**

**Methods**

Suitable for a facilitated workshop**.** Case study with small group exercise, work in pairs and large group feedback

**Preparation**

Hand-out with Dillon’s case study. Hand-out with questions to consider in pairs

**Time Required**

60 minutes

**Learning Outcome**

To explore contact from the perspective of others.

**Process**

1. Divide the group into two for the first task. Provide Dillon’s case study as a hand-out.

Group1 - consider the case study from the point of view of Dillon’s new social worker

Group 2 - consider the case study from the point of view of the supervising social worker

Each group spends 20 minutes discussing the case and considering the key issues they want to raise with the professional from the other group.

1. Pair up a member from one group with one from the other; resulting in pairs taking on the roles of social worker and supervising social worker in the next task.

The pairs should spend 20 minutes discussing key issues from their role’s perspective and draw up an action plan for positive reunion contact, taking account of the following questions:-

* Have you considered all the factors to ensure the contact arrangements will meet Dillon’s needs?
* What other information /advice do you need to make a decision /plan and how will you get that?
* What research can you draw on to help?
* Who will support his birth mother, Dillon and the foster carers?
* What support will they need?
* Discuss your respective anxieties about the contact.
* Do you agree on the purpose of the contact?
* Are there any information sharing issues and how can these be managed?
* What tasks will you take away with you in your role?
* In what ways have you kept Dillon’s needs central to your thinking?

1. When they have been working together for 20 minutes give them this piece of new information and allow for a further 5 minute discussion to consider how it impacts on planning and decision-making.

*“The school has said that Dillon has been quite distressed recently and has been using the Makaton sign for mum quite a lot. The classroom assistant who knows Dillon well, is not enthusiastic about the contact and agrees with the foster carers that this will be an unsettling experience for Dillon”*

1. Allow for 15 minutes feedback to the wider group

Below are some prompts for you to use during the feedback session:

* What were the key differences between reviewing Dillon’s needs from one perspective (part 1) and reviewing them from the social worker’s and supervising social worker’s point of view (part 2)?
* Any areas of disagreement, how did you resolve them?
* How did you allocate tasks?
* What makes working relationships easier?