

Audience Groups 1-8 (Working Together 2010)

Methods Case studies; small group activity; large group feedback

Preparation

You will need to ensure that all participants have access to the Henderson/Miller/Taylor family case study. You may want to include some of the family members' own stories – or you could play them some of the audio versions of the family member's stories.

- F2.0 Henderson/Miller/Taylor family case study
- F2.1 Claire's story
- F2.2 Darren's story
- F2.3 Michelle's story
- F2.4 Troy's story
- F2.5 Susan's story
- M2.1 Claire's story
- M2.2 Darren's story
- M2.3 Michelle's story
- M2.4 Troy's story
- M2.5 Susan's story

Links to Common Core

Common Core 1 Effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers (skills: listening and building empathy). Build open and honest relationships by respecting children, young people, parents and carers and making them feel valued as partners.

Common Core 1 Effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers (skills: listening and building empathy). Hold conversations at the appropriate time and place, understanding.

Common Core 2 Child and young person development (skills: empathy and understanding). Demonstrate your commitment to reaching a shared understanding with a child, young person, parent or carer by talking and listening effectively; make sensitive judgments about what is being said and what is meant by what is being said.

Childhood Neglect: Improving Outcomes for Children

Learning Outcomes

To overcome factors that impede assessment, analysis and planning.

Process

This exercise is about reflecting on how we talk with parents and carers, and the extent to which 'official' language may be alienating or confusing.

Part 1

Ask participants to work in small groups of 3-4 and to read the Henderson/Miller/Taylor family case study and individual family members' stories and discuss the following:

- Do you have concerns about the children? If so, write these down.
- From your notes, 'quick think' all the words that might be considered as professional 'jargon' when sharing concerns about children with their parents/carers.

Bring the groups back together to compile a 'whole group' list. Try to clarify what the words/terms mean within the group.

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Time

Total : 1 hour

Part 1 45 minutes

Part 2 15 minutes

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Process Continued ▾

Below are examples of how words, commonly used in child welfare discussions with parents were understood by a group of service users:

- Voluntary agencies:** people with no experience, volunteers
- Maintain:** mixed up with maintenance, money paid for children in divorce settlements
- Sensitive:** tender and sore
- Agencies:** second hand clothes shops
- Common:** cheap and nasty
- Eligibility:** a good marriage catch
- Allocation process:** being offered housing
- Gender:** most did not know this word
- Criteria:** most did not know this word
- Advocacy:** some thought this word meant that if they did not agree with the assessment they would have to go to court.

(Social Services Inspectorate 1991, p20)

Part 2

Ask the whole group to undertake a 'quick think' about what questions the parents in the Henderson/Miller/Taylor family would be likely to ask.

Ask them to return to their small groups and consider how they might respond clearly and honestly to these questions avoiding the use of jargon.

In the large group discussion it will be helpful to encourage participants to reflect upon the extent to which 'official' jargon and language is used and the extent to which it can create a distance from service users. For example, do participants always double-check with parents and families the extent they have understood discussions or outcomes from assessments. Do local information sheets explain terms such as 'assessment'? Perhaps professionals can 'hide' behind the language of their agency or profession to avoid facing up to difficult issues with families, for example. If you have a mix of professions it would be very helpful to ask them to be open about the jargon each distinct profession uses that may not be understood by others.

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