

Exercise

This exercise aims to reflect on how we work with children and families. There are three parts to this exercise.

Part 1 - Discuss your approaches to partnership working

In a large group, discuss the distinction between working purposeful relationships that are based on honest communication about the nature of the concerns and those where there is a superficially good relationship but at the cost of raising the issues of their concern. In other words, a relationship with parents cannot be preserved at the cost of addressing the key issues of neglect of their children.

Part 2 - Consider the Henderson/Miller/Taylor family

In groups of 3, think about the Henderson/Miller/Taylor family and consider the following questions:

- a. What approach to partnership would you be aiming for all members of the family and why?
- b. How might you try to achieve this?
- c. What skills might be involved?
- d. What might make this difficult:
 - For the children and young people?
 - For the parents?
 - For wider family members?
 - For the practitioner?
- e. In what way might organisational issues help or hinder partnership working with this family?

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Part 3 - Practising different approaches

In your same groups, decide who will role play the social worker and Claire. The third person is the observer.

Initiate a discussion in the following three styles – start with the punitive approach and see how Claire is likely to react to the opening statement by the social worker. Move on to the laid back approach and finally the authoritative approach to see which approach is most successful in engaging Claire/Darren and how this impacts upon their likely response.

Use your imagination and respond based upon your feelings at being spoken to in either the punitive, laid back or authoritative way.

a. Start of discussion – Punitive approach

Social Worker - Claire, I have called round to tell you that I am not happy with the way things are going at the moment. Your care of the children has gone from bad to worse and I have no option but to take action here, you are not doing your job as a parent and if things don't improve, there will be serious consequences ...

Claire - What are you talking about! I can't believe that you are saying all this...If you are going down that road I want Darren to be with me...he won't take this lying down...

b. Start of discussion – Laid back, ineffective approach

Social Worker - I was out and about on the estate, so I thought I'd call in to see how things are going. I thought that we could have a cuppa and a catch up – are you putting the kettle on and you can tell me how you've been getting on?

Claire - well I wasn't expecting you and I was just about to go out...but ok, I can spare half an hour...

c. Start of discussion – Authoritative approach

Social Worker - Hi Clare and Darren, thank you for making the time to see me this morning. As you know we have been working together for a while now, and based upon what I have seen, what you have told me and information from other agencies – I have concerns about the care of Michelle, Troy, Susan and Ryan and I would like to spend some time with you talking through what my concerns are and what plans we can put in place to support you as parents and to enable you to improve your care of the children...

Claire - This sounds serious...what is it exactly that you are concerned about?
...we know that there have been some problems...what kind of support can you offer us?