SWORD workbook:

KFP 3 Learning Organisation Tasks

Box 3.1: 'Using the iceberg model to support reflective leadership and practice'

Do you ever wonder why you (or others) have reached a standpoint on a key issue and become stuck? When colleagues are intransigent, do you see them as stubborn? Or do you seek to understand the reasons that might underpin their behaviour? The iceberg model can help an individual or group detect the 'mental models' and patterns of behaviour that underlie a particular interpretation of an event.

Drawing on Freud's theory of the human mind, the model recognises that the larger part of what we believe is hidden under the surface, yet that is what helps us understand ourselves and those we work with more effectively. Just like an iceberg, what we see on the surface is only an event or behaviour. But identifying what lies beneath can only be accomplished when practitioners feel safe, and leaders have the emotional literacy to engage in honest, reflective conversations.

> words
> behaviours
> gestures

> experiences
> beliefs
> values
> biases
> prejudices
> fears

Research in Practice has an excellent range of resources, and a summary of research evidence, to support critical thinking and reflective analysis in both group and one-to-one supervision sessions. These will help practitioners explore beneath the surface and help develop organisational, team and individual resilience. The tools are available **here**.

Box 3.2: Serious Case Reviews: Using positive outcomes to reflect on practice

Recent research by Forrester and colleagues (2019) explored the relationship between key social work skills and outcomes in child and family work. They asked social workers how they recognise what 'good' looks like. Responses highlighted the importance of the use of good authority and relationship-building skills, as well as having the space to reflect on how they might be enhanced.

Similarly, social work with adults is increasingly moving toward a strengths-based approach, which has a focus on relationship-building. Practitioners work in a person-centred way to engage people with care and support needs in identifying their personal skills and assets, which can inform the way in which care is accessed. Good practice is collaborative and facilitates maximum independence for people receiving care and support (Department of Health, 2017).

Bexley Council have introduced the idea of Serious Success Reviews to identify the features of good social work practice (as well as what works less well) – see Stevenson (2017) available **here**. This approach is likely to be more effective in ensuring fitness for purpose than simply 'tweaking' an existing process or procedure. Social work leaders and managers could use Appreciative Inquiry (see KFP2 Sense of Appreciation) and other consultative approaches to explore what constitutes good practice in their organisation.

Box 3.3: Critical incident technique

Critical incident analysis is a structured form of learning and reflection. It involves:

Describing a difficult or serious incident that was particularly challenging Suggesting an explanation, given the immediate context

Asking questions to find different explanations for the dilemma, exploring theories, values, assumptions and defensive mechanisms and biases

Considering the implication for future practice.

(adapted from Tripp, 2011)

Box 3.4: How does peer coaching work?

Peer coaching is a relationship in which colleagues pair up as coach and 'coachee' (i.e. the person being coached). This is often, not always, reciprocal.

It draws on intrinsic values and beliefs.

It uses the GROW model as a framework:

> The coachee identifies the GOAL they wish to achieve

> The coach helps them reflect on how REALISTIC the goal is, based on their commitments and the time and resources available

> Both parties work together to help the coachee generate a range of creative OPTIONS for meeting the goal

> The coachee develops the WILL to meet the goal by making an action plan and a commitment to making changes or taking action.

It utilises SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely).

It provides non-evaluative, specific feedback based on an objective observation, or reflecting back what is heard. This gives the coachee the encouragement to move forward.

Box 3.4: How does peer coaching work? (continued)

There are some practical considerations that must be considered when setting up a peer coaching relationship:

Trust between partners is essential, because the process requires self-disclosure.

Partners should be well matched in their working styles and expectations.

Peer coaching can be done face-to-face, via Skype or on the phone. But regular and formal contact (by any of these methods) is essential to ensure the coachee maintains focus on their goals.

Venting is important, but the coach should help the coachee move beyond this to enable them to provide solutions.

The coach needs to keep the conversation on track. It is easy to drift.

Active listening and open/probing questions are required.

Box 3.5: Moving from a problem-focus to a solution-focus in a peer coaching session

Being problem-focused	Being solution-focused
Use the questions below to talk, for about five minutes, about a recent situation that has caused you difficulty. Person A describes the situation. Person B directs the conversation with the following questions.	Use the questions below and talk, for about five minutes, about a problem that you have. When using a solution-focused approach, it is essential to help the coachee 'reframe' their 'intractable' problem into a more manageable one. Use the following questions:
'So, what is the problem?'	'So, how would you like the situation to be?'
'What happened?'	'What will it take to get what you want?'
'What do you think is the cause of the problem?	'What resources do you need?'
'Who is to blame?'	'What resources do you already have?'
'What have you tried in order to fix it?'	'What two small steps could you take to help fix the situation?'
'Why is this still a problem?'	
	'How far have you come already? Are there times when the solution is present, at least partly?'

Box 3.6: An Action Learning Set in action

An Action Learning Set usually comprises between six and eight participants who are committed to meeting on a regular basis to learn from each other in a safe reflective space. The more diverse the participants are, in terms of their background and experience, the better.

Participants take it in turns to be the presenter. This involves describing a situation or problem they face (around 5 minutes).

A period of open reflective questioning follows (around 5-10 minutes) in which the presenter answers openly, honestly and reflectively; no advice is given at this stage.

The group can then spend some time discussing the problem, as they see it, with the presenter merely listening – as if they were a 'fly on the wall' (around 5-10 minutes).

The penultimate stage is where the presenter reflects on the insights gained and the ideas for implementation that have been generated (around 10 minutes).

For the final stage, the whole group discusses the learning gained and helps the presenter to action plan, if that is requested (around 5-10 minutes). Actions are then tried out in the workplace and the group discusses the learning gained next time they meet, with the process repeated.

Box 3.7: Effective questions for action learning

Using reflective open questions is crucial to running a successful Action Learning Set. Here are some examples of questions that can encourage learning.

Questions to identify the issue and the desired outcome

> What are you hoping to achieve?

> What is the difference between how you see things now, and how you would like them to be in future?

> Who might help you accomplish change?

> What obstacles do you anticipate?

Questions to explore below the surface

> What happened? Can you provide an example?

> How did you feel about that?

> What assumptions might you be making?

> What do you think might happen in future?

> How might this decision affect others?

Questions to encourage learning

> What opportunities are there in the situation?

> What would success look like?

> What metaphor could you use to describe the situation?

> What have you tried in the past? Why did/didn't it work?

> Who could you approach for advice and support?

Questions to explore options

> What if …?

> What do you think about …?

> How do you feel about …?

> What would happen if you did nothing?

Questions to identify next steps

> How do you plan to move this forward?

> Where could you get more information?

> What actions are you going to take before the next meeting?

> How can we help you make progress?

Further questions can be found **here**.