

## Partnership Working

### **Implementation of solution oriented meetings as a model for partnership working to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.**

There is a need to ensure that agencies which provide services to children, young people and their families collaborate effectively and actively to involve them in the planning and decision making which often happens around them rather than with them. The use of a solution oriented model for running meetings is a model which can help with this process. A key element of the process is the engagement of children, young people and their families in the planning and preparation before the meeting as well as during the meeting.

Some of the key challenges for partnership working include ensuring that meetings are well run with good planning and clear outcomes. Sloper (2004) suggests that having clear aims, rules and responsibilities in multi-agency working results in partners working together more effectively. Solution oriented meetings provides a structure for the meeting process which ensures a well-defined purpose along with clear responsibilities and rules.

Involving children, young people and their families in a meaningful way in meetings, ensuring they are able to represent their views and to be an active participant in the planning and outcomes is essential. This is an area where we have not always fared so well in our partnership working. We know there is a relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement, Fan and Chen (2010), but parents often feel excluded from involvement in decision making in aspects of their children's education, Hanafin and Lynch (2002). Another area of concern is the extent to which parents know how to speak the language of schooling, John Hattie (2008) and the extent to which we support parents in this.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) stated the right of the child to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account. It also introduced the child's right to information and to freedom of expression. These principles are also reflected in our legislation, most recently in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014.

An important strand of the policy framework enshrined in the 2014 Act is Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). This has a strong focus on listening to children, young people and their families and involving them appropriately in discussions and decisions which affect them. It also demands a more streamlined and coordinated response from practitioners.

Across Inverclyde Council there are some examples of developing practice but there is a need for a coherent model across partners to engage children, young people and their families more effectively in planning and decision making. We need to build on the current practice in Inverclyde Council where children, young people and their families are listened to and able to express their views in meetings.

## References

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