

SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS

AGENCY PROCESSES

Agency Process: Strengths Based/Restorative Justice Focused Practice

Introduction

A Restorative Approach

A restorative approach is a way of working through conflict between people and communities. It places the focus on repairing the harm that has been caused and seeks to include all parties involved. A restorative approach looks to build, maintain and repair relationships while fostering a sense of social responsibility and shared accountability.

A restorative approach should be:

- Voluntary
- Trauma informed and empathic
- Nurturing and supportive
- Curious and patient
- Respectful and non-judgmental
- Transparent and honest
- Done 'with'

Restorative conversations are typically quick and easy conversations when harm is caused that does not require a formal intervention. Restorative language helps shift the focus away from blame and shame to root cause and repair. Restorative language is free from blame and stigma.

Key restorative questions that should be asked are:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done?
- In what way have they been affected?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

A Strengths Approach

Strengths-based practice is a collaborative process between the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets. The term 'strength' refers to different elements that help or enable the individual to deal with challenges in life in general and in meeting their needs and achieving their desired outcomes in particular.

A strengths-based approach is holistic and multidisciplinary and works with the individual to promote their wellbeing.



Figure 1 - Seven Key Principles of Strengths Practice

As shown in Figure 1, there are seven principles of the strengths perspective (Venkat and Abraham, 2015), and these are:

1. People have a number of strengths and have the capacity to continue to learn, grow and change.
2. The focus of intervention is on the strengths and aspirations of clients.
3. The community or social environment is seen as being full of resources.
4. The service provider collaborates with clients.
5. Interventions are based on client self-determination.

6. There is a commitment to empowerment.
7. Problems are seen as the result of interactions between individuals, organisations, or structures rather than deficits within individuals, organisations or structures.

What is the impact on safeguarding adolescents?

Learning to work 'with'

People are happier, more cooperative, and more likely to make longer lasting positive change when they are worked 'with' rather than when things are done 'to' or 'for' them. Therefore, a restorative approach requires a balance of high levels of control/limit setting with high levels of support, as shown through the social discipline window.

It is fundamental that children are supported to consider the impact on others of their actions and behaviour, and where appropriate start repairing some of the harm caused. However, that can only take place once the child is safe from harm, otherwise there is risk of harm to both the child and others.

Use of language by professionals when talking about children

Language used by safeguarding professionals is very important. When completing reports detailing interactions with children and vulnerable adults, the language used needs to be truthful and factual. A certain amount of opinion and hypothesis may be appropriate when considering risk and making decisions in respect of a safeguarding response. However, practitioners need to be mindful of the language they use and be acutely aware that their documents may end up being used in court proceedings.

Appropriate terminology is particularly important when used to discuss children who have been exploited or are at risk of exploitation. Language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or responsible for the crimes that have happened or may happen to them, must be avoided. Language should reflect the presence of coercion and the lack of control children have in abusive or exploitative situations and must recognise the severity of the impact that exploitation has on the child. Victim-blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt. This in turn may prevent the child from disclosing their abuse, through fear of being blamed by professionals. When victim-blaming language is used amongst professionals, there is a risk of normalising and minimising the child's experience, resulting in lack of an appropriate response.

Additional Resources and Information

[Affective statements](#) - Guidance on affective statements as part of restorative practice.

[Restorative language](#) - Guidance on affective statements and restorative language.

[Why me?](#) - Information and resources for schools and young people to introduce the concept of Restorative Justice in the British justice system.

[Use of language by professionals in relation to child exploitation](#) - Briefing document produced by The Children's Society and Victim Support. Can be used by all staff when discussing exploitation of children, escalating intelligence and delivering training.

[Appropriate Language: Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation](#) – Guidance for professionals.

Restorative approaches in schools

[Restorative Justice for Schools](#)

[Restorative Approaches in Schools in the UK](#)

Restorative Circles

[Building Community With Restorative Circles \(Edutopia\)](#)

[Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles](#)

[Restorative Circles: Creating a Safe Environment for Students to Reflect - YouTube](#)

[Restorative approach to conflict](#) - A video introduction.

[Restorative Justice explanation](#) - A video explanation.

Restorative Justice conference training

Email: cs.nominations@hants.gov.uk

Short film

[Do you know what restorative practices are?](#) - This short video was made by young people through the support of Foróige under Donegal ETB's Peace IV funded Restorative Practices project in 2019. It explains this concept in clear and easy to understand terms and shows the benefit of using restorative practices to resolve conflict.

[What is a strengths-based approach? - YouTube](#)

Further reading

Local

[Restorative Justice](#) - Covering Hampshire.

[Hampshire Youth Offending Team](#) - Offer a restorative service to all victims of youth crime.

National

[Restorative Justice Council](#) - Promoting quality restorative practice for everyone.

[Restorative Solutions](#) - Work in partnership with local organisations and police forces across the country to reduce harm caused by conflict and to heal communities.

[Why me?](#) – Restorative Justice charity.

[AIM project](#) - Working with harmful sexual behaviour, AIM offer restorative approaches training.

Strengths based

[Strengths-based approach](#) - Practice framework and practice handbook.

[Strengths-based social work](#) - Practice framework and practice handbook.

[Strengths-based approaches for working with individuals](#) – From Iriss.

[Building a practice framework](#) - Hampshire County Council.

[What is a Strength-Based Approach?](#) – Including activities and examples.

Berg, C.J. (2009). '[A comprehensive framework for conducting client assessments: highlighting strengths, environmental factors and hope](#)', Journal of Practical Consulting, vol 3, no 2, pp 9–13.

Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, (2012). [Insight: Strength-based approaches for working with individuals](#).

Skills for Care, (2014). [Skills around the person: implementing asset-based approaches in adult social care and end of life care](#).

Improvement and Development Agency and the Local Government Association, (2010). [A glass half-full: how an asset approach can improve community health and wellbeing](#).

References

Pulla, V. & Francis, A. (2015). A Strengths Approach to Mental Health.