LiPP SCR Masterclasses

Masterclass 3:

Group work and facilitation; getting the best out of groups in the SCR process

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LiPP SCR Masterclasses

SCR lead reviewers have a key role in producing high quality SCRs, which provide a good understanding of practice problems. There are currently limited opportunities for continuing professional development for reviewers.

As part of the LiP Project, we are proposing that the activity of reviewing needs further professionalisation. To begin to test this concept, we have developed a set of "masterclasses" that bring knowledge from other domains in, to support reviewers to tackle various aspects of the role that are challenging.

A number of bodies of knowledge and expertise exist that are potentially applicable to serious case reviews. These include
- approaches to analysing data developed in the field of qualitative research
- understandings of error and its causation developed in industry and engineering
- ways of thinking about groups and their dynamics developed in social work and therapeutic methods
- requirements from legal, coronial and criminal justice perspectives as well as other reviews

All have potential for supporting the quality of SCRs but have not yet been applied systematically to SCR practice. The four LiPP masterclasses aim to introduce key ideas from these different fields and give SCR reviewers to consider their relevance.

The material from these masterclasses is being published to assist SCR lead reviewers with their SCR practice. It should not be used to deliver training without seeking permission from Social Care Institute for Excellence.

Masterclass 3:

Group work and facilitation; getting the best out of groups in the SCR process

Date:	**Tuesday 16th February 2016**
Time:	**10.00-16.00**
Venue:	**Doubletree by London Hilton West End, 92 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4BH**

Introduction

Lead Reviewers frequently find themselves having to facilitate a wide range of groups in the course of their work, either on their own or with a co-worker. Given this need to work with groups in the course of a Review, Lead Reviewers can benefit from accessing a knowledge base about group dynamics and group facilitation in order to make the work both more enjoyable and more effective.

This workshop aims to introduce participants to some key concepts for thinking about groups and group processes (incl. leadership). This knowledge base stems from
- a) social work
- b) psychoanalysis and
- c) organisational theory.

The workshop will give participants the opportunity to consider how these ideas help them to make sense of their experiences of groups in the SCR process. They will also have the chance to think about how the ideas can help them think of better ways of managing difficult group situations.

The workshop will be largely participatory, using a range of exercises to explore dynamics and facilitation, and drawing on the experiences of the participants. There will be some handouts and a small number of ppt slides to illustrate groupwork theory, derived from a range of sources, though based predominantly on the work of Bion and subsequent work at the Tavistock and by the Group Relations movement.

Learning Objectives

The aims of this class are:

1. To introduce participants to some key concepts for thinking about groups and group processes (incl. leadership) from a) social work b) psychoanalysis and c) organisational theory.
2. To encourage participants to consider how these ideas help them to make sense of their experiences of groups in the SCR process
3. To give participants the opportunity to think about how the ideas can help them think of better ways of managing difficult group situations

Learning Outcomes

Participants who perform well in this module will be able to:

a) Demonstrate *knowledge* of:
- Some key concepts about groups and group processes, including leadership and their applicability to the SCR group processes

b) Have developed the following *skills*:
- The ability to plan group sessions, including chairing and facilitation requirements
- The ability to identify and analyse group dynamics and difficult group situations
- The capacity to critically reflect on their own leadership style and facilitation skills

There is no required pre-reading for this class.

Programme outline

10.00- 10.30	Welcome & introductions Hopes & expectations Outline & purpose of the day
10.30-11.00	Small group exercise What are the groups that you work with in your SCRs? And what kinds of difficulties do you encounter? Feedback
11.00- 11.30	Input – **Some ways of thinking about groups and group processes (incl. leadership)** Key concepts from a) social work b) psychoanalysis and c) organisational theory Questions, queries & clarifications
11.30 – 11.45	Coffee
11.45- 12.45	Small group discussion (understanding): How do these concepts help you to better make sense of your experiences of groups in the SCR process? Feedback to whole group & identification of key problem areas to go into in more depth in exercise after lunch
12.45-1.00	Reflections on the morning
1.00 – 1.45	Lunch
1.45- 2.45	Small group exercise (action) Each group allocated one difficult group situation. Task: How do these ways of thinking create different possibilities for how you might manage your difficult group situation? Feedback & discussion – what new & different?
2.45 – 3.15	Exercise in pairs. Leadership styles in groups and implications (spectrum) Feedback
3.15-3.30	Coffee
3.30 – 3.45	Final reflections on the ideas and their relevance
3.45-4.00	Evaluation form & close

Presenter

Sue Bairstow: Freelance Trainer and Consultant

BA, Dip Social Administration, CQSW, Msc in Group Relations.

Sue is a social worker by background. She has considerable experience of group work which includes setting up, running and supervising groups. She also provides group work training and consultation. In addition she has worked on SCIE Learning Together reviews so is familiar with the range of groups and workshops that participants will be required to lead.

The Learning into Practice Project (LiPP): Improving the quality and use of SCRs

Groupwork Masterclass
16th February 2016

Welcome & introductions
Hopes & expectations
Facilitator: Sue Bairstow

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What this is:

- A masterclass in group work and leadership for Lead Reviewers
- An opportunity to learn more about theory and share implications for practice

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Who is it for?

- Lead Reviewers who need to work with groups in the course of a Review and would benefit from accessing a knowledge base about group dynamics and group facilitation in order to make the work both more enjoyable and more effective.

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Aims

- To introduce participants to some key concepts for thinking about groups and group processes (including leadership) This eclectic knowledge base stems from:

  a) social work

  b) psychoanalysis

  c) organisational theory

- To give participants the opportunity to consider how these ideas help them to make sense of their experiences of groups in the SCR process.

- To think about how these ideas can help them think of better ways of managing difficult meetings and group situations.

N.B These concepts and theories overlap.

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Learning outcomes

By the end of the workshop participants will:

- know how to plan a group session
- have a better understanding of group dynamics and difficult group situations
- have a deeper grasp of facilitation and leadership skills
- have a better understanding of their own leadership style and how that might work with a co-worker
- understand the similarities and differences between chairing and facilitation

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Learning outcomes

a) Be able to demonstrate *knowledge* of:

- Some key concepts about groups and group processes, including leadership and their applicability to the SCR group processes

b) Have developed the following *skills*:

- The ability to plan group sessions, including chairing and facilitation requirements
- The ability to identify and analyse group dynamics and difficult group situations
- The capacity to critically reflect on their own leadership style and facilitation skills

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Approach

- The workshop will be largely participatory, using a range of exercises to explore dynamics and facilitation, and drawing on the experiences of the participants.
- We will use the key concepts to enhance our understanding of group processes and consider ways of managing meetings to make them more effective.

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Small group exercise

- What are the groups that you work with in your SCRs?

- What kinds of difficulties do you encounter?

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What is a group?

- No single definition

- But general agreement that:

  ' a group is a set of people who share a common purpose/objective and come together in order to interact to achieve it.'
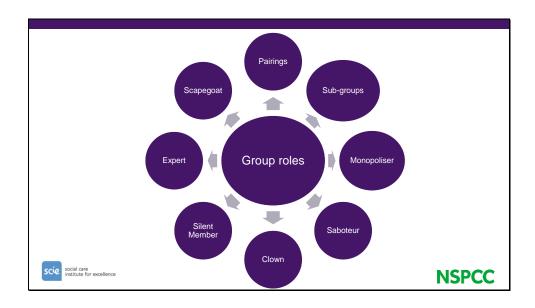
- This should apply to all formal groups and meetings

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Some ways of thinking about groups and group processes (incl. leadership)

- Group roles
- Components of the group – Task and Process
- Stages of group development
- Containment of anxiety (Winnicott and Bion)
- Envy, rivalry and competition (Klein and Bion)
- Fight/flight
- Dependency
- Leadership functions and styles

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Task(Maintenance) and Process

- The **CONTENT** of the group refers to the *what* of group experience: what is being talked about, what activity is taking place. This is commonly described as the group *task*, which is effectively the same as the agenda, programme etc. The content is the conscious level of group activity and interaction, and can be observed on the surface.

- The **PROCESS** of the group refers to the *how* of group experience, the way in which a group discusses or acts together, and engages with the task. Process is what happens beneath the surface on the psychological and unconscious level. Most people understand this as *group dynamics*. It is less easy to observe because the elements are often invisible and hidden. Some are more obvious than others, e.g. body language, whilst others are more difficult to detect.

. Questions to think about include:

- What are the levels of participation?
- Why is this happening now?
- Why is this happening in this way?
- What roles are members taking up in the group?
- What is the tone/atmosphere of the group?

N.B. Leaders need to know when to divert from task to deal with process, but overall
need to attend to both and maintain a balance.

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Bion's contribution: *Experiences in Groups*

Bion argues that in every group, two groups are actually present:

- the **work group** (to do with the primary task)
- the **basic assumption group** (tacit underlying assumptions which affect the group dynamic)

Three basic assumptions:

1. **Dependency** - the group members behave passively
2. **Fight-flight** - group may be characterized by aggressiveness/hostility **OR** the group may chit-chat, tell stories, arrive late or engage in any other activities that serve to avoid addressing the task at hand.
3. **Pairing** - Two people may carry out the work of the group through their continued interaction, whilst other group members listen eagerly and attentively. Alternatively they may behave in a destructive way.

N.B. When a group adopts any one of these basic assumptions, it interferes with the task the group is attempting to accomplish

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Containing anxiety

Taken from **Winnicott's** view on '***holding***' (mother/infant) and **Bion's** further development of the concept of '***containment***' in groups.

Implications for leaders:
- The facilitator's role is to contain anxiety for the sake of learning.
- The facilitator's skill lies in setting up and maintaining a "containing space" Within this safe space, learning can be experienced as the expansion of potential. Without it can/will be experienced as a threat.

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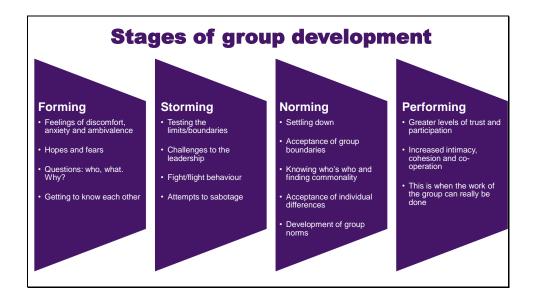
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Klein's work on Envy

- The definition of ***envy*** used by Klein

    "the angry feeling felt by one member that another person possesses and enjoys something else desirable, often accompanied by an impulse to take it away or spoil it."

- Later Bion built on this concept to explore rivalry and competition in groups.

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Stages of group development

Forming
- Feelings of discomfort, anxiety and ambivalence
- Hopes and fears
- Questions: who, what. Why?
- Getting to know each other

Storming
- Testing the limits/boundaries
- Challenges to the leadership
- Fight/flight behaviour
- Attempts to sabotage

Norming
- Settling down
- Acceptance of group boundaries
- Knowing who's who and finding commonality
- Acceptance of individual differences
- Development of group norms

Performing
- Greater levels of trust and participation
- Increased intimacy, cohesion and co-operation
- This is when the work of the group can really be done

Questions, queries & clarifications

- What's familiar and what's new in this?

- Is it easy to see how these concepts apply to groups and meetings?

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Small group discussion

- How do these concepts help you to make better sense of your experiences of groups (and meetings) in the SCR process?
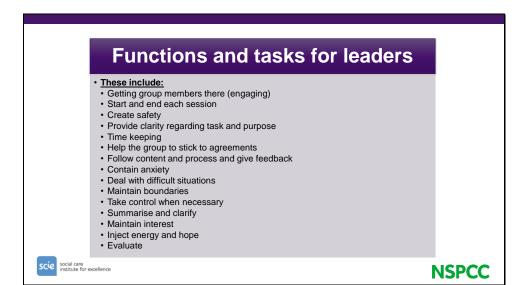
- Share specific examples

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Small group exercise

- **Task:** How do these ways of thinking create different possibilities for how you might manage your difficult group situation?

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Functions and tasks for leaders

- **These include:**
  - Getting group members there (engaging)
  - Start and end each session
  - Create safety
  - Provide clarity regarding task and purpose
  - Time keeping
  - Help the group to stick to agreements
  - Follow content and process and give feedback
  - Contain anxiety
  - Deal with difficult situations
  - Maintain boundaries
  - Take control when necessary
  - Summarise and clarify
  - Maintain interest
  - Inject energy and hope
  - Evaluate

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Responses

- Are these all relevant?

- Anything missing?

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Leadership styles in groups and implications

- Autocratic/Laissez faire

- Task focused/process focused

- Supportive/confrontative

- Proactive/reactive

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Exercise in pairs.

• Use the sheet to think about where you would place yourself on the spectrum

• Share with your partner and think about the implications (for sole working or co-working)

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Final reflections on the ideas and their relevance

- What is familiar?

- What is new?

- How might it help you in your work?

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Evaluation & close

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LiPP SCR Masterclass 3: Group work and facilitation; getting the best out of groups in the SCR process

Glossary of terms

Clown. The person who constantly makes jokes in the group/meeting, thus diverting everybody from moving forward. This person may of course be very amusing but ultimately the behaviour is usually destructive.

Content/Task and process. The content of the group refers to the *what* of group experience: what is being talked about, what activity is taking place. This is commonly described as the group *task*, which is effectively the same as the agenda, programme etc. The content is the conscious level of group activity and interaction, and can be observed on the surface. The process of the group refers to the *how* of group experience, the way in which a group discusses or acts together, and engages with the task. Process is what happens beneath the surface on the psychological and unconscious level. Most people understand this as *group dynamics*. It is less easy to observe because the elements are often invisible and hidden. Some are more obvious than others, e.g. body language, whilst others are more difficult to detect.

Dependency. The group members behave passively and look to the leader to take responsibility for everything.

Envy. The angry feeling felt by one member that another person possesses and enjoys something else desirable, often accompanied by an impulse to take it away or spoil it.

Expert. The person in the group/meeting who believes that they know all this already, has nothing to learn, and is eager to demonstrate this to the others. This role sometimes overlaps with the monopoliser or saboteur.

Fight-flight. The group may be characterized by aggressiveness/hostility *(fight),* OR the group may chit-chat, tell stories, arrive late or engage in any other activities that serve to avoid addressing the task at hand *(flight).*

Holding. Winnicott considered that the *"mother's technique of holding, of bathing, of feeding, everything she did for the baby, added up to the child's first idea of the mother",* thus fostering a sense of security and containing anxiety. Extrapolating the concept of holding from mother to family and the outside world, Winnicott saw as key to healthy development *"the continuation of reliable holding in terms of the ever-widening circle of family and school and social life".* He influentially came to view the work of psychotherapist as offering a substitute holding environment based on the mother/ infant bond. This concept has been adapted to the world of groups and the role of the facilitator – the person who manages/contains anxiety.

Monopoliser. This is somebody who dominates the group (meeting) with apparent disregard for the other members. It is very common in all groups and can be very difficult for facilitators to manage.

Pairing. Two people may carry out the work of the group through their continued interaction, whilst other group members listen eagerly and attentively. Alternatively they may behave in a destructive way, acting as one in a powerful and challenging manner.

Projections. Splitting off the parts of oneself that are unacceptable and putting them into someone else. This is an unconscious process, and very common in groups.

Saboteur. The person in a group who constantly challenges the leader and the purpose of the group, and generally attempts to derail the group from achieving its task by rubbishing the whole process.

Scapegoat. Often it is easier to find other people to 'blame', either within or outside the group, as a way of avoiding responsibility oneself. In groups it is it is very easy to get another weaker or vulnerable member to take the blame and the scapegoat thus becomes the recipient of the all the bad/difficult stuff.

Sub-groups. A situation in which two or three people 'gang together', either against the leader or against other group members. If this situation is not acknowledged and dealt with it will put the effectiveness of the group at risk.

The silent member. The person who says very little, leaving others wondering what they are thinking. Their contribution is minimal and the silence often very powerful.

Transference. It is common for people to transfer feelings from their parents to their partners or children (that is, cross-generational entanglements). For instance, one could mistrust somebody who resembles an ex-spouse in manners, voice, or external appearance, or be overly compliant to someone who resembles a childhood friend. The group provides many opportunities for such unconscious behaviour.

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Leadership Styles

Autocratic _____ Laissez-Faire

Task Focused _____ Process Focussed

Supportive _____ Confronting

Pro-Active _____ Re-Active

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Suggested further reading

Bion, W. R. (1961). *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers.* London: Routledge.

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