

SCIE conference 2005: Workshop 8 – Interactive drama

The actors from The Splinter Group presented a series of characters based on case material from BASW (British Association of Social Workers). None of the information about the characters related to actual service users although the themes were derived from real people's experiences.

Lynn is 32 years' old and is mother to Kyle and daughter to Sylvia. Lynn used to work in a bookshop before developing a heroin dependency. She has brought up Kyle on her own although now he lives with his grandmother Sylvia. Lynn lives in a housing association flat. She currently works as a sex worker.

Kyle is 13 years' old and lives with his grandmother Sylvia. He sees his mother Lynn about once a week. Kyle has been engaging in anti social behaviour with a gang of older children and has received an official warning about it. Kyle is having sexuality issues. He can be both verbally aggressive and incommunicative at times.

Sylvia is 50 years' old and works in an old people's home. She recently separated from her husband who has started a relationship with a younger woman. Sylvia's relationship with her grandson Kyle has become more difficult as she often nags him about his behaviour. Sylvia is developing depression; she is often tearful and has been drinking during the day.

The delegates watched a twenty minute performance expanding on the themes above.

This was followed by two scenarios showing bad practice in clinical interventions:

- a) an education welfare officer carries out a home visit to Sylvia and Kyle, threatening Sylvia with prosecution for Kyle's school non-attendance
- b) Sylvia visits her GP to talk about depression - he does not take her seriously.

The delegates offered suggestions for improving these scenarios:

- Introduce yourself
- Show ID
- Wait to be invited in
- Don't be patronising
- Wait to be seated
- Offer clear explanations
- Don't assume the client is lying
- Don't wade in with the worst case scenario
- Try to engage client

- Leave negative preconceptions behind
- Put notes and clipboard down
- Keep an open body posture
- Show interest
- Offer alternatives to medication
- Ask “what can I do for you”
- Refer to specialists such as primary care mental health workers
- Ensure that the client takes something away from the contact
- Acknowledge how hard it was for her to come to the appointment
- Put her at ease.

The delegates were then given the opportunity to question the characters directly in order to gain further insights into their behaviour.

Finally, the delegates provided the following solutions:

- Families in Sheffield can be referred via the First Point centre or drugs agencies to an intensive family intervention service
- Kyle would be eligible for Connexions input and would be seen as a high priority, hard-to-reach client
- Kyle’s social worker could investigate re-establishing contact with his grandfather, Sylvia’s ex-partner.
- It would have been a good idea for the home visit to be carried out by someone already known to Kyle, such as a trusted teacher, in order to support his engagement with services
- Kyle would benefit from more young person focussed services
- Lynn is in a key position to influence the whole family
- It would be helpful to pay attention to the family’s strengths
- Primary care mental health workers would be able to identify appropriate services including family therapy

The Splinter Group
 Workshops and Performance
 53 Hope Street
 Liverpool L1 7BJ
 W: www.splintergroup.org.uk
 E: info@splintergroup.org.uk
 Tel: 0151 708 7435