



Using strengths based approaches in social work (full film) – TRANSCRIPT

DEFINING SBAs

Pauline Turner, Director of Performance, Quality and Innovation, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

Strengths-based social work I suppose is working with families rather than doing to families and I suppose that's really what is at the essence of social work practice when we talk about a strengths-based approach. And really that's working with the families' own strengths, resiliences, things that they know they're already doing well as individuals but as a wider family community.

Paul Moffat, Chief Executive, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

Bringing up children is a challenging experience and if you don't have others around you to help you during those difficult times, sometimes things happen and children can suffer as a consequence of that so it's trying to find out those moments when people are most likely to need the support and recognising all of us, we want parents to be successful.

Jennifer Jessop, Senior Practitioner, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

It's a way of working with families to identify, amplify their own innate strengths. I believe ultimately our goal is to guide people towards safer parenting practices and I think that model really helps build a collaborative relationship in which to work with children and families to motivate them. To empower them and to encourage them to find the solutions to the problems that they're facing at that point in time

CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

Paul Moffat, Chief Executive, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

For many years staff within Doncaster were feeling very demonised, they were recognised as an area that had been underperforming for a long period of time. The impact of that on morale, the impact of that on culture, in my experience, is to make the organisation almost risk averse, frightened to almost make decisions and you don't allow for that more creative side to you to help influence the way you work with families.

Pauline Turner, Director of Performance, Quality and Innovation, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

We recognised here at the trust there needed to be a culture change because we needed to support our staff and I suppose what we wanted to do was to create a vision that everybody in the trust owned and bought in to. And our vision and our values are about being respectful, being excellent and making a difference. So our values are important not just to our social workers but to all staff in the trust. Everybody has to say how they're making a difference, how they're aspiring to be excellent and how they are respectful to others.

Paul Moffat, Chief Executive, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

We were able to move the culture from one of feeling anxious about making decisions to feeling confident about making decisions and when you're confident you make better decisions because you make decisions which are in the interests of the child. We start from a positive position that people have great potential

KEY FEATURES

Jennifer Jessop, Senior Practitioner, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

I think the main features of strengths-based practice are the relationships you build with the adults, the children and young people and their wider family networks as well. The relationship is the change driver, it's akin to driving the car down the road, the relationship is that car, you want to encourage the people to come and sit with you on that journey but by the end of the journey you want them to be driving the car. They've found their own solutions.

Pauline Turner, Director of Performance, Quality and Innovation, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

It's being able to, from a strengths-based approach, identify what's working well in families and being able to unpick why things work well and use some of those attributes to solving some of the other problems that aren't working that well.

Jennifer Jessop, Senior Practitioner, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

Think one of the main features is often getting the shared goals, the shared understanding. Strengths-based practice really enables you to get the overall goal to then build in the smaller steps of how we're going to work together to get there.

SBA's IN PRACTICE

Pauline Turner, Director of Performance, Quality and Innovation, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

What we had to do to start off with was to set some very basic standards. Initially we just started off with our seven keys to good practice and that was things about listening to and engaging with children. The real element of a strengths-based practice for us in child protection services is hearing and acting upon the voice of that child. No matter how many times some professionals can tell a family this isn't really good for your child, actually the most powerful thing is for a child to say this isn't really good for me and this hurts me or this upsets me.

Jennifer Jessop, Senior Practitioner, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

The best thing about strengths-based practice for my role is the way it's changed how I engage with families. It's going into families with the attitude of I know you have strengths, I know you've reached this point so tell me how you've done it. I know that bad things have probably happened before, tell me how you've navigated through that. It feels much more partnership working.

Pauline Turner, Director of Performance, Quality and Innovation, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

Our social work staff are the main vehicle that we're going to improve children's lives and what we needed to do was to set our standards and expectations about the frameworks that we wanted to use for all of our social workers. And that's about social workers having manageable case-loads. That's about social workers having regular supervision that's reflective. That's about social workers having access to good quality training and support so that then those staff are confident and resilient to work with families who needed their self-esteem raising, their confidence raising in order to draw on the strengths to make the difficulties in their family life get better.

Jennifer Jessop, Senior Practitioner, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

It's motivating them to find their own solutions. If you empower people to have the skills to do that, then actually by the time you are at the end of their journey, if future problems arise, they're much more likely to be able to resolve them, to find their own solutions because they've already developed the tools to do so.

Pauline Turner, Director of Performance, Quality and Innovation, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

The outcomes we would want to be achieving is that they have confidence and resilience and take ownership of life in their family to try and improve some of the issues that they might be facing.

Paul Moffat, Chief Executive, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

When people can see that outcomes for children, you know the impact of our intervention has been a positive one then that's when I think you know, that you're starting to change things that things have shifted. So that the individual who's supporting the family, they know what's expected of them, the family understand what the contribution is likely to be, then I think that's what, for me, is what good strengths-based practice looks like.

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