Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee

When Services Find It Hard To Engage

Key Learning Objectives

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- To raise awareness of why non-engagement by a parent or carer matters in child protection.
- To increase skills and confidence in practitioners when they find it hard to engage a family.
- To promote multi-agency working and self-reflection to help tackle non-engagement.
- To identify resources for practitioners to use to help manage non-engagement.
- To remove barriers for engagement for parents/carers.

What does 'When Services Find it Hard to Engage' mean?

- The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023, changed the registration category from

Non-Compliance to When Services Find It Hard To Engage.

The reframing of language is critical as it encourages professionals to:

- Challenge themselves
- Look beyond the presenting behaviors and question why are services finding it hard to engage?

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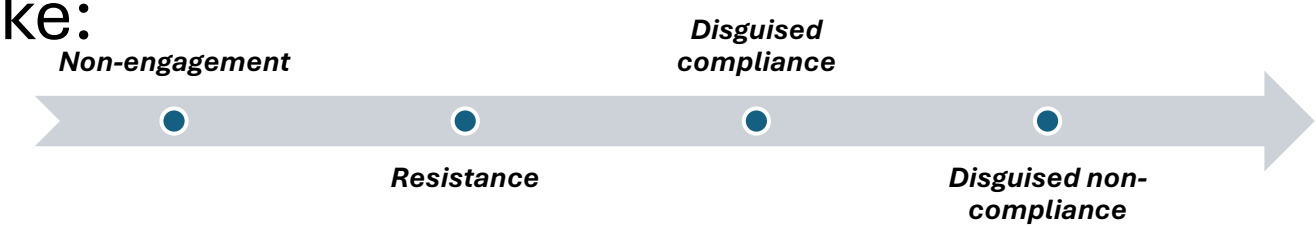
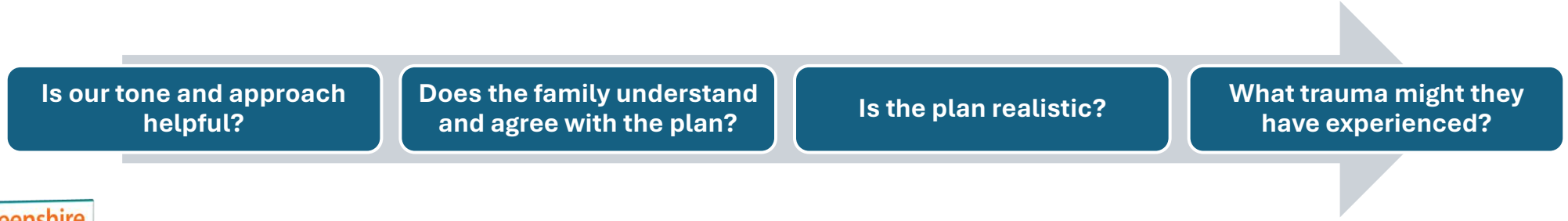
- **<u>Professionals</u>** use terms like:



when families are hard to engage. These help us understand what we're seeing and why change may be resisted or risks to the child ignored.

To address this, we need to **<u>reflect on our own practice:</u>**



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Professional curiosity is key.

Looking and listening carefully

Asking direct questions

Checking and reflecting on information

Exploring what's really happening for the child and family

It's about digging deeper, challenging assumptions, and acting when needed rather than taking things at face value.

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Non-Engagement

1) Avoidance behaviours - Failure to enable necessary contact

2) Active Non-Compliance

3) Disguised Compliance

4) Threating violence/Intimidation

5) Online Behaviors

Additional Behaviours to Consider

1.Passive Avoidance

1. Ignoring calls, letters, or messages.
2. Frequently unavailable for home visits.
3. Moving without notifying services.

2.Information Withholding

1. Providing incomplete or misleading information.
2. Avoiding questions or giving vague answers.
3. Refusing consent for information sharing.

3.Deflection and Blame

1. Shifting responsibility onto professionals or other agencies.
2. Blaming circumstances rather than addressing concerns.
3. Using conflict between agencies to avoid accountability.

4.Over-Compliance

1. Agreeing to everything without genuine intent to change.
2. Excessive politeness masking resistance.
3. Performing minimal actions to “tick boxes” without meaningful progress.

5.Manipulation

1. Attempting to influence professionals through charm or hostility.
2. Playing agencies against each other.
3. Using emotional appeals to divert attention from risks.

6.Cultural or Language Barriers

1. Genuine or perceived misunderstanding of expectations.
2. Using cultural norms as a reason for non-engagement.
3. Language barriers that mask resistance.

7.Substance Misuse or Mental Health Factors

1. Using crises as a reason for non-compliance.
2. Avoiding engagement during periods of instability.

Questions Breakout Rooms

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Thinking about Professional Curiosity, what might lie behind the non-engagement in this situation?

What could have been done differently to improve engagement from your agency perspective? Were there opportunities missed?

At what point could or should concerns have been escalated? and in what way?

The contribution of universal services is crucial in recognising and monitoring risk where non-engagement is suspected. Information such as immunisation gaps or school attendance patterns, when shared across agencies, creates a clearer picture of the child's needs and potential risks.

Our speakers will explain their roles within individual services and demonstrate how, together, we form a multi-agency approach to child protection.

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Social Work

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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

ACEs are "highly stressful, and potentially traumatic events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence" (From YoungMinds)

Physical Abuse

Emotional Abuse

Domestic Violence

Sexual Abuse

Parental Substance Use

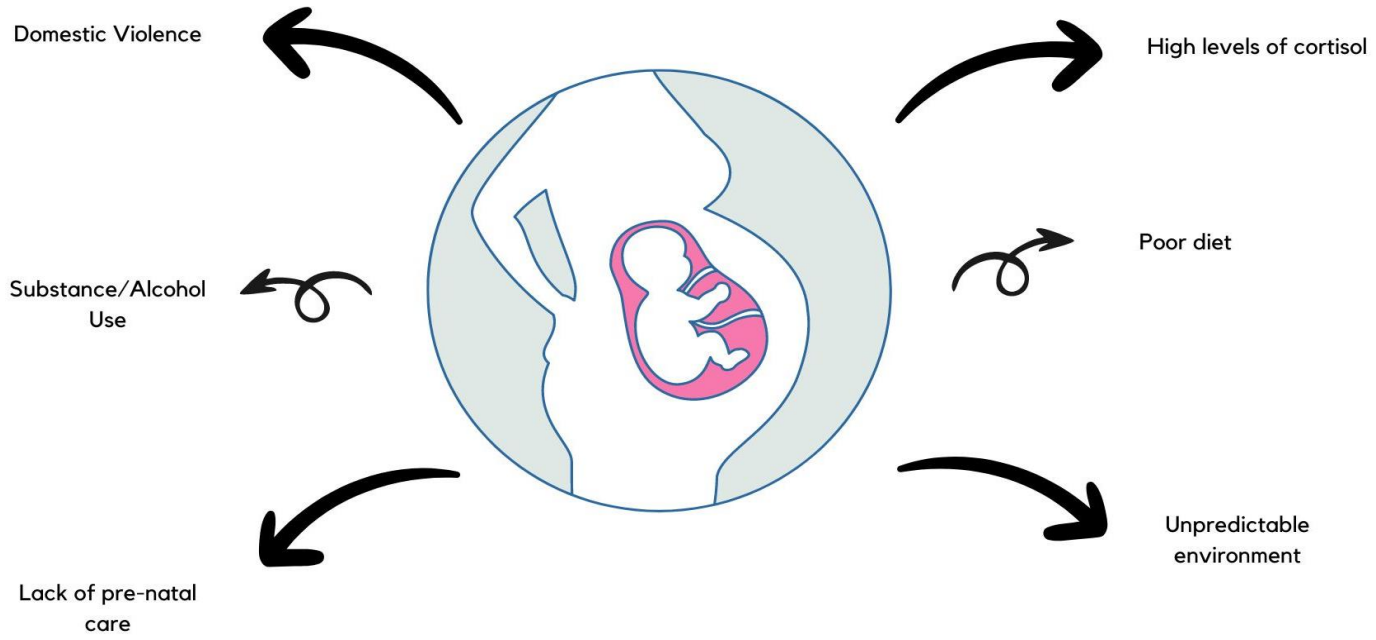
Mental Illness

Suicide or Death

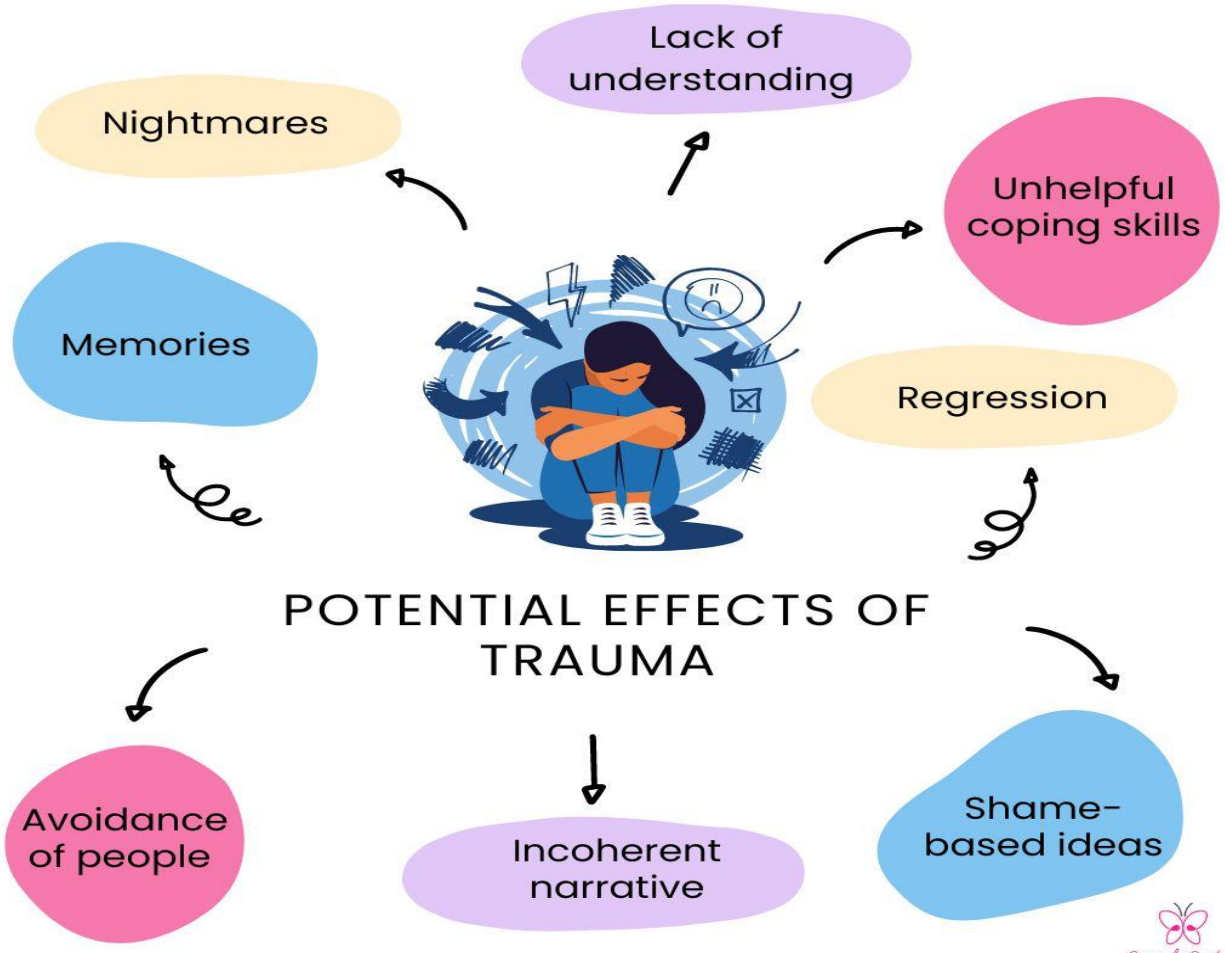
Crime or Family in Prison

(Based on the ACE's study by Felitti and Anda, 1998)

What might impact developing foetus?



Curiously Creative
IN SOCIAL WORK


Lack of understanding
Nightmares
Unhelpful coping skills
Memories
Regression
POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF TRAUMA
Avoidance of people
Incoherent narrative
Shame-based ideas

Anxious
Angry
Out of control

HYPERAROUSAL

Fight/Flight Response

Want to run or fight
Overwhelmed
Chaotic Rasponses

Stress and trauma can shrink you window of tolerance. Feeling out of control, or unsafe may also shrink your window

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

Ready to learn
Able to listen
Regulated
Calm
Connected
Can deal with stress

You can widen your window of tolerance by taking part in hobbies, listening to music or exercising

Flat
No energy
Numb

HYPOAROUSAL

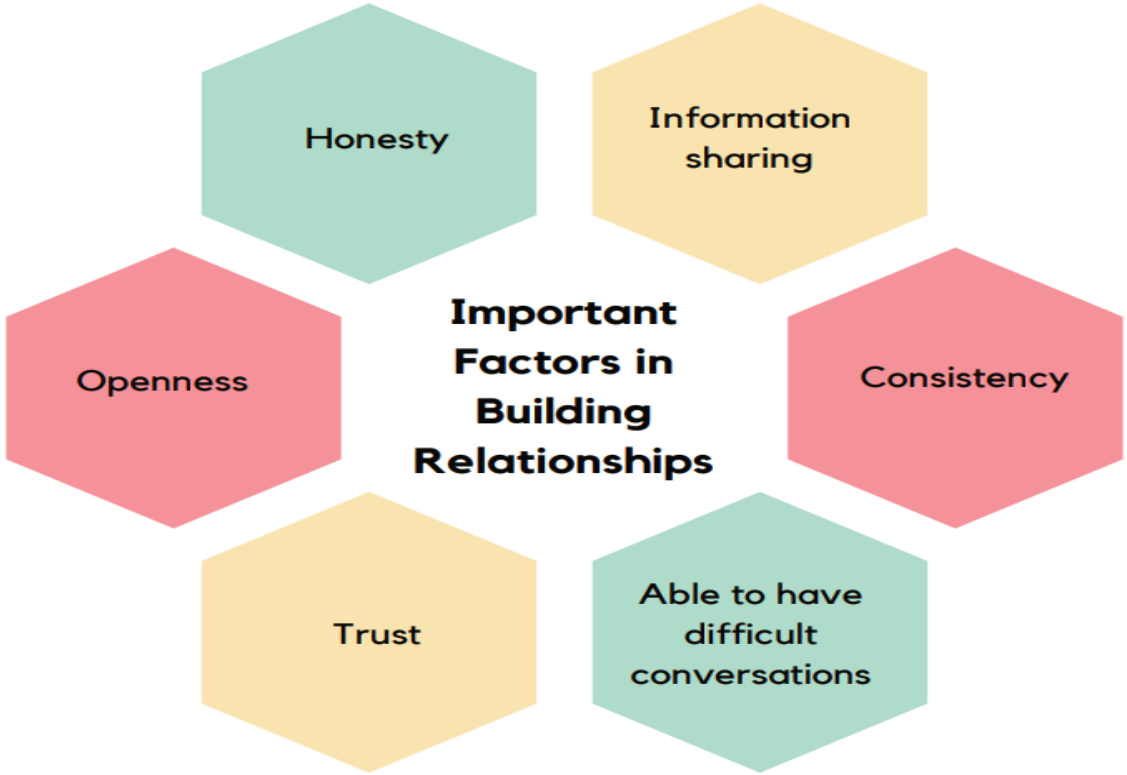
Freeze/Collapse Response

Frozen
Shut down
Appears emotionless

SAFETY
CHOICE
TRUST
Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice
COLLABORATION
EMPOWERMENT

What is wrong with you?	What has happened to you?
• Indicates blame • Indicates they have done something wrong • May create shame • Lacks empathy • Lacks understanding	• Is curious • Listens and understands • Value and respect for the person • Supports recovery • Helps alleviate shame • Understands the impact of lived experience

How Can We Build Meaningful Relationships?



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IN SOCIAL WORK

The Impact of Relationships on Trauma:

- "Relational trauma requires relational repair" (Treisman, 2021)
- "The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will recover" (Bruce Perry)

Health

IMPACT ON THE CHILD

Parental resistance can result in the following negative outcomes for children:

- Increased Risk to the Child
- Deterioration of Wellbeing
- Escalation to compulsory measures
- Incomplete Assessment
- Impact on Professionals
- Impact on Parents/Carers
- Influence on the child

WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE?

- Impairment on child's development
- Behavioural issues
- Physical symptoms.

IMPACT ON PROFESSIONALS

- Fight Response
- Collusion
- Hyper-Alertness
- Filtering or Minimising
- Paralysis

WORKING WITH NON-ENGAGEMENT / RESISTANT BEHAVIOUR

- Staff aim to maintain positive relationships to support parental change

- Risk : avoiding confrontation may lead to Complicity

WORKING WITH NON-ENGAGEMENT / RESISTANT BEHAVIOUR

- **Evaluate and monitor impact** of resistance on interventions.
- Ensure decisions remain in **best interests of the child**.

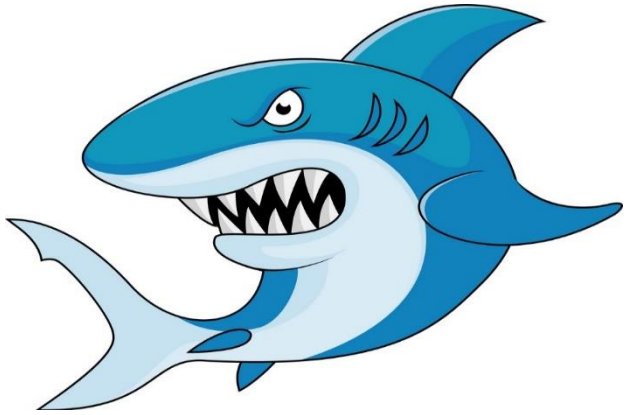
FIVE STYLES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION CATEGORIES

SOOTHING

COMPROMISING

PROBLEM SOLVING

FORCING



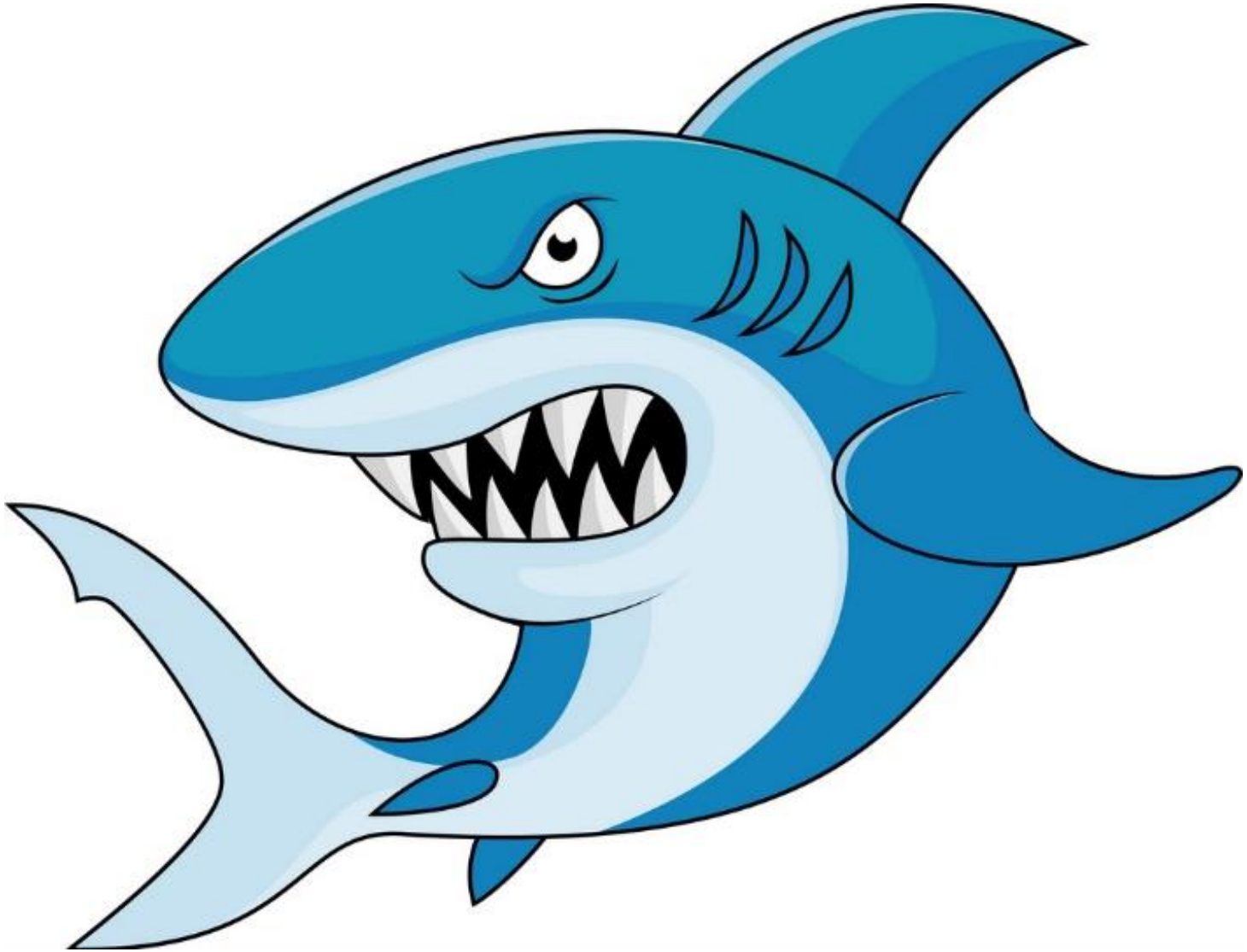
WITHDRAWING

ACTING LIKE A TURTLE AND WITHDRAWING.

- I LOSE, YOU LOSE.

ACTING LIKE A SHARK TO FORCE YOUR OWN WAY.

- I WIN YOU LOSE



ACTING LIKE A FOX AND COMPROMISING

WE COULD BOTH LIVE WITH THAT.

ACTING LIKE A TEDDY BEAR TO SOOTH.

- I LOSE YOU WIN

ACTING LIKE A OWL TO PROBLEM SOLVE AND NEGOTIATE.

- I WIN, YOU WIN

WHY IT MATTERS AND NEXT STEPS

- **Communication and outcomes.**
- **Different approaches**

- **COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND REFLECT·**

What Is Your Conflict Management Style

Instructions: Listed below are 15 statements. Each statement provides a possible strategy for dealing with a conflict. Give each a numerical value. Don't answer as you think you should, answer as you actually behave.

1=Always 2=Very often 3=Sometimes 4= Not very often 5= Rarely, if ever

____ a. I argue my case with peers, colleagues and coworkers to demonstrate the merits of the position I take.

____ b. I try to reach compromises through negotiation.

____ c. I attempt to meet the expectation of others.

____ d. I seek to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are mutually acceptable.

____ e. I am firm in resolve when it comes to defending my side of the issue.

____ f. I try to avoid being singled out, keeping conflict with others to myself.

____ g. I uphold my solutions to problems.

____ h. I compromise in order to reach solutions.

____ i. I trade important information with others so that problems can be solved together.

____ j. I avoid discussing my differences with others.

____ k. I try to accommodate the wishes of my peers and colleagues.

____ l. I seek to bring everyone's concerns out into the open in order to resolve disputes in the best possible way.

____ m. I put forward middles positions in efforts to break deadlocks.

____ n. I accept the recommendations of colleagues, peers, and coworkers.

____ o. I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself.

What Is Your Conflict Management Style Scoring:

The 15 statements you just read are listed below under five categories. Each category contains the letters of three statements.

Record the number you placed next to each statement. Calculate the total under each category.

Style		Total
Competing/Forcing Shark	a. _____ e._____ g. _____	_____
Collaborating Owl	d. _____ i. _____ l. _____	_____
Avoiding Turtle	f. _____ j. _____ o. _____	_____
Accommodating Teddy Bear	c._____ k. _____ n. _____	_____
Compromising Fox	b. _____ h. _____ m. _____	_____

My dominant style is _____ (Your LOWEST score) and my

back-up style is_____ (Your second Lowest score)

Education

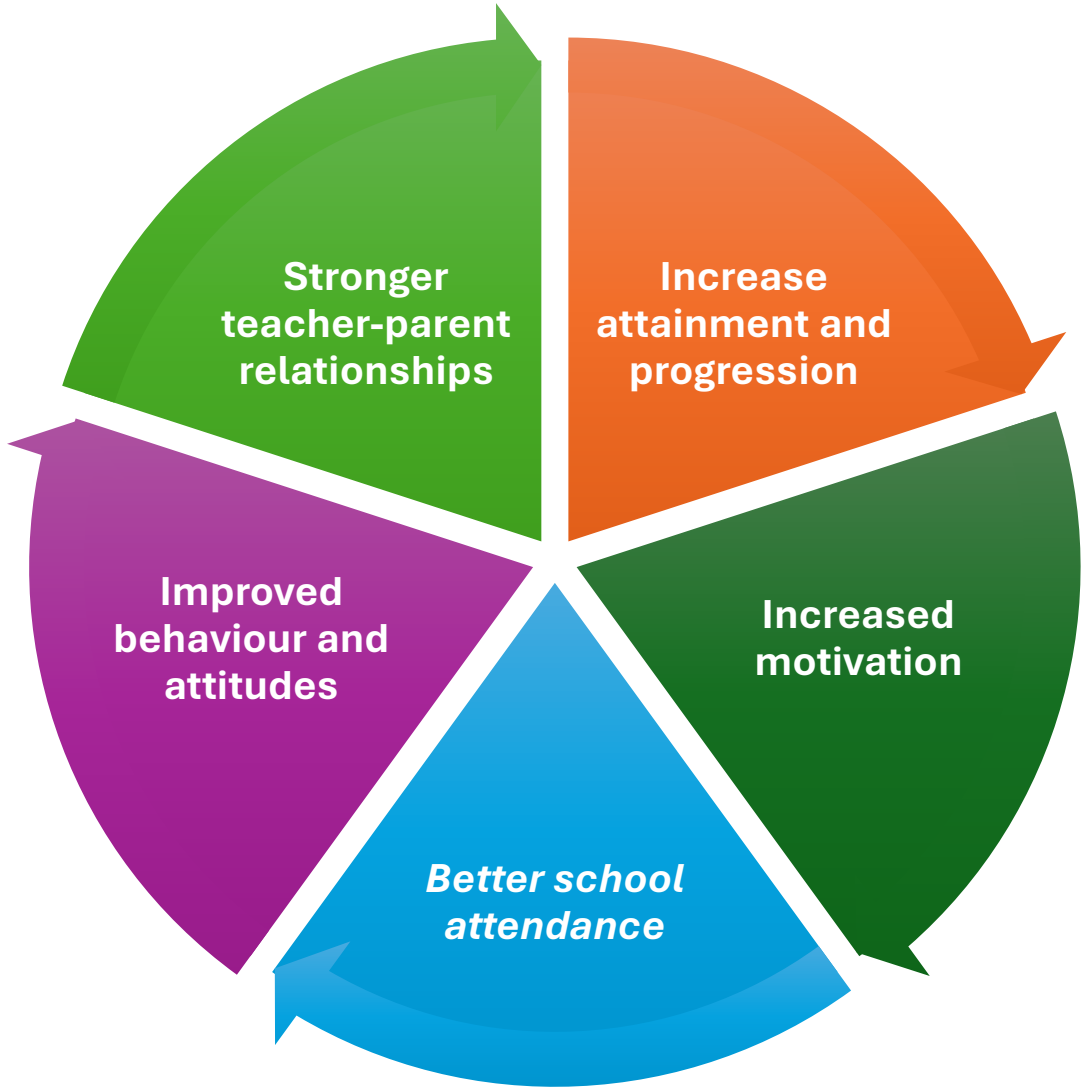
Parental engagement within education

Parental involvement is the active role of a parent/carer in a child's life, not specifically just within education.

It is affected by how 'present' a parent/carer can be for their child and to what extent they are a part of the child's day-to-day.

Parental engagement refers to education, and specifically the interactions between families and school; for instance, attendance at school events, participation in school initiatives, awareness about their child's attendance, progression and wellbeing.

Positive impact of parental engagement



Barriers to parental engagement

Practical issues

Negative experiences of education from their own childhood

Some parents and families living in areas of multiple deprivation can suffer from isolation in their own community which can lead them to feel embarrassed, cautious or unable to engage with schools. Parents' evenings and Parent Councils may not be options for parents in this context.

Language and communication

Cultural differences

Barriers and potential concerns

Very young parent who has a lifetime of professional involvement.

The school setting is a daunting place to even enter.

Lack of first hand experience of consistent parenting.

Some life decisions may be self destructive.

Potential financial challenges

Involved in a string of interventions and programmes but where is the consistent thread.

Strategies and interventions

- Consistent link with school as one personable adult
- Use eligible two time for developing play and nurture skills alongside parent
- Link closely with Ed Psych team
- Build strong and non-judgemental relationships
- Find a way to communicate that is not scary
- Work closely with partners in social work, CLD and health visiting team with ELC/School using their strong relationship to bridge
- In school build partnership with nurture including time in school for parent and child together to further develop relationships and boundaries
- Actively involve parent in the life of the school

Working with other agencies

CLD for skills for work and life

Social work – be careful when reporting to social work that this is also shared with the parent with a clear explanation of the need and the process. Try to protect the relationship as it will be the bridge.

Health Visiting team will be the consistency between home and ELC with shared key messages.

Paediatrician or CAMHS - be wary, the issues being reflected in the chronology might be solvable sooner through good partnership working sooner.

Housing Team

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Housing and Building Standards

Structure

Asset management and Repairs

Strategy and Building Standards

Tenancy Services/Rent Arrears

Options and Homelessness

Tenancy Services Response to Dylan's Situation

Noise Complaints – Potentially Domestic Abuse – Noise App

Onward Referral to Services – Referral to Grampian Women's Aid via Housing, Referral to Housing Support

Possible Mediation with Neighbour's (if she feels they have it in for her)

Discussion with Options team about a house move (although most of the time a move will not fix things if other support needs are not addressed)

Potential referral to Housing Mental Health Linkworker

Speak to mum about potential action around house condition but explain lots of support available to work towards improving conditions

Rent arrears – make sure all applications for benefits are in place and try to get a repayment agreement in place.

Options and Homelessness Response to Dylan's Situation

Referral received by Housing Support Team – Assessment

Assessment identifies action plan with support goals and actions to complete the goals and are regularly reviewed.

Passed to Support Partner Foyer or Salvation Army. RAG rated which indicates level of contact needed.

Support partner allocates worker and contact is made. Housing Support is sometimes accepted better because it is not deemed as being Social Work and links in with numerous partner agencies to make the referrals needed.

We don't close support cases without a long period of trying to find ways to engage with people even seeing them out with the home, more social aspects to start with until we can get the person to trust us and start dealing with what needs to be done.

Options appointment arranged with Housing Officer to discuss options for a move.

Suggestions when those we support are not engaging

Housing First – Consistency, Stickability, Relationship building

Try joint appointments with other workers

Try suggesting a meeting away from home eg café, community space or going for a walk

Try to break down the barrier and promote trust

Look at practical help, fuel voucher, food parcel

Conversation builders – have a chat about what matters to them

Offer choice and control about when they want the support and the way they would like it delivered if possible

Sometimes the best conversations are in a car where no eye contact is being made

Good examples of partnership working

Networking between Housing Staff and Social Work/NHS staff in local locations happens but not across the board.

Examples of shared email chain when a number of services are working with same client – especially high risk cases

Housing have direct links into other services such as police, drugs and alcohol, throughcare and aftercare, criminal justice, prison service, NHS etc

Good news story

Questions?

Contact – Gail Predell 01467 538905 gail.predell@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Housing Options 01467 530577 or options@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Tenancy Services 03456 081 203

tenancyservicesBB@aberdeenshire.gov.uk for Banff and Buchan area (Banff, Fraserburgh and all surrounding areas)

tenancyservicesB@aberdeenshire.gov.uk for Peterhead and surrounding area

tenancyservicesgf@aberdeenshire.gov.uk for Inverurie and surrounding areas (including Turriff, Ellon, etc)

tenancyserviceskmm@aberdeenshire.gov.uk for Stonehaven and surrounding areas and Huntly and surrounding areas

Housing Support 01467 538125 hosupport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Police

- Information Sharing
- Joint Investigation Interview
- Progressing Police Enquiry where families are non-engaging

Bairns' Hoose

PEOPLE WILL FORGET
WHAT YOU SAID.
PEOPLE WILL FORGET
WHAT YOU DID.
BUT PEOPLE WILL
NEVER FORGET HOW
YOU MADE THEM FEEL.
Maya Angelou
The Restaurant Boss

Module – When Services Find It Hard To Engage

aldo.aberdeenshire.gov.uk
(Filter – Children)

Child Protection – When Services Find It Hard To Engage

Additional Slides

Tools to Support Intervention & Assessment

- Reminder.....
- Explicit about factual information
- Concerns discussed with your line manager
- Keep case records up to date/accurate
- Keep chronologies up to date/accurate
- Be clear about what actions need to be taken

Tools to Support Intervention & Assessment

The National Risk Framework to Support the Assessment of Children and Young People 2012 is guidance **designed to support and assist practitioners at all levels, in every agency,** to approach the task of risk identification, assessment, analysis and management with greater confidence and competence.

A key feature of the Framework is the inclusion of Resistance-Related Risk Indicators (page 65). These indicators are drawn from both research and practice and are designed to highlight potential risk factors within a child or young person's life. They are mapped across the three dimensions of the **My World Triangle:**

The child – *How I grow and develop*

The parent/carer – *What I need from the people who care for me*

The wider world – *My wider world*

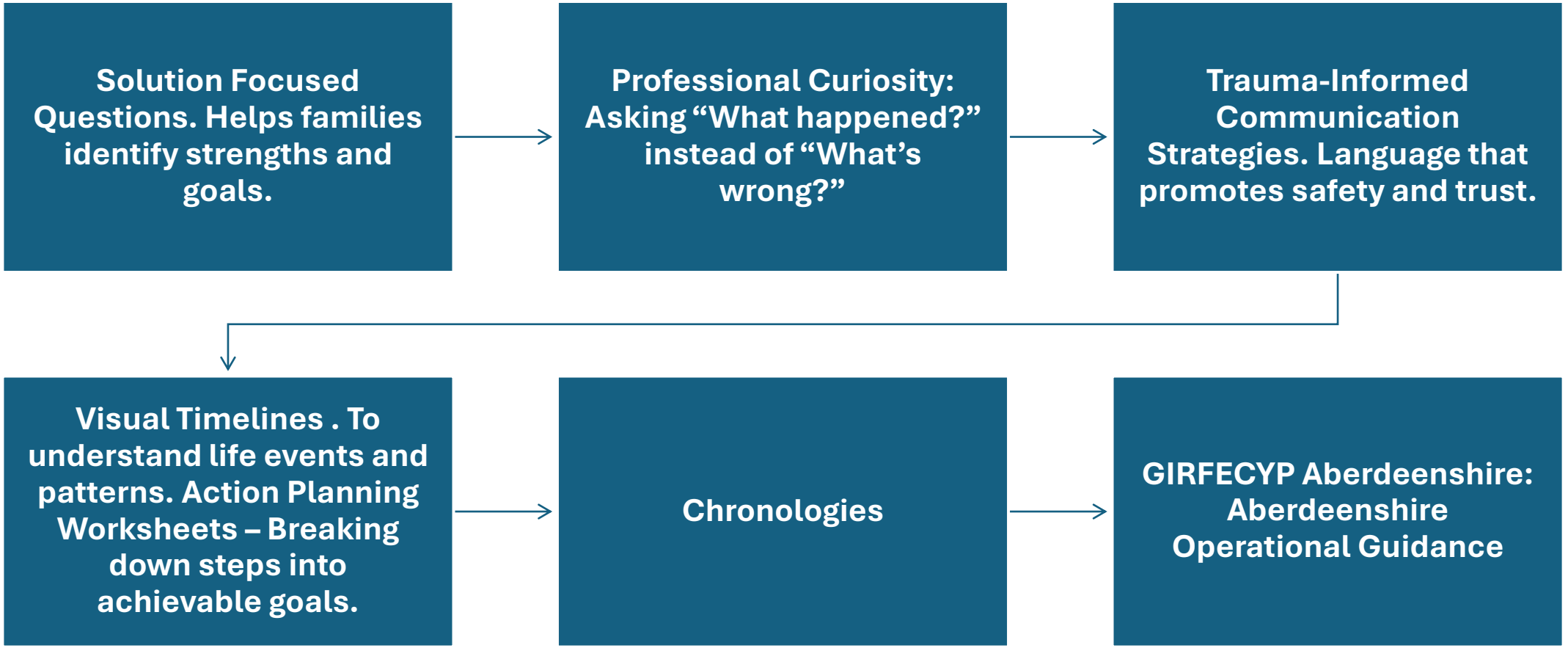
Family Group Decision Making

There is considerable evidence to suggest that **involving parents and their wider extended family in the decision-making processes can decrease parental resistance** to involvement with social workers by reducing their feelings of powerlessness within the context of statutory interventions and court proceedings.

FGDM is underpinned by the following 3 principles:

Child centred

Future focused

Encouraging a blame free environment for discussions to take place.

Assessing Risk and Need