

**Audience** Groups 2-6 (Working Together 2010)

**Methods** Large group discussion; case study; audio(s); small group discussion

### Preparation

You will need to ensure that all participants have copies of the Henderson/Miller/Taylor family case study. You could include some of family members' own stories, or prepare to play some of their stories from the audio resource:

- F2.0 Henderson/Miller/Taylor family case study
- F2.1 Claire's story
- F2.2 Darren's story
- F2.3 Michelle's story
- F2.4 Troy's story
- F2.5 Susan's story

You may want to use the audio-video of the stories:

- M2.1 Claire's story
- M2.2 Darren's story
- M2.3 Michelle's story
- M2.4 Troy's story
- M2.5 Susan's story

### Links to Common Core

**Common Core 1** Effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers (skills: listening and building empathy). Understand the roles and value of families and carers as partners in supporting their children to achieve positive outcomes.

### Learning Outcomes

To assess parents' capacity to respond to the child's needs.

### Process

This exercise aims to reflect on how we work with children and families. There are three parts to this exercise.

#### Part 1 Discuss your approaches to partnership working

In the large group, it will be helpful during discussion to encourage practitioners to consider the distinction between working, purposeful relationships based on honest communication about the nature of the concerns and those relationships which seem positive, but it is difficult to raise issues of concern. In other words, a relationship with parents cannot be preserved at the cost of addressing the key issues of neglect of children.

Participants can be encouraged to discuss ways in which empathy, reliability and warmth can be used even when discussing very challenging concerns with parents. There is scope for participants to practice ways of saying difficult things to parents in an open and clear manner. Some participants may be more confident in this and will be able to help others to formulate effective ways of expressing their concerns.

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### Time

Total : 1 hour 20 minutes

Part 1 10 minutes

Part 2 25 minutes

Part 3 25 minutes

Final discussion 20 minutes

Communicating  
concerns to parents

G13<sub>1</sub>

## **Part 2 Consider the Henderson/Miller/Taylor family**

Put participants into small groups of 3 and ask them to discuss the information made available about the Henderson/Miller/Taylor family and consider the following questions:

a) What approach to partnership would you be aiming for all members of the family and why?

b) How might you try to achieve this?

c) What skills might be involved?

d) What might make this difficult:

- For the children and young people?
- For the parents?
- For wider family members?
- For the practitioner?

e) In what way might organisational issues help or hinder partnership working with this family?

Continued ↘

### Part 3 Practising different approaches

In the same groups of 3, ask each group to decide themselves who will role play the Social Worker and Claire. The third person is the observer.

Ask each group to initiate a discussion in the following three styles – start with the punitive approach and see how Claire is likely to react to the opening statement by the social worker. Move on to the laid back approach and finally the authoritative approach to see which approach is most successful in engaging Claire/Darren and how this impacts upon their likely response.

Use your imagination and respond based upon your feelings at being spoken to in either the punitive, laid back or authoritative way.

#### a. Start of discussion – Punitive approach

**Social Worker** - Claire, I have called round to tell you that I am not happy with the way things are going at the moment. Your care of the children has gone from bad to worse and I have no option but to take action here, you are not doing your job as a parent and if things don't improve, there will be serious consequences ...

**Claire** - What are you talking about! I can't believe that you are saying all this...If you are going down that road I want Darren to be with me...he won't take this lying down...

#### b. Start of discussion – Laid back, ineffective approach

**Social Worker** - I was out and about on the estate, so I thought I'd call in to see how things are going. I thought that we could have a cuppa and a catch up – are you putting the kettle on and you can tell me how you've been getting on?

**Claire** - well I wasn't expecting you and I was just about to go out...but ok, I can spare half an hour...

#### c. Start of discussion - Authoritative approach

**Social Worker** - Hi Clare and Darren, thank you for making the time to see me this morning. As you know we have been working together for a while now, and based upon what I have seen, what you have told me and information from other agencies – I have concerns about the care of Michelle, Troy, Susan and Ryan and I would like to spend some time with you talking through what my concerns are and what plans we can put in place to support you as parents and to enable you to improve your care of the children...

**Claire** - This sounds serious...what is it exactly that you are concerned about? ...we know that there have been some problems...what kind of support can you offer us?

Finally, bring the small groups together to reflect on the different approaches.