

Audience Groups 1-8 (Working Together 2010)

Methods Family case study, audio of family case study; audio: Parents statements; small group exercise; large group feedback

Preparation

For the first part you need to choose which family case studies you want to use (you could use all of them or you could, instead ask members of the group to describe cases they are aware of from practice) and ensure that there are handouts of the case study families and the associated family members. For the second part you may want to use the audio - Parents' statements - because the tone of voice also helps to convey level of motivation to change.

Links to Common Core

Common Core 1 Effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers (skills: listening and building empathy). Build open and honest relationships by respecting children, young people, parents and carers and making them feel valued as partners.

Common Core 1 Effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers (skills: listening and building empathy). Hold conversations at the appropriate time and place, understanding.

Common Core 2 Child and young person development (skills: empathy and understanding). Demonstrate your commitment to reaching a shared understanding with a child, young person, parent or carer by talking and listening effectively; make sensitive judgements about what is being said and what is meant by what is being said.

Learning Outcomes

To maintain the momentum of change.

Process

There are two parts to this exercise.

The first is to consider what hinders or facilitates purposeful therapeutic relationships with parents and carers. The second part is to broaden out to consider the importance of purposeful relationships in assessing parents' capacity to change.

Ask participants to work in small groups of 3-4 and to read the case study material and discuss the following:

Part 1

What might get in the way of effective working between parents/carers and practitioners?

- First discuss this from the parents/carers perspective.
- Then consider the practitioners' perspective.

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Time

Total : 45 minutes

Promoting and
maintaining
meaningful
change

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Process Continued ↘

Consider that many parents/carers mistrust formal services because of:

- fear that contact with statutory services will result in removal of their children
- fear of stigma or suspicion of statutory services
- a belief that their behaviour would be judged as harmful to their children
- differential power relations between them and practitioners.

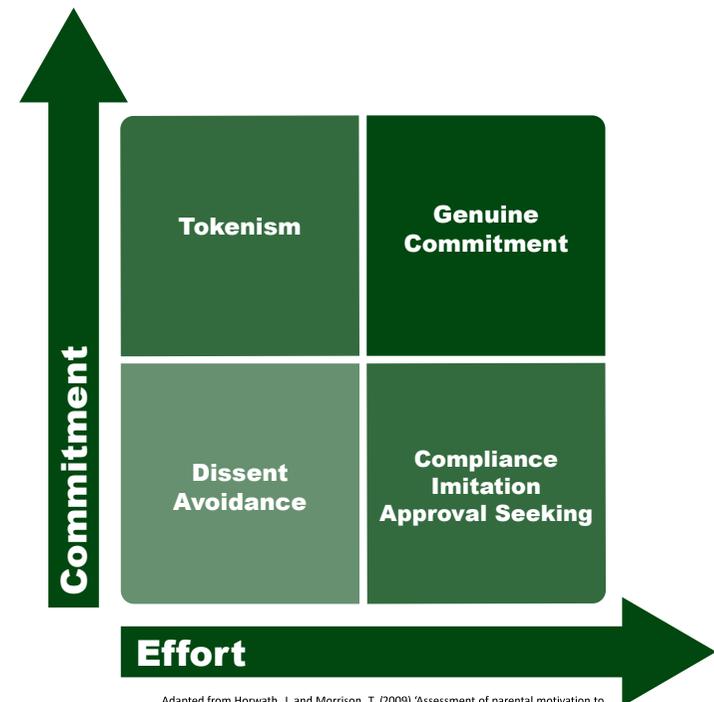
Do you think any part of these statements may be true of parents of neglected children?

Why might this be?

Part 2

Then ask participants to consider Howarth's model, Assessment of parental motivation to change (2009), that shows two dimensions to help when gauging both motivation and willingness to change. The two dimensions allow for four different patterns that are likely to be recognisable to practitioners and are shown in a diagram:

- 'genuine commitment' where parents make good efforts to change and show commitment to improving their parenting for the benefit of the children
- 'tokenism' where parents express commitment to change, but for a range of possible reasons do not put in actual effort to change
- 'compliance imitation' or 'approval seeking' where there can be high effort to make changes (perhaps sporadically) but the commitment to sustained change is not demonstrated
- 'dissent' or 'avoidance' where there is a combination of low effort and low commitment.



Adapted from Horwath, J. and Morrison, T. (2009) 'Assessment of parental motivation to change.' In Horwath, J. (Ed) (2009) *The Child's World: Assessing Children in Need*. London, Jessica Kingsley.

Continued ↘

Process Continued ▾

Statements

- I want to change
- I don't like things as they are
- I am asking for your help
- I have resources to help solve this
- I think you can help me
- I think things can get better
- I have other support which I will use to encourage me
- I accept that I am doing something wrong
- I accept what you say needs to change
- I accept that others are right (family, friends, community, agencies)
- You defining the problem clearly helps
- I understand what change will involve
- I understand that if I do not change you will take my children away
- I can change if you do this for me
- I'll do whatever you say
- I agree to do this so the family can be reconstituted
- It's your job to solve my problem
- You are my problem
- I am right and you are wrong
- I don't have any problems

Ask participants to read the statements provided (and consider playing them the audio version) and to group them in different ways to represent different combinations of the two dimensions of commitment and effort: Ask them to consider how they could incorporate this kind of analysis into assessments of motivation and willingness to change, and how they communicate with parents or carers.

Use large group discussion to share the views.

During discussion you may want to note that there is increasing recognition of the value of developing good working and therapeutic relationships with parents. However, developing and maintaining relationships in the context of child neglect requires tenacity and resilience. It can be helpful to discuss with participants that the parental characteristics associated with neglect in the first place are often those that make relationships difficult. For example, parents whose children are neglected often find it difficult to make use of help that is offered, and can rebuff support.

You may also want to discuss some of the particular issues relating to longer term support of children and families. It is possible for practitioners to become enmeshed with the family, or to become habituated to the conditions of the home such that they lose sight of what needs to be in place for the children. Practitioners can also lose sight of the extent to which parents' expressions of a wish to change are supported by concrete evidence of change.