

## Reflective Journal (November 2008)

### The Intention of the Reflective Journal

The notion that effective professionals are those that can think systematically and critically about their own work, and use this to develop is now well established under the broad title “Reflective Practice”.

There is an expectation of workers by most employers that they reflect upon their practice, and this often forms an important element of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Reflective accounts also form the backbone of SVQ Level 3. Your Reflective Journal will be a useful point of reference when undertaking this work.

In order that you keep a record of attending the course and how you have or hope to put into place the skills and knowledge you gained, STRADA recommends that you complete a Reflective Journal.

**Your reflective journal is considered a key element of all modules, for the Practice-Based Workshops it forms a key part of the activity of Day 3. For other modules, we recommend that you start work on as soon as possible after the module and keep it as evidence of your on-going learning.**

The idea of reflection is not just about reinforcing our own ideas, but about developing them.

Tripp (1993) explains:

Reflecting on what we do is essential to the development of professional judgement, but unless our reflection involves some form of challenge to and critique of ourselves and our professional values, we tend to simply reinforce existing patterns and tendencies. The problem is that reflection does not take place in a vacuum; so -called “objectivity” is always partial because perception and thought are always contextualized and therefore limited. Reflection is always informed by a view of the world, which is created by our culture, values and experiences. This forms a circularity that reinforces our existing view of the world: we construct our world through reflection, but how and on what we reflect is largely determined by our existing world view. It is this tendency, which means that we have to do something other than merely reflect upon our practice to change or view it differently. We first must change our awareness through deliberately setting out to view the world of our practice in new ways. In other words, to develop our professional judgement, we have to move beyond our everyday “working” way of looking at things, critical incidents can help us to do so. (Tripp 1993:12 )

Tripp D. (1993) *Critical Incidents in Teaching: developing professional judgement*. Routledge

By working through the outcomes detailed below you will gain a more in-depth understanding as to how to link your learning with your work practice and to be able to examine your work practice in some detail. You may also find it useful to discuss these learning outcomes with a colleague. Perhaps you know of one particular colleague who could be your mentor for the course - a mentor being someone with a sound general understanding of the theory and practice of working with drug and alcohol users and who has the time and ability to discuss these issues with you.

### **How to complete your Learning Portfolio**

Your reflective journal consists of five short pieces of writing.

It is suggested that each outcome should be approximately 300 words, however the exact length is, of course up to you. This is your record. The journal will not be collected in or marked. However, each response to each outcome should be written in complete sentences. You are encouraged to use the word "I" frequently – this helps you to keep the tone of your work personal to your experience and your specific service. You should start to work on your reflective journal as soon as you can. The order you complete the outcomes in is not important. There may be times when you wish to cross-reference from one outcome to another. If you do this please ensure that you explain this. Your response to each outcome should be on a different page. This document does not need to be typed, as long as you can read it, that's fine.

## THE SIX OUTCOMES

### OUTCOME ONE

**Reflect on how a current and up-to-date understanding of current issues in the drug / alcohol field could improve my work practice.**

Pick a specific issue (*for example raising the legal age to buy alcohol*) and explain it using appropriate references. Reflect on how it impacts on your current work. Include some recommendations as to how to maintain an up-to-date understanding of issues in the drug and alcohol field.

### OUTCOME TWO

**Reflect on what good practice means for me as a worker and for the service in which I am currently employed.**

Detail what you believe good practice means, try to support this with reference to documents, books, policy and then analyse how far this meets with your interpretation of good practice and the interpretation of your employer. Include recommendations as to how you and your service could strive to improve practice. Reference should be made to the *National Quality Standards for Substance Misuse Services*.

### OUTCOME THREE

**Detail those skills required in my current post and how they could be improved.**

Be as specific as possible. Identify two or three core skills and explain why they are important for you as a worker. Where appropriate, the skills identified should refer to the specific module you are completing. Ensure that recommendations are specific & achievable. Are these skills explicit in your job description? If they are not specified, ought they to be?

### OUTCOME FOUR

**Consider the impact of this course on my working relationships with drug/alcohol users.**

You may wish to write this in the form of a diary with three or four short entries written at intervals over an agreed period of time. It might be useful for you to refer to books and articles that document those qualities which seem to be effective when working with clients. You may also wish to reference comments made by colleagues or clients themselves.

### OUTCOME FIVE

**Explore the ways in which a knowledge & understanding of other services in my area can improve my work practice.**

This is not just about a/those service/s you receive referrals from but also those that you make referrals to and that are used by your client group.

### OUTCOME SIX.

**What is my understanding of Recovery? What is my service's understanding of Recovery and how is this promoted? How does my service support service users' " Road to Recovery"?**

To what extent does my service take into consideration the wider context of the service users' life such as work, education, recreation, relationships, religion and self-help and peer supports?