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<u>Title/ id 1</u>	An Introduction to the Case Conference
<u>Brief Course Description</u>	Highly interactive life drama role play to encourage practical understanding and open discussion
<u>Keywords</u>	case conference, role play, drama, experiential, characters, communicate effectively, professional role, agency role, responsibilities, newly qualified social worker, inter-agency, intra-agency
<u>Required trainer skills</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Beginner, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intermediate, <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced
<u>Level of CP knowledge/experience required from trainer</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Beginner, <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advanced
<u>Level of training</u>	<p><u>Targets</u></p> <p><u>Foundation</u> S2-9: How you should participate in case conferences and other CP meetings (core group and others); clarity about your professional role in the same. S2-11: How we communicate effectively and engage with all parties – children and young people, their families and carers, and other professionals – listening and being heard – communication. This includes complaints.</p> <p><u>Contributes to Foundation</u></p> <p>S2-3: Roles and responsibilities of each discipline/agency; how they all fit together to protect children – conflicts between them – professional confidence. S2-4: Information handling – pursuing – collating – recording – sharing – consent and confidentiality identifying gaps.</p> <p><u>Investigation Assessment</u> S3-1: Identification, investigation and/or assessment of abuse/neglect and professional role in this.</p> <p><u>What participants need to know already</u> Basic awareness raising of child protection, including some input on the function of the Child Protection Case Conference and how/when this is used.</p>

Overview & Objectives

The experiential life drama is an interactive learning activity which allows for greater flexibility than a traditional role play and therefore more comfortable for participants. In this activity, participants have the opportunity to 'act out' their understanding of what happens in a Case Conference, based on their existing level of knowledge and experience. For 'first timers' this will be an introductory experience.

Learning objectives

- Consolidate participants understanding of the roles in the Case Conference: their own, inter-agency and the family/child.
- Become familiar with the function of the Case Conference.
- Draw on any knowledge of their agency's child protection procedures.
- Consider their own presenting skills, how information/assessment is analysed and potentially how decisions are reached within the Case Conference.
- Evaluate the needs and rights of the family/child in the Case Conference process.
- Consider their own professional attitude towards other agencies.
- Consider the child's role within the Case Conference and the dilemmas faced when including the child positively in this type of meeting.

Learning outcome

Participants should feel more confident in applying their knowledge and skills while attending and participating in a Case Conference; including their own professional role and their agency procedures.

How does the selected approach fit with the learning outcome?

Provides participants with the opportunity to test out their knowledge and also receive feedback from others. Participants can also be involved at the level most comfortable to their knowledge and experience. Inter agency roles and the decision making process are part of the experience. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their own contribution during the evaluation.

Before the training day

Audience Originally intended for use with newly qualified social workers as part of a five day Basic Child Protection training programme. Can also be used as a stand alone exercise as part of child protection training with other disciplines both inter and intra agency. Intended for any professional who has previously attended or might be expected to attend, a Child Protection Case Conference. This is a flexible training activity, which can be adapted to meet particular learning needs or requirements of all participants. For example you may wish to edit the character descriptions when running the exercise for other disciplines, and carefully consider how you distribute the roles amongst the group.

Length of activity • 60-90 minutes

Group size • Minimum 10 – Maximum 20

Approximate timing (for group of 20)

- Introduction of scenario, setting the scene and identifying characters: 30 mins approx.
- Life drama: 30 minutes approx.
- Debriefing and reflection: 30 minutes approx.

Materials

- Scenario: to introduce the members of the Case Conference and the family situation to be discussed (see Annex A)
- Flipchart and pens
- Table name tents (if sitting for drama)
- Character labels: name of each character written on a piece of flip chart papers and placed on the floor or hanging from the back of a chair if seated in open circle

Preparation

- Send out case conference character descriptions prior to training
- Send out character descriptions at least one week prior to the training
- Two facilitators: one to 'direct' the life drama and one to actively participate in the 'audience'. NB. If the chosen facilitators have not run this sort of exercise together previously, it would be sensible for them to meet before the training day, to go over the process together.
- **Secure** large open space to give plenty of room depending on size of group
- **One** meeting between facilitators

Original context for training

Original context from which this learning activity is drawn

The Basic Child Protection 5 day programme is designed to take staff through the child protection process (i.e. from the initial referral to formulating a child protection plan), prior to undertaking this in practice. Over the five days, participants receive inputs in relation to the various stages e.g.: legislative context, signs and symptoms of abuse, planning an investigation and inter agency roles. Throughout the course, participants work with a scenario to consider the child protection process. The scenario is developed each day to include additional information as the investigation progresses; to reflect the stages of learning.

Discussing the function of the Child Protection Case Conference is included in Day 4, following the 'investigation' being completed. The life drama is used to facilitate a more practical understanding for participants and to stimulate discussion.

Roles

Facilitator (x2): One facilitator assumes the role of 'director' to provide all instructions and guide the participants through the life drama. The 'director' facilitator should be someone with real world experience of case conferences. The second facilitator participates as a member of the audience (described later) and while they should not provide instructions, can act as a support to the director. Participants should have received the character descriptions prior to the day so the director need only highlight the key issues to be presented during the case conference. (See Annex A)

Drama character (12)

- Angela Skip (mother)
- John White (father)
- Melissa Skip (child)
- Social Worker
- Senior Social Worker
- Area Service Manager
- Head Teacher
- Nursery Teacher
- Community Paediatrician
- GP
- Health Visitor
- Police

- Voluntary Sector Worker
- Reporter

NB. you may wish to vary the cast of practitioners, according to local patterns of service provision/practice.

On the training day

The director introduces individually the 'characters' who are attending the Conference (See Annex B). Depending on the size of the group, facilitators should plan how many characters are in the Conference, with remaining participants being in the 'audience'. With a large group i.e. 20, it is suggested that at least half take on a character role and with a small group i.e. 10 then everyone could participate as a character with no audience (except the second facilitator), which will achieve a similar outcome.

The director provides some characteristics and a brief description of each character's role. This can be adapted to suit the professional roles and experience of the participants and the director can inject some humour in describing the characters. For example, Ms Lovely who is a newly qualified Social Worker and nervous at attending her first Case Conference or Ms Boss the Head Teacher who clearly feels that the children should have been accommodated long ago.

The director writes the name of the character on a piece of flipchart paper and places it on the floor or if sitting at a table use name tents. The director allocates a role to each person in order to save time. Volunteering for roles is an option but requires additional time. At the end of this stage, all of the characters should be standing on a piece of flipchart paper in a circle (or sitting around a table), with members of the audience standing (or sitting) outwith the circle.

Rules

Once the characters are identified, participants should be advised of some rules.

- At any time during the life drama the director (and only the director) can ask that everyone 'freeze' – at this point the director might ask two characters to swap roles, or provide additional information to be discussed, to change the dynamics of the life drama.
- Do not interrupt someone when they are speaking.
- Try to ask open ended questions.
- Use character's name when addressing them.

Note. These last three rules tend to make the learning experience 'tidier'. If you wish to expose learners to the way case conferences can happen, rather than to a model of good practice, then you may wish to omit these rules.

Optional extra (recommended for experienced trainers only as it can be difficult to manage):

- At any time, any of the characters or a member of the audience can decide that they want to swap roles – to do so they should walk over to the character they want to swap with and place a hand on their shoulder.
- If the audience is reluctant to contribute to the life drama, the other facilitator (placed in the audience) can encourage this by example.

'Freezing' – a note for the Director – some other points on taking this action:

- You may find it useful to meet the needs of the group generally or to get the life drama back on track to meet learning objectives, when, for example, a character is dominating the discussion or the drama is going a bit flat.
- On the other hand, it is probably not sensible to use it for the purpose of debriefing any of the actors at the time, as the subsequent discussion can get in the way of experiencing the rest of the conference process. It's probably better to 'let the take run' and debrief afterwards.

The activity The director introduces the theme – the Case Conference and allows participants to act out their roles accordingly, which should promote discussion. The director can use the strategies above as appropriate to maintain the momentum of the life drama. The facilitator in the audience also has a key role in monitoring the progress of the discussion and intervening as appropriate; although only the director can give instructions to the life drama and freeze the discussion. As the life drama progresses, the characters should have moved around frequently and a lively discussion ensued. The aim is not to reach a recommendation, although this might be the outcome, but to generate a discussion where information is evaluated and everyone contributes. The director should end the drama at an appropriate time.

Conclusion *Debrief*
Directly following the life drama, it is advised that the director spend a little time on debriefing with the group, to bring everyone 'out of character'. For example, to ask participants to close their eyes and naming each character in turn, remind that these are fictional and bring the group back to their current surroundings.

Reflecting on what has been learned

Subsequently, both facilitators should ask the characters how they felt in their roles, what they had learned and what they will take with them to their next case conference. The group should be asked to verbally evaluate what happened in the life drama e.g. how information was responded to, who dominated the discussion, how was inter-agency conflict dealt with and how decisions were reached. The audience's observations should also be encouraged to add their perspective. The facilitators should raise any issues for further discussion/ clarification. This is for example an opportunity to highlight relevant local procedures that. It is also important to raise and explore the point that case conferences sometimes do – but should not – over-focus on registration both at the expense of identifying protective factors and of the task of collating of an active plan for the child, including identified responsibilities within this.

Following this exercise, a break is suggested.

The next training step

Following the 'outcome' of the Case Conference – further consideration of the child protection plan and how this is implemented in practice e.g. role of the core group

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ANNEX A

SCENARIO

This scenario has been adapted to be used as a stand- alone exercise. This scenario could also be incorporated in other training exercises and details changed to meet the needs of the learning activity. If working with a small group, it may be appropriate to reduce the number of characters or information provided

The Skip Family

(information to be distributed to the group)

The following information should be provided to the participants at least one week prior to the life drama

Family Details

Angela Skip Age 28 Mother
John White Age 34 Partner
Melissa Skip Age 10 Child
Haley James Age 7 Child
Darren James Age 4 Child
Rebekka White Age 2 months Child

Profiles

Angela Skip

She has a long history of social work involvement and was looked after and accommodated as a teenager. Angela has lived in the area for one year; she has led a chaotic lifestyle and has moved regularly across Scotland. She has a history of alcohol related difficulties. Angela has been in a relationship with John White for one year and the couple have a child, Rebekka. She has had two previous significant relationships, from which she has 3 children, although these children have no contact with their respective fathers.

John White

Has always lived in this area. John has a history of substance addiction, including heroin use. He has previous criminal convictions including a serious assault and is currently subject to a Probation Order

Melissa Skip

As a young child, Melissa lived with her maternal grandmother for three years, due to Angela's alcohol use and her violent relationship with Melissa's father.

Melissa is described as withdrawn and isolated at school. She is not attaining her educational potential and often arrives late at school, stating that she is hungry

Haley James

Haley is described as having a mild learning disability and attends mainstream school with additional supports. She demonstrates challenging behaviour and thrives on individual attention at school.

Haley has told her class teacher that 'bad men come in to my room at night and they hurt my mummy'. Haley and Melissa share a bedroom

Darren James

Darren has reached his developmental milestones. He is described as being aggressive towards other children during his time at the local nursery. Darren is often very tired on arrival at nursery and is always hungry. Darren will often try to 'hide' when John White collects him from nursery

Rebekka White

Rebekka was born prematurely with a low birth weight. Whilst in hospital, Angela had to be encouraged by nursing staff to spend prolonged periods with the baby. The Health Visitor has had difficulty gaining access to the home to monitor Rebekka

Child Protection Scenario

Angela's mother, Ann Joseph, contacted the Social Work Department expressing concern about the children. She described the home as 'cold and filthy' and that there wasn't enough food for the children as Angela and John spent all their money on 'drink and drugs'. She stated that the house was used by other 'druggies and alkie's' and is concerned about what they are 'doing' to the children, but did not make a specific allegation

Mrs Joseph decided to phone Social Work after meeting Melissa in a distressed state. She noted bruising on Melissa's cheek and eye, as well as her upper arms. Melissa told her gran that 'John did it' when he was angry and he and her mum were drunk.

Outcome of the Child Protection Investigation

A joint Police and Social Work investigation took place. Melissa stated that John had caused the injury and that he had hit her several times in the past. A medical examination confirmed that the injury was non – accidental. John White denied the allegation but was charged with the offence of assault to Melissa. Darren has also stated that he 'is hit when he is a bad boy' by John White and also his mother. On visiting the family home, Angela White was found to be under the influence of alcohol whilst the three children were in her care. The Police have sent a report to the Children's Hearing.

Subsequently the children were placed overnight with Mrs Joseph. They returned to their mother's care the following day, on the condition that John White was no longer living in the family home and had no contact with the children. Since the incident, Angela agreed to accept support from Addiction Services although her cooperation has been minimal. In nursery, Darren has stated that 'John was in the house last night' which Angela has denied.

A Child Protection Case Conference has been arranged in light of these concerns.

ANNEX B

Characters for Life Drama (For Facilitator's use only)

This is intended as a guide which can be adapted to meet the needs of the group. As explained, the facilitator should read out the details of each character in turn and ask for a participant to volunteer. The number of characters used should reflect the size of the group. The facilitator should give each character a fictional name and characteristics. The participants can then develop the characters as they choose.

Social Worker

e.g. Anna Lovely, age 28 who is newly qualified and nervous to be attending her first Case Conference

The Social Worker would normally provide relevant details of family members, background information, details of the referral and an overview of risks and strengths in the family. The Social Worker will have been actively involved in the child protection investigation and undertaken the joint investigative interview of Melissa

Senior Social Worker

Will have an overview of the case and will have co-ordinated the child protection investigation, including Briefing and De-Briefing sessions. Has responsibility for ensuring all relevant checks were undertaken at the time of the investigation

Area Service Manager

Is the Chair of the Child Protection Case Conference and will have taken the decision to convene the meeting. Will ensure that all views are heard of those present, before reaching a decision with those present, as to whether the children's names should be placed on the Child Protection Register

Head Teacher (for Melissa and Haley)

Will be expected to share all relevant information in relation to the children e.g. attendance, concerns about behaviour. Will have an opinion regarding the need for Registration

Nursery Teacher (Darren)

Will be expected to share all relevant information in relation to the child e.g. attendance, concerns about behaviour. Will have an opinion regarding the need for Registration

Community Paediatrician

The Clinical Medical Officer will be invited as part of the Core Group i.e. those invited to every Child Protection Case Conference. Will be expected to share all relevant information including that on the children's development and contribute to discussion in respect of child protection concerns. Will have an opinion regarding the need for Registration

G.P

Will be expected to share all relevant information including that on the children's development and contribute to discussion in respect of child protection concerns. Will have an opinion regarding the need for Registration

Health Visitor

Their records will contain significant details of the children, including home visits. Will be expected to contribute to discussion in respect of child protection concerns. Will have an opinion regarding the need for Registration

Police

The Family Protection Unit Officer who was involved in the joint child protection investigation. Will have undertaken background checks of those living in the family home, to be shared at the meeting. Contribute to discussion in respect of child protection concerns and will have an opinion regarding the need for Registration

Angela Skip

John White

Melissa Skip

The Area Service manager will decide which relevant family members can attend the meeting and whether it is appropriate for the family to be involved in the full Conference.

ANNEX C

(Evaluation to come)