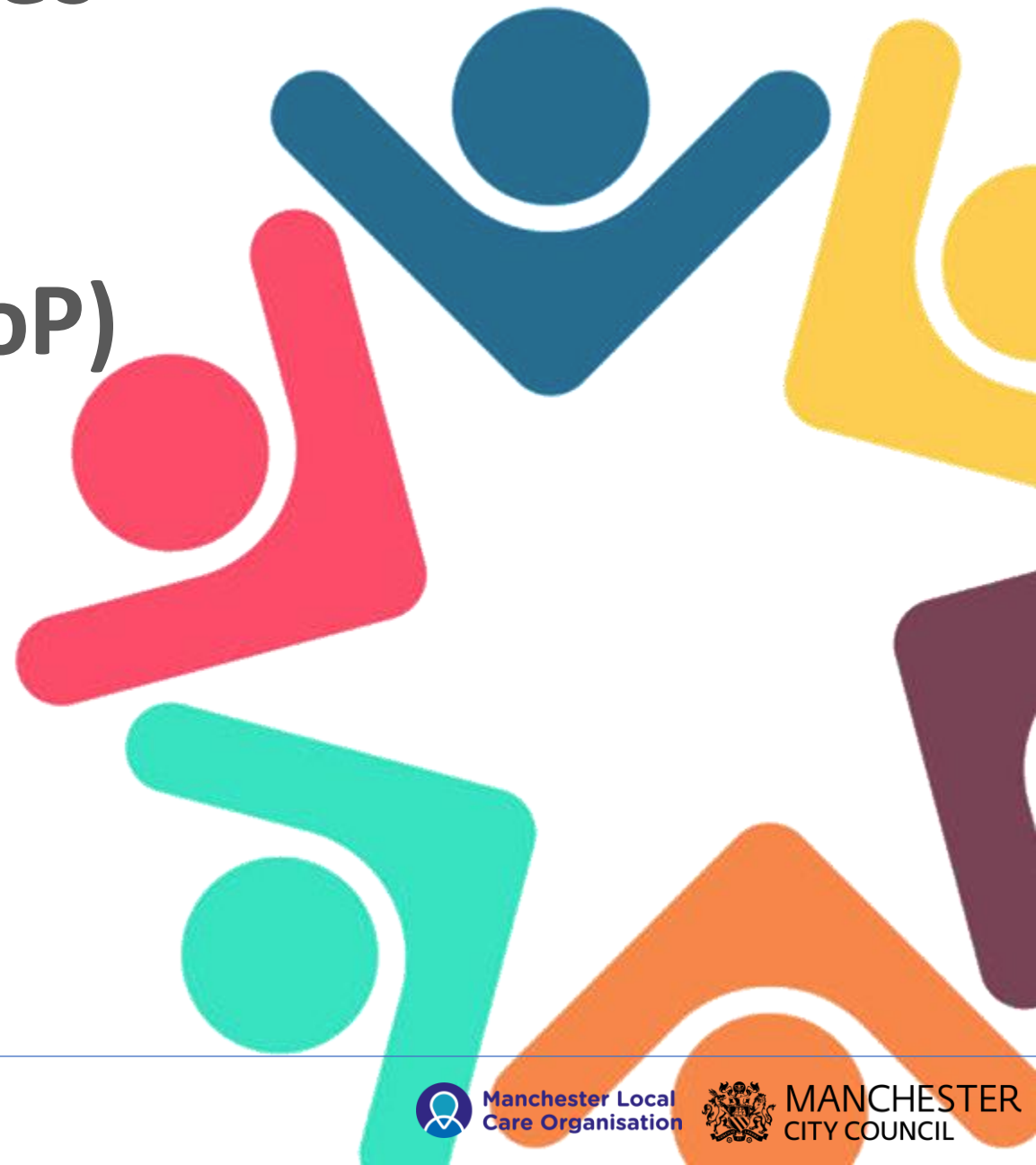


Achieving Better Outcomes Together

Communities of Practice (CoP) Facilitation Masterclass

Spring 2026



Communities of Practice Facilitation Masterclass

Introduction and icebreaker



- This session is designed for Senior Social Workers who are new to the role or new to CoPs
- It covers the responsibility of SSWs to provide for their team a regular safe space for reflection once or twice per month for one hour
- Your Practice Supervisor can provide you with support to set up your Team CoPs. Contact your Practice Supervisor direct or email:
adultsocialcarepracticesupervisors@manchester.gov.uk
or adultsocialworkconsultants@manchester.gov.uk

Communities of Practice Facilitation Masterclass

Outline of today's session

1. Purpose of Communities of Practice (CoP)
2. Roles and Responsibilities in CoPs
3. What is the role of a facilitator in the Team CoPs?
4. Planning a Team CoP and encouraging conversational flow
5. Tools and techniques
6. Handling challenges





Purpose of CoPs

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Purpose of CoPs

- ✓ Provide a **safe space** for practitioners to **learn, reflect and share** experiences, to get **peer support and challenge** and contribute to professional development.
- ✓ Connect with and learn from colleagues about **community resources**.
- ✓ The freedom to **be professionally curious**, be well-informed and expand our learning.
- ✓ CoPs are an important tool for reinforcing good practice for maximising independence.
- ✓ Focused on working with core ASC colleagues but recognising the **importance of engagement with our wider health, commissioning, mental health, neighbourhood and voluntary sector colleagues** where most beneficial to help connect things up and have **maximum impact**.



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Reflective Practice (primary focus of CoPs)

Communities of Practice **focus on group / peer critical reflection and learning**, and as such, should be different and complementary (not replacing), to other mechanisms, forums and meetings that are also supporting good practice.

CoPs reflective practice is NOT...	This should happen elsewhere IN...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scrutinising Packages of Care	✓ Quality Assurance & Panels
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case Decision-making	✓ MDT Meetings, MAMS & MAPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cascading Management Information	✓ Team Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Individual' Clinical or Practice Supervision	✓ Supervision

The above remain important existing tools, that also need to be functioning well, to also support the embedding of good practice.



Roles and responsibilities within CoPs

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Roles and responsibilities 2025



Social Work Consultant

- Overall responsibility for CoPs.
- Respond to themes, issues and barriers to service delivery
- Management of Spotlight forward plan (liaising w/ Business Support)
- Oversee quarterly CoP self-assessments and action/ respond to relevant feedback
- Schedule/ Lead quarterly Facilitator Workshops
- Provide feedback on CoPs and development into Service Managers and where applicable, Performance Board governance arrangements
- Schedule and co-ordinate TM/SSW CoPs every 3 months
- Promote Spotlight sessions and identify Comms for follow up
- Lead change in ASC practice



Practice Supervisor

- Coordinate and deliver Themed CoPs in response to practitioner reflections and issues/ barriers (liaising w/ Business Support if required)
- Promote engagement of CoPs within their networks
- Manage and deliver CoP Intro Sessions (for ASC and wider partners)
- Manage and deliver Facilitator masterclass
- Promote recruitment of co-facilitators to support facilitation of reflective CoPs
- Develop and embed new COPs
- Embed change



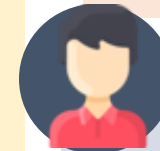
Facilitator

- Facilitate Reflective Practice CoPs (liaising w/ Business Support if required)
- Promote engagement of CoPs within their networks
- Manage CoP attendance
- Responding to relevant/changing needs of their team
- Utilise local knowledge/ networks to include presenters/ participants with specialist community knowledge and facilitate neighbourhood connections
- Work with Co-Facilitator and Practice Supervisor to maximise opportunities presented by CoPs



Co-facilitator

- Support/ facilitate reflective practice discussions
- Encourage meaningful engagement in CoPs
- Work with facilitator to plan and resource the sessions



Business Support

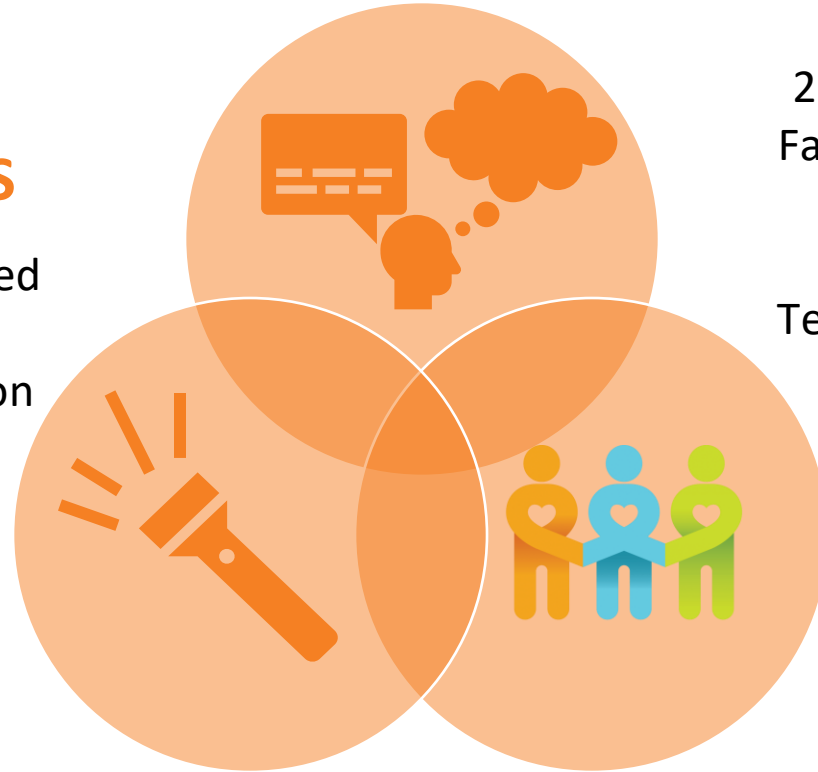
- Where appropriate, work with SWC. Facilitators and PSs to invite relevant attendees to CoPs for Themed, Spotlight and Reflective Practice sessions and Team Manager/Seniors CoPs
- Manage invite list for CoPs (if required)

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Different CoP sessions

SPOT-LIGHT SESSIONS

1st full week of the month – managed by Social Work Consultants/Convenors. Spotlight on important topics and issues to practitioners



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Primary focus of Team CoPs

2nd and/or 4th week of the month. Facilitated regular group reflection, centred on case discussion. Predominantly focused on the Team. May include wider partners.

THEMED DISCUSSION

3rd week of alternate months – facilitated by Practice Supervisors. Themed discussion on subjects that are important to practitioners in the locality



Role of CoP facilitator in Team CoPs

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What is the role of CoP facilitators?

How would you describe the role and characteristics of a Facilitator in a Team Community of Practice?

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What is the role of a facilitator?



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Facilitation role in a CoP

- The Lead Facilitator role supports **reflective practice** as part of the CoP
- Enables '**rich conversations**' that support practitioners to be confident and enhance their practice
- Helps the smooth running of CoPs, **boosting engagement and participation**
- Promotes collaborative working with health colleagues and other partners
- Identifies **opportunities** to address system barriers, escalating to the Practice Supervisor or Manager as required, and/or completing a [My VIEWS](#) form
- Leads with **professional curiosity**, creating an open culture of learning to support peers
- Requests a team member to act as co-facilitator if this would be helpful





Planning a Team CoP and encouraging conversational flow

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Points to consider when planning a team CoP

- Invite a practitioner to present a case
 - Discuss a recent training session which team member(s) have attended – discuss as a wider group
 - Discuss a theory, policy or model and relate this to current practice
 - Feedback from a research article, podcast, webinar or a topic within current affairs
 - Invite students/apprentices and ASYEs to present a topic of their choice
 - Invite another professional or agency to discuss their role and how the teams can work better together
 - Remember to follow up on any agreed actions
- ❖ **Trigger warnings: Consider whether these would be appropriate and offer suitable support**

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Asking questions to encourage reflective discussion



As in your practice with citizens, facilitation requires questions to help achieve the overall outcome – to develop and strengthen good practice

- Ask open questions – that cannot be answered with a simple “Yes” or “No”.
- Asking “Why” can be useful – but be aware that this may sometimes cause defensiveness.
- Funnel questions – you may want to start with broader questions and then focus in on a specific element.
- Know the purpose of your question - think about where it will take the conversation.
- Encourage wider group questions or questions to the group –this isn’t a supervision!

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Reflective questioning within a CoP

Points to explore

- What was the least restrictive option available?
- What was the outcome? Is support helping to prevent, reduce or delay?
- What has worked well and why?
- What did you learn that you will build into your practice?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What approaches have others taken with similar situations?
- What were you looking to achieve? What did others involved want to achieve?
- What theories and evidence base has informed your practice?
- Can anyone share an example of where they have been able to work creatively to support someone's outcomes?





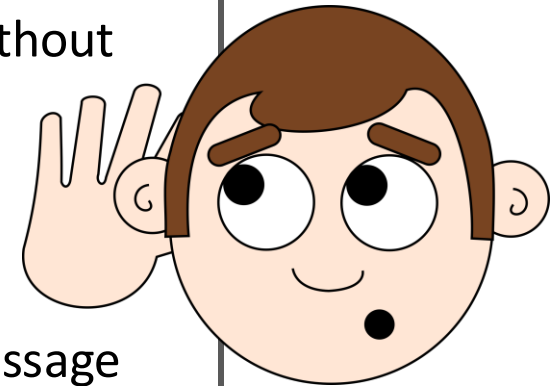
Tools and techniques

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Active listening

Active listening will help to encourage and validate contributions by team members.

- **Non-verbal listening** – body language, eye contact, posture, focused attention without distraction.
- **Verbal Reinforcement** – positive listening noises.
- **Comprehension through Questioning** – using questions to ensure the correct message has been received and that a shared meaning has been agreed.
- **Retaining and Summarising**– Remember key ideas and details to enable a summary to be shared back to the group.



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Active listening



Examples of Active Listening Questions

- When you said X, what did you mean by that?
- So you did X, and then what happened?
- Could you tell us more about that?
- The citizen wanted X outcome, but the family want Y. Have I got that right?



What other common questions or tools do you use to actively listen?

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Systems theory

Ecological Systems Theory

- Considers how individuals are influenced by a number of interconnected environments that shape their lived experience
- These systems include the individual, their family, community, religion, culture, and local, regional and national organisations
- Each system contributes to an individual's current circumstances and to the broader cultural context



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Systems theory

Utilising systems theory will help to encourage broader and deeper analysis and professional curiosity.

- Need to understand and step back to be able to see the whole picture
- Systems theory can be useful in reflecting about the wider systems or focusing in on the immediate support system around the citizen
- We are each in control of some elements of the system, but we also have an influence in other areas. We can use our influence to create change
- Different systems interact – health services, adult social care services, community services, citizen, family and local community
- Systems theory can also be applied to professionals, teams and organisations, to reflect on multi-agency working, professional outcomes and impacts on team members



Handling challenges

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Handling challenges

Lack of Engagement & Virtual Working

Low energy within a CoP, with limited volunteering of information or questions. Some participants attend but with limited engagement.



Take 5 minutes to think about how you might address these challenges in a Community of Practice

Defensiveness or Tension within CoPs

Individuals feel uncomfortable or defensive sharing their practice and client outcomes within the CoP. Peers may ask questions in a less sensitive manner creating tension.



Same issues raised with no resolution

The same issue or challenge is raised at each CoP with limited progression forward. Actions are not being taken or being followed through.

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Handling challenges

Lack of Engagement & Virtual Working

Low energy within a CoP, with limited volunteering of information or questions. Some participants attend but with limited engagement.



Speak to a member of the team in advance to ask them to present something of interest to them.

Defensiveness or Tension within CoPs

Individuals feel uncomfortable or defensive sharing their practice and client outcomes within the CoP. Peers may ask questions in a less sensitive manner creating tension.

Set ground rules at the start and be prepared to step in and clarify and encourage. Start low-key and build up gradually.

Vary the style and content of the CoP. Take any actions to a different arena as CoPs are reflective spaces.



Same issues raised with no resolution

The same issue or challenge is raised at each CoP with limited progression forward. Actions are not being taken or being followed through.



Any questions



Contact your Practice Supervisor direct or email:
adultsocialcarepracticesupervisors@manchester.gov.uk
or
adultsocialworkconsultants@manchester.gov.uk

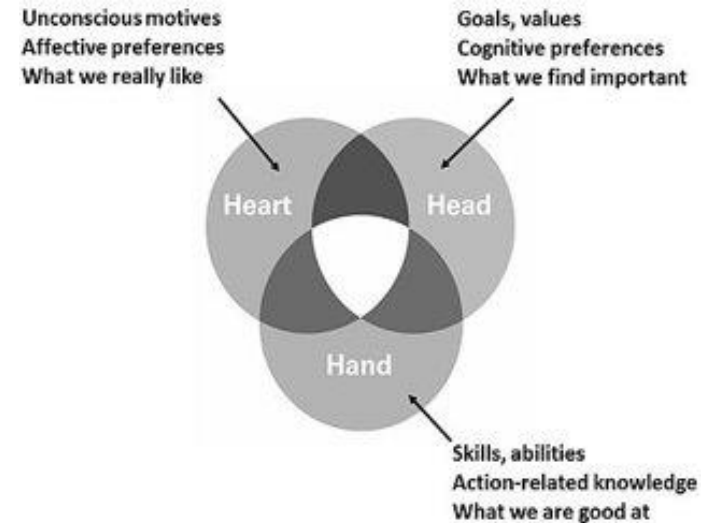


Useful resources

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Reflective practice models

- The are **many reflective models**, including; the head, heart, hands reflective model, or the Weather Model (see right) ...and more.
- *Whatever approach one takes, being **critically reflective involves a number of key things** (Brookfield, 1998), including;
 - An analysis of our assumptions.
 - A degree of scepticism about existing knowledge, beliefs and values.
 - An awareness of the social context, for us and for people who use services.
 - Some imaginative speculation - how else might this have happened?



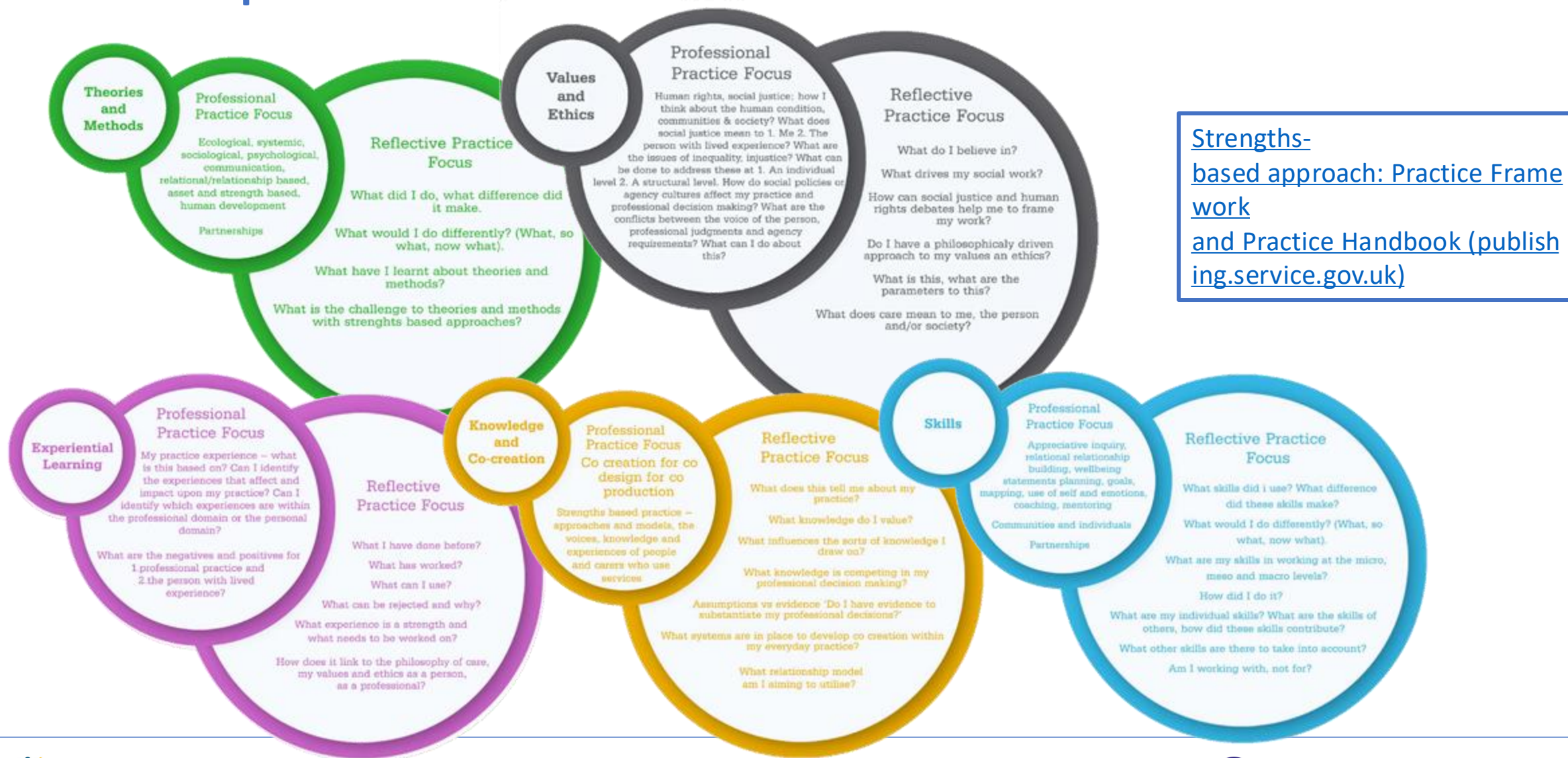
"The weather model"

- Sunshine – what went well? What felt good?
- Rain – what didn't go so well?
- Lightening – what came as a shock?
- Fog – where did you get lost? What couldn't you see? Why?



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Reflective practice KcVETS model



[Strengths-based approach: Practice Framework and Practice Handbook \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

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Socratic questioning

Socratic Question Type	Example
Clarification questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you mean by...? Could you put that another way? What do you think is the main issue? Could you give us an example? Could you expand upon that point further?
Questions about an initial question or issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is this question important? Is this question easy or difficult to answer? Why do you think that? What assumptions can we make based on this question? Does this question lead to other important issues and questions?
Assumption questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why would someone make this assumption? What is _____ assuming here? What could we assume instead? You seem to be assuming_____. Do I understand you correctly?
Reason and evidence questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would be an example? Why do you think this is true? What other information do we need? Could you explain your reason to us? By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion? Is there reason to doubt that evidence? What led you to that belief?
Origin or source questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this your idea or did you hear it from some place else? Have you always felt this way? Has your opinion been influenced by something or someone? Where did you get that idea? What caused you to feel that way?

Socratic Question Type	Example
Implication and consequence questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What effect would that have? Could that really happen or probably happen? What is an alternative? What are you implying by that? If that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why?
Viewpoint questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would other groups of people respond to this question? Why? How could you answer the objection that _____ would make? What might someone who believed _____ think? What is an alternative? How are _____ and _____'s ideas alike? Different?

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Resources

Access to national and local Manchester policies:

MCC Policy Portal [Manchester Adult Policies, Procedures and Practice Portal](#)

Feedback to senior colleagues to raise awareness and support positive action:

MyViews form [My VIEWS](#)

Government document on the strengths-based approach:

Department of Health & Social Care, 2019 [Strengths-based approach: Practice Framework and Practice Handbook](#)

Continuing Professional Development:

Social Work England Peer reflection [Peer reflection - Social Work England](#)

What are Communities of Practice? Hear from Jon Morris, (formerly) Senior Social Worker
2021 video [Communities of Practice on Vimeo](#)