



Creating a Safe Learning Environment

and PSHE Education in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent

2023

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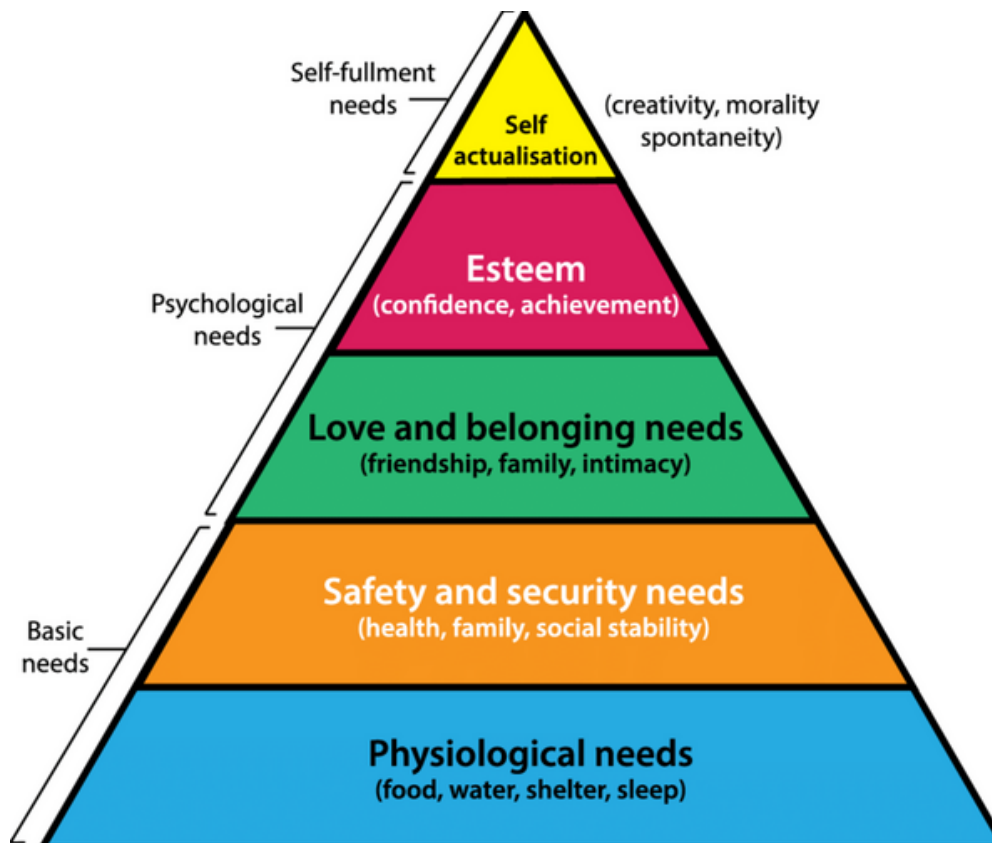
The PSHE Education Service, funded by Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner aims to support the development and delivery of age appropriate, good quality, consistent PSHE education across Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

PSHE education covers a wide range of topics, many of which are complex or sensitive. Participants who feel safe are more likely to engage in learning. It is essential to create a safe learning environment to enable children and young people to learn in a positive, supportive and empowering environment. A safe learning environment will enable children and young people to share feelings, explore values and attitudes, and express their opinions without fear of negative feedback from their peers. A safe learning environment with clear boundaries also helps professionals to manage discussions with greater confidence. It should be assumed before every session that at least one person in the room could have first-hand experience of the topic being discussed, or find it sensitive for another reason and planning of the session should take this into account when considering language use, resources and activities to use.



MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEED

Maslow's Hierarchy of Need is often applied to education. Participants who feel safe, physically and emotionally, will find it easier to learn,, make progress and grow as individuals and members of society.



It is essential that needs lower in the hierarchy are satisfied before children and young people can attend to needs higher up. However, these work together and all contribute to their overall needs and therefore, motivation.

This means that children and young people not only need their basic needs met, for example, food and shelter, but also their psychological needs, for example, love, belonging and self-esteem. This is an important lesson for professionals to apply to the children and young people we work with. Maslow's theory highlights that, if an individual does not feel emotional and psychological safety, they will find it more difficult to make engage in education sessions and develop the knowledge, skills and attributes to enable them to thrive.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

It is good practice for professionals to:



Set up clear ground rules about the group will behave towards each other during the session



Provide opportunities for discussions in small groups as well as whole class discussions



Provide a space for anonymous questions or concerns to be placed



Ensure access to a balanced information and differing views to enable children and young people to clarify their own opinion (remember to make clear that racist, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, discrimination and bullying are always unacceptable)



Be aware and follow local setting policies on behaviour, safeguarding, confidentiality and other relevant policies and procedures



Be aware of any participants who may have particular needs or be at a particular risk, need additional support



Give participants the opportunity to opt out of the session, if appropriate (without the expectation to justify their absence to their peers) or have a designated person for them to speak to if required. You will need to consider how to follow-up on the missed session as some of the learning may still be relevant to them



Not talk about your own experiences or views. As a person in a position of power, your opinions matter and can influence others



Signpost participants to trusted adults and organisations, both within your setting and outside including local and national organisations

In order for ground rules to be effective they should be created in collaboration with the group rather than given by the professional. These should be role modelled by the professional and reinforce and re-negotiate them when required. When having external speakers in they should be made aware of the ground rules and ensure that they work within these boundaries too. Ground rules can be named as a group agreement, class contract, whatever terminology works best within your setting to set boundaries and expectations for all involved.

Work with participants to establish ground rules for PSHE education lessons, such as;

- Everyone has the right to be heard and respected
- We will use language that won't offend, stereotype or upset anyone
- We will use the correct terms, and if we don't know them, we'll ask the session facilitator, teacher...
- We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it
- We won't share our own, or our friends', personal experiences, but will instead use hypothetical or fictitious examples to discuss key ideas
- We won't put anyone on the spot and we have the right to pass
- We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone

The ground rules should be on display throughout the sessions and anyone can refer to them at any time to help keep the session on track.

At the start of each session the ground rules should be revisited to remind participants of their ideas and ask them if there is anything they would like to add, and if anything has changed, needs addressing or a different approach.

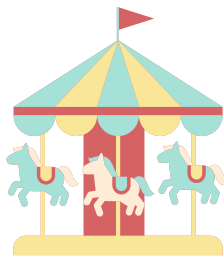


ACTIVITY IDEAS

To help you create ground rules for your setting you could:



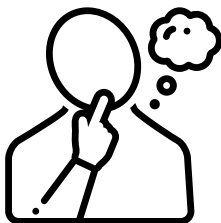
Create a character and ask the group for suggestions on how they can be helped to feel comfortable in the sessions



Carousel Activity: Split the group into smaller groups and give each group a piece of paper with the headings:

- Types of Behaviours
- What people should say/do
- What people should not say/do

Give each group five minutes to write down their thoughts and ideas about how that would be carried out in a session. When the five minutes are up pass the paper clockwise and let the group add their suggestions for a further five minutes. Pass the paper clockwise again for the final time. Once all groups have completed the activity, put the paper on display and ask the whole group to come up with the ground rules based on their ideas.



Ask the group about a time when they had rules or agreements in place for a group of people - school, sports. Explore the following discussion questions:

- Why is it important to have rules that everyone agrees to?
- How can they help to keep people safe?
- Why are these rules or agreements useful or effective in keeping people safe?


Ask the participants to work in pairs or small groups and discuss what ground rules they would like for the whole group to follow. Ask for ideas from the group, capturing them on flipchart paper so they can be referred to again



Utilise the ditty created by Jenny Walsh, based upon the work of Professor Moira Carmody use the headings as a starting point for conversation and ideas from participants.

Taking care of me
Taking care of you
Having an equal say
Learning as we go

PSHE/SAFEGUARDING TEAM COLLABORATION



PSHE education covers safeguarding issues such as child exploitation, abuse, sharing of sexual images, extremism and radicalisation, forced marriage, FGM, “honour”-based violence etc.... It is vital that the PSHE Lead has an effective working relationship with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. This will ensure that the PSHE education curriculum reflects the needs of the children and young people, for example using anonymous scenarios and will also ensure that the correct support is in place should any disclosures be made following exploration of a particular topic. The pastoral/support/safeguarding team should be made aware of topics being covered each half term/term.

OFSTED, when judging safeguarding will also explore how schools identify and address local risks for their children and young people, including their PSHE/RSHE provision. They will also look at how the PSHE/RSHE provision enable children and young people to stay safe in their local community.

Whilst PSHE/RSHE mainly judgement is part of the wider personal development and quality of education the links between Safeguarding and PSHE can also impact on the outcomes of Behaviours and Attitudes and Leadership and Management depending of the severity of the issues.

Parents and carers can also be helpful support mechanisms for children and young people so consider informing them about upcoming topics and providing them with information to enable them to provide that support.

Education professionals are role models to the children and young people they work with, The way in which they express their behaviours thoughts and feelings will affect the children and young people we work with.

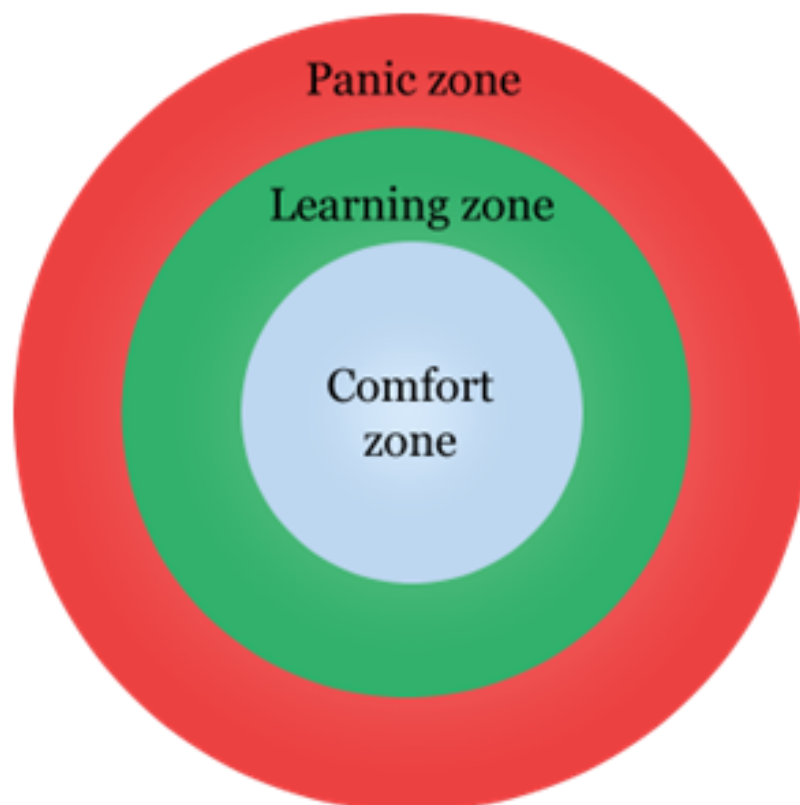
Behaviours such as anger, frustration, shame or disinterest will impact on children and young people. It is important that professionals delivering PSHE education explore their own values and attitudes towards the different topic covered by the curriculum before delivery and that own opinions are not shared.

For instance if a sexual health worker was to disclose that their contraception method of choice was the Contraceptive Implant this could, incorrectly lead the participants in the group to think this is the best contraception method available.

PSHE education should be delivered in a environment that is kind, curious, calm and consistent manner will build trust between the professional leading the session and the children and young people engaging in the learning.

STAFF CONFIDENCE

As part of a whole-organisation approach all staff will deliver PSHE education, this could be through addressing inappropriate language or behaviours witnessed or by delivering a session of PSHE education. It is important to check in with staff about how they feel about teaching PSHE education and particular topics. We all have three zones



If a member of staff identifies a particular topic as within their panic zone it is not safe or appropriate for either them or the participants to teach on these topics. Imparting knowledge is one part of a holistic PSHE education session, alongside developing skills and exploring values. Those delivering do not need to be experts on all topics, however they should have enough knowledge to feel comfortable to deliver the topic.



IDEAS

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There are lots of places to develop knowledge including:

- Attending or viewing our [Bitesize Practice Development sessions](#)
- Reading our localised ...& PSHE packs – you'll find these in our [Resource Library](#) under the relevant topic.
- [Brook Learn](#) – e-learning courses of SRE topics
- [NHS Website](#)
- [Chameleon PDE](#) – run specific subject knowledge webinars
- [Childline](#) – helpful to translate topics into age-appropriate language

Staff CPD should be planned alongside planning the curriculum to ensure staff are competent and competent to deliver the required topics.

Staff should also have the opportunity to observe and be observed by peers with the view to share positive and constructive feedback and identify any learning needs.

DISTANCE THE LEARNING

With distanced learning children and young people can better engage with and discuss issues. With own experience comes strong emotions that can hinder the ability to learn from or derive insight from the example. It is safer for children and young people to think about someone else rather than themselves.

Ideas to Distance the Learning

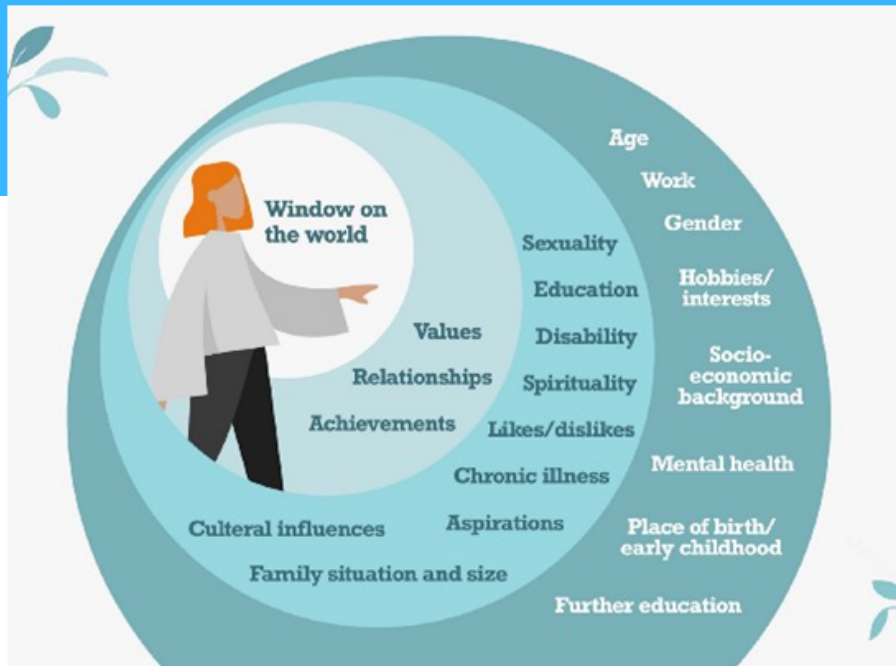
- Provide scenarios, cartoon and stories to help participants to engage with the issues
- Avoid using terms like “you and your friends”. Instead use “people of about your age”
- Avoid saying “what would you do?”. Instead ask “what could/should this character/someone do?”.
- Use questions like:
 - What is happening to them?
 - Why might this be happening?
 - How are they feeling? What are they thinking?
 - What do other people think of them?
 - Who could help them?
 - What would you tell them to do if they asked for help?
 - What could you do or say to persuade them to act differently?

Consideration

When using case studies or videos ensure that they do not, inadvertently, promote “how to” guides for example an explicit discussion on self-harming or weight loss as these can be instructional rather than preventative.



All children and young people, regardless of age, have some existing knowledge, understanding, beliefs and misconceptions relating to many of the topics explored within the PSHE education curriculum.



Schiff, J & Schiff A. (1975) Frame of Reference Model

Everyone has a frame of reference, a way in which they view the world around them. Our individual frame of reference is influenced by our experiences, interactions and feelings as well as external factors such as family and their upbringing. Finding out participants' starting point is crucial to ensuring that the learning is pitched appropriately, particularly to tackle any misconceptions held within the group and also ensure that the session is appropriate for the group's age and stage.



IDEAS FOR BASELINE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Our best practice guidance on Assessment provides further details on this element of effective PSHE education.

- 1** Mind-maps created either on an individual, small group or whole class
- 2** "Graffiti" sheets - participants write down their comments or questions about the topic on post-it notes, large sheet of paper or whiteboard
- 3** Draw and Write - all participants respond to an open ended question by drawing a picture about a particular situation or issue and then writing around the picture explaining it. For example, a happy person
- 4** Quizzes
- 5** Attitude continuum



It is important to encourage questions from the group to support children and young people to check their understanding and own thoughts. Answering questions requires the educator to feel confident to handle the questions asked.

Sometimes a child or young person will ask a difficult question. As with all questions the first thing is to value the question whilst either allowing time to consider an appropriate answer or to deflect an inappropriate question.

- Thank them for the question
- Check understanding of question
- Give factual, age appropriate answer or, if not able, give time – “I’ll get back to you”
- Consider response/answer to whole class or if a more personal, individual response is required
- Do colleagues need to be consulted?
- What is the organisation’s policy?
- Safeguarding considerations?

Be aware of:

- Body language
- Facial expressions
- Tone



IDEAS FOR RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS



- “That goes beyond the scope of this session, but I’d be happy to chat with you about that after the session”
- “That question deserves a really good answer, let me give it some thought and come back to you later”
- “That’s a really interesting question! No one’s ever asked me that before, so I’m going to think about that for a while. Can you remind me if I haven’t given you an answer before the end?”
- “We agreed not to put anyone on the spot so it wouldn’t be right for me to answer that question”
- “We agreed not to talk about our personal experiences so it wouldn’t be right for me to answer that question”

Consideration



Have an “ask-it” basket in the room for anonymous questions available before, during and after the session. Give participants time to ask questions, you could ask for questions or if they don’t have a question to write down what they had for breakfast so everyone in the group is writing and putting a question into the box.



Top Tips:

The Facilitator should....	The Facilitator should not...
<p>Value questions from the participants. Use phrases like "that's a really interesting question..." "Thanks for asking that..."</p>	<p>Pick on an individual to either ask or answer a question</p>
<p>Give participants thinking time to come up with questions and answers. Let them discuss in pairs before talking in front of the class</p>	<p>React with sarcasm or anger to a question - even if it is suspected that the question has been asked to challenge</p>
<p>Ask for volunteers to ask or answer questions</p>	<p>Ignore questions. There may be some questions that are inappropriate to answer, but in this case, politely explain why (refer to ground rules)</p>
<p>Answer the question in a factual, honest and age-appropriate way without referring to own opinions or experiences</p>	<p>Try to answer a question if they don't know the answer. It is better to be honest with participants and buy time to check an answer rather than saying something inaccurate or misleading.</p>
<p>Create an anonymous question box or envelope that participants can add their questions to throughout the session and agree with the host organisation how and when these questions will be answered.</p>	

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Participation does not come naturally to all children and young people. As an event we will create a positive, safe environment with the use of ground rules. Here are some additional tips to encourage participation.



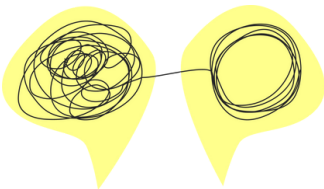
Different methods:

Participation does not just mean a reliance on speaking. Ensure the session utilises different activity styles to incorporate participation. Discussions can be in pairs or threes rather than in the full table and then get feedback from these smaller groups.



Thinking Time:

It can be tempting to jump into a question and ask for reactions from the participants. Stop and give them time to think. Embrace silence do not expect an immediate response.



Clarity:

It is important to anticipate and plan for point of confusion or different questions/responses. Be ready to explain or demonstrate the different activities.

MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

The majority of participants in the session will want to learn and will appreciate the experience of being able to interact in a learning environment. However, in a small minority or cases – and for a variety of reasons – it is possible that some children and young people will present challenging behaviour that is disruptive.

It is useful to check your organisation's behaviour policy, and to discuss common techniques used for responding to low level disruption. For example, many organisations will use a consistent technique for attracting attention back to the professional in between activities or to signal that they want quiet. This might be silently raising an arm at the front and waiting for everyone else to mirror this action before they stop talking. Some professionals will clap their hands and the group will have to repeat the pattern, whilst others will countdown from "3,2,1" before expecting there to be silence and for everyone to be paying attention.

When engaging with an external provider it is vital that a member of staff from the education setting to help manage classroom behaviour.

If external providers facilitating the session can use the same techniques it helps to maintain consistency for the children and young people and means they are more likely to be ready to listen.

Equally, each organisation will have systems to manage behaviour that is consistently disruptive, such as giving a number of warnings before the child/young person is removed from the group.

The acronym WILMA can help facilitators to manage different types of behaviours as shown on the next page.

W

Worried

Reassurance, ask what they want from the session, set out early on what you are going to do and expect from them, get them to work with a friend.

I

Insecure

Reassurance, ask questions which the children and young person would be comfortable with to start with, encourage them to work with a friend.

L

Loud

Lay out the group agreement including something around taking turns to share opinions, create a rule that everyone has the opportunity to share one opinion over a set time, create opportunities to work in small groups which change so they do not dominate the same conversations.

It is known that people either take 5 seconds to formulate an answer or 10 seconds. Encourage everyone to wait until 10 seconds before answering to give everyone a chance.

M

Mute

Ask them closed and direct questions which are easy to answer. Create more opportunities for small group work; it may be that they just don't want to talk in front of everyone.

A

Aggressive

Lay out on the group agreement that it is not acceptable, position the individual close to you to keep an eye on them. Ask someone else to intervene if distracting you from the rest of the group and the outcomes (e.g. teacher, youth worker etc.).

THE PACE MODEL

Hughes' PACE model can be helpful when considering how to create a safe learning environment. Oxford County Council has created a useful guide to using PACE in schools.

PACE stands for:

P Playfulness



A acceptance



C Curiosity



E Empathy



PACE Behaviours	Education Professional Demonstrates	Child/Young Person Experiences
Playfulness	Openness and light-heartedness of tone in interactions with learners	Fun and joy in relationships
Acceptance	Unconditional acceptance for participants as people, regardless of the behaviours they are expressing	Acceptance
Curiosity	Non-judgmental interest in what a learner is trying to communicate with their behaviours.	Understanding of their behaviours
Empathy	Demonstrating an understanding of why the learner behaves as they do. Communicating willingness to support learners through the experience	Empathy, support

Some sessions can be emotionally draining for both the educator and participants. Building in a light-hearted activity at the end of the session to change the atmosphere so the children or young people are ready for the next activity or lesson. The person delivering the session should try to be available afterwards because they found the session distressing or want to disclose they have the opportunity to do so.

This should only be completed when the learning outcomes for the session have been achieved to not take away from the learning.

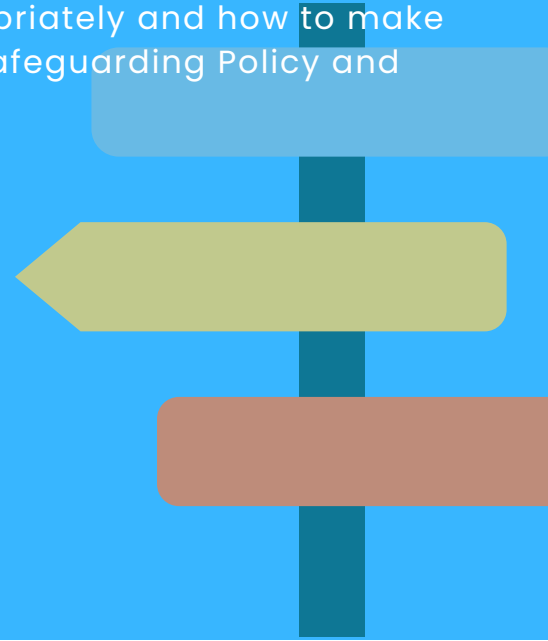
SIGNPOSTING SUPPORT

It is absolutely essential, that included in the lesson, is information about different organisations and people that can provide support both within the organisation and outside of it. This gives children and young people the opportunity to develop and practice their skills to seek advice and speak about their concerns by explaining how to access help and give information on what is likely to happen if they seek support from different services.

The [PSHE Education Service Website](#) has a number of local and national organisation that children and young people can be signposted to. If you are unsure please check with your local PSHE Coordinator (details can be found at the end of the guidance).

This information should include how the participants access the service.

If a child or young person makes a disclosure to the person facilitating the session it is important they know how to respond appropriately and how to make any necessary referrals in line with the organisation's Safeguarding Policy and that effective records are kept.



SUGGESTED RESOURCES



OBSERVATION OF PRACTICE

This form is designed to create discussions around positive and constructive feedback and identify learning needs.

Delivery

Prompts:

- Is the facilitator passionate and enthusiastic?
- Time management - how does the facilitator keep to the specified timings? Is the session pacey? Is the content sufficiently explained but points not overlaboured or repeated?
- Is the atmosphere positive?
- Has a safe learning environment been created?
- Is the facilitator engaging/ are the group engaged and enthusiastic?

Content

Prompts:

- Does the facilitator have a good grasp of the content?
- Does the session flow well?
- Is the facilitator familiar with the session resources and materials?
- Are the activities well explained and executed?

Skills

Prompts:

- How well are discussions managed?
- Does the facilitator respond appropriately to members of the group that might be challenging?
- Does the facilitator use inclusive strategies to ensure wider participation e.g. asking for feedback from different groups?
- Is the facilitator about to keep the attention of the group and keep them on task?

General Comments and Feedback

Person Observed:

Date:

Observer:

Session Observed:



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STOKE-ON-TRENT
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SASCAL
STRONGER TOGETHER

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