The Family Partnership Model: 
Recent Advances, Future Challenges

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The Challenges of Helping

‘They just came and told me stuff, but I didn’t really take it in… I just didn’t think about it that much, I didn’t really listen to what they told me because I wasn’t interested in it’

‘I wasn’t sure what ‘support’ meant, because all I really needed was a hand, physically, with stuff…… (They) said it would be someone talking to you… I needed that like a hole in the head.’

‘I don’t want (them) to get in my face about my daughter. Don’t tell me to do things that I am already doing! Instead, start by asking questions to find out what I am doing and why I am doing it.

“You really do feel like they intimidate ‘cos you’re a Mum, you’re a parent and you’re sitting in doors and they’re outdoors. They try and like, just pushing it down you’re throat till like it makes you feel like more of a bad parent.”

‘I always want to say and do the right things in front of (her) because I’m not sure what will happen if I don’t’

Providing Effective Help and Support

‘If they’re to be effective in helping you as a parent, then they need to know what you as a parent go through”

‘She talks to you like a human being, she doesn’t treat you like you don’t know anything’

‘I feel now, no matter what my problem was that she wouldn’t judge me….. She knows me, she knows me really well…. I trust her, I trust her’

‘They are not just listening to what you say, they are hearing what you’re saying as well as listening although they sound very much the same …. they are not.’

“Understanding is like listening to people and like knowing what their situation is like … if you can’t understand someone or they can’t understand you they can’t help you ‘cos they don’t know what you’re talking about”

“I think the most important thing is that you work together. Not them coming in and saying ‘This is what we do’, or the parent saying ‘This is what I want you to do’ “

Therapeutic Skills, Qualities & Relationships: Evidence for specific effects

- Correlations between process/relationship variables and predictors of outcomes range from modest to strong (eg. Bachelor & Horvath, 1999; Karver et al, 2006; Shirk & Karver, 2003).

- Quality of therapeutic relationship is related to attrition and drop out (eg. Garcia & Weisz, 2002; Kazdin, Holland & Crowley, 1997, Shirk, 2001)

- Best predictors of outcomes:
  - Child and parents’ characteristics eg. willingness to participate
  - Practitioner capacity to influence & their interpersonal skills and qualities
  - Quality of relationship and nature of alliance
  - Structure and purpose

- Continuing gap between research and outcomes for children and families
Family Partnership Model

Helper Qualities → Helper Skills → Process → Outcomes

Construction Processes
Parents & children

- Nature of parent and child strengths, concerns and problems
  - Services often take problem orientated approaches
  - Understand strengths and capabilities
  - The match between parent/child and priorities those of services/practitioners

- Beliefs, expectations and concerns about help seeking, services,
  - influence attendance, engagement & relationship building helping process and outcomes

- Desires and concerns about change
  - priorities, goals and managing the process of change

- Wider family, social circumstances and culture
Community Context

• Characteristics of population eg.
  – Level of need
  – Resilience and vulnerability factors
  – Family experiences and social networks
  – Diversity
  – Culture

• Geographical characteristics eg.
  – Availability of services
  – Urban/Rural
  – Transport
Service Context

• FP has to fit with the tasks in hand and be flexible enough for practitioners to adapt and use

• Support for staff
  – Training, support & supervision for practitioners
  – Time & resources to adopt & implement

• Service approach
  – Stable & proactive
  – Open, reflective culture that welcomes FP and trusts new ways of working
  – Leaders with commitment, vision for how FP will bring improvements as well as freedom of action to bring it about
  – Managers and supervisors equipped to support FP implementation
Intended outcomes of helping

• Do no harm
• Help parents and children to identify and build on strengths
• Help to clarify and manage problems
• Foster resilience & problem anticipation
• Foster development and well-being of children.
• Facilitate social support and community development
• Enable service support
• Compensate where necessary
• Improve the service system
Intended outcomes of helping

• These outcomes are broadly set
• Demonstrates the applicability of the model across different areas of practice
• Emphasis on both finding and building resilience as well as problem management and resolution
• Power for change is in the detail of families lives
  – The outcomes of helping need to be personalised and specific for the practitioner as well as the family
  – Negotiation of intended outcomes with families and their link with goals
  – Ownership, review and reflection on outcomes
Essential qualities of the helper

- Respect and interest in parents
- Authentic and real
- Empathic - being involved and connected rather than an observer
- Seek to understand parents, their vulnerability & how wider concerns affect their needs
- Show genuine understanding for parents
- Personal strength, integrity and humility
- Quiet enthusiasm - time, effort and emotional energy
- Being trustworthy, reliable and consistent in word and deed
Skills of helpers

• Technical/professional expertise and knowledge
• Active listening and good communication
  – Sensitivity to language and non-verbal behaviour
  – Manage negative reactions to what parents say and do
  – Share knowledge and expertise in understandable, meaningful and useful way
• Negotiation and problem management skills
• Enable and facilitate change in parents’ feelings, ideas and actions
• Humour, thoughtfulness and empathic responding
Qualities and Skills of the Helper

- **Being supportive**
  - To sustain, encourage, care and shore up
- **Being connected**
  - To hit off, hook up with and to get along
- **Being facilitative**
  - To make possible, make easy, to make happen
- **Being influential**
  - To have some bearing on, to inspire and to change
The Helping Process

1. Relationship Building
2. Exploration
3. Understanding
4. Goal Setting
5. Strategy Planning
6. Implementation
7. Review
8. End
The Helping Process

- Challenging and complex process for practitioners and parents to work through
- Exploration as distinct from the process of assessment
- Explicit understanding of the ways in which families difficulties have arisen, are maintained
- Also to grasp how a family’s current situation affects the processes of helping and change
- Finding and maintaining focus in complex lives as well as common goals
- Exploring wide range of options not just the ones we are used to, comfortable with or fit our immediate expertise
- Building in methods to review as well as appraise change and goals
- Ending – addressed in a limited way in the FP training
Partnership

- Work together with active & mutual participation/involvement
- Share aims, process of helping and decision-making power
- Recognise and use complementary expertise and roles.
- Negotiate disagreements
- Clear communication, trust and respect, openness and honesty
- Requires genuine exchange & pacing - ‘giving & receiving’ rather than ‘knowing & telling’
Partnership

- Beyond information, involvement into partnership
- Shared dynamic process but not necessarily equal process to
  - Plot the course of helping
  - Navigate the journey
  - Achieve the desired goals and outcomes
- Partnerships cannot be imposed – process needs to be explicit and explicitly negotiated including differences in process of helping
- Genuine partnership requires exploration with families:
  - How are we going to work together?
- Avoid shift in models to expert judgement and expertise
  - Partnership begins to really count when it is not achieved automatically but needs building
Constructs

• Awareness – Constructs – Action
  – Automatic and outside of immediate awareness
  – Reinforce the familiar
  – Influence not only the way we see families but also the way that we are seen by families
  – And by peers, colleagues, managers

• Determine that constructs in FP practice are useful and accurate

• Practitioner skills and qualities
  – Reflection, openness
  – Willingness to change and adapt
  – Confident purpose
  – Tools for the job - FP Handbook

• Involving families – review
• Involving peers and managers/supervisors
FP Developments to Support Practice

• Assist practitioners and services to put the FP approach into practice
  – Effective FP training and support
  – Practitioners who are able to implement the FP approach
  – Service support, leadership and resources
• Training evaluation and accreditation
• Family Partnership Handbook
• FP supervision training
• Family Partnership Network and community
• New applications of Family Partnership approach
Family Partnership: Foundation training

- Some changes training course
  - eg. to allow for more integration of skills at the end of the course
- Course accredited through Open College Network
- Developing tools to help look at the effects of the course
  - ‘About the Family Partnership Model’
  - ‘My Way of Working’
  - Individual goal setting
- Maintain a focus on the journey during the course as well as the outcomes
- Maintaining ethos of partnership
Family Partnership Handbook

• Developed as part of materials available to people trained in the model
• Fits in between the Foundation course and ‘Working in Partnership’ (2002)
• Support for practitioners
  – To reflect on use of the FP approach.
  – To plan sessions with parents,
  – To review FP work
  – To offer a framework for use in supervision.
• Very positive response to Handbook during piloting
• Next steps are to
  – Build it into the core course
  – Make it available as widely as possible
  – Examine and evaluate the benefits of its use in practice and during supervision
Updated Supervisor Training

- To develop broader supervision skills of supervisors/managers based on using a partnership approach
- To ensure effective supervision of practitioners who are using the FP model with families
- Desire to integrate FP supervision into routine supervision wherever possible
  - Training devised for supervisors and managers
- The 4 day course focuses on particular aspects of the supervisor role:
  - Supervisor skills, qualities, constructs and roles in supervision
  - Understanding and working in partnership with supervisees
  - The development of the self supervisor.
  - Supervising the use of the FP Model in practice – eg. using the FP Handbook
New Applications of Model: Examples

• Parenting
  – Family Nurse Partnership
  – Parents Under Pressure
  – Incredible Years
  – National Academy of Parenting Practitioners: High need families research programme
  – Post qualification parenting training for health visitors and social workers

• Adult learning disability
• Recognition of adults with depression
• Collaborative Working: Interpersonal Skills for Teaching in Partnership
Collaborative Working: Interpersonal Skills for Teaching in Partnership

• Poor school relationships contribute to children and parents disengaging from learning and achievement
• Current emphasis on learning outcomes, but not process through which the outcomes are achieved
• Positive relationships are a crucial element for enabling learning and preserving motivation
• Few systematic ways for teachers to develop the qualities and skills involved in developing such relationships with individual children, never mind groups!

• “They may not remember what you taught them, but they’ll never forget how you treated them.”
Collaborative Working: Interpersonal Skills for Teaching in Partnership

- Applies the principles of the Family Partnership Model to the task of teaching children and young people and working with parents/carers
- Developed training courses for
  - Trainee & newly qualified teachers,
  - Established teachers
  - Head teachers and senior leadership teams
- Engaging the Class (2 days):
- When the Going Gets Tough: Helping Children and Young People Change (2 days):
- Working with Parents and Carers (1 day):
- Working in Partnership to Raise Attainment (2 days)
Family Partnership Community

- Set up Yahoo group: Family Partnershipnetwork
  http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/familypartnershipnetwork/
- Updating the CPCS website
- Want ideas on further support that Centre can provide
  - Advanced seminars on key topics
- As well as ways for the Centre to keep in touch with you
Future issues

- Dynamic and exciting time for Family Partnership
- Continue to explore application with other evidence based approaches
- Better understand the way that relationship, process and techniques can work effectively together
- Understand more about what aspects of the FPM work for whom
  - Reinforce effective practice for practitioners and services
  - Help to solve and support the challenges in practice
- Family Partnership community
  - Sharing, developing, testing and disseminating developments
  - e-learning and e-support