



Strengthening Care Programme

Developing care that makes a difference.



STRENGTHENING CARE



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Introduction

Who are we?

Strengthening Practice have been helping to develop vibrant and skilled professionals since 2007, working with many local authorities and other social care organisations throughout the UK. We provide helpful practice frameworks for social and healthcare workers who serve children, young people, adults, older people and their families.

Strengthening Practice are a successful and dedicated training and development company specialising in evidenced based, relational focused, whole system programmes. We believe that any learning and development is only useful and helpful when it is easily applied to the job people are doing. We provide the knowledge and tools to enhance individual and team practice and improve outcomes for children and families.

Our trainers are friendly and approachable, engaging, perceptive and always tuned into the needs of those they are training. They are emotionally intelligent and charismatic, and never simply 'deliver' coursework. Your team will look forward to the interactive and supportive sessions that create a space to reflect and share knowledge, refreshing and acquiring skills specific to the job they are doing.

We always do everything we can to make every event something your team will treasure – a two-way flow of information and experience that your team can draw on for support as they put their new knowledge into practice.

The training team are all highly qualified with relevant and diverse experience, making them great models of practice for your team.

Finally, our training programmes are accredited by both the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and we are members of the UK CPD Certification Service.

"This course has really made me think about what the child needs from me and what good care really looks and feels like from their point of view." (Foster Carer).





The Strengthening Care Programme

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Programme Overview

The Strengthening Care Programme will support excellence in residential, foster care and adoption settings, with a focus on the knowledge and skills needed to provide purposeful and effective care to children and young people. This programme will unpack what is needed to create a home and become a parent that meets each individual child's needs, that repairs damage, restores relationships and prepares each child for a successful adulthood.


We know that caring for someone else's child brings with it a very significant responsibility and focus, and we should take it very seriously.

Each child needs us to fight for them, to jealously prioritise their needs and to go all out to make sure they are given every opportunity to live the life they would like.

Looking at care from the perspective of the child encourages us to always ask, 'So what for the child?' and to adjust our care appropriately. To be able to do that effectively we must have first understood the child's past experiences and also their lived experience today. The children that we care for will have had a range of experiences, many of them adverse, that have left each child with a unique perspective on their world, and also a unique way of negotiating with, and understanding, their environment and the people around them.

Over six workshops we will explore the theory, knowledge and above all, practice that helps us be the best parents and carers we can be. We will think about our individual, team and service wide responses to the child's needs; we will learn together what it is that the children we care for need from us.

At Strengthening Practice, we understand that good outcomes for children are born out of relationships that work, and that is what we model. We will form good quality authentic relationships with programme participants that create space and safety to think about practice and to try out new ideas and approaches.



*"I would tell anyone thinking of doing the Strengthening Care Programme: This is a great way to learn and reflect on the reasons why we do our job. Re-evaluate and have tools that can aid key-working, care planning and hopefully having a positive impact on the young people."
(Registered Children's Home Manager)*

Programme Resources

Each participant will be provided with a comprehensive programme workbook with all of the workshop content and links to further resources.



This programme can also include access to online materials via 'My Learning Space', our online learning environment. This will allow some learning to take place both before and after group sessions, with

participants being able to flexibly access materials that will support learning. This approach allows for a learning experience better suited to residential staff and foster carers' work and home routines.



Each workshop will use a variety of resources: videos, discussions and group activities, relevant literature and articles, input from specialists, and from those with lived experience.

Programme delivery

Opening Seminar

A one hour session to introduce the programme, look at your resources, and understand the expectation on you. There will be a chance to ask any questions and prepare yourself for the rest of the programme.

Workshops will be built up in the following way:



1.5 hours of self-directed content before each workshop. Using 'My Learning Space' participants will access videos, articles, questionnaires and other resources relevant to the upcoming workshop. This will prepare them for the workshop.



A workshop for colleagues and peers to learn and think together across 6 different themes. In groups of no more than 20 we will work together to share expertise, consider new approaches and knowledge and identify what works for the children we care for.



1.5 hours of self-directed follow-up content that allows each participant to enhance and extend their learning from the workshops. This will include more special interest or subject specific materials – for example, content around neurodiversity or disability.



A chance to meet in small groups of no more than 8 to consolidate, refresh and share learning from the 6 workshops. Participants will be encouraged to share practice examples from their own experience since the workshop and the group will explore these examples identifying tools, approaches, models and theories that help. These sessions will support embedding of new practice and allow for continued learning together once the programme has ended.





The Workshops

Each of these workshops is built on one of Kim Golding's 6 Pyramid of Need and Assessment Matrix areas (Golding, 2007). Threaded throughout each workshop will be the fundamental knowledge and skills related to our care responses around attachment relationships, trauma and loss, child development and the impact of adversity, abuse and exploitation.

1 Workshop One Feeling Safe

Aim

In this workshop we will consider why feeling physically and emotionally safe matters to both us and our children, we will look at how we achieve that together.

Reflection for this session

Put my own mask on first.

Some themes for this session

Creating and maintaining emotional and physical safety.


Being a safe adult. Recognising that a child may / will test this – how available are you?

Recognising and responding to threats to safety.

De-escalating and defusing.

How to create safety in foster placements – What does tangible safety look and feel like to the child? Have you made it explicit?

Written and unwritten rules of safety – What does safe mean to the child?



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2 Workshop Two Developing Relationships

Aim

In this workshop we will consider the nature of human relationships and how we can use ourselves to model and support young people in the exploration and testing of new, safe relationships.

Reflection for this session

Relationships matter – both now and in the future.

Some themes for this session

Being trustworthy and available.

Modelling relational skills.

Valuing individual identities.

Relationships that matter - Providing nurture.

Who is the decision maker in the child's life? Which decisions can be made by the keyworker / "parent"?

Who holds the power? Which relationships matter to the child?

Understanding disruptions / breakdowns – what was underpinning them?

Responding to need for changes in the nature of the relationship in line with developmental stages / trauma impact.

Key phases that need focus – transition times.

Being present with the child.



"We will consider the nature of human relationships and how we can use ourselves to model and support young people in the exploration and testing of new, safe relationships."

3 Workshop Three

Comfort and Co-Regulation

Aim

In this session we will look at how adults can allow children to express a full range of emotions that don't overwhelm them or others.

Reflection for this session

Each of us experience a range of emotions that all have purpose.

Themes for this workshop

Regulation and Containment.

Responding to emotional content.

Understanding behaviour as communication.

Paying attention to others in the network – fostering families, wider family.

Each person has their own emotional responses – how do we validate those?

Establishing values and justice – underpinning principles. Is everyone treated fairly?

How to communicate consistency at the same time as delivering different responses.

Consistency versus flexibility



“We will look at how adults can allow children to express a full range of emotions that don't overwhelm them or others.”



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“This programme has really helped me think about what I’ve been doing for many years in residential care and think more about the reasons I do what I do and what it is that works best for the children.”
(Residential Worker)

4 Workshop Four Empathy and Reflection

Aim

In this session we will be looking at how we understand the child’s experience and help the child find sense and meaning in their past, their present and their future.

Reflection for this session

It is okay to sometimes not know. Together we learn.

Themes for this session

Understanding the internal world of the child.

Being honest with self (child and adult) around our own understanding – expect to not know sometimes.

Supporting sense-making. Moving a description of what happened to an understanding of why.


Understanding developmental stages – responding to developmental not chronological age.

Curiosity and Wondering with the child.

Mentalisation – what do we think about what they think?

Offering limited and safe choices that can be tolerated – knowing when to allow choices.

Checking our expectation that the child will be able to explain or understand their own world or behaviour.



“We will be looking at how we understand the child’s experience and help the child find sense and meaning in their past, their present and their future”.

5 Workshop Five

Resilience and Resources

Aim

In this session we will be exploring the network around the child, who is in it and how they help now and in the future. We will also look at what the child needs from us to successfully move into adulthood.

Reflection for this session

Our resilience is dependent upon the strength and flexibility of my network and the internal and external resources available to me. Don't put all the eggs in one basket.

Themes for this session

Building self-esteem and self-efficacy – allowing for experimentation.

Scaffolding and developing problem solving with the child.

Strengthening networks and managing risk.

Using a safeguarding lens – worried about 'What ifs? How do we manage risk and allow failure?

Take child out of comfort zone in a safe way. How? What can they, and us, tolerate?

Managing anxiety in the network. When people around the child worry.

Links to Life Story work – understanding back story and context.



"We will be exploring the network around the child, who is in it and how they help now and in the future. We will also look at what the child needs from us to successfully move into adulthood."



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“The Strengthening Care Programme has allowed the residential workers to re-visit care principles and look at their practice via a different source.” (Registered Children’s Home Manager)

6 Workshop Six Explore Trauma and Mourn Losses

Aim

In this session we will be exploring the impact of trauma and loss on the children we care for, and also the impact on carers of caring.

Reflection for this session

Not “What’s wrong with you?” but “What happened to you?”

Themes for this session

Developmental Trauma and Interpersonal Trauma.

Self-Care and Secondary Trauma.

Complex Grief, Loss and Attachment styles.

Managing holidays / change of shifts / respite care – normalising of loss?

Anticipation and fear of being left behind or forgotten.

Feelings of abandonment – Who cares about me, and will they reject me?

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How to commission the Strengthening Care Programme for your organisation

No matter the challenges you're facing, we'll support you through every step of the commissioning process, and together we'll explore and identify what support your team needs.

Our work with you begins with one or more conversations with relevant members of your team (e.g. learning & development, service manager/s) to understand your requirements. For example: would you like face to face or virtual workshops (or a combination of both); how many participants do you wish to participate in the programme; are there any particular topic areas you wish us to focus or expand upon or even remove from the programme? We try to be as flexible as we can when developing a proposal, so that you receive a programme that best fits your requirements and budget.

We also have a Readiness to Learn toolkit, which a number of organisations have found helpful for identifying the conditions within the organisation and workforce that might contribute to - or hinder - successful training, e.g. existing knowledge in the workforce (and any gaps), availability of facilities and technology, communication with staff and staff culture, time allocated for training and funding available. We'll work closely with you, providing helpful advice and guidance so you can ready your organisation and get the most out of training.

How much does it cost?

This entirely depends on your specific requirements, and we will provide a quote once we have discussed your needs. As an example,

however, the full programme was recently delivered over a period of 18 months to 350 foster carers, residential staff, and family workers at approx £440 per person, for 6.5 training days per participant (with a hybrid mix of in-person and virtual learning). Note that per person costs reduce as participant numbers increase.

Who can I talk to for more information?

We would be delighted to have a conversation with you about your particular needs. Please feel free to call our head office on 01900 822 458 to arrange a discussion with our training team. You can also email us at: training@strengtheningpractice.co.uk.

We also provide a wide range of other learning programmes for children's and adult social care. Please take a look at our website for more information, or you can request a brochure in hard-copy or digital format that outlines our various training offerings.

Strengthening Practice

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We are an accredited training and CPD provider with the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and members of the UK CPD Certification Service.





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My Learning Space

Self-directed,
blended and
trainer-led
online learning



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