

Shadowing

In the context of integrated working, shadowing offers new & existing staff & volunteers an opportunity to learn about a range of roles, service perspectives and priorities in the multi-agency team. It facilitates cross agency networking, building working partnerships, sharing skills and knowledge and understanding the boundaries as well as the inter-relationships between roles & services.

Pilot activity has found this to be a powerful way of maximising informal, reflective dialogue and boosting team effectiveness. Devon's Children's Trust is committed to supporting teams across the county, based on Local Learning Communities and AXS networks, to promote good practice in identifying what makes for improved impact on children, young people and families.

Shadowing supports induction and ongoing development of existing staff & volunteers. It is also a requirement for some qualification programmes e.g. social work BA students undertake 10 days of observational learning which forms part of the assessed preparation for practice learning and the host worker is asked to provide feedback on the student.

More widely, shadowing can be used to support a training programme. Where new skills or a new role need to be developed, shadowing may support this too. Building transferable 'common core competencies' across sectors encourages best use of skill mixes in a locality between services or teams. The integrated qualifications framework allows for 'credits' to be achieved which might be gained from extended shadowing or work placements. This widens career opportunities and supports a holistic recruitment strategy.

Shadowing is also an effective tool to support action learning to evaluate the impact of specific integrated interventions. Sometimes this is called a *Learning Conversation*. It is about increasing capacity at local level for evaluating impact. This means focusing single-mindedly on planning and implementing professional activity in order to bring about clear and measurable change for users of children's services. Another direct benefit for teams is that they will gain expertise in facilitating dialogue through using action learning, coaching and other team-based approaches to CPD and change management.

Shadowing is a two way process. For the worker in the host agency it is a self-affirming opportunity to showcase their work and contribute to the development of integrated working between their agency or service and for the shadow it is a useful way to find out about the day-to-day activities and demands of a particular career, specific job role or service as it interfaces with their own.

Devon's Children's Trust workforce strategy endorses shadowing as one essential method to support integrated working amongst others such as common induction, using the integrated supervision framework and undertaking multi-agency training programmes.

A number of shadowing projects have provided useful feedback (appendix 1) Children's centres have called these 'structured visits', schools have undertaken 'enquiry walks'.

BENEFITS OF SHADOWING FOR HOST AGENCIES:

Providing shadowing opportunities:

- Celebrates workers and what they do
- Provides an opportunity to gain a genuine understanding of a particular role and work together with realistic expectations of capabilities and capacity.
- Creates a benchmark / standard of practice to compare & share
- Encourages creation of learning environments - shadows bring questions, observations and their own ideas, which can refresh workers and contribute to team development.
- Maintains standards – shadowed workers are motivated to be seen performing at a highly professional level
- Can be low cost, easy to arrange and an efficient use of time – one person has responsibility for planning and other members of the team contribute and support.
- Fosters equality – hosts can be at any level in an organisation reflecting needs of the individual shadow. Involvement of all staff supports an open, learning culture and shared understanding that helps team cohesion and effectiveness
- Brings diversity – student shadows will be from many backgrounds and levels of experience
- Allows agencies to gain a new perspective on their own performance.
- Gives autonomy to host workers who can opt into the scheme at a level that they can manage, taking responsibility for negotiation and planning with the shadow.

Having a sense of autonomy and meaningful level of control in the workplace is consistently cited in research as central to job satisfaction and high level performance.

- Offers flexibility as it can last just a short while and can fit and combine easily with workers' existing commitments
- Can lead to requests for longer term placements - informed choice is a good basis for successful learning and ongoing developments of partnership working

BENEFITS FOR SHADOWS:

The experience of shadowing:

- Challenges myths - prevents people from continuing to hold misconceptions about other sectors/ agencies, avoids false expectations
- Enables staff to identify links between their work/ agency/ service and the wider multi-agency environment in which they may increasingly work

- Allows staff to discover firsthand that jargon is a barrier to good communication and inclusion and helps to establish a common language between agencies/ teams/ services
- Is time efficient – in a short period a member of staff can find out through experiential learning, often has greater impact on changing practice than a course.
- Can allow staff to set up coaching or supervision arrangements with ‘experts’ / other practitioners
- Can be negotiated to provide particular experiences, meet identified learning needs or introduce a specific aspect of a role.
- Allows staff to gain insight into the realities of a specific role
- Offers networking opportunities
- Supports students to be self-directed learners offering early exposure to good role modelling.

ISSUES, CONSTRAINTS AND RISKS

Considerations when planning shadowing opportunities:

- Contingency plans are essential in environments where host workers have to deal with emergencies or unpredictable changes
- Confidentiality issues need to be carefully thought through and if, for example, a shadow is to go on a home visit, they must have the relevant level of CRB clearance and sign up to agency policy.
- Host workers need to be willing and positive participants – coercion can compound cynicism, which will be conveyed to the shadow
- Agreement and support from management and team is essential or host workers left to sort out arrangements can be/feel vulnerable

PROPOSED GUIDELINES

For Host Agencies:

1. Agencies should build an expectation that shadowing is part of all aspects of their workforce development process.
2. When learning and development needs have been identified through appraisal, line managers and staff should agree a learning and development plan which describes how the needs will be met and, where appropriate, prioritises them. This plan should be reviewed periodically during supervision and can be updated during the year as new issues arise. Learning and development needs arising from individual plans will also contribute to the development of the overall organisational learning and development plan
3. Learning and development can take place in a variety of ways recognising that individual's learning styles vary. The organisation will support staff to find the most suitable way of meeting their identified needs. This could include spending time at other partner organisations to see how they work and to develop contacts

4. Teams should be encouraged to use the CT guidelines & support shadowing to support staff from a range of work roles which interact with those within their own services. Agency strategic sign up to shadowing includes disseminating
 - Why shadowing – background information and benefits for the agency & partners with whom it works
 - Expectations of staff offering to support shadowing
 - Processes, contacts and paperwork
5. Individual workers who wish to be involved negotiate agreement to act as hosts, and the number of offers they can make, with their managers and teams.
6. The student shadow links directly with the host worker and negotiates arrangements including potential learning opportunities and contingency plans once they have gained approval from their manager

Guidelines for Host Teams:

1. Think about what you would want a shadowing visit to achieve and what aspect of work could be used to best demonstrate what is required by the shadow
2. When contacted, tell them what is on offer; ask about their hopes for the shadowing visit, any specific needs; negotiate a plan and provide all practical information – map, directions, time to start, who will welcome
3. Ensure that you have an agreed contingency plan
4. Practicalities e.g. toilet facilities, safety procedures, make sure that there is appropriate comfortable space available for group or individual work.
5. If you have any suggestions or feedback that could develop the shadowing process or opportunities, please send your idea to the Children's Trust Learning and Development mailbox - childrenstrustworkforcedevelopment-mailbox@devon.gov.uk.

Guidelines for Shadows:

1. Think about what you hope to learn from the shadowing opportunity and any specific things that you wish to experience related to the particular setting
2. Once given information and details by the Manager, make contact with the setting contact
3. Find out what is on offer; identify any specific learning needs and ask about opportunities – be flexible and open
4. Find out what information your host would like to have about you and any preparation you should make
5. Check basics: dress code; access; parking etc.
6. Negotiate detailed arrangements including contingency plans for sickness etc.
7. Read confidentiality statement (attached) appendix 2

APPENDIX 1

EXAMPLE ONE: STRUCTURED VISITS – CHILDREN’S CENTRES’ EVALUATION

Children’s Centre staff indicate that: **For the participants**

- Having general input and ‘a tour’ highlighted issues they hadn’t thought about.
- Focussing on their identified need and providing a ‘specialist’/experienced practitioner to discuss it with made the visit more valuable in terms of staff development.
- Having time for input, observation and discussion was seen as particularly useful.
- When participants stayed all day they were able to select one aspect to focus on in the afternoon. This could be in the form of continued practice observation, examination of documentation, extended input or work shadowing/working alongside.

For the children’s Centre

- The discussions with visitors and sharing of ideas helps to evaluate and develop our own practice.
- Hearing of others difficulties/constraints re-addresses discontent and complacency.

Issues Identified for the participants

- Lone visiting and how to influence others.
- Needing more time when they had only half a day.
- How to translate ideals into possible developments considering practicalities.
- Cover for the practitioner to visit was not just a financial issue.

For the Children’s centre

- Issues around documentation and administration remain a challenge. Chasing up etc
- Balancing quality input to visitors while maintaining a quality service to children and families is easier when visit sessions are limited to one a month but it can still be difficult to ensure key staff are available.
- Ensuring the right number of visitors so that the setting is not overwhelmed with adults but that there is a large enough group to exchange ideas and whether to postpone or not if several people withdraw.

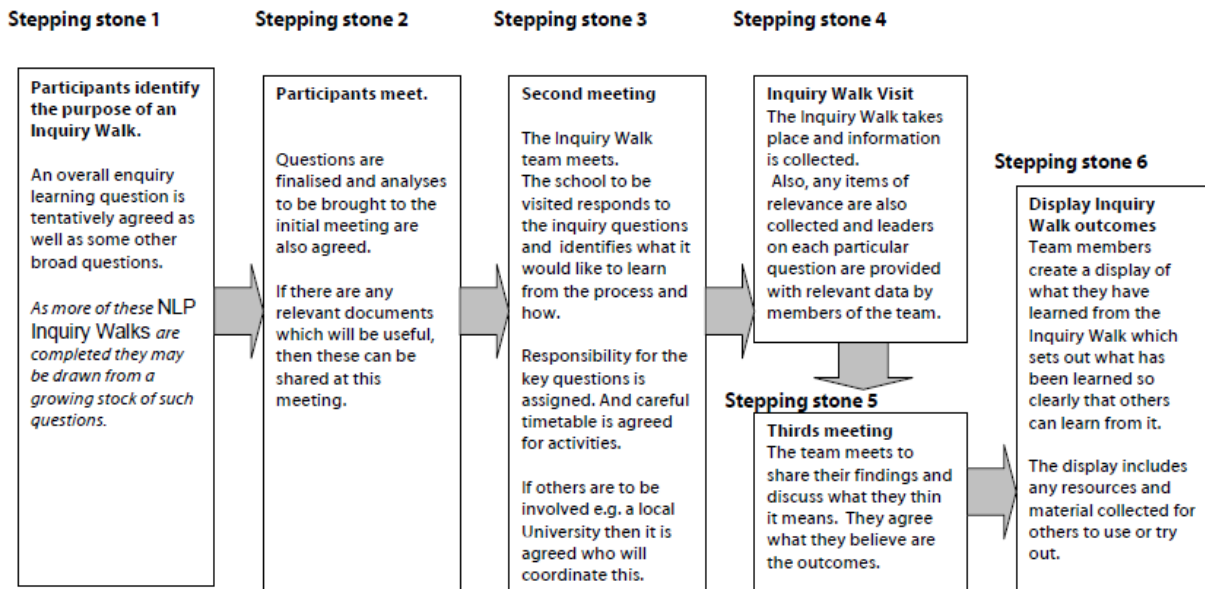
EXAMPLE TWO: PRACTITIONER’ S REFLECTIONS

‘You are totally right about capacity and time, but I have to say it is worth investing in. Skill sharing, measuring oneself against others standards and comparing working styles, processes and practices, and building relationships with external agencies are just a few of the benefits....’

...I also think that taking time to reflect creates renewed energy which compensates for the time away from other tasks. One needs enthusiasm to continue with the day job!!’

EXAMPLE THREE: INQUIRY WALKS IN SCHOOLS - GUIDANCE

The *Inquiry Walk* is a structured process where a group of learners (student, staff, or both) visit another classroom or school in order to gain a better understanding of a particular issue. It helps both those visiting and those being visited to gain a deeper understanding of what is going on in a classroom, a school or a network of schools. For convenience the Inquiry Walk is broken down into easy stepping stones:



EXAMPLE FOUR: SOCIAL WORK STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS

Social Work Student's reflections

'The shadowing experience gave me the opportunity to get a realistic picture of how social work runs in an organisation. I began this course with an idealistic perception of the career that was in direct conflict with the picture often painted by the media. My concerns regarding negative workplaces and highly stressful working environments were rebuked by my shadowing experience. What I learned quickly was that presenting needs are not eligible needs and I was fascinated by the eligibility criteria. When making assessments you need to focus on needs and not services. Case files were extensive and thorough and every conversation regarding the service user recorded even when nothing was achieved. I was concerned by the level of responsibility of the profession and was relieved to find that panels make all the big decisions and you only make recommendations. After a visit to a service user I questioned professional boundaries, when do we draw the line? I experienced firsthand the jobs of the team, the OT, community care workers, referral coordinators and care managers. When reflecting on the day I became aware how much my knowledge of statutory services was limited and often had to query terms that were used by all members of the team fluently. The social worker advised me that the most important thing to be a good social worker is a good value base and creative thinking'.

APPENDIX 2

SECURITY OF INFORMATION

All Children's Trust agencies and services keep a great deal of information about certain individuals to enable staff to carry out their work. Some of this information is highly sensitive and confidential.

There are two pieces of law which relate to the use of information relating to individuals; the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Computer Misuse Act 1990.

All of the information held by the agency is only to be used when it is required for their work. If the information is used for any other reason, the user may be committing a criminal offence under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Computer Misuse Act 1990.

You may hear or see confidential information about individuals in the course of your visit / shadowing experience. Please remember that you must not disclose this information to anyone else and this includes your family, friends and neighbours.

Remember that if you give information to someone who is not entitled to it, you could be committing a criminal offence under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Agency information is kept solely for its purposes and should not be abused.

I have read and understood the instructions given above.

Signed Date