

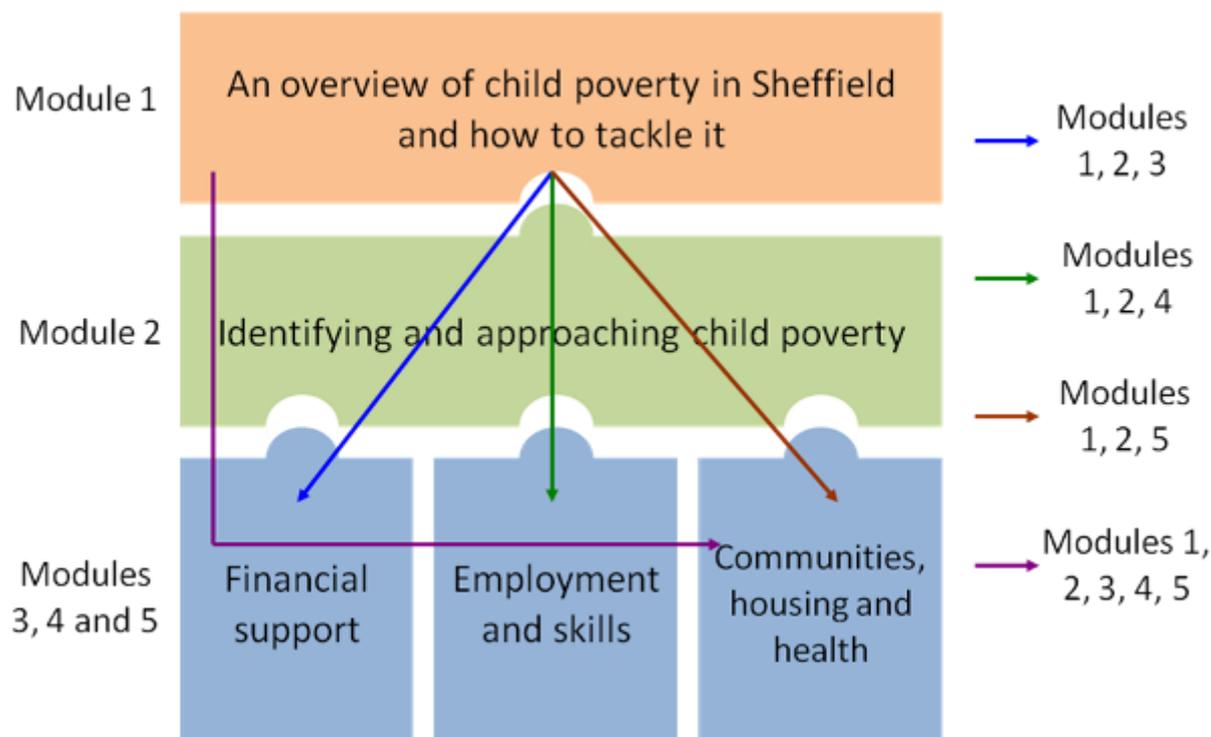
Identifying and approaching child poverty

**Trainer notes for part two of the
Sheffield child poverty training module
for front-line staff**



Introductory notes for trainer

This is one of five training modules for front-line staff about child poverty in Sheffield. The five modules are designed so that they can be taken in various combinations depending on individuals' skills, interests and job roles. Possible combinations are shown on the structure chart below:



How to use:

These modules are available free of charge for people to use within their organisations and/or in multi-agency training in whatever way is felt to be most appropriate. They can be delivered as face-to-face training individually or as a whole. They can also be adapted: you might want to add to them to make them more specific to your own organisation, or you might want to break them up and integrate elements of the training into existing courses, staff development days or team meetings. There are also online versions of the modules, which you and your staff can access.

If you are delivering more than one module, or are delivering one module to people who will then be accessing other modules at a later date, it would be useful for you to familiarise yourself with all five modules if possible. This is because some people may have questions or want to know more about a topic, which is covered in more detail in another module.

Materials you will need:

Required:

- Computer with Microsoft PowerPoint, audio/speakers, and a screen or projection that participants can see (you can read out the audio quotations from this document if speakers are unavailable)
- Spiral handouts printed in colour on A3 paper to share in small groups

- Pens and note paper to share in small groups

Optional:

- Slide handouts with space for notes (ideally three slides to a page)
- Barriers from slide 16 written on individual cards and some spares for people to add to these barriers - either to share as a big group or enough copies for smaller group working
- Poster-style guide to key messages printed in colour on A4 paper (one per participant)
- Printed copies of the structure of the training and toolkit examples (best printed in colour, can be several pages to a sheet)

Suggestion for delivery of this module:

Module two has been designed so it can be delivered following module one. Between an hour and an hour and a half should be set aside for the session, depending on how much discussion time you would like to include.

Where possible it is suggested that you conclude the session with a 15 minute discussion on what people thought of the issues raised and what they could do in their role to help tackle child poverty (supported by slides 26 and 27).

Dealing with reactions to the training:

Poverty can be an emotive topic and it is possible that some of the people attending training may have experienced poverty themselves or know people who have. It can be useful to lay some ground rules at the start of training sessions such as: 'any personal stories shared will be treated confidentially and not repeated outside of the training session' and 'we will respect each others' views'.

Training is a tool to support the eradication of child poverty, it cannot achieve that aim. Therefore, if anyone questions how much of a difference the training can make, remind them that this is only one of many things being done in Sheffield to help tackle child poverty.

The training has been designed to be sufficiently generalist that it is of use to all the agencies in Sheffield that have a role in tackling child poverty. Individual services and organisations will therefore potentially have a more in-depth knowledge of individual topics covered. Therefore, if anyone suggests they already have more knowledge in a particular area than the training covers, remind them that the training is designed to ensure everyone has an overview of the myriad of elements linked to child poverty, it is not designed to replace specialist training. You could ask people to think of ways that the training could be built upon or linked to other training in their specialist area in order to make it even more relevant to them.

There are many challenges currently facing front-line staff. It is important to prevent the training session becoming an opportunity for staff to air general grievances. If people raise unrelated complaints, acknowledge them but reiterate the purpose of the session. If people question or raise barriers that are

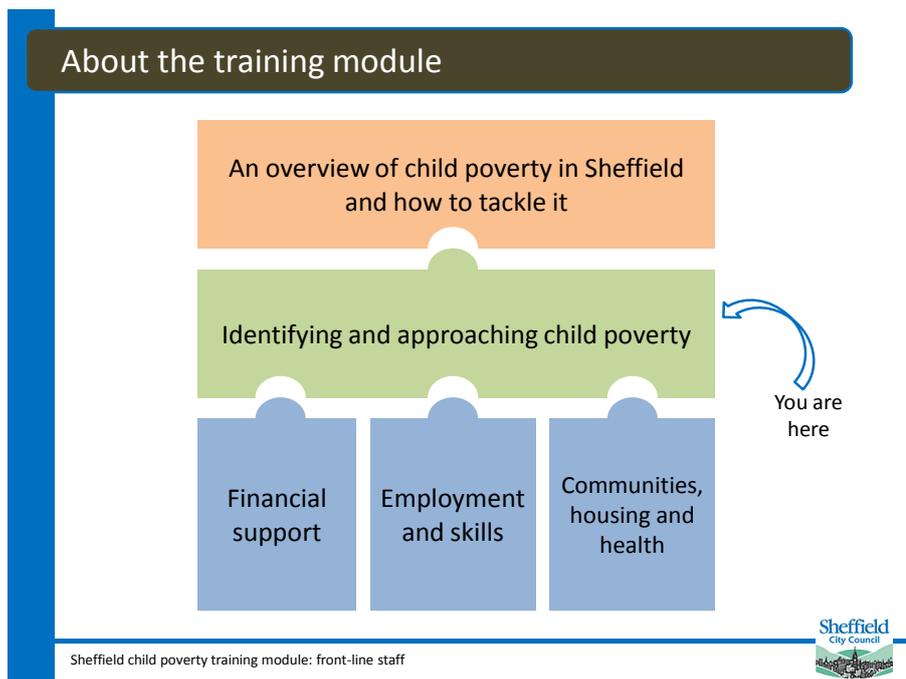
preventing them from tackling child poverty as effectively as they could/would like, try to get them to focus on possible solutions rather than the problem. Suggest they feed the issues to their managers and reassure them that their managers are also being trained and the child poverty strategy should help address such issues.

Screen 1: Title page

Identifying and approaching child poverty

Part two of the Sheffield child poverty training module for front-line staff

Screen 2: About the training module



This is the second of five modules you can access about child poverty in Sheffield and how to help tackle it.

In the first module, you looked at what child poverty is, considered the issue from a national and Sheffield-wide perspective and looked at how you can make a difference by taking ownership and through effective signposting.

The purpose of this session is to consider not 'what you should do' in terms of dealing with poverty (which will be covered in the forthcoming modules) but 'how you should do it'. The main points and key messages of this part of the training have come directly from consultation with families, children and young people in Sheffield who have experienced or are experiencing poverty. While you may not agree with all of these points, it's important to remember that they reflect service-users' views.

Optional information: You can access subsequent parts of the training module either online or at a face-to-face training session. A course toolkit containing further information and useful resources is also available online.

Screen 3: What this session covers

What this session covers

- Poverty stereotypes
- Poverty discrimination
- Barriers to services
- Experiences of services
- How this should shape your work

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In this session, we will consider issues related to poverty from real individuals' perspectives, and use these to think about how to approach working with people who may be affected by poverty.

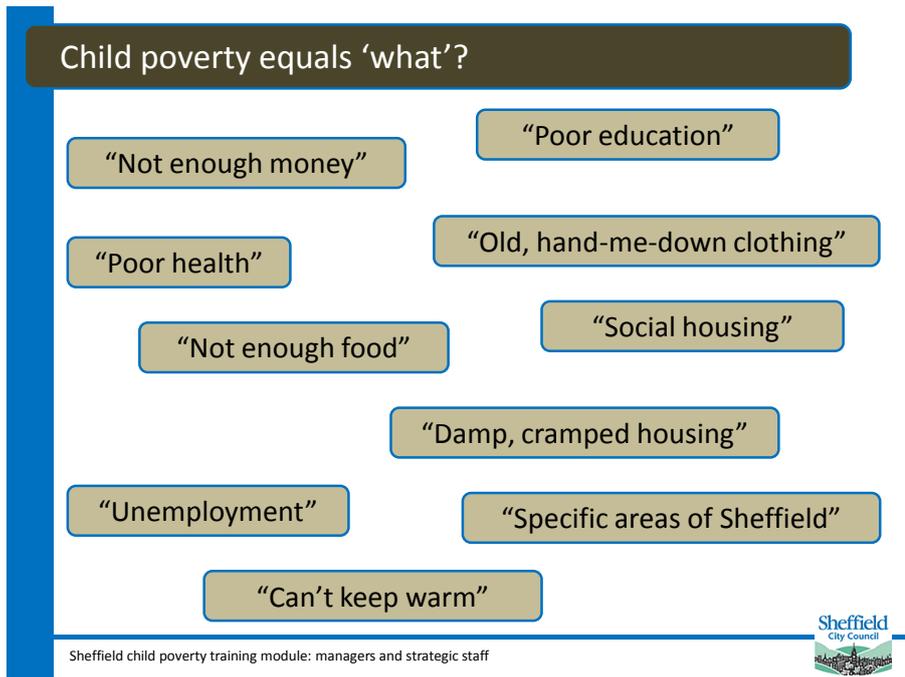
All the messages, quotes and case studies in this module are based on the real experiences of local people. We worked with parents and young people from across Sheffield who are, or have been, affected by poverty in a series of focus groups.

So what are we going to cover in this session?

- We will look at poverty stereotypes and discrimination.
- We will then explore barriers to, and experiences of, services.
- We will then think about how an understanding of all of this should shape how you work every day.

The key message of this module is that 'how you act at work has a big influence on people and your approach can make a really powerful difference.

Screen 4: Child poverty equals 'what'?



We asked parents and young people from Sheffield what they first think of when they hear the term 'child poverty' and they said:

- Not enough money
- Not enough food
- Old, hand-me-down clothing
- Poor health
- Social housing
- Damp, cramped housing
- Can't keep warm
- Specific areas of Sheffield
- Unemployment
- Poor education

However, whilst some or all of the things mentioned on this slide can be associated with poverty, in reality child poverty is much more complex.

Screen 5: Moving beyond the stereotypes

Moving beyond the stereotypes

You can't always see poverty

I know some people from personal experience – although they have not got hardly anything – they always make sure that they are clean, they are tidy, they are presentable when they go out. So sometimes you can judge a book by its cover and then when you look at their home life it is totally not what you'd expect."

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When we started discussing poverty in more detail with parents and young people in Sheffield, a much more complex picture emerged:

"Sometimes it's not about what they look like. I know some people from personal experience – although they have not got hardly anything – they always make sure that they are clean, they are tidy, they are presentable when they go out. So sometimes you can judge a book by its cover and then when you look at their home life it is totally not what you'd expect."

Question: (ask before revealing answer) What's the key message here?

Answer: You can't always see poverty.

Screen 6: Moving beyond the stereotypes

Moving beyond the stereotypes

“My address is Lodgemoor but I live in a caravan site. But because my address is S10 they think ‘oh, she’ll be loaded her’.”

Poverty can be found in all areas of the city

“They kind of think they all live in a few areas, that they’re all poor in Brightside and Manor Castle and they’re all OK in Ecclesall and Fulwood.”

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“My address is Lodgemoor but I live in a caravan site. But because my address is S10 they think ‘oh, she’ll be loaded her’.”

“In areas where child poverty is prevalent, staff are used to looking out for it, but in more affluent areas they often aren’t. I live in a quite affluent area and a lot of the professionals in the area would have no concept of even trying to guess if some families are struggling because it’s not what they’re used to in the area. So if people don’t ask for help and it doesn’t look obvious, it’ll be missed. They kind of think they all live in a few areas, that they’re all poor in Brightside and Manor Castle and they’re all ok in Ecclesall and Fulwood.”

Question: (ask before revealing answer) What’s the key message here?

Answer: Poverty can be found in all areas of the city.

Acknowledge that this can appear contradictory to some of the things covered in module 1, e.g. the map and spiral, but we will come back to look at this later in the module.

Screen 7: Moving beyond the stereotypes

Moving beyond the stereotypes

“You could have someone who’s a single teenage parent on benefits, but who is well supported by her parents, and then a family

It’s not always the groups you’d expect

paid jobs and struggle to pay the bills and put food on the table. From a professional’s point of view, they’d be more focused on the young mum, when it’s the others who need the support.”

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“You could have someone who’s a single teenage parent on benefits, but who is well supported by her parents, and then a family where the parents both work but have low paid jobs and struggle to pay the bills and put food on the table. From a professional’s point of view, they’d be more focused on the young mum, when it’s the others who need the support. So you’ve got to get from behind the blinkers and open it up.”

Question: (ask before revealing answer) What’s the key message here?

Answer: It’s not always the groups you’d expect.

Expand by explaining that in-work poverty is surprisingly common. 58% of all children in poverty in the UK belong to families in work and two thirds of these working poor families are couple families.

Source for statistic: ‘Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2009/10’ (2011) Department for Work and Pensions.

Screen 8: Moving beyond the stereotypes

Moving beyond the stereotypes

“In this current climate, every child is at risk of poverty because if you’ve got a family that lives in an affluent area, the parents could lose overnight.”

Anyone can experience poverty

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“In this current climate, every child is at risk of poverty because if you’ve got a family that lives in an affluent area, the parents could lose their jobs. Things can literally go downhill overnight.”

Question: (ask before revealing answer) What’s the key message here?

Answer: Anyone can experience poverty.

Expand by explaining that there is ‘generational poverty’, which is a cycle that passes from generation to generation, but there is also ‘situational poverty’, which is triggered by a specific incident in the lifetime of a person or family.

Screen 9: Moving beyond the stereotypes

Moving beyond the stereotypes

“I grew up in poverty but at the time I didn’t realise it, I just thought everyone was the same. It’s when you get older you see that they’re not.”

Not everyone affected by child poverty is aware of it

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“I grew up in poverty but at the time I didn’t realise it, I just thought everyone was the same. It’s when you get older you see that they’re not.”

Question: (ask before revealing answer) What’s the key message here?

Answer: Not everyone affected by child poverty is aware of it.

Screen 10: Moving beyond the stereotypes

Moving beyond the stereotypes

You can't always see poverty

Poverty can be found in all areas of the city

It's not always the groups you'd expect

Anyone can experience poverty

Not everyone affected by child poverty is aware of it

What does this mean for you in your role?

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Discussion exercise: (discuss as a whole group for a couple of minutes): what does this mean for you in your role?

Possible answers may include:

- We need to think past the stereotypes.
- We can't assume poverty will always be obvious.
- We need to be 'poverty sensitive' in all our interactions with Sheffield families.
- We can't assume all families that could benefit from and access help would know to ask for it.

Screen 11: Poverty and discrimination

Poverty and discrimination

“At school my younger brothers and sisters would get picked on because they were wearing my old T-shirts.”



“They become known areas and then it gets that nobody wants to live there and then it’s a downward spiral.”



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We’re now going to look at poverty and discrimination. People who are perceived as poor are routinely targets of discrimination in the form of stigma, and frequently viewed with contempt for circumstances beyond their personal control.

This can be from the people around them: “At school my younger brothers and sisters would get picked on because they were wearing my old T-shirts.”

It can also be from societal structures: “They become known areas and then it gets that nobody wants to live there and then it’s a downward spiral.”

This kind of discrimination, bullying and stigmatisation can exacerbate the challenges faced by families living on low incomes and struggling to make ends meet.

Discussion exercise: Ask the group if they can think of any examples.

Discussion prompts: Because of the stigma attached with being poor, families and children may seek to hide their personal circumstances and so not take up opportunities or support available to them. As an example, children entitled to free school meals often do not take them because of the stigma attached with being seen by their peers as being poor.

Similarly, families seeking to avoid being seen as poor, may spend money that could have been put towards bills or rent, on the latest trend such as a pair or trainers or clothing.

Screen 12: Discrimination from service providers

Discrimination from service providers



Double-click here to hear about the experience of a parent in Sheffield who encountered discrimination from service providers

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Sheffield child poverty training module: front-line staff

Image courtesy of Andy Newson

The image shows a woman with blonde hair wearing a red shirt, talking on a black mobile phone. A blue curved arrow points from the text 'Double-click here...' to the phone. The background is white. The entire content is framed by a blue border.

Families in poverty can also experience discrimination from service providers, both in terms of individual staff attitudes and in terms of service design. Here is an example of the experience of a parent in Sheffield who encountered discrimination from service providers.

[Play audio or read out case study text below].

Case study text: “I got tired of ringing one organisation. They don’t listen. I’ve rung them so many times, then my caseworker steps in, and it’s done. We’re the service users, why can’t they listen to us, why do they have to wait for a professional to step in? Why can’t they respect us like they respect the professionals? Just because we’re on benefits and live on council estates doesn’t mean we want to. We want to get off but without people’s help, how are we supposed to do that? They just look down their noses. They said ‘make a complaint’ as if that’s going to go anywhere. Everything I’ve talked to them about in the past they’ve pretty much lied about so what’s the point in making a complaint when for all I know they could read it, have a laugh and then put it in the shredder.”

Optional information: As can be seen in this example, discrimination can:

- Make people want to hide signs of poverty
- Make people not want to ask for help or access services
- Make people feel dehumanised and demotivated

Which all further perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

- It is excellent for helping to plan appropriate services at the right levels in the places they are needed most.
- It is excellent for highlighting some of the impacts of poverty.
- But... we need to be cautious that it isn't used in a way that perpetuates stereotypes and 'pigeonholes' people in particular areas or from particular groups.
- But... we need to be cautious that we don't use it to give deterministic messages to families such as 'it's too late to do anything if your child is past 22 months and has so far missed out on some development opportunities'.
- But... we need to ensure it doesn't mean we miss signs and examples of poverty in other areas and groups. For example, almost 0% of 15-17 year olds in Dore and Totley get pregnant but it isn't 0% so there are some.

Then remind them that what they have said in terms of how they should and shouldn't use the spiral applies to all tools they use that show poverty based on areas or groups.

Screen 14: Barriers to getting help

Barriers to getting help

Double-click here to hear about the barriers to help faced by a parent in Sheffield



Sheffield child poverty training module: front-line staff

Image courtesy of Stuart Miles



There are many barriers to getting help that people may experience. Here is one real-life example.

[Play audio or read out case study text below].

Case study text: "I went to college, mixed with different people, made the most of opportunities. When I got pregnant, I was on £28,000 a year. You never know you're going to need money so I

didn't have a great amount of savings. The father panicked and ran straight away so what I had went to getting ready for the baby. I worked an hour away – with morning sickness that wasn't nice – and they made it quite clear they didn't want me to continue there. They knew I wouldn't be likely to want to go back full time so they basically forced me out and my priority was my health. I ended up getting a temping job at six months pregnant, which was great. But when I had my little boy I just got statutory maternity. By this time I had no savings, HMRC were arguing the toss over tax credits because I'd been a temp, even though I'd worked since I was 17. I eventually got that sorted through help from a charity but until that was sorted, for the first six weeks of my son's life I lived on one meal a day. And I didn't tell anyone because you don't. And no one picked up on it: the health visitor had no idea even though she knew I was a single parent. I obviously didn't look poor and I had my own house and mortgage and car, which I had to sell, so I didn't look poor.

Because I wasn't eating my son wasn't getting enough milk from me but no-one questioned why I couldn't breastfeed, I was just made to feel like a bad mother for not being able to. I had a big problem with that, I felt very sensitive. They all knew I was doing it on my own, that should have sparked something. How did they think I was paying the mortgage? My health visitor knew I was a lone parent. If she'd talked to me, it might have led to a different outcome.

The only person who did pick up on it, and that was just through a conversation, was a lady at the children's centre. My cooker had broken and I couldn't afford to get it fixed and she overheard and took me to one side and said she had access to a pot of money for things like that. But otherwise, no one had a clue. I went back to work when he was six months old and I was fortunate enough that my mum could have him. He's three and a half now and it's taken all that time to recover."

Screen 15: Barriers to getting help

Barriers to getting help

**What barriers might people
face to accessing services?**

Discussion question: Thinking about the case study, and more generally too, can you think of some of the barriers to accessing services that people might face?

Slide 16: Barriers to getting help

Barriers to getting help

Don't know what you need	Had unsupportive experiences in the past
Don't know about services available to you	Believe no-one is willing to help you
Told you don't fit the criteria of the service (correctly or incorrectly)	Don't feel comfortable sharing your personal information
Considered too complex or challenging for the service	Believe practitioners will judge you
Health and disability barriers (physical or mental including depression)	Lack of confidence or self-esteem
Language barriers	Fearful practitioners will make you do things you don't want to do
Distance/cost of travel to the services	Fearful you'll be offered assistance that might cost money

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Discussion exercise: Reflect on the examples on the slide along with the examples generated in the previous slide's discussion. Ask the group to think about how they/their organisation would approach making changes to address these barriers.

Option for delivery of the above exercise: Put the barriers on individual cards (and also have some blank cards for people to write any additional barriers on). Ask the group to sort the cards into 'barriers that could be addressed through service design', 'barriers that could be addressed through approach' and 'barriers that could be addressed by both'.

Optional information: Acknowledge that the 'barriers that could be addressed through service design' are beyond the immediate control of front-line workers.

But...Tell them we will be looking at these with managers as part of this training. Also, suggest that they consider looking for evidence of such barriers in their day-to-day roles and feeding these upwards. Managers can only start to address the barriers when they are aware they exist.

Two big things front-line workers can do easily: The first links to people not knowing what they need and about the services available to them. You can make a big difference and reduce this barrier through effective signposting, which was covered in the first module. The second is that you can make a big difference and reduce a number of barriers through your attitude and approach.

Screen 17: Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

Double-click to hear about the negative effects that attitude can have



Sheffield child poverty training module: front-line staff



Why is your attitude and approach so important? When working with parents and young people from Sheffield on development of this module, all the groups said that one of the main messages they wanted to send back to staff was the importance of approach. A good approach is not something that just benefits families in poverty, but it can be especially important for such families.

There is a lot of great practice and great staff working in front-line services in Sheffield. However, it can just take one bad experience. To reiterate the importance of this, listen to this Sheffield parent describing what a non-considered approach can mean.

[Play audio or read out case study text below].

Case study text: “It’s ten times worse if they’ve got a bad attitude. That’s worse than anything, whether they give you any help or not. If you leave that building feeling like dirt, you won’t want to go back and ask for help again.”

Screen 18: Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

“People are so judgmental, they think that because you’re young, you’re not going to be as good a parent. I understand there’s studies proving that, but at the end of the day, why can’t they accept that one in a hundred, one in a million will be different, so why judge every young person. Some of us don’t want to be that, some of us want to do good for our kid, we don’t want to be judged for something we’re not.”

Sheffield child poverty training module: front-line staff



Here are some of the messages Sheffield parents and young people wanted to give about approach.

[Read out slide].

So it’s important to keep an open mind and avoid stereotyping and discrimination, as covered earlier in this module.

Optional information for trainer: This section of the training has the potential to illicit a negative reaction – people being told to do things they may feel they do anyway. It’s important to emphasise that a lot of the messages relate to things that most people in Sheffield do anyway without even thinking of it, and we are not suggesting that there is a lack of these skills among the people doing the training. The reason why this is covered is to reiterate the approach that families in Sheffield have told us they value most.

Screen 19: Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

“They can still call it poverty behind closed doors but you’re not going to get people’s attention if it’s called that because its like ‘I’m not going to admit that I’m in poverty, I’m struggling but I’m not in poverty’. It’s less of a label too: most people have struggled with something at some time. Poverty is something people can judge you on but, if you say struggling, people need to get to know you to find out what you’re struggling with and how they can help.”

Sheffield child poverty training module: front-line staff



Think about the impact of the language you use too.

[Read out slide].

Screen 20: Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

Providing a good service – your attitude and approach



Double-click to hear about why this can create barriers



Sheffield child poverty training module: front-line staff



Think about how you show understanding.

[Play audio or read out case study text below].

Case study text: “We once had a worker and every tale we were telling her, she’d done that. It invalidates you – that’s what I felt every time she said it. I’d just poured my heart out about some bad thing that had happened and she’d be like ‘oh that happened to me’. I don’t want to hear that.

Don’t say I know what you’re going through cause you never will. Even if you’ve been through a similar situation, you will never know what that one person is going through because everyone reacts to things and copes with things differently.

It’s ok to have not experienced it, be honest and don’t fake it. Because if you can’t believe what someone is saying, how can you trust them? You just need to listen, to try to help and support and to reassure people that things will get better. Trust is important because you’re vulnerable when you’re in a bad way.”

Screen 21: Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

Providing a good service – your attitude and approach

“If you gain someone’s trust and get to know that person, sooner or later you will know if something isn’t right. It’s not about sitting in front of someone with a checklist. That doesn’t build the relationship. It’s hard work to admit you need help. But if somebody in poverty trusts you they will, sooner or later, come to you for that help. If they don’t trust you then they’re just on their own, they’re too scared.”

Sheffield child poverty training module: front-line staff



Building trust is the best way to get people to ask for help.

[Read out slide].

Discussion exercise: Acknowledge that staff need to work within the constraints of their service, e.g. some have to use checklists in their role. Ask the group if they do and, if yes, have a quick discussion about this in light of the comment ‘it’s not about sitting in front of someone with a checklist’.

Possible discussion points include: The issue isn’t necessarily checklists themselves but how they are used. Checklists are an issue where they are used in place of open discussion rather than alongside. It’s

important not to let a checklist prevent eye contact – reactions can sometimes give as much information as what people say. It's also important not to let a checklist prevent people from providing information outside of the checklist constraints – don't forget to give people chance to add things – ask them if there's anything else they want to raise or need help with. Checklists can be helpful for ensuring comprehensive information gathering. They can also be a helpful way to ask sensitive questions in a non-accusatory way (because they are clearly being asked of everyone and not personally directed). It can sometimes be helpful to acknowledge to a client that you have to run through a checklist but that they are more than welcome to add more information.

Screen 22: Providing a good service – identifying child poverty

Providing a good service – identifying child poverty

Look for possible trigger points:

- Losing your job
- Losing your house
- Relationship break-up
- Having a child

Ask questions:

- Examples in Sheffield Contacts Planner in toolkit
- Question phrasing is important

Sheffield child poverty training module: front-line staff



We've seen how child poverty can be complex and not always obvious. To avoid making assumptions based on stereotypes whilst avoiding missing cases, consider possible poverty trigger points in your dealings with all Sheffield families. These can include losing a job, losing a tenancy, relationship break-up and having a child.

Optional exercise: ask the group to think about other possible trigger points and note down (on their copy of the poster if they have these) all the ones relevant to the families they work with.

If a family is experiencing one or more of these triggers, they may be of increased risk of child poverty. You should therefore aim to talk with the family further to see if they need any help, support or advice.

The Sheffield Contacts Planner in the toolkit provides examples of questions you may want to ask to explore a family's circumstances, e.g. debt, skills, housing, etc.

Question phrasing is important – this links back to the messages we’ve just heard from people in Sheffield, e.g. asking someone ‘are you struggling with anything?’ is likely to be better understood and answered than ‘is your family in poverty?’

Optional exercise: ask the group to split into pairs and take it in turns to think of and ask questions which could be used to find out if someone is affected by child poverty, to what extent and how they could be helped. The person in the pair being asked the questions does not have to answer them, but instead think about and feed back how they would feel if they were asked that question in that way. Would they be likely to answer it openly and honestly? If not, why not? Was the question unclear? Did it make you feel uncomfortable or defensive? Ask people to feed back what they have learnt in terms of the best questions to ask and the ones to avoid. Suggest people make a note of the best questions (on their copy of the poster if they have these).

Screen 23: Providing a good service – a strengths-based approach

Providing a good service – a strengths-based approach

- Don't focus on needs, deficits and problems
- Do work on the assumption that all families want good outcomes for their children
- Do communicate a sense of hope
- Do focus on people's assets and strengths

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Work on adopting a ‘strengths based approach’ in your dealings with service users.

This means that you avoid focusing on an individual’s or family’s needs, deficits or problems as this has the effect of:

- Communicating a sense of failure and helplessness.
- Reinforcing low expectations.
- Creating dependency on outside resources and agency created solutions.

- Discouraging individuals and communities from moving in the direction of positive outcomes.

Instead, assume that all families want good outcomes for their children and will use whatever is available to them to achieve that goal. Recognise and place a positive emphasis on resilience and the assets and strengths of the individual or family. This has the effect of:

- Communicating a sense of hope.
- Establishing expectations for success within an individual's capacities.
- Promoting empowerment and independence.
- Setting in motion forces for improvement.

It's important to empower clients, and encourage and motivate them to help themselves when they can, and using a strengths-based approach can really help this.

Acknowledge that: This is a very high-level summary of a strengths-based approach. Encourage people who haven't come across this before to seek out more in-depth training on this, such as the 10 day Sheffield Children's Induction and CWDC courses including Families Going Forward.

Optional exercise (if delivering in a multi-agency setting): Ask if anyone already uses a strengths-based approach in their role and, if yes, ask them to share some examples with the rest of the group.

Screen 24: A positive approach

A positive approach

Double-click to hear about the impact that a positive approach can have



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Now listen to this example of the impact of a positive approach.

[Play audio or read out case study text below].

Case study text: “We felt no-one was listening or taking on board how much stress we were under. Some of the services seemed like they did not care and came across like it was just a tick box exercise.

To begin with, I felt the Family Intervention Project (or FIP) would be yet another service that would not follow through. I was also wary because they knew so much about us it made me feel uncomfortable. My FIP worker did a visit with the Health Visitor as she was the one who did the Common Assessment Form (or CAF) in the first place. She shared all of the information about us and told me where it had come from by going through the CAF with me.

I felt that my FIP worker listened to me and reassured me. I have never felt that we were judged unlike with other agencies in the past. I had a strong input in our support plan - in each step my worker would check if I was happy with it. She had a lot of faith in us as a family and spoke about realistic aims, goals and time scales. One of our problems was that we felt that we were never getting anywhere in the past and that we had no positive future to look forward to.

My support worker co-ordinates all our appointments at the moment which we struggled with before and I have learnt from that so I will be able to do the same in the future. She has come along to our appointments for support, for example, I was very worried and upset because my family was going to be made homeless. I tried talking to the housing provider but they would not listen to me and I felt powerless. My support worker got involved and now the decision to repossess have been overturned. Now we are talking about redecorating my house, as I know we can stay in our home, which is great.

I did not want to start the group parenting course at first but having talked about my fears I have taken that opportunity. Now I have somewhere to go and get out of my house to meet new people and I look forward to going - this is something I would never have done before. My FIP worker has been so helpful for me and my family. We can now see a better future for us all. We have resolved some housing issues and my partner and I are communicating better and working towards a more settled life for our kids. Although there is still more to do I do not feel as stressed because I know she will work with me over the long term and I can talk to her about my problems.”

Screen 25: A positive approach

A positive approach

- She “listened to me and reassured me”*
- “I never felt that we were judged”*
- “I had a strong input in our support plan”*
- “She had a lot of faith in us as a family”*
- She “spoke about realistic aims and timescales”*
- She helped provide a “positive future to look forward to”*

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Acknowledge that this example is of a worker from a wrap-around service but emphasise that the key messages to take from this case study was the positive and non-judgemental approach of the worker, e.g.

- She “listened to me and reassured me”
- “I never felt that we were judged”
- “I had a strong input in our support plan”
- “She had a lot of faith in us as a family”
- She “spoke about realistic aims and timescales”
- She helped provide a “positive future to look forward to”.

In summary, what can be seen from the statements made is that while practical help is important, the way you provide that help is just as important, if not more so. Treating people as individuals and giving them respect will help them to open up and reveal issues where they exist, and will help make them more willing to ask for and access services that can help.

Optional exercise: Ask the group to reflect on and share examples of a good approach from their service area (and particularly examples of where there is a focus on involving families in designing the service they receive). What skills do staff with a good approach have? What kind of things do they do?

For example, sports club coaches at ZEST in Sheffield ask the young people how their day at school has been so they can put their attitude into context.

Also, some support workers adopt a whole household approach in their work. This means that they work with not just children and their parents but also the extended family. Working with all the key influencers in a child's life, such as grandparents and aunts and uncles, can be really powerful. It is also a good way to widen the information you can gather about the family's circumstances and motivations.

If you have distributed copies of the poster to the trainees, there is room under the 'How to act' heading for them to note down any prompts they feel would be useful for them in terms of providing a good approach.

Screen 26: What this session has covered

Summary – what this session has covered

- Common poverty stereotypes
- The impact of poverty discrimination
- Barriers to services and how to reduce them
- The importance of a considered approach
- What a considered approach looks like

Your approach can make a really powerful difference

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To summarise, in this part of the training module we have looked at:

- Common poverty stereotypes and the reasons we need to move past them.
- The impact of poverty discrimination.
- How to use poverty tools and statistics in ways that don't perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination.
- Reasons people can be unable to access services and ways you can reduce these barriers.
- The importance of a considered approach and what this looks like.

Screen 27: What next?

What next?

What three things are you going to do differently (or more often) as a result of this training?

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Discussion exercise: What three things are you going to do differently (or more often) as a result of the training? Ask people to write them down; ask them to share one each with the group; encourage them to put their 'three things' somewhere they will see them every day. Discuss what messages people are taking away from the training.

Optional information: It's expected that different people will take different things away from this training. In the past some people have felt that the key message was simply to acknowledge and listen to people. Some pointed out that a lot of the messages in this session relate to things staff should be doing anyway (but don't always). It's important to remember that the messages in this session came directly from families, children and young people in Sheffield who have experienced poverty.