Top TipsStaying Solution-Focused



Solution-focused support

Solution-focused support is about building confidence and believing that everyone can make positive changes in their lives. Breaking down goals into small steps helps to make change realistic and achievable. The focus is on looking for future solutions rather than looking into past problems.

With solution-focused support:

- parents and carers identify their own goals and realistic steps to reach them
- parents and carers identify their personal strengths rather than dwelling on challenges
- parents and carers identify skills and solutions they have used before, in similar situations, which they could draw on again

Why offer solution-focused support?

Evidence shows that taking a partnership approach and focusing on parents and carers' strengths and ability to find their own solutions is an effective way to support behaviour change. Advances in neuro-science have shown that when we focus on and talk about future actions, our neural pathways start to change in readiness.

How to offer support

If you are not accustomed to this approach, it can be hard to get used to supporting parents and carers to look for their own solutions rather than offering advice or exploring past problems. It is useful if you can find a chance to practise offering solution-focused support with the 'Supporting change in practice' resource in front of you; please see below.

This table might be useful to show a comparison between a problem-focused and a solution-focused approach.

Problem-focused	Solution-focused Solution-focused
Could you tell me about the problem?	What would you like to change?
Is this a problem you have always had?	How would you like the future to look?
How can I help you?	What are your best hopes for this session today?
How have you been since the last session?	What has improved since the last session?
What could you change about this difficulty?	What will it look like when things improve? How will you feel?
Do you feel things aren't getting much better yet?	What have you been doing to stop things getting worse?
How are you coping?	When you have faced this kind of problem before,what steps have you taken to resolve it?
Has this session helped?	What will you take away from today?

If you're not sure how to respond to a difficulty someone has raised, remember to use your skills of ESP – Empathy, Strengths, Paraphrasing:

- Empathy Tuning in to someone else's feelings, understanding their point of view
- Strengths Looking for strengths rather than weaknesses
- Paraphrasing Feeding back what someone has said to show you understand their point of view

Using ESP will help parents and carers feel understood, empowered and ready to change.

Supporting change in practice

Exploring Steps to change Partnership Open questions and Encourage reflection on On a scale of 1-10, with one Desire to understand being a low score and 10 the 'door openers' - 'Tell me present reality - 'So · Trust and belief in a bit about...' how's that affecting highest score, where are you capacity for change Listen you/your family/your now in relation to this issue? Where would you like to be? children?' Respect for parents as Allow silence when What are you already doing experts in their own helpful Magic question - 'If you to have reached (number)? • Empathy - 'That sounds familes knew you could sort this (..and what else?) out/change things... really tough' · What number will be a Acknowledge strengths what will be different/ realistic next step up the to build hope and what will it look like?' 'If scale? confidence you could wave a magic When you get there, what Paraphrase to clarify wand what will be will you be doing thoughts different?' differently?and what will Recognise gap between help you do this? (..and what present reality and else?) desired future What will be different when you have made this change? (..and what else?) How will you feel about these changes? desire for change