

# **FACILITATING CONFLICT RESOLUTION BRIEFING PAPER**

## **Introduction**

Over the last 18 months a small group of representatives from behaviour support, early years, educational psychology, inclusive education service, MALT, social services and community paediatrics have worked together to develop a multi-agency tool for facilitating conflict resolution. This came about following a research project, which analysed the underlying processes that took place in enabling effective multi-agency working where there was conflict within and between agencies. One of the main findings was that whilst conflict can be destructive, it can also be an effective tool for change if managed well. Service managers therefore requested that time should be given to develop a process which would support resolution of conflict around high profile cases and issues.

The Facilitating Conflict Resolution (FCR) process builds on the use of problem solving tools such as solution circles and circles of adults and is specifically designed to be used where there is conflict between people about what they think should be happening in relation to a specific issue and where the difference in views is hindering joint planning and actions.

## **Overview of Stages**

- Introductions including relationship to the problem/issue
- Ground rules including agreeing the desired outcome of the session
- Story of the problem/issue from everyone's perspective
- Feelings associated with the problem/issue
- Possible options for moving forward
- Agreeing viable option/s
- Agreeing actions
- Reflections

## **Requirements**

- A process and graphic facilitator who are separate to the problem
- Minimum of one hour with all participants staying for whole process (ideally one and a half hours if the group is large)
- A group of 4-8 people who are willing to discuss ways forward

## **Potential Uses**

This process could be used around individual child/family issues and strategic planning issues:

Child/family issues:

- Conflict over allocation of resources vs. child needs
- Placement and provision decision in relation to children with SEN, vulnerable pupils, high profile pupils (e.g. pupils back from out of city placements, secure units)
- Reintegration of excluded pupils e.g. preadmission meeting
- Assessment issues e.g. statutory assessment of pupils with SEN
- Movement of pupils from child to adult services
- Closing and/or transferring cases

Strategic issues:

- Integrated children's services – how do different professionals/agencies work together e.g. help to resolve potential conflicting priorities
- Multi-agency planning e.g. where agencies have different/conflicting views

### **Example of uses to date:**

This process was used with a SENCO, teaching assistant, educational psychologist and teacher from the inclusive education service to resolve conflict around education placements and arrangements for meeting the needs of a year 9 pupils with significant special educational needs. The conflict centred around the school staff holding the view that the pupil should be placed in a special school and the support staff holding the view that the pupils needs could be met in his current mainstream school.

The outcome resulted in a range of possible options, which were prioritised. The option of special school placement was at the bottom of the list of priorities. The SENCOs immediate feedback was that the process had been really positive, providing an in depth plan for the future. 6 months later the mainstream school has implemented additional strategies and the pupil's needs are being better met in the mainstream school.

### **Current status**

- There is a core group of 6-8 people who have the skills to trial this process in 'real' situations and develop a training/support programme for teaching the skills to others

### **Aims for 2006/2007**

- a. Share the process so that it can be used confidently in a range of situations by:
  - Members of the core group
  - A range of Children's Services staff
- b. Identify ways forward to generate trials to develop skills of core group
- c. Core group to implement a training programme to develop skills of range of Children's Services staff (using circle of adults model e.g. one day and follow up twilights)

### **Questions for the Behaviour Reference Group:**

1. How useful do you think this process might be on a scale of 1 to 5?
2. In what situations might you envisage this process being used?
3. How might you identify conflicts the core group could use to trail the process?
4. What might you need from the core group to do this? (e.g. input to teams on the process)
5. Any other comments?