

Focus on Appreciative Facilitation

Invitation to join an on-line reflective practice set

“[How can we] build in routine times, spaces and sacrosanct places for observing and speaking (especially at cross-purposes), far far sooner – before too much damage is done and before too many unwanted ways become ‘the ways we do things around here (or else)’?” (Wadsworth, 2011)¹

How can we work with the best of the here and now?

How can we be better at noticing and working with what’s strong, what’s working well and what matters to people and communities?

As practitioners that seek to support others and not do things ‘to’ people, how do we make that shift to genuinely working alongside people?

How much further can we take our so-called soft skills?

When we’re rushing around, how can we look at old issues with new eyes?

This on-line set is a unique experiential learning opportunity to develop your practice of relationship-centred and appreciative facilitation. You may not be in a formal facilitation or leadership role, but if you are interested in how to create the conditions and support change with others, then it could be for you.



Based on the principles of action learning and appreciative inquiry, the intention is to co-create a safe and stretching space to support reflection and learning. As a small group of practitioners, we will reflect on the live issues we are working with and consider what action we each may take with the intention of changing the way that we work. We will encourage each other to try things out in our own environment between sessions. This approach is based on the recognition that people learn best when they learn with and from each other by working on real problems and reflecting

on their own experiences.

It is likely to be useful for people working in a wide range of public services; those working with complex change; people with a brief to develop participation or build communities; those engaged in facilitation of learning or supervision; and action researchers and practice developers. We will seek to share our knowledge and experience to create the conditions for sustaining and improving services, organisations and communities.

Each session will be three hours long. We will agree a general structure for the sessions amongst us. Set participants should expect to commit to working together positively and be willing to engage in an open, honest and positive manner, within the confines of an agreement made at the first session.

¹ Quoted in (Sharp, 2018) *Collective Leadership: Where Nothing is Clear and Everything Keeps Changing, Exploring new territories for evaluation*, Workforce Scotland November <http://tinyurl.com/y6vll2hp>

There will be some limited material to read to stimulate discussion, always with a focus on how to personalise and apply the learning to the practical issues and challenges that participants are already immersed in.

Participants should expect to be challenged and be prepared to work with the personal values, feelings and attitudes that may arise. They can expect to develop new understandings about themselves and their own problems and situations in which they are working. This will help them to change the way that they act, foster their own professional development and promote facilitation skills.

Key elements

- How to create spaces to talk about how we approach our work together
- Building everyday inquiry capabilities for yourself and with others
- Being curious about language in practice settings
- Developing our practice, exploring what goes well, testing new approaches and learning from successes and mistakes
- Developing skills of appreciative inquiry and facilitative leadership
- Using novel and creative approaches to facilitation for individuals and groups

The set will be hosted and facilitated by Cathy Sharp, Director of *Research for Real*, based in Edinburgh, UK. Cathy is an experienced facilitator, action researcher and action learning set facilitator, who is actively working to support more appreciative and facilitative practice with a wide range of people, organisations and communities concerned with health and wellbeing, social care and community development. She has a PhD in Town and Regional Planning, BA (Hons) degree in Urban Studies and a Postgraduate Diploma in Action Research in Professional Practice. More information is available at: www.research-for-real.co.uk

More information

We are seeking to establish a small group of 5-6 participants able to commit to the series of five sessions. Dates and times are:

- Thursday 19 September 2019 (1-4pm, BST)
- Thursday 31 October 2019 (1-4pm, GMT)
- Thursday 12 December 2019 (1-4pm, GMT)
- Thursday 30 January 2020 (1-4pm, GMT)
- Thursday 12 March 2020 (1-4pm, GMT)

Our sessions will use Zoom video meetings. Participants do not need to download any software. Zoom is best used on a computer but can be used on a tablet or smartphone. A Zoom practice session can be arranged in advance, if required.

Prices

The total fees (for all five sessions) are as follows:

- £300.00+VAT for self-funded individuals and small charities (fewer than 15 staff)
- £350.00+VAT for all other organisations

How to join

If you are interested, please contact Cathy to express an interest before 1st August 2019. Contact details: info@research-for-real.co.uk