

Appreciative Facilitation Invitation to join an on-line action learning set (2021-22)

“It has taken me a long time to unlearn the art of using questions as clubs with which to bludgeon other people.” (W. Barnett Pearce, 2007)

This on-line set is an opportunity to help you to develop and spread practices of relationship-centred and appreciative facilitation. Blending the principles of action learning and appreciative inquiry, the intention is to co-create a space for slow reflection and play, to support practical learning and help to develop shared responsibility for group dynamics and experiences.

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 recognises that people learn best when they learn with and from each other - by working on real problems and reflecting on their own experiences. As an on-line set, this is based on the expectation that everything we do can be translated into both your own on-line and off-line learning spaces.

“I believe that emotions urge us to action, so action learning has to dive into the emotional landscape of the present at all times. If we stay in denial of our emotions, we are susceptible to endless anxiety and stuckness”. (Amy Stabler, 2021)

As practitioners that seek to support others and not do things ‘to’ people, how can we be true allies in change?

How can we look at old issues with new eyes?

How can we work positively with our emotions and our different perspectives?

It is likely to be useful for people working in a wide range of public services; for example, 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. **If you are interested in how to create the conditions and support change with others, then this is for you, even if you are not in a formal facilitation or leadership role.** 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, using Zoom. Participants should expect to commit to working together in an open, honest, and positive manner, within the confines of an agreement made at the first session. 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 can navigate our work together
- Building everyday action 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 and collaborative inquiry and facilitative leadership
- Using novel and creative approaches to facilitation for individuals and groups
- Adapting familiar tools and approaches for use on-line.

The set will be hosted and facilitated by Cathy Sharp, Director of *Research for Real*, based in Edinburgh. 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. More information is available at: www.research-for-real.co.uk

More information and next steps

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

- Thursday 14 October 2021 (1-4pm, UTC+1)
- Thursday 11 November 2021 (1-4pm, UTC)
- Thursday 9 December 2021 (1-4pm, UTC)
- Thursday 20 January 2022 (1-4pm, UTC)
- Thursday 17 February 2022 (1-4pm, UTC)

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

- £350.00+VAT for self-funded individuals and small charities (fewer than 15 staff)
- £395.00+VAT for all other organisations.

Please contact Cathy to express an interest before **27th August 2021**. Contact details: info@research-for-real.co.uk

The offer can also be adapted for an 'in-house'/partnership group, with fees and timings by arrangement.