Supporting change in residential child care through the use of practice profiles and Active Implementation

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Practice Profile?

A practice profile is a tool through which the essential functions or core components of a practice can be identified. It also describes the key activities, and the 'saying and doing' associated with that practice. If it is used consistently, and is integrated in training, supervision and continuous practice development, the practice profile enables a practice to be teachable, learnable, doable, and assessable.

How has the practice profile been developed & what conditions were required

Aberlour Sycamore, with CELCIS support, thought about what the organisation could do to build, strengthen, and support the competencies of everyone in the team. Using a whole system perspective, we explored how the relationships with the wider Aberlour Sycamore community can be strengthened, considered the cross-walk with key policies and procedures, and asked what else influences the system in which Aberlour Sycamore is placed.
Ensuring senior management buy in was vital, so that any changes wouldn't be a surprise for any adults, children, or young people. Along the way, we engaged with people in different roles across the Aberlour Sycamore houses and across CELCIS, ensuring consistent and continued support.

How have children and young people been involved?

Hearing directly from children and young people about what they want to see and hear from the adults in their lives is an ongoing commitment of the Participation Team at Aberlour Sycamore, who provide consistent, holistic spaces for children and young people. Through existing relationships and attunement, adults hear what children and young people need at all levels across Aberlour Sycamore, to provide enduring relationships, safety, connection, and healing.

The Aberlour Sycamore Participation Team has been promoting and supporting the rights of children and young people to have their voices heard and participate meaningfully in activities, consultations, and events across a range of methods and mediums.

How will the Practice Profile be used? What will need to be in place?

The next phase of the work is 'installation', in which the focus moves towards securing or repurposing the resources required for engaging in the new ways of work.

At the beginning, the Practice Profile will be used within two Aberlour Sycamore houses, carefully selected using a specific set of criteria to assess their readiness for change.

The bespoke mutual selection tool identifies several pre-requisites, such as: a stable team, adequate staffing levels, practice is at a progressing level, and permissions and arrangements are in place to support the house. When identifying the readiness of the house team, the following are considered: management agreement, staff commitment to the Practice Profile, children and young people consulted about the initiative, strong learning culture, and a willingness to share the experience.

Aberlour Sycamore have been providing resource and capacity through staff at all levels in the system for:

- ✓ Directly observing staff
  - recognising staff's strengths and how they care for children and young people, and
  - thinking about what support is needed for their practice to meet the high-quality standard described in the Practice Profile

- ✓ Providing real time reflections and feedback, supporting and coaching staff to the Practice Profile

This is supported by the Aberlour Sycamore Change Team and the two House Change Teams (one within each house). The Change Teams meet regularly to reflect upon observations and learning, and to discuss what barriers and facilitators need to be brought to leadership's attention.

What is Active Implementation?

Active Implementation is an approach that can be used to guide complex change, employing a set of six frameworks developed and refined over several decades through practitioner-scientist activities and synthesis of implementation literature.

Active Implementation highlights that, for achieving *significant outcomes*, attention should be paid not only to the effective practice (the '*what*'), but also to '*how*' that is implemented, as well as to ensuring an *enabling context*, as they are all critical elements in the implementation formula (Fixsen, Blase, Metz, & Van Dyke, 2015):
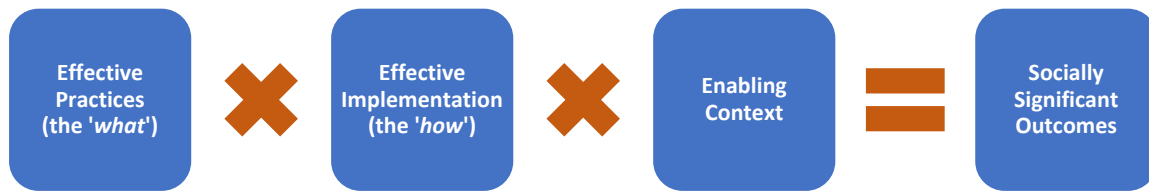
How will you know it's making a difference?

In order to inform decision making, data will be collected and analysed regarding the extent to which the practice is being implemented with fidelity (as described in the Practice Profile), the increasing scale of the programme (process data), the capacity within the system and the obtained outcomes.

A mix of existing and new measures and data tools will be used across a number of key areas in Aberlour Sycamore, including:
- Culture and environment
- Recruitment and retention
- Induction
- Confident adults
- Increased occasions of respectful challenge, use of feedback
- Reporting and recording of incidents, supervision, absences
- Mental health (adults, children, and young people)
- Reporting processes – wellbeing meetings
- Children's and young people's views and experiences, educational outcomes, and engagement
- Improvement in the throughcare living conditions (eg quality housing and opportunities, sense of belonging when young people move on)
- External feedback – Social Work and other partners, family dynamics

How has the partnership between Aberlour Sycamore and CELCIS contributed to the work?

During a joint evaluation session, colleagues across Aberlour Sycamore and CELCIS developed this word cloud describing the benefits of the collaborative partnership approach to this work:

How is this work different to previous change programmes?
It is challenging to successfully implement and sustain complex change across organisations. The lens of active implementation encouraged the change teams to approach this project in a different way to previous change work. Some of these differences included:

- Ensuring that all staff across the organisation have been included in, updated on, and received feedback on the change journey as it has progressed.
- There has been continued commitment at all levels of both organisations
- Learning from previous change programmes has influenced this journey, provided a sense of purpose and a renewed level of readiness!
- The implementation team can articulate with clarity what and why we are committed to this change
- There has always been role clarity within the implementation team and understanding of distribution of power and decision making across all involved
- This change work is underpinned with a strong belief that Residential child care is the right first choice for some children and young people

How will this be used?

Practice profiles and the learning from this work will be used in a number of ways across Aberlour Sycamore including:

- As a reference point
- To inform and support formal and informal learning and development
- To support and alignment across organisational policy and Procedures To support recruitment and induction processes, supervision, and annual appraisal conversations
- Individually by our adults to positively impact the care they offer to children and young people

How do I find out more?

If you are interested in finding out more about this work or would like to speak with one of the team involved, please contact:
celcis@strath.ac.uk
andy.finlay@aberlour.org.uk

Footnotes:
Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., Metz, A., & Van Dyke, M. (2015) 'Implementation science'. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioural sciences* (2nd ed., Vol. 11, pp. 695-702). Oxford: Elsevier, Ltd.