

The above outline shows how very different activities can help the group learn listening skills. Lots of different skills can be developed in this way from practical skills like swimming to complex skills like team work.

<http://www.cdysb.ie/publications/PDF/Programme%20Planning.pdf>

Recording in Social Group Work

Writing and maintaining group work records is an essential element of professional social work. A recording well done saves the group worker the trouble of having to emphasize to the agency about the group's progress in various aspects. But how seriously does the social work fraternity take up recording or written communication? Let us read what experts have to say on this:

“We believe that it is important that social work educators, students and professionals focus on developing their written communication skills for a range of reasons. These include:

- Writing is a core mode of communication in many fields of social work practice. The capacity to communicate effectively in writing can enhance practice in many ways, from promoting inter disciplinary team communication to advancing the capacity to attract funds and influence policy
- Writing skills, like all professional skills, can be learnt. Just as social work professionals can develop effective spoken communication skills, so too their professional writing skills can improve through sustained attention and effort
- Written communication can represent complex matters better than speech can. So it is a vital tool for social workers, who are often involved in complex

situations with individuals, families and communities and need to be able to convey the intricacies to others who may have limited first-hand experience of the specific situations. In addition, some professional writing tasks, such as completing tender documents, can require the integration of detailed and complex information in a succinct and cohesive format.

- Social workers' approach to writing should reflect the distinctive character of their professional purpose. This is shaped by the institutional context and audience, and must always be driven, at least in part, by professional knowledge and an ethical value base" (Healy & Mulholland; 2007: 2-3).

Principles of Recording in Social Group Work

Recording in social group work aims to make better the quality of service to the members. The agency could assess the quality of its service, thereby understanding its efficiency. Group records are imperative in study, research and experimentation.

Principle of Flexibility: the record must be adapted to the agency's purpose because group work practice and agency purpose are inseparably interwoven

Principle of Selection: worker does not include everything in his record but selects significant material in the light of individual and group development

The Principle of Readability: form and style are important and that clarity of expression is essential for all written material

The Principle of Confidentiality: the record is a professional document and that as such its contents are guarded by as sense of professional ethics.

The Principle of Worker Acceptance: the worker must accept his responsibility to write records because of his conviction that records have value in rendering high quality professional service. (Trecker; 1955: 208)

Types of Recording in Social Group Work

Group work recording is more difficult than recording one-to-one interviews because of the complex nature of a small group. In groups with a task oriented focus, recording will be concerned with tangible tasks, plans, actions and decisions. In a person-oriented group, where feelings, relationships, and non-verbal communication receive high priority, recording is dealing with intangibles, perhaps the most difficult of all to write about. Most group records attempt to communicate both content and process. Group work recording has several different purposes as follows:

- Agency requirements
- Training and skill development
- Planning, evaluation and research
- For direct use in work with members (Brown, A; 1994: 99-100).

Thus recording in group work is based on (i) Contents and (ii) Process.

Content Recording:

Numerical information on registration, enrolment and attendance of individuals and groups

Programme reports, depending on the types of activities the group is involved in.

Process Recording:

Another kind of record kept by group workers is the chronological narrative write up of the group-work process

as it develops. In this kind of record each meeting of the group is described in full detail. It is a process record in the sense that primary attention is given to the participation and interaction of the members, with a view of determining the role of each individual in the affairs of the group. The major value of the narrative process record from the standpoint of the worker is that such records help the worker to do a more effective job with his groups. Every other purpose is in a sense a sub purpose of this major one: to improve the quality of experience provided for the group. The record is thus a tool in the process of understanding the group and learning how to help it. The process records help the worker to (i) become more aware of the members of the group (ii) see emerging and changing interests of the individuals (iii) see evolving needs and how these needs are being met (iv) see the development of skills and social attitudes (v) becomes sensitive to special problems which may interfere with the individual's full use of the group (vi) it shows the variety of patterns of interpersonal relationship which take place within the group (vii) The development of the worker's relationship and role can be ascertained from careful recording of what he does while helping the group. (Trecker; 1955).

Contents in a Group Work Record

A group record is expected to hold the following information. This is especially important in the case of a worker leaving the group and when a new group worker takes over. By referring to the group records, (assuming it is done professionally), the new worker can be relatively at ease since group records consist of information that enables him to take hold of the appropriate 'strings'.

Given below is a gist of the contents a group work record shall consist of:

- Individual behaviour of the group members

- Nature and degree of members' involvement in the group's affairs
- Source and progress of suggestions, initiatives and innovations
- The worker's role with minute details of what he exactly does in executing his responsibilities
- The worker's thoughts and feelings about the group situation
- The development, transformation and evolution observed in members and in the group as a whole
- Affiliation among the group and the agency community relationships inclusive

Tips on Recording

Thus, recording skills calls for the worker's keen observation, understanding of dynamics of relationships within individual members and among the group as a whole and understanding the importance of how group cohesiveness is built. The worker also consciously puts in writing his contribution to the group's functioning.

Recording is not difficult, but thinking and analysis that precede the actual writing is difficult. Here are some tips for recording in social group work:

- Organize a concise, thematic sketch prior to putting things in writing as it facilitates in arranging the information/facts and in the choice of the main issues
- Clear-cut language, concise sentences, frequent paragraphing along with appropriate titles all through the document assists in subsequent assessment
- All the records should be accompanied with the dates, place and time to ensure

- The dating of all entries is important because it shows continuity
- Regular summations of individual and group progress are important means for appraisal of the group's development

Conclusion

Thus, programme planning is a significant part of social group work and the group worker is expected to navigate the group with its individual members in this process.

All groups have natural processes or group dynamics and the skill of the group worker lies in developing a programme of activities which phase in with the stages and condition of the group, to provide the best possible opportunities for task achievement. Group workers need to be flexible and pragmatic in their use of programme, drawing on different sources and ideas (Brown, A; 1994).

A proper record of all his initiatives will be a knowledge bank from which academicians and practitioners alike can draw from and build upon.

References

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