



**MAGIC**  
*moments*  
WITH CONSULTANT SOCIAL WORKERS

- ✓ **INSPIRE**
- ✓ **MOTIVATE**
- ✓ **support**



# **MAGIC** *moments* WITH CONSULTANT **social workers**



ensure that those at the front line are appreciated, valued and respected



# Foreword

The concept behind Magic Moments is to inspire, motivate and support and I know that the first booklet, which focused on improving life in care homes, was very well received. I am confident that this second edition will be just as valuable as a resource to help us achieve the continuous improvement we all desire. This booklet celebrates success and provides some examples of the practical support being delivered by Consultant Social Workers across Wales, who have a unique perspective from research to delivery. It is intended to prompt everyone to reflect on what they can learn from the examples given, so that front line practice is evidence based and good practice is widely shared.

The first Magic Moments booklet demonstrated how 'simple' things made such a difference to the lives of those living in care homes and some of those simple things matter to managers and practitioners too. If we can all ensure that those at the front line are appreciated, valued and respected, as well as supported to have the skills and knowledge they require, we are more likely to see great outcomes for people.

In my current role, I am regularly reminded about the everyday experiences of people who need protection, care and support from

social care workers, through our role as the workforce regulator in Wales and close connectivity to front line practice. We know that sometimes mistakes are made or poor practice is evident, with serious consequences. However, this is a very rare event, with less than 1% of the workforce being reported and sanctioned. This reflects my own experience in previous roles in delivering, managing and leading social care services in South East Wales. There is much to be celebrated, with excellent practice, despite the challenges of large and complex caseloads and diminishing resources. The role of Consultant Social Workers in helping practitioners to improve their practice and to make better use of research evidence to better understand what works and why is to be commended to all who have an interest in improving lives. I urge you to read on.



*Sue Evans*  
**Chief Executive,  
Social Care Wales**





# Why

## Should we collect and share 'Magic Moment' stories?

The idea of developing a series of 'Magic Moments' booklets, in different areas of Social Care, came out of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and the Health and Care Research Wales funded Developing Evidence-Enriched Practice (DEEP) project; now part of the Wales School for Social Care Research. The DEEP project initially sought to bring together older people, family carers, frontline staff, managers and researchers across six project sites in Wales and Scotland to explore how they could use a range of evidence to 'make the world a better place' in health and social care services.

The first 'Magic Moments' booklet focussed on Care Homes. One area of interest for project participants was to use evidence to improve quality of life in care homes. More often than not, media attention regarding Care Homes is focused on the things that have gone wrong, rather than the many things that have gone right. This is both unbalanced and discouraging to everyone who lives in, visits, or works in Care Homes. By contrast, the DEEP project discovered many examples of kind, compassionate, creative, and heart-warming stories of good practice in Care Homes, which became referred to as 'Magic

Moments'. Such moments were often 'hidden' and did not feature in the written care plans, which are the focus of so much attention. However, when these stories were shared and discussed, they encouraged and inspired others to create their own 'Magic Moments' in ways that care plans, rules, and regulations never could.

As with Care Homes, media attention on social work practice is invariably focused on the things that go wrong, rather than the things that go right. The role of Consultant Social Worker was introduced in Wales to raise the status of the profession, leading the development of social work practice to enable individuals, families and groups to achieve their dreams and reach the best possible outcomes for them.

We are told that human beings are 'storytelling animals' and there is growing evidence to suggest that we learn and develop most effectively through the sharing of stories. The aim of this booklet is therefore to share a range of 'Magic Moment' stories from Consultant Social Work practice, in the hope they will inspire discussion, learning, and development regarding the role across Wales. These 'Magic Moments' came from a variety of sources;



Consultant Social Workers themselves; the individuals and families they work with; Social Workers and other professionals they support; and organisations and employers.

Whilst people are often 'moved' by reading or hearing stories, they have a greater impact if they are subsequently explored and discussed with others. The final

chapter of this booklet therefore provides some simple exercises that can be used to help practitioners, managers, citizens, and carers explore 'Magic Moments' in Consultant Social Work practice, and use them to help take the profession forward in promoting and achieving the aspirations of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

**“ The aim of this booklet is therefore to share a range of ‘Magic Moment’ stories from Consultant Social Work practice ”**





# What

## Is a Consultant Social worker?

The role of Consultant Social Worker was developed to help meet the ever expanding challenges of offering high quality, efficient and effective social care to all in Wales. The role of Consultant Social Worker is attractive to experienced professionals who wish to stay in direct practice; driving forward the development of evidence-enriched interventions, developing the workforce as well as contributing to research and service development. The title of Consultant was selected as this is widely accepted to indicate a skilled professional with exemplary expertise, skills and knowledge that can then be shared in a variety of ways.

Consultant Social Workers work directly with individuals and families and, in addition, provide the opportunity for practitioners to develop their knowledge and skills around complex social work

practice, thereby working for better outcomes. They provide consultancy on practice issues, contribute to service development, offer education and training for Social Work colleagues and lead practice-based research.

A recent survey by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSS) found that Consultant Social Workers are employed across Wales, in both Adult and Childrens' Services as well as in the third sector. Whilst the role of Consultant Social Worker is varied and can be flexible, the survey found Consultant Social Workers share a drive and passion for practice that has led to them contributing to the ongoing development of effective social care services, bringing a practice-based perspective to development of services in Wales.

# How

## Can Consultant Social Workers help?

At the heart of Social Care policy in Wales is a focus on 'well-being, people, partnership and prevention'. This has led to a drive for excellence in Social Care in Wales, resulting in the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.

Consultant Social Workers can help meet the needs of individuals, groups, and communities, as well as demonstrating a commitment to the highest standards in social care by supporting workers, managers and other professionals in the following ways:

### Working for Better Outcomes

Consultant Social Workers – directly and through facilitation – deliver expert evidence-based interventions to individuals, groups, and communities.

### Consultancy

Consultant Social Workers offer professional leadership to other professionals through mentorship and consultancy.

### Service Development

Consultant Social Workers work closely with colleagues and partner agencies, taking a lead role in ensuring that service provision is based on sound evidence. They contribute to the development of new service models where relevant.

### Education and Training

Consultant Social Workers work in collaboration with academic institutions in order to remain appraised of developments in practice and interventions, and in order to assist in the training and development of other social care professionals.

### Research

Consultant Social Workers use and conduct research to ensure that evidence-enriched interventions are offered across services; disseminating best outcomes and promoting efficient and effective social work.

Consultant Social Workers have a unique role in developing a culture which recognises and values the irreplaceable contribution of the Social Work profession. They drive forward creative and innovative social work leading to more sustainable communities, creating a positive impact on the workforce, thereby addressing the challenges faced by populations and providers today in Wales.



# MAGIC *moments*

## Consultant Social Workers Working for Better Outcomes

### 1 Seeing the light

It was a 'light bulb moment'. He helped me to see how much I was obsessing over this one person and how much it was getting in the way of my relationship with my son. He helped me to give myself permission not to think about this person any more.

### 2 Stepping up to the unexpected

I helped to bury a client's dog. I attended the funeral (accidentally) with client and her family in the garden. I even said a few words, left a token in the grave and helped fill it in.

### 3 Believing is a step towards achieving

The Consultant Social Workers are taking on the role of Outcomes Intervention Champions. This is a model adopted by the Local Authority, an intervention that supports and is in line with the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act. The Consultant Social Workers provide advice and guidance in the team to less experienced staff and are also planning to promote the way

of working with partner professionals with the view of creating a greater understanding of this model of work within meeting settings.

### 4 Hard to reach but great to teach

The Consultant Social Workers have created group-work sessions for vulnerable teenagers in the area that participate in risky behaviour. The teenagers have been given advice and information as well as using their time constructively. The teenagers have responded well to these group sessions, and have provided positive feedback.

### 5 Reclaiming Social Work

Consultant Social Workers work in the Integrated Family Support Team (IFST), which is a multi-disciplinary team delivering intensive interventions to families where there are serious child protection concerns relating to parental substance misuse. Part of their role is in line with Welsh Government requirements re: Reclaiming Social Work agenda and developing the wider workforce in evidence-based interventions.



### 6 Mending not ending

A Consultant Social Worker intervened where breakdown of the relationship between parent of a Looked After child, Social Worker, and Local Authority had occurred. The Consultant Social Worker was able to intervene and re-establish relationships to the point where the Local Authority had confidence for the child to return home.

### 7 From break down to growing strong

Closing a family where an adoption had been breaking down, and helping that parent and young person work through the difficulties by using an attachment-base to the work was important. 2 years later I hear that things continue to go well.

### 8 Not walking away was the way

Adult with acquired brain injury:  
“you are a pain in the arse!”  
Consultant Social Worker: *“I’ve been called worse.”* Adult: *“No, I mean that in a good way, you don’t let me hide. You are different to the others in that you treated me like a human being. You didn’t walk away.”*

### 9 It really is worth it

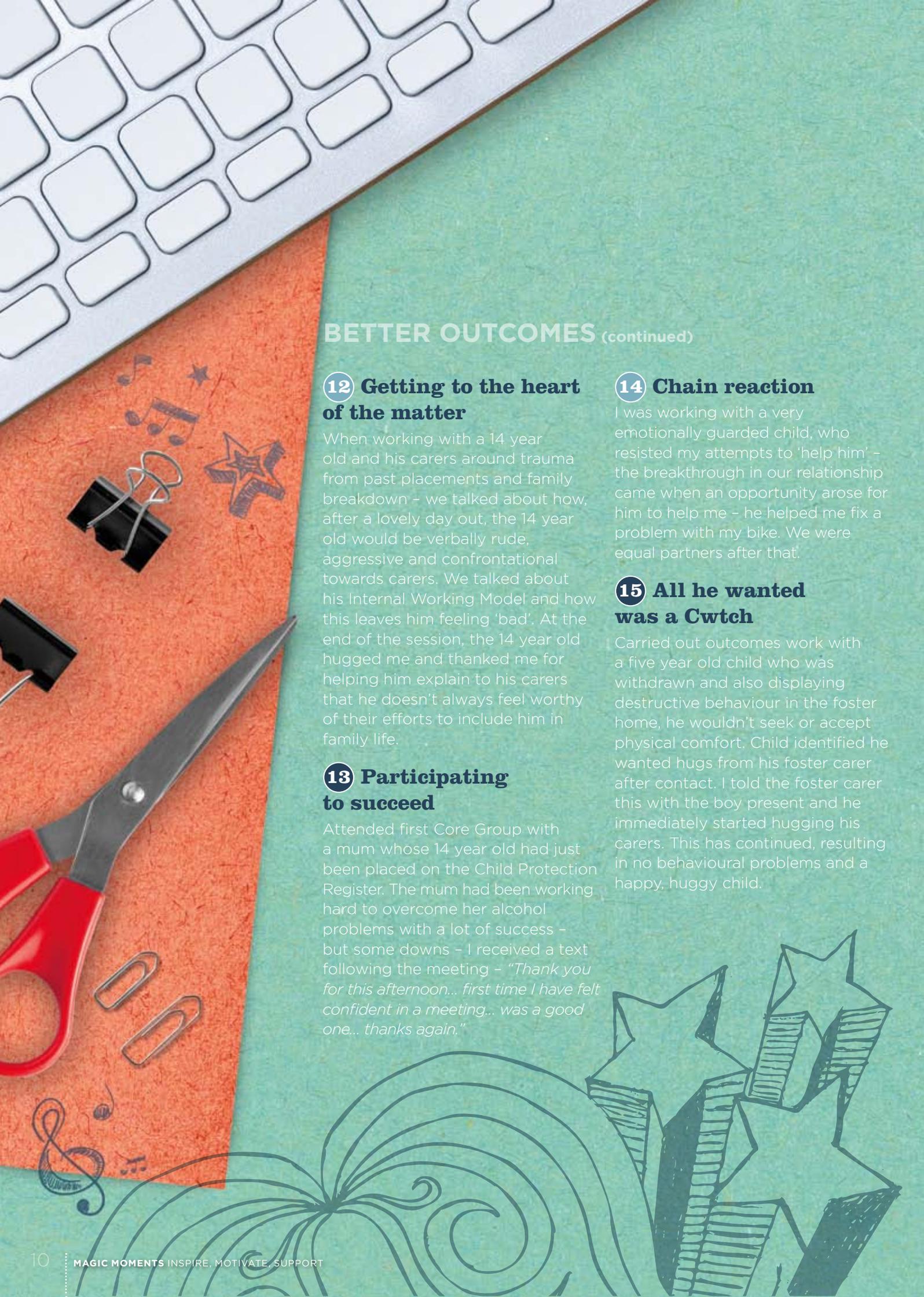
I think it is really important to keep working with families – this means that I do not end up detached, but also create moments with them. For example, recently working with a family where a dad had been a bit elusive and difficult to track down – I wondered if he was avoiding me – when he did engage in the first session of work and then has been available since – this feels important.

### 10 Finding me with the help of you

Testimony of parent following IFST intervention – *“she helped me better understand myself”*. Parent made a full recovery and is sustaining it.

### 11 No place like home

The beaming smile of a young person who moved into his first own home – with his own front door key.



## BETTER OUTCOMES (continued)

### **12** Getting to the heart of the matter

When working with a 14 year old and his carers around trauma from past placements and family breakdown – we talked about how, after a lovely day out, the 14 year old would be verbally rude, aggressive and confrontational towards carers. We talked about his Internal Working Model and how this leaves him feeling ‘bad’. At the end of the session, the 14 year old hugged me and thanked me for helping him explain to his carers that he doesn’t always feel worthy of their efforts to include him in family life.

### **13** Participating to succeed

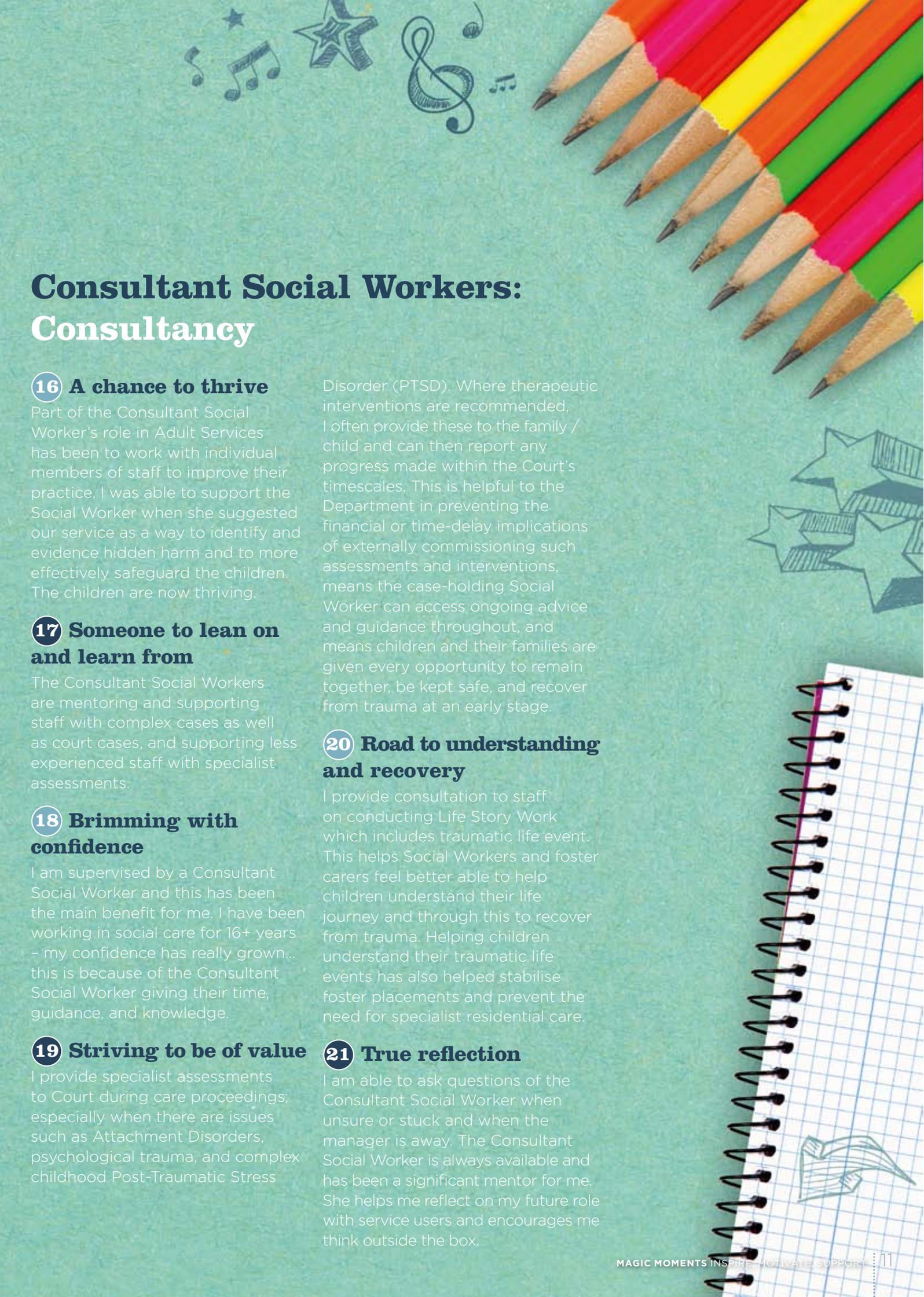
Attended first Core Group with a mum whose 14 year old had just been placed on the Child Protection Register. The mum had been working hard to overcome her alcohol problems with a lot of success – but some downs – I received a text following the meeting – *“Thank you for this afternoon... first time I have felt confident in a meeting... was a good one... thanks again.”*

### **14** Chain reaction

I was working with a very emotionally guarded child, who resisted my attempts to ‘help him’ – the breakthrough in our relationship came when an opportunity arose for him to help me – he helped me fix a problem with my bike. We were equal partners after that.

### **15** All he wanted was a Cwtch

Carried out outcomes work with a five year old child who was withdrawn and also displaying destructive behaviour in the foster home, he wouldn’t seek or accept physical comfort. Child identified he wanted hugs from his foster carer after contact. I told the foster carer this with the boy present and he immediately started hugging his carers. This has continued, resulting in no behavioural problems and a happy, huggy child.



# Consultant Social Workers: Consultancy

## **16 A chance to thrive**

Part of the Consultant Social Worker's role in Adult Services has been to work with individual members of staff to improve their practice. I was able to support the Social Worker when she suggested our service as a way to identify and evidence hidden harm and to more effectively safeguard the children. The children are now thriving.

## **17 Someone to lean on and learn from**

The Consultant Social Workers are mentoring and supporting staff with complex cases as well as court cases, and supporting less experienced staff with specialist assessments.

## **18 Brimming with confidence**

I am supervised by a Consultant Social Worker and this has been the main benefit for me. I have been working in social care for 16+ years – my confidence has really grown... this is because of the Consultant Social Worker giving their time, guidance, and knowledge.

## **19 Striving to be of value**

I provide specialist assessments to Court during care proceedings; especially when there are issues such as Attachment Disorders, psychological trauma, and complex childhood Post-Traumatic Stress

Disorder (PTSD). Where therapeutic interventions are recommended, I often provide these to the family / child and can then report any progress made within the Court's timescales. This is helpful to the Department in preventing the financial or time-delay implications of externally commissioning such assessments and interventions, means the case-holding Social Worker can access ongoing advice and guidance throughout, and means children and their families are given every opportunity to remain together, be kept safe, and recover from trauma at an early stage.

## **20 Road to understanding and recovery**

I provide consultation to staff on conducting Life Story Work which includes traumatic life event. This helps Social Workers and foster carers feel better able to help children understand their life journey and through this to recover from trauma. Helping children understand their traumatic life events has also helped stabilise foster placements and prevent the need for specialist residential care.

## **21 True reflection**

I am able to ask questions of the Consultant Social Worker when unsure or stuck and when the manager is away. The Consultant Social Worker is always available and has been a significant mentor for me. She helps me reflect on my future role with service users and encourages me think outside the box.



## CONSULTANCY (continued)

### 22 Experience is the teacher of all things

From a Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQS) being mentored by a Consultant Social Worker – *“It’s the only time it all makes sense.”*

### 23 Proud to be a part of it

I really like seeing the creative, innovative work that the team does, and feel that I support them to help families find their own way through problems. I am proud of the team.

### 24 Leading by example

From a Social Worker being mentored by a Consultant Social Worker: *“I copied questions you used, and felt like a pro!”*

### 25 Being creative being confident

In discussing mentoring offered a worker stated: *“I feel confident in using activities with families – helpful when stuck.”*

### 26 Aiming high-scoring higher

In a recent survey of workers in one local authority who had contact with a Consultant Social Worker 90% of workers rated their support as seven or above (on a 0-10 scale) and workers identified an increase in knowledge and confidence after contact with a Consultant Social Worker.

### 27 Growing in confidence increasing in competence

A Social Worker commented that: *“supporting me through legal meetings and case discussions has helped raise my confidence when completing something new.”*

### 28 By your side

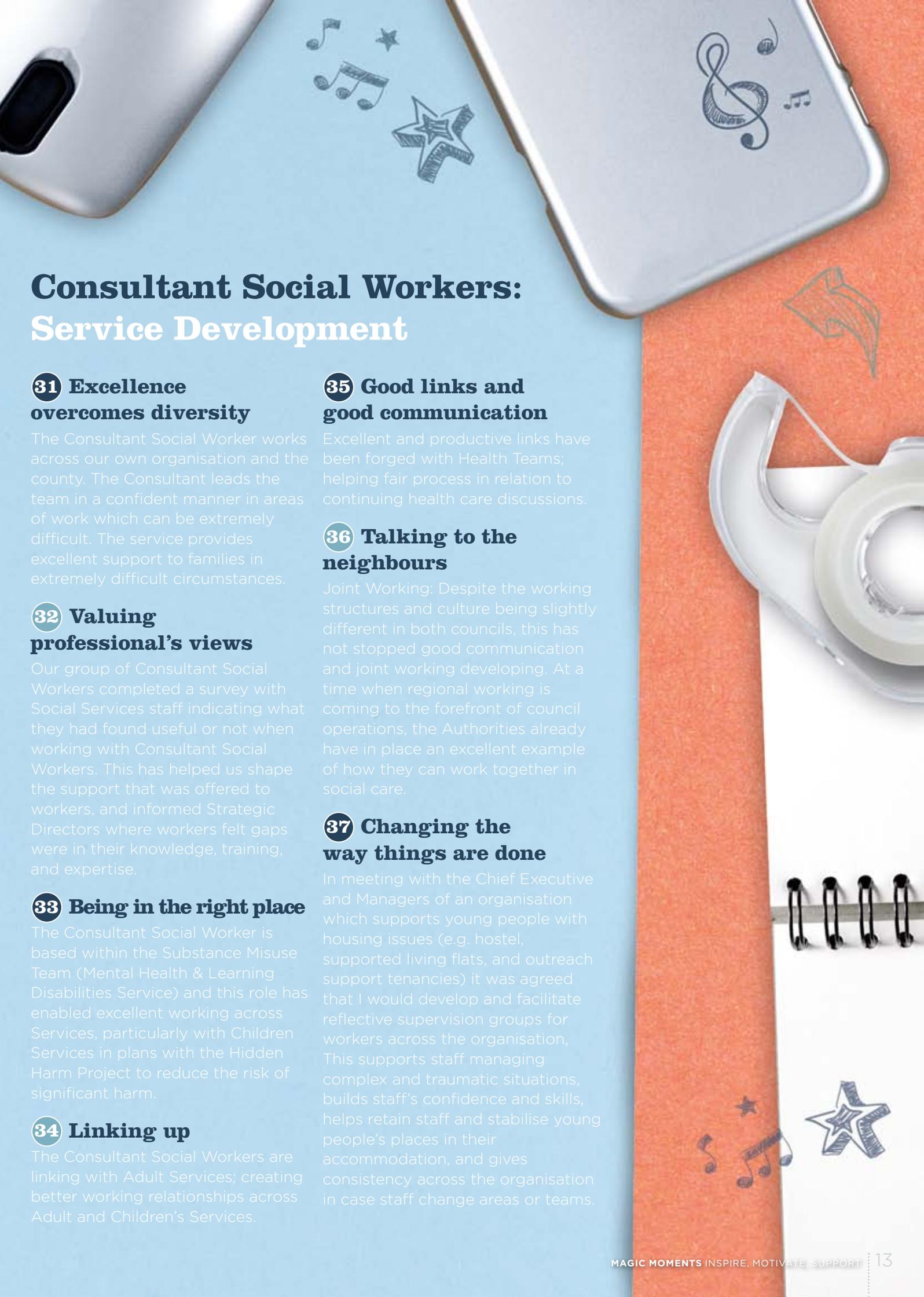
They gave me many ideas of how to approach a subject with a service user and also attended the home address with me for support.

### 29 On the right path

Supports me to draw the focus back to the purpose of my role.

### 30 Getting to grips with decisions

Enables me to trust my decisions based on analysis, reflections, and evidence.



## Consultant Social Workers: Service Development

### **31 Excellence overcomes diversity**

The Consultant Social Worker works across our own organisation and the county. The Consultant leads the team in a confident manner in areas of work which can be extremely difficult. The service provides excellent support to families in extremely difficult circumstances.

### **32 Valuing professional's views**

Our group of Consultant Social Workers completed a survey with Social Services staff indicating what they had found useful or not when working with Consultant Social Workers. This has helped us shape the support that was offered to workers, and informed Strategic Directors where workers felt gaps were in their knowledge, training, and expertise.

### **33 Being in the right place**

The Consultant Social Worker is based within the Substance Misuse Team (Mental Health & Learning Disabilities Service) and this role has enabled excellent working across Services, particularly with Children Services in plans with the Hidden Harm Project to reduce the risk of significant harm.

### **34 Linking up**

The Consultant Social Workers are linking with Adult Services; creating better working relationships across Adult and Children's Services.

### **35 Good links and good communication**

Excellent and productive links have been forged with Health Teams; helping fair process in relation to continuing health care discussions.

### **36 Talking to the neighbours**

Joint Working: Despite the working structures and culture being slightly different in both councils, this has not stopped good communication and joint working developing. At a time when regional working is coming to the forefront of council operations, the Authorities already have in place an excellent example of how they can work together in social care.

### **37 Changing the way things are done**

In meeting with the Chief Executive and Managers of an organisation which supports young people with housing issues (e.g. hostel, supported living flats, and outreach support tenancies) it was agreed that I would develop and facilitate reflective supervision groups for workers across the organisation. This supports staff managing complex and traumatic situations, builds staff's confidence and skills, helps retain staff and stabilise young people's places in their accommodation, and gives consistency across the organisation in case staff change areas or teams.



## SERVICE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

### 38 Supported workers are happy workers

My team of 9 talk about having pride in the team and are mutually supportive of each other. Staff retention is really good and they are happy in their work. This feels very important and has been commented on in independent research into the service.

### 39 It's evidenced

A recent study in a service led by a Consultant Social Worker found 'the service is providing highly evidence-based and effective support to children and families on the brink of Care, and enabling a very high proportion to remain living safely at home. [It] is also a very cost effective model'

### 40 Training that they want to do again

I have developed a Life Story policy for the Department, which amongst other recommendations includes using Later Life letters for all children, not just those who become adopted. I then developed a training programme for all foster carers and Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, and other professionals, and met with managers to advocate this. The policy is now implemented, the training programme made mandatory for all existing staff, and delivered regularly and as part of new staff's induction. Many staff ask to come on it a second time or book a consultation session with me about specific points afterwards, and all find it useful in helping children overcome trauma and in stabilising placements.

“ Staff retention is really good and they are **happy** in their work ”



## Consultant Social Workers: Education & Training

### 41 Changing cycles of behaviour

I was co-facilitating a direct-work training session. In it we were reflecting and talking about different ways of engaging children in our work. One described working with a child who keeps running back to their parents from care. She was encouraged to help the young person think about what kept pulling her back, and the advantages and disadvantages to being in either place. She left the session with a plan for her next meeting with the young person. After this she fed back that this worked really well and she was able to work a safety plan with the young person.

### 42 Accessing the skills that we share

After carrying out an audit of skills and expertise across the Team, I developed a plan of how existing skills could be shared, and how areas of deficit could be met.

### 43 Watching them grow

Provision of mentoring to newly qualified social workers, contribution to supporting their transition from student to competent practitioner (first year in practice programme.)

### 44 What do they do

The Consultant Social Workers build workforce capacity through training, mentoring, and supervision of health and social care professionals.

### 45 There in on the Act

A Consultant Social Worker was involved in development of 'Person Centred' workshops with both Childcare and Adult services, and delivering this to Social Workers across the Authority to support working in accordance with Signs of Safety and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

### 46 Taking a different path

I developed a training programme for the Service, with various courses being offered under particular headings and sub-headings. This meant that workers could follow pathways of training specific to their professional area of interest, and also gain more than a basic level training in any given subject (as each subject area then had a progressive and tiered system of training levels within).

### 47 Doing it for ourselves

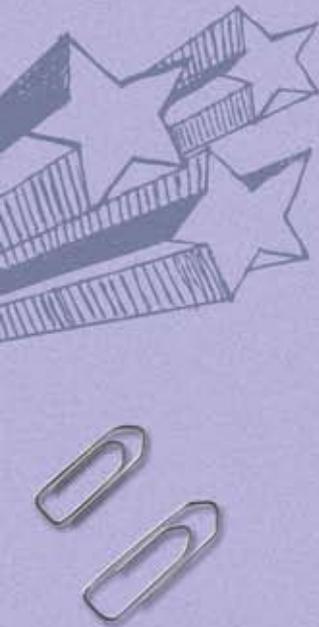
I started a Peer Mentoring /Continuing Professional Development group. Initially this was facilitated by me, but then asked other people in the Service to come and share. This has now been running for a couple of years and is highly valued by staff across the Department, who can either come regularly or just attend when a specific topic is of interest or relevance to them.



## EDUCATION & TRAINING (continued)



### 48 Expert knowledge is best shared



I develop and deliver various training courses to foster carers, Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, and other professionals. Within each of the subjects delivered there are various courses, of a sequential nature and aimed at various levels of specialism. Subjects include: Public Law Outline, Assessing and Building Resilience, Assessing and Building Attachment, Attachment-Focused Therapeutic Parenting, Life Story Work, and Helping Recovery from Trauma. It is great when I hear staff say how these courses have helped them.

### 49 Strive not to be a success but to be of value (Einstein)

As a Practice Teacher and portfolio reader for the Social Work Degree and the Continuing Professional

Education & Learning (CPEL) Consolidating Practice stage, it is great to see how students and new Social Workers develop during the time of receiving reflective guidance. I feel that I am making a difference in my profession by supporting them to continue growing.

### 50 Inspiration from lessons

As Consultant Social Workers we sometimes act as guest-lecturers in the University on the Social Work and the Psychology courses. It is wonderful when sometimes a couple of years later I bump into professionals who attended these lectures as students and they paraphrase back what they still remember and how it shaped their thinking and practice. It makes me wonder how what I am saying and doing today might be remembered or shape those I work with, and therefore to always give my best.

“ it is great to see how students and new Social Workers develop during the time of receiving reflective guidance ”



## Consultant Social Workers: Research

### **51** A model that helps

I carried out research with foster carers to explore their experience of applying trauma-theory training and the therapeutic parenting of Looked After children. This research helped share foster carers' voices, and through this research the 'Fostering Self' Model was developed. This model is being used by workers in a few different counties now. It is great to hear those that use it say how it helps carers explore their experiences in supervision sessions with their Social Workers; preventing compassion fatigue / 'burn out' in carers, stabilising foster placements to prevent breakdowns, and developing Social Work and fostering practice.

### **52** What shaped me

I carried out research with young people who had been Looked After and were now leaving care. This helped them to share their stories and experiences of their Corporate Parent, and ascertain how the Corporate Parent shaped these young people's identities. The research messages were shared with practitioners and the Corporate Parenting panel, and have helped practice to evolve. I hope to publish this soon, to help change practice further afield or across the profession as a whole.

### **53** Combating burn out

I have carried out in-house research across our Service, into Social Workers' perceptions of advice and support available to them. The findings showed that the various consultation systems and forums which the Consultant Social Worker set up and provides prevented feelings of overwhelm and emotional 'burn-out' when working with complex cases and traumatic situations, and also helped difficult decision-making during Court care proceedings.

### **54** What have we got and what do we need

I completed a piece of research analysing the demographic of needs which our Service was responding to over a two-year period, then explored the key roles and skill-sets of all individuals in our Team. This helped identify any specific strengths and resilience, and also any deficits of skills or support, in our Team. From there I developed an Action Plan identifying ways in which to maintain and build on existing internal skill-sets, how these could become shared throughout the Team, and how areas requiring attention could be addressed through either existing internal or external sources.



## RESEARCH (continued)

### 55 Being relevant, accessible and useable

Every year I conduct an audit of consultation sessions I provide to foster carers, Social Workers, residential care workers, and any other professionals involved in the child's life. This helps to show how and why these consultations are used, and also explores with those who haven't used them why this is. This helps to make these sessions relevant, accessible, and useful - and also makes sure that all available resources (including the consultations themselves) are at their most effective for the Service and those who work in it or access it.

### 56 Knowing the landscape

I deliver various training programmes to foster carers, Social Workers, residential care workers, and other professionals who work with Looked After children and young people leaving care. I therefore carry out a continual auditing of these, to gather a 'landscape' view of which sets of professionals have completed the various courses, and what Teams they are in. It helps the Service Managers establish what skill-set they have in each of their Teams (particularly when workers change Teams across the county!), and therefore identify areas of strength or which require improvement. This also means that training sessions as a (financially and time-limited) resource can also be targeted or utilised most effectively.

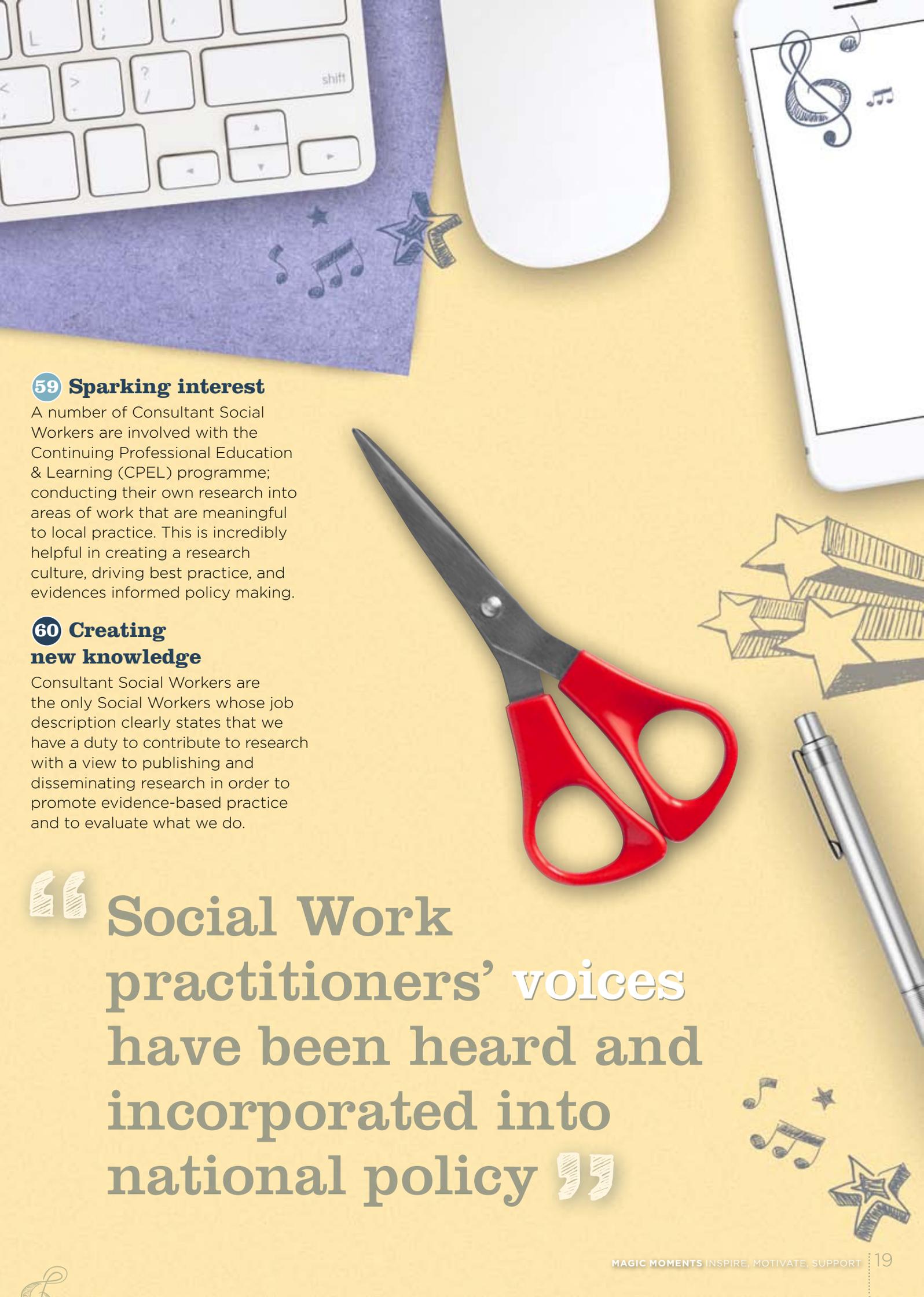
### 57 Relevant research

The Consultant Social Worker has worked collaboratively and produced two published articles: Case Work In Social Work: Exploring The Use Of Reflective Letters In The Intensive Family Support Services - This paper reviews the current policy context of 'evidence-based interventions' and demonstrates the application of practice of a range of workers the Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) in Wales in the context of reflective letters utilising Motivational Interviewing (MI) techniques. Integrated family support using Transactional Analysis (TA) as an evidence base: The aim of the paper was to explore how TA is used as evidence based intervention within the IFSS.

### 58 Being heard

A member of the All Wales Consultant Social Work Steering Group has been involved in the writing of the Social Care Wales research strategy. This has meant that Social Work practitioners' voices have been heard and incorporated into national policy.





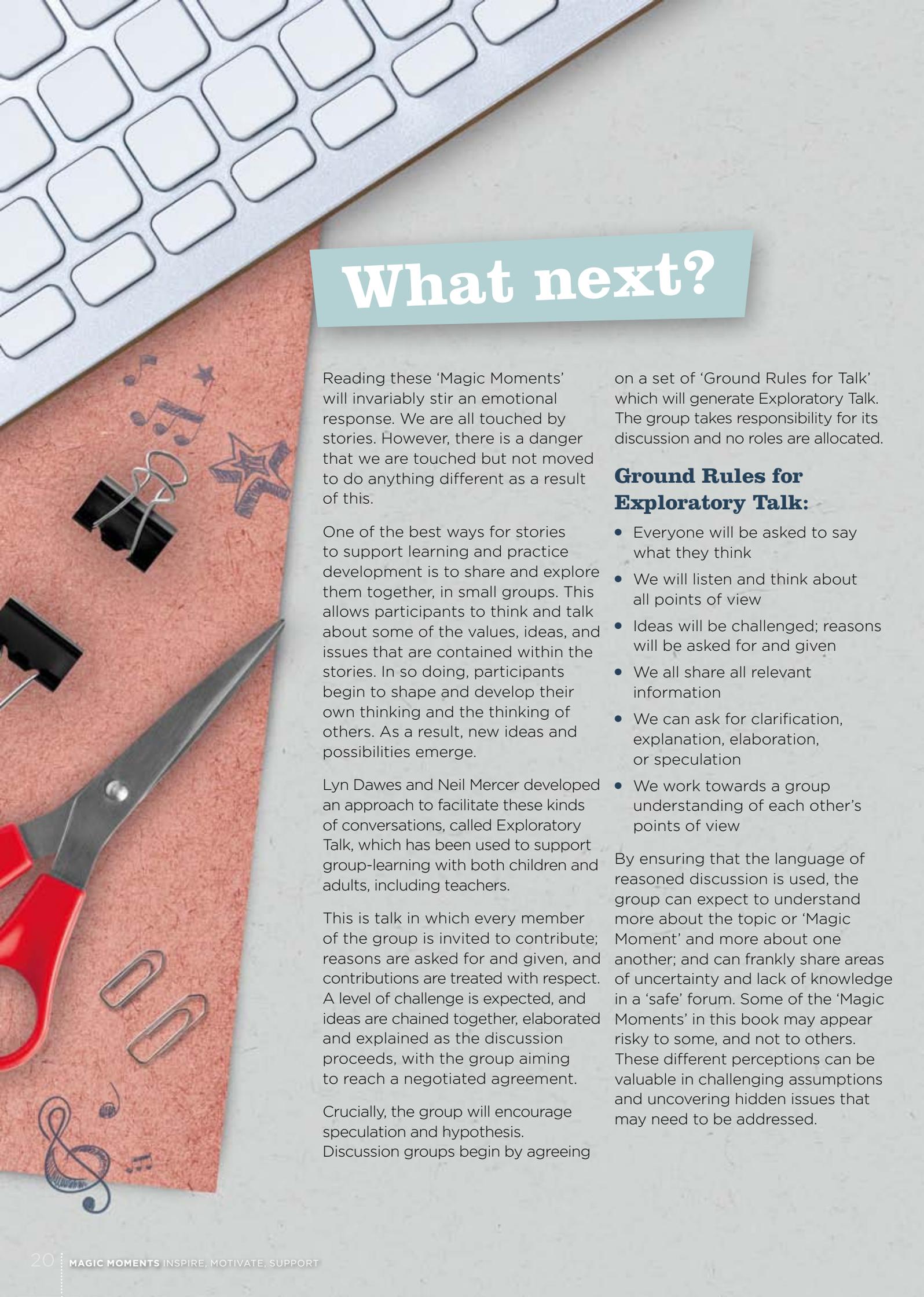
### 59 **Sparking interest**

A number of Consultant Social Workers are involved with the Continuing Professional Education & Learning (CPEL) programme; conducting their own research into areas of work that are meaningful to local practice. This is incredibly helpful in creating a research culture, driving best practice, and evidences informed policy making.

### 60 **Creating new knowledge**

Consultant Social Workers are the only Social Workers whose job description clearly states that we have a duty to contribute to research with a view to publishing and disseminating research in order to promote evidence-based practice and to evaluate what we do.

“ **Social Work practitioners’ voices have been heard and incorporated into national policy** ”



# What next?

Reading these 'Magic Moments' will invariably stir an emotional response. We are all touched by stories. However, there is a danger that we are touched but not moved to do anything different as a result of this.

One of the best ways for stories to support learning and practice development is to share and explore them together, in small groups. This allows participants to think and talk about some of the values, ideas, and issues that are contained within the stories. In so doing, participants begin to shape and develop their own thinking and the thinking of others. As a result, new ideas and possibilities emerge.

Lyn Dawes and Neil Mercer developed an approach to facilitate these kinds of conversations, called Exploratory Talk, which has been used to support group-learning with both children and adults, including teachers.

This is talk in which every member of the group is invited to contribute; reasons are asked for and given, and contributions are treated with respect. A level of challenge is expected, and ideas are chained together, elaborated and explained as the discussion proceeds, with the group aiming to reach a negotiated agreement.

Crucially, the group will encourage speculation and hypothesis. Discussion groups begin by agreeing

on a set of 'Ground Rules for Talk' which will generate Exploratory Talk. The group takes responsibility for its discussion and no roles are allocated.

## **Ground Rules for Exploratory Talk:**

- Everyone will be asked to say what they think
- We will listen and think about all points of view
- Ideas will be challenged; reasons will be asked for and given
- We all share all relevant information
- We can ask for clarification, explanation, elaboration, or speculation
- We work towards a group understanding of each other's points of view

By ensuring that the language of reasoned discussion is used, the group can expect to understand more about the topic or 'Magic Moment' and more about one another; and can frankly share areas of uncertainty and lack of knowledge in a 'safe' forum. Some of the 'Magic Moments' in this book may appear risky to some, and not to others. These different perceptions can be valuable in challenging assumptions and uncovering hidden issues that may need to be addressed.



## Exploratory Talk requires:

- A topic which merits discussion – for example ‘Magic Moments with Consultant Social Workers’ from this booklet
- Time in which to agree or generate Ground Rules for Talk
- Time for the discussion to unfold
- A clear use or purpose for the products of the discussion – for example, what are the implications of the ‘Magic Moments’ and our discussion on our practice?

The chance to hear and consider a range of points of view in equitable discussion is invaluable. In addition, such reasoned discussion enables participants to assimilate the tools of reasoning which benefit thinking when subsequently problem-solving alone.

## Facilitating an Exploratory Talk

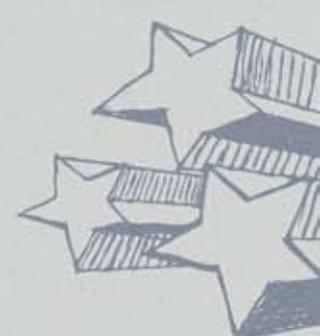
Discussion around ‘Magic Moments with Consultant Social Workers’:

- The person facilitating the discussion should select a number of ‘Magic Moments’.
- For groups of 6 or over, ask participants to organise themselves into groups of three, trying to choose people that they may not know so well.
- Sort out the Ground Rules for Talk

Ask the whole group to suggest four or five ‘rules’ which will help to ensure good discussion. No need to write these down – simply repeat and reinforce the suggestions that are most appropriate e.g. ‘Ask everyone what they think’ is a useful rule, as is ‘Make sure you ask challenging questions’ – whereas ‘Make eye contact’ and other body language rules are unnecessary. Summarise by repeating the key rules, or reading out the Ground Rules for Exploratory Talk.

If you think it will help, choose a particular rule for the session. For example, ‘In this session it’s important that we make sure that absolutely everyone is asked to contribute, so please check that your group does that’; ‘In this session, we need to make sure we give reasons, so let’s try to ask why, and use because to give responses’; *“We need to go into as much detail as possible, so try to share everything you know, before negotiating a summary.”*

Again, if needed, key words on display can focus thinking about good discussion, e.g. include; discuss; question; respect; challenge; reason; elaborate; explain; negotiate.



A photograph of a workspace with a laptop, a notebook, a pen, and a paperclip. The background is a solid purple color. The laptop is in the top left corner, showing the keyboard and trackpad. A notebook with a wooden cover is in the middle left, with a pen resting on it. A paperclip is in the bottom left corner. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

## WHAT NEXT (continued)

Tell (and perhaps display for) participants your overall aim, for example:

*"We are going to use discussion to suggest implications of the 'Magic Moments with Consultant Social Workers' for our services."*

### Discuss ideas in groups

Ask each group to choose one of the Magic Moments to discuss (or allocate one per group). Using the shared Ground Rules for Talk, ask the group to discuss their response to the content of the 'Magic Moment'. Make sure no pens, paper etc. are used! The group's shared memory will record the talk. Set a time-limit.

**If needed, display these prompts:**

### Our Response to Magic Moments

**'Magic moments' are very rare:**

- I have never experienced anything like the 'Magic Moments' we have heard
- Some of the 'Magic Moments' worry me because...
- Our 'Magic Moment' has some problematic aspects
- It is difficult trying to create the contexts for 'Magic Moments' to happen
- 'Magic Moments' are the icing on the cake; life is necessarily much more ordinary

- We can say what might create 'Magic Moments' in our own workplace
- A summary of our discussion in two sentences would be...

30 seconds before time is up, let the groups know, and ask groups to spend this final half a minute choosing a spokesperson and making sure that this person knows what they are going to say on behalf of their colleagues.

### Share the ideas of the groups and their implications

Ask the first group to read their 'Magic Moment' and then share their summary. The whole group can then ask questions, comment and discuss the issues. However, it's important that all groups are heard, so keep an eye on the time. Make sure all groups have chance to give their feedback.

Finally ask the whole group what they believe are practical outcomes from their talk. These can be noted down, with group names, so that reference to group discussion can be called on later if necessary. Refer to your original aim and establish what you have achieved together.

# Acknowledgements

## Optional – talk about talk

If this is part of a process to enable more and better discussion, ask the group to comment on the quality of their group talk, and how it influenced their thinking; some questions might be,

- Who said something that you found interesting or thought provoking?
- Do you think everyone got to contribute, and if not, what can we do differently?
- What was a positive aspect of the discussion groups, for you?
- Did talking about talk help your group to work well?

## After the Session

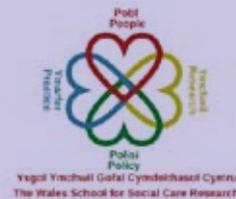
- Establish a bank of practical suggestions from the discussions.
- Use the group to help support implementation, and ask for problem solving suggestions as ideas are put in to practice.
- Let the group know the difference their ideas have made.

Thanks to the Wales School for Social Care Research for funding the development and publication of this booklet.

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# MAGIC *moments*

WITH CONSULTANT SOCIAL WORKERS

**Having read this booklet, please take time to reflect on how you might use it as a learning resource within your organisation.**

**You might also like to reflect on and record your own magic moment:**

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