

One Minute Guide - Motivational Social Work (MSW)

What is Motivational Social Work (MSW)?

Motivational Social work (MSW) is grounded in principles of *Motivational Interviewing (MI)*, *Task Centred Social Work (TCSW)*, and *Motivational Risk Assessment & Management (MRAM)*. MSW is a relationship based model of practice that **aims to reduce resistance and ambivalence in service users**.

We believe that where social workers can provide intensive, evidenced based, goal-based interventions they can develop transformative relationships and facilitate more meaningful and sustainable change. We believe this style of practice can hold families together and reduce the number of children coming into care, reduce re-referrals, speed up decision making, and where cases do go to court – enable us to be better prepared with robust child and family assessments.

The philosophy of MSW

An important principle of MSW is self-determination - that **only the service user can create and sustain meaningful change**. The social worker can be a change agent, a support, a coach, and a facilitator – but cannot make the necessary changes. This represents a significant cultural and philosophical shift away from a compliance based, directive approach.

The evidence base for Motivational Social Work (MSW) identifies seven key elements essential to effective social work practice: ***evocation, collaboration, autonomy, empathy, purposefulness, clarity about concerns and child focus*** (figure 1 overleaf). **These seven elements are social work values that can be measured as behaviours during practice**. It is these practice skills that we believe **make the difference in practice and are worth measuring**. These skills tell us far more about the quality of social work and service delivery than the timescales for a visit or an assessment. **Our practice evaluation framework evaluates the degree to which these seven skills are employed by the social worker during their visits (See – One Minute Guide – Practice Evaluation)**. It is our goal to create an organisational culture that embodies MSW philosophy. If you get the philosophy right – the quality of practice will follow suit.



The practice of MSW

Social workers use their evocation skills to tap into the family's intrinsic motivation for change to identify 3-4 overall goals for the intervention. **These overall goals relate to the change that needs to be seen to safeguard the child and close the case.** Social workers offer **intensive (weekly sessions), goal based interventions** to support the family to achieve their goals, drawing on multi-disciplinary expertise when indicated. Medium term and weekly goals that helpfully contribute to the achievement of the overall goals are agreed. The family's progress towards their goals is reviewed every 6 weeks.

To enable social workers to spend more time with families and less time completing paperwork we have employed more social workers to reduce caseloads, and reduced bureaucracy by employing more administrators and streamlining the case recording system. Social Workers maintain an up to date Child & Family Assessment and Family Goals form as the key documents relating to the child.

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