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One Minute Guide: Training Transfer - Putting Learning into Practice

What is it?

Training is used extensively in children's services as a way to standardise practice, meet legislative requirements, induct new staff and embed new ways of working. Organisations like Redbridge invest significant resources in training, to improve practice which should translate into better outcomes for service users.

'*Training transfer*' is the term used to describe how learning and skills are transferred and used back in the workplace to maximum benefit. It is an important but often overlooked issue in social care ([Burke and Hutchinson 2007](#)) and should concern staff, managers, and learning and development providers.

Why is it important?

Commentators have identified, despite investing considerable resources into training, that "*we have little knowledge of what training works and for whom or its outcomes*" ([Manthorpe et al, 2005](#)). If training is not transferred to the workplace i.e. if practice does not change after attending training, the whole exercise is a waste of resources and there will be no real benefit to service users. It is therefore important to staff, who will be investing their time in training, commissioners, who need to ensure that there is evidence of outcomes and managers, who will need to support their staff to practice the skills that they have learnt.

By understanding the process of training transfer and the factors that influence whether it occurs, we can change the way we commission, deliver and engage with training to maximum the likelihood of transfer and long term benefit to service areas within children's services.

What are the key theories?

Within research literature, four factors have been identified as being important in influencing transfer. Exploring these will assist us in having a better understanding of the whole process.

Individual Characteristics: The characteristics of individuals who attend training programmes have a significant impact on whether training is

transferred into practice. The degree of engagement with learning is affected by many things including type of motivation of the individual, self-efficacy (belief in ability to perform certain tasks), cognitive ability, organisational commitment, perception of relevance of the training, attitude to training in general and personality.

Training Design and Delivery: The way that training is designed and delivered has an impact on training transfer. As well as taking account of the principles of adult learning, tools such as learning needs analyses and practice and feedback of skills are important. Other methods to increase transfer include discussing training transfer and how the learning will be used at work, creating action plans or learning goals and follow up and evaluation.

Ensuring that the content is relevant is crucial. People are not likely to use learning that they can't relate to in their job. This ties in to learning preparation and ensuring that the right people attend the right training.

Workplace factors (also known as 'transfer climate'): Refers to *"those situations and consequences in organizations that either inhabit or facilitate the use of what has been learned in training back on the job"* ([Burke and Hutchinson 2007](#)). These include: Manager Support, Peer Support, Opportunity to use training, Strategic link of training to organisational goals and support of follow up and evaluation.

Subject Climate: For Social Care training specifically initial studies seem to suggest that the 'subject climate' may also be important in the context of training transfer ([Pike 2012](#)). Subject climate refers to how good a match exists between what training says should happen and what actually happens at work. This is a key consideration in the commissioning and delivery of training within children's services. Subject climate may be influenced by the culture of the workplace, existing structures and supports for the subject being trained; and staff attitudes to a given topic. Little evidence exists around the issue of subject climate in training transfer so far but use this time to consider its impact in your organisation.

What should I do?

Training (and training transfer) is a shared responsibility between organisations/managers, training providers and staff. Do play your part by ensuring that you attend training that is relevant to your practice and follow this up with your line manager during supervision/one-to-ones to maximum the opportunity for transferring your newly acquired knowledge and skills into practice. Do also provide feedback on any training you take part in which will help to inform the commissioning process. For more information please email the [Workforce Development Team](#).