

Solution Circles

A creative problem-solving tool

What is a Solution Circle?

A solution circle is a short and powerful tool that takes up to an hour. The approach was developed by Forrest, Pearpoint and colleagues (1996) and it aims to bring together a group of people to generate ideas for solutions to a particular problem.

Collaborative problem-solving approaches have been developed on the assumption that this process is superior to individual problem-solving. It enables staff to pool resources, increase their skills and understanding and find ways forward for working with children and young people in their classes.

Why are they important?

There have been arguments that staff need to be nurtured and supported in their role and that increasing communication between staff and increasing opportunities for peer support can help to promote teacher well-being in schools.

There is a need for a safe space to collaborate with one another, to think together and share good practice, and problem solve for the benefit of not only the staff themselves, in terms of their well-being, but also for the children they are working with. This is an area that our team can support and facilitate, offering a formal and structured approach to enable teams to make better use of this time.

Feedback received:

very useful and collaborative

great to get the time to reflect and consider short-term next steps

A positive session which allowed the group to come up with a range of solutions to our specific issues

Contact the EPS if you would like more information



When might you use Solution Circles?

Solution Circles can be used across a variety of contexts, including: in SENCO meetings, with year group staff, with support staff or senior leadership teams, to help to address a wide variety of topics which groups may wish to find solutions to. This might include unpicking a problem to arrive at the best approach or intervention for a specific child or group of children. The Educational Psychology Service can facilitate group discussions using this approach.

Roles

- Problem Presenter
- Process Facilitator (keep time and ensure no interruptions)
- Note Taker or Graphic Recorder (takes illustrative notes throughout the process for the team to keep as reference)
- Creative Team (5 – 9 people)

Agenda

1. Problem Presentation (up to 5 minutes)
The problem presenter has up to 5 **uninterrupted minutes** to outline the issue.
2. Opportunity to Share (3 minutes)
Each member of the creative team now gets an opportunity to share something of their experience of the issue presented.
3. Round of Questions (4 minutes)
This is an opportunity for each creative thinker to ask a question about the issue they have been listening to and/or sharing about.
4. Responses, ideas and solutions (15 minutes)
This is a chance for both the initial problem presenter and the creative team to respond to the questions posed and put forward ideas for solving the problem. Everyone can chime in with ideas, thoughts and possibly even solutions!
5. Next Steps (10 minutes)
Both the initial problem presenter and the creative team decide on first steps which are doable within the next few days.
6. Summary (2 minutes)
The graphic recorder now provides a summary of the whole discussion with reference to their recording.
7. Round of Words (2 minutes)
Finally each member of the creative team contributes one word or short phrase to describe the experience of the Solution Circle.

NB timings can be adjusted to fit your requirements.