



One minute guide

Appreciative Inquiry

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What is Appreciative Inquiry?

The [Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) (LSCP) uses Appreciative Inquiry as one of its approaches for analysing and understanding multi-agency safeguarding practice. Appreciative Inquiry is an effective method for undertaking safeguarding practice reviews (as set out in [Working Together 2018](#)) and helps us understand, define and celebrate good multi-agency safeguarding practice in Leeds. The approach is well established and used in health and social care settings around the country.

What are the key features of Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry looks at what is good, what works and as a city what we'd like to do more of. This is different to traditional approaches of reviewing practice where the focus is often on what went wrong and what should be done differently. As an approach, Appreciative Inquiry does not apportion blame; instead it seeks to understand what has happened, within a framework that is participative, collaborative, embraces professional curiosity and challenge, and focuses on what works well and what is valued.

How does it work in Leeds?

In Leeds, cases are suggested by partner agencies that involve aspects of good or challenging multi-agency safeguarding practice from which we can learn. The focus of the good practice varies and could be about, for example: working with the child and/or family; communication; planning; and professional curiosity.

The practitioners who were directly involved in the work are then invited to take part in an event where agencies come together to discuss the practice in question and identify what can be learned from this. The LSCP leads and facilitates the planning and coordination of the event in consultation with practitioners involved.

It is important to consider how the child or young person and their parent(s) and/or carer(s) are involved in Appreciative Inquiry, and this is established with practitioners on a case-by-case basis, and with consent.

Before the event, participants are asked to refresh themselves about their involvement in the case and to come prepared to share an aspect of practice they consider has had an impact on the way the work with the family developed and was handled, and that would benefit from further analysis.

At the event participants share these aspects of practice and from these a number are selected to analyse in detail. This is carried out in a safe and non-blaming environment, which enables participants and agencies to get the most from the learning about both effective and challenging aspects of practice, depending on the focus of the Appreciative Inquiry. The event involves whole and small group work and there is plenty of time for discussion to reach a shared understanding of the practice involved and to identify learning.

What do participants and partners say about Appreciative Inquiry?

Feedback from participants is essential in helping to develop the Leeds approach to Appreciative Inquiry. The following are some examples of feedback received:

A mother explained how support offered to her and her child had made *'a real difference'* and was surprised and pleased to hear that her own *'contribution to planning had motivated and inspired others.'*

Before an event, some participants felt *'apprehensive, concerned you've not got things right', 'nervous, out of my comfort zone'.*

After an event some participants felt *'welcomed and reassured', 'more confident that I am a great practitioner', 'positive, having learned more about the case and having had high quality practice-based discussions in a safe and participative environment'.*

Practitioners have said that *'this approach with a positive focus, feels transparent and enabling and more conducive to learning',* that *'the method of enquiry was refreshing and allowed for honest and open discussion'.* Also they have said that Appreciative Inquiry gave a *'deeper understanding of complex issues and barriers both for this child and other professionals'.*

Partners have confirmed that Appreciative Inquiry is a robust and credible approach to reviewing practice involving complex and difficult case work, which enhances our understanding about what works well.

How is learning shared?

The LSCP produces a report that sets out the learning and recommendations for practice and policy improvements and shares this with partners who in turn discuss learning with their workforce at service and team meetings. The LSCP are exploring how they can build on their approach to supporting reviews of practice within individual agencies, teams and in supervising staff.

Summaries of learning from Appreciative Inquiry and other multi-agency reviews are posted on the [LSCP website](#).

Key contacts or for more information

If you'd like to discuss how Appreciative Inquiry can support practice development in your area of work, or to find out more, please contact Phil Coneron, Assistant Manager for Evaluation and Analysis at the LSCP, email: phil.coneron@leeds.gov.uk or tel: 0113 37 89671.

As Leeds develops and reviews the approach to Appreciative Inquiry, more information will become available on the LSCP website. In the meantime, you can find more information about the approach from the IRISS webpage — [Forming new futures through Appreciative Inquiry](#).



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