

What is Allyship?: Developing Supportive Cultures

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Practitioner.





My Story



- Extensive background in both Children's and Adults Social Care across three local authorities
- Qualified Social Worker since 2015
- Long standing practice educator
- Delivered independent work on Anti Racist Practice regionally and nationally
- Developed a wide range of service improvement tools



Outcomes

- To understand what allyship is in the context of working with children and families and supporting our colleagues.
- To understand how allyship is linked to empathy
- To understand the need to move from performative to transformative in terms of allyship



Reflections:

- When was the last time that someone used their influence to help you when they did not have to?
- Who has stood up for you when you were not in the room?
- Who has challenged an unfair decision on your behalf?
- How did this make you feel?
- What difference did it make?



What do we mean by Allyship?

Definition: Allyship is the active and consistent practice of using your influence, privilege, position or voice to support people experiencing disadvantage, exclusion or discrimination.

Practice: Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, Children Act 1989, Working Together 2026, Education Act 2002, Nursing and Midwifery Council Code and College of Policing Code of Ethics

True Allyship

True Allyship is:



Action



Being Brave



Showing
Curiosity



Being
Accountable



Solidarity and
Empathy

True Allyship is not:

- Being a saviour
- Excluding people for the sake of others
- Being perfect
- Knowing everything about everyone and everything

Why does Allyship matter when working with Children and Families?

Children and Families

- Know who gets listened to
- Know who gets challenged
- Know who gets left behind
- Know who belongs

In Practice

- Trust
- Psychological Safety
- Better Relationships
- Better Outcomes



How does Allyship impact workforce culture?

Silence – Awareness – Empathy – Advocacy – System Change

What can we do now to show Allyship?



In Supervision

- Challenging assumptions.
- Asking about cultural understanding.
- Exploring bias.

In Meetings

- Ensuring quieter voices are heard.
- Challenging stereotypes.

With Children

- Making identity visible.
- Being curious about lived experiences.

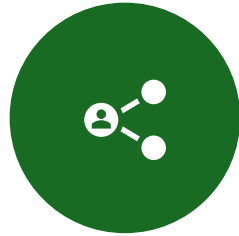
With Families

- Avoiding deficit narratives.
- Understanding cultural contexts.

Small things make a big difference



PRONOUNCING
NAMES
CORRECTLY.



SHARING
OPPORTUNITIES.



AMPLIFYING
OTHERS' IDEAS.



ASKING RATHER
THAN ASSUMING.



CHECKING
LANGUAGE.

Common obstacles to allyship



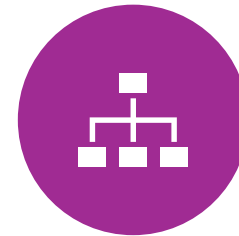
FEAR OF
CONFLICT.



FEAR OF GETTING
IT WRONG.



FEAR OF
DAMAGING
RELATIONSHIPS.



ORGANISATIONAL
HIERARCHY.



TIME PRESSURES.

Reflective Case Study 1

Team Meeting

Anjalika is a newly qualified South Asian born social worker who presents an assessment and discusses her findings with the team.

A colleague comments:

"I think you're being a bit sensitive. The family probably didn't mean it like that, you're jumping to conclusions"

The room becomes silent.

The manager quickly changes the subject.

The newly qualified worker appears uncomfortable and stops contributing to the team meeting.

What's going on in this scenario?



What is happening here?



What messages are being sent?



What might the worker be feeling?

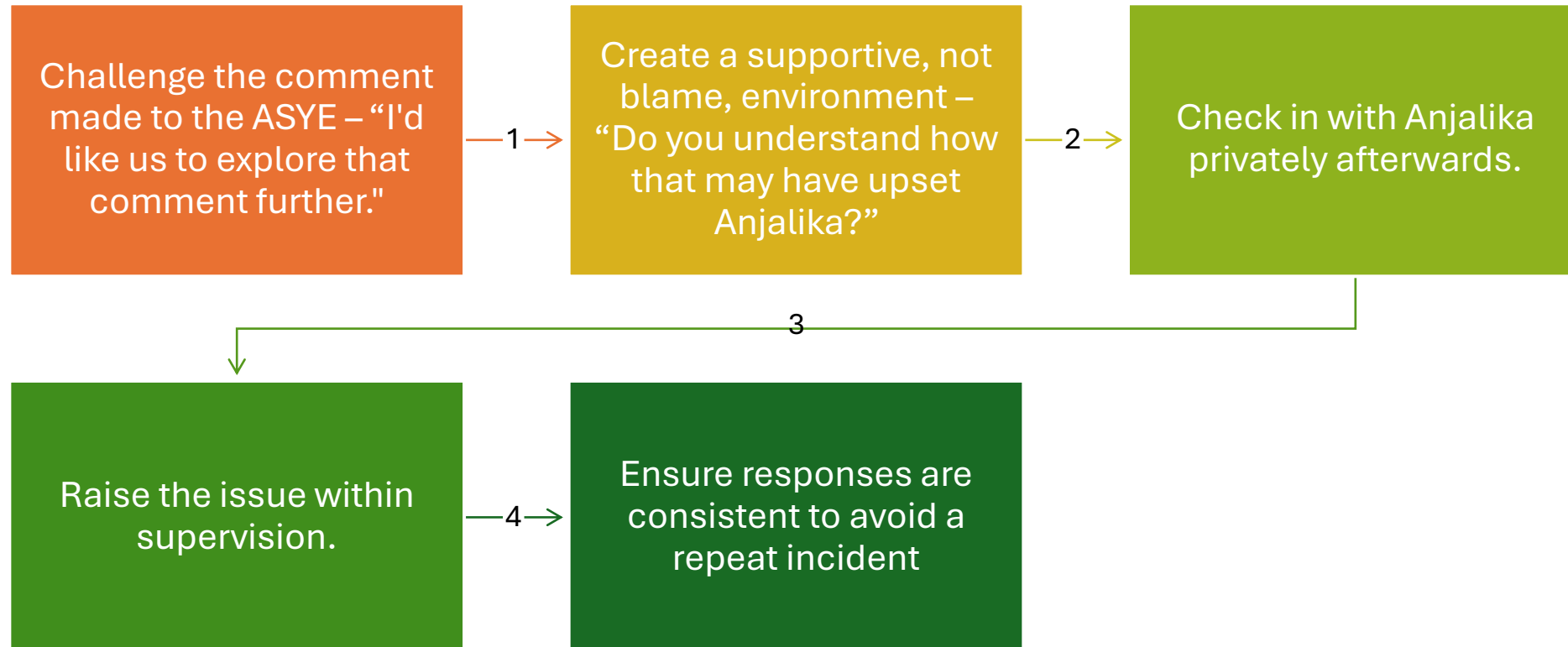


What might silence communicate?



What could an ally do?

Possible steps we could do in practice



Reflective Case Study 2

Child Protection Conference

An Irish Traveller family attend a conference.

A professional states:

"The problem with these families is that they never engage."

Several professionals nod.

No one challenges the statement.

The parents hear this and then become visibly withdrawn.

Possible
steps we
could do in
practice

"Can we avoid generalising and focus on the evidence relating to this family?"

"Have we thought about what the family may need to overcome barriers to work with us?"

"What can we do better to connect to them rather than blaming the family?"

Conclude

Allyship is part of safeguarding because discrimination can create harm.

Allyship is part of relationship-based practice.

Allyship strengthens psychological safety within teams.

Allyship is not reserved for managers; influence exists at every level.

Children often learn inclusion from what adults do, not what adults say.



Thought for the day

- *"If every child, family and colleague experienced me as an ally, what would they see me doing differently?"*

Thank you for your time



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