Restorative Practices in School – are we nearly there yet?

Restorative Approaches and Family Group Conferences with Schools, Care Homes and Families

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Overview of presentation

- Thinking about schools and complexity

- Key concepts used in restorative approaches

- Reflections on the use of restorative approaches in three research projects

- Comparisons and conclusions

- Some questions to think about

Restorative approaches and schools

"Restorative approaches to schools must include all three conceptions of restorative justice: *repair* *of harm,* *encounter* *of the affected parties and* *transformation* *of relationships and culture................. A whole school approach to restorative approaches must be supported within the larger educational structure and its surrounding police and judicial environments "*

(Van Ness, 2013, p. 38).

Schools and Society

- Schools are not 'total institutions,' they are open systems.

- Schools are complex systems that interface with other complex systems – the family, local community and wider society.

- BUT schools are one of the only forms of 'universal treatment' (see Fitz-Gibbons,2000) for young people. Especially important for those 'at risk' of getting into trouble of social exclusion and marginalisation.

Schools, Behaviour and Complexity
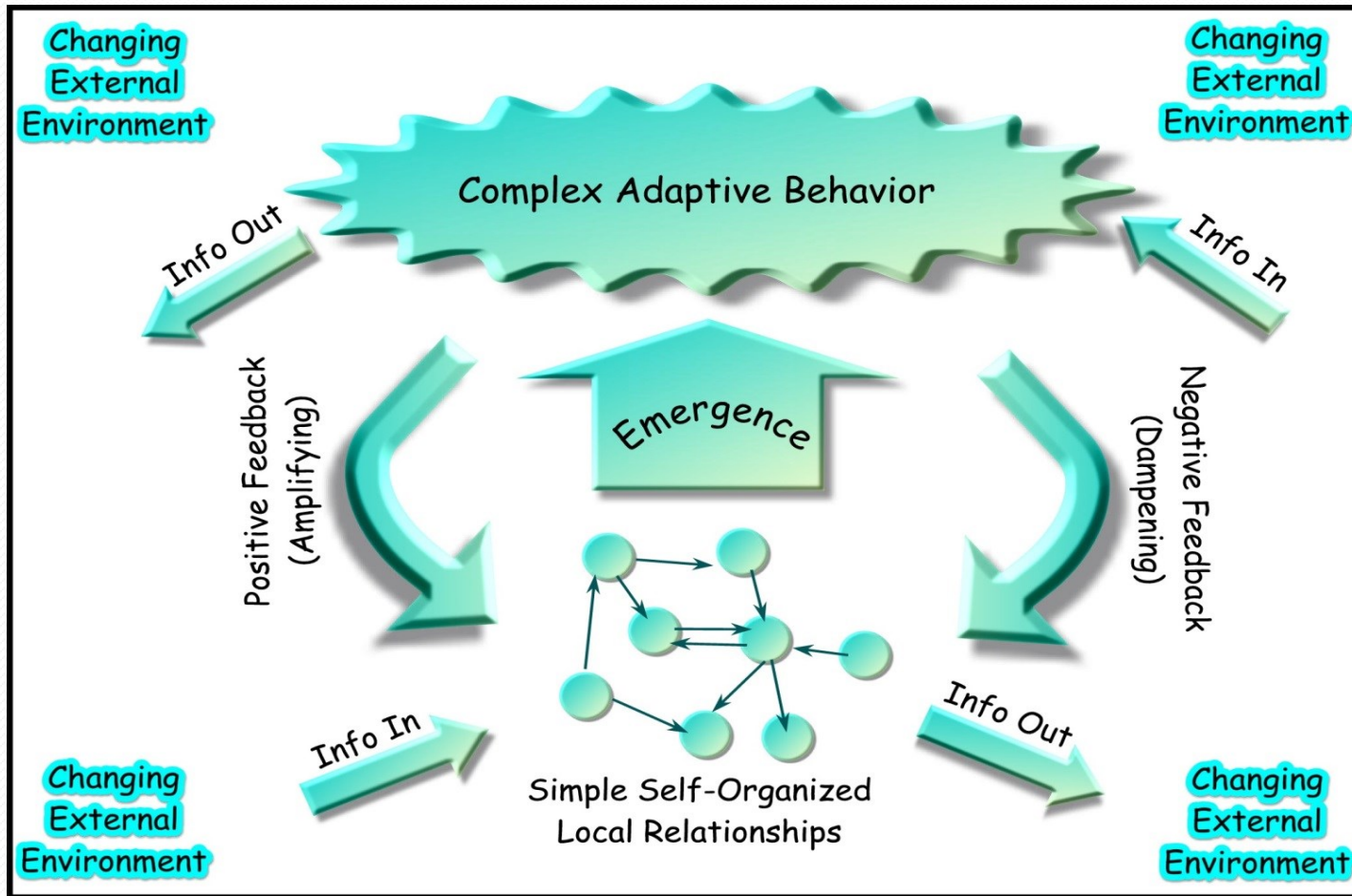
Complexity is generally used to characterize a system (such as a school) with many parts where those parts interact with each other in multiple ways. The study of these complex linkages is the main goal of complex systems theory. Schools as systems are not closed – home, community, media and wider society all influence people who spend time in a school.

Complexity and Order

Unorder

Complex

Cause/Effect:
only seen in retrospect

Answers:
emerge over time

Leader:
probe-sense-respond

Chaotic

Cause/Effect:
none

Answers:
none

Leader:
act-sense-respond

Order

Complicated

Cause/Effect:
may need experts

Answers:
many good

Leader:
sense-analyze-respond

Simple

Cause/Effect:
easily seen by all

Answers:
one best

Leader:
sense-categorize-respond

Disorder

Complexity and the professional task

"The nature of the professional task – which to some extent involves controlling and predicting outcomes – puts a premium on making judgements in conditions of uncertainty. (....) in any social system, it is human relationships and interactions that drive the dynamics governing complexity, so that patterns of conflict and co-operation in the group can play a role"

(Hood, 2014, p.30).

KEY RESTORATIVE CONCEPTS

Key aspects of restorative processes

- **Responsibility**

- **Reparation**

- **Transformation**

- **Reintegration**

- **Encounter**

How 'restorative' are different approaches and practices?

Source: McCold and Watchel (2003)

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES *IN SCHOOLS*
THE FOCUS IS ON:

Harm done to individuals

Responsibility and problem-solving

Dialogue and negotiation

Repair, apology and reparation
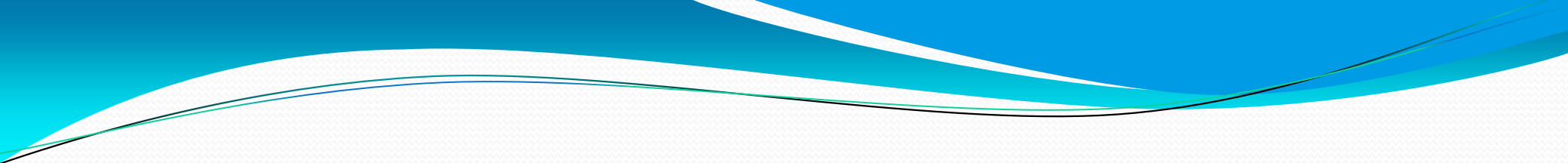
Interpersonal processes

AND AS A RESULT:

The needs of those affected are addressed

The unmet needs behind the behaviour are addressed

Accountability = putting things right

SOURCE: Hendry, Hopkins, Steele, (2013)

Reflections on the use of 'restorative approaches' in three research projects

Three research projects based on interventions using restorative approaches

- **FGCs and Schools**: poor attendance and exclusion (see Hayden, 2009; Hayden, 2013)

- **RAs and children in residential ca**re (see Hayden and Gough, 2010; Hayden, 2013)

- **FGCs and 'Troubled' families** (current and ongoing)

FGCs in Schools

THE SCHOOL
As a referral agent –
requesting the help and
expertise of an outside
agency
ADHERED TO
FORMAL MODEL

EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL FOCUS:
FGC Facilitator brings together key adults, the child and supporters to develop and agree a plan to address the attendance/behaviour problem (s) that are presenting in school. Limited or no impact on school culture. 100s of referral points. **Formal event, takes place about 6 weeks after 'referral'.**

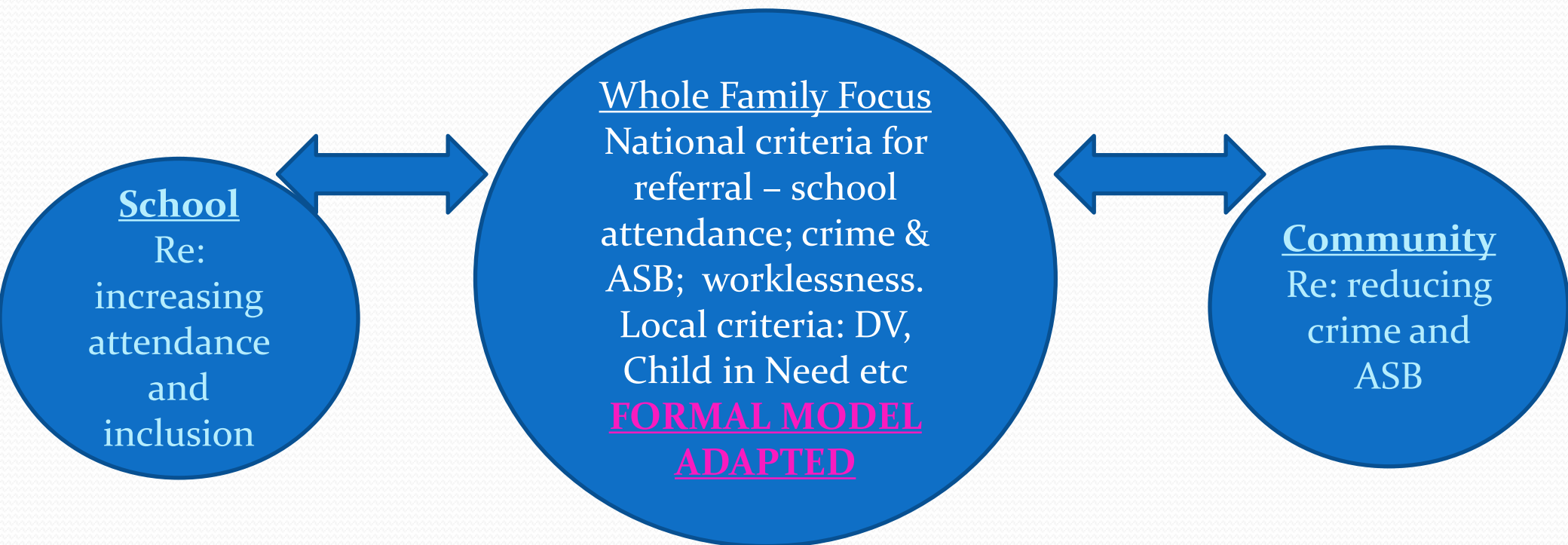# Restorative Approaches in Children's Residential Care

INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL FOCUS:
staff skills developed.
Cultural change mostly limited to within the residential home. But protocol agreed with the police. RAs as everyday communication and encounter – 'corridor' or 'stand-up' . Impromptu conferences common – **immediacy is seen as the strength**.

THE RESIDENTIAL HOME
No external facilitators – all staff trained in an RJ approach. Mostly used within the home
PRAGMATIC

FGCs with 'Troubled' Families

School
Re: increasing attendance and inclusion

Whole Family Focus
National criteria for referral – school attendance; crime & ASB; worklessness. Local criteria: DV, Child in Need etc
FORMAL MODEL ADAPTED

Community
Re: reducing crime and ASB

Whole family focus; problem solving, encounter, participation and responsibility. Families put forward from within the local 'Troubled' Families programme. The FGC focus is on developing the family plan, which is also part of the practise of the TF programme. Currently awaiting the first conferences to be convened.

Conclusions and comparisons

Different starting points (in these research projects)

- FGCs – start with the family and empowerment

- RAs – used as a whole staff approach to relationships, behaviour management and developing a climate or ethos in children's homes

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES THE FOCUS IS ON:	FGCs in schools - Focus on attendance and behaviour	RAs in residential care - Whole institution & service approach	FGCs with 'troubled' families - Wide ranging possibilities, including school attendance and behaviour
Harm done to individuals	X But not an explicit focus	X	X But not an explicit focus
Responsibility and problem-solving	X	X	X
Dialogue and negotiation (**Encounter**)	X	X	X
Repair, apology and **reparation**	No focus on reparation	X Sometimes reparation	No focus on reparation
Interpersonal processes (**Encounter**)	X	X	X
<u>AND AS A RESULT:</u> *Does this amount to 'reintegration'?*	**Are these changes 'transformational'?**	**Are these changes 'transformational' ?**	**Are these changes 'transformational'?**
The needs of those affected are addressed	X Immediate needs	X Immediate needs	X Varies with individuals
The unmet needs behind the behaviour are addressed	X To some extent	X To some extent	X To some extent
Accountability and putting things right (**Restoration?**)	X	X	X

Some questions to think about

Focussing on the three research examples (or 'real world applications'):

- Do the three real world applications share enough in common to be seen as part of a similar approach?
- To what extent are the three applications 'restorative'? If so, what are they 'restoring' to?
- To what extent are they 'transformative'?
- How important is 'reparation' when RAs are used in relation to schools?

Focussing on children and schools:

- Are restorative approaches appropriate with all children?
- Do these approaches make sense to parents and carers?
- What are the challenges in getting support for RAs from outside schools (from parents/carers; services working with school)?

References

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