# Evaluation of Reflective Practice Group Project: Brighton & Hove Children's Services

# Preliminary Report

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## 1.1  Introduction

We report here on the design, implementation, methodology and findings from a small scale mixed-methods evaluation of a Reflective Practice Groups project undertaken by the Centre for Social Work Practice for Brighton & Hove Children's Services between November 2015 and December 2016. Three time-point quantitative data was gathered alongside a range of qualitative data from observations, interviews and focus groups. Numeric analysis and thematic analysis of qualitative data are presented, integrated and discussed.  The report can be read in conjunction with the wider self-evaluation report of the broader Team Around the Relationship development undertaken by B&H, which was the context for the commissioning of the RPG project.

There are few systematic evaluations of Reflective Practice Groups in social work and there is reason to suppose that the current report makes a significant contribution to the evidence base for such practice. However, real world contexts for such practice are inevitably complex, shifting, and unique to specific organisational conditions. This does not invalidate the findings of the present report, but it does mean they should be read with this in mind. Such contextual considerations ideally call for a more complex 'realist' evaluation methodology than was possible in the case of this project. These considerations are discussed in Section 3.

## 1.2  Key findings

On a range of measures, a majority of respondents reported a positive impact of the RPGs on their professional identity, capacity to manage work related emotions, capacity to reflect on the complexity of their work, access to new perspectives on their practice; a minority believed that their actual 'skills' had improved, but a majority nevertheless believed that the RPGs had had beneficial impacts from the point of view of service users.

## 1.3  Different degrees of impact

The RPG project was designed on what might be termed 'trickle down' principles, with more senior staff with supervisory responsibilities receiving RPG input from an external facilitator, and many of these in turn delivering internal facilitation of RPGs to frontline practitioners. There is evidence from the evaluation, which ranged over staff receiving both internal and externally facilitated RPGs, that those who had been members of externally facilitated groups evaluated their impact more positively than those receiving internally facilitated groups. Scores among the former group are consistently above the mean, and those for the latter consistently a little below it. This may also reflect the different membership of groups facilitated by the external facilitator and the internal facilitators, which is discussed at 2.1. It is possible that the different levels of 'buy-in' to the new model held by those within different organisational roles also affected their views and scores allocated. These results indicate that the process of 'skilling up' a whole organisational system to both deliver and receive 'reflective

practice' may be a lengthy one, requiring careful attention to the balance between various aims in such an initiative - provision of reflective practice for its own sake, provision as a means of training for future delivery, and provision and / or training as a route to optimising the benefits of 'receiving' reflective practice. Reflective practice groups are not a one way 'transmission' process, and knowing how to make best use of membership of a group is as important as knowing how to facilitate one.

## 1.4  The nature of 'reflective' learning

Learning itself cannot be designed (you cannot force people to learn by bringing them in to a classroom), but it can be designed *for* through the implementation of particular structures and features designed to promote learning. In the same way, inviting people into a reflective space does not automatically make them able, or willing to reflect within it. Reflective space can, nevertheless, be designed in such a way as to *maximise* the possibilities for reflection.  Designing a reflective space entails a series of possible choices about which types of social infrastructures are likely to enhance participants' ability and desire to think differently about their working lives.

The current report defines and discusses the design for reflection that has been implemented in Brighton and Hove during the first year of the RPG project. Using direct quotations from participants, key design components are described along with a consideration of how they contributed to (or detracted from) participants' experience of reflection.

## 1.5  Choices and dilemmas in reflective practice group design and learning

The qualitative analyses presented in the report uncover many subtle and important features of the experiences of both those receiving and providing RPGs. Among the most significant of these are questions about what level or depth of reflection was achieved and / or was desired or found helpful; whether an organisation should pursue a single 'model' or culture of reflective practice groups, or allow some degree of emergence of group cultures as these are 'co-created' by facilitators and participants; the variety of possible ways of bringing material to an RPG for reflection; whether attendance should be mandatory or voluntary, or at least flexible; and the degree to which 'challenge' by facilitators is helpful, in contrast to a more validating and nurturing style.

## 1.6  Conclusion

Overall, we believe it is fair to conclude that this evaluation provides a robust, if not impregnable, range of quantitative and qualitative evidence for the constructive impact on staff at various organisational levels of a year-long programme of Reflective Practice Groups delivered within a complex 'real world' Children's Service environment with strong support from the management of this organisation for the successful implementation of the initiative.  Qualitative evidence supports and deepens quantitative evidence, generates an outline model of 'what happens inside a reflective practice group', while also surfacing a range of questions for future attention in the design of similar projects.

# 2 The Origins of the Project – The Brighton & Hove 'Team Around the Relationship' initiative

In October 2015, Brighton & Hove implemented relationship-based practice as a whole system change across Children's Social Work Services. The new model of practice, the Team Around the Relationship, involved a move to small social work teams, or pods, which support children from the assessment stage through the whole of their journey across social work services.

Relationship-based practice recognises that the relationships between social workers and families are the main vehicle to facilitate change. The Team Around the Relationship is premised on the idea that, if social workers feel safe and contained, they can build relationships with families and use these relationships to affect change. The model of practice, therefore, incorporates group supervision, reflective practice groups and a new model of relationship-based assessment and recording, One Story, as key processes to support whole system change. The practice system is supported by a cultural transformation towards becoming a relationship-based organisation, which inspires trust and confidence in its practitioners.

Brighton & Hove's vision for the new model was assessed by Ofsted in June 2015 as being "coherent, with the right balance of care for social workers, relationships with families and performance management. It is being introduced in a measured way through constructive engagement with staff." (Ofsted, 2015)

In the Autumn of 2015 B&H invited the Centre for Social Work Practice (CSWP) to tender for a programme of work involving the provision of regular facilitated Reflective Practice Groups as an important contribution to this organisational development process. It was agreed that this provision would be offered at a number of levels in the organisation, and that the aim would be not just 'delivery' but also staff and organisational skill development with a view to embedding a sustainable longer term capacity for reflective practice.

The CSWP was interested in using this opportunity to evaluate a model of Reflective Practice Groups (RPGs) to help consolidate B&H's initiative, to contribute to the wider evaluation of the total TAR project undertaken by Sussex University (B&H, 2017) but also as a contribution to the general evidence base for this approach to professional development. The proposal to B&H for the delivery and evaluation of this work noted that:

> 'CfSWP has a particular interest in the development of reflective practice groups in social work to support and encourage workers to consider the impact of the work on themselves and the meaning of feelings and thoughts in relation to case work and how these might be understood in order to enhance intervention currently in the UK and the available evidence base.

> This (programme of RPGs) would initially be delivered during a period of one year and will be reviewed after 9 months to consider further input as agreed. As part of a broader project CfSWP wants to research and evaluate its method of delivery of RPG's and evaluate its impact. It will propose a method of ongoing investigation and evaluation of the RPG's.'

> (CSWP, 2015)

> The key elements of the programme of Reflective Practice Groups were:

- Half a day of training on the model for all the Lead Practitioners
- 2 senior manager groups of up to12/13 participants in each group once a month for 1 ¼ hours for each group
- 2 pod manager groups of up to 12/13 participants in each group once a month for 1 ¼ hours for each group
- 1 Lead Practitioner group of 3 to 4 participants once a fortnight for 2 hours. Taking into account that they will be delivering all the RPG's to the PODS  this group included one RPG a month and additional support and education functions  to be negotiated and agreed with the Practice Leads and the PSW'

CSWP engaged Fiona McKinnon, a very experienced facilitator to deliver the range of RPGs, and the planned programme of work was fully implemented by her. CSWP also engaged an experienced organisational consultant and evaluator to design and implement the evaluation who withdrew from this contract of work in August 2016. He was rapidly replaced by another experienced researcher, Dr Amanda Lees from Winchester University, who picked up the programme of work more or less without interruption and completed the data gathering, analysis and report writing.

The RPG project was overseen by the then Director of Development of CSWP, Dr Jane Herd. The evaluation was overseen by Professor Andrew Cooper from CSWP who also offered supervision to the RPG facilitator.

## 2.1  The model of RPG delivery

The full programme of RPGs delivered during the contract period was as follows:

'RPGs are delivered in partnership with the Centre for Social Work Practice (CfSWP).  At present the CfSWP provides an independent facilitator who supports the following groups to meet on a monthly basis, on alternate Wednesdays:

| Week A | Week B |
| --- | --- |
| Team/Pod Managers Group 1 | RPG for Lead Practitioners |
| Support/Education Session for Lead Practitioners | Senior Leadership Team RPG |
| Team/Pod Managers Group 2 | Team/Pod Managers Group 3 |

The Principal Social Worker (PSW) also facilitates three RPGs for Practice Managers from across Children's Social Work Services.

The Lead Practitioners (LPs), Professional Educator and PSW also facilitate 16 RPGs for social workers and workers who do not have a professional qualification from across the service.  To support the facilitators of these groups the independent facilitator from the CfSWP provides a support/education workshop once a month.' (B&H, 2016)

# 3 Context of the RPG project and the evaluation

## 3.1 Background

As noted above the RPG project was implemented as part of a whole systems organisational change process in B&H Children's Services. This context of change had implications for the RPG project, and affected the processes within RPGs that the evaluation was designed to study. It is rare for a contemporary Children's Service organisation to be in a 'steady state' for any length of time, if ever. Turbulence and change arising from the policy environment and the pressures of resource constraints are the reality for modern public sector organisations.

However, the TAR transformation programme was initiated by B&H and thus to a significant degree it set in train planned change processes rather than unplanned or unintended ones. However, these processes did entail significant perturbations for staff at many levels. The introduction of 'Pods' and the associated role of Pod Manager, and the creation of the new Lead Practitioner role meant that a high proportion of staff in RPGs facilitated by the external facilitator were occupying new and unfamiliar roles, while senior managers were overseeing the transformation processes while being simultaneously engaged with the 'day job' of ensuring the service met external and internal performance standards.

## 3.2 Implications for RPG delivery and evaluation design and findings

Associated with these factors, an important aspect of the design of the RPG project, with implications for the design and conduct of the evaluation is as follows:

- The external facilitator provided RPGs for Senior Managers, Pod Managers, and Practice Leads. Practice Leads on the other hand were themselves providing, as a new initiative, RPGs for front line staff. With this in mind the external facilitator also provided a parallel series of support groups, which became more theoretically oriented when required, for Practice Leads to assist them in taking up the new and often unfamiliar role of RPG facilitator.

- The quantitative evaluation of RPGs and their impact on staff did not distinguish between these different aspects of RPG delivery. The same survey instruments were administered to all recipients of RPGs. However, individual job roles were reported as part of survey returns and in the analysis of results it has been possible to distinguish between responses from those who received facilitation by the external facilitator, and those who received facilitation from Lead Practitioners.

- Broadly, as would be expectable under the circumstances, the model of RPGs offered by the external facilitator was very consistent across different groups and across time; the model of facilitation offered by Lead Practitioners, occupying a new organisational role, and themselves therefore new to the role and to RPG facilitation, was more varied across groups and across time. These differences are clearly 'visible' in the qualitative sections of the report, and

although the absolute numbers are small and therefore not statistically significant, also in the quantitative findings.

## 3.3 Implications for the RPG project and the role of external and internal facilitators

The declared primary task of RPGs was:

'to support relationship-based practice and relationship-based management across Children's Social Work Services. RPGs support the new model of practice by providing emotional containment for practitioners and managers, sharing good practice, and developing links between practitioners across the service.'

(B&H 2016)

The primary focus of RPG activity is usually understood to be the emotional and relational challenges arising from the direct experience of participants' practice with service users, supervisees, or in the case of managers the organisational systems for which they are responsible. In front line social work, from the perspective of the practitioner, there is generally no completely clear distinction between direct work with service users and the demands and challenges arising from the organisational context within which 'casework' is conducted. All social work, whether from the service users or the practitioner perspective, is conducted within a complex set of systemic contexts. However, as noted above, the organisational context can be more or less stable and consistent at any point in time.

The RPG programme was implemented under circumstances of wider organisational change, with many staff (both receiving and delivering RPGs) occupying new and unfamiliar roles within an evolving organisational model and the inevitable 'contextual organisational turbulence' created by these processes was often brought to RPGs by staff. This created some degree of tension and ambiguity about the de facto 'primary task' of the B&H RPGs, and in turn some degree of 'role strain' for the external and internal facilitators.

The external facilitator found herself in receipt of material brought to RPGs concerning wider change processes in the organisation (a) that she did not always feel sufficiently briefed about and (b) which positioned her as the recipient, in confidence, of information and feelings about organisational processes which she believed would be most usefully 'channelled' back into the management system. In retrospect, there was a need for clearer project management between CfSWP and B&H to take account of the systemic and contextual impacts of wider change processes on the RPG delivery process, although it is important to state that regular reviews between B&H and CfSWP were included within contractual arrangements.

As these issues became more prominent, the external facilitator took appropriate steps to address them and with the group's full consent the external facilitator enabled this feedback into the organisation via the PSW.

In October 2016, towards the end of the delivery period for RPGs, a meeting was convened between The Director of B&H, the Principal Social Worker, the external facilitator, and CSWP staff to consider

these processes in more detail. It was agreed that feedback mechanisms into B&H management from external consultants should be an established part of any future model of RPG delivery.

## 3.4  The model of facilitation

The model of RPG facilitation used by the external facilitator in this project was broadly based on the Tavistock model of 'Work Discussion' developed over several decades by many staff working at the Tavistock Centre in London (Rustin & Bradley 2008). This is a model of group reflection that emphasises learning from experience, a focus on direct unprocessed practice material brought by a presenter, a non-judgmental culture of inquiry, and attention to the blend of systemic and unconscious processes affecting the work and the worker. It is not 'therapy' and it is not 'personal development'; the focus is the emotional and systemic demands of 'the task', and the emotional impact of the work on the worker. However, the final aim of such groups is to develop and deepen the capacity of the worker to undertake complex, emotionally and relationally demanding human service work, and thus to do it 'better'. Evaluating the impact of such groups on service users' experience, rather than professionals themselves, is a complex task that was beyond the scope of this evaluation design. However, we have sought to address this question in the report within the limits of the evaluation model which did not set out with the specific aim of testing 'changes to service user experiences or outcomes.

For participants, the model for each session is simple, but the experience can be demanding. The external facilitator, in an interview for the evaluation commented:

"…because the model was so simple people didn't get lost, they could easily follow it, it was simple, um it was very effective…the model was just a wonderful, um stable, agreed, everybody consented to use that model, everybody worked with it in the end, you know. So that was a great strength" Interview 14, external facilitator

"So the strengths were the model gave the boundaries and actually in terms of Bion and the container, I found sometimes when I was lost maybe about exactly how things were going, when people were presenting the most difficult, awful situations in their working life, and what it was doing to them, the model gave us that, yeah that safety and that containing and that holding boundary" Interview 14, external facilitator

The strengths, difficulties, and variety of possible interpretations and translations of the model are explored in considerable depth in this report, from the perspective of those who participated. There are many varieties of 'Reflective Practice Groups' in social work, let alone across the other professions who use such approaches. A good introduction to this spectrum can be found in Jones (2015).

## 3.5  Discussion – RPGs and organisational change processes

This evaluation was undertaken with a limited funding base which constrained the complexity of the research model. We are confident that within the overall design parameters the methodology is roubst, and the results valid and reliable. The design follows a classic model that might be represented as the systematic study of

Intervention  →  Mechanisms/Processes  →  Impacts/Outcomes

However, the limitations of such models are well understood and have been fully conceptualised and then developed within the tradition of 'realist' evaluation (Pawson & Tilley 2004). What is absent from the first model is 'context'. All real world interventions (as opposed to clinical type 'trials' which are designed and delivered under something approaching 'laboratory conditions') occur in a context of complex environmental / organisational variables which interact dynamically with the discrete 'intervention' being implemented and evaluated, so that ' context ' affects mechanisms and outcomes. In this model the preferred shorthand is therefore:

Context  →  Mechanisms/Processes  →  Impacts/Outcomes

The RPG intervention was designed and implemented within a 'real world' context of organisational change and development; even without this particular aspect of context, surrounding organisational processes would have been present and exerting influence on the RPGs as they were delivered. These points are discussed more fully in Section 2 above

The influence of organisational processes on the RPG overall delivery of the project, on the participants, and importantly upon the facilitator of the RPGs became manifest in a range of ways that is reported and discussed in the sections of this report that discuss the qualitative data and findings. The wider evaluation of the TAR initiative undertaken by Sussex University, discusses and to some degree deploys these 'realist' evaluation principles (B&H 2017). Part of the learning from the RPG evaluation is that these effects could have been more fully anticipated at the outset, even if a full realist evaluation model was not feasible given resource constraints. In particular, as described above, the facilitator found herself at points, through material brought to RPGs, the recipient of information about participants' feelings and responses to the wider organisational change processes at work but lacking an established or agreed means of feeding these back into the organisational 'loop'.  Such  mechanisms were enabled to some degree by the facilitator, and CSWP and B&H management, as noted above (3.1.3). But a degree of strain on the facilitator, and confusion about the role of RPGs in the minds of participants could have been avoided and incorporated into the original project design without radical alteration to its basic design features. For a full discussion of the methodological complexities of real world evaluations, and the strengths and limitations of focused evaluations in the context of systemic complexity see Cooper & Wren (2012).

## 3.6  Did it work?

The RPG programme was delivered by CSWP's contracted facilitator between October 2015 and November 2016 and the evaluation of this work ran in parallel.

In an internal B&H social work health check in April 2017, 88% of respondents (n= 104) said that their Reflective Practice Group 'provided emotional containment and the development of good practice'.  The evaluation results themselves show that at the end point of the programme 85% of respondents thought (agreed or strongly agreed) that 'The RPG has further developed my ability to reflect on my work, that 60% believed the RPG 'had beneficial impacts from the point of view of service users, and for 67% 'The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional impact of my work'. A balanced assessment of such results must always bear in mind that the remaining percentage of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with these statements.

These are a few selective and indicative measures of some of the encouraging impacts and outcomes that seem to have flowed from the initiative. The remainder of this report provides a much deeper, more nuanced and differentiated picture of the range of impacts and outcomes of the RPG initiative. There is no simple answer to the single question 'Did it work, or not?' and readers are invited to reach their own conclusions, respecting the wealth of solid quantitative and qualitative data available. However, an equally broad brush answer to the question might be 'Yes, it did, but there is also much to learn from the findings about how such an initiative might be better designed, implemented and evaluated in future. '

Thus, both quantitative and qualitative data suggested that there were mixed views regarding the success of the RPG project on a range of measures. However, broadly speaking the message is positive with most workers appreciating the reflective opportunity RPGs provide, reporting that their capacity to manage feelings and reflect effectively on the work, and their professional identity all strengthened. Equally, the organisational commitment to providing RPGs was recognised and appreciated. A number of participants were concerned to stress that the project needs a longer timescale within which to fully embed, and above we have discussed the need for refinements in the design, management and systemic integration of a project like this for the future.

# 4  Evaluation Methods

We employed a mixed methods approach to the evaluation. The research methods used were questionnaires, observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. These are discussed below.

## 4.1  Quantitative element

### 4.1.1 Questionnaire

Online questionnaires (via Survey Monkey) were delivered at three time points during the first year of the RPG project. The time points were: before the project (January 2016), during the first year of the RPGs (May, 2016) and at the end of the first year of the RPG project  (February 2017).The response rates are shown below.

|  | Time 1 (T1) | Time 2 (T2) | Time 3 (T3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Surveys sent out | 268* | 268* | 214* |
| Responses | 89 | 66 | 47 |
| Response rate | 33% | 25% | 22% |

*Figure 1: Survey rounds and responses*

*Based on figures provided by B&H

The three surveymonkey questionnaires  are shown in the appendices. The first and second surveys were relatively short and used, basically, the same questions. They consisted of a series of statements that respondents were asked to agree or disagree with to indicate their hopes (Time 1) and learning/outcomes (Time 2) from the RPGs. These statements were reviewed and a number of them also included in Time 3, along with additional questions with a more specific focus on particular elements of the RPG project. The time three survey also asked participants to specify their job role when answering the survey.

## 4.2  Qualitative element

### 4.2.1 Observations

Observations of 6 reflective practice groups were carried out during three separate site visits. The following sessions were observed:

| 2/11/16 | Externally facilitated Groups |
|---|---|
|  | 1 x lead practitioners |
|  | 1 x senior managers |
|  | 1 x pod managers |

| 16/1/17 | 2 x internally facilitated social worker groups (The groups had different facilitators) |
|---------|---------|
| 30/11/16 | 1 x externally facilitated pod manager group (On this day 2 other groups were also scheduled, one was cancelled and one did not take place due to low attendance) |
| | |

Figure 2: Observation sessions

Agreement for the researcher's presence within the RPG sessions was sought in advance by the researcher, or the team administrator. At each group the facilitator introduced the researcher (and the purpose of the evaluation), who was then invited to briefly explain the evaluation and answer any questions participants had.

The observational role adopted could best be described as 'participant observer' – the researcher was visible to group participants during the course of the RPG, but tried to remain as unobtrusive as possible. The researcher took notes during these sessions. Notes related to the processes of the RPG, rather than the content of discussions (although inevitably there was some overlap with this). Guided by Hinshelwood and Skogstad (2000) psychoanalytic approach to observations, as well as a focus on events happening, observations also paid attention to the perceived emotional atmosphere within groups and the related personal responses of the researcher. Notes were type up in full and expanded (with additional reflective notes) as soon as possible after each observation session.

## 4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Whilst observations allow the researcher to witness and make interpretations of events as they happen, interviews are important in accessing participants' own interpretations and experiences of these events.

To this end, semi-structured interviews were carried out with RPG participants and facilitators. The interviews covered a range of job roles, as shown in *Figure 3:Interviews conducted* below. The inclusion of respondents from a range of differing positions within the organisation was important to allow for a range of reactions to, and experiences of the RPG project. A number of different interview guides were developed for participants within different job roles (separate guides were developed for social workers/senior social workers; lead practitioners; pod and other managers and senior managers). This tailored approach was employed to recognise and examine the differing relationships held by each of these participants to the project. For example, pod managers' interview guides included questions about perceived effects of the project from their own perspective and from the perspective of their pod members, lead practitioners' guide included a range of questions that reflected the fact that they had both 'received' and facilitated RPGs. The interview guides are shown in 10.4.

Interviews tended to last in the region of forty five minutes to one hour and were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Participants were asked to sign a consent form at the start of the interview (see 10.6).

| Role | Number of interviews |
|---|---|
| External facilitator | 1 |
| Social worker/senior social worker | 5 |
| Team/Pod managers | 2 |
| Lead practitioner/internal facilitators | 3 |
| SWRO/other 'non-social work' practitioners | 2 |
| Senior managers | 2 |

*Figure 3:Interviews conducted*

## 4.2.3 Focus groups

A series of focus groups were carried out as part of the evaluation. The change in researcher part way through the evaluation, affected data collection from focus groups. The first 4 groups were run as 'nominal groups'. This involved the following steps:

1. Introduction
2. Presentation of questions
3. Silent generation of ideas (each participant silently thinks of and writes down as many ideas as possible)
4. Record ideas (in turn each participant reads aloud one idea and it is recorded on the flip chart for all to see)
5. Group discussion

Steps 2-5 were repeated for each of 6 research questions:

- In what ways has attendance at the RGP helped with practice?
- Can you identify any positive impact on your professional stress levels from RPG attendance?
- Can you identify any negative impact on your professional stress levels from RPG attendance?
- What do you like about the RPGs?
- What do you dislike about the RPG experience?
- How could the RPG project be improved?

The remaining 2 groups used the same research questions but followed a more flexible process of questioning and contributions from respondents (notes were still made on cards and flip charts but the discussion was more free flowing). Whilst four focus groups were scheduled in the second half of the evaluation (with the new researcher), only two took place. One of the scheduled groups did not take place because of a lack of attendees. One became a group interview (that is, it followed the 'pod manager' interview guide) because of the small number of attendees - initially there was one attendee, she was joined later by a further two managers. This group interview was recorded and

yielded very useful data. (It was interesting to note that the difficulties of attendance that emerged as an important theme in the evaluation findings also affected data collection to some extent.)

The following groups were conducted: 2 x social worker nominal groups; 2 x manager nominal groups; 1 x social worker 'freer form' group ; 1 x manager 'freer form' group; 1 x group interview (managers).

## 4.3  Consent

An information sheet was circulated within the local authority during the evaluation detailing the different strands of data collection and providing contact details of the researcher and academic from the Centre for Social Work Practice, to whom potential participants could direct any queries. Participants to focus groups (during second half of evaluation) and interviewees were asked to sign a consent form at the start of data collection. 'Opt-out' consent was employed for the survey and the observations. Thus, people did not have to fill in a questionnaire if they did not wish to, and if any members of RPGs at which a researcher was in attendance had not been happy to be observed this would have been negotiated at the time (e.g. by agreeing not to record any of their contributions to the group). This did not turn out to be necessary, as participants did not raise objections to the researcher's presence, although the researcher did explain that their participation was voluntary and that they were not obliged to consent to being observed/included in the notes.

## 4.4  Data Analysis

### 4.4.1 Questionnaire data

Basic analysis of each time point's data was conducted using the 'analyze' function in Survey Monkey. Numeric data was exported into Excel to create the charts that are included in the report. Responses to open questions were also imported into Excel and coded to group responses into broader themes.

### 4.4.2 Qualitative data

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse qualitative evaluation data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) across a data set. It therefore takes a collective overview rather than treating individual cases separately as in the narrative or biographical tradition. The method is presented as having 6 steps –

1. Familiarizing yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

These were the steps and processes broadly followed in data analysis. Data was stored and managed through the use of NVivo 11. Using this software package, transcripts were read in detail and coded, with codes being re-named, re-grouped, merged or disregarded, as issues emerged and re-emerged in subsequent transcripts. The coding frame was increasingly refined towards the production of the final version, which was then used as a basis for analysis and writing. The coding

was predominantly inductive – the researcher aimed to create codes that best reflected participants' accounts, rather than seeking to code answers according to specific research questions. In this way, the coding scheme was relevant for all forms of data collection (interviews, focus groups and observations) because while different sets of questions were asked within interview and focus groups (and participants were not asked questions at all during observations), the same themes emerged as important within each of the three strands of data collection.

Whilst qualitative research does not seek to accord numeric values to numbers of responses in the same way as quantitative research does, the numbers of 'mentions' of a code within a single transcript and also across transcripts can be taken as an indication the importance or prevalence of a code or theme. For example, the code labelled 'attendance, investment in process/ownership' was coded in twenty data sources, and overall a total of eighty two times.  It was coded within all fifteen interview transcripts, in four sets of focus group notes and in one set of observation notes. The issue was also coded *repeatedly* within these sources (giving a reference total of 82) - indicating this was a topic that was accorded importance (and frequently returned to) by respondents themselves. In reporting the qualitative findings the most 'important'/ frequently coded themes have been highlighted. At times, some of the lesser coded items are presented as a counterbalancing view, where this is the case, the relative strength of feeling on particular issues is reported within the text. Wherever possible, themes are supported (or evidenced) by more than one quotation, from a range of respondents.

## 4.5  Rigour and Reflexivity

A number of measures were taken to enhance the rigour of the approach, in particular to enhance processes for reflexivity, given the interpretive nature of the qualitative element of the study. A series of discussions of emerging findings were carried out between the researcher and Prof. Andrew Cooper (and once with Robyn Kemp, CfSWP).This discussions were useful and highlighted a need for further clarification around the differences of facilitation style between the first and subsequent external facilitators. This led the researcher to contact two external facilitators to ask their views about how they would describe their models of facilitation. This led to a subsequent amendment to the wording of the qualitative findings to reflect their views. A draft version of full research findings was shared with the first external facilitator and comments invited, resulting in a number of changes to the text including an additional analysis of quantitative findings to reflect different responses across job roles. The external facilitator was also invited to feed into the study's conclusions and recommendations. Findings will also be presented at a feedback event in July and discussion invited.

## 4.6  Ethics

As a 'service evaluation', the study did not formally require ethical review. Nevertheless, the second researcher was advised by her University to submit the study for a 'light touch' ethical review, to ensure ethical standards were adhered to and to ease the way for any resulting publications. As part of this, a participant information sheet and consent forms were added. The study was reviewed by the University's Faculty of Education, Health and Social Care and approval granted in January 2016.

# 5   Quantitative findings

Because of its more detailed nature (please see explanation in methods section), this  section predominantly reports findings from the T3 questionnaire, but wherever possible (where the questions overlapped), comparisons are made with T1 and T2.

## 5.1  Q1 Job Role (Time 3 only)

The number of respondents to the T3 survey, by job role, is shown in *Figure 4: Q1 (T3)* Job Role.
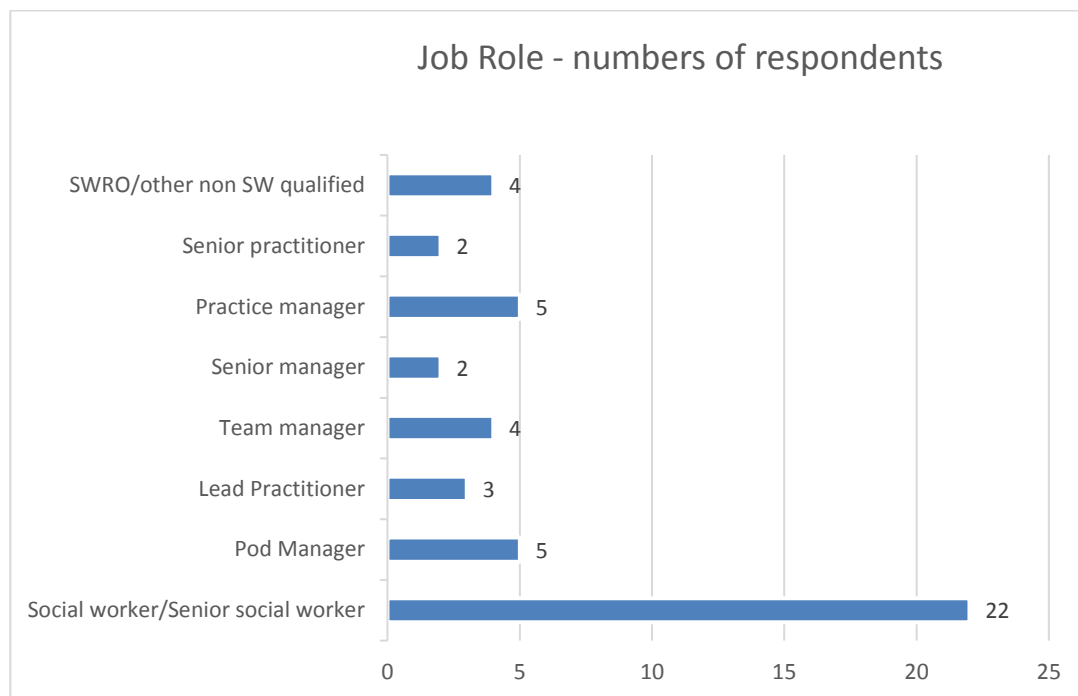


*Figure 4: Q1 (T3) Job Role*

## 5.2  Q2 RPG Outcomes for practitioners (T3)

At T3, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with a set of statements regarding outcomes from the RPG project. These statements were:

1.  The RPG has helped me to develop better understanding of complex problems in my cases
2.  The RPG has strengthened my professional identity
3.  The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional impact of the work
4.  The RPG has helped me to enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system
5.  The RPG has provided other perspectives concerning my work
6.  The RPG has improved my skills in relationship based work with families
7.  The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional strain of my work more easily
8.  The RPG has further developed my ability to reflect on my work
9.  The RPG has increased my knowledge about different types of interventions to make with families to achieve change

10. Membership of the RPG has had beneficial impacts from the point of view of service users

The responses to these statements at T3 are shown in *Figure 5: Q2 (T3) Outcomes of RPGs* (%). To assist interpretation, we can see that with regards to statement 5, for example, 'the RPG has provided other perspectives concerning my work, 20% strongly agreed, 62% agreed, 13% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed.
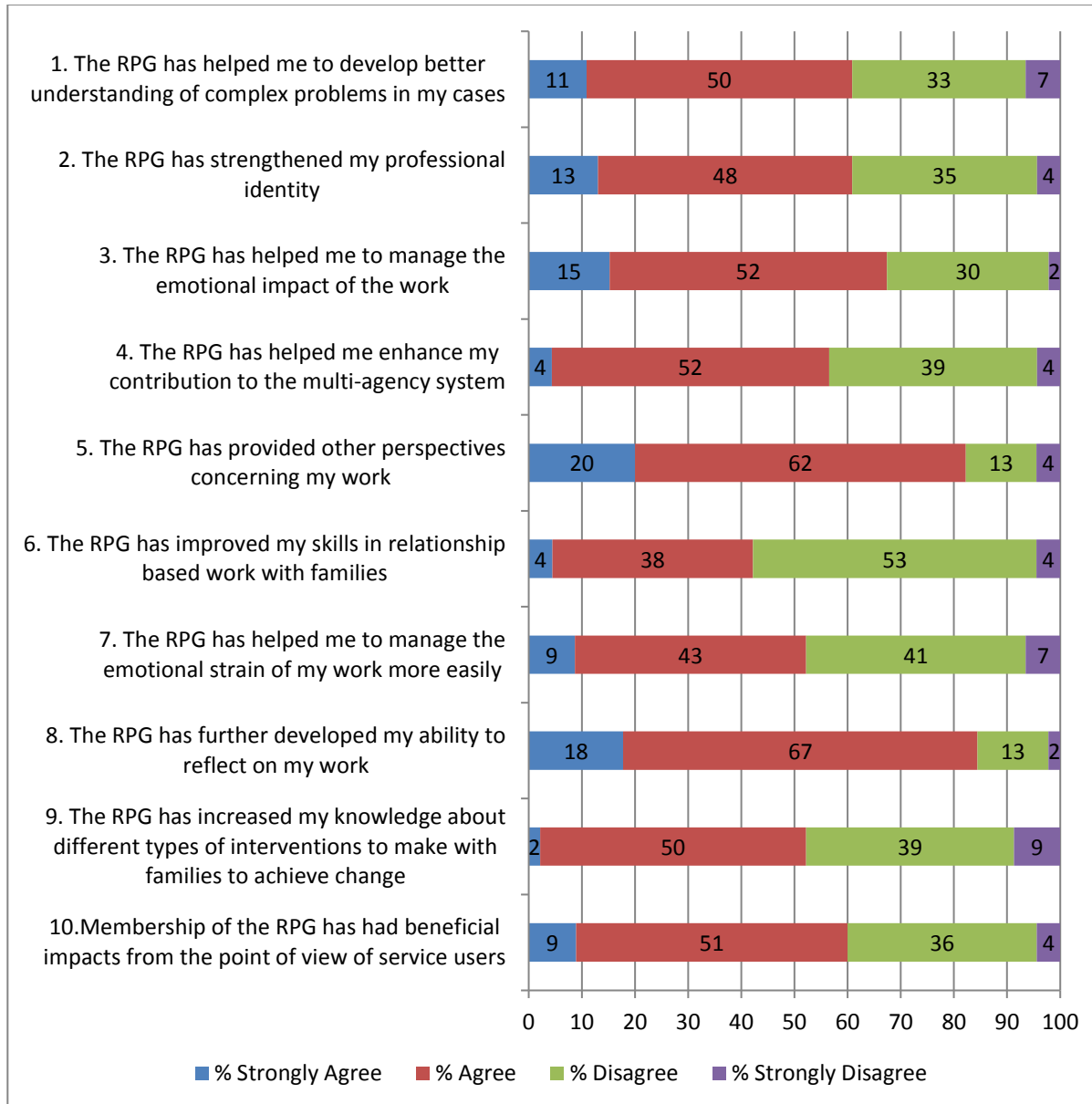


Figure 5: Q2 (T3) Outcomes of RPGs (%)

Taking into account the varying levels of agreement to each statement, the mean (average) scores for each of these statements is shown in *Figure 6: Q2 (T3) Outcomes of RPGs Mean Scores.*

To calculate the mean scores each level of agreement is accorded a value. Agree strongly = 4, Agree=3, Disagree=2 and Strongly Disagree=1. The nearer the score to 4, the higher the overall level

of agreement. A score of 2.5 indicates the mid point between Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree, indicating a neutral response.

## Mean (average) score

| Statement | Mean (average) score |
|---|---|
| 1. The RPG has helped me to develop better understanding of complex problems in my cases | 2.65 |
| 2. The RPG has strengthened my professional identity | 2.70 |
| 3. The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional impact of the work | 2.80 |
| 4. The RPG has helped me enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system | 2.57 |
| 5. The RPG has provided other perspectives concerning my work | 2.98 |
| 6. The RPG has improved my skills in relationship based work with families | 2.42 |
| 7. The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional strain of my work more easily | 2.54 |
| 8. The RPG has further developed my ability to reflect on my work | 3.00 |
| 9. The RPG has increased my knowledge about different types of interventions to make with… | 2.46 |
| 10. Membership of the RPG has had beneficial impacts from the point of view of service users | 2.64 |

*Figure 6: Q2 (T3) Outcomes of RPGs Mean Scores*

Taking into account Figure 5 and Figure 6, we can see that the most agreed with outcomes of RPGs, at time 3 were:

- The RPG has further developed my ability to reflect on my work
- The RPG has provided other perspectives concerning my work
- The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional impact of my work

The least agreed with the statement was 'The RPG has improved my skills in relationship based work with families'. Whilst the survey does not reveal behind the lack of agreement with this statement, within qualitative data collection there was some discussion ab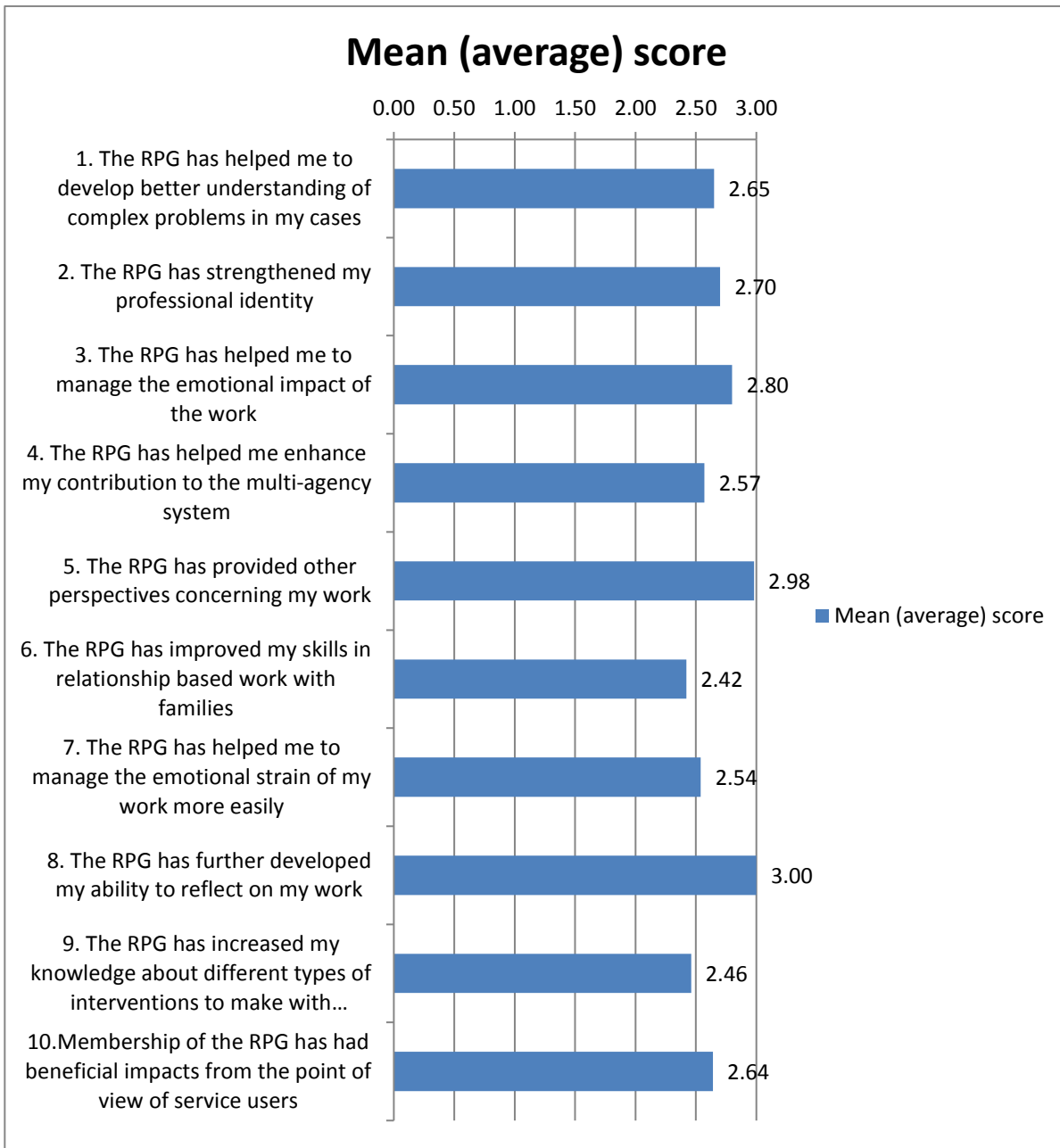out what 'relationship based work' actually meant and whether people felt clear about this. It may be that this lack of clarity fed into the responses to this question.

We can see some interesting differences when we look at the scores according to the job role of the respondents. It is important to note, however, that the number of respondents in each of these groups are low as shown at *Figure 4: Q1 (T3)* Job Role (also, not all respondents rated each statement). This negatively affects the reliability of these findings. Nevertheless, *Figure 7: Outcomes by practitioner grouping* suggests that senior managers and lead practitioners gave ratings above the average to all the outcome statements. For pod managers, the most agreed with statements concerned increased professional identity, access to other perspectives and opportunity to reflect. This is helpful in considering the potential differing outcomes of RPGs according to their position in the organisation, and whether they received external or internal facilitation. For example, apart from RPGs, pod managers reported little opportunity to come together as a group with their peers. It is also interesting to note that the strongest agreement with outcome statements comes from groups of staff who received external facilitation.
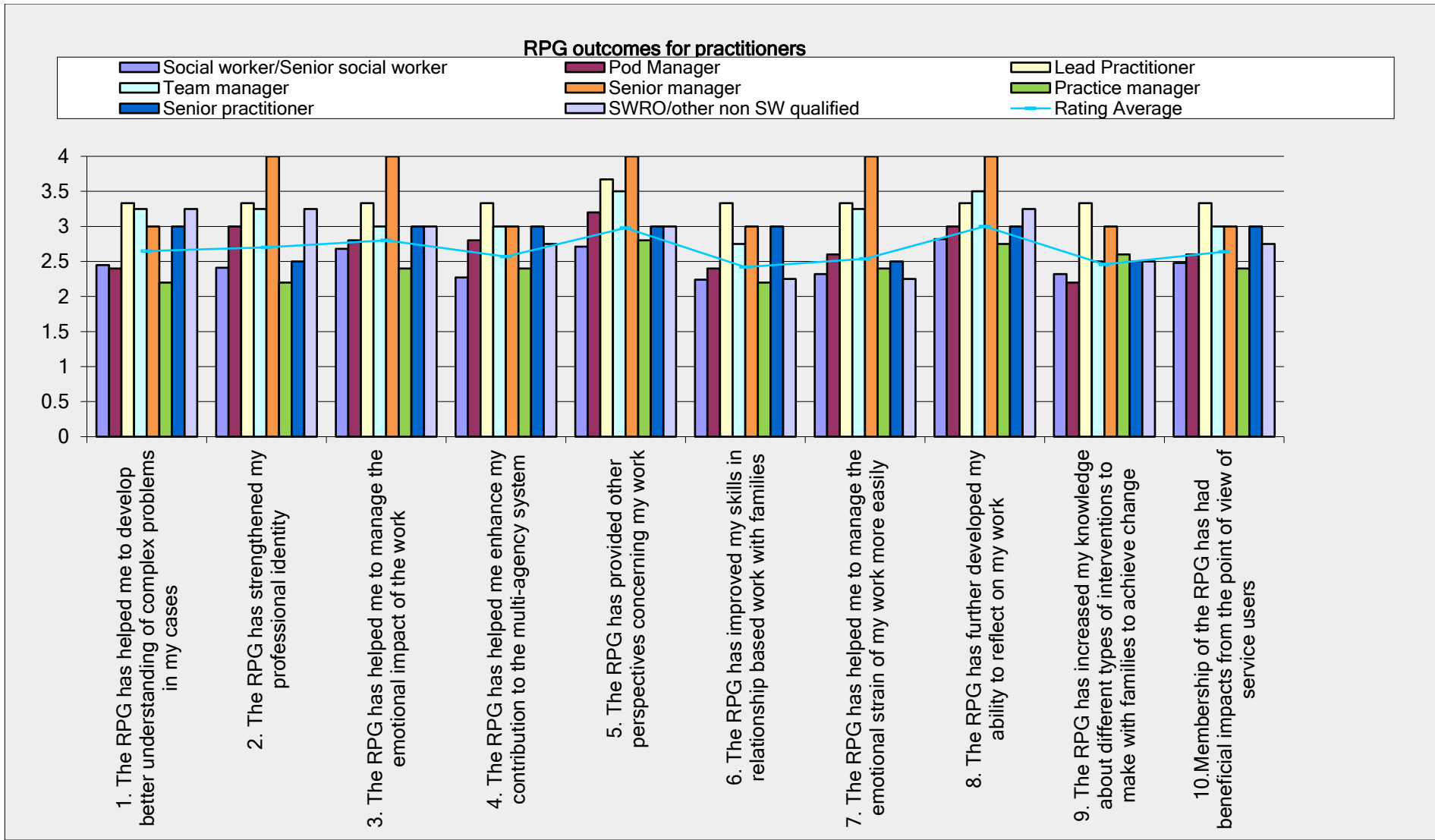
*Figure 7: Outcomes by practitioner grouping*

## 5.3 Comparison between statements at T1 and T2

As discussed earlier, a number of statements with the same focus were used across all three questionnaires. This section looks at the differing ratings to the statements that were used in T1,2 and 3. The slight difficulty with this is that because of the different time periods, the statements were phrased differently, an example of which is given below.

| T1 | T2 | T3 |
|---|---|---|
| I would like RPGs to enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system | The RPG is helping me enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system | The RPG has helped me to enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system |

Therefore, as shown in the tables below, whilst T1 is measuring 'hopes', T2 and T3 are asking respondents to register perceived effects at that particular point. What we see therefore is higher scores at T1 (Figure *8: T1 Hopes for RPGs*), but similar ones at T2 & T3 (*Figure 9: Outcomes of RPGs*). The scores shown on figures 8 and 9 are mean scores which take into account the spread of ratings for each item (strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, strongly disagree=1).



*Figure 8: T1 Hopes for RPGs*

## T2&T3: RPG outcomes for participants (mean scores)

The RPG has provided other perspectives concerning my work — T3: 2.98, T2: 3.03

The RPG has helped me enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system — T3: 2.57, T2: 2.63
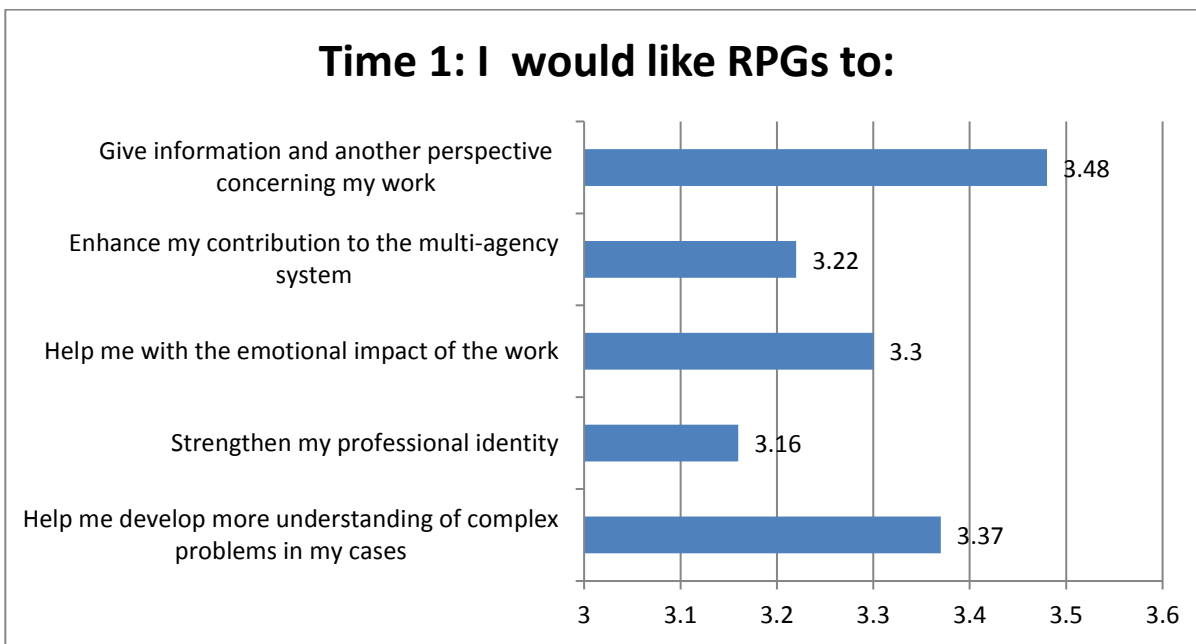
The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional impact of my work — T3: 2.80, T2: 2.7

The RPG has strengthened my professional identity — T3: 2.70, T2: 2.67

The RPG has helped me to develop better understanding of complex problems in my cases — T3: 2.65, T2: 2.64

Legend: ■ T3  ■ T2

X-axis: 2.3  2.4  2.5  2.6  2.7  2.8  2.9  3  3.1

*Figure 9: Outcomes of RPGs*

As described above, whilst agreement scores are lower at T2&T3, scores still indicate participants agree that the RPG has been making positive contributions in these areas. The strongest agreement with the 'common' statements is with 'The RPG has provided other perspectives concerning my work'. As will be discussed later, this was also a key theme emerging in the qualitative work.

## 5.4  Q3 (T3) Understanding of complex problems

At time point 3, a number of open ended questions were included (not included at T1&T2) to elicit participants' thinking around a number of the statements. The open ended comments relating to the question 'could you say how the RPG has helped you to better understand complex problems in your cases?' is shown below. These comments have been grouped together and coded under broader themes, *(Figure 10: Open ended comments – complex problems).* Because of the small number of responses here, the numbers shown are actual numbers of respondents giving this answer. Where responses are very small, percentages can be misleading.

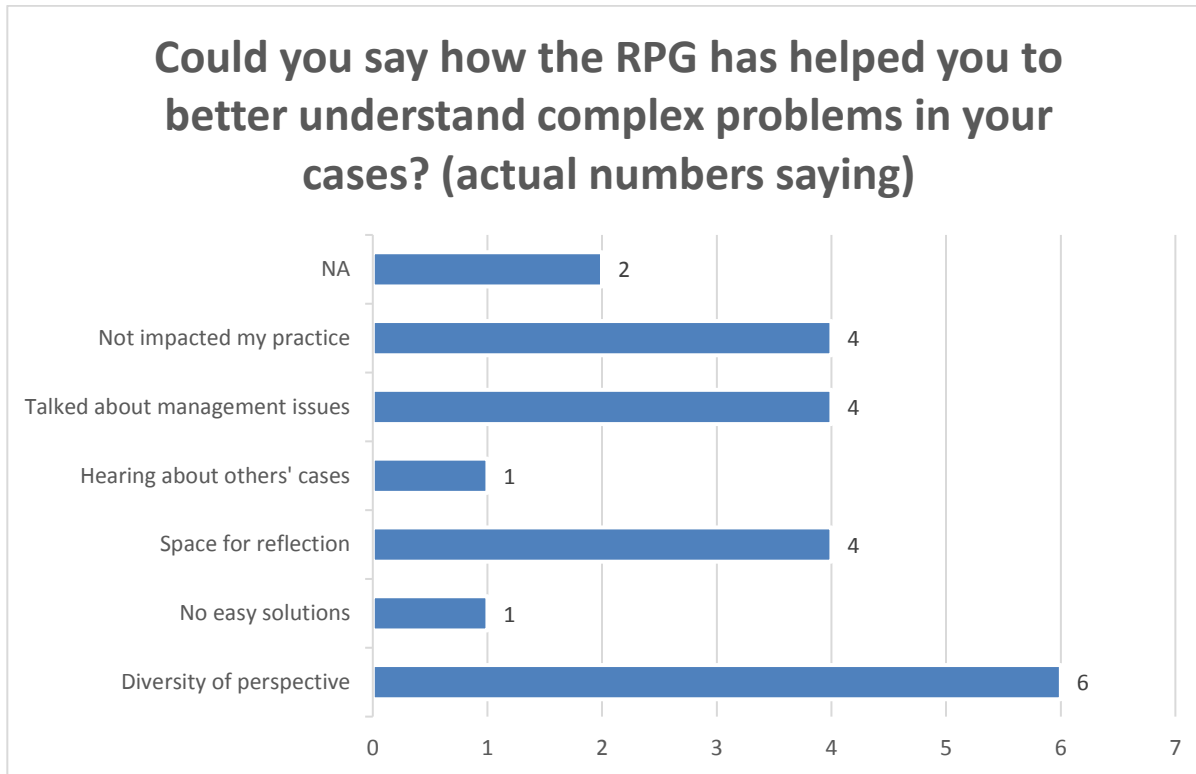**Could you say how the RPG has helped you to better understand complex problems in your cases? (actual numbers saying)**

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| NA | 2 |
| Not impacted my practice | 4 |
| Talked about management issues | 4 |
| Hearing about others' cases | 1 |
| Space for reflection | 4 |
| No easy solutions | 1 |
| Diversity of perspective | 6 |

*Figure 10: Open ended comments – complex problems*

There is a mix of comments here, which well reflects the diversity of opinions regarding the RPG project. The most mentioned issue is that thinking about complex problems has been helped by exposure to a diversity of perspective, a consistent theme within both quantitative and qualitative data. Four respondents pointed out that within their RPGs 'cases' as such were not discussed, rather issues concerning management of staff. These comments all came from those in managerial positions, reflecting the differing focus of RPGs dependent on job role of participants. Four respondents stated that the time for reflection has enabled them to think through complex problems, but a further four respondents stated that the RPG has not impacted their practice in this way.

## 5.5 Q4 (T3) Could you say how the RPG has helped you manage the emotional impact of your work?

*Figure 11 Q4 (T3) Open ended comments – emotional impact* shows the open comments relating to the statement about the emotional impact of the work. Responses here are again congruent with qualitative themes. Respondents suggest that RPGs have helped them with the emotional element of their work mainly through talking/sharing; having their concerns supported and acknowledged and the provision of a safe space away from the normal working day. It is also important to note that two respondents felt RPGs have not succeeded in this regard, and that 3 respondents stated that effects have been limited by low attendance – another important theme in the qualitative work.
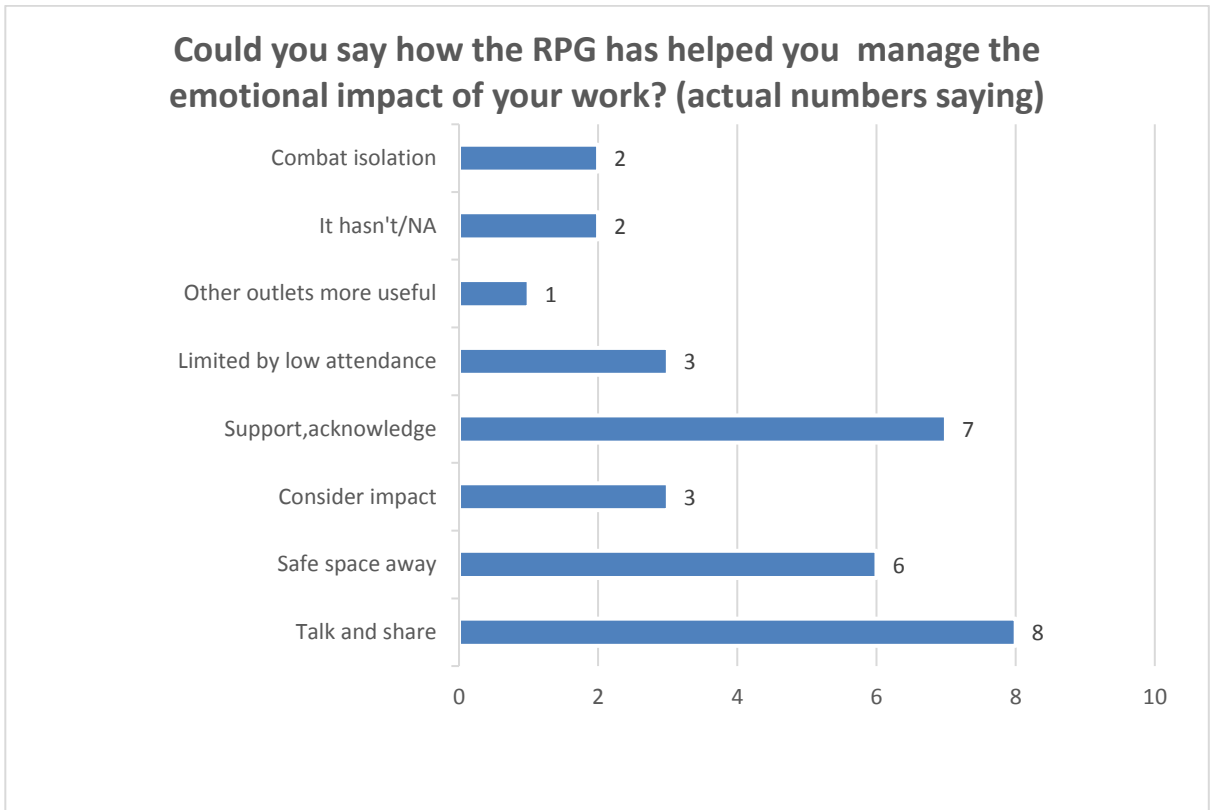
**Could you say how the RPG has helped you manage the emotional impact of your work? (actual numbers saying)**

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| Combat isolation | 2 |
| It hasn't/NA | 2 |
| Other outlets more useful | 1 |
| Limited by low attendance | 3 |
| Support,acknowledge | 7 |
| Consider impact | 3 |
| Safe space away | 6 |
| Talk and share | 8 |

*Figure 11 Q4 (T3) Open ended comments – emotional impact*

## 5.6 Q5 (T3) Effects on practice

*Figure 12 Q5 (T3) Open ended comments – effects on practice* shows the open ended responses to a broader question giving participants the opportunity to comment on any effects RPGs may have had on their practice. The highest number of responses suggested that respondents value the RPGs (eight comments). One response indicates a lack of value. Two other comments suggest that participants enjoy RPGs but do not feel they have impacted practice. Three respondents commented that more robust facilitation is required for RPGs to increase their impact on practice. Four respondents highlighted the difficulty of prioritising RPGs in amongst an array of competing priorities and three respondents felt that the RPGs duplicated team based opportunities for reflection. These themes have all also arisen in the qualitative work, and once again, reflect a spread of opinion concerning the project. Again, because of the small numbers involved, actual number of responses are shown rather than percentages.

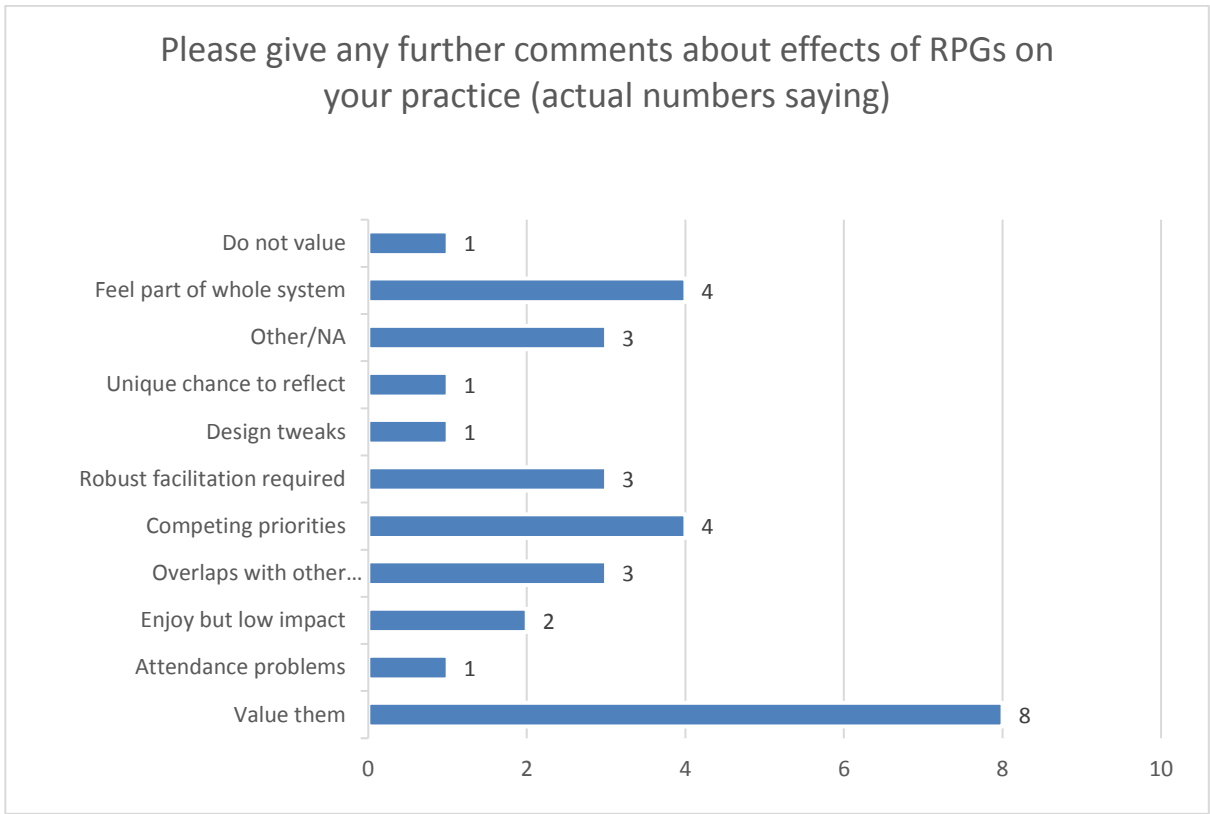*Figure 12 Q5 (T3) Open ended comments – effects on practice*

## 5.7 Q6 (T3) Self Efficacy

At Q6, respondents to the T3 questionnaire were asked to rate their agreement to a further range of statements:
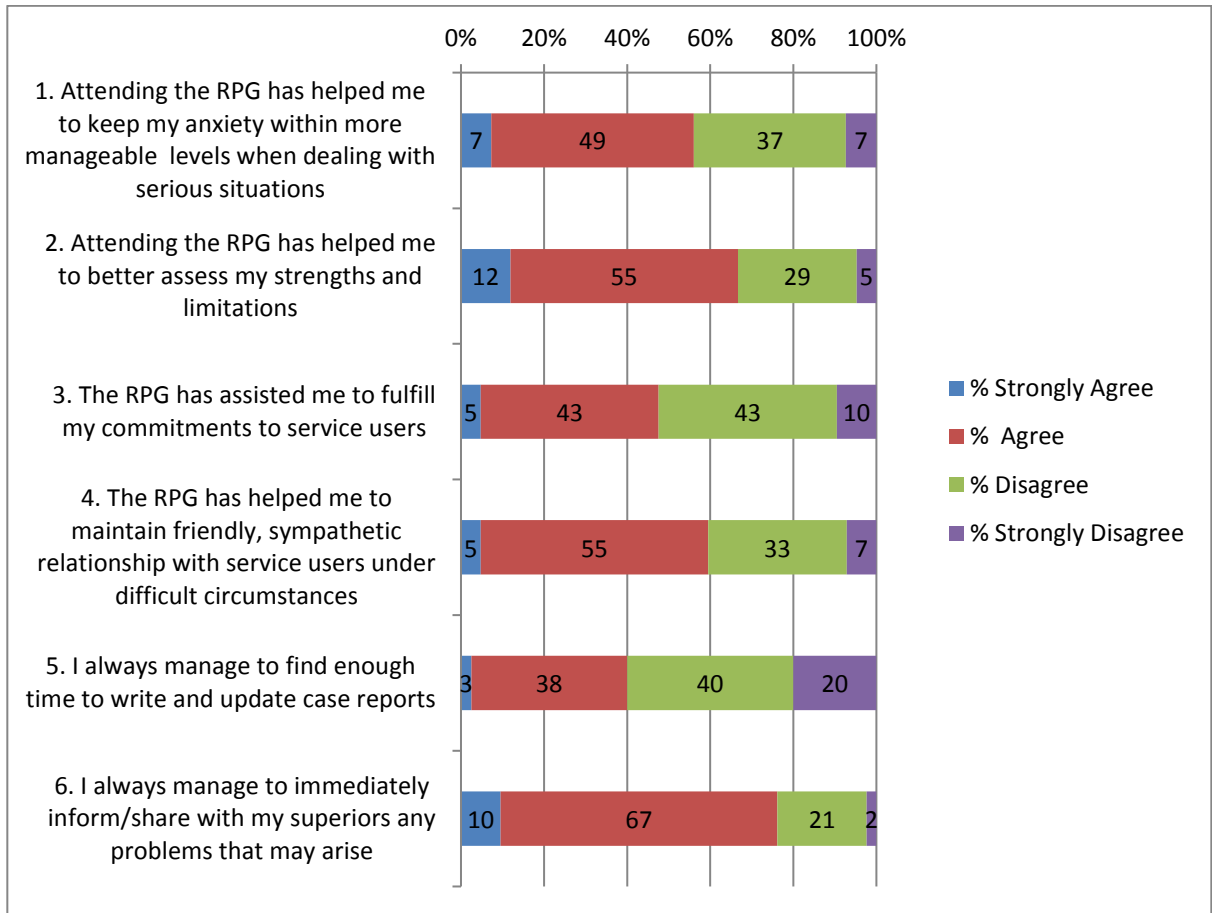
*Figure 13: Q6 (T3) Agreement with Self efficacy statements*
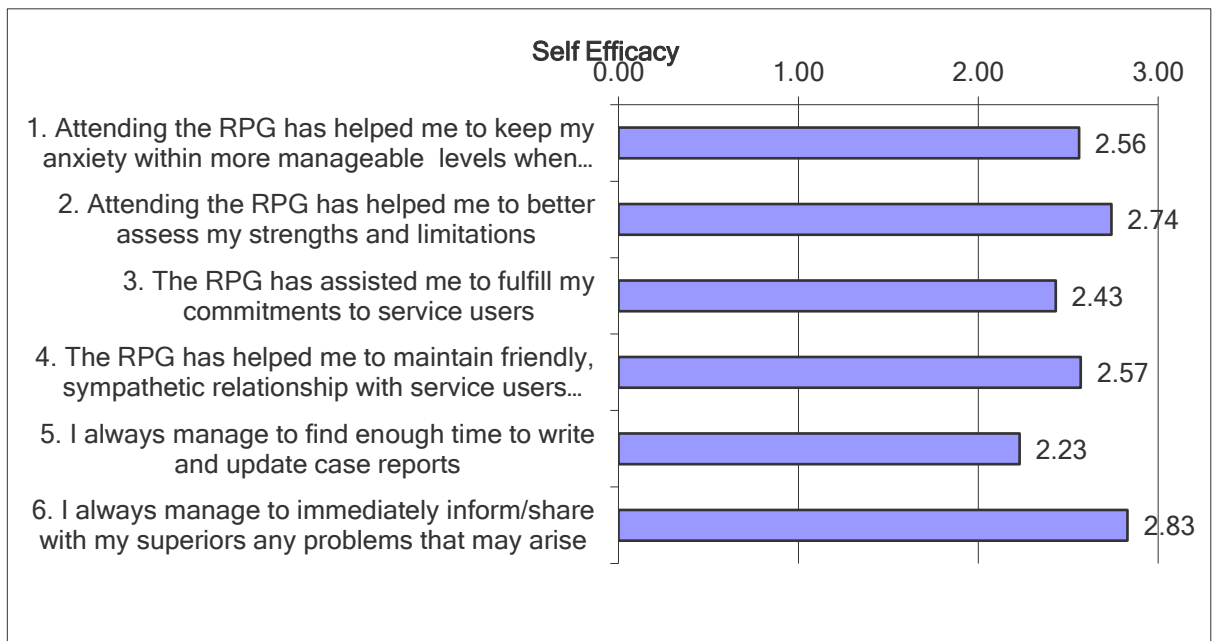


*Figure 14: Q6 (T3) Mean (average) agreement with self efficacy statements*

The following 'efficacy' statements were included across T1, T2 and T3.
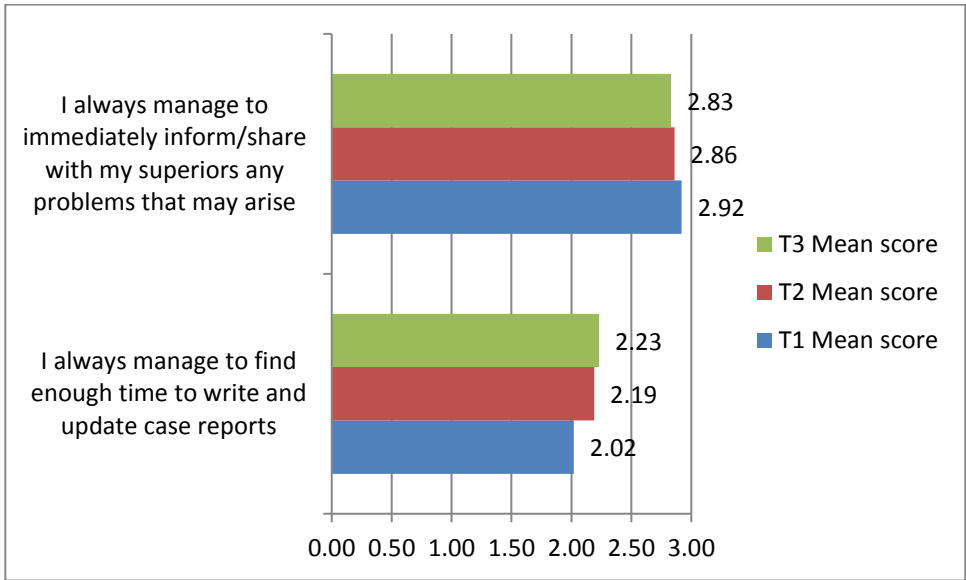
*Figure 15: Mean agreement with Self efficacy statements T1,2,&3*

There is indication finding enough time to write and update case reports has slightly improved across the time points, on the other hand immediately reporting problems seems to have slightly decreased. Whilst the reasons for responses are not provided in the data, it could be surmised that increased reflexivity and support from RPGs may provide additional sources for problem solving, perhaps lessening the need to always immediately report to superiors.

Figure 16: Self *efficacy by job role* breaks down the scores according to respondents' job roles. Again it is important to note that the low numbers of respondents within each job category limits the reliability of this data. It is noticeable that senior and team managers, as well as lead practitioners provide above average ratings to each of the statements.

*Figure 16: Self efficacy by job role*

## 5.8  Q8 (T3) Team around the relationship

(Please note that Q7 on the T3 survey 'please give any other comments you wish to make about how you feel RPGs have affected your skills and abilities' yielded very few responses and is therefore not tabulated here).

At Time 3, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with four statements concerning the effects of RPGs on relationships across the organisation (the question asked if respondents felt there had been improvements to relationships with pod/team managers; between peers; with senior managers and across the whole organisation).
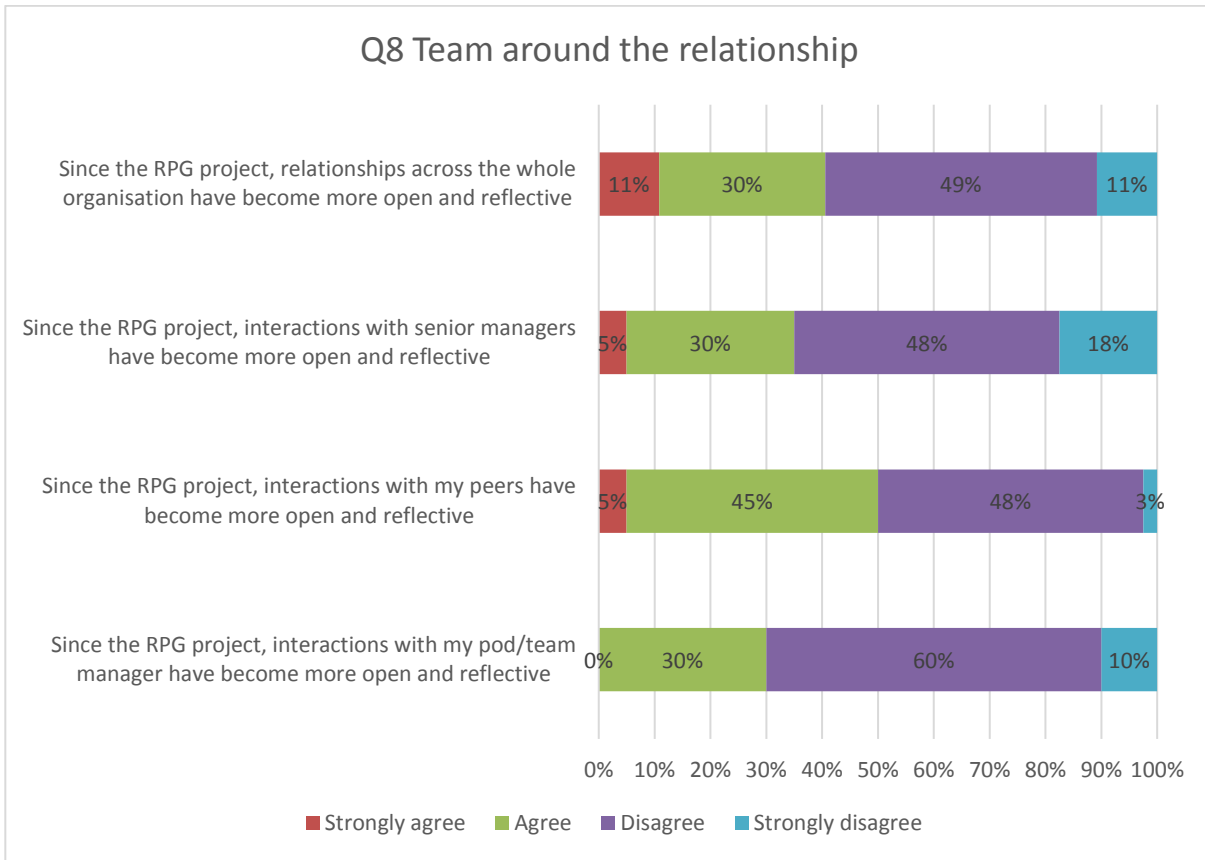
Figure 17: Team around the relationship

The mean scores (Strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, strongly disagree=1) for these statements are shown in *Figure 18: Agreement to relationship statements (mean scores)*, below.
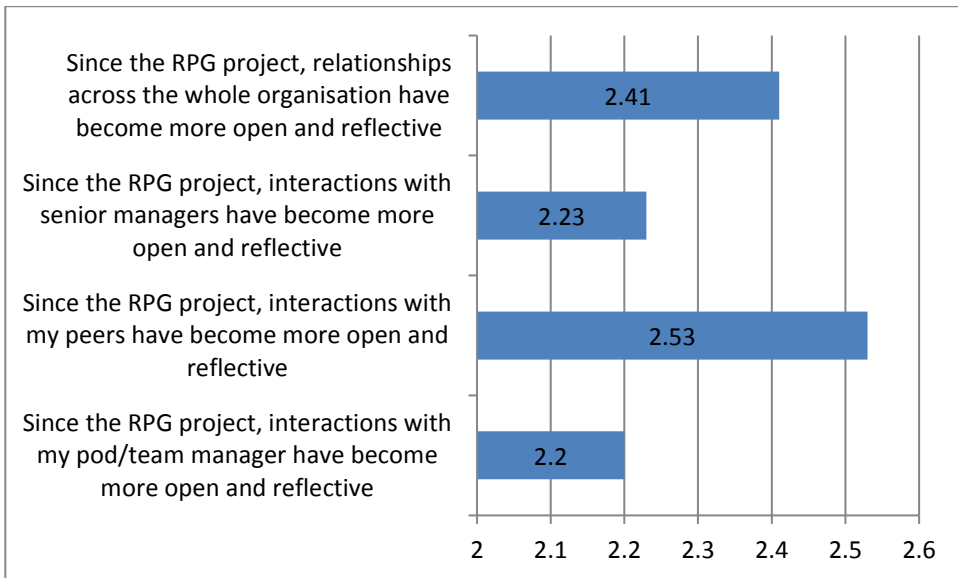


Figure 18: Agreement to relationship statements (mean scores)

Agreement with statements according to job role, is shown below. Again, bearing in mind the low number of responses, *Figure 19 Views on relationships by job role* suggests that senior managers, lead practitioners, team managers (and for 3 out of 4 statements) pod managers have seen the most improvement in relationships as a result of RPGs. This may be because of the uniqueness of the opportunity afforded by RPGs for these groups of staff to come together.
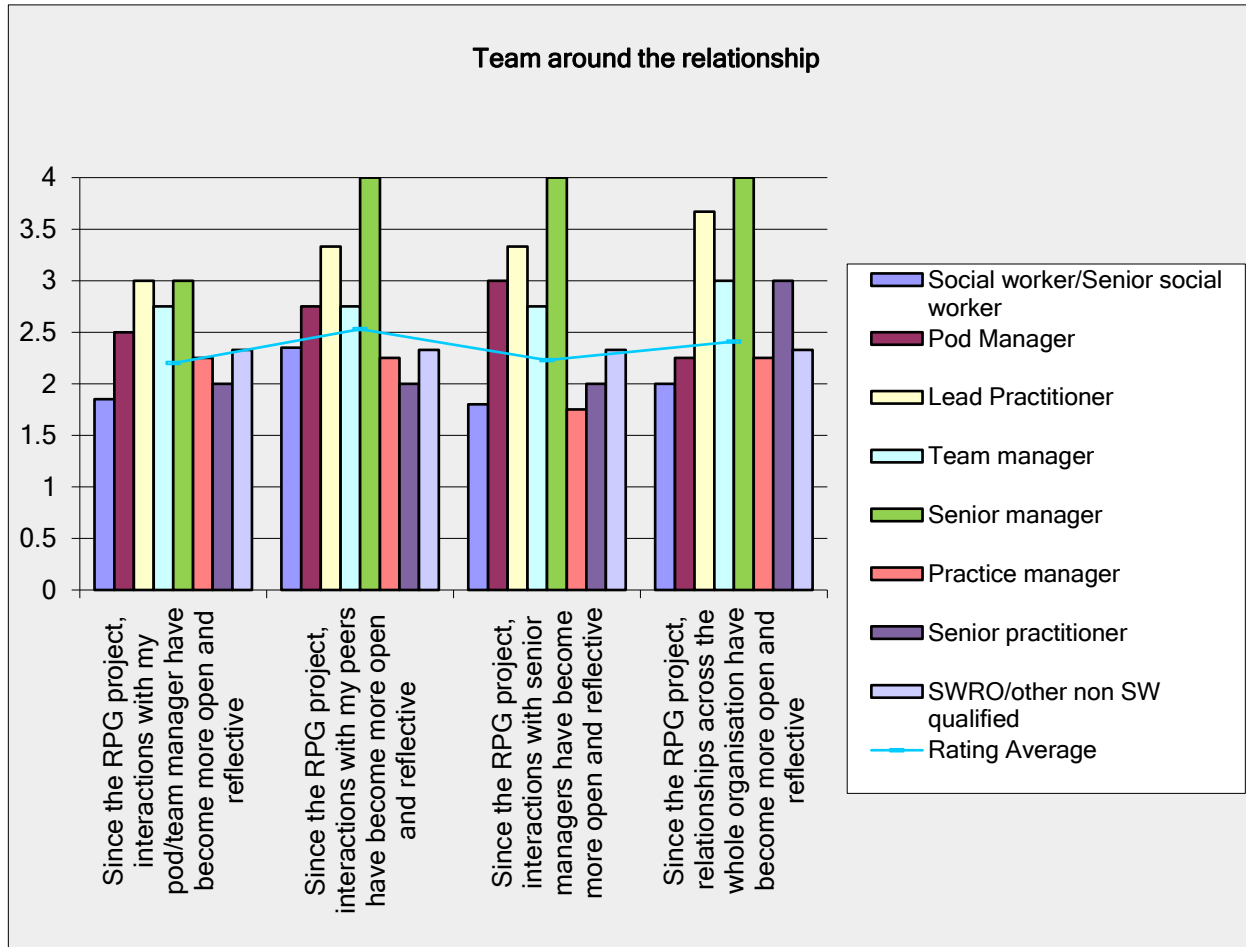


*Figure 19 Views on relationships by job role*

Overall mean agreement with these statements was fairly low as shown in *Figure 17: Team around the relationship and Figure 18: Agreement to relationship statements (mean scores)* and it is noticeable that social workers recorded low levels of agreement to all of the statements (i.e. below 2.5). The answers to the comments section related to these statements provide some insight into why this may be overall (please note these figures are not broken down by job role because of small numbers). As shown in *Figure 20: Q8 open comments*, the highest number of responses indicate that relationships were already seen to be open and reflective ahead of the RPG project and in this way, they do not see the RPGs having changed things. Five respondents felt they could not comment/ did not know the answer to this. Five gave broadly positive comments about RPGs effects on relationships but three felt that RPGs, in fact, had had a negative effect, for example by highlighting problems that colleagues were experiencing across the organisation. "Hasn't at all. Our group isn't reflective - it is a moaning forum." And "I do not think that the RPG's have contributed to a more open

and reflective culture - if anything for me they have reflected how poorly we are supported by the wider organisation". Once again, this is indicative of the spread of opinion concerning the project.
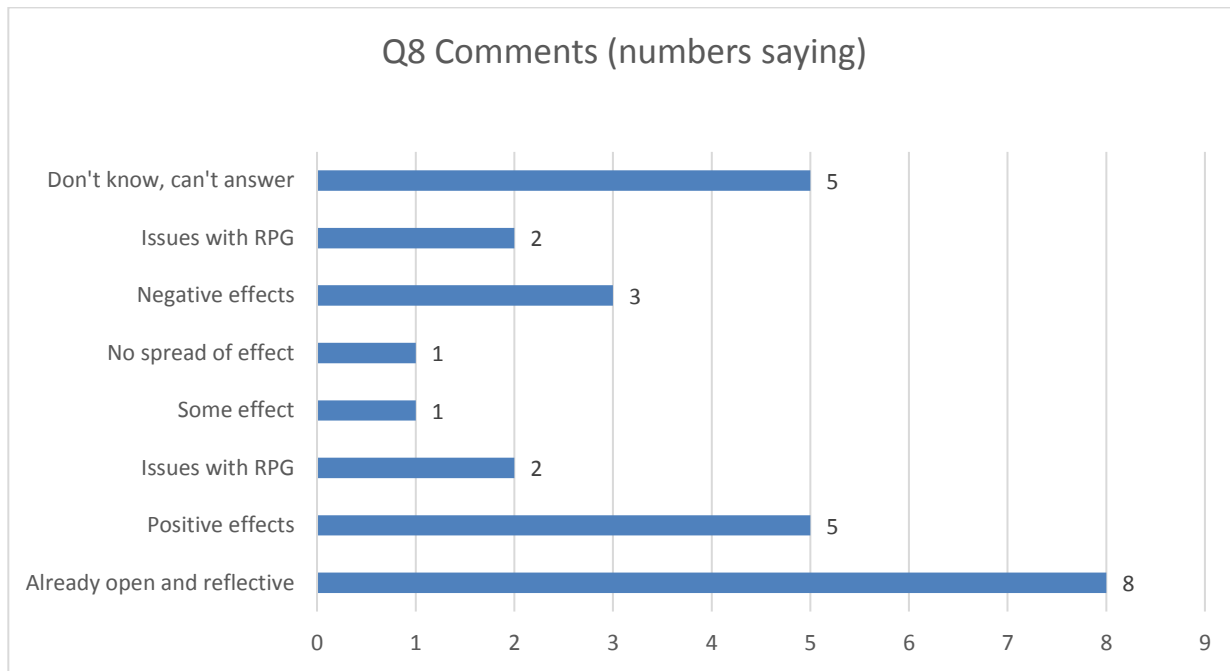


*Figure 20: Q8 open comments*

## 5.9  Q9 (T3) Facilitation

As shown at *Figure 21: Q9 (T3)*, responses with regard to the statement 'I have found the model/style of facilitation within my RPG to be helpful' were positive, with 92.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that this was the case. A small number of respondents *Figure 22 -Q9 open comments* did suggest that the lack of a 'neither agree nor disagree' option forced respondents to make a positive rather than a neutral choice to this question and some suggestions for improvement were given in the open comments around the need for more dynamic facilitation and a less 'solutions focused' approach. Again this reflects some findings within the qualitative data. Open comments also show positive views about the model and the facilitation (the question asked about the two aspects together). Again, due to small response to the open comments, the numbers are actual numbers of respondents saying.
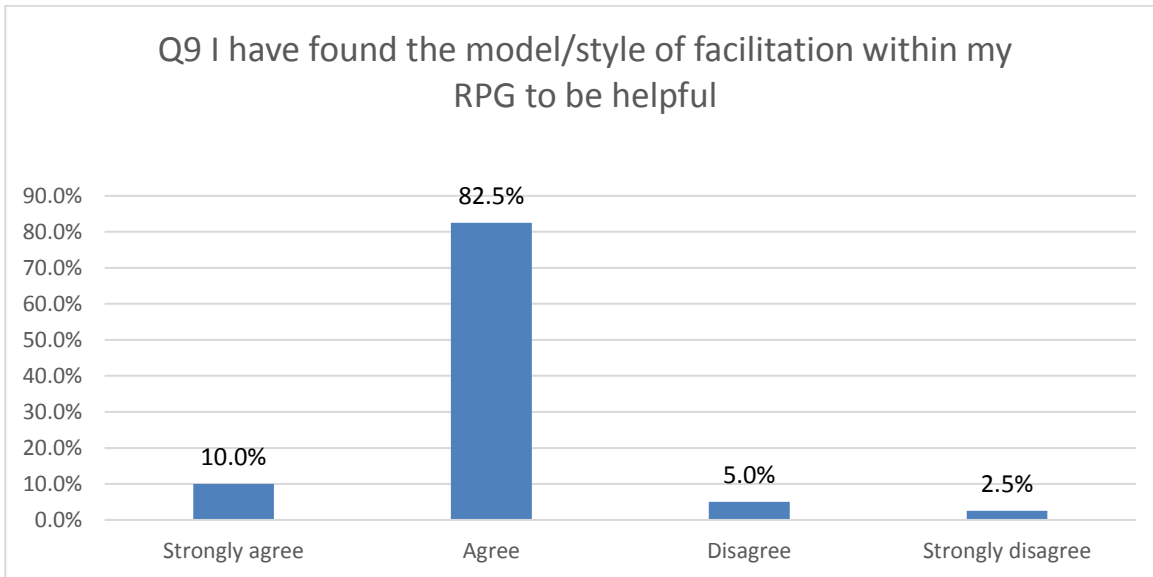
Figure 21: Q9 (T3)

In terms of mean scores for this question, total mean score = 3.0; social worker/senior social worker = 2.95; pod manager=3; lead practitioner=3; team manager=3.25; senior manager=3; practice manager=2.67; senior practitioner=3; SWRO/other 'non social work'=3.3.
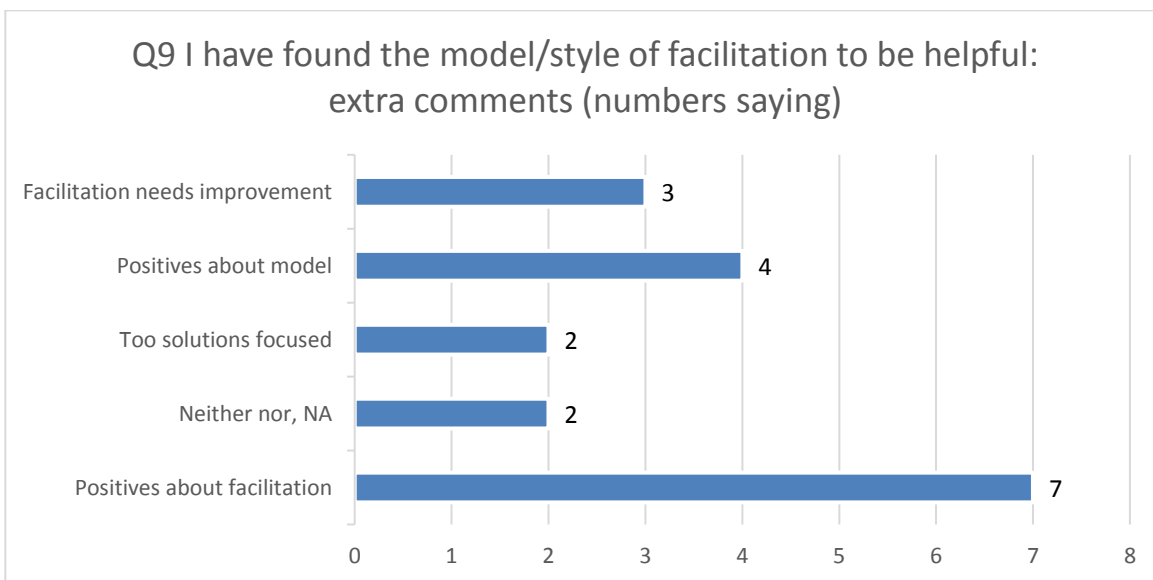


Figure 22 -Q9 open comments

## 5.10 Q10 (T3) Internal versus External facilitation

At Time 3, respondents were asked whether they feel RPGs should be facilitated by an internal or external facilitator. As in the qualitative data, there was a spread of opinion to this question, dependent on the respondent's own job role and experience of facilitation thus far. Overall 58% felt that an external facilitator is preferable and 42% favoured internal facilitation. All practice managers, team managers, lead practitioners and the majority of pod managers stated that an external facilitator is preferable. These staff groupings had already experienced external facilitators in their RPGs.

Comments within the open comments section to this question suggest that reasoning behind the preference for external facilitators are broadly congruent to those emerging in the qualitative data, ie. that external facilitators may be more skilled and more objective. For example: 'ideally yes because then they can be highly trained in this model' and 'participants feel able to be more honest', 'it would be easier for institutional and cultural institutions to be challenged'. Comments also indicate that those who currently experience internal facilitation are content with this arrangement, 'I am comfortable with my facilitator and appreciate that (*facilitator*) has shared experiences with the group'.

It is also important to note that 11 respondents did not answer Q10 and this may be due to the lack of a 'no preference' option. A number of respondents (5) stated in the open comments that they did not have a preference in the comments. One comment indicated that it is the quality of facilitation, as opposed to the internal v. external position of the facilitator that should be important.



*Figure 23 – Q10*

# 6 Qualitative findings

## 6.1 Introduction

Within the theoretical perspective of socio-cultural learning theory, Wenger (1998) tells us that whilst learning itself cannot be designed (you cannot force people to learn by bringing them in to a classroom), it can be designed *for* through the implementation of particular structures and features designed to promote learning.

In the same way, inviting people into a reflective space, does not automatically make them able, or willing to reflect within it, as the quotation below shows:

> "I'm going right back to think about - What does reflective mean? What is reflection? …For me it's about feelings, but it's also about thinking and it's about giving yourself space and being able to step back and I think one of the aims really, of all of this is to start to get people to think much more about things and be less reactive sometimes. But I think the challenges around that are, you set this space where you're going to meet…where it's almost like "you will be reflective in this period of time!" No matter what else is going on around you and how much tension there is from, you know, 'well I've got to get this court report finished'… It is really difficult because it's a space that's carved out for you to take a step back and think and allow yourself to feel if you want or feel to a certain point, but that's quite difficult as well." Pod Manager, Focus Group 7

Reflective space can, nevertheless, be designed in such a way as to *maximise* the possibilities for reflection. Designing a reflective space entails a series of possible choices about which types of social infrastructures are likely to enhance participants' ability and desire to think differently about their working lives. The proceeding section uses data from the qualitative study to *define* and *discuss* the design for reflection that has been implemented in Brighton and Hove during the first year of the RPG project. Using direct quotations from participants, key design components are described along with a consideration of how they contributed to (or detracted from) participants' experience of reflection. A number of additional questions – or design choices - are also highlighted. These have potential to feed in to the design of RPGs moving forward.

## 6.2 Design For Reflection

### 6.2.1 Time and space to think

The provision of a place and allocated time, away from the demands of a working day, is a fundamental component of RPG design, anticipated and appreciated by respondents. The space was often characterised as different from the circumstances of normal working lives, an opportunity for thinking, rather than 'doing'.

> "I guess that we just often get sucked in to doing all the time because of time pressures and so we're wanting to do, so I think there's the bit about I have to stop, and I have to try and hold that there" Interview 10, senior social worker

> "Social workers, you know, much of their kind of work is very much direct work with families and children, working in you know…very difficult circumstances and seeing difficult, you know,

upsetting encounters that children and families may have, it's an emotional impact as well as being quite fast paced at times and quite stressful and needing to make quite quick decisions and assimilate things quickly and make sense of them…I would certainly want to think that reflective practice could bring some space away from that to, you know actually sit down, have a kind of head space really to make sense of some of those things and to have some time to think" Interview 15, senior manager

This time and 'headspace' was valued by respondents.

"I like that it is time out of the week, away from the endless meetings and report writing – time to stop and breathe". Respondent focus group 2 (notes from cards)

"Time and space away – bigger picture. Like that not in your own building. Protection of the space. Not going in to the office – look forward to it. Feels like a morning off. Refreshing. Easier that not in the office and have to leave to get there because otherwise would go in to the office and make calls until the 11th hour. Away from the manic – ness. Risk that wouldn't get away if it was in the afternoon (people's RPGs are in the morning)." Focus group 6 (notes from cards)

Also appreciated was the recognition of the commitment, by the organisation, to provide this time and space for staff.

"For me, actually having the resource put aside for that reflective space I think is really important, so although we may have sort of challenges around it and criticisms of it I think organisationally I think it's hugely important that we've got that resource there." Pod manager, Focus Group 7

"I think the sense the RPG promotes of being part of a committed service is positive." Focus Group 1 (notes from cards)

There were, however, a number of practical issues raised by respondents that detracted from their ability to best appreciate the time and space provided. These related to travel, facilities and timing.

For those whose reflective practice groups were not based at the same location as their office, time travelling and finding somewhere to park could result in feelings of stress as well as concern about extra time taken away from other aspects of working life. Respondents explained that whilst groups lasted only in the region of an hour and a quarter, time travelling and parking could mean that attendance equated to approximately half a day's work.

"The time of travelling to and attending RPGs at busy/stressful times can increase stress levels when this is not a priority." Focus group 1 (notes from cards)

"Also it's like because we are all around the town, I mean we're really fortunate that actually most of them now are in this building but you know people are coming, you know people are spending quite a bit of time and they're feeling very pressured travelling here" Interview 13 non-social work practitioner.

A number of respondents felt that the quality of the rooms provided did not represent a welcoming space nor did the lack of any facilities for tea or coffee.

"Rooms aren't great (cold and smelly)" Focus Group 5 (notes from cards)

"Organisation communicates something by the rooms they provide for you – no tea/coffee etc. Room always changing."  Focus Group 5 (notes from cards)

"Environment – not nurturing, not providing tea/coffee – a drink is part of a welcome." Focus Group 6 (notes from cards)

Several suggested that scheduling RPGs for first thing in the morning may overcome some of the travel difficulties (not having to go into the office first), and would also avoid people being dragged into other business during that short time in the office which may then mean they can't get away for RPG. They did, however, recognise that this would not be practically possible for those with childcare issues.

"For me, to start at 9am rather than 9.30am as I would come in straight to the group rather than logging on to the computer first (I know that's not viable for many with childcare issues)." Focus Group 2, notes from cards

"you can't avoid looking at that and thinking that's a whole morning because it's (location) and its 9.30, why 9.30, why not 8?" Interview 7, non-social work practitioner

The creation of time and space out of a busy working day is a fundamental requirement for reflection, which is appreciated and recognised by participants. As outlined above, there may be some practical adjustments that could further enhance this element of design.

## 6.2.2 Bringing together workers from across the service

Bringing together workers from across the service was described by respondents to be an important and appreciated feature of RPG design, bringing the opportunity for learning about others' roles, sharing perspectives and the cross fertilization of ideas. Within the theoretical approach of socio-cultural learning theory, the harnessing of different perspectives within learning activity systems has been referred to as 'multivoicedness' Engestrom (2003). Engestrom suggests that it is through exposure to these differing perspectives that learning occurs.

"Obviously one of the differences is that it's not your supervision group so you have a range of differing experiences um, perspectives, different teams, people with different roles and priorities and so on, so that's really helpful." Interview 10, social worker

"I really like the fact that there's a real mix of professionals from different kind of parts of the service" Interview 5, social worker

For managers and lead practitioners, being brought together with their *peer group* from across the service was of special importance due to more limited opportunity to do this in other forums.

"It's time with your peers which I think is one of the key things for me". Interview 4 (pod manager)

This element of design potentially promoted broader reflection through exposure to the differing perspectives of workers across the service. For a few respondents, however, the net had been spread too wide in terms of mix of colleagues, meaning that they found the content of discussion less relevant to their work. A number suggested that a more careful 'matching' of participants in terms of working networks would be beneficial. This may include people from outside of children's service.

"so I think a bit more ownership, who will be a member of the team, and under what, what's the process for the joining and choosing them? Could we, within the council structure identify people who might be really useful?" Interview 7, non-social work practitioner

As well as the positives of a 'multivoiced' reflective practice group, the mix of different parts of the service did bring with it the possibility of some difficult dynamics being played out in the context of the group. This seemed to be particularly an issue between podded child protection social workers and those within the fostering and adoption services.

"the dynamic can be a bit them and us which doesn't help everybody trust the process". Interview 12, social worker

The mix of professionals from across the service was a design feature that was highly appreciated by research participants. The existence of different perspectives in the group was seen to enhance the reflective process, and provide a collaborative opportunity not existing elsewhere. Some of the benefits of this, in terms of perceived outcomes, are discussed further at 6.7.1. A small number of respondents, however, suggested that where the mix of groups extended beyond one's own natural working networks, relevance of subject matter decreased. Challenging dynamics arising need to be carefully facilitated.

## 6.2.3 Implementation of a structured model

In bringing colleagues together within a space designed for reflection, the use of a model to structure interactions was recognised to be important.

Use of a model was described as necessary to keep conversations relevant and on track. The respondent below gives a brief outline of her experience of the model and its strength.

"I think it's really good and it's nice to be able to kind of yeah, I'm going to present this case and I'm just going to sit back and take you know hear what people have got to say and then come back in. Yeah I like that, for me that works I think otherwise, I am a bit of a chatter…..so I like the fact that actually you know there's a point, right now, you just sit back and relax and let's just hear what everybody else has got to say, but not being too, so allowing for that kind of, that discussion to be kind of quite free flowing at times but also let's hear what everyone's got to say, making sure everyone gets a chance to contribute because obviously some people are more chatty and as I say I quite like the different perspectives from all the different people." Interview 5, senior social worker

This structured discussion, was recognised to provide an opportunity for a different type of thinking, and reflection:

"You know there's something about actually you have to provide a structure to people's discussions and to get them to think differently about how they're feeling and the impact to them" Interview 11, senior manager

From the perspective of the external facilitator, the simplicity of the model was seen as a strength. She also expressed that it provided a sense of containment and boundaries around the issues under discussion.

"…because the model was so simple people didn't get lost, they could easily follow it, it was simple um it was very effective…the model was just a wonderful, um stable, agreed,

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everybody consented to use that model, everybody worked with it in the end, you know. So that was a great strength" Interview 14, external facilitator

"So the strengths were the model gave the boundaries and actually in terms of Bion and the container, I found sometimes when I was lost maybe about exactly how things were going, when people were presenting the most difficult, awful situations in their working life, and what it was doing to them, the model gave us that, yeah that safety and that containing and that holding boundary" Interview 14, external facilitator

## 6.2.4 Pre-prepared or 'off the cuff' dilemma

One element of the model that caused some discussion was the issue as to whether the person presenting the dilemma, or issue, should identify and prepare to talk about it in advance, or whether they should be asked to present an issue that is considered to be pressing at the time of the group, in other words, speaking about it off the cuff. A small number of respondents appreciated the process of preparing a dilemma in advance for discussion, which they suggested enabled the maintenance of a more focused discussion, and sticking to the structure of the model.

"…it's a bit harder to stick to the discussion how we'd hope because they haven't kind of processed it in advance and you're getting a bit more of a you know, I'm processing it as I talk kind of discussion which ends up just being a bit more open and wide ranging rather than a bit more focused so I think one of the things is about that bit of preparation for the group. Interview 10, senior social worker.

Interviewee 10 continues…

…I've presented a few times, um, and I guess have used that opportunity to try and make sure that we try to follow the model. It's just what made sense for me and I thought that's what I want to happen really, um, and I think, I think because I arrived with written materials to hand out and had made clear kind of written presentation and so on I think it made it easier to follow the model and the session then did." Interview 10, senior social worker.

On the other hand, for others, preparing something in advance could lead to a more 'head led' discussion, rather than the processing of genuine emotion. 'Off the cuff' presentations were sometimes required during the first year when the person due to present could not attend the group, and were appreciated as allowing a processing of emotions in real time. This 'off the cuff' presentation appears to have become more common as the project moves into its second year.

"The model of people bringing things to it, I wonder about the thoughts behind that because, just thinking now, it's that sort of encourages a head led discussion I think in some ways because people haven't been bringing emotive issues, um necessarily, I think some people have and some sort of are having those discussions but people have often brought a practical issue haven't they and discussed a practical issue, so I wonder whether that's… R3, focus group 7

"On the week I presented it was off the cuff as someone wasn't able to attend. I spoke about a dilemma and emotions re a LAC child. The group really helped me process my feelings, gave me ideas for how to work the case. I felt less overwhelmed by emotion afterwards. (Focus group 1, notes from cards)

"I think having to you know, plan, having an hour out is one thing, but then you've got to think about the night before, the day before oh my goodness, what am I going to do? And you know it's another thing you've got to get together and write up and type up and get printed and sorted out so I think probably that…that's something that's changed which is good and I think I prefer definitely the route we've got now, you know people can come with the live thing there and then…Yeah, I think it is a bit more spontaneous, … it feels less maybe scripted, you've kind of um, you know when you had to write things down you're probably thinking about half of it yourself already and you know, kind of half way there, whereas when you just kind of go, 'oh this is happening' and actually you're getting in touch with the feelings at the moment, at the time err, I think, yeah, there's probably more to be gained from it." Interview 15, senior manager

## 6.2.5 Aims and statement of purpose

Whilst the process of the RPGs was generally well understood in terms of a step by step process for facilitating reflective discussion, a lack of clarity remained around the purpose or aims of RPGs. A lack of an overarching 'statement of purpose' emerged as an important theme in the data.

"…..The Reflective Practice Group felt a bit top down 'you will', then OK I will but I'm not quite sure why I'm doing it and then not feeling that that was ever kind of really discussed and agreed amongst the group about what the purpose of it was and then it stopping and changing to another group, it all feels a bit messy to be honest." FG 7, managers

"it's like if you go into alcoholics anonymous, not that I've been but you know, but you go all with the same, you're investing aren't you, or you might go for, I don't know why people do group therapy apart from that, I know they do it on social work courses and you're trying to reach your target or plan a mission together, so there's something that really ties that group in to a collective goal, whereas this isn't, this is to reflect and you all go off"…Interview 12 social worker

In the quote below, the respondent highlights that he suspects that people have differing expectations regarding the aims of RPGs, suggesting that this needs further clarification at this point.

"As I listen to people speak, I'm not sure there was a real understanding from everyone doing reflective practice groups of what they are. So just that core thing of, because I've got a very clear idea what they are in my head but I think maybe other people have slightly different clear ideas in their head of what they are (laughs), so I don't by any chance think that I know what they're supposed to be but so that whole challenge as I said earlier around moving from the head led, talking about issues very academically or intellectually rather than thinking about the emotional stuff that's going on for people, that was my thought of where they should be going but I wonder whether that was really set in foundation at the beginning and whether that needs now as part of this review really as being something that they need to have a clear, as you said (R2: statement of purpose), statement of purpose that's right.." Respondents 3 and 2, Focus Group 7

This lack of clarity was acknowledged to link back to certain gaps around the time that RPGs were commissioned, in amongst the broader service reorganisation that was concurrently taking place.

"it was quite complicated and I think there was an impact in terms of thinking where reflective practice groups fitted into that um, but then as well the communication around it, obviously while we did communicate with social workers and managers about reflective practice groups, I think and again this is just one of the learnings around the whole service redesign anyway, is you can never communicate too much, you've just to keep reminding people this is what we're doing, this is why we're doing it, so I think there was probably more we could have done in terms of that sort of communication, that sort of branding, even the joint stuff with the centre for social work practice, making more of a um, making more of a big deal in terms of actually this is what we're doing, this is why we're doing it" Interview 11, senior manager

During the first year, this lack of clarity appears to have pervaded the roll out of groups, such that the external and, therefore also the internal facilitators, (who were trained in leading RPGs by the external facilitator), have had the experience of hitting the ground running, broadly implementing the process of the model, without being entirely sure what the parameters were around this.

"I mean, looking back now and while I was involved in facilitating, especially in the early days, it was that lack of brief that was so difficult. There wasn't a particular brief, um, the model for example, we could, one could develop oneself and so, I proposed a model, um and because, as we'll go on to look at, there were difficulties during the project development and management, um, which I you know, just carried on working through" Interview 14, external facilitator

"The biggest challenge for me is….actually there's two biggest challenges which I think probably relate specifically to what we've just talked about as well, being, sticking to the model and being clear about the model (Internal facilitator)

This created some practical difficulties for internal facilitators, charged with running their own groups for social workers, without being completely confident that they fully understood, or could implement the model sufficiently.

"I guess it also links to the challenge about being clear about a facilitator's role and fidelity to the model because I don't think I've experienced that as a group member so I find it hard then to demonstrate that as a facilitator." Internal facilitator

This issue played out during observations, when the researcher noticed that the two internally facilitated groups followed a different course from each other, and from the externally facilitated groups observed. This raised questions within the researcher about how clearly defined the model has been, and whether it was intended to be applied completely consistently, or expected to have a more emergent quality dependent on specific group context. An extract from the observation notes is presented below:

"I noticed with this facilitator (and possibly slightly less so, the second observation) that the PL facilitator doesn't completely follow the model of facilitation as presented by external facilitator. For example, this facilitator doesn't ask the presenter to crystalize her feelings (maybe because she has expressed them quite openly already) and later seems to pick up on particular discussion points and broaden them out for the group to discuss. This appears to be useful but I'm not sure if it is an adaptation, or just part of the model I hadn't seen before. I also had a sense that this group went on quite long (It was an hour and a half) – and felt that it went off in different directions rather than just focusing on the case presented…. Do internal facilitators feel they are adapting the model to suit the needs of the group? Has it been

anticipated that this will happen and what are the potential effects of these adaptations? How flexible is/should the model be?" Notes from observation session – social work group, facilitated by Practice Lead

As part of the contract with CfSWP, a half day training session on the model was delivered by the CfSWP for managers, lead practitioners and the senior leadership team. The external facilitator implemented the model in practice, and internal facilitators were prepared to facilitate their own groups by being in an RPG led by the external facilitator and thus learning and modelling these techniques. Findings suggest that this learning through modelling did not work as successfully as had been envisaged. This may be to do with a number of factors including lack of consensus around definition of the aims, parameters and statement of purpose of RPGs. There is evidence that there may be a 'sea change' in this respect with the introduction of two new external facilitators at the start of the second year of the project. Coming in at a later point in the development of the project, and with what is possibly a more clearly defined model of facilitation[1], the new external facilitator appears to offer a clearer example for internal facilitators to follow.

> "…(*facilitator's name*) was very, I'm going to hold this boundary, very structured …I mean (*facilitator's name*) was very clear about the amount of time that people had and what was going to happen, also I think a shorter amount of time worked so it was just an hour and a quarter …*(facilitator's name)* was clear in how s/he* communicated and also helpfully cut me short…like, 'you've said enough now' (laughs)…actually, I just felt like oh I don't need to go on and on because you've just got what I was intending to say and so let's just hold it here and somebody else can come in" Interview 9, Lead Practitioner (*'s/he' used to protect identity of facilitator)

> "…you know when you see something in action and you think 'oh my God', you're good, just his, so I suppose some modelling about actually you know from our own experience of doing of it in the group that we were then able to kind of apply some of the things of how we'd experienced some of those things, in our own group that we were able to take forward in our own practice in terms of facilitation and I got lots of that from that last week" Interview 9, Lead Practitioner

How this may affect participants' experiences of RPGs moving forward would be a question for subsequent evaluation.

### Should one size fit all?
A number of participants suggested, in fact, that it may not be a desirable aim to consistently apply the same model across all groups, given their differences in terms of mix of specialism, job role and reflective disposition.

While Respondent 1 (within focus group 7) recognized the need for a consistency of model to ensure some consistency of experience:

> R1: "I think the quality of facilitation and group forming varies considerably and therefore that's where you need some base line of consistent structure and expectation otherwise, you do get

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[1] Model used by second external facilitator to which respondents have been referring is informed by the Tavistock model of consultation informed itself by systems psychodynamic and group relations conceptual models which in practice is based on a work discussion methodology also used at the Tavistock.

a kind of task centred one verses a really psychodynamic – do you know what I mean and that's not going to kind of build forward a consistent organisation…."

Other pod managers in her group questioned if this was ever going to be possible:

R2: "And managers are different and staff groups are different and you have to, things have to evolve in a way that works for you and yet I think that's almost frowned upon in a way….(she goes on to discuss the idea that) there is this perfect model and we should all be doing the same thing…..but I don't see how we can have, I think we can have an 'overarching idea'."

R3: I think for me as well you have to be careful what you wish for, because as a manager I like autonomy, that's how I like working I'll be honest and I'm aware of that, and I like to evolve things in my own style in some ways, I think  you're right in that inconsistency sometimes and ensuring that there's safeguards around that, um, but if you're too prescriptive around how it should happen, then it becomes quite a rigid space, do you know what I mean, which you don't want either, so it's a balance isn't it?"

Group members went on to discuss how different groups may feel comfortable with different types of model – some happier with psychodynamic, deep reflection, others feeling happier remaining at a more 'surface', task focused level. This is reiterated by one interviewee, expressing the desire to engage of deeper levels of reflection himself, but recognising that this would not be to everybody's liking:

"So I'm aware of the fact for those people to go somewhere that's not busy when they're busy could be effective and designing something really effective and challenging every week could be the last thing they need". (Interview 7, non-social work practitioner)

Questions were also raised as to whether it would be better to allow groups to try more than one model/choose the one they would best like to work with.

 "What would be the bad thing that would happen if people did co-facilitate and try different models? What about having some which are elected, some which are rotational and some which bring in a psychologist or someone from a different practice, why not try those and then compare?.....It needs to be done a bit more thoroughly and that might give people a real sense of ownership of the group because I do get the feeling that it is people do turn up basically because it suits them and most people aren't there most of the time" Interview 7, non-social work practitioner

In the terms of socio-cultural learning theory, this raises questions how 'designed' or 'emergent' the model should be. Wenger suggests that:

'There is inherent uncertainty between design and its realization in practice, since practice is not the result of design but rather a response to it' As a consequence, the challenge of design is not a matter of getting rid of the emergent, but rather including it and making it an opportunity. It is to balance the benefits and costs of prescription and understand the trade-offs involved in specifying in advance'. (Wenger, 1998, p.233).

### How should RPGs promote systemic/practice change?
RPGs in the first year were described as having a dual focus on both emotional containment and practice development, that is to say there was a systemic element inherent in the project.

> "the purpose of the reflective groups, what the outcomes we're going to get is, that sort of, um, you know dual sort of purpose of emotional containment and practice development." Interview 11, senior manager

This was acknowledged by the first external facilitator whose approach to facilitation was influenced by systems theory as well as psychodynamic theory. This was reflected in the observation notes to one of the sessions:

> "the facilitator's focus was often on how do you put that back into systemic thinking – what can the 'system' do, rather than the individual? Refocusing discussion/changing the angle of the lens." Researcher observation notes from externally facilitated RPG.

The focus on systemic change was generally supported by respondents, who also stated that they would like a little more clarity around the actual process for feeding issues arising in RPGs back to senior managers.

> "that's come up in a variety of different groups about people feeling that they did not get adequate support….I think if that doesn't get fed into the way the system's managed it will continue to just be a problem and what would be the point about reflecting about it in the reflective practice group. So, yeah, I suppose that to me is quite an important thing." Interview 13, non-social work practitioner

> "I think on the one hand we want it to be a contained thing as an opportunity for us to reflect on our work but it's also bound to raise issues that then affect the work that we do, not just for us as individuals and what we take away from it, but actually how does our management structure take away something from that? Where's the feedback that they get and how could that in turn positively influence the development of the service and the work. So I think if that was more clearly stated, more open, that would be helpful as well. It might also help people to think there's more value to this because I think it could be seen as a, something that we're asked to do and it kind of just sits there rather than it being embedded in a more of a kind of vertical structure." Interview 10, senior social worker

A smaller number, were less sure about this joint focus:

> "Is it about feedback into organisation? I would challenge that a little bit. For me it's about getting to the emotional nitty gritty. How everyone's pissed off with each other? How does that affect our ability to do our job?" Observation notes quotation from pod manager, who is discussing the purpose of the RPGs 30-11-16

This suggests that a consideration of *the mechanisms by which RPGs can be used to promote opportunities for organisational and practice change* may be timely. Should organisational themes be fed back from RPG discussions – if so, what is the mechanism for this and how do group members consent? Or should a deeper reflection on practice allow practitioners to implement changes to their practice on an individual level, with the hope that this promotes a wider movement towards relationship based practice with families and colleagues?

### Summary – Aspects of the model that may benefit from further clarification

In summary, participants recognised the need for the implementation of a model to provide structure and opportunity for reflection. Respondents were clear in their understanding of the process, and various stages of the model. A number of people suggested that the element of presenting a dilemma may best be done 'off the cuff' rather than prepared in advance, in order to reduce preparation time

and promote reflection at an emotional, rather than purely practical, level. Although there was general understanding and clarity concerning the process of the model, this was somewhat lacking concerning the overall aims and purposes behind the model. There was a sense that a number of different interpretations of the model exist, both in people's thinking, but also in the way that they RPGs are facilitated and experienced across different groups. This appears to be, at least partly, linked to some lack of definition at the outset of the project (as well as the influence of groups' differing dispositions and styles of facilitation). As the project moves forward into its second year, it may be a timely juncture for the creation of a more detailed statement of purpose for RPGs. Issues identified within the preceding section that would benefit from clarification within such a statement may include:

- the extent to which the structured model of reflection is intended to be applied consistently across groups (that is 'designed' in advance) and the extent to which it should be possible, or desirable, for groups to adapt and adopt it according to their specific context (i.e. that the model is seen as 'emergent').
- The level of reflection aimed at (e.g. head led/'surface' reflection versus emotional/deeper reflection, or any points in between)
- The nature of the dilemmas to be presented e.g. practical issues that need resolving, or difficult emotional experiences. Along with this is the question as to whether dilemmas should be prepared in advance or determined at the time of the group – and a consideration of the effect of this on the likely nature of the issue chosen.
- The inter-relationship between reflection and practice development/service change. Is the feedback of themes an aim of RPGs, and if so, how should these be identified and fed back into managerial process? This is also linked to the role of the facilitator (see 6.3.5).
- An issue which will be discussed later in 6.6.1 is that of attendance, and whether in fact it should be mandatory. Whilst not expanded on here, this is an element that could also usefully be considered/included within any review of a 'statement of purpose' for RPGs.

## 6.3 Facilitation

The presence of a facilitator was also described as crucial to the design of RPGs. A number of 'roles' for the facilitator emerged from the data.

### 6.3.1 Maintaining the structure

Respondents felt that one important aspect of the facilitator's role was to maintain the necessary structure to the discussion, ensuring fidelity to the adopted model of reflective practice (taking above comments on board). Without the maintenance of this structure, focus and opportunity for reflection, could be lost and groups may become negative.

> "I think it's really important to have the facilitators because otherwise we tend to moan, to go into moaning which is not the, you know, sort of the best strategy because moaning gets people into negative thoughts and then nothing comes out that…can be productive…so I think the facilitator has an important role to keep people wondering, finding solutions, finding strategies, looking at positives, reinforcing you know the skills, so I think it's really crucial" Interview 2 social worker

Respondents often expressed that they felt facilitators had successfully held the structure of their groups.

"Absolutely fine, I mean it's very, very gentle, it's you know, but very clear so we knew what was expected and….would sort of bring us back if we were going off on…you know she was very good at reflecting back what was being said and being clear you know, now is time for you to sit back and listen so yeah it was good". Interview 4, Lead practitioner (referring to external facilitator).

"I think he's got a very nice style about him, there's a real balance him making you feel relaxed enough to be able to be safe and to talk about what's going on, um but also keep the group fairly contained." Interview 5, social worker (referring to internal facilitator)

Others reflected that the maintenance of a structured model was not always achieved, with some members of the group being allowed to take over through discussion of their own issues, this being a particular challenge around 'check in' at the start of the group (although this approach has been modified in some groups to account for this).

"Each session starts with a check in and I understand why that happens but I think, thinking about it, I think the check in is also part of the difficulty because that is often what I think then leads away to the challenges that people have in the moment and takes away from the model that we're trying to follow. So, maybe some thought about the check-in and either, how that's structured, managed, or even should there be a check-in, is that the place for it?" Interview 10, senior social worker

Internal facilitators acknowledged the difficulty they sometimes found in applying the stages of the model – struggling with knowing how long to allow colleagues to continue to talk before bringing them back to the model.

"So for example part of the groups that I've facilitated, part of the model if often to do a check in at the beginning but also to be really clear that that's a brief check in but then if a worker starts offloading lots, how far do you let them do that, when do you step in, how rigid are you about that? Or when you're doing, somebody's presenting and other people are reflecting on it, and the presenter is meant to be listening and not joining in, if they keep joining back in how rigid are you about? Internal facilitator

Whilst internal facilitators tended to reflect that they have become more confident as the year progressed, it is worth noting that they are likely to have ongoing support and development needs (as discussed in 6.3.4).

## 6.3.2 Managing group dynamics

A second key role was seen as managing group dynamics such that the safety and positivity of the group is maintained.

"I think that really that's back to the facilitators and their role because I do think that bit about safety and containment in the group is really important because people aren't going to be able to invest they're not going to be able to be honest, they're not going to be able to give and they're not going to be able to take if they're not feeling OK about being there, so I guess you know for me in terms of it being a group, that's a fundamental requirement." Int 10, senior social worker

A number of respondents reflected on the safeness of the group that had developed such that they felt happy to share

> "Our facilitator, I feel she listens, cares and contains; challenging different perspectives on work and cases feels like a 'courageous group' willing to take risks; time/space away from practice to think about the bigger picture" FG 6 social workers (notes from cards)

> "I found it was a very kind space, so you could go and talk about things and people wouldn't judge you or say, oh you didn't do that did you? It really was that sort of proper reflective space. FG 7, manager (notes from cards)

Others however, reported incidents where some difficult dynamics had not been successfully handled, leaving participants feeling threatened.

> "But I also know from other colleagues that at that point, in that space, they have been challenged and taken to task in what seems an inappropriate way and have felt very unsafe in that forum…and the facilitator hasn't intervened and ended up becoming in one case became quite personal as well" Interview 10, senior social worker

Internal facilitators acknowledged the challenges they faced in trying to work with groups where dynamics were less conducive to reflection

> "…challenging, is the word!...It is about trying to get people to, everybody, into a reflective space so because some people are naturally less reflective than others, um so and sometimes if those are more dominant members of the group in any case, it's really hard then to steer the conversation into a more reflective space because they're more dominant and they don't want it to go, 'don't want it' you know I don't think this is outwardly resistant it's something that happens far more unconsciously and unintendedly….Other times it works really well" Internal facilitator

Another internal facilitator echoed the differing dynamics within groups making facilitating them more or less challenging.

> "actually my experience of facilitating as well, some groups work really well and some groups don't work very well at all and I guess some of that obviously I'm sure is down to facilitators and group membership but it can't all be down to facilitators, because for example I would say the groups I facilitate…one of them was excellent, one of them was really difficult and one of them was somewhere in the middle, so it wasn't just about me (laughs)". Internal facilitator

Again these issues may feed into a consideration of ongoing facilitator support and development 6.3.4

## 6.3.3 Challenge

A number of those in lead practitioner and manager roles suggested that they felt ready for more challenge and development from their facilitator. This message was not as strong from social workers who often appreciated a validating and gentle approach.

> "I think it's that probing as well, which obviously should come from the group but those key moments to push that conversation beyond that surface, kind of scratching beneath that and guiding, yeah, a bit of discomfort as well, a bit of, what is the elephant here? That is a real skill and that's where you get the real qualitative, bloody hell, that was intense, but you know that was worth 2 hours of my life, rather than yes I've regurgitated the issue we've all said, call HR…" Focus Group 7, Pod manager

"I think we probably could have, because I don't think it's challenge as in….I think it's mainly more sophisticated facilitation maybe, you know I don't want to be negative about the facilitator we've had but I think you know, for the senior leadership team, I think it's probably more sophisticated in terms of taking our thinking along, so yeah. Um, mmm I definitely think, yeah, it's good that we've got a new facilitator and to be challenged in a different way to try and develop the group and how it works" Interview 11, senior manager

The message from interview 1 suggests that this role of challenge may be easier for someone with a totally outside perspective.

"I think we could handle that as a group so I think it could have been more dynamic and it may be that externally that would work because our facilitator has other hats on and it's very difficult to change role from everyone's perspective". Interview 1, manager

This seems to be confirmed by a number of comments concerning the style of the second external facilitator. Whereas the first external facilitator had in a sense become 'internal' due to her longstanding involvement with the local authority (see 6.3.5), the second internal facilitator, described here, came in as completely new to the authority and appears to have adopted a more forthright style from the outset. Also, with the device of asking the presenter to sit facing away from the group, he appeared to give permission to the group to carry out a more challenging discussion of the issues.

"yeah it felt very different in a really good way in the sense that it felt like, yeah it was going to be challenging and thought provoking and there was something about him being in charge as well…

he got the presenter to do was to after they'd presented, was to turn away and look out of the window…yeah and I didn't present but the person who did said that that was really helpful in terms of um, just sort of suspending, just being able to just listen but also stare and the window about not trying to kind of non verbally sort of engage with other members of the group and stuff so it really kind of got, yeah, it um and it also felt safer then for us who were reflecting to be able to um, I think maybe just be a bit braver in some of our reflections in what we were really thinking because there wasn't that 'oh God, I don't know how to say this', when you're kind of looking over at somebody else to be able to say oh I don't quite know how they're going to be experiencing this, oh I don't know if I can, actually it just felt quite liberating, you know we didn't anything particularly that was going to (laughs)..we were the right side of appropriate and challenging!" Interview 9, lead practitioner

It is important to note however that the style of facilitation in the second year is not the focus of this piece of evaluation, and that it is possible that this style may not suit all group participants.

## 6.3.4 Support for facilitators
There is a point here to be made about support for those involved in facilitating RPGs, who shoulder the responsibility for supporting colleagues and undertake the skilled task of managing group dynamics.

This was a particular difficulty for the first external facilitator.

"If you're working with service users, so I knew that it was my relationship with the organisation, with those groups, that was going to make or break the reflective practice groups happening, but I felt alone. I felt totally, although I had, I knew I had lots of support from xx in

terms of clinical supervision, I was doing it on my own and I didn't feel I had anybody else to bounce ideas off" Interview 14, external facilitator

It was also recognised that the internal facilitators would need ongoing support, including additional skills training as required.

"I think that just, having people facilitating groups just because of their job role without really thinking about what their skill set is and what they understand about how groups function can be a bit of a risk and I think some of the groups are a moan up. And it's really hard to turn your groups around – you know you've got to be very assertive, but gentle, you know and, you've got to know about group dynamics and be able to pull them back from the brink or encourage them to take their thinking forward and I think that yeah I think the facilitators need looking after a bit". Interview 8, manager

Both the external and internal facilitators acknowledged that there were difficulties around the training provided for internal facilitators during the first year. This was at least partly around how the training was set up as an additional session for lead practitioner running in between their own RPG. This arrangement created some confusion as to the difference between training and RPG and how the two were different from each other.

"If I'm honest I don't think the training part of it felt that different or distinguished from the reflective practice component of it so I think again it would have probably have been quite helpful to do a bit more thinking about the structure of it or whether you know we'd have in that training provided some sort of boundary and structure that um, I don't know might have included us doing a bit more reading having a key theme…some common themes that we knew we would be exploring in terms of sort of endings or group dynamics, you know good questions…I think something about different ways of running groups…it can be quite helpful to read quite broadly around…being exposed to different models and thinking…becoming a bit more conscious about what we don't know. If it's training let's call it training and model it differently and let's so you're walking into a very different space that this is a training day………..these are the learning outcomes?…..I think it would be helpful to do something a bit more structured, maybe doing a bit more role play or a bit more skills in practice like getting us doing stuff, use of reflective questions…I think more training would probably be very helpful" Interview 9, lead practitioner

The external facilitator also describes a lack of definition around what the training sessions should encompass and how this might differ from the running of the actual RPGs. This led her to develop a curriculum for the training groups, but this was difficult to work with due to competing demands on participants' time.

"Um, the training groups though were a bit odd…it was a bit confusing because sometimes what they brought up in the reflective practice groups then we'd be in the training session and actually the example would be similar to what they would bring up in the reflective practice groups and then there were some people in the group that would say, 'is this a training group or is it a reflective practice group?' And we'd say 'no it's a training group'. So in the end, even though there'd been nothing written about it, nobody had looked at, with me, at any of this, at any time actually, it was never part of supervision to discuss, really unless it was bothering me, I said OK, shall we, to make some more definition do you want to, shall we develop a curriculum? So I developed with them, thematic curriculum from all the things that had been

coming up in the previous training groups and we got agreement that it was a really good idea and it was linked to group processes and the facilitator role and all that sort of stuff, so I'd developed all that, wrote it all up and said well, 'two people at a time need to be engaged in bringing some material from your experiences so we can look at, what happens when a group'...'what happens to your role and what happens to group processes?', and I only got, because, they were very good at doing their reflective practice group presentations, but, they would say, 'oh yeah, we'll do this and me and xx will do this' and we'd get to them and they'd say, 'we haven't done it' ….but I think to define things as a training group and a reflective practice group caused a bit of conflict only because as well there wasn't enough definition.." Interview 14, external facilitator.

Moving forward, giving sufficient thought to identifying and defining facilitator support needs is likely to be important in ensuring the success of the RPG project.

## 6.3.5 Internal versus external facilitation

Within research interviews, respondents were asked about their preferences for internal versus external facilitation. On the whole people were fairly equally matched –many could see pluses and minuses for both. Social workers who were already experiencing internal facilitation, were mainly happy with this and wished it to continue. They also identified the benefit of working closely with lead practitioners (as facilitators), with whom they could then create a relationship and look for help in other areas of their work. Lead practitioners and managers were more likely to see an external facilitator as preferable, feeling that there is less of a conflict of interest for an external facilitator. They are not known in any other role (therefore people do not have preconceived associations with them) and group participants may be likely to feel more confident that their confidential discussions would be unlikely to feed into any organisational agendas. External facilitators were seen to be more likely to have the necessary skills for handling dynamics, hierarchical differences and providing challenge and insight (as discussed above). In some ways, because of her role facilitating such a cross section of groups and becoming so closely involved with the organisation, the 'external' role of the first facilitator had become slightly compromised, resulting in what was sometimes perceived as a role blurring (although it is important to stress that no confidentiality was breached and consent was sought in any feedback of themes).

"sometimes with the previous facilitator it felt that her role often, partly maybe because she facilitated other groups and had been doing it for a long time was to comment or add or confer or give views maybe on issues that were coming up, which I think you know, certainly in hindsight thinking about it was probably a different, because she was facilitating other groups and things was um, a role blurring maybe" Interview 11, senior manager

This is an issue that arose because of the particular contextual role out of RPGs in Brighton and Hove, however, it does indicate the necessity of clearly defining the role of facilitator, in terms of role within the group and role within the organisation, and any processes for linking the two. This is likely to ease the facilitator's work, and to build trust in the confidentiality of subject matter raised within the group, but also the sense that these groups do not operate in a vacuum and that wider organisational learning can be disseminated through clearly defined, and consented to, processes.

## 6.4  Processes of reflection

At section 6.2, the *design for* reflection at Brighton and Hove during the first year of the RPG project has been discussed. In this section, the processes and dynamics of reflection are expanded upon. Within the qualitative data, a number of these 'processes of reflection' emerged – these were the various activities and stages the groups engaged in as part of the reflective task. A number of other dynamics were also apparent, which at times could be detrimental to the reflective process – these are also discussed. Section 6.5 goes on to talk about the differing depths of reflection achieved by groups.

### 6.4.1 Expressing and examining emotional experience

In the context of RPGs, participants are encouraged to talk about their feelings and emotions in a way they would not be expected to in other contexts.

> 'language of feelings and emotions is valued and expected in a way that it can be shut down '(in other forums)" Social worker, focus group 6.

> "I'm a great fan of, like in reflective practice you have to say the unsayable and be safe to do so" Interview 8, manager

Being prompted to name emotions related to particular dilemmas is important for defining and venting emotions:

> "yeah and what was amazing was I was actually forced, let's not say forced because it sounds very heavy, but it wasn't, to admit and to verbalize that I was really scared of him. Which I probably wouldn't have done in a different context to just say I'm really scared, I'm really scared I'm going to be hit by this man if I'm not careful. Which I probably wouldn't have admitted." Interview 2, social worker

> "So I think, what was good for me, is generally speaking at work I'm quite contained, can keep a lid on how I'm feeling quite well, so what I liked about it was that opportunity to actually say, this isn't OK, I'm really cross about this and being able to reflect on how cross I was getting and feeling about the situation and frustrating it is, so just really useful in that sense, having that chance to vent as well as trying to work out what to do next with colleagues". Interview 4, pod manager

As alluded to above, recognising the emotion allows for a greater understanding and unpicking of what might be behind and contributing to these feelings – this in turn opens up possibilities for change and positive action.

> "When you stay with the emotion and have it reflected back it opens up practice avenues." Focus Group 6

> "I think as a facilitator I've really seen people be able to share their anger and frustration and come out of that in a constructive way actually" Internal facilitator

Linked to the expression of emotions, is the process of:

### 6.4.2 Acknowledging, expressing shared experience, resonance

Particularly noticeable during observations, this process of expressing shared experience was also acknowledged by interviewees and in focus groups. Once a presenter had talked through their initial dilemma, part of the subsequent discussions was around people picking up issues that resonated with them, and of which they also had personal experience. The following extracts are taken from observation notes:

> R3 "Absolutely resonates with my experience of the push and pull of it. Sort some things out, then others are failing". Observation notes.

> "Some resonance, I've been in situations where I've felt so lonely – trying to explain why your performance indicators aren't better. It's a 'work of effort' trying to explain yourself. You want someone on your side. You can get them there but you need to do a lot of talking." Observation notes

> "…some things that ring very true for me, you know there were times when you get a presentation and you think yeah I can really understand that bit, that's exactly what I'm feeling or felt or have struggled with, um, so it's kind of affirming in some ways that you're you know, you're not always, there are some things that you have a shared experience of." Interview 15, senior manager

## 6.4.3 Expressing, hearing (diverging) personal perspectives

As well as expressing areas of resonance, exposure to the differing perspectives of colleagues (often those located in another part of the service) is also an important part of the reflective process , opening up avenues for seeing things differently and for learning from the experiences of others.

> "So for me, it was this opportunity to get the expertise and different views about a case, because I think it's one role to be the supervising social worker for foster carers and its completely different when you're the social worker sort of having everything on your shoulders and managing the risks, and being just in there, so that kind of perspective it's really nice, it's a nice mix". Interview 2 social worker

> "I really enjoy hearing other people's perspectives and thinking about how people might manage, deal with things, so I just find it really helpful because it gets me thinking a bit more about some of my other cases when you hear about, you know, sometimes our cases are all, although there can be similar themes, so actually it makes me then go away and think, oh do you know what I might try that with one of my other cases, it's quite similar." Interview 5, senior social worker

Sometimes, rather than just expressing one's own point of view, this developed to disagreeing, or challenging the perspective of others. This too can produce important reflection and learning.

> "I kind of threw something in there, I was wondering about this, I can't even remember what it was, but she disagreed with me and then the whole discussion followed on about that and that made me reflect actually on me as a role as a facilitator but also my own personal values that I might have been bringing in and that's the interesting thing." Interview 6, Lead practitioner

There was an acknowledgement that for direct challenge to take place a certain amount of safety and

trust needs to exist in the group. The expression of diverging opinions and direct challenge may therefore be less prevalent in less well-bonded groups:

> "They're all very different my groups, um and some of them are I would say where people feel quite comfortable stepping into the critical friend type of position and say ooh you know I was wondering what was going on there for you a little bit more …whereas other groups actually mainly the ones who've had poor attendance or quite high turnover, they're less safe, so those groups will often be like, oh  yes that does sound very hard and aren't you doing a good job?" Interview 6, lead practitioner

## 6.4.4 Wondering and listening

The section of the RPG after the presenter has spoken about their particular dilemma involves a process of 'wondering' where colleagues comment and question but without expecting an answer from the presenter who is outside of the discussion at this point. This is described as a powerful process within the group – with the free flow of ideas generating new lines of thinking and reflection.

> "I think the wondering, because first of all it's the social worker comes up with a dilemma and then it goes round about wondering, then whilst you wonder, somebody else might wonder about something else and it just develops into a conversation and discussion so that for the wondering bit it's basically looking at what's been happening for the social worker, what's happening in the case are there different dynamics which they have picked up or they haven't picked up so the wondering goes not only on one level, goes on different levels and that's why its really useful and at that time the social worker who is presenting is just absorbing so there's not interruption, so you just sit and present the case, then people are wondering and you listen to what they're wondering" Interview 2, social worker

Part of the wondering can involve purposefully broadening out the discussion to try to take on board the perspectives of all the actors involved in the dilemma, including clients. This provides further opportunity for thinking differently and accessing a differing point of view.

> "I suppose one of my hopes that come out of it, you know, at times it works and at other times it doesn't but to have a space where social workers feel able to hold a different position if you like, or to say well um, yeah this is my position but actually what might be going on for a particular family member or um you know particularly in those kind of cases where they might feel a bit stuck, or entrenched or a bit, so, to have a think about well what if I stepped inside the shoes of this health visitor I'm really finding really tricky right now, what's going on for them?" Interview 9, Lead Practitioner

As alluded to in interviewee 2's quote above, this is especially powerful for the presenter who is at this point just listening and absorbing what is being said. Taking away the responsibility to speak allows a greater focus on what is being said and an opportunity to think without feeling the pressure to contribute. In a way, this is providing additional space, within an already reflective space.

> "I find that very useful and I think when I am doing it I find that listening part very useful because it is making me think more rather than talk too much also I think that's when other people get the most out of it if I facilitate it right." Interview 6, Lead Practitioner

> "I think the participatory bit about colleagues um having discussion without you participating is actually, is really, you know I think that's quite a powerful part of the process that you still hear

without having to make contributions or come back and answer things." Interview 15, Senior manager

## 6.4.5 Drawing out the positives

Another element in reflection appears to be colleagues reminding each other to think about the positive elements – of what has been going well, as well as helping them to grapple with the struggles.

> "regardless of the outcome you know it's about the work that we're trying to do and the relationships that we've tried to build and the interventions we've tried to put in place and sometimes they may not have the desired outcome but we can still come away thinking that we did the best we could in difficult circumstances and I think that's an important thing to hold on to for all of us if we're going to be able to continue to do the work in ever increasingly difficult times." Interview 10, senior social worker

> "it's a lot of support, it's a lot of back up, it's a lot of you're doing great and of course that is really immense when we're working in the environment we're working in, let alone that you know sometimes it's more or less like the blame culture, you haven't done this or you haven't done that, but when you know when there is two people who have already wondered about the same thing then you just think great, ok I'm not, I feel confident and I'm great at that, oh thank you very much, if you wouldn't have shared that with me or if you wouldn't have wondered then maybe I would have left it or I wouldn't have picked it up, so yeah, dynamics like this are really, really good." Interview 2, social worker

As well as the positive processes of reflection, there was of course the possibility for more difficult dynamics to arise within groups.

## 6.4.6 Negative dynamics

There appeared to be the possibility sometimes for participants to take distressing aspects of cases discussed away with them from RPG.

> "Some of the material that has been brought to the RPG has been distressing and has lingered with me for some time after the group." Focus Group 1

Something about taking on other people's difficulties (can feel weighed down by other people's cases/situations) Focus Group 6

This was also noted in one observation session as notes below show:

> Facilitator says that she feels 'heavy' and the 'enormity' of what the social worker has been carrying – she feels she is going away carrying a bit of it and that the presenter should look after herself. *Reflecting on that now, that's quite an interesting comment. The facilitator I think has said that she feels as if she's taking some of this away with her. Not sure that is quite the purpose of the group – has it been transferred across rather than properly contained? Not sure. Or is it about saying 'I am holding you in mind in this'?*

There also seemed to be the possibility of dynamics from organisational relationships and cases with service users being imported (actually or in participants' minds) into the group setting:

Differences in roles. In some groups that can be difficult and some pushed aside. Heard about this in others' groups – and also negative discussions – wondering if this is to come. 'I know my case isn't going to be as difficult as yours' – majority are CP social workers so holding back a bit. Focus Group 6

On another occasion, observation notes reflect the fact that the researcher wondered whether the feelings of being 'stuck' with a case and going round in circles, were being imported into the discussion about it. (She did not have the chance to check this out with the participants however.)

I was really tired in this session…discussion and case felt quite heavy, lots of going round reflecting – I didn't get a great sense from the presenter what was actually going on with the case – not sure if that was because I was tired or could it be that the lack of clarity, passivity and repetitive dynamics (all used as descriptors about the case in the presentation and discussion) were in some sense being played out in bringing it into the group? Researcher observation notes

## 6.5  Reflection at various levels

Groups appeared to access reflection at different levels, which participants described as 'head led' (surface) or emotional (depth). In depth reflection, participants were able to really work with the emotions of situations discussed. This might encompass participants expressing emotions and examining what lay behind them, in terms of their own personal beliefs/histories etc or contextual factors. This could provide new insights and may lead naturally on to ideas about how things could be changed or improved. A number of examples of this kind of reflection were given in interviews. In one instance, a respondent described intense feelings of frustration relating to another worker, which she brought to the group. The group helped her to reflect on how feelings of being overwhelmed personally may reduce workers' abilities to empathise with others. This led the respondent to take some practical steps to reduce certain aspects of her work.

 "And I was quite surprised at how irritated I felt by that, it really surprised me, thinking, why do I feel like…So yeah, I took that – is it ever enough and just how do you manage feeling like that because I don't want to be, stop being empathetic and coming up with support plans and so I took that…? And I think that it's a reflection of the work quite often social workers feel that with families, what else can I do? So that was what we unpicked and it was really helpful because everyone without exception had felt like that at times. And it was about the clarity of your thinking, if you're overstretched, does it then feel like oh what do you want now? And if you feel more solid, you're in a better position to say would it help if, just where you're boundaries are and, so we kind of unpicked all of that and I guess the things I came away with that made it more manageable was the sheer numbers have doubled, but my time hasn't doubled so it was about moving some stuff …so I had to then think about my capacity and it was helpful to take it there and think, do you know what, I'm knackered?" Interview 8

In another instance, a social worker spoke about being encouraged to admit in reflective practice group that she was scared of an aggressive male client. Once this admission had been made and the group had helped her to reflect on all the dynamics involved in the situation she gained new insights into how her own behaviours may be contributing to heightening tensions and then did something differently the next time she visited her client (more details of this will be given under 'outcomes' at section 6.7.)

On the other hand, in other groups reflection appeared to remain at a more surface level restricted to trying to find practical solutions to dilemmas presented rather than dwelling on any difficult emotions contained within.

> "At times, yes, because I, but it has felt like a little bit of a battle for me, as I said earlier, around um, groups evolving to be able to do that and my sense that groups can be much more comfortable in that head space of thinking about things on a practical basis so people saying, I've got this problem with this member of staff and it's what shall I do and people saying, well do this, this and this and everyone going, yes that sounds like a plan? FG7

> "It was interesting in my view listening to xx's response was very 'process', very much talking about the work and kind of leaving out the human being who had sat in the room, in my view, which is why I said it, this young woman's really talked very personally about a lot of distress and actually you're talking about her work, she's not bringing her work she's bringing, I'm going to be cross examined and I feel lots of feelings and it makes me question fundamental things my professional role, my place in society, my sexuality but we avoid that, it's interesting." Interview 7, non-social work practitioner

The external and internal facilitators often spoke about how their groups had different 'dispositions' to reflection.

> "Other times it works really well I mean I've got two or three groups which I'm pretty confident in that if I wasn't there a high quality level of discussion, actually my role is so minute in it now, those are my groups that have been more stable, but actually so two have been quite stable and quite reflective throughout then we've got this one group who goes there and then shies away a little bit which is really interesting" Interview 6, lead practitioner

Even within groups, there may be members who are keener to reflect more deeply than their colleagues appear to be, which can result in feelings of frustration.

> "but what happened was, there would be people in some of the groups who were wanting to do much more in depth learning and access the real impact, and what is it about me?, because here I am again…and there were some people in the group that didn't want to do that". Interview 14, External facilitator

There is also the hopeful sense from the data that groups who have initially started with surface level reflection can develop towards accessing deeper levels.

> "So I had a bit of a managerialistic view in my head that it was going to be, I might only get, pockets of deeper learning…depending on how the group, they might only stay at a more surface level and if that was OK for the group…it started very much like that and I thought well you know, it may just stay at that level, but with more prompting and  yeah, probing and using the model a bit more…. they started to move…" Interview 14, external facilitator

## 6.6  Enablers and barriers to 'deeper' reflection

What then does the data tell us about what factors lay behind these varying group dispositions to reflection, and what might be the factors that prompt a shift from surface to depth? Below, a number

of issues that arose as important in this regard are discussed. It is important to note that specifying the parameters around reflection aimed at in the form of a statement of purpose is also likely to assist reflection. This has already been discussed at section 6.2.5.

## 6.6.1 Group cohesion (attendance and 'buy in')

The simple fact of getting to know each other, and spending time gelling together as a group is important for building and enhancing trust. Feelings of trust and safety in the group facilitate willingness to share at a deeper level.

> "it is a cohesive group where I feel safe to be emotionally vulnerable" Focus Group 2 (notes from cards).

In view of this, factors that have limited group cohesiveness, noticeably, inconsistent attendance were highlighted as an important barrier to reflection.

> "basically I suppose what I'm trying to say is, not everybody's there all the time, I couldn't look round the room and give the names of everybody, I don't know everybody's names, I know a few and then I won't see them again and then I'll scratch my head to think who they were and who brought that last time, so we haven't built, we haven't just got to know each other really and going straight from, yeah not knowing each other." Interview 12, social worker

> "Well it's interesting it's kind of, um, I don't have a sense of it as a group because it's very erratic who attends…… So I don't have any sense of this is a group of people that I belong to which is where I'm safe to share information." Interview 13, non-social work practitioner

A number of respondents linked this to the different group stages of forming, storming, norming and performing (Tuckman, 1965) – suggesting that in some instances groups have not yet reached their 'performing' potential because of poor attendance.

> "Well, sometimes 2 turn up and sometimes, I think the most I've probably been in a group is 8 or 9 maybe, so somewhere between that but they're always different because some people turn up everytime and it hasn't got, it hasn't found its thing, personality, or it hasn't gelled or it hasn't done the storming, norming thing, we're still in storming I think" Interview 12, social worker

The issue of attendance was frequently mentioned by interview and focus group respondents. It was a source of frustration for those that did attend regularly that their colleagues were not able to prioritise RPGs in the same way. As highlighted above, this could affect group dynamics and result in some feelings of resentment at having to 'give' to people who only come when it's their turn to present.

> "Disruption of trust if non attendance – lack of individual responsibility – skews dynamics when people come every now and again. If come first time and present (we're 'giving' to you now)" Focus group 5.

> "I know that there is, I think that for some people there's an issue in terms of we're all being told to go and some of us are going and some people just aren't and so there's a bit of an issue about equity and fairness really in that we're giving up our time and kind of fairly expect other people to do so as well." Interview 10, senior social worker

Barriers to attendance were recognised to be competing demands such as heavy workload and court. There was suggestion that some managers were not attending RPGs consistently and therefore not

providing good modelling to their social workers.

> "I mean the life of social workers and managers is always perhaps more immediate crisis will come up, to be fair to them like you know suddenly there's a child protection medical or there's a case that gets in to court and there's no ability for you to not go so it may just be a case of actually some of the social worker and manager tasks are just unavoidably, you know, take you away because that's the nature of you know, kind of social work, child protection work is that it's not predictable and keeping neatly within time frames, um, so I don't know what the, everyone's obviously, it's been made really clear that this should be a commitment for people, a priority but inevitably I think there will be issues about other things take another priority." Interview 15, senior manager

> "Mixed messages/lack of support from new team inc managers who do not see the value e.g. we're too busy, it's only RPG, don't bother going; People not coming/prioritising the group" Focus group 6, notes from cards

There was also a feeling that the way the RPGs were rolled out in the beginning in terms of 'mandatory' attendance was not a good example of 'relationship based social work' thus perhaps putting people off at the start.

> "I remember when it was all first arranged and it was going to be evaluated and you had to go and this and that I immediately bristled and I thought how do people remain adult (laughs) because of the presentation of the 'have to'. And, yeah, so I've got over that but I thought …it wasn't a very good use of relationship building like the whole format of how it was..." Interview 3, senior social worker

As already alluded to above, there was also an acknowledgement that there were some areas which lacked clarity at the outset of the project. This may have resulted in a lack of buy-in and understanding that all parts of the service were included in the project (see also section 6.2.5).

> "It was very poorly managed in my view, not that things can be well managed, sometimes things just are what they are. So it was put out, I didn't realise, they kept sending me emails, I said well sorry I'm not part of this, it wasn't really explained at a managerial, no one within the service explained it, but then we've had a long history of changes and we didn't have any managers and so maybe in other services it would be better, but certainly it wasn't really explained what this was for, so I was saying well I'm sorry I'm not part of this and it was a bit unclear whether it's mandatory or not because that's very ambiguous because sort of earlier I didn't go, well why didn't you go, because I had things to do, so there's a little bit of ambiguity there and in terms of what it's for, it wasn't clear" Interview 7, non-social work practitioner

There was also some discussion around whether RPGs may actually be of more value to podded social workers who may not get much opportunity for reflection in day to day practice, than for those who are in other areas, for example some fostering and adoption teams, who already have opportunity to reflect frequently with their team.

> "Our work is so much longer term, so we're assessing people over months and we can change our minds and make decisions and go away and have a think for a week and find a bit more out, so we reflect a lot anyway and when we meet as a team we've just reflected we've just done short, sharp group supervisions on some things that are going on about whether to

proceed with different potential carers and that's really useful and we reflect, because we are a reflective team, we're quite sort of, um, we've done social work for a bit longer maybe so we kind of think about attachment, we think about theory, we think about observations with children, we really think about what's going on underneath, we're thinking about how people's history and their own parenting and health all impact on stuff, so we really I think work in quite a reflective way anyway, so that (i.e. RPG) isn't that helpful because we do that and more anyway in supervisions and with each other" Interview 12 social worker

"And I think in terms of reflective that sort of reflective practice, was I think, you see I would say there has been much less necessity for it for our team, because I think there's always been the space to reflect and the importance of, you know we've been less, I would say less under pressure to kind of um, no because it's not child protection work, you know there's a lot more sort of space to be a bit more kind of measured about things and you know I would say I have you know within the work, the day to day work that you know I'll have those sort of reflective kind of discussions with my colleagues or, there was always that sort of reflective space within the, within my supervision rather than it just be like case management kind of decisions." Interview 13, non-social work practitioner

This also links to discussions earlier about the lack of relevance of some discussions to workers from certain areas of the service when linked with front line social workers. In this sense the 'need' for RPG may not be uniform. Coupled with the potential effects on the dynamics of the group when 'reticent' group members are present (this is not to suggest that these are the workers from the services represented in the quotations above who in fact were regular attenders at their RPGs) – this could raise questions about whether in fact mandatory attendance (in a one size fits all approach) is the right one.

Within interviews, there was discussion over whether 'carrot' or 'stick' methods to ensure maximum attendance might be necessary. Interviewee 11 suggests that the solution seems to be in making the groups the best they can be so that people want to attend, and consistent modelling of this throughout the organisation

"if the groups are experienced in terms of helping people to think differently not just reflect on their feelings but reflect on their work differently and I think again that's about the model of facilitation and then there's obviously the virtuous circle, about if you're doing that people get more out of it, people attend more they talk positively, you get more…it gets better and better in terms of attendance and people's commitment and people because like I say actually the thing that makes it work……is that thing about people coming and contributing and you know taking an ownership of the group and how it works. Because you need both, however good the facilitator is, if two people are turning up and people are coming not wanting to talk then it's not going to work is it." Interview 11, senior manager

Despite issues of varying attendance, others recognised that a twelve month period was not a long time within which to expect groups to have become fully embedded. An enforced change of reflective practice groups for some at the end of this time, was therefore a source for concern – especially for those who felt that the group they were in originally had been performing well.

"It's that thing isn't it with storming and norming groups anyway isn't it? It takes a little bit of time for groups to settle …So it takes quite a long time to embed them I think, so only, well I

know it's a year and a bit, but you're thinking about what ten, twelve maximum groups that you've had, you're bound to have missed a couple through annual leave or whatever, um it's not an awful lot for a group to really form and move things forward is it?" Respondent 3, Focus Group 7

"In the storming, forming, norming bit, that's what came through and certainly some discussion when xx, the administrator sent out about the groups changing, there were emails from my group from other people saying how do people feel about this and there was that kind of it started off with, I don't really want to create a fuss but and actually underneath that I think is partly, we're kind of getting to that space of forming a group and now it's changing and that kind of sounds dramatic…but actually it's probably a really valid point that it's kind of going back to the start in a way." Respondent 2, focus group 7

## 6.6.2 Personal disposition of members

As well as the contextual factors that can be put in place to maximise the opportunities for deeper reflection, the personal disposition of members is also likely to remain important. It may be partly about having a critical mass of those wishing to reflect deeply:

"we've had a new member start, she's a new person to the local authority and she was asking such reflective and interesting questions so the power that she kind of, the difference that she brought to the group, because rather than, I guess you had a balance of people who were less reflective and quite reflective, and she's kind of swung the balance and has taken everybody with her and it felt like people afterwards people felt really good about the group and how it had gone and even somebody who is really, really resistant". Interview 6 lead practitioner

The data above suggests that accessing deeper levels of reflection is partly about groups getting to know each other over time (thus enhancing trust and feelings of safety within the group) and practising the model. Inconsistent attendance was seen as a serious barrier to this.

As well as allowing time for groups to embed naturally, the data suggests that feelings of trust and confidence in the safety of the group (seen as pre-requisites for deeper reflection), are likely to be enhanced by the explicit statement, and consent to, group aims. Moves to enhance buy in, attendance and group cohesiveness are likely to be helpful.

## 6.7 Outcomes

### 6.7.1 Broader sense of the organisation as a whole

Respondents spoke about feeling more part of a whole organisation as a result of meeting and mixing with colleagues from across the service as part of the RPG project. This could break down 'siloed' views, give people pride in their work and also more understanding of, and willingness to help with, the challenges of other teams.

> "Hearing from other members of the group has given me a broader sense of my place in the service as a whole which is helpful in working with colleagues from other aspects of the service". Focus Group 1 (notes from cards)

> "I think that there's a bit about, there's a kind of solidarity about how we do that together which I think certainly we do in our team but we don't always get the opportunity to do across teams or across parts of the service and so that coming together and sharing to do that I thought was really beneficial. And, it kind of enhanced, I guess my pride in the work that I do and we do really." Interview 10, senior social worker

> "My sense is it is giving opportunity for managers to meet other managers across other sites, you know there's a sense then of not being siloed, you know because we've got three social work sites really of teams, you know and there's always a risk of people getting a bit siloed so I do think from the point of view that it really mixes up the managers from across the whole of the city and with their colleagues from other services that that is a really valuable experience because it um brings a sense of ownership and you know we're all in this together. This isn't just about my team and my location here…I think it has helped when other teams have been in more difficulties for them to kind of go oh actually yeah, we need to help over there and that has resulted in people offering to say well, we need to do something to sort this team out, you know so there's much more of an ownership really of the work, the pressures, the strains across the whole of the social work, the sort of teams, um so I think that, you know, is a really important aspect and probably similarly for social workers as well that, you know, you get the world according to your own little group and your own little site, you're kind of getting a broader sense of the whole of the organisation, social work, you know child protection social work". Interview 15, senior manager

Taking a broader view of the service as a whole, rather than one particular team or job role perspective, also provided a greater level of strategic insight for managers.

> "I think it's really helped me to think about what people need from an organisation and to think what a relationship based organisation and relationship management might look like". Interview 11, senior manager.

> "Oh and the biggest impact…was many managers were new, many pod managers were pod managers and they had been very much maybe as team managers before, or as senior pracs, rushing around doing a lot, alongside their staff and as pod managers they were in a more strategic view and they had to stop doing and start looking at how the team was functioning and getting their team in a better place so that will have impacted on practice, to stop them going out and thinking oh well I might as well go and do it myself, you know, so out on home

visits and in court, when sometimes they just didn't need to do that and they needed to step back but support people to do it better. Interview 14 external facilitator

## 6.7.2 Validation and reassurance

Interactions within RPGs served a dual purpose in terms of validating participants. Firstly, in sharing their own concerns and opinions, and having them recognized by others, gave people a sense that there concerns were reasonable, and in fact, shared by others.

> "Others experiencing similar challenges….there is a tendency for optimistic messages about how it's all going. May not reflect your own experience and it's good to share this/to know others feel the same." Focus group 5 (notes from cards/flip charts)

> "However, with most people, um, having just been able to share some of the stuff, gave them, I believe, probably gave them the strength to say, well everybody's listened and you know and everybody has understood. I can go somewhere else now because it's actually, um, this is, um, this is tangible and it's valid, that's what I'm looking for, it's valid so maybe I can take this somewhere else now and mark it up and say, you know it's not good enough, I've got to have some more resources, or whatever. It gave it validity, I think that's…I've never really thought about that before. I think it gave all the thoughts and the experiences…I'm going to write this down because I'm going to forget. It's the validity of their experiences I think which, um, is such a powerful result of the model, so they may have gone on to get some more support because they thought it was valid." Interview 14, external facilitator

Secondly, it gave participants confidence that they were practicing social work well.

> "actually what it did for me was kind of reinforce a kind of, it kind of validated I guess some of what we do because it's often difficult to see the successes in our work and we have to, we sometimes have to do that bit about trying to find and identify very kind of small strengths or successes". Interview 10,senior social worker

> "I suppose yeah, just having that time to sit back and listen to other people's points of view is good, um, and it doesn't make it any easier, you know I'm still ultimately the one making those decisions but actually I think it just gives you that little bit of confidence that actually I'm on the right track, I am thinking about all the options and I'm trying to be balanced" Interview 5, social worker

## 6.7.3 Going out feeling calmer

A theme emerging within interviews, focus groups and observations was that participants could go into reflective practice group feeling bogged down and overwhelmed by the pressures and work, but come out feeling much lighter and calmer. This was observed in one RPG as a physical change in demeanour, which is also reported in interview.

> The presenter smiles. 'yes that's really helpful'. She looks much brighter…. 'feeling quite contained. Feel really good for having brought it to the room today.'

There is a change in her physical demeanour – you can tell she has found this helpful/containing. Like one of the first groups I observed where there was a physical change in demeanour from start to finish. Resonates with one interviewee's comments that people go out feeling lighter. Notes from observation facilitated by PL

"I've seen social workers and all my social workers from the group leaving the room quite relaxed, so for me, its just like well everybody has left with something, everybody is leaving a bit less tense, err shoulders a bit down" Interview 2, social worker

Through the reflection taking part in RPGs, things could be unpicked and broken down, so as not to seem so overwhelming, and ideas formed on constructive ways forward. As highlighted in the previous section, the recognition that others can understand and have felt the same way too can result in the sense of a burden shared.

"I think as a facilitator I've really seen people be able to share their anger and frustration and come out of that in a constructive way actually, well actually we can do something about this and again, there's other people in the group that feel the same as me but actually, we can do something with those feelings and I guess in terms of facilitating social work groups as well I've seen social workers coming feeling very overwhelmed and going out thinking actually I feel so much better from talking about that" Internal facilitator

"That you can go in feeling very stressed or overwhelmed by things you need to do and just having that creative thinking space together can make you come out feeling like you're on top of it and it's OK, that's the best bit about it really, in short I think that's the best thing." Interview 8, manager

"I've had direct feedback of a couple of people have said that they're surprised at how calm they feel immediately after the group and they've made little jokes about how to keep it going until the next one. So I've had a couple of people come in say they felt really strung out before and actually they don't feel so bad" Interview 8, manager

In this quote, the respondent explains that this has even helped him to feel that he can carry on with his job, where he had questioned it in the past.

"so sometimes when things are difficult and we're feeling particularly stressed there's that bit of, it's hard to see the wood for the trees kind of thing and I think a lot of the discussion helped pick some of that apart in terms of going OK well right, you know, helping me kind of narrow things down a bit, boil things down a bit to, rather than, oh it's hard for me to work out, what's, why is this working and where has this gone wrong, to OK, that's a bit more about….I did quite well there but actually yes there's still work that needs to be done on other aspects so sometimes if things can feel quite, muddled, hard to see through the fog at times and it really helped with that and I think it also helped um, emotionally in terms of not feeling quite so, kind of worn down with many of the challenges and perhaps a bit disillusioned in a way, you know I had a period of wondering could I do this anymore really? ….And I think the group's helped with that" Interview 10

### 6.7.4 Feeling supported

The provision of support, at both a practical and emotional level was an important outcome for respondents, this brought together processes of being listened to and 'held in mind' as well as the offering of practical support.

> "As a member of a group it's helped me when things have felt difficult to feel that you know that there's other people that feel things are difficult as well and actually are willing to support me with that and share that and so it's played an important role for me in terms of that" Interview 11, senior manager

> "Feeling heard/held" Focus group 2 (notes from cards)

> "Support and listening from colleagues as well" Focus group 2 (notes from cards)

Importantly, the external facilitator makes the link between this provision of support and workers' ability to carry on doing their difficult and demanding roles.

> "…What I witnessed was the group helping to hold that person together and I hoped then afterwards that people in that group would have just buddied up and checked out with people, were they still OK? Um and some people had… issues, really big …issues and they came out in the groups, and you know the group would say I never knew you were struggling with that, why didn't you say, you know, I would have helped and you know, I'm never too busy to do that, I had no idea that your struggle was so bad and that every day was such a struggle for you to get in for these reasons.  So all sorts of things came out …so that was very gratifying to know that I think the group did hold people together, so they were hopefully in a better place and more thoughtful place to carry on going out and doing the difficult job tomorrow. Interview 14, external facilitator

### 6.7.5 Changes to practice, doing things differently

There are encouraging messages in the data about participants taking different, and positive, courses of actions with families as a result of having time to reflect on their cases in the context of the RPG. Perhaps the two most striking examples are discussed below.

In interview 2, a social worker described taking a case to RPG involving a young man she had previously worked with as a child a number of years earlier (she was now the social worker for his own child). Her relationship with him as his social worker had been positive and he had been keen for her to become the social worker for his own child now that he is an adult. However, the dynamics of the case had become very difficult, with the client becoming anxious and aggressive and the worker fearing for her own safety during home visits. During the course of the RPG she was encouraged to acknowledge her feelings of fear and reminded of strategies she had used in the past to work successfully with anxious and aggressive clients. Having had the opportunity to reflect on all this she went back to the clients.

> "…and then me having had the space to reflect and to think and to you know look at new strategies, I then went back to the family, and I said, we need to do something about this cos this is not ok. It hasn't been working and it makes you very anxious …and he apologised and I said ok.…anyway so we had that discussion afterwards and yeah, and yeah, their child is on supervision order now and I'm going to continue to be involved for the next seven months but

we're talking on completely different terms now, completely different…and …the child remained at home with them…" Interview 2, social worker

In the second example, a focus group participant gave an example of one her colleagues who had reported a change of mind, and action, following discussions during her RPG. In this case, a mother had relinquished care of her baby but did not want the father informed. The social worker had agreed with her in this. However, following discussions and safe challenging within the context of the RPG, the worker undertook a different course of action.

The following extract from focus group notes includes the participant's own words from cards with some additional researcher paraphrasing of the discussion:

"not my case but I heard about a completely different outcome for a relinquished baby – worker had not wanted to contact dad. After discussion at RGP child ended up in his care." (participants' own words)…'Don't underestimate the role of the RPG'. Allowed worker to explore avenues, be open to considering what she wasn't comfortable with, didn't feel judged, made for a more manageable piece of work and supported good outcome for the child.' (Researcher paraphrasing of discussion.)

Two workers described how discussions in RPGs had led them to change roles within the service or to prioritize particular aspects of their roles.

"Bound up with lead practitioner – helped me to articulate how stressed I was. Check in bit – hearing myself say out loud (repeatedly) – crystallized that I needed to do something different – fed into changing roles" FG 5 (notes from cards)

"So I had to then think about my capacity and it was helpful to take it there and think, do you know what, I'm knackered? And actually I'm going to hand my notice in in xx, so I did that.

I: Really, as an actual result of that discussion?

R: Yeah that and a couple of discussions with friends and at home, you know, just the whole thing I thought, I think I just need to slow down a bit and create a bit more space". Interview 8, manager

For others, practical outcomes were to do with implementing strategies or techniques learned within RPG to their practice, either straight away, or by making a note to do so if a relevant situation came up in the future.

"Invitation to get head in to where everyone's coming from (violent dads) – took a bit of time to find out where he's coming from – led to spend more time – what does he need?" FG6 notes from cards/flipcharts

"I really enjoy hearing other people's perspectives and thinking about how people might manage, deal with things, so I just find it really helpful because it gets me thinking a bit more about some of my other cases when you hear about, you know, sometimes our cases are all, although there can be similar themes, so actually it makes me then go away and think, oh do you know what I might try that with one of my other cases, it's quite similar Interview 5, social worker

This was further enhanced by the presence of workers from other parts of the service. Sharing these wider perspectives could broaden ideas for practice, and should improve services to clients

"it's an opportunity to build working relationships because where I wouldn't have had anything to talk to about my colleague from leaving care team now we've made a connection so I go and talk to him and I would have no difficulties in asking him for example for pathway plans which is something I haven't done, so yeah it builds that kind of network and stronger social workers in groups are you know good social workers and are delivering better service for the clients. Interview 2, social worker.

## 6.7.6 Mixed picture

It is important to state that as well as many positive messages about the process and outcomes of RPGs, there remain a proportion of participants who are unconvinced as to the benefits of the RPG project, for some of the reasons that have already been alluded to in preceding sections.

"I guess again, I also recognise for every positive there's always another side isn't it, and for example, …I'm very aware that for some social workers they would be like well this is just ridiculous why are they doing reflective practice groups they're just a waste of time, you know, so there's kind of that scepticism or cynicism maybe around them, um and I guess, and especially maybe for people who have struggled to attend or who are in groups that aren't functioning well, they would be like well this is a big investment in my time and I don't see the difference it's making and I think especially one of the challenges of being a part time worker…..a big commitment especially if they do weekly group supervision and have to go to a monthly reflective practice group as well……

I mean I think that it is but again I recognise that it's a mixed picture, it is and providing a sort of holding and containment for our social workers and for our managers and I think you know maybe especially for our pod managers and team managers, those that have really committed to the process, again it's been a mixed picture within that group about how many people have committed to it, that have actually found it very supportive to do that and actually then that has an impact for the organisation as a whole in terms of how held people." Interview 11, senior manager

"I would definitely say it's quite a controversial thing, I don't think it's kind of got universal, you know these have been great." Interview 13, non-social work practitioner

"I mean from what social workers say a lot of people say they find it very helpful but then a lot of people don't, a lot of people are angry about the time it takes and I'm always saying to them, it's a gift." Interview 8, manager

# 7  Answering the research questions

"so yeah I think you know it's mixed and I think for some social workers they have really committed and then they resent the people who haven't really committed or they've committed and then found it difficult because the group hasn't been functioning well, other people say actually I really value this and it's great." Interview 11

As perhaps might be expected with a large, cross organisational project, such as the roll out of RPGs, the answers we find to our questions are nuanced with people holding different views dependent on their own personal preferences, experiences of groups, position in organisational hierarchy and so on.

Nevertheless, some consistent themes and messages have emerged, allowing us to give the following responses to the evaluation's research questions.

**1) How can we describe and conceptualise the work of the RPGs within the context of Brighton and Hove Children's Services? What happens when the groups are in operation and what are the dynamics at play?**

Qualitative findings have allowed us to describe and define the design of RPGs in the first year, as follows:

- Time and space to think
- Bringing together workers from across the service
- Implementation of a structured model
- Facilitation (with key functions of 'maintaining the structure', 'managing group dynamics' and, in the case of manager RPGs, 'challenge')

A number of processes for reflection that take part in the context of RPGs have been identified. These are:

- Expressing and examining emotional experience
- Acknowledging/expressing shared experience and resonance
- Expressing/hearing (diverging) personal perspectives
- Wondering and listening
- Drawing out the positives

A number of negative dynamics were also identified which included importing dynamics from outside into the group (such as confrontational dynamics between teams or feelings of being 'stuck' in cases with families). There also appeared to be the possibility of transference of negative emotions rather than containment – such that other workers could go out feeling worried about other people's cases at the end of RPGs.

Reflection was found to take place at varying levels within RPGs. Some groups were able to access deep levels of reflection on emotions and feelings, other groups remained more at the level of 'surface' reflection – that is looking at situations intellectually and trying to problem solve. Lack of attendance and thus opportunity for groups to gel together, was seen as a barrier to deeper level reflection.

**2) How have participants experienced participation in RPGs? Are staff satisfied with the groups, did they meet their expectations? How could RPGs be improved?**

Both quantitative and qualitative data suggested that there were mixed views regarding the success of the RPG project on a range of measures. However, broadly speaking the message is positive with most workers appreciating the reflective opportunity RPGs provide and the organisational commitment to providing them. A number of participants were concerned to stress that the project needs a longer timescale within which to fully embed.

Qualitative data yielded rich insights into the various factors behind participants' experiences and suggested several ideas for ways in which RPGs might be improved.

Some of this was at a very practical level – for example improving rooms in which RPGs take place, offering drinks, schedule timings and locations to best suit group members to minimise travel time and time out of the working day.

Some issues were of a higher level and spoke more into how groups have been conceptualised and rolled out in Brighton and Hove. With regards to the identified issues, there is unlikely to be a right or wrong position to take, but data indicated that further clarity around them would be likely to benefit the project as it enters its second year. These issues/questions were:

- The extent to which the structured model of reflection is intended to be applied consistently across groups (that is 'designed' in advance) and the extent to which it should be possible, or desirable, for groups to adapt and adopt it according to their specific context (i.e. that the model is seen as 'emergent').
- The level of reflection aimed at (e.g. head led/'surface' reflection versus emotional/deeper reflection, or any points in between)
- The nature of the dilemmas to be presented e.g. practical issues that need resolving, or difficult emotional experiences. Along with this is the question as to whether dilemmas should be prepared in advance or determined at the time of the group – and a consideration of the effect of this on the likely nature of the issue chosen.
- The inter-relationship between reflection and practice development/service change. Is the feedback of themes an aim of RPGs, and if so, how should these be identified and fed back into managerial process? This is also linked to the role of the facilitator.
- Whether in fact attendance should be mandatory, given workers dispositions and other avenues for support and reflection.

It is perhaps important to note that the approach taken by the new external facilitators, appears to provide possible answers to a number of these questions. (Although their work does not form part of the current evaluation). As discussed earlier, the provision of a clearer 'modelling' of facilitation techniques may allow internal facilitators to more readily learn and apply these within their own groups, enhancing the potential for a more consistent application of the model across the service. With the application of techniques geared to allow a deeper reflection upon current emotions – such as choosing a topic for discussion on the day, asking the presenter to face away from the group during the 'wondering' phase and suggesting that images coming to mind could be drawn, the new facilitator described above prompted, and gave permission for, a deeper level of reflection.

A number of respondents suggested that affording groups the possibility of influencing the nature of the model they adopt may enhance 'buy-in' and satisfaction for some members (and thus also, attendance). It is also likely that the more consistent and effective implementation of a model designed to facilitate deeper reflection may well accomplish the same aim. At this point, however, it is a little early to tell.

**3) Has involvement in RPGs affected participants' capacity to deal with the emotional aspects of practice, and if so, in what ways?**

Survey responses at T2 and T3 show that respondents agreed that RPGs were helping them to manage the emotional impact of their work. Means scores were 2.8 at T2 and 2.7 at Time 3. A number of outcomes identified in the qualitative work were emotionally focused. These included validation/reassurance; going out feeling calmer; feeling supported and having the sense of being part of an organisation as a whole – whilst not directly related to an emotional impact – this sense of being part of a greater whole gave participants enhanced pride and a sense of belonging. It is important to note however that a proportion of respondents to the quantitative and qualitative aspects did not feel the RPGs have been successful in this regard.

4) **What are the perceived changes to practice that have resulted from involvement in RPGs?**

Not all participants reported changes to practice, nevertheless, a number of encouraging examples emerged from the qualitative data. These included social workers changing their behaviour and courses of action in work with families, with beneficial effects. A number of workers reported taking action to change their own workloads and priorities as a result of RPGs. Others reported feeling that they now had new ideas and strategies to implement as a result of discussions with colleagues.

# 8 Discussion

We have reported on the design, implementation, methodology and findings from a small scale mixed-methods evaluation of a Reflective Practice Groups project undertaken by the Centre for Social Work Practice for Brighton & Hove Children's Services between November 2015 and December 2016. Three time-point quantitative data was gathered alongside a range of qualitative data from observations, interviews and focus groups. The report can be read in conjunction with the wider self-evaluation report of the broader Team Around the Relationship development undertaken by B&H, which was the context for the commissioning of the RPG project.

There are few systematic evaluations of Reflective Practice Groups in social work and there is reason to suppose that the current report makes a significant contribution to the evidence base for such practice. However, real world contexts for such practice are inevitably complex, shifting, and unique to specific organisational conditions. This does not invalidate the findings of the present report, but it does mean they should be read with this in mind. Such contextual considerations ideally call for a more complex 'realist' evaluation methodology than was possible in the case of this project. These considerations are discussed in Section 3 above.

On a range of measures, a majority of respondents reported a positive impact of the RPGs on their professional identity, capacity to manage work related emotions, capacity to reflect on the complexity of their work, access to new perspectives on their practice; a minority believed that their actual 'skills' had improved, but a majority nevertheless believed that the RPGs had had beneficial impacts from the point of view of service users.

The RPG project was designed on what might be termed 'trickle down' principles, with more senior staff with supervisory responsibilities receiving RPG input from an external facilitator, and many of these in turn delivering internal facilitation of RPGs to frontline practitioners. There is evidence from the evaluation, which ranged over staff receiving both internal and externally facilitated RPGs, that those who had been members of externally facilitated groups evaluated their impact more positively than those receiving internally facilitated groups. Scores among the former group are consistently above the mean, and those for the latter consistently a little below it. This may also reflect the different membership of groups facilitated by the external facilitator and the internal facilitators, which is discussed at 2.1. It is possible that the different levels of 'buy-in' to the new model held by those within different organisational roles also affected their views and scores allocated. These results indicate that the process of 'skilling up' a whole organisational system to both deliver and receive 'reflective practice' may be a lengthy one, requiring careful attention to the balance between various aims in such an initiative - provision of reflective practice for its own sake, provision as a means of training for future delivery, and provision and / or training as a route to optimising the benefits of 'receiving' reflective practice. Reflective practice groups are not a one way 'transmission' process, and knowing how to make best use of membership of a group is as important as knowing how to facilitate one.

Thus as we note above, learning itself cannot be designed (you cannot force people to learn by bringing them in to a classroom), it can be designed *for* through the implementation of particular structures and features designed to promote learning. In the same way, inviting people into a reflective space does not automatically make them able, or willing to reflect within it. Reflective space can, nevertheless, be designed in such a way as to *maximise* the possibilities for reflection.

Designing a reflective space entails a series of possible choices about which types of social infrastructures are likely to enhance participants' ability and desire to think differently about their working lives. The current report defines and discusses the design for reflection that has been implemented in Brighton and Hove during the first year of the RPG project. Using direct quotations from participants, key design components have been described along with a consideration of how they contributed to (or detracted from) participants' experience of reflection.

The qualitative analyses presented in the report uncover many subtle and important features of the experiences of both those receiving and providing RPGs. Among the most significant of these are questions about what level or depth of reflection was achieved and / or was desired or found helpful; whether an organisation should pursue a single 'model' or culture of reflective practice groups, or allow some degree of emergence of group cultures as these are 'co-created' by facilitators and participants; the variety of possible ways of bringing material to an RPG for reflection; whether attendance should be mandatory or voluntary, or at least flexible; and the degree to which 'challenge' by facilitators is helpful, in contrast to a more validating and nurturing style.

Overall, we believe it is fair to conclude that this evaluation provides a robust, if not impregnable, range of quantitative and qualitative evidence for the constructive impact on staff at various organisational levels of a year-long programme of Reflective Practice Groups delivered within a complex 'real world' Children's Service environment with strong support from the management of this organisation for the successful implementation of the initiative.  Qualitative evidence supports and deepens quantitative evidence, generates an outline model of 'what happens inside a reflective practice group', while also surfacing a range of questions for future attention in the design of similar projects.

The findings of this report touch on, and provide some evidence for the impact of RPG provision on the quality and conduct of direct relationships with families, children and other service users. However, this was not a goal of the project or of the evaluation, and while it is a reasonable expectation that public funds devoted to service developments will ultimately benefit the 'end users' of the system, commissioners and researchers should bear in mind that evaluation of such impacts is a methodologically and ethically demanding and sensitive process which cannot be achieved at low cost.

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# 10 Appendices

## 10.1  T1 Questionnaire

Reflective Practice Groups Survey

This is an opportunity to express your hopes and expectations of the Reflective Practice Group that you are joining.  The purpose of obtaining the information is to assist in the improvement of and evaluation of RPGs. It will serve these purposes best if items are answered carefully and honestly as you reflect on your initial thoughts on the RPG membership.

Thank you

### 1. Hopes and Expectations of the RPG:

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I would like the RPG to help me develop more understanding of complex problems in my cases | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 2. I would like the RPG to strengthen my professional identity | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 3. I would like the RPG to help me with the emotional impact of the work | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 4. I would like the RPG to help me enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 5. I would like the RPG to provide a regular space for me to reflect upon the content and process of my work | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 6. I would like the RPG to give information and another perspective concerning my work | | | | |

## 2. Areas of Practice

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. I think my skills in relationship based work with families needs improvement | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 8. I can mange the emotional strain of my work easily | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 9. I think my ability to reflect on my work is well developed | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 10. Most of the time I know what type of interventions to make with families to achieve change | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 11. My supervision helps me plan my work with my families | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 12. I am confident that my work within the multi-agency system is improving the lives of children | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

## Reflective Practice Groups Survey

### 3. Self Efficacy

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. I always manage to keep my anxiety levels within certain levels when dealing with serious situations | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 14. I am always able to recognize the limits of my competencies | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 15. I am always able to fulfill my commitments to the user | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 16. I am always able to establish a friendly, sympathetic relation with the user | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 17. I always manage to find enough time to write and update case reports | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 18. I always manage to immediately inform/share with my superiors any problems that may arise | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

4. Any other comments on what you would like from being a member of the RPG?

5. Any other comments on your practice?

6. Any other comments on self efficacy

## 10.2  T2 Questionnaire

Reflective Practice Groups Survey

This is an opportunity to express your mid point experiences of the Reflective Practice Group that you have joined. The purpose of obtaining the information is to assist in the improvement of and evaluation of RPGs. It will serve these purposes best if items are answered carefully and honestly as you reflect on your current thoughts on the RPG membership.

Please do complete the free text comment boxes. Your individual views are valuable and helpful.

Many Thanks
David Lawlor

### 1. Hopes and Expectations of the RPG:

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The RPG is helping me develop more understanding of complex problems in my cases | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 2. The RPG is strengthening my professional identity | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 3. The RPG is helping me with the emotional impact of the work | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 4. The RPG is helping me enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 5. The RPG is a regular space for me to reflect upon the content and process of my work | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 6. The RPG gives information and another perspective concerning my work | | | | |

## 2. Areas of Practice

|  | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. I think my skills in relationship based work with families needs improvement | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 8. I can mange the emotional strain of my work easily | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 9. I think my ability to reflect on my work is well developed | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 10. Most of the time I know what type of interventions to make with families to achieve change | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 11. My supervision helps me plan my work with my families | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 12. I am confident that my work within the multi-agency system is improving the lives of children | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## 3. Self Efficacy

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. I always manage to keep my anxiety levels within certain levels when dealing with serious situations | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 14. I am always able to recognize the limits of my competencies | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 15. I am always able to fulfill my commitments to the user | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 16. I am always able to establish a friendly, sympathetic relation with the user | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 17. I always manage to find enough time to write and update case reports | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| 18. I always manage to immediately inform/share with my superiors any problems that may arise | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

4. Any other comments on being a member of the RPG?

5. Any other comments on your practice?

6. Any other comments on self efficacy

## 10.3  T3 Survey

Reflective Practice Groups Survey

This is an opportunity to express your experiences of the Reflective Practice Group (RPG) that you have been part of for about a year. The purpose of obtaining the information is to assist in the improvement of and evaluation of RPGs. It will serve these purposes best if items are answered carefully and honestly as you reflect on your current thoughts on the RPG membership.

Please do complete the free text comment boxes. Your individual views are valuable and helpful.

Many Thanks
Amanda Lees

1. What is your current job role?

○ Social worker/Senior social worker

○ Pod Manager

○ Lead Practitioner

○ Team manager

○ Senior manager

○ Practice manager

○ Senior practitioner

SWRO/other non SW qualified

## 2. RPG outcomes for practitioners

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The RPG has helped me to develop better understanding of complex problems in my cases | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 2. The RPG has strengthened my professional identity | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ○ |
| 3. The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional impact of the work | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 4. The RPG has helped me enhance my contribution to the multi-agency system | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 5. The RPG has provided other perspectives concerning my work | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 6. The RPG has improved my skills in relationship based work with families | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 7. The RPG has helped me to manage the emotional strain of my work more easily | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 8. The RPG has further developed my ability to reflect on my work | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ○ |
| 9. The RPG has increased my knowledge about different types of interventions to make with families to achieve change | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 10.Membership of the RPG has had beneficial impacts from the point of view of service users | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

3. (If appropriate) Could you say how the RPG has helped you to better understand complex problems in your cases? If possible, please give examples.

4. (If appropriate) Could you say how the RPG has helped you  manage the emotional impact of your work? If possible, please give examples.

5. Please give any further comments you wish to make about any effects RPGs have had for you and your practice.

## 6. Self Efficacy

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1. Attending the RPG has helped me to keep my anxiety within more manageable levels when dealing with serious situations | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 2. Attending the RPG has helped me to better assess my strengths and limitations | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 3. The RPG has assisted me to fulfill my commitments to service users | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 4. The RPG has helped me to maintain friendly, sympathetic relationship with service users under difficult circumstances | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 5. I always manage to find enough time to write and update case reports | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 6. I always manage to immediately inform/share with my superiors any problems that may arise | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

7. Please give any other comments you wish to make about how you feel RPGs have affected your skills and abilities.

## 8. Team around the relationship

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Since the RPG project, interactions with my pod/team manager have become more open and reflective | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Since the RPG project, interactions with my peers have become more open and reflective | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Since the RPG project, interactions with senior managers have become more open and reflective | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Since the RPG project, relationships across the whole organisation have become more open and reflective | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Please could you say in what ways RPGs have contributed (or not) to a more open and reflective culture of practice?

## 9. I have found the model/style of facilitation within my RPG to be helpful

☐ Strongly agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly disagree

Please explain why.

## 10. I believe that RPGs are better facilitated by:

☐ Somebody from inside the organisation  ☐ Somebody from outside the organisation

Please say why

11. Please give any other comments about the RPG project.

## 10.4 Interview guides

**Draft interview guide for social workers**

1. Could you tell me a little about your job role and how long you've worked at Brighton and Hove?

2. When they were first introduced, what did you understand about the purpose of reflective practice groups within the local authority?

   a. What did you understand about the purpose of RPGs for you?
   b. What were you hoping to get out of them?

3. *Could you tell me a bit about the group that you're a part of? (led by respondent but might cover size, membership, who facilitates etc)*

4. Could we start by talking about a session where you have presented an issue? – How would you describe the process of what happened within the group and what did you take away from it? *(Respondent may describe more than one group if they wish, if choose to talk about just one, ask why this particular group is described)*

5. Could you describe a session where you were a group member rather than a presenter? Could you describe the process involved with being a 'group member' and what you took away from it? *(Respondent may describe more than one group if they wish, if choose to talk about just one, ask why this particular group is described)*

6. In general, what have you found helpful/enjoyed about being part of RPGs?

7. In general, what have you found less helpful/disliked about RPGs?

8. What would you say have been the impacts of the group for you? (Probe on – any impacts on practice; ability to deal with emotional aspects)

9. (If this is not already covered above) Could we talk about the style of facilitation – how helpful have you found it and why?

10. Do you have any views about whether an external or internal facilitation is preferable?

11. How could RPGs be improved/ developed and what impacts could this have?

**Draft Interview Guide for Lead Practitioners**

1. Could you tell me a little about your job role and how long you've worked at Brighton and Hove?

2. When they were first introduced, what did you understand about the purpose of reflective practice groups within the local authority?
   a. What did you understand to be the purpose of RPGs for you?
   b. What were you hoping to get out of them?
   c. What were you hoping that social workers involved in the groups you run would get out of them?

3. *Could you tell me a bit about the group that you're a part of? (led by respondent but might cover size, membership, who facilitates etc)*

4. *Could we start by talking about a session where you have presented an issue? – How would you describe the process of what happened within the group and what did you take away from it? (Respondent may describe more than one group if they wish, if choose to talk about just one ask why this particular group is described)*

5. Could you describe a session where you were a group member rather than a presenter? Could you describe the process involved with being a 'group member' and what you took away from it? *(Respondent may describe more than one group if they wish, if choose to talk about just one, ask why this particular group is described)*

6. In general, what have you found helpful/enjoyed about being part of RPGs?

7. In general, what have you found less helpful/disliked about RPGs?

8. What would you say have been the impacts of the group for you? (Probe on – any impacts on practice; ability to deal with emotional aspects)

9. Could we talk about the style of facilitation– how helpful have you found it and why?

Could we talk now about things from your perspective as a facilitator of a group/or groups yourself?

10. Could you tell me about the group(s) that you facilitate (in terms of size of group etc etc)

11. How have you found facilitating this group (these groups)? What are the challenges and benefits?

12. Could you tell me about the training and support your received to prepare you for the facilitator role? How helpful have you found it?

13. Moving forward, do you have any views about whether an external or internal facilitation is preferable for RPGs?

From your perspective as a Practice Lead, how do you feel involvement in RPGs has affected social workers involved in your groups (and more widely)?

14. What do you think your people have found helpful/enjoyed about being part of RPGs?

15. What have they found less helpful/disliked about RPGs?

16. What would you say have been the impacts of the groups for the social workers you work with?
    a. Have you noticed any impacts on social workers' practice?
    b. Have you noticed any impacts around their ability to deal with emotional aspects?

17. What would you say have been any more general/wider organisational impacts of the RPG project?

18. How could RPGs be improved/developed and what impacts could this have?

**Draft interview guide for Pod Managers**

1. Could you tell me a little about your job role and how long you've worked at Brighton and Hove?

2. When they were first introduced, what did you understand about the purpose of reflective practice groups within the local authority?
   a. What did you understand to be the purpose of RPGs for you? –
   b. What were you hoping to get out of them?
   c. What were you hoping that your pod members would get out of them?

3. *Could you tell me a bit about the group that you're a part of? (led by respondent but might cover size, membership, who facilitates etc)*

4. *Could we start by talking about a session where you have presented an issue? – How would you describe the process of what happened within the group and what did you take away from it? (Respondent may describe more than one group if they wish, if choose to talk about just one ask why this particular group is described)*

5. Could you describe a session where you were a group member rather than a presenter? Could you describe the process involved with being a 'group member' and what you took away from it? *(Respondent may describe more than one group if they wish, if choose to talk about just one, ask why this particular group is described)*

6. In general, what have you found helpful/enjoyed about being part of RPGs?

7. In general, what have you found less helpful/disliked about RPGs?

8. What would you say have been the impacts of the group for you? (Probe on – any impacts on practice; ability to deal with emotional aspects)

9. Could we talk about the style of facilitation in the RPG that you have been part of – how helpful have you found it and why?

10. Moving forward, do you have any views about whether an external or internal facilitation is preferable for RPGs?

I'd like to ask you about how you feel involvement in RPGs has affected your pod members?

11. What do you think your pod members have found helpful/enjoyed about being part of RPGs?

12. What have they found less helpful/disliked about RPGs?

13. What would you say have been the impacts of the group for your pod members?
    a. Have you noticed any impacts on their practice?;
    b. Have you noticed any impacts around their ability to deal with emotional aspects?

14. What would you say have been any more general/wider organisational impact of the RPG project?

15. And finally, How could RPGs be improved/developed and what impacts could this have?

**Draft interview guide for senior managers**

1. Could you tell me a little about your job role and how long you've worked at Brighton and Hove?

2. When they were first introduced, what did you understand about the purpose of reflective practice groups within the local authority?
   a. What did you understand to be the purpose of RPGs for you?
   b. What were you hoping to get out of them?
   c. What were you hoping that the social workers and managers within your own service would get out of them?

3. *Could you tell me a bit about the group that you're a part of? (led by respondent but might cover size, membership, who facilitates etc)*

4. Could we start by talking about a session where you have presented an issue? – How would you describe the process of what happened within the group and what did you take away from it? *(Respondent may describe more than one group if they wish, if choose to talk about just one ask why this particular group is described)*

5. Could you describe a session where you were a group member rather than a presenter? Could you describe the process involved with being a 'group member' and what you took away from it? *(Respondent may describe more than one group if they wish, if choose to talk about just one, ask why this particular group is described)*

6. In general, what have you found helpful/enjoyed about being part of RPGs?

7. In general, what have you found less helpful/disliked about RPGs?

8. What would you say have been the impacts of the group for you? (Probe on – any impacts on practice; ability to deal with emotional aspects)

9. Could we talk about the style of facilitation in the RPG that you have been part of – how helpful have you found it and why?

10. Moving forward, do you have any views about whether an external or internal facilitation is preferable for RPGs?

I'd also like to ask you about how you feel involvement in RPGs has affected the managers and social workers within your service

11. What do you think people have found helpful/enjoyed about being part of RPGs?

12. What have they found less helpful/disliked about RPGs?

13. What would you say have been the impacts of the groups for the managers and social workers that you manage?
    a. Have you noticed any impacts on their practice?
    b. Have you noticed any impacts around their ability to deal with emotional aspects?

14. What would you say have been any more general/wider organisational impact of the RPG project?


15. How could RPGs be improved/developed and what impacts could this have?

## 10.5 Information sheet

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**Participant Information Sheet**

*Evaluation of Reflective Practice Groups*

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the Evaluation of Reflective Practice Groups. As you know, Reflective Practice Groups (RPGs) were introduced in Brighton and Hove's Children's Social Services as part of the Team Around the Relationship, in order to support relationship-based practice and relationship-based management. It is important that they are evaluated in order to understand the experiences and views of those who have participated, any impacts that RPGs may have had and how they could be developed in future. You have been invited to take part in the evaluation because either you, or someone you manage, has been a member of one of the RPGs.

The evaluation is conducted by Dr Amanda Lees, a researcher from the University of Winchester, on behalf of the Centre for Social Work Practice, and in partnership with Brighton and Hove Children's Services. Amanda is taking over from the evaluation's previous researcher.

The evaluation is concerned to address the following questions:

1) How can we describe and conceptualise the work of the RPGs within the context of Brighton and Hove Children's Services?
    - What happens when groups are in operation?
    - What are the processes and dynamics at play?

2) How have participants experienced participation in RPGs?
    - Are staff satisfied with the groups, did they meet their expectations?
    - How could RPGs be improved?

3) Has involvement in RPGs affected participants' capacity to deal with the emotional aspects of practice, and if so, in what ways?

4) What (if any) are the perceived changes to practice that have resulted from involvement in RPGs? (From the perspectives of participants, their line managers and other colleagues?)

As part of the evaluation, you may be invited to participate in one or more strands of data collection as follows:

1) A semi-structured interview to talk about your experiences of and views about RPGs. These interviews will take in the region of an hour and will take place at a time and date that is mutually convenient. Interviews will be held between December and February.
2) Participation in a focus group. These groups will use a structured form of data collected called Nominal Group Technique, in which you will be asked to take turns to respond to a series of questions concerning RPGs. Each group will last approximately 1.5 hours.
3) You may be asked to agree to one of your RPG sessions being observed.
4) A short Survey Monkey survey, which can be completed online.

At the beginning of interviews and focus groups you will be asked to sign a consent form (please see below) as a means of gaining your informed consent. At the start of observations you will be asked to provide verbal (or 'opt out') consent. Taking part in the evaluation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without penalty.

The information you share as part of this project will be anonymised; you will not be identified in any notes taken or information used. An audio recording of one-to-one interviews will be made to assist with capturing the details of the discussion. Audio recordings will not be made of the focus groups or RPG sessions. Previously recorded RPG sessions will be transcribed and anonymised. This recording will be kept securely and destroyed following completion of the project. The information will only be used for the purposes of this study.

If you have any concerns about this evaluation, you can contact Dr Amanda Lees, Senior Researcher, University of Winchester, on 01962 827452 or amanda.lees@winchester.ac.uk. Alternatively, you could raise any concerns or queries with Tom Stibbs (01273 296049 or Tom.Stibbs@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk) or Professor Andrew Cooper, Centre for Social Work Practice (ACooper@tavi-port.nhs.uk).

Thank you again for supporting this evaluation.

## 10.6  Consent Form

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**Consent Slip**

*Evaluation of Reflective Practice Groups*

|  | **Please initial box** |
|---|---|
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily. |  |
| I understand that qualitative and survey data will be collected for this study and that data protection regulations (Data Protection Act, 1998) will be observed. |  |
| I understand that no individuals will be identified in any publication or public presentation drawing on my contribution, and pseudonyms will be used where necessary. |  |
| On this basis, I agree to material from my contribution being used for the purposes of evaluation or publication. |  |
| I understand that I can withdraw from the evaluation at any stage. |  |
| I agree to take part in the above study. |  |

*Name of Participant_____*

*Signature_____Date_____*