

Solution Focused Approaches

What is it?

The main principles of the approach are to support people (including children, young people and families) in making a shift from being problem –focused to being solution-focused. This is achieved by holding a core set of beliefs when working with others:

- We don't need to fully understand the problem before we can find a solution
- Everyone has the strengths and resources to help themselves
- There will already be something that is working
- Change can happen in very small steps
- No matter how bad the problem is, it doesn't happen all the time
- We can't change the past so we should focus on the future
- Having a clear idea where you want to be makes it more likely that you will get there

What is the evidence of its effectiveness?

Several studies have found good outcomes following use of the approach in therapeutic settings. There is more research being undertaken in schools and other settings. A research summary is available from BRIEF. Research indicates that only a small number of sessions are required. Some of the measurable outcomes are a reduction in reoffending rates, reduced measures of depression and increased scores on measures of parenting skills. Solution focused approaches have been used in schools to support young people experiencing difficulties with anxiety, friendship issues, reading difficulties and social and behavioural difficulties.

How does it work?

Once the main principles of the approach are understood it can be applied in a number of ways and a wide variety of situations:

- Whole school approaches to support staff and pupils in developing high standards of teaching and learning (Solution Oriented School Programme, Rees, 2005)
- Individual work with children and young people – coaching rather than counselling
- Group or class work – finding out what is working and what change would look like
- Meetings with colleagues, parents and families, children and young people
- Training and large group meeting to gain positive outcomes
- Supervision and personal reflection
- Organisation reviews
- Use of video feedback (Video Interactive Guidance)

The solution focused approach sounds simple but requires training and practice to implement. Teachers can become solution focused with practice and begin to notice much more positive behaviours to build upon. This supports quality teaching and relationships with children, young people and families that can support positive change.

How can we find out more?

BRIEF - Europe's largest provider of solution focused Brief Therapy training
The Educational Psychology Service

[Focusing on solutions - a positive approach to improving behaviour](#) – Institute of Education, 2013