

You can't eat salad with a spoon...

what social workers say they need

Co-design of an intervention to support self reported social worker wellbeing

Introduction

- Research tells us that 40% of Social Workers are thinking about or planning to leave the profession (BASW 2018, 2019).
- Reasons were the emotional toll of the work but significantly the amount of work and working conditions (Ravalier, 2018, McFadden et al 2021, Kinman & Grant, 2016)
- But.... Some people stay and stay a long time.

Research Aim

To understand the nature and extent of current support for social worker wellbeing so that this can be built on and developed

Research Design and process

Review work wellbeing interventions previously published through a scoping literature review.

Use interviews to co-design and develop an intervention that aims to support the wellbeing of Local Authority-employed social workers.

Use focus groups to further the design and development of the intervention

Research Question

Could Appreciative Inquiry (AI) be used to explore and build on what is already happening and to co design an intervention that could support self reported social worker wellbeing?

Why did this study use Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry was used to **Discover** what is already happening that is working well, to **Dream** about the possibilities for the future, **Design** what could happen and plan how this can be **Delivered** (Cooperrider et al (2000)). This approach enabled acknowledgement and celebration and considered the social workers as expert on their experiences. This qualitative study took a social constructionist approach to exploring meaning and sense making of the data.

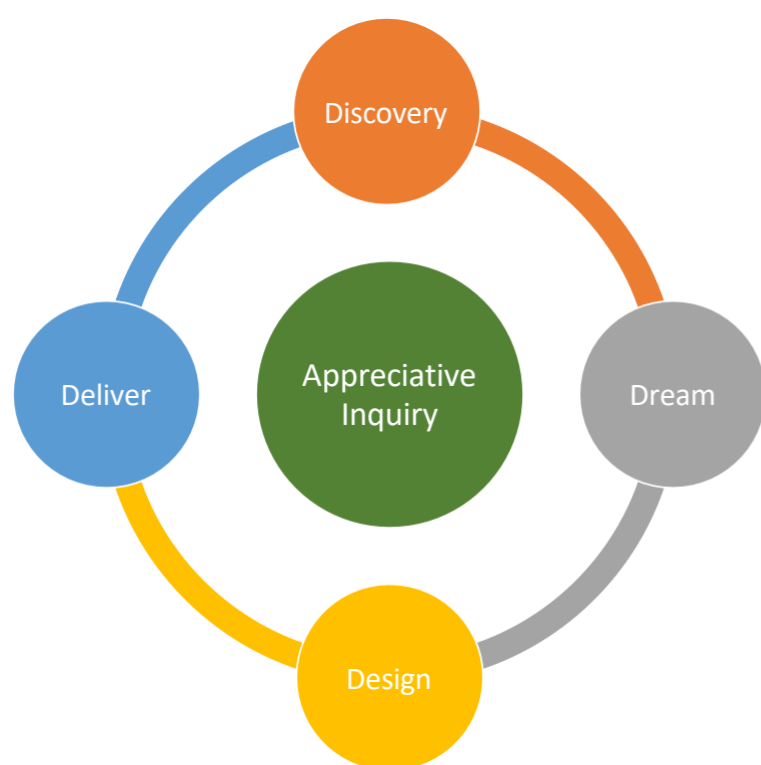


Diagram 1: Process of Appreciative Inquiry

Method

This study gathered data in 3 stages:

- Scoping review
- Semi structured interviews with social workers working in one UK Local Authority frontline team.
- Focus Group with social workers working in one UK Local Authority frontline team.
- Thematic analysis was used analyse the data and design the intervention

Participants

A total of 19 participants were recruited from one LA in the UK, all qualified for over one year.

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References

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Results

The data was analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, (2022) and following themes generated:

Theme	Sub theme
Wellbeing	Physical wellbeing
	Emotional wellbeing
	Being seen as a person
Practical things	Comfy space
	Equipment
	Working systems
	Cutlery to eat lunch, drinks cups
	Adequate pay
	Being together in an office
Support	Colleagues
	Line Manager
	Senior Manager
	Media / Societal perception
Personal satisfaction	Work / non work balance
	Feeling acknowledged
	Appreciation / Celebration
	Acceptance of nature of the work
	Self efficacy
Opportunity	Path of progression
	Developing others
	Building knowledge and skill
Making a difference	Positive outcomes for families
	Meaningful work
	Doing direct work to support change

Table 2 Themes generated in the data collection

Design Intervention

The second focus group designed an intervention considering each theme and what was required for each to be met. The hierarchical triangle was designed by the group to reflect what has to be in place at every stage to build upon for the next stage, acknowledging the individual, team and wider organisational factors. Basic needs for equipment, cutlery and space to work were set as the foundation for all other factors to be built on. The group agreed some broad questions (examples included below). The design provides for discussion alongside a performance review or induction plan for new employees.

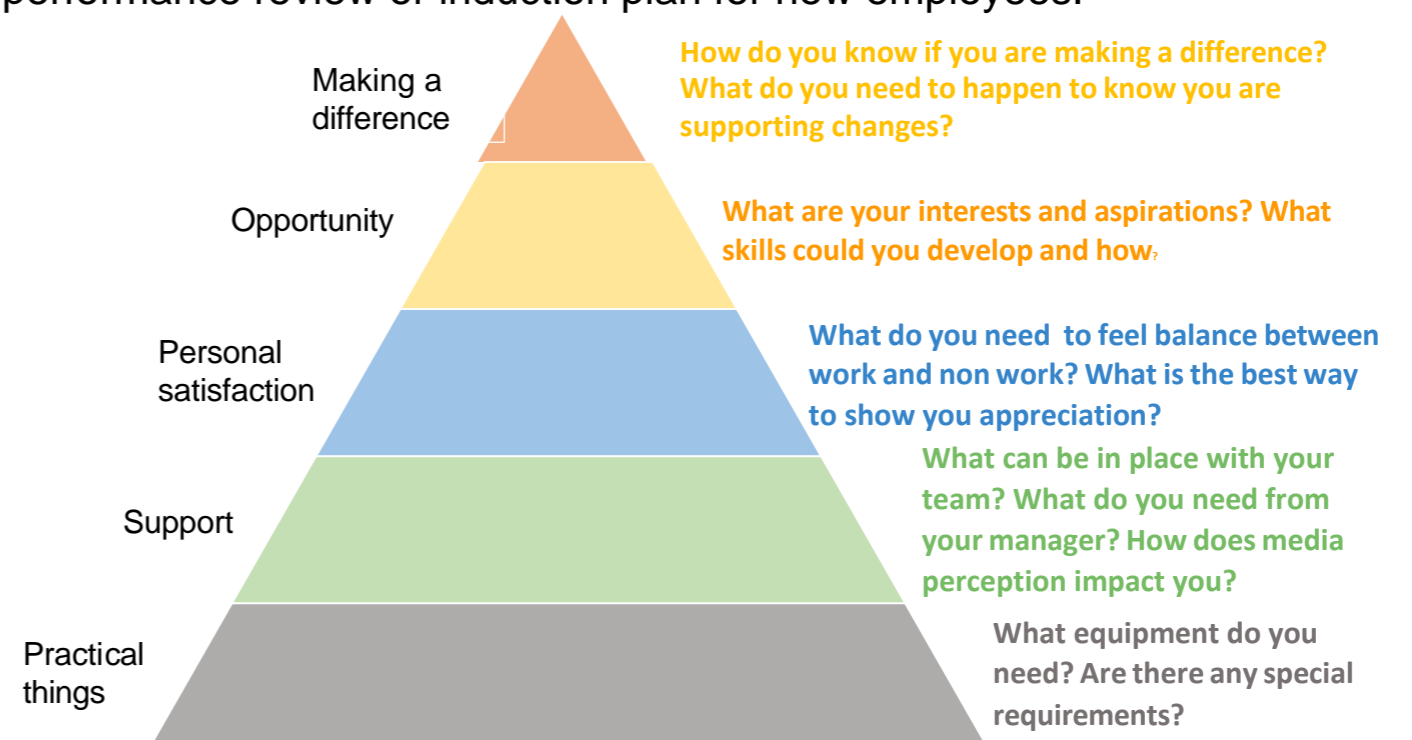


Diagram 2: Intervention design

Conclusion

This study used AI to co-design an intervention to support self reported wellbeing. The method utilised and built on what already was working well in the organisation to gather data to dream, design and deliver a preferred future. The intervention could be used as sequential plan to help employees and employers determine together how individual and organisational needs should be met to support wellbeing and support social workers feeling they are making a difference in their work.