

# **VOICES FROM CHILD & FAMILY SOCIAL WORK:**

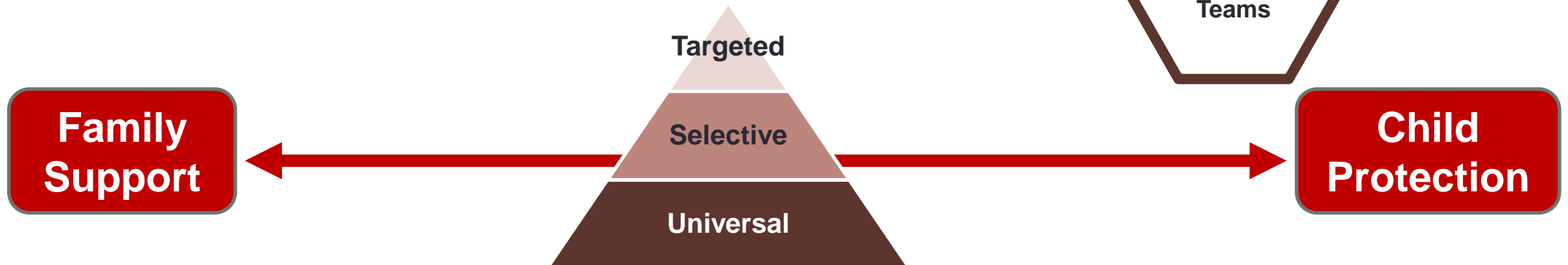
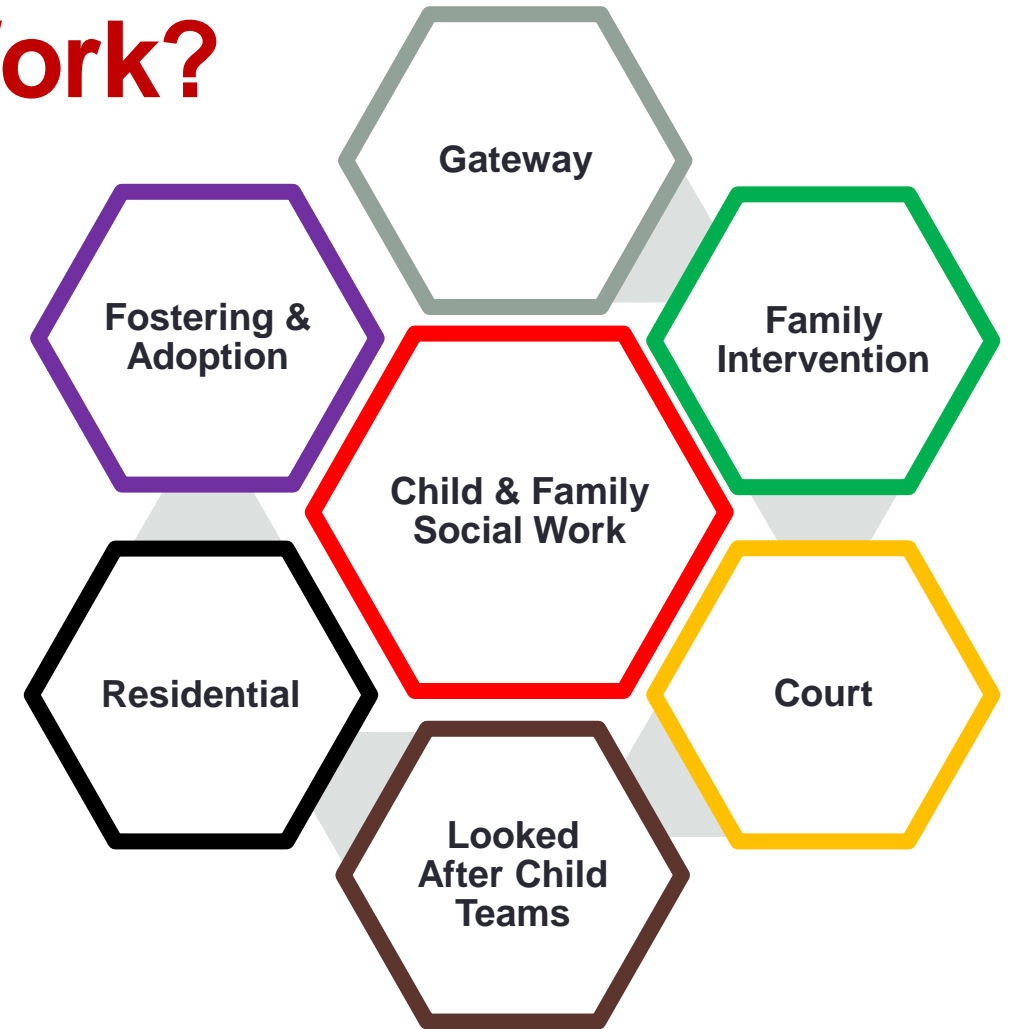
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## **WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN A SYSTEMIC APPROACH MAKE?**

*NISCC Webinar  
28 March 2022*

# Why Child & Family Social Work?

- Signs of Safety
- Family Group Conferencing
- 'Think Family'
- Relationship-based SW Practice
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Framework for Integrated Therapeutic Care



# Outline for today

**Setting the context: what is a systemic approach?** Dr Suzanne Mooney (QUB)

**Voices from practice in NI:**

- Megan Quinn (BHSCT)
- Tara Murphy (SHSCT)

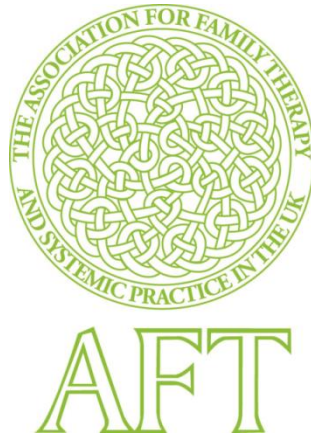
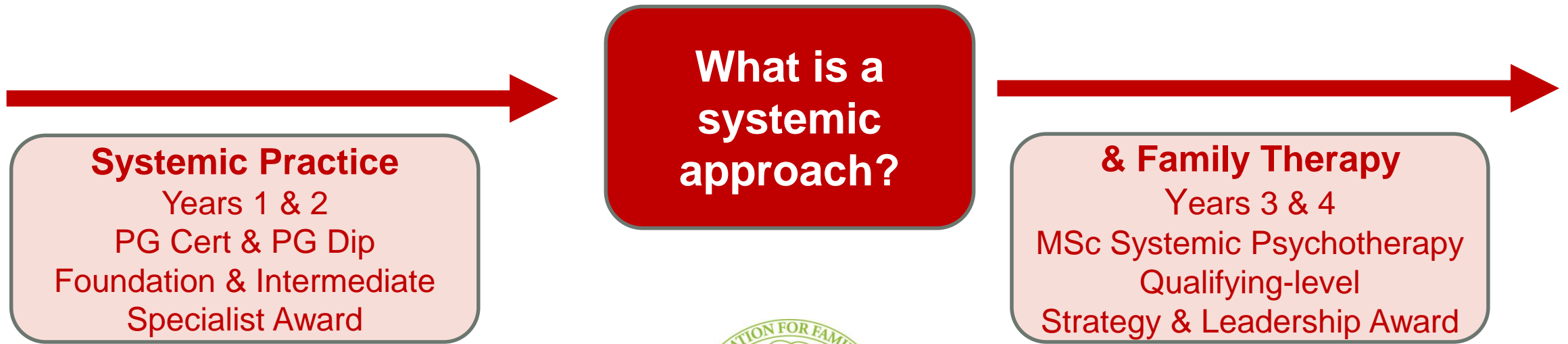
**What is the evidence?** Dr Stephen Coulter (QUB)

**Voices from practice in NI:**

- Karen Bowd (SEHSCT)

**Building a systemic orientation in family & childcare:** Jennifer McKinney  
(WHSCT/QUB)

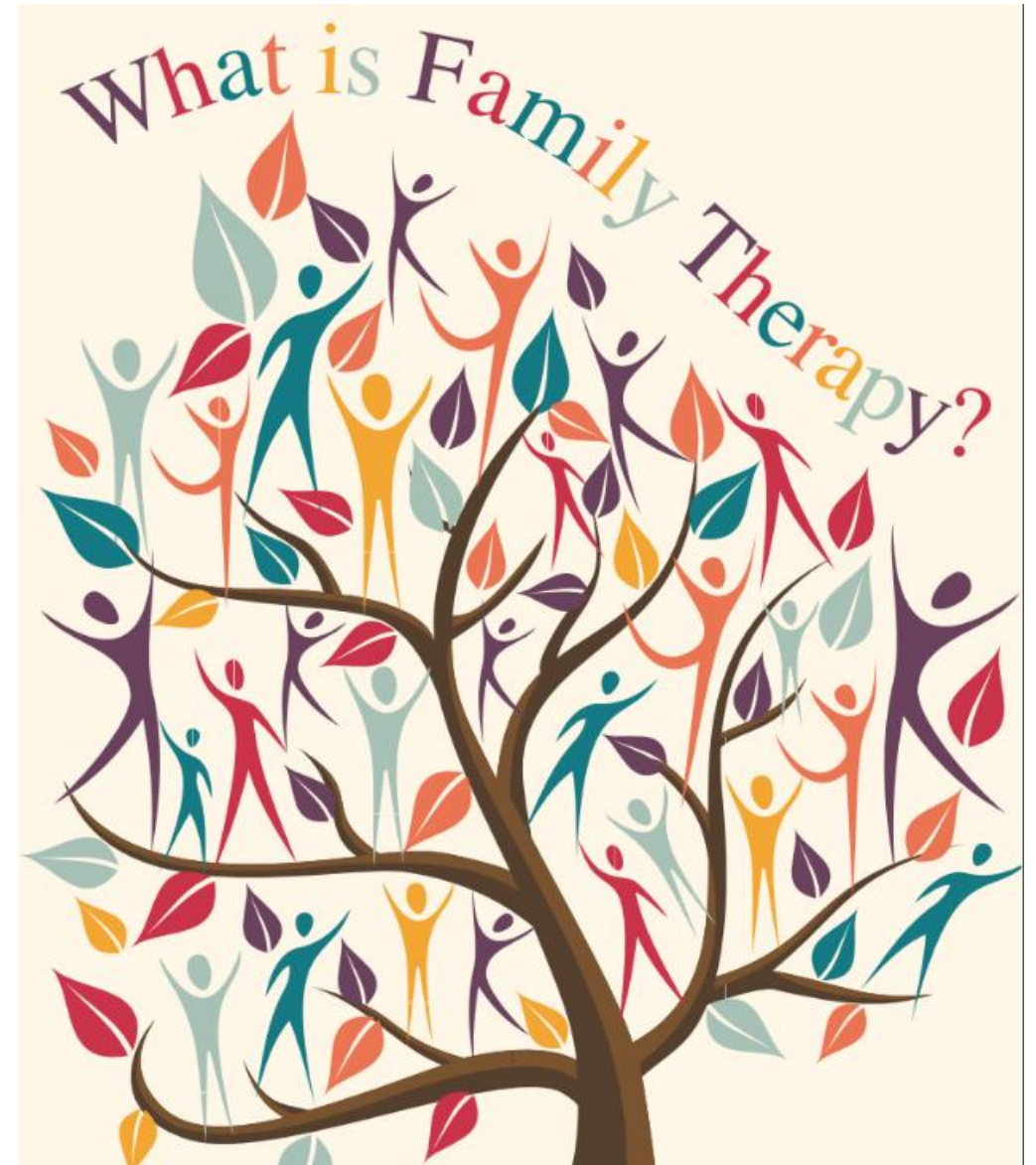
.... maximising therapeutic benefit in everyday practice with individuals (children & adults) and ‘families’



# A systemic approach...

- helps people in close relationships to **better understand and support each other**
- enables family members to **express and explore difficult thoughts and emotions safely, understand** each other's experiences and views, **appreciate** each other's needs, **build** on family strengths, and **work together to make useful changes** in their relationships and their lives.

*(Association of Family Therapy – What is family therapy leaflet)*



# A systemic approach... an applied practice framework

Systemic approach is **not** a question of how many people are present

***but a theoretical framework which informs what the practitioner does***

... it provides a framework for thinking about ***how to create change***

- Direct work with individual children
- Direct work with parents/caregivers
- Direct work with 'family'
- Indirect work with the professional network – consultation, reflective practice, group/team supervision

# Who is 'family'? - thinking network

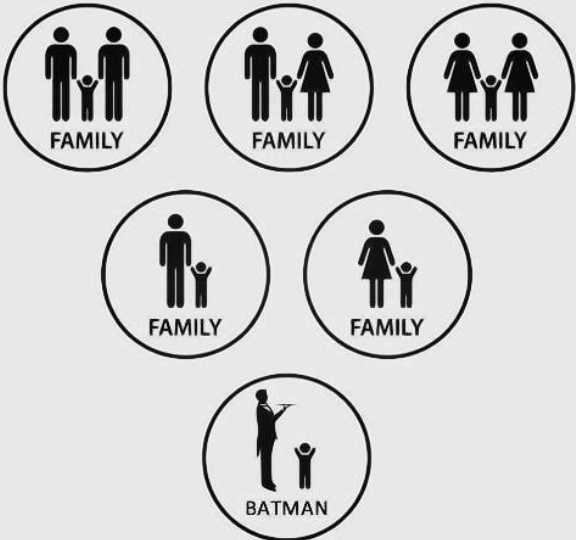
Family therapists understand that different people have different ideas about what 'family' means.

So **'family' is used to describe any group of people who care about each other and call themselves a family.**

As well as parents and **children of all ages**, they may also involve grandparents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins, **friends, neighbours, carers, and other professionals.**

They try to include whoever is important to the family.

*(Association of Family Therapy, What is Family Therapy leaflet)*



**Who** are the important people in this person's life?

- **those we see & those we don't**



# 'Doing' family (rather than 'being' family): thinking about family 'practices'



**N.B. All people 'do' family differently**

- All families are **utterly diverse and unique**

**How** does this family '**do**' care-giving?

- 'doing' meal times? 'doing' bed times?
- 'doing' Mum/Dad/big brother/big sister/aunt?
- 'doing' love? 'doing' comfort? 'doing' affection?
- 'doing' safety? 'doing' encouragement? 'doing' specialness?







‘Families’ are important





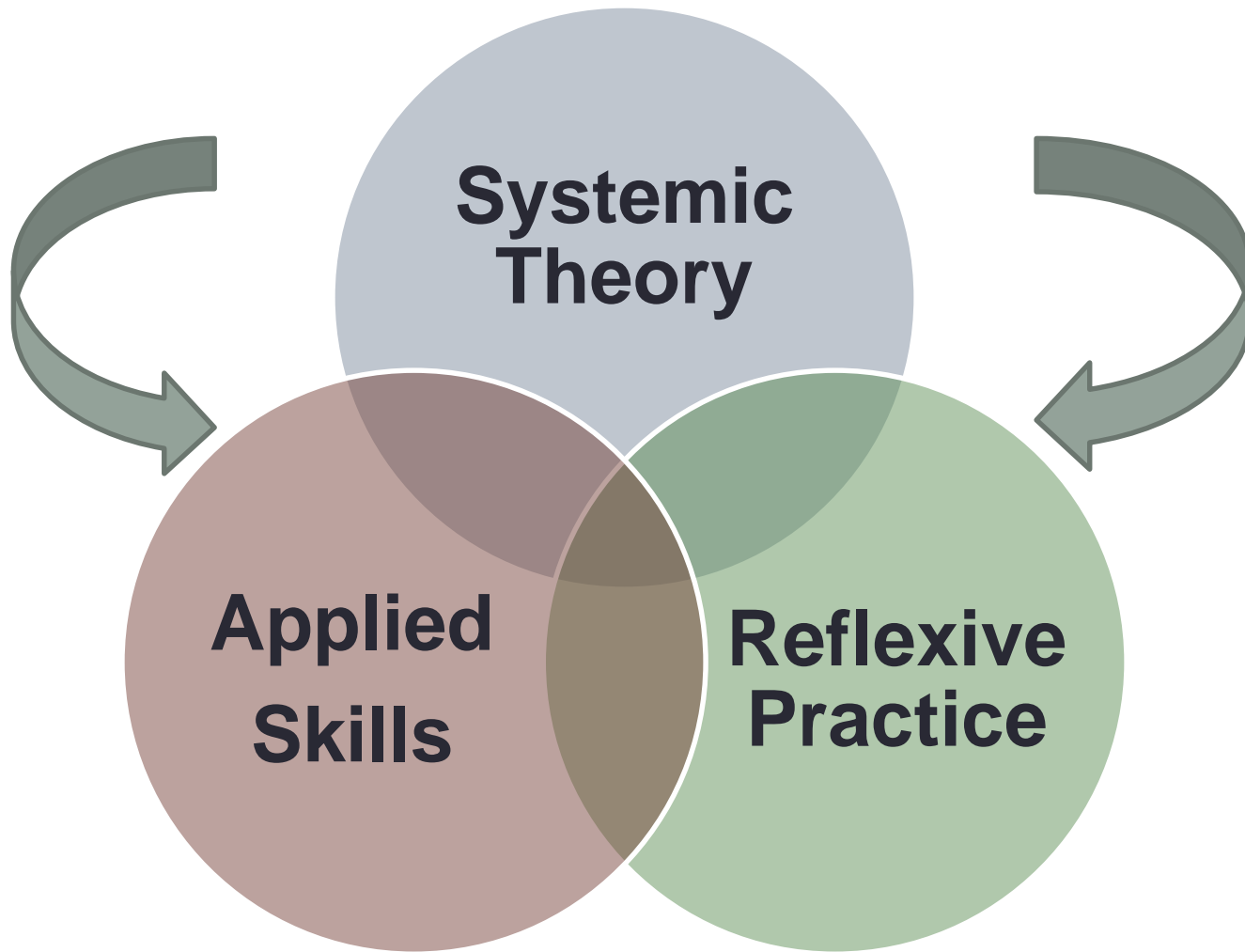
**‘Families’ are important**

**...in child & family social  
work?**

**Strengthening caregiving network relationships  
... using our relationship to  
support theirs**



# Contemporary systemic approach

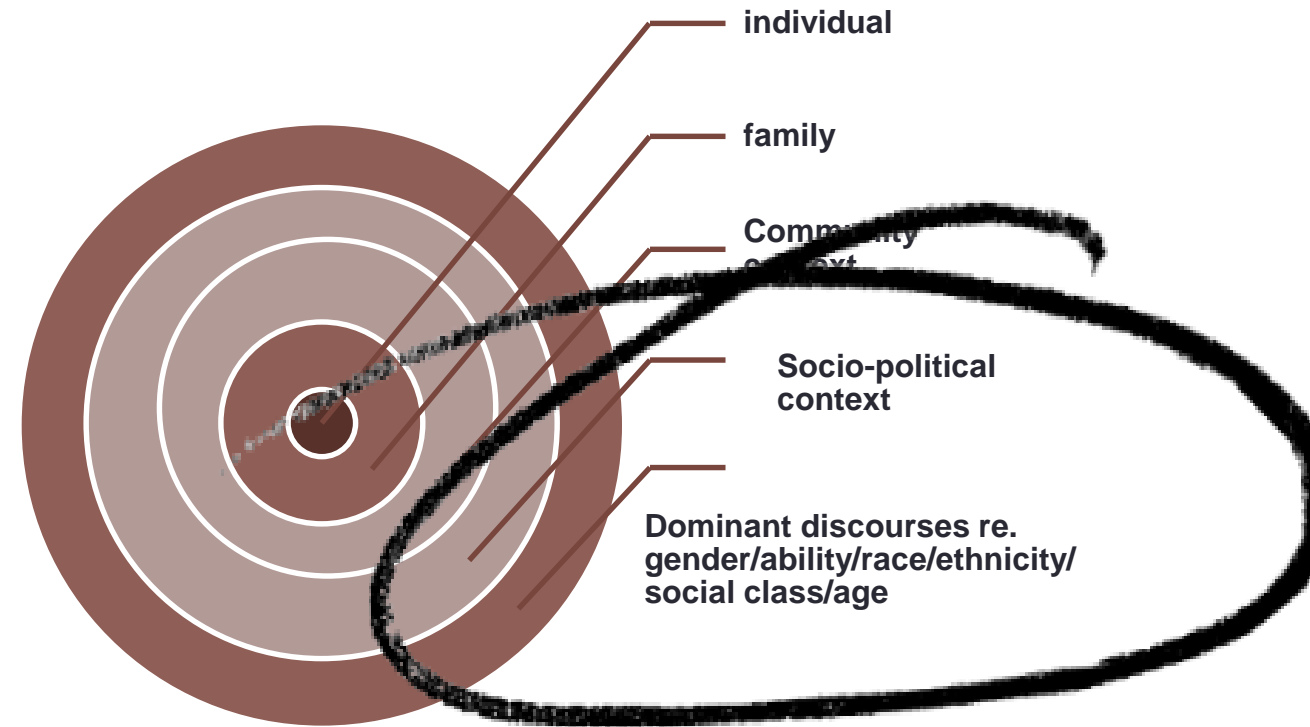


An applied **relational & interactional** approach:

- **Theory** that helps consider the problems in people's lives
- **Skills** and **techniques** to help us practice – to bring about **change**

# Thinking about presenting problems or behaviours

## Relational & interactional



**LIFE COURSE**

# Intersectionality & power

"There is no such thing  
as a single-issue struggle  
because we do not live  
single-issue lives."

— Audre Lorde



Gender RACE identity  
Social class GEOGRAPHY sexual orientation  
ethnicity  
religion  
age  
culture employment  
spirituality appearance  
Education

# Family Life Stories: workbook & guidance

## Staying 'curious'

HSC South Eastern Health  
and Social Care Trust

### 1. Relationship maps

- Family maps (genograms)
- Social network maps (ecomaps)

Parents  
are  
important

### 2. Timeline / Life maps

Parenting  
is tough

### 3. Preferred futures

### 4. Feedback form

'Doing'  
family



## FAMILY LIFE STORIES WORKBOOK PRACTITIONER GUIDANCE

Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative (NI)

Helping parents talk with practitioners about the impact  
of difficult times when they were young



Suzanne Mooney & Stephen Coulter  
School of Social Sciences, Education & Social Work  
Queen's University Belfast  
Correspondence to s.mooney@qub.ac.uk



# Talking about adversity & trauma

**SHAME  
BLAME  
GUILT  
STIGMA  
POWERLESSNESS**

Alcohol and  
drug use?



Separation?  
Imprisonment?

Domestic  
Violence?

Abuse?  
Neglect?

Death?  
Loss?  
Trauma?

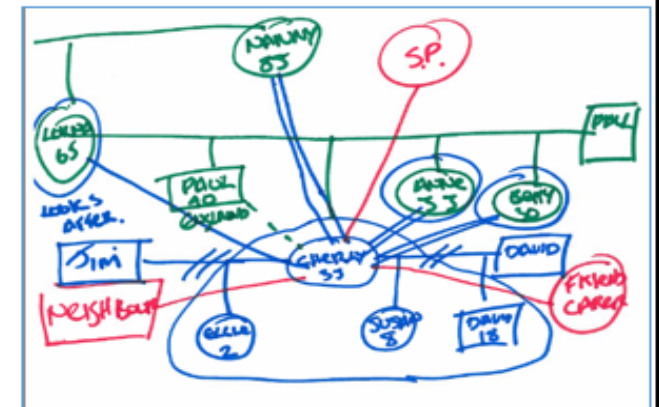
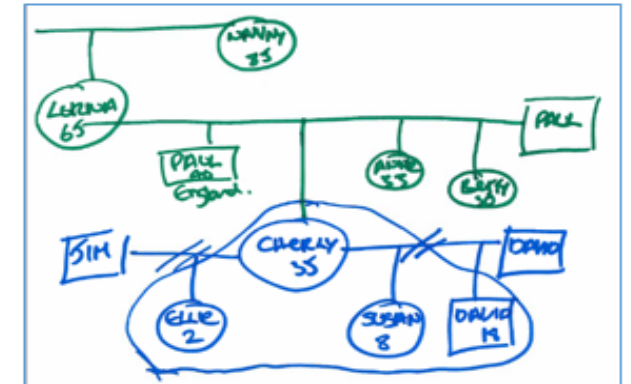
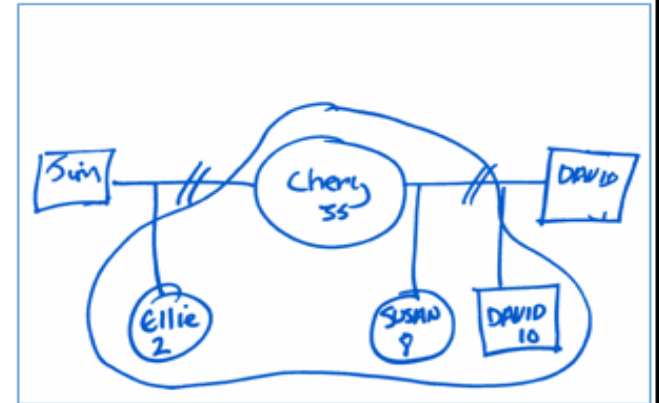
## Relationships Map

- My family now → my family growing up
- Immediate family & extended family → friends & other significant people
- Who are you close to, who is important in your life → Who were you close to, who was important in your life?

Allows us to ask questions about important people and events

***Who are the important people in your life?***

***What was it like growing up in your house?***



## My Life Map: Good times, Hard times



# Life over-time:

- Good times? 😊
- Hard times? ☹️

Places I lived  
/went to school

Family life &  
relationships

Key memories?  
Turning points?

Health and  
emotional  
wellbeing?

Education /  
Work?

Involvement with  
agencies/services?



## Thinking transitions

*Connecting past and present...*

# ...& preferred futures



MAPPING THE FUTURE – WHERE DO YOU WANT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TO BE IN 5 YEARS TIME?

If we were to future-gaze to 5 years time,  
and I were to meet you and  
***things were going really well...***

what would life look like...?

- (Name of each person and family as a whole)
- What might help you get there?
- What might get in the way?
- What needs to happen next?



**Everything** we do in a relationship  
either strengthens it or weakens it.

