Gofal Cymdeithasol Cymru
Social Care Wales

Different ways to reflect

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Reflection can help you think about your learning and experiences in different ways. Some methods help you reflect quickly on everyday learning, while others help you explore an experience in more detail.

The most important thing isn’t how you reflect. What matters is taking time to think about what you’ve learnt, how it relates to your role and how it can improve your practice.

Choose the approach that best suits your learning and the level of reflection you need.

The best approach will depend on:

- the learning activity or experience
- how much detail you need
- the purpose of your reflection
- your own preferred way of reflecting.

Whichever approach you choose, reflection should help you understand your learning, use it in practice and improve outcomes for the people you support.

Different approaches

A simple approach for everyday learning

This approach has been developed to support reflection following any type of continuing professional development (CPD).

It encourages you to think about:

- what you have learnt
- why it’s important
- how it relates to your role
- how you’ll apply your learning in practice
- the difference it could make for the people you support.

This approach suits most learning activities and only takes a few minutes to complete. You can use it after training, webinars, reading, supervision, team discussions and other everyday learning experiences.

This approach is useful when you want to:

- reflect quickly after learning
- prepare for supervision
- record informal CPD
- identify actions to improve your practice.

What? So what? Now what?

A simple structure for thinking about learning and experience

This reflection model uses three straightforward questions to help you make sense of learning or an experience.

It encourages you to:

- describe what happened
- consider why it’s important
- decide what you’ll do next.

This approach is quick, practical and easy to use. It helps you identify how learning can improve your practice without writing a detailed reflective account.

This approach is useful when you want to:

- reflect after a meeting or training session
- think about an everyday experience
- prepare for supervision
- identify actions after learning.

Gibbs' reflective cycle

A structured approach to reflecting in more depth

Gibbs' reflective cycle helps you explore an experience by working through a series of stages.

It encourages you to think about:

- what happened
- how you felt
- what went well
- what could’ve been improved
- what you learnt
- what you would do in a similar situation in the future.

By exploring an experience from different perspectives, this approach helps you gain a deeper understanding of your practice and identify opportunities for future development.

This approach is useful when you want to:

- complete a qualification or reflective account
- explore a complex situation
- learn from challenging experiences
- analyse your practice in more detail.

Kolb's learning cycle

Learning through experience

Kolb's learning cycle focuses on how learning develops through experience.

The model encourages you to:

- have an experience
- reflect on what happened
- identify what you've learnt
- apply that learning in future situations.

Instead of focusing on just what happened, this approach encourages you to use your learning to improve future practice.

It's particularly useful when developing new skills or trying different ways of working.

This approach is useful when you want to:

- learn from workplace experiences
- develop new skills
- improve your practice over time
- apply learning in different situations.

Reflection examples

The examples below show how you can reflect on the same learning activity in different ways.

There’s no single right way to reflect. Choose the approach that best meets your needs and supports your professional development.

Learning activity: attended a webinar on strengths-based practice

The webinar showed how focusing on a person's strengths, abilities and outcomes can give them more choice and control over their lives. It also highlighted the importance of working in partnership with people to identify what matters most to them.

Example 1: Reflecting on your learning

Show

What did I learn?

I learnt more about strengths-based practice and how focusing on what people can do can help build confidence and independence.

Why is this important?

It reminded me to involve people more in decisions about their care and support, rather than focusing only on the support they need.

How will I apply this learning in my practice?

I’ll ask more open questions to understand what’s important to people and identify their strengths, before discussing support options.

What difference could this make for the people I support?

People may feel more involved in decisions about their care and have greater choice and control.

Is there anything I’d like to learn more about?

I would like to explore more examples of strengths-based conversations and discuss them during supervision.

Example 2: What? So what? Now what?

Show

What?

I attended a webinar about strengths-based practice.

So what?

The webinar helped me think differently about how I involve people in decisions about their care and support. It reminded me to focus on people's strengths and what matters to them rather than starting with their needs.

Now what?

I will use more open questions in my conversations and encourage people to identify their own strengths and goals. I’ll reflect on how this influences my practice and discuss my experiences during supervision.

Example 3: Gibbs' reflective cycle

Show

Description

I attended a webinar on strengths-based practice.

Feelings

I found the webinar interesting and realised there were opportunities to strengthen my own approach. It made me think about how I involve people in conversations about their care and support.

Evaluation

The webinar gave practical examples that related to my own role. It reinforced some of the approaches I already use and introduced new ideas that I hadn’t considered.

Analysis

The learning highlighted the importance of focusing on people's strengths and working alongside them to achieve outcomes that matter to them. I recognised that asking more open questions could encourage more participation and independence.

Conclusion

The webinar increased my understanding of strengths-based practice and helped me identify changes I can make in my own practice.

Action plan

I’ll use more strengths-based questions during care planning conversations and reflect on the impact this has on the people I support. I’ll discuss my learning in supervision and identify any further development needs.

Example 4: Kolb's learning cycle

Show

Concrete experience (*what I did*)

I attended a webinar on strengths-based practice.

Reflective observation (*what I thought*)

The webinar encouraged me to think about how I currently support people to make decisions. I recognised opportunities to involve people more fully in conversations about their care and support.

Abstract conceptualisation (*what I learnt*)

I learnt that focusing on people's strengths rather than their limitations can promote independence, well-being and person-centred practice. I learnt how this approach aligns with professional values and improves outcomes.

Active experimentation (*what I'll do*)

I will introduce more strengths-based questions into my everyday practice and review how this influences conversations with the people I support. I'll use supervision to reflect on what's worked well and identify any further learning.