

## **Module – Coaching for provider certification**

### **How coaching fits into an interprofessional context**

Given the variety of tasks to be undertaken in interprofessional networks and the challenges these pose, it would appear sensible to suggest a form of coaching to managers, institutions and teams in which the special characteristics of their own work can be illuminated, reflected upon and developed in a supportive manner. This is recommendable in particular due to the fact that the processes for the certification and recertification of family centres generally involve the awarding of concept-related quality seals. Amongst other things (for example in North Rhine-Westphalia) the intention is for family centres to have network partners which will support their work in the areas of care, education and advice. Consequently there is an associated requirement to develop an interprofessional network, maintain this and demonstrate it to an evaluator during the certification process.

Even when coaching for the certification of family centres involves repeated higher level topics such as

- Strategy and concept development
- Dealing with colleagues and network partners
- Clearing up problems and conflicts
- Self-control and dealing with stress
- Training of professional competences or
- Personal careers and development,

the counselling processes are always specific and unique. This means that for counselling to be successful, it is beneficial for there to be a high degree of fit between clients and their needs, and the personality, skills and experience of the counsellor. The quality of the counselling takes effect in interaction; it is communication in the form of a dialogue, the benefits of which unfold during the process.

Reflections within confidential coaching sessions can open up new perspectives, surprising insights and clashes with previous habits. Thus once the agreed goals have been achieved, good counselling and coaching are also educational processes which usually stimulate developments that did not explicitly form the subject of the counselling assignment which ensued from the first meeting. Education processes here mostly concern attitudes, approaches or personal development. Unlike courses, coaching processes in the situation described can only be standardised to a limited extent. This is due to the fact that unlike courses, counselling processes are clearly more greatly user-led, in other words they are determined by the coachees with their terms of reference and

issues. Nonetheless, clear recommendations can be given on how quality can be achieved.

### **Subject areas in the coaching of interprofessional skills**

An interprofessional way of working increasingly requires early education establishments to take equal account of the needs of children, families and network partners. In terms of the organisational structure, this leads to a need to deal with heterogeneous interests, contradictory needs and complex interactions. If the work of a professional body that has been recommended by the family centre does not develop in the way that was hoped, and problems occur, this also has an impact on the establishment which made the recommendation. The time and effort that need to be put into communication and coordination increase, and it is not unusual for there to be frictional losses at the interfaces. Focussing on the specific interprofessional aspect of organisation design makes it clear that there is a need to create structures and processes on several levels. For the variety of interprofessional structural tasks, we therefore suggest using different methods in the coaching process (see table).

Structural task	Useful methods
Create transparency as to the structure of the organisation and its processes	Sociometrics, sculpture process, network map, visualisation, moderation
Make use of knowledge management within the network	Identify and document existing skills and those that are lacking
Clarify interests and contracts	Discussion, counselling, analysis of interests, negotiation
Make binding agreements on working together	Dialogue with partners, written cooperation agreements
Develop skills in managing social processes and groups	Moderation, visualisation process, running meetings and negotiations
Be aware of desired and undesired effects of your own professional actions, and control these in line with goals	Reflection within the team, coaching, supervision, training
Development a team culture, a culture of commitment and a learning culture in the organisation	Cooperation meetings, moderated focus groups and themed groups, team development

Structural task	Useful methods
Strategy development for your own organisation and sharpening its profile	SWOT analysis, 360-degree feedback, plan measures, parent survey, meetings with cooperation partners and specialist advice
Integrative personnel, concept and organisational development	Qualifications, further training, courses, attending professional conferences, coaching for specialists and managers

### **Recommendations for coaching units**

When running coaching sessions, we can differentiate between individual coaching (e.g. for the target group of managers or establishments) and team coaching. Usually between six and eight sessions of up to two hours are agreed, which take place four weeks apart on average. The contents of a coaching session must in all events remain confidential, but the formal framework can by all means be described to a funding provider. The funding provider must however agree that the coach will not pass on any of the content of a coaching to it. An open exchange between the coach and coachee can only take place when confidentiality is maintained without fail.

The coaching can be supplemented by an evaluation and transfer meeting which takes place six to 12 months after the coaching. This is recommended because it increases the degree of commitment to putting what has been agreed into practice, and a follow-up enables further reflection. Coaching can take place in-house, in other words at the coachee's workplace. An ideal coaching process can be divided into three phases, which might well overlap in practice:

#### **1.) *Getting to know one another and agreeing the contract***

During the first meeting, clarification takes place on whether and to what extent the coach and coachee can and want to work together at all. This assumes the existence of mutual trust, as well as a working agreement which allows realistic results to be expected. No coaching can take place without a contract, because contracts authorise the coach in terms of the framework within which he needs to work and intervene. At the beginning of coaching, discussion takes place on the coach's tasks and the issues he can get involved in. Once this has been clarified, the coach and coachee make an agreement on the goals, content and the framework within which the whole of their working together will take place. Once the contract has been agreed, the content of their working together can begin.

## **2.) Clarification and working phase**

During the clarification phase, a diagnostic assessment takes place as to what resources the coachee will bring with him/her, and how these strengths can be used to achieve progress in the development areas that have been identified and encourage the desired solutions. Amongst other things, this clarification involves identifying the problems, the people involved, goals, solutions tried to date and any potential that already exists, but is not yet being used consistently. In the working phase, the coach and coachee work together on the relevant topics. Different methods can be used depending on the coach's way of working (see table). Coaching supports the counselling system above all by asking good questions, giving open feedback which encourages development, and intensively dealing with the topics the coachee brings with him or her.

## **3.) Implementation and transfer phase**

Good coaching supports coachees in moving forward with their issues and achieving their desired goals during counselling. Therefore following the clarification and working phase, support is given in implementing the desired effects. These are supported on the one hand by practical actions (e.g. via concrete implementation planning), while positive effects are also stabilised (e.g. through feedback and through support for solution, search and discovery processes). The focus of this coaching phase is on transferring the results of the discussions and reflection into the coachee's everyday working life. The quality of the counselling is thus supported by the effects that it can trigger in the coachee's everyday interprofessional life.

## **Qualifications required for professional coaches**

Against the background of the experiences of the INPRO project, we can draw conclusions on the standardisation of qualifications for counsellors. The likelihood of individuals, teams or organisations receiving skilled coaching increases

- when counsellors have completed a course of study leading to a sound additional qualification for counselling, coaching or supervision in a recognised procedure (for example systematic counselling, supervision or coaching,
- when they can demonstrate several years of counselling experience. People with at least 10,000 hours' experience in their profession are described as experts, and this is usually the case after seven to eight years.
- when they bring with them experience in the field or experience that is relevant to the counselling process, in other words ideally when they are familiar with interprofessional and/or multiagency ways of working and have accumulated the relevant practical experience,

- when their expertise is recognised by a professional or umbrella association, or they have verifiable references from relevant employers or are recommended by credible partners,
- in the case of coaching for members of management or establishments, when the coaches have management experience of their own.

When selecting a suitable coach, as well as these recommendations, above all a coachee should pay attention to how much confidence he/she has in the person with whom the coaching will take place.