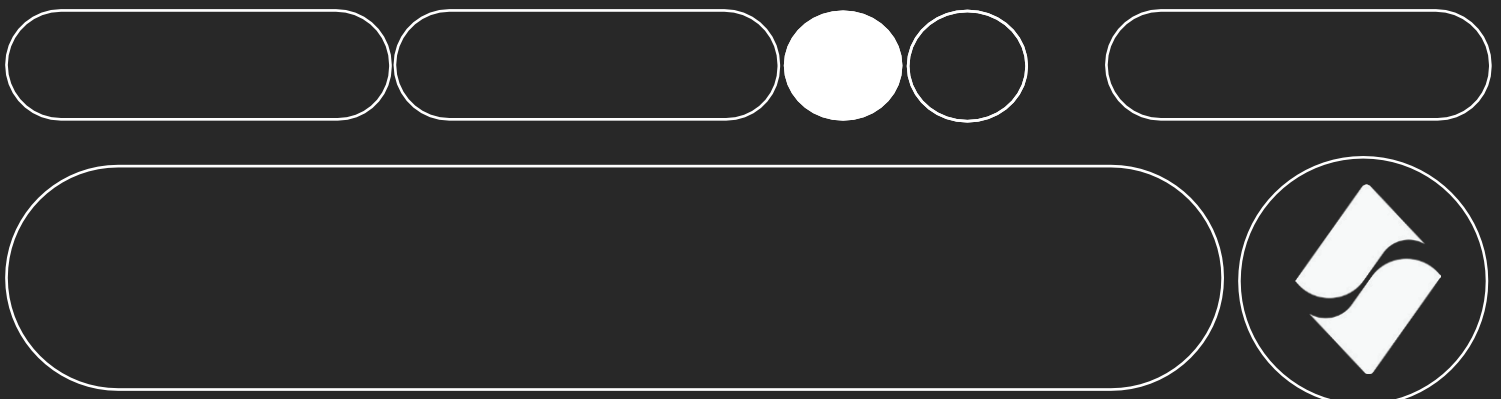


Seeing a Return on the Investment

A process for the implementation of Motivational Interviewing



A process for the implementation of Motivational Interviewing (MI)

It can be said that “time used for training is time away from doing the work”. This less optimistic view of learning and development is true if staff do not apply their learning into practice to improve outcomes for people they support.

Successful implementation of MI across an organisation involves practitioners being both competent in MI and integrating MI into routine practice. It is not enough for staff to attend a training course where they are introduced to concepts and core skills.

The following actions provide a menu of options to support the implementation of MI.

Develop clear aims

Agencies are more likely to implement MI successfully when they establish clear and measurable aims for its adoption. These aims may include outcomes such as improved client retention, reduced client discord, and enhanced behavioural change.

Organisational readiness

Agencies are likely to achieve better outcomes by giving deliberate attention to their organisational readiness to learn and implement MI. This preparatory work should occur before commissioning MI training. Collecting relevant information, securing support from both staff and leadership, establishing clarity regarding how MI will be integrated into practice, and addressing potential systemic barriers are all essential steps in advance of training. Implementation of MI does not begin with the training itself; rather, it requires early and intentional consideration of several foundational factors, including:

1. Staff interest and commitment to learning MI. Assessing and fostering staff motivation to learn MI prior to commissioning training can enhance both their engagement and the likelihood of successful implementation. Consulting with staff to elicit their own reasons for undertaking MI training, as well as the anticipated benefits, may strengthen their commitment to the learning process. Conversely, requiring staff to attend MI training when they lack motivation or have limited capacity may lead to reluctant or ambivalent participation, which can diminish engagement during training and hinder subsequent application of MI practices.
2. Interest and commitment from management.
3. Clear articulation of why MI is needed, who will use it, how it will be used and who are to be trained.
4. Sustaining MI through post-training coaching and feedback. The organisation’s strategy for maintaining MI practice should include ongoing coaching and structured feedback to support staff in advancing their skills toward fidelity. An introductory training course alone is insufficient to prepare staff to deliver MI with the level of competence required for fidelity. Continued supervision, skills practise, and performance-based feedback are essential components for sustaining MI and ensuring high-quality implementation.
5. How management will be involved in sustainability of MI practice within the organisation.
6. Mechanisms for evaluating adherence to MI practice for individual staff and programs.

Line managers follow up with individual staff who have completed MI training

Through regular support and supervision meetings, line managers should engage staff in reflective discussions about the key insights gained from the training and the specific changes they intend to make in their practice, including when and how these will be applied. These conversations should also identify the types of support staff require to begin integrating MI into their daily work.

Developing an implementation plan, jointly reviewed by the line manager and staff member during subsequent supervision sessions, can further support this process. Managers play a critical role in helping staff navigate the initial discomfort that often accompanies adopting a new practice and in providing the guidance needed to build confidence and competence over time.

Identify MI champions who support ongoing MI application into work practice

MI champions who have completed Motivational Interviewing training facilitate quarterly MI practice-development sessions during working hours. These sessions bring together staff who have previously undertaken MI training and are designed to support the ongoing maintenance and strengthening of MI skills. Champions do not need to be MI experts; rather, they should be individuals who are enthusiastic about supporting MI implementation. Session activities may include discussing challenging client cases and considering how an MI approach could be applied, engaging in skills-practice exercises, and other activities that promote continued development.

Offer advanced practice MI coaching to supplement MI training

Deepen and consolidate staff competence in MI by offering opportunities to pursue the SDF Silver or Gold Badge levels. These advanced badges provide an ideal progression for individuals who are motivated to engage in more intentional, strategic, and purposeful MI practice. They support continued professional development and help move practitioners closer to achieving fidelity in MI delivery.

Ensure MI implementation continues to be reviewed

Identify barriers to early implementation through discussion with staff and communicate these challenges to organisational leadership for problem-solving and resolution. Additionally, gather and share early examples of successful MI use across the organisation to build momentum and reinforce progress.

Build MI into organisation policies and procedures

Clearly state MI as a preferred method to support client engagement and motivation for change within organisational policy and practice documentation.

Use data to conduct an evaluation of the implementation effort

Assess the impact of MI on client satisfaction and outcome. Review whether the organisation is experiencing the anticipated benefits of MI.

Regularly review evaluation results at a leadership level

Decide what if any changes need to happen to support continued implementation of MI and recognise successful outcomes.

Find out more

Scottish Drugs Forum will be happy to support MI implementation within your organisation or region, answer any questions you have, and get you started on your MI implementation journey.

Contact: workforcedevelopment@sdf.org.uk



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