



## Collaborative Problem Solving using Solution Circles



## SEND Support Consultations as part of Stage 2 of the Graduated Response to supporting SEND in Suffolk

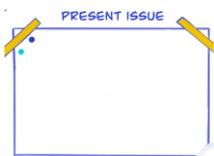


**Solution Circles** are short, powerful and help to build “community capacity.” The process requires a person to present the issue they are grappling with to a group of multi-agency and multi-professional colleagues. The steps within the process are all underpinned by psychology and designed with successful outcomes in mind.

A Solution Circle uses ‘graphic facilitation’ to record the meetings. We are using Microsoft Teams to run these meetings virtually. We will share the graphicers screen during this process. We use this form of note taking as visual learning and attention are both activated during this process. Sometimes spoken words may fade and be forgotten whereas the picture serves as a reminder of things that have been said at the beginning of the process. This helps people hold those things in their mind throughout the session. Graphics can show complexity and connections very effectively and colour can be used to reflect a range of emotions. This way of recording helps people to build on their own and each other’s ideas. You can come back to things mentioned previously and they are not lost during the session.

**There are several roles within a Solution Circle process.** These being the ‘issue presenter’, the team of colleagues, a process facilitator / chair – guiding the team through the 4 steps, a timekeeper, and a graphic recorder who takes notes during the process.

### Step One: Issue presenter (Six minutes)



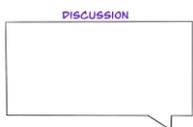
*The presenter outlines the issue with no one interrupting. The recorder takes notes and the timekeeper lets people know when six minutes is up. Everyone else listens. If the presenter stops talking before the six minutes is over, everyone else stays silent. You can often find that the presenter needs time to think quietly and then starts talking again. It is important not to chip in at any point during the full six minutes.*

### Step Two: Team of colleagues (Six minutes)



*Everyone in the team of colleagues ‘chips’ in with **ideas for solutions** to what they have heard from the presenter. Share anything that you think may be a way forward. It is not the time to ask for clarification or ask questions about the issue. The process facilitator must ensure that everyone gets a chance to contribute and that no one voice dominates. During this step, the issue presenter sits and listens without speaking or responding. In the virtual Solution Circle we ask people to use the ‘Teams hands up’ function in order to let the chair know that they would like to speak and we ask each person for one idea at a time in order to ensure everyone who wants to offer ideas for solutions can do so within the time.*

### Step Three: Dialogue (Six minutes)



*The presenter chooses at least 2 or 3 of the ideas mentioned in step two. Ideas that they would like to hear a bit more about. The presenter now has a chance to lead further discussion. This is their time to explore and clarify the issue. It is important that they focus on positive ideas only and not on things that are not possible.*

### Step Four: First Steps (Six minutes)



*Everyone has a discussion about the first steps that can be achieved over the next three days. It is important the at least one step is started within the next day. The importance of this initial next step happening quickly has been highlighted as crucial in research carried out in this area. A volunteer is asked for who can act as a ‘link colleague’ for the issue presenter. They seek agreement as to how this will work. For example, it might be that the ‘link colleague’ agrees to phone or see the person within three days and check if they took their first step.*

The graphic facilitator then shares the solution circle graphic with the presenter and with those colleagues who have been named in the next steps.

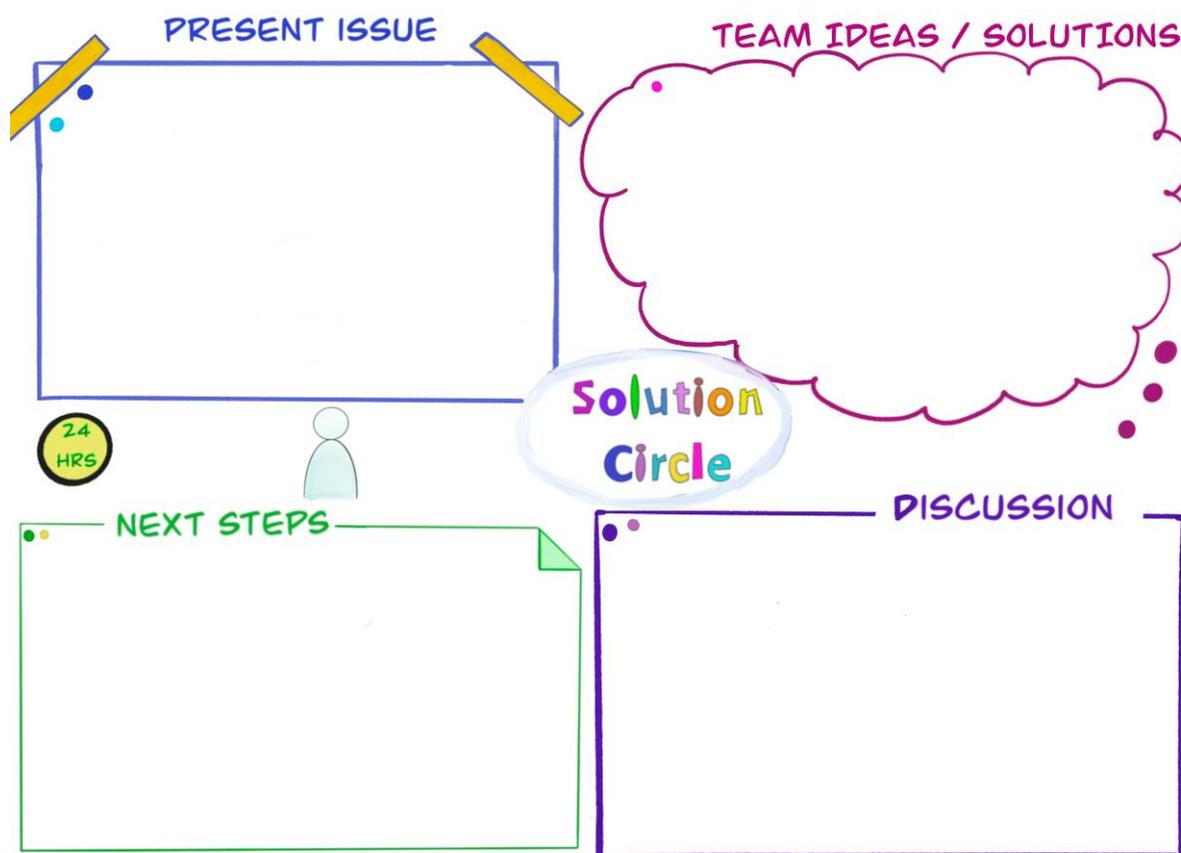




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Ref: Marsha Forest & Jack Pearpoint  
Inclusion Press

**At the end of the 30 minutes session Solution Circle (SC) the issue presenter should have:**

Two or three ideas to move forward.



One of the steps will be identified to take place within the following 24-hour period



A member of the team of colleagues will be allocated (at the end of the Solution Circle). They are known as the **'link colleague'** and will be best placed to follow up with the education setting 'issue presenter' in a way that suits them e.g. phone, text or email (this is part of the decision making during the SC).

