



Heart and Head

Messages from research and practice on supporting effective judgement in social work

Drivers

- Challenges in the workplace
- Messages from professional programmes
- Cross-UK comparisons
- Strengthening evidential status of practice responses

Purpose

- Consider findings from practice-near research
- Create space for critical reflection and discussion
- Integrate findings from research and practice

Format

- 3 presentation/discussion sessions
- Presentation = 30 minutes
- Group discussion and feedback = 20 minutes
- Plenary: messages and actions emerging


Timetable

- **9.30am – 10.20am** Duncan Helm. *Thinking Spaces: Offices as supports for analysis*
- **10.20am - 11.10am** Dr. Peter Yates 'Examining social workers' thinking processes through accounts of their decision making in cases involving sexual behaviour between siblings.'
- **11.10am – 11.30am** Refreshments
- **11.30am – 12.20pm** Dr Martin Kettle 'How social workers make sense of their work to protect children'.
- **12.20pm – 1.00pm** Plenary

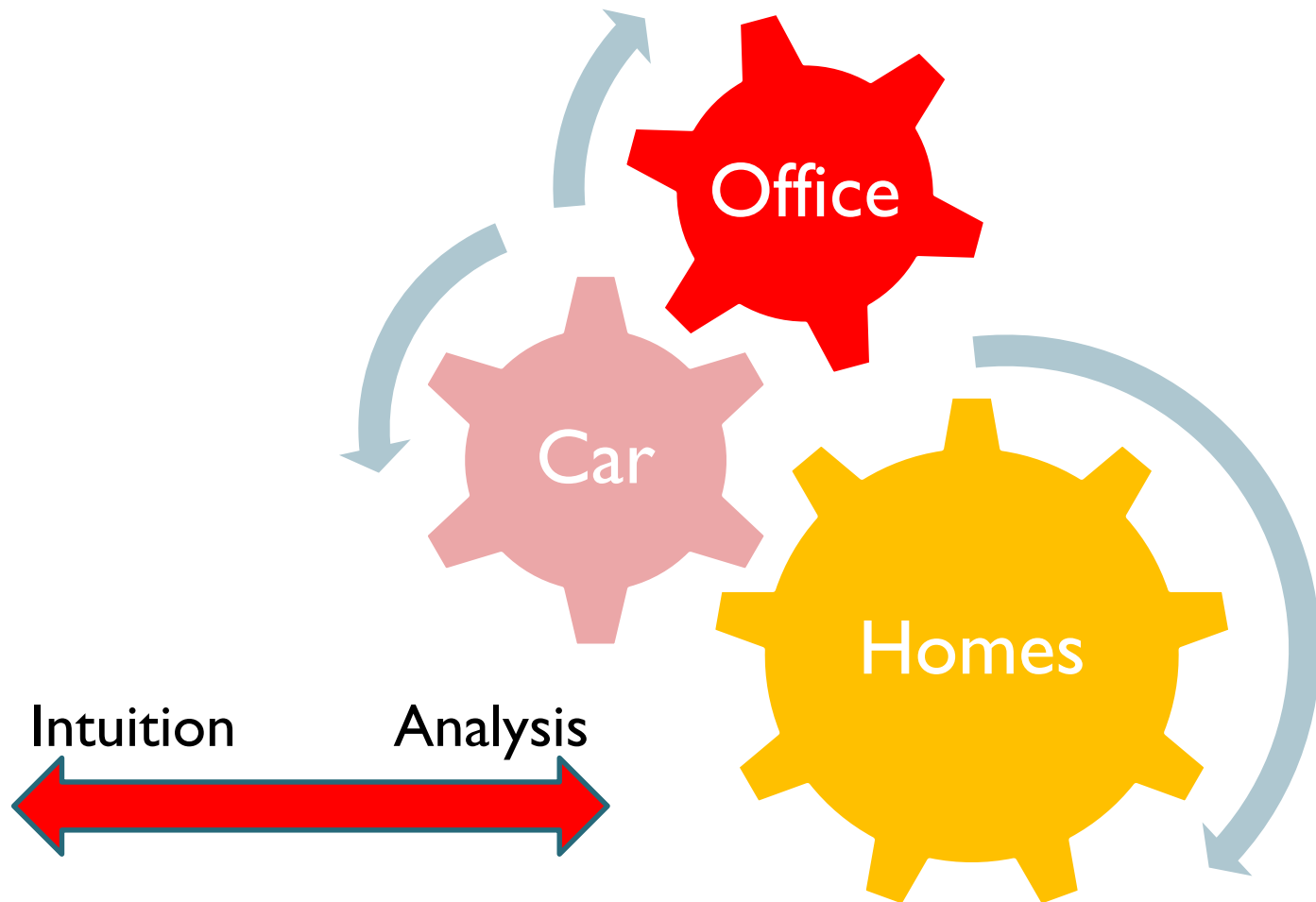


Thinking spaces: Offices as supports for analysis

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- How do spaces and places of work contribute to the process of sense making in social work practice?

Different spaces for thinking



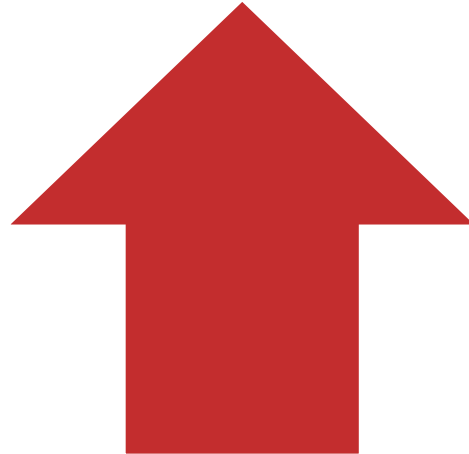
New ways of using working spaces

- “Agile working”
- Open-plan offices
- Working from home
- Call centres
- Hotdesking
- Information technology

Changing offices



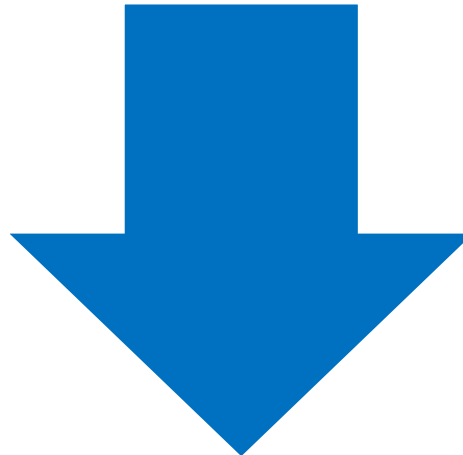
Impact?



Economics

Higher occupant density

Easy reconfiguration



Job satisfaction

Communication

Interaction

Noise distraction

Cognitive processing

Kim, J. and deDear, R. (2013)

Workspace satisfaction: The privacy-communication trade-off in open-plan spaces

Journal of Environmental Psychology 36 pp18-26

Are “cell” offices better places for thinking?

Workers in smaller open-plan offices performed better under normal working conditions than those in larger open-plan offices and cell offices

Seddigh et al (2015) The association between office design and performance on demanding cognitive tasks. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 42 pp172-181

Findings from this ethnographic study

- Movement and direct face-to-face contact
- Case discussion and sharing analysis
- Trust and security

Movement and direct contact

- Intersubjectivity – the construction of shared meaning
- Proximity – important but social workers sought out discussions with people at greater distance
- Depth of communication

Shared analysis

- Interaction can be a distraction but also acts to support analytical thinking
- Offering choice of time, place and person to speak to
- Control over public/private boundary
- Unpicking and unpacking thinking with others

Trust and security

- Containment and safe haven
- Belonging and identity
- The importance of stuff and the comfort of things

Conclusions

- Intersubjectivity – shared meanings co-constructed through daily interactions – are fundamental to social work judgement
- The physical geography of social work offices impacts significantly on sense-making activity
- New practices bring new opportunities but also inflict costs

Discussion

- Think about the different spaces in which you have worked
 1. What was it about these spaces that helped you with your analysis and sense-making work?
 2. How have you adapted to keep up the quality of your analysis as working spaces have changed?