

### **'Handling difficult conversations': an interactive workshop**

This session is provided by ARC's Director, Jane Fisher. Jane has twenty years' experience in training professionals to communicate effectively in emotionally-charged situations. In her role at ARC, which is the UK's only charity to provide impartial guidance to parents and professionals on the complexities of fetal conditions and baby loss during pregnancy, Jane has extensive knowledge of the importance of nuanced, high quality communications in all walks of life – at home, clinically and the workplace.

'Handling difficult conversations' – which runs from 90 minutes to two hours maximum - is best delivered face-to-face to accommodate such sensitive topics, but can be adapted to online delivery. The workshop aims to equip staff to handle challenging interactions with their colleagues and stakeholders. It is suitable for a variety of work settings, from managers tasked with giving what may be seen as negative feedback or difficult news to staff, to call centre or helpdesk workers who are faced with aggressive or distressed contacts, or more specifically, employees wanting to use the right language and approach around peers who have been affected by issues like pregnancy loss.

The workshop uses a combination of evidence-based content on effective communication, self-reflective activities, experiential learning and interactive scenarios to help build confidence and skills. The session ideally includes role play of realistic scenarios: Jane would ensure that these will be carried out in a safe non-exposing way. All content and format can be adapted to create a bespoke session that suits the environment, communication needs and demographics of different organisations.

### **An example workshop schedule**

The below is based on a tailored session that Jane delivered to UK Screening (formally part of Public Health England), as a result of a request asking for helpdesk training:

10.00 – 10.15: ***Introductions and context***

10.15 – 10.35: ***Effective communication in telephone work***: to include verbal and non-verbal aspects, tone and pacing.

10.35 – 11.00: ***Dealing with challenging calls***: to include self- awareness of what we find difficult and handling callers who are distressed, angry, abusive or looking for something helpdesk cannot provide.

11.00 – 11.45: ***Call scenarios***: role playing three realistic 'difficult calls' (safely, i.e. awareness that no-one having to be watched by peers) with a view to putting into practice strategies previously discussed.

11.45 – 12pm: ***Feedback and the importance of debriefing and support***: including time during or after the session for questions to Jane.