

A National Framework of Values in Mental Health[†]

Values-based practice is a new approach to working with values in health and social care that starts from respect for differences and diversity. Instead of prescribing which values are 'right', values-based practice relies on good clinical skills, such as communication, for balanced decision-making where values conflict.

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Work on values in mental health care is guided by three principles of values-based practice:

- 1) **Recognition** – recognition of the role of values alongside evidence in all areas of mental health policy and practice.
- 2) **Raising Awareness** – a commitment to raising awareness of the values involved in different contexts, the roles they play and their impact on practice in mental health.
- 3) **Respect** – respect for diversity of values and supporting ways of working with such diversity that makes the principle of service-user centrality a unifying focus for practice. This means that the values of each individual service user/client and their communities must be the starting point and key determinant for all actions by professionals.

Respect for diversity of values encompasses a number of specific policies and principles concerned with equality of citizenship. In particular, it is anti-discriminatory because discrimination in all its forms is intolerant of diversity. Thus respect for diversity of values has the consequence that it is unacceptable (and unlawful in some instances) to discriminate on grounds such as gender, sexual orientation, class, age, abilities, religion, race, culture or language.

Respect for diversity within mental health is also:

- *user-centred* – it puts respect for the values of individual users at the centre of policy and practice;
- *recovery oriented* – it recognises that by building on the personal strengths and resilience of individual users, and on their cultural and racial characteristics, there are many diverse routes to recovery;
- *multidisciplinary* – it requires that respect be reciprocal, at a personal level (between service users, their family members, friends, communities and providers), between different provider disciplines (such as nursing, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, social work), and between different organisations (including health, social care, local authority housing, voluntary organisations, community groups, faith communities and other social support services);
- *dynamic* – it is open and responsive to change;
- *reflective* – it combines self monitoring and self management with positive self regard;
- *balanced* – it emphasises positive as well as negative values;
- *relational* – it puts positive working relationships supported by good communication skills at the heart of practice.

[†]The above activity is based on some of the exercises in a training manual for values-based practice, 'Whose Values?' that was developed by Kim Woodbridge, Bill Fulford and others at the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health.

Piers Allott has incorporated this approach into recovery training and it provides a framework and skills-base for spirituality, understanding voices, and other aspects of person-centred care within the New Ways of Working. The 10 Essential Shared Capabilities include values-based alongside evidence-based approaches.

The workbook, 'Whose Values?' and other resources for values-based practice are included in the references at the end of this chapter. If you would like more information please go to the Warwick Medical School website for values-based practice http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/study/cpd/subject_index/pemh/vbp_introduction/

This exercise is one of a series published in the Whole Life Workbook (Eastern Development Centre 2009). Exercise developed by Tanya Kennard-Campbell.