

Groundedness

For managers working in person centred services the dimension of groundedness is important to consider, throughout the service and the agency. We know from the first block how to identify the different areas in this dimension; each of them assists us to ground ourselves and the service in who the person is rather than what their labels are.

In order to achieve a more grounded service managers need specifically to address the following areas:

Staff recruitment

The need is to recruit staff who are open to the person and respect all of the aspects of their identity. This doesn't necessarily mean that all of the staff need to have the same identity or interests as the person, but it may mean careful thinking about the person specifications for engaging staff in relation to the person. For example if a person speaks or understands two languages it makes sense for at least one staff member to share those skills, but it may be much more important for all of the staff to like the person and enjoy being with them. Staff who understand and respect the culture a person has come from but who are open to the possibilities of change and growth in the person are required. It may be that the most important additional consideration is whether or not staff are grounded themselves in the local community.

Grounding the service in the community

As mentioned above one way to begin grounding the service in it's local community is to recruit staff who are themselves local. This is important and rarely considered, however it is not the only way to begin working on grounding the service, the service can use local resources, shops, banks, pubs etc. The manager can assist staff to work out how to discover what local resources there are in terms of ordinary places, community leaders and people of influence. People can then work hard to have the service and the people it supports considered as an asset in the community. Later blocks on this course consider being grounded in the community in more detail.

Relationship and Roles

Both of the above aspects, staff recruitment and getting grounded in the community, are important only because they will enhance the likelihood of each individual service user expanding their roles and relationships. Managers have to continually encourage staff teams to be thinking about and working towards people getting more ordinary lives. Ordinary lives involve relationships; people who have had little experience of ordinary lives will often need assistance to get started, to keep relationships going and to understand the differing roles involved. Support staff may also need assistance to understand the processes involved; many people can build relationships themselves but need help to understand how to assist others. The manager will often have to remind staff of the aim of much of this work as well as help them learn how to do it. Staff may need assistance to stand back and enable service users to really enter relationships or roles and to loosen their own attachments to the process. For example supporting someone who is beginning to form friendships will involve the staff in sometimes supporting a relationship that they don't approve of or that breaks down. Managers need to assist staff to deal with their own feelings whilst also reminding them of the persons right to make their own judgements and decisions.