Tools for Talking

What makes a good support worker?

Instructions for support workers

This activity is to help service users think and talk about what represents good support. It involves a card sort, whereby cards describing attributes of support workers are placed on an arrow to indicate how important that attribute is to the service user. The cards describe various attributes, some positive and others less positive. Some cards are designed to be ambiguous and promote discussion. For example, one cards says 'checks up on me'. The interviews with service users indicated that some people feel comforted by the feeling of 'being checked up on' whilst others did not like this and felt it was invasive. Similarly, for some, having a support worker who was the same religion or gender as them was important, for others, this did not matter.

This activity is designed to be completed in groups (up to five people) to stimulate discussion and debate between service users, however, it can be completed individually. There is one set of cards, placed in a pile, and service users take it in turns to select and place a card on the arrow. The poster should be printed as large as possible to allow plenty of room for card placement. The activity is facilitated by support workers and can be used as a training tool, perhaps as part of new staff induction. However, support workers should be mindful of their impact on the activity and care should be taken to ensure that service users feel comfortable to express their opinions.

Resources to be printed:

1. Support worker poster
2. What makes a good support worker cards (cut into cards).

Instructions:

1. Explain that the activity is to help the service user(s) think and talk about what makes a good support worker.
2. Check the service user(s) knows what a support worker is/does.
3. Show the 'What makes a good support worker?' video.
4. Discuss the video: ask whether the service user(s) has any questions, ask whether what was said felt relevant to the service user, ask what it meant to them, and what they felt was important.
5. Explain the activity:
   a. Direct the service user(s) to the poster.

b. Explain that the activity is to place the cards on the arrow. The higher up the card is placed, the more important it is.

c. The cards have things written on them that might or might not be important when thinking about a good support worker. Different people might have different opinions. Emphasise that it is fine if people have different ideas.

d. In groups, the service users take it in turns to take a card from the pile and put it on the arrow to indicate the importance of the attribute to them. There are blank cards to write additional attributes, either positives or negatives that are mentioned or are missing.

6. Ask whether anyone has any questions.

7. Ask the first service user(s) to take a card from the pile and show it to the group, make sure you read it out clearly, so the group can hear, and provide explanations, if required.

8. Ask the service user to place the card on the arrow.

9. Ask the person to explain their decision.

10. Encourage discussion in the group.

11. Repeat the process until all the cards are placed on the arrow, asking each service user to explain their decision and exploring the ideas of others through discussion. It is not essential that all the cards are placed, exploration of ideas is more important.

12. If time allows, ask the group to generate their own attributes, either positive or negative, write them on the blank cards and place them on the arrow.

13. Cards can overlap and can be moved at any time. It does not matter if most of the cards are placed at the top.

14. After the activity you may like to stick the cards down or photograph the poster to keep a record of their placement.