

## **THIS IS HOW WE DO IT ..... HERE**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to encourage discussions between ourselves as a group of staff about the attitudes and behaviours we feel are important to the way we interact with each other and importantly the values and aspirations we have for the children, young people and families that we work with. It seeks to clarify our values, and most importantly how we live and breathe these values.

Living and breathing a set of values is much more difficult than writing them down, and all of us will, on occasions fall short of what we might expect of ourselves, and the expectations of our colleagues and the young people we work with. On these occasions, rather than criticise our colleagues we will seek to find constructive ways of ensuring we have learnt from any difficulty, and that next time we are able support each other to get it right.

The discussion we need to have is in relation to how collectively and individually we are able to measure up to the values we want to adopt, and what we should do to make sure we are the best we can be.

The hope is that we all support each other to embody the values set out below. If some people do not feel that they can subscribe to this process, it is likely that they may not wish to remain in an organisation that seeks to embrace and live by such values.

### **Young People Are At the Heart Of All That We Do**

We are an organisation which ensures that the safety and improved life chances are central to all decisions that we make on behalf of young people. These decisions are informed by listening to what young people tell us, but also from listening to parents and other professionals who are involved in the life of that young person.

When we are required to make key decisions about their lives, it is the safety and well-being of young people that determine our actions and longer-term planning. Unless young people are safe, and feel safe, any other type of intervention cannot be as effective.

We understand that to grow up without fear of violence, abuse or neglect is vital in allowing young people to reach their full potential. Security, supportive relationships and opportunities to learn are key for young people and we will ensure that all our young people are able to attain these.

### **We Take Responsibility**

When we say that we will do something, we will do it. When we agree to undertake a task, we will take responsibility for completing it to the best of our abilities and according to timescales. If we cannot deliver what we have

agreed to do, we take responsibility for this, and look to negotiate how we can deliver on the promise as soon after as possible, provided this is feasible.

We can do this by asking ourselves a simple question, ‘what would I want if it were me?’ Always take time to put ourselves in the shoes of the service user – imagine the world from their perspective and in relation to the circumstances we are seeing and experiencing.

### **We Do The ‘Right Thing’**

Our work with young people should place the emphasis on ‘doing the right thing’, rather than simply ‘doing things right’.

Doing the right thing for young people means that decisions and planning must be based on ensuring that their wishes and feelings are taken into account at all key decision points in the lives of young people. In addition to this, we must ensure that we can evidence how we have gained the views of young children. A clear, written account of how we do the right thing will be important. We will not be risk averse, but rather risk sensible.

It is also important to acknowledge that ‘doing the right thing’ does not mean that we will be able to do everything for all young people. ‘Doing the right thing’ has to be grounded in the way we interact, listen and value the opinions/views of young people, not just in providing resources. When providing resources we will seek to do it in a timely, creative and sustainable way, informed by good quality assessments.

### **We Are A Learning Organisation**

We understand the importance of being able to learn and develop. This approach embodies our own professional development as well as the way in which we hope our families are able to learn and develop parenting skills to ensure our young people remain safe and secure.

Our organisation values the principle of continuous professional learning and development. It is important that we regularly refresh and challenge our own professional assumptions. Where it is appropriate to do so, we will ensure that staff are given opportunities to enhance their skills through a combination of training and career opportunities.

We also learn from reflecting on what we have done, what went well for us and what we can improve; supervision and annual Skills Set discussions are key to this learning approach. We are an organisation that prizes ‘learning’ above ‘blame’. It will also be important that we carry forward the importance of learning and reflection into our work with families. We know that no one gets everything right all the time. We will encourage families to reflect on areas of concern and support them in learning and developing in the same ways that we aspire to learn and develop. Feedback from the children, young people and families we work with will be a key method of our learning.

## **We Are Ambitious For Ourselves And Our Service Users**

By being the best that we possibly can be, we will provide the best possible services for our community. We will not be satisfied until all of our service users can be happy with the service we provide and/or understands clearly why we have taken the decision we have. In striving to deliver the best possible service, we will not accept negligence and will work with colleagues to 'go the extra mile' for young people.

However being ambitious and wanting to do the best for ourselves and our service users cannot be done alone. Improving ourselves will also come through supportive professional relationships within teams, between teams and via our supervisory relationships. As individuals and teams we must be prepared to share ideas and be able to reflect on how we can improve practice and systems.

## **'One Service' – A Collective Responsibility**

Our service users do not distinguish between staff or teams. If one of us gets it wrong, or fails to undertake what has been promised, it reflects on us all. We have a collective responsibility for upholding the reputation of the Council.

What happens in one team and the manner in which we reach decisions and convey them, may well have ramifications on many other actions weeks/months/years later.

The 'journey' of children through our service will be as seamless and consistent as it possibly can be. Young people see us and expect us to be 'One Service' and this must be reflected in our planning and the clarity of communication between teams at the points where case transfers or joint working is appropriate. Where differences of view occur, we will aim to resolve these quickly, and will not be played out publicly with service users experiencing delay or reductions in the quality of service.

## **We Do Compassion**

We will act compassionately at all times. We must not forget that very often we intervene at points of crisis and where people may be frightened about our involvement. It is important that we retain the importance of asking ourselves the question 'how would I wish my family to be treated in such a situation?'

But compassion does not mean that we will not be challenging to families where there are concerns. We need to be able to deliver difficult messages and hold challenging conversations. If we have identified concerns we must be clear with parents about what we expect to change, by when, and how we will support this change. In these situations we will be clear, honest but understanding of how difficult and challenging these messages are.

## **Where Do We Go From Here?**

If this document is about one thing it is about culture. Organisations are defined by their culture, which are the norms, values and accepted behaviour of the people who make up that organisation. If we can consistently live and work to the values that are set out in this document our actions, decision-making and planning for young people will ensure that the outcomes for our young people will be the best they possibly can be.

This document is different from policy and procedure documents in that it does not offer a prescriptive, easy to follow set of steps or guidelines to follow in all situations. Whilst there is a place for such documents, these types of documents will not address the quality of relationships we have with each other as colleagues, or the quality of relationships we have with our service-users. Ultimately, culture will always trump rules and procedures in terms of how service users and staff are treated and valued. If you are uncertain about this, please read the Berwick report into Mid-Staffs Hospital enquiry.

Ensuring that we begin to embody the values set out here will be difficult, and there will be times when it will feel difficult to embody all of the values we have set out here. However it will be important that we keep these values to mind in all of the decision-making we undertake, in all of the planning, discussions and supervision that we have in relation to young people. In order to ensure that we can deliver on these values we will need to return to this document on a regular basis in order that we can assure ourselves that we are the type of organisation we want to be and most importantly we are the type of organisation we would want for our own families and our own children.

**Children and Young People's Targeted and Specialist Divisions  
People and Communities Department  
Bath and North East Somerset Council**