

Let's NOT pretend things are as good as they can be

Every week our team spends time with self-advocates, family members, paid supporters, organisational managers and leaders.

We hear people talk bravely and with heavy hearts about:

- the impact of reducing financial resources;
- families feeling excluded
- the struggle with and, the injustice of block tendering
- practice that limits any sense of individuality.

People tell us that Support for Living (people choosing where they live, who they live with, how they live and who supports them – see Reach) seems unrealistic in the present climate - that these aspirations are impossible.

Are we really on the verge of losing years of progress towards people living good ordinary lives? Are we going to accept the growing gap between stated values and practice?

We wanted to support people to discover a better way, to have the courage to risk new ways and to protect the rights of people to express their freedom to live good ordinary lives.

So, following a workshop with John O'Brien we published a paper 'Healing Integrity Gaps' highlighting people's stories, their struggles and desire to find a way of identifying and minimising the growing gap between values and practice. Importantly, we share some thoughts about how to achieve this.

Positive cultures, where such gaps are identified, grow stronger through thoughtful conversation among people with different positions and perspectives. It is through stopping and having these conversations that everyone will reflect and learn about a particular situation AND if necessary, find a better way of moving forward. Ten agencies joined our Create Positive Cultures Project to do just that!

As the starting point we suggested that the work would call on four capacities:

- First is the desire to support the freedom to live an ordinary life.
- Second is seeing and believing in people's capacity to live an ordinary life with the right support.
- Third is mindfulness and design thinking. The capacity to notice situations in which there is a disconnect between stated commitment to support people to live a good ordinary life and our actions.
- Fourth is a willingness to risk trying the design of a better way, reflecting and revising as you go along.

Time together triggered ideas for action! The project is ongoing and we'll be reporting on the work early next year. This process has allowed staff to reflect on what their organisations do more objectively.

What has become clear is that people value it when:

- we try and figure out the good intention at the core of people's actions
- people are supported to create and claim their own solutions
- we all keep asking: 'why' are we doing this?
- we seek answers to our 'Why' questions, in an open and non-confrontational way
- people practice the principles for Managing Emotional Well-Being which include:
 - ✗ Be compassionate and see the situation from another person's perspective
 - ✗ Listen and do everything you can to include ALL people
 - ✗ Make it your mission to work hard on relationship building even in the face of conflict and tension
 - ✗ Never sit on the fence when you know something is not right – Act!
 - ✗ Breathe!

Let's NOT pretend things are as good as they can be. Let's be honest, let's speak out, and let's figure out the best way forward together. Let's fight the right battles together.



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