

Conflict Management & Lone Working Training

Safeguarding staff and service-user well being in three steps

STEP 01

STEP 1) UNDERSTANDING INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT AND THE VULNERABILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH COMPLEX TRAUMA AND ENDURING MENTAL ILLNESS

- The ability to manage conflict is enhanced when staff understand and recognise the behaviours and challenges common to most interpersonal conflict.
- The ability to manage conflict is enhanced when staff understand the vulnerabilities and increased challenges associated with complex trauma history and enduring mental illness.

Increased vulnerabilities include:

- Paranoid interpretations of others' behaviours - quick to sense conspiracy and betrayal
- A sensitivity to perceive rejection which can trigger bouts of hostility. This often induces negative rejecting responses from staff and becomes part of a vicious circle
- A vulnerability and tendency to develop fixated grievances
- A difficulty regulating emotions and restraining impulsive behaviours (a tendency to be overwhelmed by emotions)
- Rapidly changing opinions of others - a tendency to quickly split between trust and mistrust or liking and hating
- Invalidation sensitivity - an inability to tolerate perceived criticism or negative judgements
- Factors associated with anxiety which can increase the potential for hostility
- Hostility associated with delusional psychosis
- An increased potential for substance-induced disinhibition and / or paranoia

STEP 02

STEP 2) SKILLED RESPONSES TO HOSTILE CONFLICT

- The maintenance of safe environments for both service user and staff is critical. To achieve this, staff must manage all experiences and exposures to workplace hostility appropriately, and with skill.
- Appropriate and skillfull management of interpersonal conflict happens when staff have a deeper understanding of the associated psychology and the relationship between complex trauma experiences and challenging behaviour.

Skills to manage conflict and maintain emotionally and physically safe environments:

- Skills to de-escalate conflict effectively with a mix of passive (or assertive) communication styles
- Advocating for individuals vulnerable to emotional outbursts
- Validating 'dialectics'. The ability to actively listen, empathically reflect and validate - balanced with the skill to advise, support, maintain boundaries and maintain assertive responses (when and where appropriate)
- Post-conflict management - supporting service users with appropriate skills and advice
- Dynamic risk assessment skills to improve personal safety - enhanced awareness of non-verbal behaviours, emotional displays / micro gestures, multiple-person conflict, substance misuse / disinhibition factors, and cognitive factors / factors associated with potential psychosis.
- Reporting incidents to improve risk assessment and risk management processes

STEP 03

STEP 3) ENHANCED LONE WORKING SAFETY

- Staff have a responsibility to support employers' health & safety obligations and commitments. The maintenance of safe working environments is critical. This is achieved through robust evidence-based training.
- Staff must make safe decisions and comply with guidance. Knowledge of risk is critical! Lone working staff must make safe decisions, and these decisions are guided by improved risk knowledge.

Understanding mental health / forensic risk to guide safer decisions, safer interactions and safer lone-working exposure:

- The risk factors associated with individuals supported in the forensic mental health system. Including paranoid attributions, 'splitting', projection, emotional dysregulations, fixated grievances, general impulsivity and rejection sensitivity
- Enhanced awareness of the clinical risk profile (HCR-20), understanding the Implications of these risk factors and managing interactions / making safe decisions when delivering difficult or potentially upsetting news (Integrating the 'circle of safety' into community-based lone working)
- Learning from case studies - enhancing safety by understanding the catastrophic mistakes and unsafe decisions that others have made
- Dynamic risk assessment skills to improve personal safety (see step 2)
- Reporting incidents to improve risk assessment and risk management processes