

## Ability to work with difference

There are many factors that need to be considered in the development of culturally competent practice, and finding a language that encompasses all of them is a challenge. For example, issues in relation to gender, disability or sexual orientation may vary according to a specific cultural group. Nonetheless, the competences required to work in a culturally competent manner are probably similar. They relate to the capacity to value diversity and maintain an active interest in understanding the ways in which people who use services may experience specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles, and considering any implications for the way in which an intervention is carried out.

Issues of specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles often relate to differences in power and to inequalities. As such, professionals need to be able to reflect on the ways in which power dynamics play out, in the context both of the service they work in and when working with people.

## Stance

An ability to draw on knowledge that when working with specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles, it is stigmatising and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours that are problematic, rather than any specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles, and therefore:

An ability to value equally all people for their particular and unique characteristics and an awareness of stigmatising and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in themselves and others (and the ability to challenge these)

An awareness that there is no 'normative' state from which people may deviate, and therefore no implication that a 'normative' state is preferred and other states are problematic

### **Knowledge of the significance for practice of specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles**

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| An ability to draw on knowledge that the demographic groups included in discussion of 'different' beliefs, practices or lifestyles are usually those that are potentially subject to disadvantage and/or discrimination                     |
| An ability to draw on knowledge that a person will often be a member of more than one 'group' (e.g. a gay person from a minority ethnic community); as such, the implications of combinations of lifestyle factors needs to be held in mind |
| An ability to maintain an awareness of the potential significance for practice of social and cultural variation across a range of domains, including:   |
| ethnicity   |
| culture   |
| gender and gender identity  |
| religion and belief   |
| sexual orientation  |
| socioeconomic deprivation   |
| class   |
| age   |
| disability  |
| An ability to draw on knowledge of the relevance and potential impact of social and cultural factors on the effectiveness and acceptability of an assessment or intervention  |

### **Knowledge of social and cultural factors which may have an impact on access to the service**

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| An ability to draw on knowledge of cultural issues that commonly restrict or reduce access to interventions, for example:   |
| language  |
| marginalisation   |
| mistrust of statutory services  |
| lack of knowledge about how to access services  |
| the range of cultural concepts, understanding and attitudes about mental health that affect views about help-seeking, treatment and care  |
| stigma, shame and/or fear associated with mental health problems (which makes it likely that help-seeking is delayed until or unless problems become more severe)   |
| stigma or shame and/or fear associated with being diagnosed with a mental health disorder   |
| preferences for gaining support in the community rather than through 'conventional' referral routes (such as GP)  |
| An ability to draw on knowledge of the potential impact of socioeconomic status on access to resources and opportunities  |
| An ability to draw on knowledge of the ways in which social inequalities affect development and mental health   |
| An ability to draw on knowledge of the impact of factors such as socioeconomic disadvantage or disability on practical arrangements that influence attendance and engagement (e.g. transport difficulties, poor health) |

### **Ability to communicate respect and valuing of a person and their family or carers**

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| Where people from a specific sociodemographic group are regularly seen within a service, an ability to draw on knowledge of relevant beliefs, practices and lifestyles                   |
| An ability to identify protective factors that may be conferred by membership of a specific sociodemographic group (e.g. the additional support offered by an extended family)           |
| An ability to take an active interest in a person's social and cultural background and hence to demonstrate a willingness to learn about their sociocultural perspectives and world view |

### **Ability to gain an understanding of the experience of specific beliefs, practices and lifestyles**

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| An ability to work collaboratively with people in order to develop an understanding of their culture and world view, and the implications of any culturally-specific customs or expectations for the ways in which problems are described and presented |
| an ability to apply this knowledge in order to intervene in a manner that is culturally sensitive, culturally consistent and relevant   |
| an ability to apply this knowledge in a manner that is sensitive to the ways in which people interpret their own culture (and therefore recognises the risk of culture-related stereotyping)  |
| An ability to take an active and explicit interest in a person's experience of the beliefs, practices and lifestyles pertinent to their community to:   |
| help them discuss and reflect on their experience   |
| identify whether and how this experience has shaped the development and maintenance of their presenting problems  |
| identify how they locate themselves if they 'straddle' cultures   |

### **Ability to adapt communication**

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| Where the practitioner does not share a person's language, an ability to identify appropriate strategies to enable their full participation in the assessment or intervention    |
| where an interpreter/advocate is employed, an ability to draw on knowledge of the strategies that need to be in place for them to work effectively and in the person's interests |
| An ability to adapt communication with people who have a disability (e.g. using communication aids or by altering the language, pace and content of sessions)                    |

### **Ability to demonstrate awareness of the influence of the practitioner's own background**

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| An ability for practitioners of all backgrounds to draw on an awareness of their own group membership and values and how these may influence their perceptions of a person, their problem and the therapeutic relationship |
| An ability for practitioners to reflect on power differences between themselves and a person   |