COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

This section outlines competences for collaborative problem solving. These competences are for professionals who have had appropriate training in collaborative problem solving.

Knowledge

An ability to draw on knowledge that patients experiencing acute mental health crisis usually have a multitude of problems or stressors contributing to their distress (for example, homelessness or financial difficulties), and that:	
	they may not have the resources to overcome these problems
	they may struggle with how to manage or solve these problems
	their problems may not have a clear solution
An ability to draw on knowledge that the problems that the patient is facing may not be solvable by them alone and that:	
	staff may have to intervene with problems, such as, homelessness or difficulties accessing benefits
	the problems may be long standing and not immediately solvable and therefore should be incorporated into their discharge and community care or recovery plan
An ability to draw on knowledge that high levels of distress can hinder problem-solving and perpetuate the crisis therefore problem-solving can be an important crisis intervention in its own right	
An ability to draw on knowledge that problem-solving is not about locating the problem in the individual as there are most often wider interpersonal, social, cultural, and political causes to the problems they face	

An ability to deliver problem-solving strategies

An ability to deliver problem-solving in a normalising, validating, and compassionate manner bearing in mind that:	
	patients may have a large number of presenting problems and may feel understandably overwhelmed and distressed about them
	some problems may not be solvable and therefore know when problem-solving strategies may not be suitable or invalidating
An ability to include the patient's family and carers in the delivery of problem-solving interventions	
An ability to identify the key problems which have contributed to and are perpetuating the current crisis, and prioritise the ones which are most urgent to address	
An ability to explain the rationale for problem-solving (i.e., a focus on helping to manage stressors effectively in order to help manage the crisis)	
If relevant, an ability to help the patient identify any cognitive "biases" or thinking styles that contribute to difficulties in problem-solving (for example, believing they have no control over their problems)	
An ability to help the patient undertake problem-solving in an effective manner by:	
	asking them to describe their problems in a concrete and specific way
	brainstorm initial ideas and generate possible solutions
	choose their preferred solution
	examine the consequences and weigh up the pros and cons
	supporting them to test out these possible solutions
	review and revise the solutions if necessary to see if they can be improved
An ability to help patients develop alternative (backup) plans which they can put in place if their first plan does not work	