

**Likewise**

# Impact and Learning Evaluation Report

MAY 2019



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# Introduction

## Foreword

At Likewise, we take our learning seriously - in order to respond to the realities of the people we work with and the contexts we work in, learning is fundamental to our success. The previous evaluation cycle was an important first step in tracking, formalising, and assessing this learning. It provided confidence in our ways of working - client satisfaction and outcomes were highly pleasing, linking directly to the kind of work we had done in developing our staff learning program. Staff were coming to terms with complexity, developing emotional intelligence, and were able to be highly professional without sacrificing the quality and authenticity of relationships.

The first cycle also gave us a sense of what to examine moving forwards - questions emerged about the role of volunteers, the capacity of staff to manage high workloads, and our continual processes of learning as the organisation grows and changes. As such, this current report does not stand alone but emerges as part of the broader evaluative process - the questions we ask and the things we evaluate in this cycle are a direct result of our previous analysis.

The evaluation process is itself a learning experience, and this cycle has brought up a lot to think about. Whereas the first cycle was somewhat of a blank canvas onto which we could paint what we found, this cycle is more joined-up with previous data, a

continuation rather than a new creation. The excitement of the new has been replaced with a more critical think about our evaluative purposes and methodologies, and this brings with it a sense that we still have much to learn in terms of improving these processes. Nonetheless, this analysis is highly valuable - the insight gained here is useful not only in shaping our future research and ways of working, but also in sharing our learning journey and how we have come to where we are.

As with our previous report, we accept the pitfalls of in-house evaluation. We have aimed for objectivity, but welcome challenges, queries, and support to help us improve - please do get in touch using the contact details below.

We also recognise the density of this report - we value the detail as central to our story, but are aware that others may want a quicker overview. If so, we recommend the executive summary, the conclusion, and the tables and boxes on page 14, 25, 29, and 34.

Finally, as much of the report refers to and builds on our previous evaluation we have included an overview of that evaluation on page 53.

However, if you would like to read this in full head to [www.likewise.org.uk/reports](http://www.likewise.org.uk/reports)

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# Executive Summary

The previous report focussed on staff learning and its impact on the work with clients. It captured the role of acceptance, emotional intelligence, the capacity to be comfortable with complexity, and the way these facets enabled strong relationships with clients. These relationships formed the basis of a diverse range of outcomes that were meaningful for clients.

It also found that the autonomy given to staff combined with the workload could be challenging; that some staff felt over-reliant on their line manager; and that some clients were anxious about working with volunteers.

For this evaluation cycle we wanted to build on these findings, and continue our evaluation of client outcomes. As such, we further examined the experience of clients across our services and how the support relationships might or might not contribute to change. We evaluated and assessed how our support and learning processes were or were not supporting staff to manage the high workloads in social care - with staff at the heart of delivering our service, their resilience is integral to the organisation. We looked deeper into the learning of the volunteers and its impact on the work with clients, something particularly important as an increasing number of hours are delivered by volunteers.



## FINDINGS: KEY STATISTICS

### Benchmark statistics

- 96% satisfaction rate for 6-8 session service and 100% satisfaction rate for floating support.
- 100% of clients across both services agree or strongly agree they have a good relationship with their key worker.
- 95% of 6-8 session clients and 80% of floating support clients agree or strongly agree that they have control over what they do in the service.

### Outcome statistics

- 85% of 6-8 session clients and 77% of floating support clients agree or strongly agree that the service has helped them achieve what they wanted to achieve.
- 76% of 6-8 session clients and 70% of floating support clients agree or strongly agree that they are managing their mental health better since using the service.

## ANALYSIS

- The questionnaire data broadly supports our approach. It also raised questions about the nature of independence that we would like to further explore.
- We found that staff had become more person-centred in their thinking than they were previously, and that their work had become even more contextualised. The structure of the organisation enabled their autonomy and flexibility. Clients valued the way this allowed for adaptation to their lives, the fact we could work alongside and support other services they were in contact with, and as a broader contribution to their mental wellbeing.
- In particular, clients valued the fact that this flexibility and contextualisation meant staff could do things other services might not be able to - staff could get on with whatever it was clients wanted. This seemed to contribute to wellbeing in three ways: distraction

from negative thoughts; reducing the administrative burden; and providing purpose and structure to their lives. It also produced a high number of diverse and meaningful outcomes for clients.

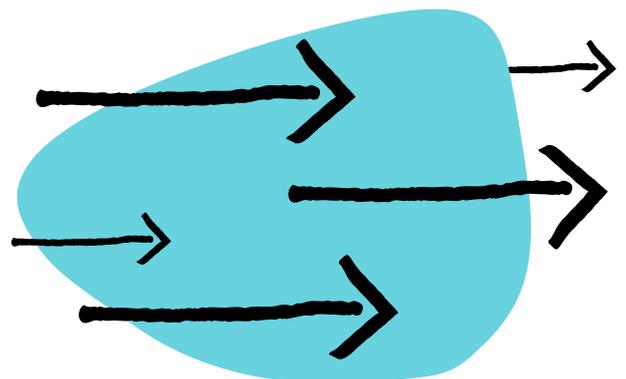
- Much of this 'doing' was supported by the conversations clients and staff were having. Staff had learnt a particular tone that enabled them to 'name the elephant', using humour, authenticity, and the normalising of emotions to have honest, challenging, but supportive conversations - these lead to more action and had a great deal of value in themselves for many clients.
- To examine staff autonomy in dealing with high workloads, a literature review demonstrated that the structures Likewise has in place to support staff should enhance resilience and reduce burnout according to the evidence on best practice.
- In particular, staff valued the stepping back from their work in reflections and supervisions, and the cultural tone of 'lightness' that allowed for optimism over anxiety. We also found that high workload intermittently limits the capacity of staff to take advantage of these tools and structures, and have begun developing ways to further support their use.
- Staff used the concept of 'good enough' in managing their feelings about the work, a concept that aims to support staff think realistically about what they can and cannot control whilst providing the reassurance necessary to be flexible. Due to the high intrinsic motivation of staff and the nature of values-led work, this assurance was not always easy to grasp and some staff lacked confidence in being sure their work was values-led - whilst overall reliance on line managers was decreasing, people felt over-reliant on their affirmation of values. As such, we are developing ways to make this process clearer and easier without diminishing the necessary reflexivity of accountable and high-quality work.
- Staff had learnt to individualise learning for volunteers. This included a particular emphasis on reflective practice, something volunteers seemed to particularly utilise and appreciate, and which

seemed to be coming through in positive evaluation of volunteers by clients.

- A small number of volunteers struggled with the contextual nature of the learning. As this is vital for learning to be person-centred, we will experiment with more direct learning to support this approach.
- Clients were positive about volunteers they worked with. There remained an anxiety about working with new people due to a fear of loss in terms of relationship and the capacity to hold a persons story over time. However, the sustained relationship with Pod Leaders was able to mitigate these anxieties in practice, and working through the anxiety was itself a positive outcome for several clients.

## MOVING FORWARD

- We will look to further understand notions of independence and opportunity as part of people's experience with support and change.
- As we develop and try out new processes of learning and holding each other accountable to values, we will continue to monitor staff and volunteer capacity and confidence to use the values and how this translates to the work.
- We are re-considering our evaluative processes to make sure we are making best use of our resources and truly capturing what we need to in order to deliver the best service possible, looking at the use of ethnographic and co-produced methods and different means of reporting in the future.



## **Where we left off**

As each of our 6 month evaluative cycles opens up new questions or areas for consideration, we focus our research questions so that our learning builds on itself over time. In this section, we detail the questions and considerations raised by the previous cycle and how they have informed our current research focus.

Our last report focussed on three areas (the executive summary of that report can be found in the appendix). The first was how clients were benefitting (or not) from our approach, and we found that they were achieving a diverse range of outcomes meaningful to them. In particular, clients pointed out the benefits of acceptance and the quality of relationship with staff, and interviews demonstrated the role of emotional intelligence in both enabling staff to work non-judgementally and helping clients consider their own emotions differently. Based on this evaluation, there were several areas for further development. Firstly, we wanted to dig deeper and further our understanding of the kinds of things that enable meaningful change, unpicking the processes that are useful within those support relationships. Secondly, we wanted to broaden our data to include our 6-8 session program, as it was a vital element of our working that we were missing. On top of these two, we are not complacent about our previous successes - we use each evaluation cycle as a continual check on client experience, so this report also evaluates this more generally to assess our progress.

The second area we focussed on in October 2018 was our staff learning program - to what extent were workers becoming equipped to truly work with difference? Again, the results were very positive - staff had learnt to accept complexity as part of their work, responding to the individuality and full personhood of their clients without pre-conceived assumptions. However, we did not have data about volunteer learning, and 6 months later this makes up a larger proportion of the work - as key elements in the delivery of the service, evaluating their learning and their work makes up a significant part of this cycle. Additionally, as staff learning has progressed we also wanted to know how this continuing development translates into practice.

Finally, our previous report looked at accountability, examining the use of values rather than rigid outcomes targets. We found that these enabled high levels of professionalism whilst maintaining flexibility when supported by the organisational culture, reflections, and consistent supervisions. Whilst having a very positive effect on the client experience, two potential issues came up: staff felt over-reliant on their line manager, and such flexibility and staff autonomy meant that some felt occasionally overwhelmed by the work. Given how important staff are in delivering our work and building the relationships that produce outcomes for clients, we wanted to look in more detail at how staff are dealing with high workloads in comparison with the broader sector. We also wanted to track changes in the way people think about values, and see whether reliance on line managers would shift as staff became more bedded into their roles.

We thus began this research cycle with a clear direction and specific questions to explore. As we undertook the evaluation, the data also revealed other issues for us to consider and share. From all of these, we came up with three key questions that are dealt with in this report:

### **1. How are clients currently benefitting (or not) from our approach?**

This is our most important question, and runs throughout the entire report. In answering this question, we want to not only check on our progress and impact, but also attempt to dig deeper into the processes of relational change than we had previously. We also have enough data to include the 6-8 Session clients in this analysis. We have also used new methods to get a sense of how we are able to achieve outcomes for both floating support and 6-8 Session programs, further elucidating the nuts and bolts of change within the relationship.

### **2. How are our processes of staff support currently impacting staff capacity to manage their workloads?**

How staff manage their work in a sector that necessitates high workloads is of central importance, particularly with retention low and burnout high across social care. As such, we examine the extent to which our organisational structure supports their capacity to manage these workloads and how that compares to

elsewhere in the sector. Understanding this is vital to ensure we can maximise our own capacity to support them.

### **3. How are volunteers learning and how does this impact the work?**

Having begun our volunteer program in full, we have had our first volunteer graduates moving through the organisation. We want to understand how and what they were learning and how this impacts the client experience.

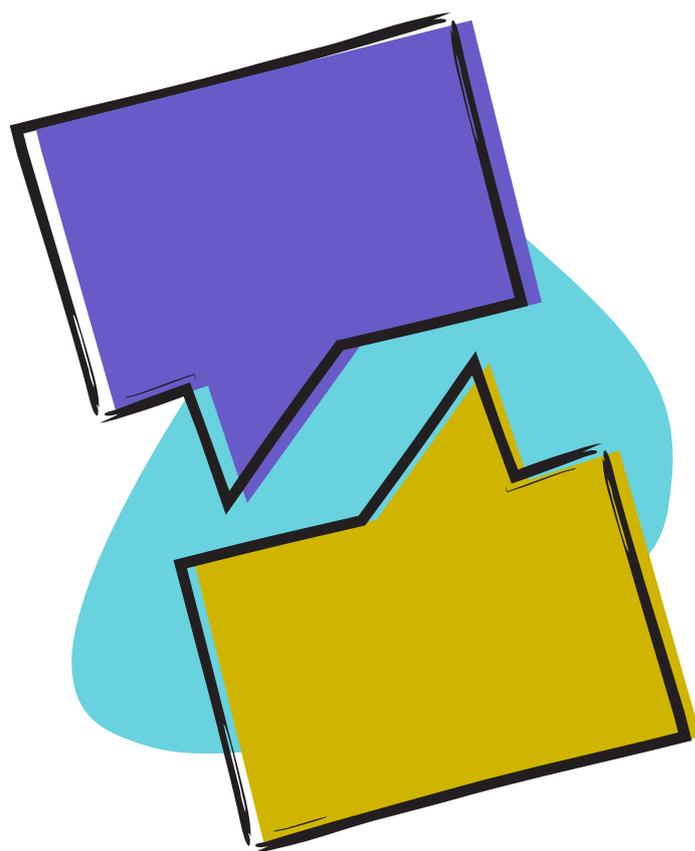
## **Methods**

### INTERVIEWS

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were undertaken over the course of two months with seven members of staff. These allow for deeper understanding of how they learn, their approach to the work, and what goes into support relationships. As the interviewer was a staff member, understanding of the work could be used to ask probing and clarifying questions, but may have led to answers being framed differently than they would to an external interviewer. All data has been carefully considered as to whether it is reasonably valid, and where doubt is present it has been removed from analysis.

We have also been undertaking output interviews with all staff, meeting regularly to record what they have been doing with each client based on that client's unique context. For reasons of confidentiality, this data cannot be reported on directly but we have produced an amalgam of such data on page 14.

We undertook qualitative, semi-structured interviews with ten Floating Support clients using stratified sampling, classifying clients by their Pods to ensure the data was representative of experience with all our members of staff. Two floating support clients were randomly selected from each of our two smaller Pods,



and three from each of our two larger Pods for a more representative sample. Where clients were unable to be interviewed, different names from those Pods were randomly selected. Two more clients were selected opportunistically. In one case, this was to test whether interviews with clients who had been interviewed in the previous cycle were valuable - the data was interesting enough that we will be doing this more in the next cycle.

We also randomly selected ten 6-8 session clients to interview over the phone. We were only able to contact one person who had finished this service early - with approximately 20% of those using the service finishing early, this is not a representative sample. This is taken into account in conclusions we draw, and we are making a concerted effort to contact more people who leave the service early.

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were also taken with five placement student volunteers who had completed their placements with the most recent set of Pod Leaders.

## QUESTIONNAIRES AND SURVEYS

Quantitative and qualitative data was taken from feedback forms that were distributed to all clients who had been with us for three months or longer or were ending the 6-8 session service. There were 26 responses from Floating Support clients and 23 responses from 6-8 session clients. We also sent out adapted questionnaires to family members and carers of clients - however, with only two responses received we have not included these in this evaluation cycle. As this number grows, we will be able to report on this in more detail.

A questionnaire was also delivered to volunteers and placement students currently working with us, of which we received 31 responses.

## INTERPRETATION

We have done our utmost to increase objectivity by randomly selecting the sample and being transparent about our findings. Whilst we have used a literature review to get some comparative data, this is far from a perfect comparison and with the analysis being done internally, there remains a significant level of subjective interpretation. We hope our transparency about this enables you to approach it better informed. We have tried to ensure it captures both an honest picture of our work and tells a story of where we are that is useful for individuals and organisations interested in our approach. However, to re-emphasise: we welcome alternative interpretations and dialogue from external audiences - please get in touch with us regarding any feedback, input, or challenges to this interpretation of our work.

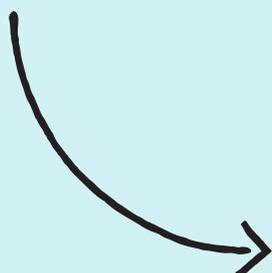
## ANONYMITY

All the data has been anonymised - names and other identifying details of all interviewees and staff has been variably altered so that they cannot be identified.



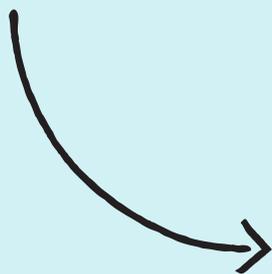
# Likewise in numbers

## BENCHMARK RESULTS



% of clients who...	Floating Support	6-8 Session service
... were satisfied or very satisfied with service	<b>100%</b>	<b>96%</b>
... agree or strongly agree that they had control over what they did in the service	<b>80%</b>	<b>95%</b>
... agree or strongly agree that they have a good relationship with their key worker	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
... agree or strongly agree that they could contribute towards the service	<b>85%</b>	<b>87%</b>

## OUTCOMES RESULTS



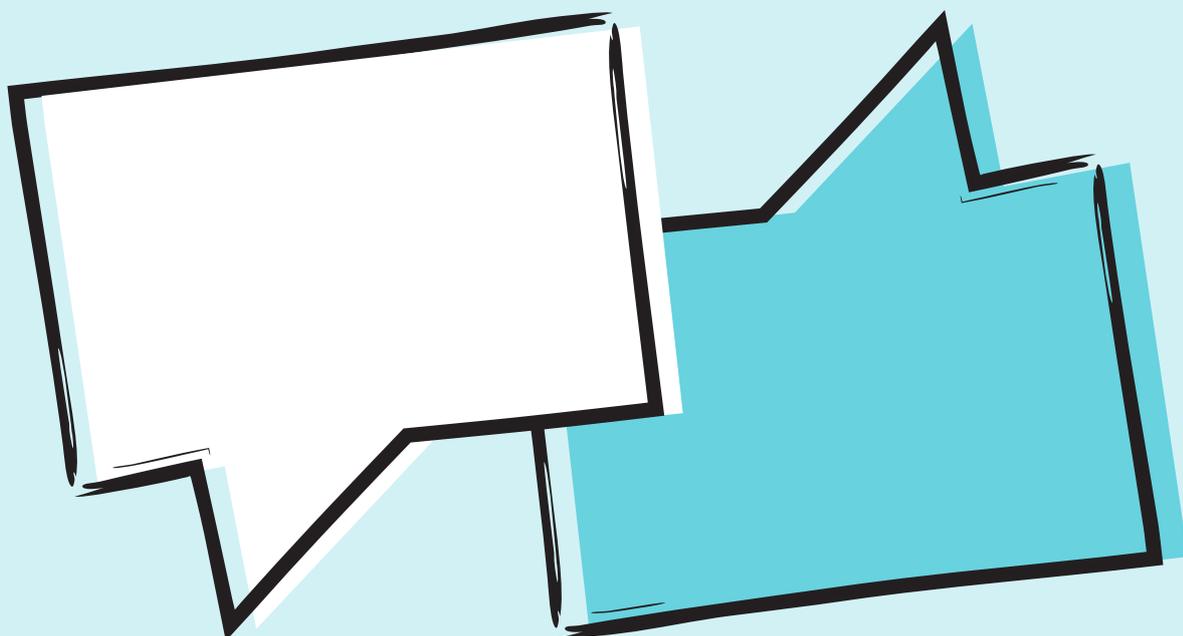
% of clients who...	Floating Support	6-8 Session service
... agree or strongly agree that they are better managing their mental health since working with the service	<b>76%</b>	<b>70%</b>
... agree or strongly agree that they are more independent since using the service	<b>61%</b>	<b>52%</b>
... agree or strongly agree that the service has helped them achieve what they wanted to achieve	<b>77%</b>	<b>87%</b>
... agree or strongly agree that they have more opportunities since using the service	<b>50%</b>	<b>78%</b>

This year, we have divided our quantitative results into two categories - benchmark results and outcomes results. Benchmark results represent those processes and experiences that form the necessary base of support for outcomes to occur - the relationships and mutuality we prioritise as the pre-requisites to change. The Outcomes results are things that may follow on from these processes, but they are understood in the context of our broader evaluation rather than taken as core indicators of our progress.

The numbers from the surveys are largely supportive of our approach. Client satisfaction has gone up from last year (the 4% who were neutral or dissatisfied from the 6-8 session service stated that the reason for this was simply the time-limit of the service, something built into the contract we have with the Local Authority for delivering it), as has the sense of good relationships with key workers. The high levels of control and the fact most people felt they could contribute the service is particularly reassuring for person-centred working - alongside our other data, this suggests people clearly had a sense of mutuality within their support. We believe every support service should prioritise the quality of relationship and mutuality as the first step to achieving change - those high levels of reported achievement are understood in the context of those core processes.

The levels of independence reported are a point of interest for us. For 6-8 session service clients, that half of clients felt increased independence in such a short time period is something we are pleased with. Nonetheless, we do not see dependence as inherently problematic as it can often be a necessary and valuable part of life. People feeling more and less dependent shifts with the kind of activity or change that is being undertaken, and increased independence is often a long-term goal rather than a quick fix. Dependence can be increased when people begin to face new things and is thus a necessary component of change. Similarly, the valuing of the relationship may create an attachment that could feel like a dependency. These results have piqued our curiosity regarding what independence means for our client base, and we hope to explore this over the next evaluation cycle

We were also interested to find that only half of our floating support clients felt they had more opportunities, particularly given the fact that 77% felt they had achieved what they wanted through the service. From our research we have a basic understanding that 'achievements' for people we work with are incredibly diverse, from being able to leave the house to setting up a chess club - however, the notion of 'opportunity' has been less explored. Over the next 6 months we will be looking into this in more detail to understand how opportunities are thought about and experienced and to see if this pattern is sustained.



# Direct Client Feedback

## FLOATING SUPPORT

*I feel this is more than a service : I have a strong and positive relationship with my key worker, the people I see and with the organisation as well. I can rely on help without being dependent. I see it as a caring, friendship organisation.*

*1. Flexibility, understanding, support to deal with my illness fluctuations/unpredictability, both physically and mentally. 2. Responsive - if I leave a message I get rung back (lots don't ring back) 3. You know where you are with boundaries*

*I've found the service to be accessible, enabling, enjoyable. Has added colour and content to my life.*

*When I have my support workers, I'm able to go out (if they manage to get me out of bed!). Sometimes I can feel lazy, but the support has helped me change. For example, it pushes me to get out of bed and go out. It makes me feel good when I'm out with them.*

*The service is tailored to my needs. I also get to talk about how I feel which is great.*

*My mental health goes up and down all the time. In some ways I'm much better, in others I'm really struggling at the moment. Overall I don't think it's linked to the service, that's just the way it is.*

*I can talk to my workers and they seem to understand my issues. Sometimes when I'm out I can have anxiety but it helps to talk it through with someone. I find it really hard to go out on my own but with the support it's easier.*

## 6-8 SESSION SERVICE

*I have received sessions where I was openly able to discuss my mental health without any judgement. I feel that I received a lot of support from my key worker as she is very attentive, caring and positive.*

*I have had plenty of support and help and especially setting up the chess club which I feel is very positive for both myself and other people.*

*Because my key worker was patient with me and helped me through the stuff I wanted to discuss with her. Basically she was there for me and she was understanding.*

*The key worker was approachable and very assertive as well as easy to get along with. No hard force or strong word. Atmosphere was gentle and respectable. Mannerisms, behaviour and gentleness of worker agreeable to me - it's rough and tumble I struggle to handle.*

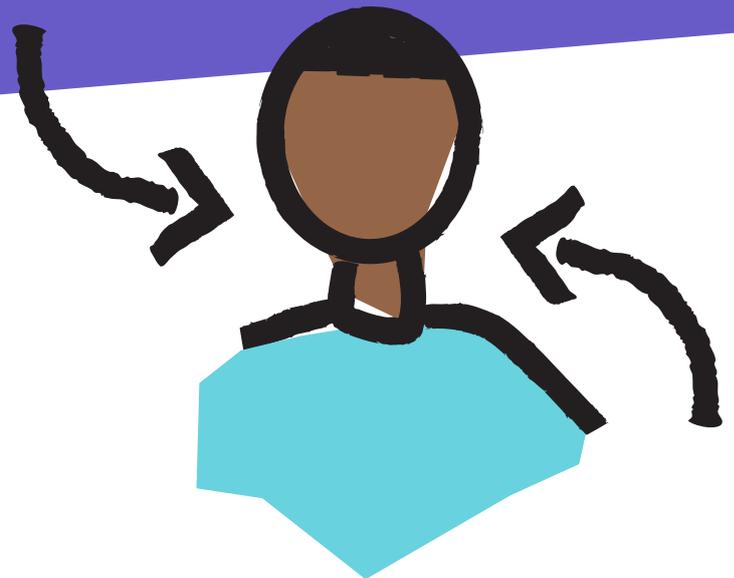
*The service has been fundamental, as it has enabled me to do practical things which would otherwise have been impossible, which would have had a really domino effect on my physical and mental health. It's also been actively positive to get support with these tasks. Someone being empathetic and supportive towards you, and has your best interests at heart, is really helpful.*

*I was able to contribute to my care. Nothing was pushed onto me. I have become more assertive and confident since taking the service.*

*I've still got issues but I'm coping with them better, I haven't self-harmed in a while.*

CHAPTER 1

# Person-centred working



In the previous cycle, we looked at the impact of the graduate training, examining graduate capacity to develop emotional intelligence, hold themselves and each other accountable to organisational values, and to work in complexity. During this current cycle, graduates are 9 months on from their training, settling further into the work and encountering new challenges: as Pod Leaders, they are starting to build their own pods, taking on more clients and beginning to supervise volunteers in delivering those extra hours. As such, a key element of this report is to continue this examination: how has their learning changed or developed over the last 6 months and in these different contexts, and most importantly how does this impact the work?

In answering this broader question, three key themes emerged: the increase in person-centred thinking, the importance of pragmatism and 'doing' things, and the importance of particular kinds of conversations. These themes show both a shift in learning as well as offering deeper insight into the processes that support change for our client base.

## PERSON-CENTRED THINKING AND FLEXIBILITY

*Our role is to be like a catching mitten in a baseball game - so a client comes to us and we kind of work with it, we catch it, we mould to it, we change with it and adapt around it.*

**Pod Leader**

As staff have progressed in this learning, their reflection and understanding of their work has shifted. Six months ago, much of the reflection on learning was focussed on the application of particular values, such as acceptance, neutrality, or 'lowering the tide.' Now, though, staff felt that such values made more sense in the context of a relationship rather than in abstract:

*To give an example, I'd say, something like 'opening up:' if you're just looking at that as a descriptive phrase it doesn't mean that much: someone being a bit more honest, someone saying a bit more, someone showing more of themselves. But for us, kind of like with a specific context of a client, so someone like Yasir, if he's opening up it might mean quite a lot: it might mean opening up to change, opening up to doing things differently, opening up to taking a more honest look at himself and where he's at with his life.*

**Pod Leader**

*I find it hard to identify themes if I'm thinking about my whole volume of work because it's so based on individuals and relationships we have between clients who look really different to each other. **Pod Leader***

*Once you begin to understand what it means to be present with someone and what it means to work in a person centred way, what's interesting and lovely about that is that it looks different with each individual person you're working with and with each individual doing the working. Me working with Sheila is different to you working with Sheila person-centredly. **Operations Staff***

Whilst all staff still engage with and talk of core values, there was an increasing sense of these being more grounded in the work and meaningful in particular contexts or with particular people. Staff noted that this is in part a result of the fact they have been working with some of their clients for up to two years - relationships had developed deep layers of trust and understanding (a point also echoed by many clients). There also seemed to be a move from theory to praxis, a development in that the values had been embodied enough to be creatively used:

*I'm probably now getting to a point where even with new clients some of the stuff I'm experiencing I've experienced before, so it's not a surprise, you know? I'm applying previous learning rather than being in that space of confusion. **Operations Staff***

*I felt able to try a few different tactics and play with it a bit more. So yeah, maybe just confidence and experience. **Pod Leader***

Experience with the nuances of the work means staff felt more 'bedded down' in their ways of working, comfortable enough in the approach to be able to 'play' with it. The learning seems to have moved from grappling with concepts to grappling with those concepts as they play out in real contexts - they have become yet further person-centred in their thinking.

## STRUCTURAL FLEXIBILITY

Alongside this shift came a recognition of the structural elements of their roles - the planning, logistics, and flexibility - that made such contextual working possible. Staff are given the capacity to manage their own diaries, to engage in as diverse a set of activity as useful, and to adapt their approach to every person supported by a reflective culture of accountability to values rather than rigid structures. This was best demonstrated by reflection on the capacity of workers in other organisations to do excellent work in engaging with clients but be structurally limited:

*There were some things in the way that the professional, Colin, spoke to Marco which I felt were really nice and really authentic. There were other times where he sort of fell back on risk quite a bit, which was quite servicey... It just reminded me that you can apply some values without having the ability to apply others the way we would. So I guess it's just to think about what what makes us different: it's the combination of the structure and those values. **Pod Leader***

Unlike staff held to more rigid criteria like negative risk or specific outcomes, the flexibility afforded to our staff creates a space in which they are able to fully capitalise on the context of an individual to work in ways meaningful to that specific context. Their movement in thinking from conceptual to contextual is enabled by the structure - they have the flexibility to think about the values of person-centred working in the unique context of each relationship.

During this research cycle, we used output interviews to understand the nature of this kind of working, sitting down with staff to plot their specific plan and approach to each client. By getting more detail on their context-specific approach, we capture the outputs they put into the client interactions that can contribute towards change. Table 1 demonstrates such an output plan, and provides an example of the need and capacity for staff to be able to shift and adapt to whatever is going on with clients at a particular time.

**Table 1**

Month	Context	Approach	Outcomes
September 2018	<p>Recently began working with Likewise. Diagnoses of bipolar, psychosis. Hospitalised several times over the last five years. Currently receiving a range of therapeutic and clinical support, but wants to be more independent. Very hard on herself and tends to focus on the negatives. Tends to take criticisms from clinical staff quite personally. Has a flat but is staying with sister quite a lot, who is struggling with supporting her.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs occasional reminders of things she might forget in meetings with clinical teams.</li> <li>• Trying to offer a more positive perspective on clinical team.</li> <li>• At the moment, she sees me as someone to support her and does not like it when I disagree with her. We are opening this up.</li> <li>• Support around the flat - returning to independent living. Meeting her at sister's and at her flat intermittently. Setting up plans for action to help her stay at home (buying cleaning products, finding a local church, making to-do lists).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing time staying at her own flat.</li> </ul>
December 2018	<p>Medication improvements mean she feels better. Has agreed with psychologist to focus on more community and social engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting in more community settings - trying new cafes and supporting her in interaction with people there, going for walks (lots of interaction with dog owners)</li> <li>• Have begun looking at English courses</li> <li>• Normalising anxiety around social interaction (making clear that social anxiety is not necessarily because she is ill)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have been able to disagree healthily - I challenged her on her perception of Care Co-ordinator and, after initial agitation, led to a productive conversation.</li> <li>• Better relationship with clinical team</li> <li>• More physical exercise</li> <li>• Seems to be more comfortable in social spaces</li> </ul>

Table 1 continued

Month	Context	Approach	Outcomes
January 2019	Went into Crisis House for a week due to suicidal ideations. Now adjusting to being on her own again. Needing a few reminders about appointments. Staying with sister. Has a PIP assessment next month which she is finding very stressful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalising crisis, okaying feeling bad.</li> <li>• Supporting her awareness of the strength she has showed in self-management of going into and coming out of crisis.</li> <li>• Slowly getting back into routine.</li> <li>• Going over PIP form, talking through feelings around this.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending the relevant appointments</li> </ul>
April 2019	Has begun course at the community college. Anxious, but enjoying it. Back at her own flat. Late to a few meetings this month. Feeling frustrated by her clinical team for not changing her medications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassuring that social anxiety is okay.</li> <li>• Talking about lateness, developing strategies for being on time. Being clearer with timing on our visits.</li> <li>• Offering different, more positive perspectives on her clinical team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back at her flat</li> <li>• Attending college course</li> <li>• Maintaining openness and good relationship with clinical team.</li> </ul>

### Notes on table 1

To protect confidentiality, this table is an amalgam of different clients to best represent the kinds of things going on both in and outside of a support relationship that effect the outputs of the work. This framework demonstrates several aspects of the developed ways of working:

- Cause and effect are highly complex - outcomes are a result of a combination of the client, their environment, their medication, their other support teams, and our support. Staff are adaptive and flexible to this.
- We often work alongside other services - in recognising the diversity of interactions that contribute to a clients wellbeing, a staff member's job is to work with that diversity to get the best outcomes for the client.
- Change is non-linear, with 'progress' sometimes followed by 'regress.' The outcomes are adjusted for such changes.

Outcomes may be those strived for several months ago, or more immediate needs. Any approach must adapt around the changing contexts of clients, even if this disrupts earlier planning.

- Change often takes a long time. Whilst this amalgam suggests these changes over a course of 7 months, it varies hugely from person to person.
- There is a combination of practical and emotional support - the achievement of practical outcomes as well as the nuances of conversations that help people see things differently and engage with their own care.
- These nuances mean that staff may see outcomes that clients don't and vice versa.
- A different worker may have engaged in a different approach to the same client based on the nature of that specific relationship.

## FLUIDITY

Given this continual depth of person-centred thinking, we would expect to see an appreciation of the service for its adaptability to client needs. Indeed, like the last review, the person-centred nature of the service was consistently noted by clients themselves with reference to the quality of relationship and flexible approach of their key workers - 100% of clients felt their relationship with their worker was either good or very good and 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they had control over what they did in the service.

Moreover, and building on previous findings, this flexibility was valued not only in terms of adapting to them as individuals, but also in terms of adapting to their own changeability:

*She's flexible with whatever is going on at the time... we've gone from polite conversation about the garden to, you know what, you need to be like Boudicca with these people [the housing association] **Floating Support client***

*Chris [the key worker] has been very fluid... if your understanding is that somebody has a particular problem, allowing yourself to maybe see that changing over time, I think that's also a unique characteristic - so it's also being an observer and not sort of coming and assuming that the same thing is always true or that the problem is always the same. So it's been a dynamic situation which is really good I think. **Floating Support client***

In a sector where instability is common and priorities often change, the ability to manage this is highly valued. In part this links back to the the work put into the skills of navigating complexity, including emotional intelligence and being comfortable with the unknown, but this is also where the structural freedom staff have to plan and adapt their approach comes to the fore.

## THE SOCIAL CARE PATCHWORK

As Table 1 also demonstrates, this flexible role was particularly valuable given the range and complexity of services a vast number of clients are accessing - every interviewee referenced at least one of psychologists, psychiatrists, care-co-ordinators or paid carers. As such, the value for a majority of interviewees was not simply the service itself, but the way it complemented, compensated for, or built on other services:

*There's obviously other things as well. It's part of the jigsaw puzzle which is helping me to keep my stabilizers on and just yeah, be able to keep going. **Floating Support client***

*It's actually a very very complicated kind of patchwork of things that make up people's existence when they're unwell so ideally you want sort of to let the people around you do what they're good at. **Floating support client***

74% of clients feel they are better managing their mental health since working with Likewise. This result comes in a context in which a range of other people and services are supporting the client, and we aim to actively complement them. Five examples given by interviewees were:

- putting coping strategies learnt in therapy into practice;
- supporting day-to-day administration so that someone felt better able to focus on their own wellbeing;
- supporting someone to attend and express themselves in clinical appointments;
- sharing information with a care co-ordinator about the recurrence of depressive symptoms;
- being a point of contact for a housing issue when the client felt too overwhelmed to deal with it.

Output interviews also revealed that staff were continually recognising and responding to such a 'patchwork,' as their structural fluidity enabled them to fit in where they were needed. As one client put it, our value is being able to 'dovetail' into what is already going on - supporting and bolstering the work of

recovery in ways that the specialisation of other services was often not able to, and thus enhancing outcomes for our clients.

## CHANGING THE LIGHTBULB - THE ABILITY TO 'DO STUFF'

The value of this flexibility also came through in interviewees appreciation of 'doing.' Likewise services are described as 'emotional and practical support.' Practical support can be hugely diverse - form-filling, decluttering, applications, attending community activity, getting out the house, and many more. Many services have stricter remits meaning some relatively simple tasks 'cannot' be done based on such remits - it is beyond the sometimes arbitrary line of what is and isn't their work:

*First of all, I have this intense psychological assessment to see if I fit their criteria for their 12 sessions and then it was like 'we can teach you how to file but we can't help you file' and it was like, what? I know how to file, you know, I know principles of filing. That's not my problem. It's just I can't. So I feel like I was always being passed on... it was very rigid. Sometimes people will steer everything towards what they can do and what they like doing, right? So I don't think that Helen [Likewise key worker] really does that.*

**Floating Support client**

*With [the previous support] we would usually just go to a shop right near I used to live. And, uh, we would just go to a park and that was it. We would do mainly paperwork, and that sort of thing. We would never really go for walks, or do stuff.*

**Floating Support client**

'Doing stuff' - in the case of the client above, applying to college, attending arts events, getting to medical appointments, and more - was central to the value of our service. Where other services have to consider whether the person and the proposed activity 'fits' the service, Likewise staff have the capacity to get on with whatever they could. Staff talk about this as the ability to 'change the lightbulb' - if there is something that you can do, just do it.

*I'm getting help with all the things that I need help with and I'm able to do more stuff myself because I feel less overwhelmed... so that at the end of the session is quite a lot of things done... that's fantastic.*

**Floating Support client**

*Most useful? That it gets me to do things when I'm really depressed.*

**Floating Support client**

## DISTRACTION, RELIEF, AND PURPOSE

In understanding what value this 'doing' had, client interviews revealed three different elements. One element was referred to as 'distraction' - the capacity to get away from thoughts, reflections, and fixations on those things that heighten anxiety or depression:

*It gets you out, and makes your mind more active and it takes your mind off of the other stuff that is distracting you, and like making you down.*

**6-8 Session client**

*[When out with a support worker] I can put my mind in their place, not in my mind.*

**Floating Support client**



The role of rumination in depressive and anxious symptoms is well known <sup>(1)</sup> and has been found to play a larger role in depressive and anxious symptoms than other negative cognitions <sup>(2)</sup> - it thus makes sense that distractions from such potential are valued, and social engagement and more general activity-focussed tasks are known to be beneficial in reducing these <sup>(3, 4)</sup> For others, the value of 'doing' was in reducing the sense of being 'overwhelmed' by administrative or functional tasks - it was the ability to move through a to-do list, to problem solve in order that broader elements of a person's life can continue:

*It's working well because chasing up this or chasing up that - I haven't got the energy for that, it's why things have gotten as bad as they have. So it's been really helpful. **Floating Support client***

These kind of tasks are greatly exacerbated by the nature of the environment many the interviewees found themselves in - based on our outputs interviews, over the last 6 months approximately 51% have need support with a range of medical appointments, 25% with benefits assessments and 65% with housing concerns which in several cases had remained unresolved for years. Tackling these was reported as bringing a sense of relief, and made more space in a persons life for getting on with other things.

The final element of 'doing' came from the structure that such activity provided to clients lives - a sense of movement and activity that gave a sense of purpose:

*It gives me a purpose to actually leave my house, cause otherwise I don't... If there is ever, like a free week where I have got nothing really going on, let's go for a walk that week. So it's just about motivating myself to choose to walk instead of choose sitting around. **Floating Support client***

*It makes me feel like I look forward to getting up and getting washed and I've got a reason to go out. I haven't been stuck indoors all the time. **6-8 Session client***

*Since I've been coming here I've been getting out and about you know? Before I came here I would sit in my flat all the time... the first time on a Tuesday someone came to take me out, to go on the bus. Then I started going out on the Tuesday then I started going out on a Thursday, then I started going out Saturday's.*

### **Floating Support client**

Six interviewees told stories of spending months or years in relative inertia, often at a time when their wellbeing or mental health was particularly poor. The one-to-one work provided a structure in two ways: firstly, the visits themselves were a consistent activity that began momentum; secondly, linking them in with other opportunities or activities that could structure their week, such as walks, educational opportunities, and community centre activities. These were highly valued by interviewees, and such meaningful activity is known to be central to recovery <sup>(28)</sup>. The capacity of Likewise staff to get on with these things without having to question whether they 'fit' the service was a central benefit.

## PERSON-CENTRED OUTCOMES

The benefits of our flexibility and capacity to 'do' was also clear for clients in the diversity of work that was meaningful to them. Of the 20 clients interviewed in this cycle, the most 'useful' parts of the work included:

- Housing and benefits support
- Developing strategies to emotionally manage a break-up
- Volunteering support
- Physical exercise
- Being supported in thinking about options to resolve family issues
- Help in setting up a therapeutic colouring group
- College application
- Filing
- Managing finances
- Enrolment in a cooking group
- Finding a space to do art
- Being able to walk down the street

- Being linked in with therapeutic services
- Visiting cafes, museums and galleries to mitigate depressive symptoms
- Being able to consistently meet someone for the first time in 10 years

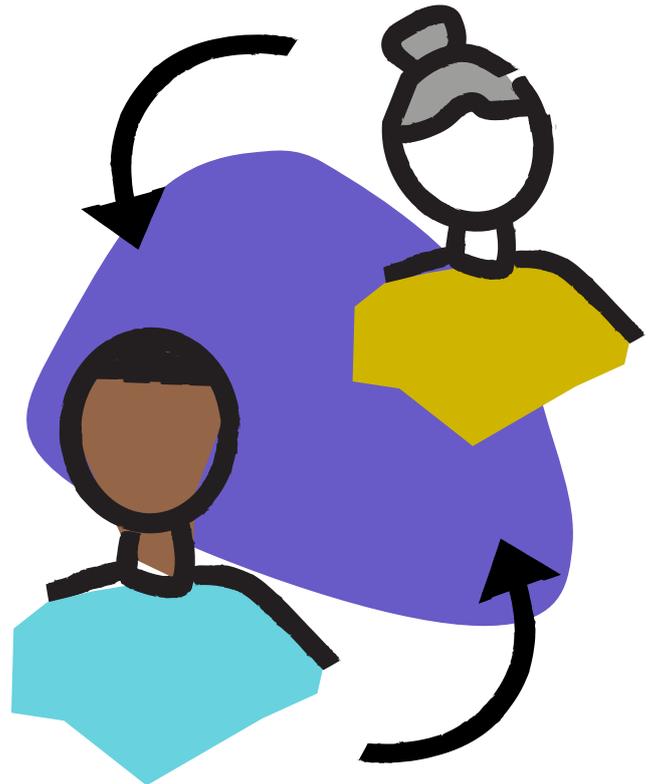
The diversity of these outcomes is, in part, a product of the structural freedom that further permeates staff capacity to think in terms of the unique context of the relationship. 76% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they achieved what they wanted through the support relationship - these goals come from the desires and specifics of clients first.

Getting to these outcomes, though, was not a straightforward process. Eleven of the twelve floating support interviewees and half of the 6-8 session interviewees entered the service doing very little - this changed during the span of their time with Likewise, sometimes quickly but more often over the course of months. Some of the elements of this process were explored in the previous report - emotional intelligence, person-centred values and healthy conflict as the basis of strong support relationships - but another theme emerged during this round of evaluation: the role of carefully considered talking.

## 'NAMING THE ELEPHANT': THE IMPORTANCE OF CONVERSATION

Output interviews demonstrated that the 'doing' activity made up only some of staff reflection and planning - a large part of staff reflection in these interviews was around the nature of conversation and interaction that might support someone in change. Examples included (see also Table 1):

- Supporting someone to see the impact of their drug use on their goals
- Helping someone to explore the role the voices they hear are playing in their decision making
- Normalising anxiety around a house move
- Bringing more optimism into the way someone views their illness and their living situation



Such conversations have the potential to be challenging. However, a key element of staff learning reported in interviews was authenticity and genuineness, and that seemingly difficult conversations can be normalised and humanised in the context of a relationship. They made particular reference to 'naming the elephant' - being honest and open about the issues that present themselves to clients and the way they deal with them:

*It seems to create a baseline of trust and of willingness to talk on their part. It's quite rare if I get that tone right for then the conversation to get shutdown or closed off... it feels like it keeps things quite neutral, normal, kind of humanises it all a bit... It seems to create a way of relating to each other that is respectful and human, genuine.*

**Pod Leader**

*I think I am starting to trust that more and more that when you do genuinely call something out but in a compassionate, good-humored authentic way, authentic in that case meaning from a position of 'I'm going to call this out because we're here to sort of work it through together and we're here to try and work with you' rather than just 'I'm going to tell you off'... it can only have a positive effect on the relationship.*

**Pod Leader**

*He's got a bipolar diagnosis and he seemed more manic than usual and I just kind of asked him about it, you know 'I noticed that you were talking quite loud and quite fast today and that's fine but do you feel any different, do you feel maybe a little bit high?' And he said 'yeah probably a bit, I feel fine at the moment but it might be something to keep an eye on.'* **Pod Leader**

As seen above, this process of 'naming the elephant' had three facets to it. Firstly, a particular tone - 'humanising,' not 'telling off,' and, where possible, 'good-humoured.' Secondly, authenticity and honesty - being upfront and honest about what you want to say and why you want to say it. Finally, normalising - a sense that whatever it is, it is 'fine.' This is not to say it does not need to change, or might not be problematic, but that it does not make someone broken - they remain accepted for who they are, and what they are going through is not something to be ashamed of. This all takes place in the broader context of the relationship.

This sense of open, honest, authentic and sometimes challenging conversation came through in the client interviews in appreciation of the conversation and interaction with staff - almost every client referred to staff being 'easy to talk to,' and the intrinsic value of conversations was expressly noted by 16 of the 20 interviewees, whether for the quality of 'being listened to without being interrupted,' the capacity to talk through options and clarify thinking, the learning from different perspectives, or the encouragement inherent in those conversations. The tone of these conversations was also readily apparent - non-judgemental, open, and honest:

*I think he's very he's very genuine and very committed to his work. He does he works with real integrity I'd say and, you know, he's clever.*

**Floating Support client**

*The relationship was very organic... I didn't have to play up to anything, I could just be myself.*

**6-8 Session client**

*She listened to me, she didn't always agree but just listened and talked to me. She listened to my ideas and never said no you can't do that.*

**6-8 Session client**

*She is open-minded and very easy to talk to.*

**Floating Support client**

## TAKING THE PRESSURE OFF

This tone - warm, honest and non-judgemental - fed directly back into 'doing,' as a key theme to emerge from the client interviews was the opportunity to explore or do things without the pressure that had been experienced elsewhere:

*The other one was more official cus it was like a psychiatrist talking me through things. It was more like going to an exam. But Sarah wasn't like that, it was like speaking to my daughter each week and talking through problems and finding ways to deal with things that would overwhelm you.* **6-8 Session client**

*Interviewer: What was the most valuable thing about the service for you?*

*Client: Very simply just to see people without any, normal pressures I guess. I haven't mixed with the public really for like 10 years, so it's difficult going out... [compared to other services] its not medicalised, its more normalising.*

**6-8 Session client**

*I went to two [clinical therapy] sessions and I felt at the time that I was being lectured by them. I didn't need somebody to tell me on paper that if you do this this and this your mood goes up or down. There's a difference. Whereas Jordan has sat and constructively listened without interrupting... there are times where I have felt comfortable saying things to Jordan that I haven't said to any of the therapists.*

**Floating Support client**

For many of the people we have interviewed, interaction and conversation with services had been defined by power dynamics of expert and patient, particular goals and objectives, and a clear expectation of achievement. The impact of this was evident:

*Seven times I signed up for pottery and college courses and every time I had to withdraw... the learning outcomes, the pressure, just the burnout really kicked in. **Floating Support client***

Pressure and pre-conceived outcomes create a particular anxiety and fear of failure that many people struggle to cope with. In the last report, we examined how the weight of failure was mitigated by an accepting relationship. Here, we see some of the processes that are part of such a relationship - those honest, normalising, and human conversations. This meant that even where there was disagreement, push back, and where the elephant was named, it was in a context in which clients retained a sense of control and openness:

*Client: She will push back, which is what I need in life... but I will always have the final say.*

*Interviewer: What do you think is the value of that?*

*Client: The freedom to choose... I am still a human and I think like having mental health issues, you lose a lot of your humanity and dignity and it's important to regain that in some point in life. **Floating Support client***

The space created by these conversations was a key sense of value, and one in which there was often a real sense of progress and exploration. In actively working on the kinds of conversations that were honest, accepting, and good-natured, the Likewise service not only stood out in comparison to some other services, but staff were able to have direct, challenging conversations in a way that prioritised the humanity of their clients. This was a key part of building the relationships that support change.

## CONVERSATIONAL OUTCOMES

The key function of these conversations is not necessarily outcomes directly, but creating a relational space in which clients can safely explore what is going on for them - these then indirectly lead to clients being able to take advantage of opportunities and attain particular outcomes. That 100% of clients agreed they had a good relationship with their key worker (with 54% strongly agreeing) is very promising in this regard, as is 75% of clients agreeing that they achieved what they wanted from the service. However, a surprising amount of direct outcomes from conversations were also present in interviews:

*A lot of the initial stuff was just kind of talking which was really most helpful to be honest... And he would say what's normal and pretty much everything was... kind of understanding, is this normal, is this not? And to explore what I could do about it. **6-8 session client***

*Sometimes when you're emotionally involved it's difficult find the solutions because you're so involved so thinking clearly is difficult, so you need practice and help to think clearly and find your options. Going through options, like saying, 'well if this happens you've got this option, if this doesn't work you can do this,' things like that... that was really useful. **6-8 session client***

*Part of getting better is talking about things for me, being able to not lock them all inside however horrible they are... if you managed to discuss the emotion of it with Scott in this case, then when you talk to a psychologist you can be very clear and lacking in emotion in your description of it which is an appropriate language for them, so it builds on your understanding of what is wrong with you, allows you to see different perspectives on that as well. **Floating Support client***

The variety of value in conversation is apparent in these examples - normalisation, clarity of thought, prioritisation, and supporting interaction with other services. The kind of talking that staff and clients were doing was not only

creating an atmosphere of exploration for clients, but also directly helping clients with achievement and ‘doing’ in various aspects of their lives.

## CONCLUSION

This second round of evaluation has supported previous findings, demonstrated shifts in learning, and built on our knowledge of the client experience of the service. Firstly, graduates and staff had shifted in the way they thought about the work - values were thought of less theoretically and more in terms of the context of the work and the relationships they helped to support. They were enabled to do this through a structure that does not restrict this flexible, individualised approach - in being held to account to values rather than outcomes or assessment criteria, their learning seemed to take staff further into the context of each client.

This flexibility and person-centredness was evident through output interviews that focussed on what staff do with clients, in particular the way staff adapt to the diversity of changing influences in a persons life. This was particularly valued by clients in terms of the way it supported other services, enabled adaption to change within clients, and as part of a broader contribution to their mental wellbeing.

Staff flexibility was also evidenced in supporting clients to ‘do’ more of what was meaningful to them. This was highly valued by clients for three different reasons: as a means of getting away from negative thoughts, as a means of reducing the administrative burden, and as a means of finding purpose and structure. This doing was enabled and supported by the quality of conversation clients had with staff. Staff had learnt to ‘name the elephant’: maintaining good-humour and positive regard, normalising emotions and feelings, and being honest and authentic. Clients valued the low pressure environment this tone created - they were able to be themselves, were under no threat of judgement, and felt like it was a genuine human relationship, even where there was disagreement. This correlated with the changes many interviewees had been through, from

relative inertia to much more ‘doing,’ as well as bringing direct benefits in terms of normalisation, decision-making, and recovery.

We were pleased with the client feedback and the way it helped with unpacking some of the dynamics of how and why our approach works. However, creating the conditions where staff are able to be flexible comes with its own sets of challenges, particularly in a sector in which workloads are known to be problematic. In the next chapter we examine how staff are supported to manage these workloads while maintaining their autonomy and flexibility, looking at the processes and challenges of supporting resilience in such a high-intensity context.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Resilience and autonomy

The previous evaluation cycle found that whilst the freedom and autonomy of staff allowed for high job satisfaction and embedded flexibility into the work, there were some staff members feeling 'overwhelmed' with the workload as they were beginning to grow their own pods. Workload is intense across the social care sector: a recent study of 3,000 social workers found that 62% of them were looking to leave their jobs within 16 months due primarily to 'the sheer amount of work.'<sup>(5)</sup> A lack of resources, an ever-increasing need for services alongside social and demographic changes, and the continuing failure of reforms to improve services<sup>(6)</sup> mean high workloads are part and parcel of working in social care in the UK<sup>(7)</sup>. At Likewise, we recognise we cannot single-handedly change such a structure. The only way to relieve workload for staff is for more recruitment: more recruitment requires more income and more clients, and this in turn means more work for staff. The inevitability of high workloads means that we aim to work with what we can, thinking about the best possible means of equipping pod leaders and operations staff to manage these very real limitations.

As such, we begin this chapter by comparing our work with research around staff burnout and staff resilience in social care. Through this, we build a picture of ways the structures at Likewise should be working to support staff and areas where we might be falling short of best practice according to the evidence base. We then examine some of these structures in more detail, using the data that emerged from staff interviews on their capacity to manage workloads, looking at the



importance of 'stepping back' from their work, the concept of 'good enough' and being realistic about what is possible, and the role of organisational values in resilience. This analysis provides an insight into both where we are succeeding and where we could think differently in a sector in which high workloads and time pressures are so common.

## EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

Our graduate learning program is set-up to support an individualised approach to development of logistical skills, enabling ways of working that best adapt to the qualities of a worker and the situations they are faced with, supported by both one-to-one supervisions and group reflection. As discussed in the previous chapter, workers are given as much flexibility as possible - whilst this is highly beneficial for person-centred working, it is also designed to maximise individualised learning for

staff. Just as we recognise that what is a meaningful outcome for each person varies according to their personality and context, we recognise that the best approach to managing work and workloads will depend on the individual capacities of staff. As such, they are in control of their annual leave, their working hours, and their timetabling. It is not expected that staff get this right straight away - instead, they are given space to examine what is and isn't working and think about what they can do about it. In some cases, this might mean organisational changes such as management of office time; it might mean setting different client expectations about availability; and it often involves a reflection on the way personal feelings are effecting this element of working and how they can be managed differently. Supervisions and group reflections are used to discuss and reflect on these processes and support learning around this. The aim of this is to give staff the flexibility to respond to the realities of the work, their own capacities and preferences, and to guide their learning to take them to a place where they feel capable of delivering the work under the inevitable pressure of the sector. We do not expect all staff to be enjoying their jobs all of the time but we do hope that this program enables enough space and learning for them to remain interested and engaged, capable of delivering a consistently high standard, and to continue our staff retention.

As a mirror to evaluate this approach, there is a considerable body of work examining the impact of different structures that contribute to poor staff outcomes. Acker's review <sup>(8)</sup> found 'strict practice guidelines, increased accountability, reduced autonomy, and a requirement to become competent with new management skills' were causes of staff burnout - that is, removing workers from the frontline and reducing their ability to be flexible or creative to their contexts was a core driver behind stress and dissatisfaction <sup>(17, 18)</sup>. Other factors included a lack of supervision <sup>(8,9)</sup>, a conflict between values and practice <sup>(10)</sup>, and some studies suggested that simply working with long-term mental illness correlates with both perceived incompetence and burnout due to the emotional stressors and the challenges of achieving outcomes <sup>(11)</sup>. A Scandinavian study found a key contributor to work stress and dropout in the sector was being unable to

realise ones own standards - not being as effective, successful, or diligent as one would want to be can greatly impact a social workers sense of competence and capacity <sup>(12)</sup>.

In contrast, several factors have been found to enhance resilience and satisfaction. High up on this list are reflective capacity and emotional intelligence <sup>(13)</sup>, workplaces that offer both formal and informal support from colleagues <sup>(14)</sup>, and autonomy over one's workload <sup>(15)</sup>. In the broader field of health care, Jensen <sup>(16)</sup> reviewed a range of studies to conclude key factors of resilience were 'setting clear boundaries between work and non-work demands; well structured work routines; effective communication skills and successful peer-support mechanisms; and enhancing self-awareness and acceptance by reflecting upon personal strengths and limitations.'

Table 2 gives an overview of how our organisational structures align to the evidence-base and the complexities of this alignment found during the evaluation.



Table 2

Factors influencing burnout and resilience	Effect (+/-)	Likewise approach	Evaluation
Lack of supervision (Huxley et al 2005, Peterson et al 2008)	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainees receive regular supervisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisions remain a space where workers gain confidence, learn, and are able to '<u>step back</u>' and see the bigger picture</li> </ul>
Conflict between values and practice (particularly values of care vs resource/ economic concerns) (Scheid 2003)	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainees recruited based on their alignment with organisational values, and given time and support in acting out of values in practice.</li> <li>• Authenticity as a central value of work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers remain confident and proud of the work.</li> <li>• Some disappointment and frustration when <u>wider context limits acting out of values.</u></li> <li>• Some work needed to <u>enhance confidence in putting values into practice.</u></li> </ul>
Working with long-term mental illness (lack of control in the face of demands for change) (Acker 1999)	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasising the long-term nature and complexity of change aims to alleviate the pressure to deliver the kind change that is put on other social workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers usually comfortable with <u>long-term cycle of change</u> and confident of value of work in that context.</li> <li>• Some dissonance or lack of confidence when working with external organisations who may not carry the same values.</li> </ul>
Reflective capacity and emotional intelligence (Kinman and Grant 2010)	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular time set aside for structured reflections;</li> <li>• Emotional intelligence a core part of learning program.</li> <li>• Staff recruited on the basis of having emotional intelligence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers remain <u>highly reflective.</u></li> <li>• Whilst increasingly <u>busy schedules limit exposure to Likewise culture</u>, staff still make the effort to engage when they can.</li> <li>• More reflection on work built into structure as a result of this evaluation.</li> </ul>
Supportive culture (Kim and Stonere 2008)	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective culture actively cultivated.</li> <li>• Staff encouraged to use each other for support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing confidence in and use of <u>supportive culture.</u></li> <li>• Consistent use of colleagues for reflection and feedback.</li> </ul>

Table 2 continued

Factors influencing burnout and resilience	Effect (+/-)	Likewise approach	Evaluation
Overly focussed on management skills such as budgeting, supervision, and evaluation as opposed to client contact (Huxley et al 2005, Acker 2009)	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers remain at the frontline, with financial management and evaluation largely held by operations staff.</li> <li>Trainees given autonomy to manage own workloads and learn through experience.</li> <li>Reflection, supervision and culture aimed to support this learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers still enjoying the <u>client contact</u> in their work</li> <li><u>Ongoing learning of logistical skills</u> - improvement, but still times where people feel overwhelmed.</li> <li>Some operations staff having clarity and confidence in their roles - others still working at it.</li> <li>Some staff working long hours, but being directly supported by colleagues to manage this.</li> </ul>
Autonomy of work, avoidance of strict guidelines (Liu et al 2005)	+		
Developing well-structured work routines Setting clear boundaries between work and non-work demands (Jensen et al 2008)	+		
Not being able to realise ones own standards (Ahlin et al 2014)	■	<p>Working in complexity relies on intrinsic motivation - so staff being motivated to do as good a job as possible is assumed and specifically recruited for. Supervisions and culture emphasise the need for work to be 'good enough,' and realistic about what staff can and cannot control. Accountability not to specific outcomes but to the acting out of values.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff still learning '<u>good enough</u>' and understanding what they can and cannot control, which seems to be <u>alleviating pressure</u>.</li> <li><u>Growing confidence</u> in capacity to do the work.</li> <li>Occasionally lacking confidence in application of <u>values</u>.</li> <li>Staff able to see value in their work even where traditional outcomes might not be met.</li> </ul>
Increased accountability to specific outcomes (Jones 2001, Jensen et al 2008)	■		

Of course, our literature review is not conclusive or exhaustive. It does, though, give us a much stronger sense of how our structures compare to the evidence of best-practice. Based on this research, many of our processes should work to directly mitigate key factors in staff burnout and poor retention rates, in particular:

- autonomy of time management (holidays, TOIL, and working hours)
- autonomy of workload (number of client visits, supervisions, office and administration time)
- consistent supervisions,
- a focus on emotional intelligence,
- a deeply reflective and supportive culture,
- self-driven learning rather than top-down bureaucratic demands,
- a focus on values and flexibility of outcomes,
- an awareness of long-term change,
- a focus on work being 'good enough,'
- ensuring frontline workers remain client facing and not dragged into bureaucratic or economic management.

However, we are still on a learning journey with these structures, and there are areas where compromise is necessary. For example, we actively make use of the high self-motivation of staff which - according to the literature - could lead to more burnout; and in our emphasis on autonomy of learning there have been struggles with developing the kind of well-structured routine that can create more resilience. Furthermore, the way some of our structures play out in reality is less predictable - whilst staff are able to work according to values, there are times when the work comes up against agencies who do not share these values and there was evidence of this causing a slight level of anxiety or disappointment. The compromises and complexities of the work mean that whilst we are confident that our structures and processes are strong according to the evidence, there is still work to be done on further development - this evaluative process is an early step towards navigating these issues.

### Staff experience of the workload

Beyond this research comparison, we were also able to track more directly the learning of staff in navigating workloads. This in-depth look at the staff journey sheds

important light on key elements of coping, highlighting particular areas of success and struggle. Three ways of working that played a particularly important role in workload management over the last 6 months were the capacity to 'step back'; the learning of what kind of work is 'good enough'; and the role of organisational values in staff confidence. In this section we examine these themes to get a fuller understanding of where we might improve.

## STEPPING BACK

Interviews demonstrated that a key element of staff learning was in taking a step back from the day-to-day desire to do, to help, or to resolve. The capacity to take a broader perspective was felt as alleviating the daily pressure, enabling people to be aware of what they can and cannot control, and ensure they get a broader sense of change and their role in a person's life. This had a direct impact on their experience of and ability to make changes to their work:

*I'll have feelings of worry or lack of confidence around that I haven't actually contributed, so then when I go into a situation with other professionals carrying those feelings through, then that feels really disempowering. Whereas actually if I'm able to have a broader perspective then I can just step back from it for a bit which is useful, opening up thinking, neutralizing the feelings and then as a result feeling able to contribute or ask questions... Initially I kind of interpreted that it's down to us to save the day but actually there are a lot of external factors and other factors at work in any one person's life... so I think I now feel less of that saviour complex. **Pod Leader***

*I was was constantly thinking I'm exhausted, I got so much to do. Well, as I've been trying to step back a little bit from it and not take it quite so seriously, not worry about it so much, you can be a bit more organised, a bit more strict. **Pod Leader***

*Interviewer: If you were to give you from six months ago some advice, what would you say?*

*Staff member: Chill. Nothing matters, but then everything matters... Nothing cannot get sorted out or can't be fixed... Just take a deep breath. Stop thinking everything's on you, because it's not.*

**Operations Staff**

These quotes suggest two temporal levels on which staff were learning operate. On one level, staff feel the burden of responsibility that comes from being in a caring profession and the sense of being pulled from one challenge to the next. At another level, staff are learning that even if things feel difficult in that moment, their role is to take a long-term, holistic look at what is going on - and that broader look means what is happening in the moment is only a part of a much bigger and less dramatic whole.

The impact of such temporal distancing on well-being and in managing emotions for more rational decision-making has been well documented <sup>(19)</sup> - in this context, being able to maintain this wider, birds-eye view on the work seems to mitigate some of the emotional stressors involved in the moment, as well as allow staff to make behavioural changes (eg. being more organised) or changes in thinking (eg. losing the 'saviour complex,' understanding what we can and cannot do) that alleviate stress and enhance care.

## LIGHTNESS AND 'FAIRY DUST'

A second element of enabling people to 'step back' from the emotional stress of the work was the role of 'lightness.' The work we do is undoubtedly emotionally challenging, dealing with a broad range of human suffering on a day-to-day basis - a key reason for the high levels of burnout in people supporting those with long-term mental illness <sup>(11)</sup>. However, whilst staff members cared about such experiences for their clients and at times felt frustrated by both the sector and wider society in the way their clients had been treated, they remained a capacity to find humour and 'lightness':

*[On working with a volunteer who missed a visit]: I can take this feeling that I've been having of 'oh my god you f\*\*\*\*\* up my visit,' and open that into a fun, meaningful conversation around 'what was going on for you?' and 'how can we build on this now? How can we make it better for you, better for the client, better for me?'* **Pod Leader**

*I think we do have a bit more of the urge to look into it more if there's just a bit more humour to it. And there's more willingness to look into it and explore it, open up, question it.* **Operations Staff**

*The CEO has described it as sprinkling a bit of fairy dust over the whole thing, so I guess I always took that to mean having a bit of freshness of prospective and a bit of optimism.* **Pod Leader**

This humour, lightness, and 'fairy dust' - a term used to reference the possibility for optimism and the importance of human warmth - seemed to have a specific effect for staff: it enabled them to explore the work with less of the negative emotional weight, be it fear, sadness, or anger. Such emotions do not vanish, but are made manageable. This concept was particularly linked to areas where there might be conflict between staff members, clients and volunteers, taking the heat out of the moment and helping all of these parties view something with possibility rather than anxiety.

## STRUCTURAL SUPPORT AND WORKLOAD

Staff members made particular reference to the way supervisions, reflections, and engagement with the organisational culture enabled these processes:

*[In supervisions] it's easier to have that step of removal, like rather than being in the midst of it, so step back and see what might be going on for all parties. It's actually kind of helped in my thinking... because you're less in it you can see more generally what's going on sometimes.* **Pod Leader**

## SUPERVISION

Throughout both evaluation cycles, the role of supervision has come up as central to staff learning. It is thus important to further open this up.

Supervisions occur weekly and are driven by the staff member who sets the agenda based on three broad themes:

- 'Client work' includes a run-through of the what has been happening with clients that week, with reflections on what is and isn't working, how people have been feeling about this, and what could be done or thought about differently. It will also include reflections on supervision of volunteers once pod leaders are doing this.
- 'Ways of working' includes reflection on operational elements such as workload management, engagement with the team and the culture, and any other pieces of work separate from the client work (for example, community projects or training).
- 'Me' involves reflections on what is going on for an individual more broadly. This can be work related or personal - in recognising that each person engages with the work, the learning, and the reflection differently, this is an opportunity to explore the broader experience of a person and the way this relates to these facets of working at Likewise.

- The role of the line manager is not to do things for the staff member, but to aid them in their thinking. As such, their main functions are:
- To allow staff to engage with the learning in their own way, making best use of supervision according to individual needs, personalities, and progress.
- To aid the reflection of the individual, allowing them to work through their own thinking with questioning, guidance, and re-framing.
- To re-direct where there are particular problems or issues and make specific suggestions where necessary. Like all the learning at Likewise, the level of direct input is contextual - it will differ depending on the person, the issue, and the timing.
- To give staff more options and help them think about their decision making so they can go on and try out new ways of working.
- To hold staff accountable to values, safeguarding, and person-centred working, and stay in touch with exactly what is going on in the work.

Unlike traditional supervisions, there is no requirement for action points or formalised appraisal. Like pre-defined outcomes, these can quickly become tokenistic and limiting if not based in the context of the person and their work. There will often be specific actions to be taken as a result of supervisions, but equally there will be days when the focus is on reflection and re-framing thinking.

However, they also found that the busier they were, the 'less accessible' these structures and processes were - they spent less time in the office and so weren't as 'dipped in the culture,' or they got into a habit of just doing the work, 'keeping things ticking over' rather than taking a step back. It was at these points where the work could start to feel like it was too much. Whilst a concern, their awareness of this is itself indicative of a learning process - staff spoke about how they were both successfully and unsuccessfully making efforts to better manage their time, engage with the culture, and step back to evaluate.

The 'right' way of navigating this is still being worked out by both staff and the organisation as a whole. Parts of this can only be solved by further recruitment (a process underway whilst this report is being written), and staff continue in their development of time and priority management based on long-term perspectives. However, as a direct result of this evaluation we have developed our outputs recording which ensures staff have monthly meetings in which this stepping back to examine broader goals and changing contexts of clients is embedded in their working life. These are combined with 6 monthly reviews with clients in which they discuss these goals together and re-write a joint plan.

## GOOD ENOUGH?

During interviews, a term that came up time and time again relating to work pressure was ‘good enough.’ In this section, we examine the important role this phrase plays in supporting staff to think about their work and workload, considering the ways in which staff assess their own work and the impact this can have on factors relating to staff resilience. Finally, we set out areas of consideration that this analysis points us towards as we move forwards.

## GOOD ENOUGH, FLEXIBILITY AND PRESSURE

Whilst seemingly innocuous, ‘good enough’ held a prevalent position in discussions of various aspects of the job:

*In terms of my confidence in [a volunteer] working with clients and just knowing she’d do a good enough job, I think I felt really confident in that.*

**Pod Leader**

*When I don’t feel like I’m reflecting as much I think I can tend to be in a bit more of a mode of ‘let’s keep this [client work] ticking over, let’s make sure it’s good enough.’ Whereas now I’ve had a short break, had a reflection this morning, I just feel like I’ve got more head space to think ‘ok, what is our work doing, where can we add value?’*

**Pod Leader**

*Interviewer: Do we think the organisation could get by without the CEO?*

*Staff member: It might still be good enough - we have enough learning, energy and passion for things to go along okay.*

**Operations Staff**

The term ‘good enough’ is one actively cultivated at Likewise. In recognising that many of the problems in social care come from a need for control, ensuring work is ‘good enough’ cedes some of that control - it is a statement that suggests so long as a few facets are in place, support will be valuable and do no harm. These basics include authentic relationships, a degree

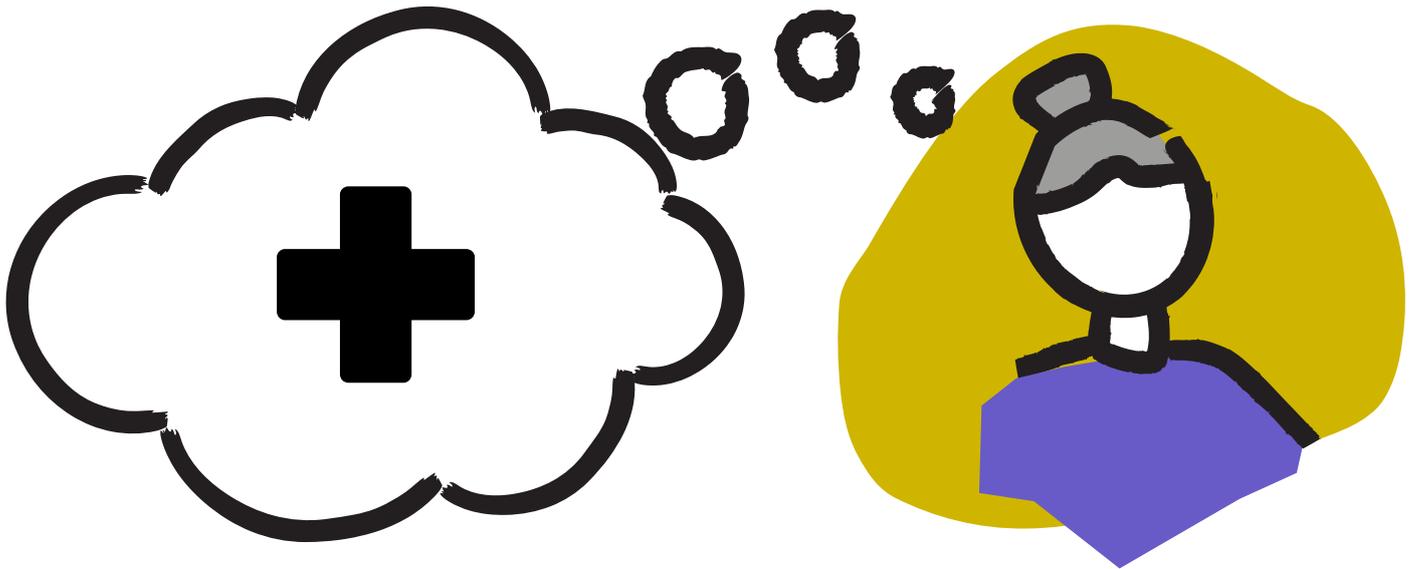
of emotional intelligence, and the centring of person-centred working. ‘Good enough’ holds that so long as we are working according to our values, we are still supporting the client - even on inevitable bad days when everything seems to be going wrong, the values that make the work ‘good enough’ act as safeguards and benchmarks for good support work. This is useful at two levels. Firstly, it allows for flexibility - so long as experimentation and creativity is within the values, staff can be more comfortable with trying out new things. They are assured that they are not doing a ‘bad job’ so long as their creativity is within the value-remit of ‘good enough’ (see page 34 - 36 of our October 2018 report for more detail on this).

Secondly, it is valuable for alleviating pressure on staff. Various studies have found that a key element of staff burnout in social care is pressure to achieve certain outcomes or ways of working, whether enforced externally by top-down structures and rigid

## DO NO HARM

Some services and interventions have the ethos of ‘we do good.’ Whilst admirable, it can be actively othering. It can place someone as a recipient of beneficence for which they should be grateful: dissatisfaction with the service or failure to ‘get better’ is thus their problem, not ours. It forgets that support services are always interlopers - their very existence is due to the fact that something has gone wrong.

Fundamental to our thinking is ‘do no harm.’ This encourages us to avoid complacency in our own inherent value and always recognise that whilst we want to be good at what we do, we would much rather that what we do wasn’t necessary. ‘Do no harm’ encourages us to relinquish self-importance and maintain awareness that it is possible for services to have negative impact. It aims to neutralise the service, placing it as a broker for change rather than an imposing force, and recognises the full realities of a person and their need for support.



bureaucracy <sup>(7, 17)</sup> or internally, by one's own sense of value. Ahlin <sup>(12)</sup> found that the 'stress of conscience' - the self-imposed pressure to alleviate suffering, even when such an achievement is outside your control - was one of the most important contributors to burnout in social work. Similarly, holding values that are not able to thrive in practice can be highly detrimental <sup>(10)</sup>: if your sense of value is one that does not make space for that suffering which is outside of your control, or that desires to see people 'fixed' or 'cured' when such outcomes are rare <sup>(21)</sup>, disappointment or exasperation is inevitable.

People in social care have lives enmeshed in a number of factors outside their control. Our staff, lacking statutory or clinical power, can at best influence but often simply support someone to face these factors. Staff, too, face their own restrictions and challenges - limited time, unexpected events, and volunteer absences are a reality. In such circumstances, to be able to be the best possible support worker in every visit, to contribute to the organisational culture 100%, to impress every clinical professional, to stay on top of administrative duties at all times, and to be the perfect supervisor - these things are not possible.

As we see in the quotes above, 'good enough' supports staff to accept the complex and difficult realities of their work: in feeling confident a volunteer would do a good job; as a means of doing client visits when exceptionally busy; and even as a means to think about the broader organisational goals.

'Good enough,' then, involves finding the balance between ideals and limitations and between creativity and values. In attaining this balance, parameters have to be set - where and how are the lines of 'good enough' drawn to ensure consistently high quality work?

## INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND 'GOOD ENOUGH'

One necessary parameter of 'good enough' is in the intrinsic motivation of staff. 'Good enough' has been earmarked as problematic in other fields due to the potential for low expectations - however, such risks can be alleviated by a deep desire to do as well as possible <sup>(22)</sup>. As Lowe and Plimmer point out, this 'intrinsic motivation' is necessary for working in complexity - when outcomes cannot be assessed with standard measures, knowing that staff and organisations are motivated to do as well as they can is an integral part of building stakeholder trust in the quality of the service <sup>(23)</sup>. This level of motivation and the desire to be better was clear throughout the interviews:

*I found myself almost feeling like a competition with a previous month, a feeling that I need to improve on this, that the pod always needs to be growing. **Pod Leader***

*I quite often go to supervision being like, 'we need to do more and I need to find other options and what else could I do?' **Pod Leader***

*I often struggle with whether or not I'm bringing value. **Operations Staff***

Throughout these interviews, the desire and effort put into to doing a 'good job' and, in particular, 'bringing value' to both the organisation and the lives of clients was ubiquitous. On top of this, the willingness to work long hours, to contribute to and be part of the culture, and to play a role in the growth and development of the organisation beyond the remit of a traditional role was prevalent. At Likewise, 'good enough,' rests in a context of genuine effort and commitment.

However, as the latter quote suggests, this intrinsic motivation brings its own struggle. Such is the desire to do a good job, the notion of 'good enough' does not mean that 'stress of conscience' or a lack of confidence is entirely relieved:

*I still struggle with seeing that as something enough, good enough, worthwhile enough, and I guess still working out where I add value in the work is something that I'm still grappling with. **Pod Leader***

*I think there's always that slight feeling of like, I don't think my own style is in conflict with the values but I don't think it's quite, it's not 100% being checked against them. **Pod Leader***

*It all became a bit of an amalgam in my head of: the system's broken. There's lots of people who are in a really bad situation. They're being ignored. There's not the support there that they need, we're in this position where we are trying to help them, I'm making a bad fist of that, what the hell we gonna do about that? **Pod Leader***

Whilst almost all staff members felt generally more confident in their work, there remained an element of reflection on feelings of incompetence or insecurity, even where 'good enough' was utilised. In a context in which gains are subtle, setbacks common and sometimes dramatic, and in which staff are highly motivated to do as good a job as possible, 'good enough' could be hard to grasp.

## GOOD ENOUGH VALUES

Some of this insecurity was linked to the fact that the parameters of 'good enough' are based not on clear outcomes but on organisational values. Likewise staff are held accountable to those values explored in the previous report - ways of working and thinking rather than specific achievements. In allowing for flexibility and positive risk-taking, they are necessarily blurry and contextual. Questioning whether their work is 'good enough' according to such values is challenging, and had implications for staff confidence. One example of this was that whilst overall reliance on the CEO had diminished since the last report, when it came to values there was still a sense of dependence:

*I feel like they are his values, so I'll be confident that therefore when I discuss them with him I've got an answer that grounds me in the values... so I think there's a risk that I kind of go back to my own style a bit too much if I haven't had supervision in a while and just checked in with the values. **Pod Leader***

*I think just working out how the values filter down into the work is something that is still kind of an ongoing learning experience and I think sometimes it can be fairly clear but other times it can be more complex and veiled in everything else that's going on. **Pod Leader***

*One thing that concerned me was that we needed to take it to him as a mediator... what he is very good at is holding us to account within those values and being very clear on what they are and what they look like and how they manifest in practice. **Operations Staff***

Every staff member felt that the the CEO remained the final arbiter of the values, and many felt that as individuals they should be better or clearer when holding themselves and others to account to such values. Importantly, though, this came alongside growing confidence in the broader culture and colleagues to hold them to account:

*I feel more confident in making those decisions because I have more of that feeling of, not 'what would he [the CEO] do' but 'what would he say?' What would any of us say to each other in this situation? Whereas before I think I was just nervously ploughing on... by being more active and engaged in the conversation I feel less reliant.*

**Pod Leader**

*I think as a team it always feels like we're grappling with the stuff, that we're trying to challenge each other and we're thinking about what we're doing, it feels quite awake and alive... You know that [the CEO would] be coming at it holding all the values and holding everything. I think as we've learnt and gone through more ourselves then we're in a better place to do that.*

**Pod Leader**

This trust in the culture was not final, but most staff members felt it was more rigorous than it had been previously. The sense of over-reliance on the CEO for holding them account to values comes alongside an increasing confidence in the ability of colleagues to do the same.

These findings direct us to a consideration of the nature of values-led work and being a 'learning' organisation. Values are not necessarily something that should be 'mastered' - there should always be a questioning of whether work is values-led to ensure we are continually learning and avoiding assumption. Values require a certain looseness and continual questioning. Furthermore, we see learning as happening through an individual and their perspective on the world - the improvement in application of concepts such as values happens through particular experiences, with each person drawing different learning based on their own traits. Pods themselves are designed to become semi-independent entities with slight differences in style and culture as a result of their pod leader - the values run through that individual whose take will inevitably be somewhat different to the CEO. The aim of supervisions and reflections is to set the bandwidth for such expression, ensuring the right level of both accountability and contextual flexibility.

Given this, we want staff to continue in their journey of contextualising the values to themselves and their relationships with the clients, continually reflect on whether their work is values-driven, but also avoid too much self-doubt and hierarchical reliance. The evidence here suggests that we are part of the way on this journey.

Nonetheless, it does seem that individual confidence is lacking - staff require assurance or clarity to move forwards in confidence that their work is 'good enough' in terms of being values-led.

As such, we have begun to consider what minimum processes of values-checking are necessary to ensure all work remains person-centred, and whether we can support staff to be more assured in their use of the values without sacrificing the necessary questioning that is central to accountability - some doubt is actively useful for checking that work is 'good enough.' We have already begun working on some of this with group learning sessions on values, and will be attempting to develop sets of questions to ask ourselves and each other to build confidence in the embedding of these values in the work. We are excited to see how this progresses over the next cycle.



**Table 3**

'Good enough' requires...	Where we are now	Evaluation
An understanding of what is within your control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff use reflection and supervision to 'step back' and consider this</li> <li>• Occasionally this is harder due to workload</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor development of workload management</li> <li>• Building more 'stepping back' opportunities into evaluation processes</li> </ul>
Intrinsic motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff highly motivated</li> <li>• Motivation can lead to unrealistic standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor changes in confidence</li> <li>• Consideration of how reassurance can be built into culture</li> </ul>
Reflection on values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff developing a grounded sense of values.</li> <li>• Staff trusting in cultural accountability.</li> <li>• Staff continually questioning their work and pushing for their own accountability to values.</li> <li>• A slight lack in confidence in doing this independently.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continual values training/ re-capping</li> <li>• Development of framework/ set of questions for reflecting on values</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION

Combining the literature review with the experiences of our staff offered us a great opportunity to examine our processes of workforce support and development. Most promisingly, much of what we have in place aligns to the evidence-base of good practice, with our focus on emotional intelligence, consistency of staff supervisions and cultural support, freedom and autonomy of workers, and values-led working either mitigating or avoiding the pressure other similar workers face. This is enhanced by two elements of the cultural rhetoric and practice that help staff better navigate the day-to-day stressors of the work: being able to 'step back' and view what goes on from a long-term perspective, which is supported through supervisions, reflections, and a cultural tone of lightness that supports optimism over anxiety; and becoming comfortable with work that is 'good enough,' relieving pressure by being realistic about what is possible given the circumstances and according to the values.

The analysis also highlighted areas for us to consider moving forwards. Firstly, high workload meant that some of those vital structures of support were not accessed or used as much as staff would have liked. We have begun to build in more opportunities for stepping back, but will continue to track how staff manage that workload. Secondly, staff may still need support in finding the parameters of 'good enough.' The combination of high levels of intrinsic motivation, complex and non-linear outcomes, and being accountable to the necessary blurriness of values means that there remains a questioning of competence, as well as a reliance on line managers.

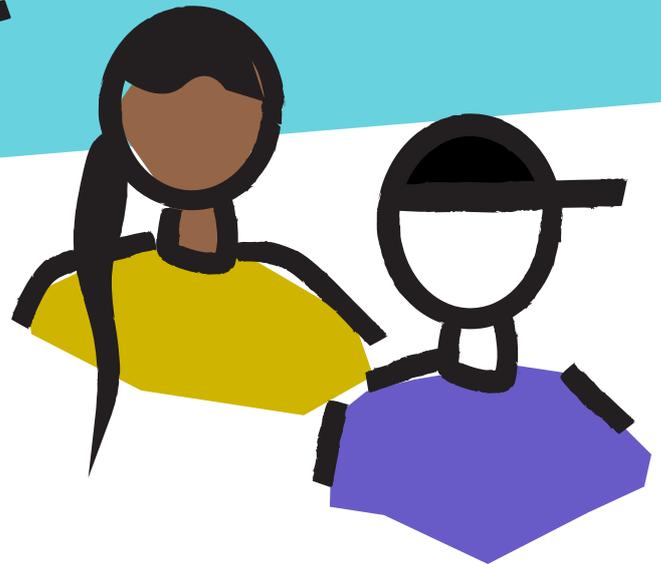
This is promising, as it shows the extent to which staff remain in consideration of their work, but suggests we need to consider whether there are ways to give staff more confidence in their alignment with values - a process we have already begun.

Having looked at one central element of our model - staff experience - we now move onto look at another: the use of volunteers.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Volunteering with Likewise



In our evaluations thus far, we have predominantly examined staff learning and its impact on the work. Whilst staff are at the heart of what we do, another core element of our delivery is volunteering. As such, this part of the evaluation looks in more detail at this - what and how volunteers are learning and how this impacts clients. This is given particular importance given that the last report picked up on a slight anxiety from clients around working with volunteers. As such, we begin by annotating the Likewise volunteer program, and then use interviews and volunteer questionnaires to look at the ways in which Pod Leaders support and develop volunteers in more detail. We examine what impact this has on volunteer learning, with a focus on the challenging balance between the ideal learning of staff against the limitations of the expectations and practicalities of volunteering. We then look at client experience of volunteers to understand whether this learning program is working and shed light on both the successes of our model and things we might be able to further develop.

## VOLUNTEERING MODEL

Approximately 40% of our delivery is using volunteer and placement student hours. This helps train and develop the social care workforce of the future and ensures we remain sustainable and affordable for clients. Clients may receive support from one or more volunteers but they retain constant contact and regular visits from Pod Leaders. As such, the consistency vital

to good quality social care <sup>(24)</sup> is maintained, and staff remain the backbone of that care: key decisions and developments are managed by staff, and they closely guide and manage volunteers through supervisions and ongoing training and support. Volunteers need to develop the skills to be person-centred, reflective, and emotionally intelligent, building those relationships from which outcomes can emerge.

To achieve this, we recruit placement student and long-term volunteers. Given the ask and expectation of volunteers is different, recruitment thresholds are lower for volunteers than they would be for staff. They must be capable of delivering person-centred care, but more challenging or complex aspects of the work are supported and delivered by the Pod Leaders through their continuing relationship with clients.

Placement students are a particularly valuable addition to the team due to the mutual benefit involved, the timing of placements (at least 6 months), and the substantial pool of such students within London. All such volunteers are put through both screening and training processes, as shown in table 4. The capability of volunteers to

Table 4

Input	Action	Purpose
Volunteer Selection Day	Full day in which volunteers are informed about the services we run, the basics of the way we work and think, and the importance of strengths-based approaches.	<p>Volunteers assessed for capacity for person-centred working.</p> <p>Volunteers first taste of the organisation are full framed by our values.</p>
Interview with Volunteer Lead	Placement students meet with staff member to talk about the work they would like to do, their understanding of values, their motivations, and expectations on them.	<p>Volunteers assessed for capacity for person-centred working.</p> <p>Volunteers get a greater sense of responsibility and a better picture of what the role requires and involves.</p>
Trial Session	Volunteers support a community day session, engaging in pre and post session reflections.	Volunteers assessed on their interaction with clients, capacity to reflect, and general attitude.
Induction Period	The majority of volunteers will spend their first few weeks doing day sessions.	<p>Volunteers assessed for their capacity for one-to-one work.</p> <p>Volunteers get to grips with values, reflection, and ways of working.</p>
Shadow visits	Appropriate volunteers allocated to a pod leader. They will meet clients alongside the pod leader. They will reflect with pod leader on how the visit went.	<p>Pod leaders develop a better sense of how the volunteer works with clients, and can provide the appropriate support.</p> <p>Volunteers get a sense of what the focus for each client is and what visits normally look like.</p> <p>Client gets a sense of the volunteer and can feedback to pod leader.</p> <p>Client and volunteer feel more comfortable with each other.</p>

Table 4 continued

Input	Action	Purpose
One-to-one visits and supervisions	<p>Volunteers begin working one-to-one with clients , checking in and out of visits with the pod leader.</p> <p>Weekly supervisions with pod leader to address volunteer concerns and client feedback, develop reflective practice and continue learning.</p>	<p>Volunteers able to work on their own and build relationships with clients.</p> <p>Pod leaders get regular feedback and input from clients to ensure person-centred working according to our values.</p> <p>Volunteers continue to reflect on their own work whilst learning the nuances of the Likewise approach from their pod leaders.</p>
Social Care Certificate and Mental Health First Aid	Volunteers take accredited courses to learn core safeguarding skills and statutory obligations, as well as build confidence in working in the sector.	<p>Volunteers feel more confident in the work.</p> <p>Volunteers learn hard knowledge around person-centred working and health management.</p>

deliver high quality care is continually reviewed, and Pod Leaders will get constant feedback from clients to ensure this is the case. Furthermore, not all clients will work with volunteers - the scheduling of visits, particularised use of sessions, and specified needs all contribute to this decision so that we remain continually adaptive to client circumstance

## HOW VOLUNTEERS LEARN

In order for volunteers to deliver the highest quality work possible, we want their learning to follow a similar path to our staff. In the previous report, three core elements of staff learning were found:

- Emotional intelligence: through learning about themselves and their feelings, staff were able to make calmer, better decisions and engage with their clients thoughtfully rather than reactively. This enabled stronger relationships, client faith in their workers rationale, and non-judgement of whatever staff were faced with.
- Core values: Staff had learnt the meaning and importance of a few core values that ensured they could be flexible in the work whilst being held to account based on these values by colleagues, line managers, and their own reflection.
- Not-knowing: In working with the complexity of human lives, staff had to learn to come to terms with not knowing the answer. This was important to maintain presence, neutrality, and to deal with the reality of a context rather than impose pre-configured models that do not fit.

However, volunteers have less time in training, in the culture, and in the work itself to develop these traits, and are recruited with less specificity in their alignment with such values. The challenge for Likewise is therefore in finding the balance between wanting an ideal pod worker - as emotionally intelligent, embedded in the values, and comfortable with not-knowing as any member of staff - and being realistic about time and resource constraints. How do we adapt the learning of volunteer workers whilst retaining quality at the front line? In this section we examine how Likewise adapts to these realities by focussing on those three core areas of learning: emotional intelligence, values, and complexity.

## INDIVIDUALISED LEARNING

When volunteers are allocated to a pod, the Pod Leader becomes a core source of learning in supporting the reflection and supervision of the volunteer. As such, pod leaders have been grappling with the best way to bring about such learning. One element they had shared was in delivering an individualised approach, adapting to and utilising the individual capacities of the volunteers:

*I do take a different approach to different people and I wouldn't have been able to do that at the beginning. I was just broadly doing me and seeing how that worked, whereas now I am more treating it like the client work, trying to get an understanding of that person and how they work and trying to work with that. **Volunteer Lead***

*I'm trying to be more reflective on what was useful for me and my learning journey and actually that's been given the space and the time to make mistakes, be interested in my own decision making, and being trusted that I'm going to examine that decision making, so in my supervisions I've tried to talk a lot less and ask a lot more questions, rather than just spouting what I think I know about it, and encouraging reflection and feelings, try not to rescue people from difficult or awkward situations, just trying to let them navigate that and talk it through after it's happened. **Pod Leader***

All staff members were learning to focus on the individual experiences of volunteers. They referred to this throughout the interviews as 'influencing' - the process of guiding a volunteer on their own journey, with an emphasis on 'opening things up' for an individual rather than asking someone to be different to who they were.

This was not a hands-off approach - unpicking decision making, probing particular feelings, and making practical suggestions were all part of supervisions. Nonetheless, an important focus for staff was on that capacity to support an individual to discover and learn for themselves.

## LEARNING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

An integral part of such individualised learning was emotional reflection - supporting volunteers to consider their emotions and feelings and the impact of these on their decision-making:

*She'd just push me to tell her like, even if it's a small thing like I might be bored in a visit, just open it up and speak about why I might have been bored, and what to do next time to make it less boring and if I felt uncomfortable, why I might have felt uncomfortable, and what to do to make it more comfortable. **Placement Student***

*Interviewer: What would you take away from your placement overall?*

*Volunteer: I think just kind of the reflection aspect of it. I reflect all the time in uni or work, but in terms of an emotional side that wasn't something that I'm used to doing. Like, how do I feel about that? How would I change that?... It's kind of like thinking if that event happened, how did that make you feel? Or if you felt a certain way after a visit when did you start to feel that way? Was there a particular thing that caused it?*

**Placement Student**

In doing this, staff were trying to provide the framing for a particular form of emotionally intelligent working. A key element of professional knowledge is held in such

framing of problems - competent professionals have a particularly way of thinking about issues in their field that makes resolution possible in different contexts <sup>[25]</sup>. Given complexity, this is particularly useful - pre-determined or 'right' answers are rare and contingent, so enabling people to frame a problem is more useful than providing particular solutions. In our case, staff were learning to set up a frame for volunteers that enabled them to reflect on their feelings in order to support more emotionally intelligent decisions.

The impact of this was very present for volunteers. 76% of volunteer survey respondents felt they were more self aware and 70% felt they were more reflective as a result of volunteering with us. Furthermore, every interviewee talked about their development in reflectiveness and awareness of feelings in the work and in the rest of their lives as well:

*We're in the feelings business, so if you can't look at your own how can you expect others to? For me that was the value in it, and I think and I've used it in my own life now. It's helped in that way too.*

**Placement Student**



*I can like sort of apply that self-awareness outside of placement as well... so like I've been a bit more patient with certain family members and not just snapping when I'm in a bad mood.*

**Placement Student**

This was particularly encouraging as it demonstrates the extent to which this knowledge is embodied and played out in different contexts - it is learning beyond theory. Similarly encouraging was that the learning was not on how to treat a particular group of people (eg. those in need of social care) but was seen as a process for broader positive human interaction. This is fundamental to our approach - the skills we focus on and the work we do is not about treating people differently because of a label or category, but about the meaningful, accepting relationships we all need. The learning and use of emotional reflection emphasises this inclusivity.

## LEARNING VALUES

A second element of learning at Likewise is that of values - as the last evaluation cycle demonstrated, staff spend considerable time coming to understand and use these. Staff were active in their focus on transmitting such values in their supervisions with volunteers - however, they had an awareness that their own learning of values was greatly supported by cultural exposure, and thus might have less impact for those not so exposed:

*I found it hard to use language that didn't feel kind of exclusive. We talked about that we might use certain words to describe things in this organisation that we might not use in the same way outside of it or someone else might not use... I felt the language didn't resonate with her [volunteer].* **Pod Leader**

Despite these concerns, volunteers did pick up values: acceptance, person-centred working, and relationships-first were all mentioned in interviews. However, replying to questions on values, volunteers also had their own take on what they had learnt, for example:

*Just kind of being more patient, definitely taught me patience and understanding various situations and how people may react to them and so becoming more understanding of other people. And definitely more empathetic as well... Or if someone isn't feeling very happy at the moment it's ok, then you can be someone just to have around, it made me more supportive I guess.*

**Placement Student**

Whilst this volunteer does not reference explicit Likewise values, he seems to be referencing them indirectly: understanding different situations is about person-centred working; okaying someone's feelings is a vital element of emotional intelligence and acceptance. Other volunteers spoke of 'honesty' and 'transparency', directly relating to authenticity and 'naming the elephant,' whilst others mentioned respect, linking to our person-centred, relationship-first approach. Values were filtering down, but were often expressed in the volunteers' own language.

Language in social care can shape the thinking and action of those working in it <sup>(26)</sup>: as such, these findings ask a question as to the importance of the language volunteers are using. For example, in the above quote the volunteer suggests the value 'patience': this could suggest a dynamic of beneficent power that could be othering, focussing on deficiency rather than mutual value. Whilst pleased that values are interpreted in ways meaningful to individuals, we may also need to consider whether there is more to do in supporting volunteers in their thinking so that they feel more aware of the importance of the language they use.

## LEARNING COMPLEXITY

A final element of learning staff were trying to adapt to the volunteer program was not-knowing - supporting volunteers to be okay with the complexity and unknown elements of the work. Whilst they learn basic rules, procedures for safeguarding, and can take various training modules, the majority of volunteer learning comes from those reflections on their own experience. However, lacking the time and space that full-time staff are given has important implications for the nature of such learning:

*I really like having discussions with other members of staff where neither of us are sure, being like, 'okay, we're not totally sure what the right thing to do would have been,' but I don't feel like that tone is the right one for placement students... I just think it could be really confusing for people if you just have endless discussions and they don't have any structure of what's right. And it is a risk that it leads them to doubt themselves.*

**Pod Leader**

Staff recognised that as much as they see the value in the kind of questioning and analysis they undertake with colleagues, particularly in terms of not-knowing, in the context of volunteers this can be actively problematic. Several staff reflected on trying to deliver learning with more clarity:

*I'm able to be a bit more consistent in my approach which really has just come down to actually saying what I mean. Trying to influence by making things clear, by saying what the problem is whether it's wrong thinking, or whether it's acting out feelings, or just practical mistakes or something.* **Pod Leader**

Volunteers themselves pointed out a few key elements in which staff gave more direct feedback - instructions on volunteer behaviour such as being more assertive, pragmatic ideas for visit activity, providing different ways to think about why a client might behave in a particular way, and emphasising the importance of particular boundaries. Volunteer interviewees also spoke about being 'thrown in at the deep end' - a significant part of their learning came from just doing the work and being encouraged to reflect on this with their supervisors. This balance between more direct instruction and more experiential reflection and questioning seemed to depend on the volunteer - as staff members pointed out, they were learning to adapt their approaches to different individuals.

Most volunteers, after an initial period of discomfort, adapted to this style of learning - feedback was overwhelmingly positive in terms of the 'hands-on' approach, supervisions, and reflective practices. However, 5 questionnaire respondents (12%) felt that

there should be more hard knowledge as part of their experience, in terms of wanting 'more precise answers' from staff, wanting more direct instruction about how to deal with challenging behaviours, or wanting more detail about clients' mental health diagnoses. For a minority, there was a desire for more clear kinds of 'knowing.'

## LEARNING AND DISCOMFORT

Whilst we recognise that some volunteers find it difficult, we can accept this relatively small percentage struggling for several reasons. On the desire for information on someone's diagnosis, we avoid the diagnosis-first approach as this can bring a set of assumptions about a person and a way of framing their behaviour before getting to know them. Whilst it forms a part of the initial referral and assessment, we leave it to the client to decide how much of this they wish to disclose to a volunteer or new worker (unless there are particular safeguarding concerns or the context requires it). Given the powerful nature of stigma in mental health and social care, this is a key part of our person-centred approach - we encourage the exploration of any discomfort this might cause with both new staff and volunteers.

The second point is that as a learning organisation we recognise that learning through experience requires a discomfort and unease that is actively supported by supervisions and reflections. This often proves to be a rich and rewarding experience - the vast majority of survey respondents felt well supported. That some may feel a continual urge for harder knowledge can link to personal preference or previous experience. For example, a volunteer who had previously worked in a clinical setting found it harder to grapple with the contextualisation of boundaries, but also saw the value in the softer approach:

*I think its easier to be professional with hard boundaries... it's easier to be comfortable in asserting a boundary – you kind of have the authority to say "I like/I don't like" and I think if the rules are looser then you have to work slightly harder to assert you authority because it's just down to you...*

*I have witnessed situations when I think professionals have been really quite unreasonable and really quite harsh in the way that they deal with people, for them there is so much invested in their sense of power as a professional, so I do think that the Hub is really quite good in the way it tries to deinstitutionalise as much as possible.*

### **Placement Student**

More hard and fast rules might make particular incidents easier for volunteers, but that such hard and fast rules can produce oppressive power dynamics is exactly why it is important to engage the challenge of a contextual approach to the work. The 'slightly harder' work of assertiveness becomes about a relationship rather than a set of rules and it is from such a relationship that outcomes emerge. Discomfort or unease that this brings is central to learning the approach, and learning to explore such feelings is a key part of learning for everyone at Likewise. Individuals will encounter this differently based on their worldview and previous experiences - that a few maintain a desire for firmer knowledge is to be expected.

A question remains about whether there could be space for more specific theoretical knowledge in the volunteer experience as a means of better understanding the learning methodology and the approach (something also suggested by two of the interviewees). Staff felt that there was an initial period of adaptation for volunteers, and such a time might be ideal for more depth and analysis of why we work the way we do, the nature of our values, and what volunteers might expect emotionally, intellectually, and practically from their experience. This is something we are currently exploring as a team, and hope to report on in our next cycle.



## CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Having examined how and what volunteers are learning, we now examine the client experience of volunteers to think about how this learning translates to practice.

*[On being initially told a volunteer could do some visits] I was kind of like are you abandoning me? I was a bit like, oh are you trying to pop me off to somebody else like what is this? Because we have built this good relationship and like, what are you doing?... But I do think she handled it quite well.*

**Floating Support client**

## MOVING THROUGH ANXIETY

The last cycle found an underlying apprehension around working with new people, and so this was explored in more detail during this cycle of interviews. One element of this we uncovered was attachment to their Pod Leader - having built a relationship with them, clients had some negative feelings around being moved onto someone else:

*At first I was a bit upset when Chris left me with Alicia because I'd got fond of Chris. (laughs) ... I wasn't worried, I just wasn't used to her. But I've blended in and I'm used to her now and I like her. I look forward to her coming now.*

**Floating Support client**

One of the most consistent concerns that came up around this was that of having to explain themselves to another person. Clients valued having someone who knew and understood their situation and could respond to their nuances, and worried about having to continually go over who they are and what they needed with a new person. One of the most robust findings about social interventions is the importance of such consistency<sup>(24, 27)</sup> – the effect of constantly changing key workers can mean vital information is lost and people have to rebuild not only relationships but the entire direction of their care, and such fear of this was present in interviews.

However, the Likewise model is set-up so that such consistency is provided by the continuing relationship with the pod leader, with the volunteers supporting alongside this. The nature of this long-term model was highly valued by clients:

*Other places move you on no matter what state you are in, that can be frustrating as an individual when you feel like you're making progress but you know it's not sort of embedded yet, when you know it's going to be easy to regress so, I should say that and make a lot of emphasis on that, having a service that sees the process through is incredibly important. **Floating Support client***

Importantly, in every interview where anxieties around volunteers had been present, such anxieties were successfully worked through: everyone who worked with volunteers was happy with them. One interviewee talked about the change regarding her anxiety about moving from her staff member to working with volunteers 6 months ago:

*You know when you pass your driving test and your first time without your driving instructor? I think it was that sort of thing. Oh well, I said it now but after that everything was fine - I loved her [the volunteer] to death. **Floating Support client***

These findings are reassuring that the ongoing contact with Pod Leaders combined with the quality of volunteers allows clients to move through feelings of anxiety to work productively and positively with volunteers. This does not alleviate initial anxiety, but thus far the quality of the working relationships is sustained.

In some cases, moving through this anxiety can be seen as a benefit in itself. One staff member spoke in their interview about a client who struggled to form healthy relationships. He was highly confrontational as a result of it being suggested that a volunteer is introduced - however, after initial conflict he began to change his mind:

*It felt like we're almost inadvertently giving him an opportunity to reflect on some of the challenges he faces with people. He was talking about jealousy, jealousy of me, the relationship that me and him had formed and the fact that someone else has come into it... and he said for once in my life I want to actually try and work through these feelings rather than run away from them... so now it's like 'this is going to be hard but we're going to work through it. **Pod Leader***

Whilst anecdotal, this demonstrates how the managing of anxiety around new people itself can be a useful step. Other clients stated that learning to be comfortable with new volunteers was a value that linked to broader aims such as learning to socialise or getting into employment:

*It's positive to be engaging socially so its a positive thing. **Floating Support client***

*It's always good to know different people because it's practice for work. **Floating Support client***

Importantly, a few key factors are in place for clients during this process. Firstly, clients feel in control of their care and of how volunteers are introduced - in interviews it was made clear that they were comfortable to have conversations with Pod Leaders to make sure they are getting what they need. Secondly, they are supported in working through feelings by Pod Leaders with whom they already have a relationship. Several clients referenced the fact that they knew the Pod Leader was always available if they needed to talk - the consistency and backbone of that member of staff acted as reassurance during anxious moments. The structures in place made working through such anxieties possible.

## BROADER FEEDBACK

Most reassuringly, we found that perception and experience of volunteers was very positive. Interviews touched on the ease of conversation and the emotional support: for example, one interviewee stated her volunteer 'isn't fazed by anything,' suggesting the kind of calmness, capacity to manage change, and emotional stability that is often picked up in reference to staff.

Another appreciated the sustained positivity, 'care,' and 'understanding' of her volunteers. Feedback forms also made various comments on the value of volunteers in their capacity for listening and quality of conversation. More broadly, all client interviewees during this cycle valued and liked working with their volunteers, something supported by the 100% satisfaction rate in feedback forms. Whilst not conclusive, these all suggest that volunteers were doing a good job of the basics of emotional intelligence - remaining emotionally calm, supportive, and non-judgemental.

During the next cycle we will introduce a specific section on volunteers on the client feedback forms, giving us a better understanding of this.

## CONCLUSION

In developing a learning program for volunteers, staff have individualised learning, with a particular emphasis on reflective practice that develops emotional intelligence - this was something highly valued by volunteers themselves. Volunteers are picking up on and using values in practice, and seem to be interpreting them in their own way - this is useful but needs further checking and examination to ensure volunteers remain person-centred. Some volunteers struggle with the contextual nature of the learning, so we are now considering whether to further develop our training to include more explicit content in terms of the approach and the values.

Clients' experience of volunteers was positive, suggesting that volunteers are working in a way aligned with our approach. Client anxiety around working with new people remained present, but was able to be worked through those continuing relationships with pod leaders. This was in itself was a positive outcome for several interviewees. As a result of this finding, we will further monitor those changing and developing relationships and the work with volunteers.

Getting the data on client work with volunteers was challenging. In several cases clients had only recently begun working with volunteers, whilst in others clients tended to speak about the service in general

terms and made more references to Pod Leaders than volunteers. Furthermore, at the point of interviews only five volunteers had moved through the new process of a Likewise placement in its entirety. As such, there was not enough data to draw firmer conclusions. This is something we will continue to dig into, developing our methods over the next six months to see if we can get more clarity from the evaluation, including changing the feedback forms, adapting interview questions and considering alternative means of evaluation.

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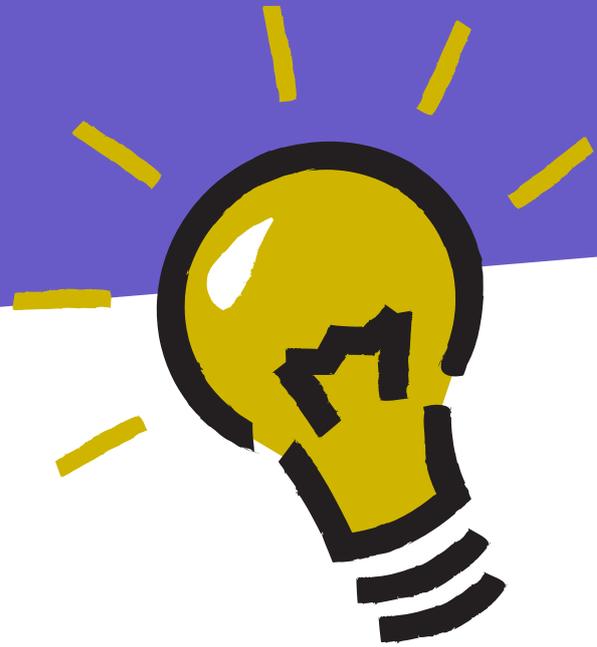
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# Conclusion



In this section, we return to the research questions for an overview of our learning from this evaluation cycle.

## 1. How are clients currently benefitting (or not) from our approach?

The results were, like last year, very pleasing. Interviews and questionnaires revealed similar themes - an appreciation of excellent relationships with key workers, diverse and meaningful outcomes, and flexibility to client needs. We also were able to further our understanding of the processes within these themes:

- The continuing development of person-centred thinking in staff created further flexibility which was present in:
  - the way in which staff were able to play a role alongside and in support of other services, utilising their flexibility to respond to the unique 'jigsaw' of care in place for different clients
  - the way staff could respond not only to different situations, but the changeability of clients themselves
  - the way in which clients valued 'doing' more than they had with other services - staff had the structural flexibility to get on with a range of activity that.
- The ability to 'do' and be active was a core value for most clients, allowing for distraction from negative

thoughts, the reduction of the stress of the administration that comes along with being unwell (such as managing clinical appointments, benefits appeals and housing), and giving a real sense of purpose.

- Conversations were also particularly valued by clients - staff learnt to 'name the elephant,' which involved a tone of optimism, honesty, and the normalising of emotions. These kinds of conversations not only contributed to the 'doing' itself, but were also of inherent value for many clients across 6-8 session and floating support services.

With each cycle we are building a fuller picture of the dynamics of the support that are valued, but many questions remain. One of these is around the meaning of 'opportunities' and 'independence' in the broader context of change - we want to understand how these conceptualised and what they tell us about our quantitative data. We also see the potential to think differently about our evaluative methods - interviews are great for getting a broad sense of what is going on, but we are eager to explore more innovative methods such as ethnographic and co-produced data.

## 2. How are our processes of staff support currently impacting staff capacity to manage their workloads?

The literature review demonstrated that much of what we have in place to support staff should limit burnout and enhance resilience.

- The cultural and structural support, the autonomy of staff, and the flexibility of outcomes align with evidence suggesting our staff will be well equipped to cope with high workloads.
- Staff spoke about the importance of 'stepping back' from their work through reflection and in supervisions, taking a bigger picture perspective that provided optimism and alleviated some of the emotional weight of the work.
  - Workload made this intermittently challenging - as a result, we are developing processes to further embed this 'stepping back' into the working structure.
- They also used the term 'good enough' to come to terms with what was possible given the limitations of their circumstances - this term was cultivated as a means to give staff flexibility whilst holding them accountable to the values.
  - Whilst reliance on line managers had reduced, people still felt they relied on the CEO for surety on values. This, combined with their high levels of intrinsic motivation, meant staff occasionally lacked confidence in their work being 'good enough' - something that could effect their resilience and risk of burnout.
  - We will be thinking about how to navigate the balance between the necessary doubt in the work (as a means to combat complacency and avoid the power-dynamics of assumed expertise) and the benefits of more confidence in the values.

Diving into the dynamics of staff resilience was particularly useful - whilst the last report focussed on how staff learn the workings of supportive relationships, this has given us a more vivid understanding of how

our staff were experiencing the work from a practical perspective. These practical considerations are integral to the longevity and capacity of staff to do the excellent work they are currently doing. The questions raised are particularly interesting for us to experiment with over the next few months - increasing staff confidence in and ownership of the values is an engaging task but one for which the consequences are unknown. Tracking this will be a key element of our upcoming evaluations in its impact on staff, clients, volunteers and organisational culture.

## 3. How are volunteers learning and how does this impact the work?

Given the different expectation and experience of volunteers, the challenge of finding the balance between directive and reflective learning for them was one staff were grappling with in their support. The individualised approach they settled with was one that seemed to be working:

- Volunteers were particularly aware and appreciative of the reflective elements, using facets of emotional awareness both in and out of the work they were doing with Likewise
- Volunteers were picking up on values in non-explicit ways, often giving them their own interpretation.
  - This was positive in its flexible, individualised learning, but will need to be continually evaluated to ensure such interpretations are as person-centred and aligned with our approach as possible given the limitations of their placements.
- A minority of volunteers struggled with the lack of hard knowledge and the contextual approach. Whilst this approach is vital to the way we work, we will be thinking about the potential to combine our contextual approach with more direct training in the values.
- Clients had positive views on the volunteers they worked with. We were able to draw a few direct links between the learning and this appraisal, but more research is needed to elucidate this.

- Clients still felt anxiety about working with new people as a result of previous experiences in other services with changing workers and a fear of having to constantly re-explain themselves.
- For all interviewees working with volunteers, this anxiety was successfully worked through as a result of the sustained and consistent engagement with the Pod Leader and the quality of the volunteers.
- For some, the working through of this anxiety was an outcome in itself.

As we are early on in the rollout of our new volunteer program, this needs continual research and evaluation. We will be incorporating more direct evaluation of this into feedback forms, and continue with our interviews with both volunteers and clients who work with them with a particular focus on the dynamics of those relationships.

## RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

There is considerable space to improve our research and evaluation capacity and efficiency. We are excited about the possibility for ethnographic methods in enhancing our understanding of the both the organisational culture and the client experience, and hope this might give us more to share with the sector in terms of working in complexity, working in person-centred ways, and what change and outcomes mean to people in social care. We have built a relationship with the UCL Centre for Co-production in Health Research that we hope to be utilising over the next year, and are eager to explore the appetite for more co-produced evaluation. We would also like to further the quantitative elements of our evaluation, and continue to look for means of doing so. Finally, we will be learning from the difficulties of this evaluation to think very hard about the best way to write-up our findings moving forwards - this may be a shift away from the current format.

Whilst valuable, this second cycle of evaluation has been considerably more challenging than the first. The processes of data collection were established and rolled out with relative smoothness, but the analysis was

more complicated, particularly with the weight of the previous report. Having used that report as the basis for meetings with funders, it was hard not to write with funders in mind - rather than evaluation for learning-sake, there was thus an often invisible pressure to demonstrate particular competencies and progress for the sake of future income. This brings with it a fear of failure and a shift away from the original intentions of the work. Over the course of writing, the awareness of this helped alleviate some of that pressure (utilising those mechanisms of 'stepping back' and 'good enough' were actively used as part of this evaluation cycle), and so what is presented is, first and foremost, part of our own learning. In that sense, it has been successful - we are already acting on what was uncovered through these processes, and are moving towards the point where we can clearly annotate our processes and ways of working. We believe this can provide a clear foundation as we grow, move forwards, and change. Nonetheless, we will be thinking a lot about our processes of evaluation to make our future presentation of our work more efficient.

## DEVELOPING A MODEL

As we end our second cycle and our first year of evaluation we are building more confidence in our story, greater clarity in our ways of working, and greater conviction in the positive impact of our work. As such, we wanted to close our report with our first attempt to build a model of what, based on our evaluations thus far, is necessary for support work that leads to change.

# The Likewise Model

## OUTCOMES AND AIMS

At the heart of our model is acceptance. When we struggle to accept ourselves and the realities of our situation, we struggle against the inevitable - a struggle we are bound to lose. As such, acceptance is a vital first point for change. It is a fluid process rather than something to be achieved: we change alongside our ever-shifting circumstances, unravelling new layers of ourselves that can either be fought against or worked with. As such, acceptance is a continual journey and a vital one - without dealing with the realities of ourselves and the world, we are stuck in a painful stasis.

The most important facet of supporting this that we provide is an accepting, human-to-human relationship. When we engage in such a relationship, value is seen in who we are regardless of our past or the labels given to us. When truly accepting, such relationships see our challenges or struggles honestly, but do not see them as problems with us - instead, they become things to be worked around, worked with, or managed. Importantly, we remain of value regardless of those challenges. This is a space from which we can actually move - we are not paralysed by a sense of being broken, by self-doubt, or by fear of losing value: an accepting relationship provides a basis from which value can always be found and so from which change and opportunity becomes safer. The mutuality of these relationships is vital - for people to be able to see themselves of value, they need to be active rather than passive in the relationship. Accepting relationships view people as their own instigators of change

To enhance the acceptance and mutuality within these relationships there are specific processes staff learn to use. In particular, 'naming the elephant' is a process that ensures honesty about concerns or challenges in an optimistic, supportive way - it stops staff hiding behind a professional veneer and encourages them to open up their thinking and decision making to their client.

They can also use normalising to re-assure people that whatever they feel is okay, relieving the anxiety of being 'broken' as a result of feelings. Staff also have 6-monthly reviews with clients where they reflect and decide together how the relationship is going and where they want it to go in the future, again emphasising the mutuality of that relationship.

Once acceptance is in place, people are able to take advantage of opportunity - that is, they are able to start doing. The relationships provide the foundation for the kind of action that brings purpose, meaning, and a sense of growth and achievement. However, that opportunity must be forthcoming and feel safe. At this point, our service is about supporting people to do the things that give them movement and change, whatever those things might be. These cannot be specified in advance - the nature of acceptance is that whatever is done is a direct result of who that person is. Furthermore, this relationship is not one-way - sometimes it is in the act of doing things together that relationships have the chance to build organically and naturally, which reinforces the opportunity for more 'doing' in the future.

## FUNDAMENTAL TOOLS

The above, however, can only take place with particular supporting mechanisms already in place. The next layers of the work are the primary tools for enabling staff to develop and act on acceptance and develop the qualities and ways of thinking about the work that create the conditions for accepting relationships.

One of the most fundamental of these is emotional intelligence. Feelings drive much of our lives, often without our awareness. For staff, developing this awareness is central. Rather than seeing what happens as 'good' or 'bad' and responding with avoidance or attraction, checking on feelings allows for a more neutral presence - one which allows clients to be themselves without judgement, and for staff to respond to often difficult circumstances with a calmness that normalises and allows for reasoned decision making. This is not about avoiding feelings, but being aware and honest about the role they play and how that influences us. It allows for conversations that are honest - rather than

avoiding difficulties, emotional awareness allows for them to be opened up sensitively, tackled not from a position of authority but supportively and mutually. Of course, the role of feelings in decision-making and interactions is unavoidable, but awareness allows the space to consider that role rather than simply responding to it.

Emotional intelligence is supported by key words such as 'neutrality' and 'presence' - words that remind staff about how easy it is to get pulled into the emotional mire, and of the importance of sitting outside such a state in order to be the best worker possible.

The other vital tool for those relationships is the concept of learning. Unlike experts, learners are constantly aware of their own fallibility and of the ever changing landscape. As such, they actively seek out the reality of each situation. This ensures continual growth - a learner cannot presume their actions were right, but must continually consider how they are acting and the mistakes they are making in order to grow. It also shifts power dynamics in support relationships to being far more mutual - people we support become sources of knowledge and value who teach us about the world. Learning this world is fundamental to accepting the wholeness of a person. The way people learn cannot be uniform - it must be contextualised to those relationships, and thus to the individual features of that learner. It is integral to the work - as soon as people stop learning, they start 'knowing' and switch off to the realities of both themselves and the people they work with.

A third fundamental driving much of what we do are the values and concepts that directly support acceptance. These act as tethers and aspirations for us to stay close to in ensuring good support work. One of these is 'lowering the tide' - the awareness that what a person presents is not the whole of that person, and that there are always commonalities and things to value beneath the surface. This helps staff look beyond immediate appearances, diagnoses, or dramas into the wider picture, finding that common humanity and value in a person.

Similarly, the concept of 'sameness not difference' helps staff focus on commonalities and checks against the inclination to categorise as 'other' - the cultural weight and stigma of terms like mental illness, addiction, and homelessness make it easy to fall into such a trap. For truly accepting, mutual relationships, this has to be avoided.

Another value in this is 'authenticity.' Whilst the notion of a singular authentic self is impossible, the concept acts as a check on those impulses and desires we have to avoid our feelings and present a facade based on a sense of what we 'should' be doing. Human-to-human relationships require honesty and transparency - authenticity acts as an aspiration towards such goals.

## FOUNDATIONAL STRUCTURES

The next layers of our model are the structural features of the work that limit the risk and maximise the potential for such tools to flourish - they are thus the foundations necessary to build towards those accepting relationships.

The first structural step to support these relationships is recruitment. Quite simply, if people do not support these fundamental values and do not have some interest and capacity to engage people as equals, they will struggle with the nature of this work. We have deliberately recruited outside of sector to avoid the biases that such work can bring (that of expert and 'patient,' that of illness or problem over potential), and our process is rigorous - we are not afraid to repeat recruitment drives if we feel the candidates don't fit the organisation. Whilst costly, the risk is too high - many people we work with have already been badly effected or frustrated by services that do not treat them humanely, and our staff do a great deal of independent working. Furthermore, with the right people the basics of the approach are already in place. We often remind ourselves that what we do is not rocket science: whilst there are a host of supporting structures and tools, the basics are relatively simple. If people have an intrinsic motivation to learn, to provide excellent human-to-human relationships, and to develop emotional intelligence, then we can trust that the support given will be a high standard.

Secondly, accountability mechanisms are fundamental for ensuring work is continually being checked against values without limiting the work. These include:

- Consistent supervisions: they are vital to support staff in their learning and consideration of how they are acting according to our values. As each support relationship is so unique to the people in it, learning must be responsive to the unique facets of each staff member. Supervisions thus need to be at least partially led by staff themselves, with the supervisors role to be questioning, reassuring, and challenging staff on their thinking and decision-making, influencing and guiding someone in their own learning. They are an opportunity for staff to step back from their work and review it differently - a vital element of reducing emotional weight and enabling optimism and bigger-picture thinking.
- Reflections take on a similar role, allowing for stepping back from the work and, in particular, for checking in on one's own feelings. The distance this allows from such feelings allows staff to think differently, be calmer in their decision-making, and so enhance their emotional intelligence in the work. As group activity, they also contribute to a culture of emotional awareness and encourage an honesty and openness about feelings that allows for people to continually explore and question their working.
- A positive mistake culture is also integral to accountability and reflection - celebrating and encouraging the sharing and analysis of perceived failures provides a safe space for people to be honest about and learn from their mistakes rather than hiding them away. This allows for more positive risk-taking and creativity according to the

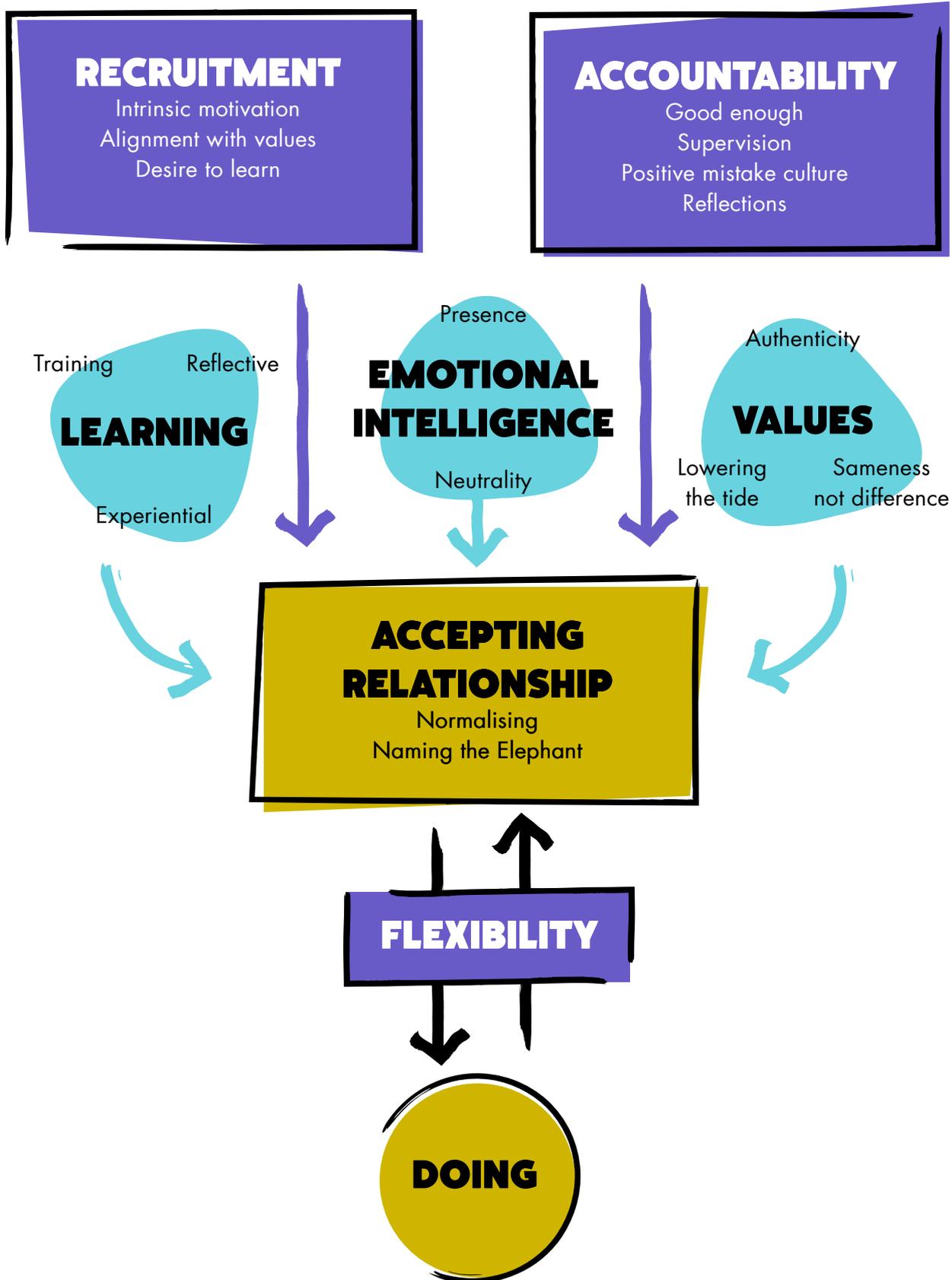
complexities of each person, and a better grasp on what is actually going on for line managers. It also mirrors the approach to clients - mistakes and failures are a positive part of learning rather than defining of character or value.

- The last tool for accountability is the concept of 'good enough.' This concept encourages staff to consider whether they are acting out values and reduce the burden of control - it recognises the imperfections of working with humans, evaluating staff performance not based on outcomes but on ways of working. This provides breathing space alongside accountability.

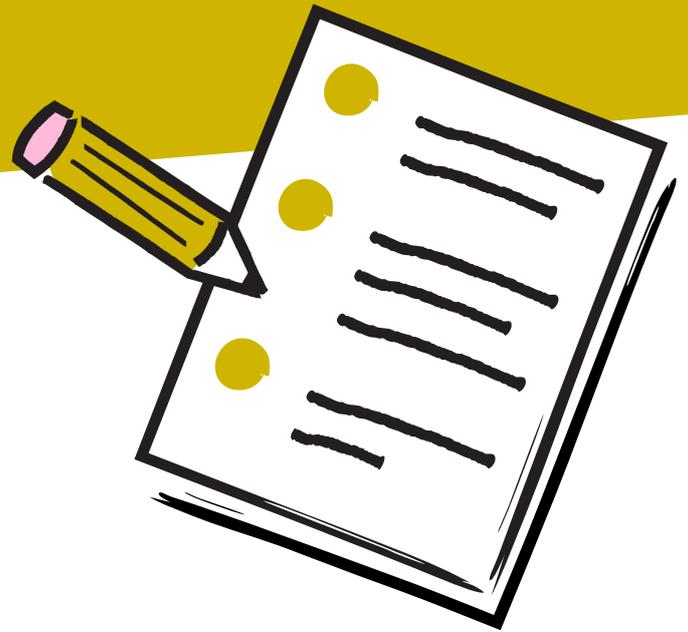
Thirdly, staff require significant flexibility. This is necessary to allow them to respond to the reality of their clients' lives - they cannot be accepting if forced by outcomes targets or particular remits to only treat clients in a particular way or see them through a particular lens. Responding to people humanely and in their wholeness requires diversity and adaptation - acceptance is not a static process, but shifts as people change and diversify. This flexibility is also central to doing - that is, it allows staff to act based on who their clients are rather than any particular service model or remit. A supporting term is 'change the lightbulb' - a phrase used to encourage the common sense approach to getting things done that need doing.

We have been able to draw this model based on both the processes and findings of our evaluation and our own experiences in the work. As we re-examine it with each evaluation cycle, it will inevitably grow and change with our continual learning and adaptation. For now, we hope that it can be useful for anyone interested in the way we work - we believe it represents the key elements of genuinely person-centred support.

## THE LIKEWISE MODEL



# Appendix: Executive Summary 2018



- In the desire to fix people, the social care sector often focuses on clients' problems in order to solve them. This has several implications. It means staff often miss the complexity of clients' lives; it encourages clients to focus on their problems as a key part of their identity; it encourages the passivity of clients; it leaves staff exhausted by solutions that do not work; and it creates a set of services that keep clients socially isolated from everyone else.
- To move beyond this, Likewise has created a learning program to develop emotionally intelligent, learning-oriented staff able to work with the complexity of clients' lives and deliver a truly person-centered service. This includes:
  - A rigorous recruitment process
  - A program of experiential learning which makes use of a set of values and principles to guide and boundary this learning
  - A high level of reflection, both formally (in meetings and supervisions) and informally (in a mutually reinforced workplace culture)
  - A graduate training program
  - The City and Guilds Level 3 in Health and Social Care
- In order to understand whether this is working, we have undertaken an extensive evaluation of staff and client experience, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

## FINDINGS

### Key Statistics:

- 87% of clients agree or strongly agree that they are managing their mental health better since using the service.
- 91% of clients agree or strongly agree that they have a good relationship with their key worker.
- 70% of clients agree or strongly agree that service has helped them achieve what they want to achieve.
- 87% of clients are satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

## ANALYSIS

- We found that the vast majority of clients had achieved outcomes that were diverse and unpredictable. The nature of focusing on the relationship first and the outcome second was instrumental in allowing these outcomes to emerge.
- In building these relationships, staff spoke of having to learn ‘acceptance’ of clients, so seeing beyond problem-based narratives and finding value in them as they are. This was picked up on by almost all clients, and correlated with how they changed the way they saw themselves and were therefore able to take advantage of opportunity – several attributed this directly to the service.
- Staff were able to balance flexibility with firm boundaries, enabling a transparent, focused, but highly person-centered approach to the work that clients valued.
- Staff had developed considerable emotional intelligence, and this was noticed and appreciated by clients. It enabled calm responses to difficult scenarios, enabled staff to challenge clients’ perspectives and open them up to different opportunities, and helped clients themselves become more emotionally intelligent.
- Staff developed a comfort with the unknown through the workplace culture. This enabled them to avoid assumptions and anxieties about the ‘right’ answer in a field in which such an answer does not exist. As such, they felt they made better decisions, and clients also referred to their sensibility and decision-making capacities.
- The comfort with not knowing created a culture of accountability in which staff were continually pushing themselves and each other to think differently and work better. The values of the organization formed the basis of much of these challenges.
- The support and mentoring given by the line manager was deemed integral for helping staff put values into practice in a nuanced, contextual way, particularly given their freshness to the field. However, a few staff felt over-reliant on this support. Further research will explore whether this reliance shifts as they move from trainee to fully-fledged Pod Leader.
- The openness to complexity enabled staff to be more creative with the work and better respond to the realities of the clients’ lives, supporting clients to take advantage of the diversity of opportunity rather than focusing on a single outcome.
- The freedom given to staff to explore their roles was both appreciated and challenging, allowing them to bring themselves to the work but sometimes lacking the solidity of other work places. Whilst all spoke very positively of their jobs, further research will be needed to assess how they are managing the demands of the work and workload compared to the rest of the sector.
- Some clients had notions of expertise and hard solutions that meant they struggled to understand the learning-first approach of the service. However, the vast majority saw the flexibility this offered as a key benefit.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Overall, we have been encouraged by the findings – the learning program seems to be having a positive impact, with a very high satisfaction rate, a great range of outcomes, and professional, productive, person-centered relationships that work with the strengths of clients.
- The findings have also opened up a range of questions and directions for further research, including on the impact of volunteers, the role of values and reliance on line managers, and how to capture client change. It also points to the need for better capturing of outcomes and outputs. We have already begun to address this and hope to include it in our next report.



## ABOUT LIKEWISE

Likewise is a charity and community centre in Camden, London, with a long history of supporting people across the community.

We work with people from all backgrounds and circumstances to support wellbeing, community and independent living. We're constantly learning about how to build a broad, inclusive community, and we're much more interested in the things people have in common than what makes them different.

More information can be found on our website:  
[www.likewise.org.uk](http://www.likewise.org.uk)