

TDI *Explainer*

Looking after ourselves and each other

Many of us work in very stressful jobs, often dealing day by day with very challenging service users or those with multiple, complex problems. This Explainer stresses the importance of looking after ourselves and our colleagues and starts to explore some of the issues organisations need to address in relation to staff care and professional standards.

We all have challenging jobs

Even though most of us are not offender managers nor delivering specialist sex offender treatment, any work with offenders will be stressful and may occasionally or potentially be dangerous. Sex offenders will often deny or minimise what they have done, sometimes even trying to blame their victims. They may attempt to manipulate staff in various ways too. Thus, our day to day practice needs to be a constant balance between offering support, paying due attention to safeguarding and public protection issues and also working with our colleagues to ensure our safety and well-being. An earlier Explainer in this series looks at some of the interventions support workers might apply with sex offenders which are compatible with the principles of public protection and rehabilitation. It might be helpful to read alongside this one.

Professional boundaries

The setting of clear professional boundaries for staff is one way organisations can protect us from manipulation by service users and help us to manage the stresses of our jobs.

Service user focus: the needs of service users should always be at the heart of decisions we make about them.

Self-disclosure: we all need to be careful about how much personal information about our lives we share with service users.

Dual relationships: we should never have more than one type of relationship with a service user, only a professional one.

Working within our competence: we all need to understand both the limitations of our role and our personal capabilities. We need to be clear when to pass on information to others or ask for support.

Looking after ourselves: it is our responsibility to ensure we are fit to do the job required of us. This includes managing our stresses and emotions both at work and, to some extent, how we behave outside of it.

As well as managing the professional boundaries which apply to our work, we, and our organisations, need to give attention to some other professional care issues. TDI can provide training and advice on these. They include:

Lone working

A lone working policy, and a clear set of practice instructions, are essential in any setting where staff need to work alone at times.

Staff supervision

In any social care or criminal justice setting, we believe professionals need good, regular supervision sessions in which to discuss, reflect on and evaluate their practice. This can be with a manager or a senior practitioner and can even include elements of group (team) supervision.

Reflective practice

Organisations and individuals learn from experience and so there should be opportunities for teams to reflect on things that have happened at work. Too often this seems to mean analysing situations which went wrong in some way: TDI believes it is also crucial to celebrate and learn from our successes.

Analysing risky situations

This applies both to analysing incidents that have already happened, in order to learn from them, but also, more importantly, planning carefully in advance for potentially difficult interviews and other scenarios to manage the risks and keep everyone safe.

Further questions you might want to think about:

How do you think you and your colleagues manage the more stressful aspects of your jobs? How do you combine that with striving for high professional standards and celebrating your achievements? How does your organisation support you in that by its policies and guidelines?



w: tdi.org.uk
e: info@tdi.org.uk
p: 07437 038 057
p: 07765 701 042
a: Suite 4, Adamson House,
65 Westgate Road, New
castle, NE1 1SG

TDI is a national charity which works to increase public protection by finding practical and creative solutions to the problem of sexual offending.

For over 25 years we have been at the forefront of the field, providing training, research, consultancy and public protection schemes to individuals and organisations across society.

If you've found this explainer useful, you may be interested in learning more through one of our training programmes. Contact us at info@tdi.org.uk to find out more.