



Fulfilling Lives

South East Partnership

CORE COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK

Supporting People with
Multiple and Complex Needs

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT ARE CORE COMPETENCIES?

The Core Competencies Framework identifies the skills, knowledge, values, and experience that are beneficial for client-facing support workers who work with people with multiple and complex needs.

These competencies were identified by the client-facing Specialist Workers, the clients themselves and the staff and volunteers with lived experience of multiple and complex needs in Fulfilling Lives South East Partnership.

The framework is not exhaustive, but provides a point of reference when thinking about the commissioning of services, recruitment of staff, and providing training and development for client-facing staff in existing services such as supported housing, substance misuse, and outreach teams.

At the end of the competencies section, we have included a strengths-based reflective tool that can be used by individuals or groups. This tool encourages self-reflection and action planning based on the competencies.

Competencies are the qualities that are desirable for client-facing practitioners to possess.

They are the meeting point of skills, knowledge, experience, and values.

INTRODUCTION

- FRAMEWORK -

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

The framework should ideally be used as part of a wider training and development offer for staff, and supported by regular supervision and reflective practice sessions with a neutral facilitator.

We recommend training in the following areas:

- **Trauma-Informed Practice**
- **Psychologically Informed Environments**
- **Motivational Interviewing**
- **Understanding the Cycle of Change**
- **Adaptive Mentalization-Based Integrative Treatment (AMBIT)***

DEMONSTRATING THE COMPETENCIES

Consideration should also be given to how the competencies can be evidenced or demonstrated by practitioners within a service. It is not possible to be prescriptive about this as it will vary between services, but in the column to the right we have identified a number of ways that the competencies can be evidenced that will be broadly applicable in most settings.

***Details about these terms can be found in a glossary at the end of this document.**

DEVELOP

- Regular supervision, including clinical supervision
- Reflective practice with a neutral facilitator
- Regular training and refresher training
- Participation in shared learning events and worker forums

DEMONSTRATE

- Practitioner case studies
- Client interviews and surveys
- Practice observation
- Assessment tools such as the Core Competencies tool, Pizazz PIE audit, Mystery Shop and Environment Assessment may be useful

CORE COMPETENCIES

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CORE COMPETENCIES

AREA



Meeting People Where They Are At

“

“They make an effort to come to me and work with me where I am and even if I am late”

2017 client survey

PROACTIVE AND PATIENT



Work proactively with clients whose willingness or ability to engage with support may fluctuate.

FACILITATORS OF CHANGE



Recognise and respond to where a client is at within the context of the cycle of change, using coaching and motivational skills to support change.

ENCOURAGERS



Recognise that ‘progress’ for a client may look different to what we expect or plan for, and celebrate client successes, no matter how small they may seem.

STRENGTHS-FOCUSED AND STRUCTURED



Adopt a strengths-based approach when working with clients; help them to break down their goals into realistic and achievable steps.

FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE



Be flexible and prepared to adapt to a client’s changing needs, for example asking what time of day work best for them to meet, and whether they prefer to communicate by phone, text or email.

RISK NAVIGATORS



Be able to risk assess challenging situations and work safely with clients; be prepared to work with clients who may at times be substance affected if it is safe and appropriate to do so.

AREA 2

Building Trusting Relationships

“

“I can open up about my partner and ex-partner because we have built up a trusting relationship”

2020 annual client interview

PERSEVERING



Persevere in building trust with clients, recognising that this can be a slow process.

RELIABLE AND CONSISTENT



Be reliable and consistent with support and contact and be transparent with clients about what can and cannot be offered.

RECONCILERS



Model healthy relationships by proactively seeking restoration and reconciliation if the client/worker relationship becomes strained or breaks down. This also applies to relationships with other professionals.

INTERESTED IN THE WHOLE PERSON



Make space to have ‘problem-free talks’ with clients in order to strengthen relationships, i.e. conversations about interests, activities, and daily life that are not to do with the clients’ support needs.

ENABLERS OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES



Offer safe and positive experiences that will foster trust and help clients to grow in confidence and self-esteem. For example, going for walks together, attending an activity group together, going for coffee.

EMPATHIC LISTENERS



Use empathic listening with clients. This involves listening with understanding and empathy, and contextualising what a client shares within the bigger picture their life experience. It also means being able to pause and reflect before rushing to generate actions or solutions.

AREA

3

Trauma-Informed Approach

“

“She got people to look beyond the addiction”

2020 exit survey

TRAUMA-AWARE



Have an understanding of the purpose and principles of a trauma-informed approach and be willing to continually develop in this area.

PREPARED AND INVESTED



Make time to learn about and understand a client's history, including past traumas if and when the client feels comfortable to share their story.

SKILLFUL IN RESPONDING TO DISTRESS



Be able to safely de-escalate situations by helping clients to regulate their emotions when they are heightened using techniques such as grounding and mindfulness.

VALIDATING AND RESPECTFUL



Validate and acknowledge the points of view and emotions of clients.

EMPATHETIC BUT BOUNDARIED



Respond to challenging behaviour with understanding and empathy, recognising that it may be a manifestation of a client's experience of trauma. At the same time, be confident, clear and consistent in challenging inappropriate behaviour, emphasising the client's ability to make positive changes.

AREA **4**

Working Together and Empowering

“

“I have contact with services, my views are listened to and I'm involved”

2020 annual client interview

PERSON-CENTRED



Work in a person-centred way, supporting clients to identify and achieve their goals and involving them in the decisions about their support.

COLLABORATORS



Work collaboratively, 'doing with' clients instead of 'doing to'. Encourage independence whilst recognising when to support a client to accomplish a task or goal.

PROBLEM SOLVERS



Adopt an attitude of 'getting through it together'. This involves working with clients in new and unfamiliar situations, problem solving together; being quick to learn; and staying positive in the face of setbacks.

AREA

5

Advocacy and Joined-Up Working

“

“My Specialist Worker made sure I was kept in the loop and asked me what I would like to say so they could take that information to the meetings”

2020 annual client interview

SUPPORTERS OF CLIENT VOICES



Support clients to articulate their needs, views and concerns to other professionals and services.

CONSTRUCTIVE CHALLENGERS



Raise and escalate concerns and complaints through the correct channels and in a non-confrontational way, focused on positive outcomes for both clients and services. This includes constructively challenging stigmatising practices and inappropriate language when it is encountered.

TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATORS



Support clients to understand processes and policies that affect them. Ensure that they have access to and the information they need to make informed decisions in a format that they can understand.

SYMPATHETIC ADVOCATES



Encourage services to understand a client's challenging behaviour. Be able to acknowledge the impact on the service, yet advocate for positive solutions that will meet the needs of both the client and the service.

EFFECTIVE MULTI-AGENCY WORKERS



Work in a joined-up way with the other professionals or services involved in a client's support. This requires clear and timely communication, understanding issues around client confidentiality, being proactive in initiating contact with other workers and services, and adopting an attitude of a 'team player'.

EXEMPLARY PRACTITIONERS



Model a non-judgemental and empathetic attitude towards clients when working with other professionals and services.

AREA

6

Emotional and Psychological Awareness

“

“[my Specialist Worker] didn’t push me too much but enough and in necessary directions”

2020 annual client interview

COMMITTED TO DEVELOPMENT



Prioritise opportunities for continuous learning and development, e.g. engaging with training, reflective practice, supervision, webinars, and other resources that strengthen emotional and psychological awareness and understanding.

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE



Recognise how the experience of multiple and complex needs is affected by issues of identity, gender and culture and respond with sensitivity and humility.

AWARE OF WORKER/CLIENT DYNAMICS



Demonstrate self-awareness regarding the worker and client dynamic, e.g. understanding and maintaining boundaries, recognising one’s own scope and limits in providing support, identifying and responding to dynamics such as the drama triangle, transference, and splitting.

ATTENTIVE TO COMMUNICATION STYLES



Be attentive to the different learning and communication styles of clients and able to adjust one’s communication to ensure it is comprehensible to the client, e.g. avoiding jargon, asking if the client needs assistance with literacy.

AWARE OF INTER-PROFESSIONAL DYNAMICS



Demonstrate the same awareness regarding the dynamics between professionals and have an empathic awareness of other workers and services and the challenges they may face.

AREA **7**

Reflecting on Practice and Self-Care

“

“We need a full tank to be resilient to be around the challenging things we hear and see daily. We need to practice what we preach about looking after yourself as we are modelling to clients without realising.”

Specialist worker, Fulfilling Lives

PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Cultivate good health, wellbeing and resilience by practising self-care in and outside of work.

ENGAGE WITH SUPPORT CHANNELS

Be aware of the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma. Reduce the risk of burnout by drawing on various resources and support networks, including: clinical supervision, debriefing after challenging incidents, mindfulness techniques, and utilising peer support.

AREA



Values and Attitudes

“

“I felt comfortable and I didn’t feel judged”

2017 client survey

NON-JUDGEMENTAL



Hold a non-judgemental and empathetic attitude towards clients.

OPTIMISTIC AND RESILIENT



Endeavour to maintain optimism and resilience when faced with challenges, both personal and professional.

HUMBLE AND OPEN



Hold an attitude of humility and a willingness to learn from clients, other professionals, and training and development opportunities.

REFLECTIVE TOOL

HOW TO USE THE TOOL

This tool can be used by individuals for self-assessment and reflection, but is best done in small groups of three or four with a neutral person facilitating the discussion. We recommend giving an hour and a half to complete this activity.

1

The group decides on one of the 8 areas to focus on from the framework, e.g. 'Building Trusting Relationships', then chooses no more than three individual competencies to discuss from within that area.

2

Participants are given time to read the competencies, and individually **reflect and rate their confidence by numbers 1 - 10** (1 = No confidence at all, 10 = Very high confidence) and write down briefly why they chose this rating (5-10 minutes).

3

The facilitator then invites the **participants to share their answers, and asks the group to give constructive feedback to each other**. Focus on identifying each other's strengths, solutions and opportunities for further training and development (1 hour).

4

Towards the end of the session, **participants should re-score their confidence level if their self-perception has changed through discussion**. Write at least one action for development and set a review date. (10 minutes, or as they arise in discussion).

REFLECTIVE TOOL

Competency	Confidence: 1 - 10	Why this score?	Actions for Development	Review date
<p>Area:</p> <p>Competency:</p>				
<p>Area:</p> <p>Competency:</p>				
<p>Area:</p> <p>Competency:</p>				

NAME:.....

ROLE:.....

ORGANISATION:.....

DATE:.....

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AMBIT

The AMBIT approach provides tools for putting mentalization to use in work with clients, team colleagues and wider inter-agency networks, and is designed to support the development of both local excellence and evidence-based practice.

<https://www.annafreud.org/training/mentalization-based-treatment-training/ambit-training-programme/>

Coaching

A coach helps the client to achieve their personal best and to produce the results they want in their personal and professional lives. Coaching ensures the client can give their best, learn and develop in the way they wish.

<https://internationalcoachingcommunity.com/what-is-coaching/>

Cycle of Change

The cycle of change is a model of behaviour change based on research by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) into smoking cessation. It has since been adopted for a range of health and social care settings. It states that there is a common cycle or set of stages to behaviour change.

Drama Triangle

The drama triangle model originated in psychotherapy and postulates that, in conflicted relationships, people assume 3 basic roles (persecutor, rescuer, and victim) and switch between these roles as they seek to get their (often unconscious) needs met.

https://karpmandramatriangle.com/dt_article_only.html

Learning Styles

There are a number of models of 'learning styles', perhaps the most influential is that of Honey and Mumford, who postulated that there are four basic ways that people prefer to take in information and learn from experiences: Activists, Reflectors, Theorists, and Pragmatists.

[https://www.talentlens.co.uk/product/learning-style-questionnaire/?](https://www.talentlens.co.uk/product/learning-style-questionnaire/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIhbeNq6C76wIVdIBQBh3UtgV-EAAYASAAEgLpSfD_BwE)

[gclid=EAlaIQobChMIhbeNq6C76wIVdIBQBh3UtgV-EAAYASAAEgLpSfD_BwE](https://www.talentlens.co.uk/product/learning-style-questionnaire/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIhbeNq6C76wIVdIBQBh3UtgV-EAAYASAAEgLpSfD_BwE)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Motivational Skills

Motivational skills refers to a the application of Motivational Interviewing (MI), which is an approach used in some forms of counselling. 'MI uses a guiding style to engage clients, clarify their strengths and aspirations, evoke their own motivations for change and promote autonomy in decision making (Rollnick et al 2008).'

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/supporting-behaviour-change/motivational-interviewing>

Person-Centred

Being person-centred is about focusing care on the needs of individual. Ensuring that people's preferences, needs and values guide clinical support, and providing care that is respectful of and responsive to them.

(<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/person-centred-care>)

Splitting

Splitting is a term used in psychiatry to describe the inability to hold opposing thoughts, feelings, or beliefs. Some might say that a person who splits sees the world in terms of black or white 'all or nothing.'

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-splitting-425210>

Strengths-Based

'Strengths-based practice is a collaborative process between the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets.'

<https://www.scie.org.uk/strengths-based-approaches/guidance>

Transference

'Transference is the process of projecting one's feelings toward an important figure in your life onto someone else... If a patient's mother was extremely judgemental to her as a child, and the therapist makes an observation that the patient perceives as judgemental, the patient might lash out at the therapist, transferring the anger she felt toward her mother onto her therapist.'

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/basics/transference>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Trauma-Informed
Practice**

+

**Psychologically
Informed
Environments
(P.I.E)**

The key goal of trauma-informed practice is to raise awareness among staff and services about the wide impact of trauma, to prevent re-traumatisation of clients in service settings that are meant to provide support, and to develop policies and practices that assist healing from trauma.

Psychologically informed environments (PIEs) are services that have been designed to take the psychological and emotional needs of people into account.

<http://pielink.net/>

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Fulfilling Lives South East Partnership is a National Lottery Community Fund programme.

For more information about the national Fulfilling Lives programme visit www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/multiple-needs

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