Professional and personal development
Essential level learning module
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Introduction

The Real Skill for professional and personal development is:

Every person working in a mental health and addiction treatment service actively reflects on their work and practice, and works in ways that enhance the team to support the recovery of service users.

Performance indicators - essential

By the completion of this module you will be able to:

- work effectively in a team by understanding team roles and respecting and accommodating different working styles
- communicate effectively (orally, in writing, when listening, by other non-verbal means) with a wide range of people
- pronounce Māori names and words correctly and ask when unsure
- understand the nature and benefits of research and evaluation
- gather and use information to inform decisions relevant to your role
- engage with colleagues to give and receive constructive feedback
- understand and practise self-care
- reflect on your own practice to identify strengths and needs
- understand and engage in supervision
- seek and take up learning opportunities.

Preparation

To help you complete this module, please familiarise yourself with key national strategy and policy documents relevant to your specific area of work (older adult, adult, child and youth, specialist, alcohol and other drugs). For your reference a list of recommended reading is included in this module. It is strongly recommended that you familiarise yourself with these documents, as they relate to professional and personal development.

There are several main themes included in this module. They are:

- identifying your strengths and areas for improvement in relation to the work that you do
- understanding and contributing to successfully functioning teams
- communicating effectively
- using evidence and research to improve service delivery
- understanding self-care
- using supervision to enhance and develop practice.

To gain the maximum benefit from this module you are encouraged to think about how the learning module applies to you and your work context. When you have finished working through this module use the Learning Review Tool to help you reflect on your professional and personal development. This will
enable you to identify where your strengths are, along with any areas you may need to further explore in your Individual Professional Development Plan.

Overview

Professional and personal development within the Let’s get real framework requires that every person working in a mental health or addiction service:

- accesses education and training that is based on evidence and on the values and attitudes expressed in Let’s get real
- participates in lifelong learning and development
- has a relevant and up-to-date professional and personal development plan that takes into account their aspirations
- understands their personal responsibility for attaining this plan and the responsibilities of the service they work for to support them in meeting the goals of the plan
- recognises the importance of supervision and reflective practice and integrates both into their daily work routines.

Reflective practice is a process of thinking about the reasons behind our decision making and actions. It requires questioning our work practices according to our knowledge, professional ethics and organisational values. Actions and behaviours are informed by our feelings and emotions too, and reflective practice requires that we consider and understand how these personal experiences affect our professional practices. Capable workers in mental health and addiction services actively reflect on their work and practice in ways that enhance their team to support the recovery of service users.

One of the core recovery competencies is the ability to work in a reflective way. Understanding the reasons and values that shape how you work is a critical aspect of working competently within mental health and addiction services. Reflecting on your practice, then developing clear, documented action plans to improve it, is a critical aspect of professional development. Completing his module, along with the modules for the other Real Skills, will help you to reflect upon and construct your own professional development plan.

Ongoing experiential learning is another means of meeting the competencies required for professional and personal development. Experiential learning is the process of doing and learning. Responsible workers in mental health and addiction services not only reflect on their practices, they also develop and decide upon action to take up to improve their performance. Following action there is further reflection and subsequent learning again.

Supervision is a suitable way to ensure that workers are reflecting on and developing strategies to improve their work practices. Supervision is the term used to describe the process of meeting to discuss issues, strengths and areas of improvement in a worker’s performance. Three commonly identified functions of supervision are:

- formative - to enable the worker to develop confidence and competence in their role
- restorative - to support the worker in coping with the demands of their role, deal with stress and ensure that they remain fit to work
• normative - to monitor standards and ensure quality in the delivery of services with service users.

All people working in mental health and addiction services work in partnerships. These are most often characterised as partnerships with service users and their families or whānau, with other team members, and other mental health and addiction services and community agencies. Contributing to well functioning teams and partnerships is the responsibility of all people in mental health and addiction services. Effective teamwork is characterised by a number of features including:

• strong team identity
• shared vision, purpose and commitment to goals and to achieving defined outcomes
• clarity of roles
• effective communication
• collaboration and participation from and between all members
• issue resolution processes and good negotiation
• reflection, self-assessment and a commitment to ongoing improvement of the functioning of the team.

Exploring and understanding how you work within teams, and the contributions you can make to the effectiveness of a team, is an ongoing requirement of a competent mental health and addiction worker.

Research and evidence-based practice both play important roles in developing policy and service planning, and in delivering quality mental health and addiction services. Practice that is grounded in evidence, and informed by the values and attitudes of *Let’s get real*, is likely to contribute to positive service user experiences of recovery.

Evidence-based practice refers to the application of research and evaluation findings to recovery planning processes for service users. International mental health and addiction policy calls for strong practices based on evidence. Evidence is developed and understood in ever-increasing ways. Strong research processes are a sound basis for the development of evidence. There are increasingly diverse ways of developing evidence. Personal narratives, qualitative research and evaluation approaches, large international studies and random-controlled trials are just some of the many means by which evidence is being developed and understood. Understanding how to gather and use information and evidence in your role is critical to delivering a good service. Furthermore, contributing to knowledge and evidence by conducting or participating in research and evaluation processes is an effective way to meet your professional obligations.
1 Understanding your own strengths and development requirements

Working within mental health and addiction services requires working from a strengths perspective, whereby a person’s strengths, capabilities and resiliencies are emphasised. Using the principles of strengths-based practice is a good way to understand your current professional and personal development needs, processes and advances. Six particular requirements of strengths-based practice with service users are:

- focusing on strengths and abilities
- tapping into personal sources of motivation
- developing trusting working relationships
- working collaboratively on a mutually agreed agenda for change
- empowering people to take a lead in their own development
- sustaining gains through learning and growing through change.

In this section we will use these six requirements to extend your understanding of your professional and personal development requirements.

1.1 Understanding your own strengths and abilities is an important way to reinforce the positive aspects of your work with service users and their families and whānau. Identify and list at least six strengths that you have in your current role.
1.2 Choose someone that you work with and have them list four additional strengths that they believe you bring to your role.

Understanding your sources of motivation is also an important consideration for professional and personal development. People are attracted to working with service users in mental health and addiction services for many varied reasons.

1.3 List the reasons why you entered mental health and addiction services, and whether those reasons are still present and relevant?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Still present and relevant</th>
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1.4 What aspects of your role do you really enjoy and get a sense of satisfaction from?

Motivations and inspirations often change throughout people’s careers. Continually checking in with the sources of your inspiration and satisfaction will give you the opportunity to ensure that your work is still meeting your needs.

1.5 Indicate below the things you can do to take time to reflect on your work inspirations and aspirations.
Having trusting working relationships with others within your team, your supervisor, manager and others who may support your professional development is critical to achieving growth in your work.

1.6 Identify in the box below the people who contribute to your professional development. Indicate the strength of the relationship (indicate whether it needs work, is good, is great etc) and one thing that you can do to improve the value of the relationship for you.

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<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Strength of relationship</th>
<th>Approach to improve relationship</th>
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1.7 What do you believe are the common features that have been present in successful collaborations that you have had with others?
1.8 What three actions can you take to ensure that the features listed in response to question 1.7 are present in your relationships with the people identified in question 1.6?

First action

Second action

Third action

1.9 What actions and steps have you taken in the past that show you have taken a lead in your own professional or work development?

1.10 What actions and steps can you take now that will continue to lead your professional or work development?
“Become a student of change. It is the only thing that will remain constant” Anthony D’Angelo.

The mental health and addiction sector is dynamic and subject to ongoing growth, development and change. An often stated experience of health service delivery is that there is a state of constant change. Legislation, policies, service delivery philosophies and the workforce all contribute to new treatment models, new practices of inclusion and involvement, and changes in how service users experience service delivery. It is important that we are able to learn and grow as a result of change.

Think about the changes that you have witnessed in the mental health and addiction sector and respond to the following questions.

1.11 Describe the most significant change you have experienced in the following areas.

In your organisation

In the mental health and addiction sector

In the experiences of service users
1.12 What has been the biggest learning for you from the above changes and in what ways has this learning improved your work?

1.13 An inspirational quote attributed to David McNally reads, “Our willingness to create a new dream or vision for ourselves is a statement of belief in our own potential”. Thinking about this statement, determine a vision for yourself in relation to what you could potentially achieve in mental health and addiction services. Write (or draw) that vision in the box below, and use it when you create your future professional development plans.
2 Effective teamwork and communication

Working in effective teams is critical to delivering effective services. Bringing people together into teams does not however ensure effective teamwork - this is something that must be pursued and purposefully developed. Effective teamwork can be undermined by a range of problems, including poor organisation, lack of coordination, misunderstanding and poor communication.

Some characteristics of effective teams include:

- strong team identity
- shared vision, purpose and commitment to goals and defined outcomes
- clarity of roles
- effective communication
- collaboration and participation from and between all members
- issue resolution processes and good negotiation
- reflection, self-assessment and a commitment to ongoing improvement.

2.1 What are the features you have experienced in a well functioning team? What contributing factors made the team successful?
2.2 Now think about teams that you have worked in or have heard about that have not worked as effectively as they perhaps could have. List the barriers to effective teamwork that were present in those teams in the box below.


2.3 What were your roles and influences on both well functioning teams and less effective teams that you have been involved in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well functioning teams</th>
<th>Less effective teams</th>
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</table>
2.4 What actions can you take to increase the positive contributions that you make to the team(s) you currently work with?

2.5 Competent communication is critical to well functioning teams. The following are three different summarised descriptions of communication, each one emphasising a different aspect. For each description indicate what you understand its primary meaning to be.

Communication is a means to share information and meaning between people through a common understanding of symbols, signs, and behaviours (Lehman and DuFrené, 2004).

Communication is a continual process where people represent their feelings, ideas, values and understandings with symbols in the form of verbal, non-verbal and graphic depictions (Dwyer, 1993).
Communication is an ongoing, complex, collaborative process of meaning-making through which we create understandings and meanings of the worlds we inhabit (Stewart, 2002).

2.6 Effective communication is critical to well functioning teams. Below is a list of communication skills and factors that contribute to well functioning and successful teams. Circle all of the communication skills that you bring to your role and all of the factors that are present within your current team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in team activities</th>
<th>Active listening</th>
<th>Paraphrasing</th>
<th>Structured communication processes</th>
<th>Consideration and respect for other members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Supporting and validating others’ ideas</td>
<td>Thought and intent in communication</td>
<td>Personal leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution oriented not problem focussed</td>
<td>Multiple communication methods</td>
<td>Hope and positivity</td>
<td>Using metaphors</td>
<td>Seeking clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving and receiving feedback</td>
<td>Defined roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Inclusion of all team members</td>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>Addressing person differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving misunderstandings</td>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Displaying appreciation</td>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>Personal responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding blame</td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>Humour and fun</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2.7 Find someone in your team who has also completed question 2.6 above. Compare your responses and give reciprocal feedback on other aspects of effective communication that you believe each other to have.

2.8 What additional skills did they indicate that you have?
There are many factors that influence communication within mental health and addiction services. Some of these are internal to you - how you are feeling, who you are communicating with and so forth, whilst other factors are external and experienced by many people. The following table indicates some of the many factors that may influence communication in the work that you do.
2.10 For each of the four categories identified above, list an additional five factors that exist within your team. These can be positive or negative factors.

**Legal and ethical factors**

**Team environment**

**Technology**

**Diversity challenges**

The Mental Health Commission’s recovery competencies indicate the need for workers to have advanced communication skills, in order to communicate respectfully and develop good relationships with service users. Recovery competency number 4 indicates, “A competent mental health worker has the self-awareness and skills to communicate respectfully and develop good relationships with service users”. (Mental Health Commission, 2001,)

Competency number 4.2 in particular indicates that people working in mental health and addiction services need to demonstrate communication styles that show respect for service users and their families and whānau.
2.11 Rate your confidence in the each of the following examples of this competency.

**Understanding of different cultural communication styles.**

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not so confident</td>
<td>Awesome</td>
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**Listening skills and ability to take people’s experiences seriously.**

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<td>Not so confident</td>
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**Ability to communicate respect and positive reinforcement to the service user.**

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<td>Not so confident</td>
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**Ability to use communication styles that motivate and support people to change.**

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<td>Not so confident</td>
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**Understanding of power dynamics.**

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<td>Not so confident</td>
<td>Awesome</td>
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**Ability and willingness to share information with service users.**

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<td>Not so confident</td>
<td>Awesome</td>
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**Use of non-technical, understandable written and oral language.**

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not so confident</td>
<td>Awesome</td>
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**Knowledge of how to use interpreters for non-English speaking people.**

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<td>Not so confident</td>
<td>Awesome</td>
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**Conflict resolution skills.**

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<td></td>
<td>Not so confident</td>
<td>Awesome</td>
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</table>
2.12 Considering your responses above, which aspects of communication do you need to concentrate on to assist service users with their recovery? What will you do to make improvements in these areas?

Working with Māori involves unique considerations in terms of communication. Many New Zealanders can speak te reo Māori. Working with Māori and their whānau requires respect for their rights to communicate in te reo and practise waiata, karakia and tikanga.

2.13 List below the local resources or cultural expertise you can access to increase your own understanding of te reo Māori.

2.14 What actions can you take to enhance your relationship with the people or services listed in question 2.13 above?
3 Using research and evidence to improve service delivery

Evidence-based practice is an approach to health care whereby health professionals use the best evidence possible (the most appropriate information available) to make decisions with individual service users. Evidence-based practice values, enhances and builds on clinical expertise and knowledge in the form of good research and evaluation. It involves complex and conscientious decision making, based on the available evidence and informed by the situations, preferences and choices of individual service users. Service delivery therefore becomes informed by evidence that directs and determines best-practice principles. Ultimately, when considered in conjunction with values-based practices, (outlined in the Values and Attitudes module of Let’s get real) it gives a good structure to help with decision making in service delivery.

Sources of evidence are varied and diverse. In the medical sciences, evidence is indicated by research that empirically proves the efficacy of interventions and treatments. In mental health and addiction services, we have collectively identified the need for interventions to be based on positive mutual relationships, challenging stigma, holding hope and practising with compassion. While these interventions are not easy to demarcate and provide evidence for, mental health and addiction research, evaluation and knowledge generation has expanded significantly in recent times. The power of personal stories and experiences are becoming increasingly recognised as critical learning opportunities for service users and their families and whānau, staff working within services, policy makers and others within our communities. Personal narratives and individualised experiences of people with experience of mental illness have become validated as a result of changes in political ideology (i.e. policies of de-institutionalisation and community care) and a growing sense of self-identification among service users. This has lead to the growing influence of what has been referred to as “hidden users’ knowledge” and comes in the form of user wisdom, advice and learning (Beresford, 2000). The encouraging aspect of user knowledge is that it is becoming increasingly valued and available in different forums.

3.1 In the box below list all of the sources of evidence that you use in your work. Think about where you find information about services, interventions and practices that relate to your role.
3.2 List below all the ways in which you use the information and evidence that you access in your role. A couple of examples have been completed to prompt you.

- Journal articles - used to inform discussions in my team’s journal club.
- Conference attendance - follows up research on concepts discussed by key-note speaker and then discuss with my supervisor about the implications to my work.
- Membership of my professional association - studying and achieving competencies.

3.3 Thinking back to the Let’s get real module on Values and Attitudes, describe below your understandings of how values-based practices and evidence-based practices complement each other.
To ensure evidence’s responsiveness and ongoing relevance, it is critical that it is continually contributed to and developed by practice. The following diagram illustrates this relationship.

Evidence informs best-practice, which in turn contributes to the creation of evidence.

3.4 Indicate below the things that you can do to ensure that your practice contributes to the creation and development of evidence. Think about professional forums, conferences, use of outcome measurements, sharing stories etc.

3.5 What one thing can you commit to right now that you can undertake to contribute to evidence?
4 Supervision and self-care

Working in mental health and addiction services can be both rewarding and exciting. Earlier in this module you were asked to identify the benefits that you get from your role. Remembering and reflecting on the value that you receive from your work is one way of looking after your own well-being in order that you may assist others to do so.

4.1 In the boxes below, indicate the things that you do to manage stress and enhance your own well-being.

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<tr>
<th>At work</th>
<th>Outside of work</th>
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It is important to ensure that you can identify and access activities, colleagues and other things that assist you to manage stress, accentuate positives, increase resilience, build coping strategies and improve your own well-being. One formal function that can contribute to this is the process of supervision.

Supervision can take a number of forms, meet a number of purposes and have a broad range of definitions. Common features of supervision are that it is an interactional process directed towards increasing:

- supervisee self-awareness
- developing skills
- making connections with formal knowledge
- exploring the wider context of practice and learning
- reflecting, conceptualising and actioning
- building accountability and safety in the supervisee’s work.
Supervision can be delivered individually by line-managers, clinically, professionally in groups or teams, or through external (to your organisation or team) supervisors. Regardless of how it is delivered there some critical aspects of the relationship between supervisors and supervisees that should be present in order to achieve the goals of supervision. These are:

- a strong ethical relationship between supervision partners
- an open acknowledgement of power in supervision relationships
- recognition of the experience of the supervisee
- common values and understandings of the purpose of supervision and the context of the work
- while the supervisor has to facilitate and allow exploration of issues, the supervisee has to have the curiosity and motivation to benefit from the exploration.

4.2 Indicate in the box below your definition of supervision.

4.3 Now check your definition against the official definition used by the professional occupational group that you belong to (you will be able to source this from the professional association). If you do not belong to a professional association, then compare your response with a colleague in a similar role to your own.

4.4 What things did your definition have in common with the definition you compared? What did you like about the other definition?
4.5 Thinking of supervision that you have experienced in the past, indicate the specific things that made it good. If you have not had good supervision, then what indicate what would have improved your experiences of it?

Learning in the context of supervision occurs when the supervisee is able to cycle continuously through:

- experience - being aware of, open to and valuing experience
- reflection - exploring experiences, feelings, intuitions, ideas, reactions and opinions
- conceptualisation - analyse, understand and create meaning, identify theory
- active experimentation - experience in a new context or way.

4.6 In relation to the above points, what aspects can you take responsibility for in order to improve your supervision, learning and development experiences?
References and recommended reading


Professional and personal development - essential level
Learning Review Tool and Individual Professional Development Plan
Learning Review Tool

Using the Likert scales below, rate your work in relation to challenging stigma and discrimination.

I have a good understanding of my strengths and competencies in the work that I do and know the areas of my practice that I can focus on for improvement.

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<tr>
<td>Very little understanding</td>
<td>Absolutely</td>
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I have a good understanding of the skills and attributes that I bring to my team and how I can continue to be an effective team member.

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<tr>
<td>Very little understanding</td>
<td>Absolutely</td>
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I can clearly articulate how supervision fits within my work context and I know how to maximise the benefits of supervision.

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<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Absolutely</td>
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I understand and practise good self-care on a regular basis.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>All the time</td>
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Choose your response to one of the above statements, and explain why you made this response.
What new knowledge or insights have I gained from working through this module?


What are three things I can put into practice or improve upon as a result?

A

B

C
Individual Professional Development Plan
Professional and personal development (essential level)

One thing I can take personal responsibility for.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What will I do?</td>
<td>When will I do this?</td>
<td>What or who will I need?</td>
<td>What barriers or resistance will I face?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One thing I can advocate for and work towards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action What will I do?</th>
<th>Timeframe When will I do this?</th>
<th>Resources What or who will I need?</th>
<th>Challenges What barriers or resistance will I face?</th>
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Please retain this Individual Professional Development Plan: professional and personal development (essential level) to contribute to your summary action plan once you have completed all of the learning modules.