

## STH Professional Development Forum 19 March 2024, 6.30 – 8pm

37 attendees

### Topic: Practitioner Competencies

### Group feedback discussion notes

Competency – approach/attitude as well as skills and at this stage, thinking about generalist rather than specialised

Core Competencies from European discussions.

- Human Health & wellbeing
- Managing a therapeutic group
- Nature Connections and therapeutic horticulture
- Garden tools and adaptive techniques
- Programming
- Horticulture including basic botany
- Therapeutic Garden Fundamentals inc design

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#### Group 1: summarised by Anna

Talked about what qualifications they had done – wide variation, all done something eg foundation course at Nottingham Trent, Thrive courses including PDD Coventry

Discussed MH: eg first aid, boundaries to go into w/people skills – interpersonal/listening/interacting w people and understanding how it's about them (clients) – person-centred care.

Flexible programming skills to pick up needs and capabilities on the day and changing plans accordingly.

Hort - general agreement that that meant equivalent to RHS level 2 or something covering those grounds – without that technical knowledge might struggle to cover a range of gardening activities.

#### Group 2: summarised by Sue

it's a broad set of competencies – unlikely a single person could be good at all.

Within therapeutic garden a team who might be able to provide those things, could look daunting to someone coming into profession to do it all

But then suggested there were more to consider – ability to manage garden space, manage volunteers to help maintain it, make sure that happens to keep garden usable

Good knowledge of health & safety to do with garden tasks

Liaising with agencies on referrers to bring in / while they are there with you / pathways afterwards

Katie Understanding of the evidence base & benefits

Design might mean a lot, but minimum understanding of accessibility

Francesca comments: draw out “social” – agree with managing a group, and perhaps in nature connection in therapeutic horticulture on Emma's slide – amend to include the word social.

Include the word “management” into the design piece – Fiona agrees a good way to express it's not just about the ability to design

#### Group 3: summarised by Clare

Also discussed qualifications – in this group 2 older diploma, 1 new diploma from Thrive. Different routes in – competency grid provides helpful guide and then, as long as training provided for others, can piece it together like a jigsaw.

Much discussion around outcomes & measurement – as you plan you can capture the outcomes you set. Assessment at someone starting. Doesn't seem to be captured in European competencies – (Fiona responds that it's within in Programming)

#### Group 4: summarised by Sallie

Started with what was required, suggest that confidence building is first thing – experiential learning benefits (as well as theory) and through that gaining respect & being able to evidence. Take your learning forward, so interlinked with everything. Proof paperwork, through CPD, including online, face to face, benefits of both types of training. Cost comes into it too.

In first two areas to investigate what you can learn from experts in that field, but not necessarily hort – eg OT/nursing – how beneficial that learning could be to STH sector

Fiona agrees a lot to be learned from other professions and that experiential learning, work experience are really important too – endorsement & recognition for these things too.

To address comments on training in Scotland – Trellis looking to establish a Scotland qualification – watch this space!

#### Group 5: summarised by Carley

Emphasise the importance to define difference between therapy and therapeutic – some people offer counselling 1:1 with STH staff to deliver the STH – what they are doing is therapeutic but not termed therapy. Really key to register, profession.

Fiona agrees – why we use “practitioners” not “therapists”. Lots of designated professions can have therapists in title and they are educated to degree level in that field and regulated accordingly. Very careful about terminology. Hope everyone is clear & happy.

Kath B raised accessibility of and need for formal qualifications noting only English course available – travel to Reading challenging. Having been a health professional, very aware that if involved in any form of any therapeutic intervention, if you get it wrong, it can go disastrously wrong. Not comfortable therefore for people to not have a level of training. How do you ensure that everyone has enough skills in terms of dealing with people in a therapeutic setting to be able to be safe. Good we're talking at this stage about being generalist – working with specific group, would need someone who has increased skills in partic area and would need more competencies in specialised areas of need.

Fiona confirms again recognition of training in Scotland. Training for someone to say they are competent – scope & limit of practice comes up – people need to understand when not competent to work with a group, or refer on – or reject a referral – confidence to say I'm not skilled enough to work with an individual.

Kathryn apologises that Reading is hard to access for some areas across UK – if we can expand provision of diploma to other areas we would do that – we're not trying to design a register that is just for people to get training from Thrive – we are trying to define competencies so that it can recognise experience and other training too. 3 bursaries with each intake.

Francesca wants to know in terms of competency will there be need to evidence/demonstrate code of conduct, safety and ethics maybe an aspect of CPD, which also needs to be defined  
When talking about horticulture including basic botany – could this be a little more expanded –to capture those who have come from variety of nature based or other, even academic, backgrounds

Fiona reminds everyone that Code of ethics will be available for comment on website – we see them as adjacent but separate topics

Marie comments having worked competencies in previous career in financial services, suggests start with a job description, then competencies fell out of that. Subsequently every month everyone has appraisal to see where evidence of demonstrating the competencies have arisen. She also notes in southern Ireland, BSc in Hort, as part of degree there is a module of Thrive material on STH, done other training w Thrive and Trellis. Question - is someone in trained in Ireland OK to work in UK.

Fiona agrees JD & competencies are a good model.