

Human Rights Based Approaches: what sustains them?

A human rights based approach (HRBA) is defined as: “a conceptual framework...that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights”.¹

[Click here](#) to view short film clips on human rights and how they can be applied in health and social care.

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde is undertaking a range of human rights work with staff and service users.

It is challenging to assess the long term outcomes of this work and, like other Scottish Health Boards, NHSGGC is in the development stages of considering human rights explicitly in its day-to-day business.

A literature review was therefore commissioned to establish which intervention and evaluation tools work best to sustain human rights based approaches in NHS settings

Which tools works to sustain human rights based approaches in NHS settings?

The literature review² found that an agreed set of standards for assessing HRBA remains aspirational. However, the writers stress the contextual nature of implementing HRBAs and the importance of process and setting the right conditions for implementation. For example,

“It should be emphasised that there is no fixed template for how to embed human rights thinking and practice into an organisation, service or team. The process is a creative rather than prescriptive one. For example, it has been likened to a magnet pulling policy, practice and organisational culture in a certain direction.”³

¹ OHCHR 2006 cited in Porsdam Mann, Bradley and Sahakian, 2016

² Curtice, 2017

³ Donald et al, 2009: 38

The review found the following regarding HRBA interventions that work in NHS settings :

- Audit tools that ask specific proxy questions around human rights issues, often using a RAG system (Red, Amber, Green). These are frequently used to review policies and procedures
- Adaptation of risk assessment procedures
- Public commitment (e.g. charter, best practice guides)
- Staff training and co-production with service user representatives

In terms of evaluation, there is a call to link HRBA more to clinical outcomes in initiatives⁴ although this is challenging. It is advised that pre and post evaluation measures should be used also. The following tools tend to be used:

- Service user feedback (surveys, focus groups, interviews, pictorial evaluations)
- Staff feedback (team feedback, individual staff pre and post surveys, focus groups)
- Document reviews

In Scotland, innovative work was tested in 2016 employing service user researchers.⁵ A peer researcher collective is developing from this work.

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde - next steps

NHSGGC is using the above learning to inform its tests of change work in Acute, Health & Social Care Partnerships and hosted services in collaboration with service users as appropriate. It is doing this work with support from the Centre for Health Policy, the Alliance, Scottish Human Rights Commission and Health Scotland. It aims to develop a simple NHSGGC 'Training for Trainers' toolkit to ensure sustainability of HRBA.

⁴ Donald, 2012

⁵ Abdulkadir et al, 2016

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