
Values as Lived Experience

Values are important in every part of life. They are important for their own sake. Professions often regard values as defining their role, driving their purpose, creating their culture, underpinning their behaviours. The agreed values become owned by everyone and are referred to in times of decision and crisis. In challenging circumstances, they are used to map an agreed course of action.

A values-based approach is driven by leaders who recognise that it's people who bring organisations to life – systems and processes only facilitate this. Insightful leaders know that system leadership moves at the speed of trust – so they build relationships based on trust and respect; individuals and teams are valued for their strengths and actions are rooted in agreed core values. Where values are truly embedded and 'live', they will not only be seen and felt in the actions of all professionals, but they will also be seen and felt in the lived experience of those whom the profession serves.

Values and bureaucratisation

Shared values are often at risk of bureaucratisation. Take 'Care' for example – a commonly agreed shared value across a range of services and built on sound relationships. But the language often used is bureaucratic. People are 'screened', 'signposted', 'assessed' and 'referred'. Care comes in 'packages', recipients are 'customers' or 'service users', managers use 'tools' for service design, services are delivered.

You can deliver parcels or fast food but you cannot deliver a relationship. True care is more complex, often tangled up with intimacy and vulnerability. True care is often wordless but deeply felt...