



Why relationships matter

The magic ingredients



www.betterstartbradford.org.uk



Our journey so far and how relationship building has been pivotal



- Better Start Bradford is a partnership between the community and the services who support families of 0-3s and pregnant women
- Began in 2013 with a 6 month bid period – we spoke to hundreds of people and everyone helped
- Commitment from partners
- Set-up period building on those early relationships
- Better Start Bradford a voice and influence for 0-3s in Bradford through the relationships we have built



www.betterstartbradford.org.uk



People and their stories

“I love my volunteer – she speaks to me about positive things and when I am feeling moody she brings patience, love and care. My son is my first born so there are lots of things I don’t know and my volunteer puts me true to help me to bring him up.

My son loves her and as I have no family around me she has been there for me. I really feel free to speak with her and don’t hide anything. There is a lot of pressure on me and she and her supervisor come to boost me. Home-Start, my children’s centre and my counsellor are my support.”



Kindness, emotions and human relationships: The Blind Spot in Public Policy

Thanks to the Carnegie Trust and Julia Unwin

The Challenge

Talk about kindness in public policy and you will possibly get several negative responses:

Embarrassment



Do we really need to talk about this?

Dismissiveness



We're facing cuts and you're talking about this?

Irritation



Are you suggesting this can replace real important services?



Bringing a fairy tale to a meeting about real things



- Issue with real urgency and importance
- Disconnect between people and institutions
- How is emotional literacy supported in the public space?
- Less effective social settlement
- Inequalities of power



www.betterstartbradford.org.uk



Challenges facing services



- How do we improve outcomes
- How do we encourage behaviour change
- How do we build trust and confidence

All require empathy and emotional intelligence
building on personal contact



www.betterstartbradford.org.uk



It seems obvious - why don't we do it?



- Emotional responses can trigger simple answers to complex questions
- Instant judgements can arise from this possibly leading to poor decisions and inequalities

But public policy drivers:

- Technology to manage information
- Digital power to manage communication
- Economic austerity
- Developing use of artificial intelligence

Have made it more important that we look at, and value, the human relationships that underpin services



www.betterstartbradford.org.uk



Bilingual approach

There are two languages used in public services:

Rational - The language of metrics, resources, regulation, measuring and evaluation

Relational - The language of kindness and grief, of loneliness and friendship, of identity and belonging

Both have strengths but are deeply dangerous on their own.



How bilingual approaches work

- Information, reciprocity, and trust
- Aggregate of resources (information, opportunities, and instrumental support)
- Arise from reciprocal social relationships
- Social capital observed in actions of civic groups, faith communities, and community-based groups
- Increases odds of achieving results otherwise not attained
- Results from participation in formal and informal settings



The shadow side of kindness

Charity generating a ‘them and us’ narrative based on:

- Fear of being in need
- Disgust at vulnerability
- Anxiety about the impact of need ‘drain on society’ portraying recipients as passive and lacking agency



Where is kindness in public services?

Can it be quantified? Measures of subjective experience:

- Who experiences kindness in public services?
- How do they experience it?
- Who is expected to be the human face of kinder services?



What have emotions got to do with public policy

Arguments against:

- It's messy
- Can be biased and discriminatory

Public services should be based on a contract between provider and recipient

Based on clear rights and responsibilities

Transparency and accountability

Paul Bloom – Against Empathy (Bloom 2013)



Why isn't that working?

- People feel services and neighbourhoods don't meet their needs
- They complain they feel like numbers and their individuality isn't recognised
- Those feelings of being disconnected impair the achievement of solutions and can make health worse
- Productivity at work is reduced

I don't want a care worker who can wash me and get me to bed in 10 minutes



Where does kindness fit

- New metrics of satisfaction and attention focus on the relational
- Acceptance that staff who can ‘be themselves at work’ make a bigger contribution
- Authentic leadership
- Requires a real commitment from leaders and managers to support relational work
- Recognises interdependencies, commonalities and differences



Making relational policies

Scottish government adopted kindness as one of its core values in 2018

Requires

- Policy design for kindness
- Measuring and auditing for kindness
- Regulating for kindness

And this can all work at every level of interactions around supporting people

“The ideas that have lighted my way have been kindness beauty and truth”
Albert Einstein



Do relationship based services work?

- Many services to improve outcomes depend on behaviour change – this demands emotional intelligence to understand factors that make change possible
- It requires us to focus on relationships and not transactions
- It asks us to understand motivations, desire, choices, culture, and the reality of people's lives



Investment in relational services



Austerity and technology – may ignore or reject the human relationships – the rule of the algorithm

Needs to be balanced with:

- Rewarding and recognising emotional intelligence
- Fostering and developing ways to measure it
- Legitimising and using the emotional lexicon



www.betterstartbradford.org.uk



Do we need a movement for change?



- Where we started in Better Start Bradford – with relationships still at the core of what we do
- Kindness is disruptive – changes the established order – but people already do it in their thousands
- These relationships drive improved knowledge, better understanding, connections and a shift in power
- Not responding will lead to a loss of trust and less effective services



www.betterstartbradford.org.uk



Finally

- Keep on doing what you're doing - connecting with people and building relationships
- Use your learning to show it works – and share
- Be kind!

