

STUDENT ACTIVITY



ACTIVITY IN PAIRS - PREJUDICES IN CARE SETTINGS

Unfair or discriminatory treatment of particular service users can sometimes occur because of the personal prejudices of care workers. This unfair treatment can often happen quite unconsciously by the care worker who may not realise that their beliefs, preferences and prejudices are apparent to others by their actions, body language and behaviour.

Scenario 1

A health care worker, Jim, thought that the health problems of a service user, who was HIV positive and an intravenous drug user, were his own fault and brought on by his own actions. However, Jim told his supervisor that he did not let these beliefs affect the way he behaved towards the service user. Jim was convinced that he treated him with the same care and respect as all the other service users. Jim's supervisor noticed that Jim left the room when the service user arrived each day, did not initiate any interaction with the service user, did not make eye contact and often asked colleagues to interact with the service user as he was too busy.

Scenario 2

A social care officer, Emily, was sure that she treated all the service users at the day centre fairly. However the manager of the centre realised that Emily unconsciously treated Rani, a physically disabled Punjabi young woman, differently from the other service users. Emily assumed that Rani could not understand much English and therefore did not try to communicate with her. She also assumed that Rani would not want to join in the mixed social activities at the centre and at meal times she always gave her the vegetarian option. (Rani understood English very well, enjoyed mixed activities and, although she did not eat beef, was not vegetarian.)

Work in pairs to discuss and write down your answers to the following questions about the above scenarios.

1. What prejudices did the care workers have?

2. How did that affect their practice?

3. How do you think the service users felt?