



Relational Practice Movement: Strategic Plan

Relational Practice is the radical act of re-introducing empowerment and kindness into the very heart of our public services.

Background

There is a long and valuable history that has used models of intervention based on the use of relationships to provide education, care and treatment. The early 2000s saw the first coherent government policy programme covering health, criminal justice and education¹, and the need for innovative services, training and research that could address the failure of services in providing for people with complex emotional needs or developmental trauma. The evaluation at the end of the programme identified that the quality of relationships was at the centre of effective service provision.

Further work, over several years, characterised this common thread as 'Relational Practice', which gives priority to relationships over procedure. This took place with extensive co-production and cross-sector engagement with many organisations and individuals who were sympathetic to the fundamental ideas. This led to the successful launch of a 'Manifesto for Relational Practice' in July 2023. To ensure the sustainability and proper resourcing of the project, this strategy was then drafted and sent out for consultation with all the relevant partner organisations and individuals who had been involved in its development.

Definition

Relational Practice gives priority to relationships, with ourselves, with each other and with the planet. It is the foundation upon which effective interventions are made, and it forms the conditions for a healthy relational environment. It requires:

- relationships based on reliability, curiosity, flexibility, authenticity and responsibility
- enabling and facilitating attitudes
- understanding our inner lives and external relationships

Relational Practice can vary across different organisational settings, but the principles remain the same.



Objectives

This strategy is to build a culture of relational practice across all public services.

- To understand the interconnection between the personal, the professional, the social and the cultural in all aspects of life
- To acknowledge that all professional work requires good quality relationships
- To work in a way which is based on a recognition of the complexity of human development, including biological, social, psychological, cultural, spiritual, ecological, legal and political factors²
- To facilitate and enrich the development of healthy and fulfilling lives for all those receiving and providing of public services
- To promote a psychoanalytic awareness of unconscious and irrational processes across an intersectional understanding of social and systemic dynamics that acknowledges power, privilege, and differences
- To use co-production and lived experience to reduce the risk of creating a 'them and us' culture in which division and conflict are fostered
- For our working lives to be based on developing knowledge and understanding of essential relational capabilities
- To support sustainable leadership that recognises relational principles and practice, which includes being available, compassionate, tolerant and adaptive
- To challenge anti-relational, paternalistic and colonialist policy, commissioning and practices
- To engage with social change and wider systemic issues that support relational values and meaning

Phase I:

The overall aim of phase one, to move from theoretical ideas to practical action, began soon after the Covid pandemic

- Seek funding and other resources to support Phase I
- Create, agree and launch The Manifesto on 7th July 2023
- Establishment of the Relational Practice Movement website
- Publicity and dissemination of the Relational Movement
- Early establishment of cross-sector and regional groups
- Early campaigning initiatives
- Exploration and support for future partnerships and collaborations

Phase II:

The main aims of phase two are to establish energetic networks of individuals and organisations, and plan specific activities including campaigning, learning, research, information collation and fund-raising.

- Call for advocates in all sectors - at local, regional and national levels
- Support organisational partners to establish and coordinate the Movement
- Encourage the development of RPM ambassadors, emissaries and digital influencers
- Develop relationships with organisations aligned with the Movement
- Campaign for policy investment from public sector agencies
- Support co-production of new training, learning opportunities and reflective spaces
- Establish a research network to build the evidence base for Relational Practice
- Develop a broad range of information in collaboration with partners, adapted to suit different organisational contexts, and support the delivery of Phase II

Phase III:

Phase three is the continuing development in establishing a culture of relational practice across all public services.

- Attend to the long-term sustainability of Relational Practice culture in all public services
- Support all future public sector commissioning with the aim of inclusion of Relational Practice principles and making the necessary investment
- Ensure policy, education and training in Relational Practice principles are a requirement in all new and established public services

References

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¹Bradley, K. J. C. B. The Bradley Report: Lord Bradley's review of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities in the criminal justice system. (London: Department of Health, 2009).

²Haigh, R. & Benefield, N. Towards a unified model of human development. *MH Rev. J.* 24, 124–132 (2019).