

FOREWORD

The problem of drug dependency, like the poor ‘who are always with us’, has historically dogged the footsteps of successive governments. Despite concerted periodic attempts to help this service user group, outcomes have continued to be disappointing, nothing seems to work and a reliably effective method of intervention and service provision has yet to be established. The implications of drug dependency for society are far reaching: they impinge on all our major institutions, the Criminal Justice System, mental health services, education, employment, housing and the NHS. Most importantly, drug dependency causes untold human misery and suffering to the users themselves and to everyone who is involved with them: their parents, partners, children, extended families and their friends.

Despite the usual minority of detractors who oppose any vanguard of social reform there has been enormous good will from all sections of society and a real commitment to understanding drug dependency and to promote attitude change from a position of dismissive condemnation to one of ‘these people are in need and deserve, and are entitled to help.’ But with no increase in success rates and the problem of drug dependency showing no sign of abating, an insidious and unwitting culture of hopelessness has crept into our consciousness. There has been a gradual drift towards perceiving drug dependency as an ‘intractable problem’ and then locating the ‘intractable problem’ in the drug user. The person, the drug user themselves, by osmosis then becomes the ‘intractable problem.’ And so the vicious circle of ‘failed’ service users in conjunction with ‘failing’ service provision continues to beat its well worn path of self-perpetuating negative expectation.

In ‘The Open Door’ Janus Solutions describe how they have developed a different model of intervention, which has been tried and tested over a period of years. They argue their case with a refreshing vigour and conviction born out of careful observation, much heartsearching, scrupulous self-examination and productive reflection.

Centring on the crack cocaine user and the ‘intractable’ problem of crack cocaine use as the focus, this much needed book cuts through the veneer of ideologies to the heart of service failure endemic in this area of service provision. By refusing to accept that the crack cocaine user presents an intractable problem to the drugs professional and unpicking the dynamics of the drugs professional’s interaction with the service user, Janus discovered a subtext of hidden agendas, mutual misunderstanding and false assumption. On the surface the professional is conscientiously adhering to all the precepts of good practice – seeing the person not as the problem, valuing and respecting the service user and applying a needs-led, task centred approach to negotiating the support plan. But it is the subtext of unconscious processes which actually drives the relationship between drugs professional and crack cocaine service user and undermines the genuine belief on the part of the service user that the professional believes in them and can help them, and undermines the professional’s genuine belief in the services user’s motivation.

Janus Solutions explain how drugs professionals can develop a new and more potent awareness of these hidden dynamics and then explain it to the service user. They clarify confusion about key concepts such as motivation, resistance and diversity. They teach us how to ask more relevant questions and how to listen effectively so that further questions and information-sharing expand mutuality, awareness, empowerment and a support plan which enables the service user to tackle his/her real issues.

'The Open Door' is not afraid to discuss the sensitive issue of the drugs professional's contribution to the hidden agendas of their relationship with their service users, or to explore the thoughts and feelings of both professional and service user which are so often left unsaid but which hang in the air between them and manifest themselves in non-verbal communication through body language or tone of voice. These unspoken messages destroy trust and damage the potential for realistic hope and positive progress.

The message of this book is that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander and that what we expect of our service users we should also and equally expect of ourselves, our colleagues, our teams, our policy makers and our umbrella organisations. 'The Open Door' is a courageous book, immensely readable and informative and essential reading for all health and social care professionals. Janus Solutions are not asking the reader to do anything which they have not already asked of themselves and therein lies their integrity.

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