

Stuck without the right support

So, we work within a service providing early intervention and therapeutic interventions for families. Often, the majority of our families have neurodivergence within the family.

So, we hear things like they are waiting for a diagnosis, and then when they get the diagnosis, what happens next? They feel like there is no support.

Thinking about when they are going through Social Services, families feel like they are not being listened to. Professionals do not know what it is like to be in their family. Whatever they do, it is not good enough.

They do not know who is supporting them around there. They feel like people do not understand and services do not help.

So, when we are working, we are listening, but we are not a specialist service. We are an early intervention and therapeutic service, and we try to facilitate support and signpost appropriately.

But what we find is that there is not a magic wand to fix things, and often there is not a right answer. Sometimes the policies and the systems can be restrictive and limited when making changes within that family because they are so policy-driven, they are so directive, and objective in what they are expecting, which is just so unachievable for the families that we are supporting.

What we feel is that we feel frustrated, we feel stuck, we feel desperate, and we feel limited in what we are able to do. As a result, we feel deskilled and our competency as professionals is questioned.

That means that often we feel restricted in our professional autonomy and what we can do to support. Which is really interesting, because it is exactly what our families are feeling. We feel just like our families - just sort of all stuck, not sure what the right answer is for change.

So, I think what we would really like to happen, and what we would like, is that it has to be an approach - it has to be a whole-systems approach, a shift in perspective.

That includes development in leadership services and how we shift perspectives in communities around how we support families.

We think what we need is compassion for everybody: compassion for people within the systems, compassion for the workers and the practitioners working around the families, and compassionate leadership.

Because if you have compassion at the basis of your intervention or the support you are providing, it does not matter about training, it does not matter about policies, you are really putting the family at the centre of it.

So, what we would like is a compassionate approach focused on being family-centred and connected to other services. Good communication with other services, connection in the community, and strengths-based, not oppressive, support.

Looking at what people's strengths are, what they are good at, and how we can add value to people's lives based on their strengths. Focusing on relationships and a relational approach.

Meeting people where they are at in the team, meeting people where they are at in the community, and being flexible with our approach.

I think if we can have compassion, if we can have compassion at the centre of our approach, then we can really keep people first, keep people at the centre of our change, and understand people on a personal level.