**Guiding principles for difficult decision making during Covid 19 pandemic**

Aim of this document: To ensure that decision making during the Covid 19 pandemic is as consistent and morally and psychologically safe as possible.

Introduction

Decision making during the Covid 19 pandemic should, in the first instance, be led by Trust policy. A number of new policy documents are being produced to respond to some of the unique challenges that this crisis presents.

Despite the guidance and support which is now available, decisions will have to be made that cannot be anticipated and which aren’t, therefore, addressed by policy. In addition, many individuals are now required to work in extraordinary circumstances (e.g. changes to their place of work) meaning that ‘business as usual’ is often not possible.

Where policy documentation and usual processes do not help us, decision making should be value led. Our Trust values are the overarching structure which allows for decision making to be as consistent, humane and compassionate as possible. Values statements in themselves are, however, open to interpretation. As a consequence, this document strives to provide practical guidance by articulating how values should be enacted by individuals working in exceptional circumstances.

We keep things simple

As much as possible we should keep things simple by sticking (wherever possible) to whatever it is that we normally do and to Trust policies that we already adhere to. New policy documentation which is produced to help us during this crisis should also provide us with immediate guidance. We keep it simple by staying mindful of what our normal primary task is and remembering that this is unlikely to have changed.

We should try and avoid the confusion that stems from being too anxious. If you find yourself getting anxious about a decision it may help to notice and voice the fact that you’re finding it difficult (have integrity). Take a minute. Remember that your primary task is almost certainly the same that it always was.

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| When we are working well at keeping it simple we… | When we are under pressure and it is harder to keep it simple we… |
| * Communicate frequently and clearly so that everyone understands what is happening and why. * Change communication style depending on the audience. * Stay focussed on clear goals. Usually this will be helped by remembering the primary task for the service and by staying focussed on the health and well being of those using the service. * Listen to service users to inform decisions about what people need and how to communicate with them. | * Struggle to keep people informed of what’s happening and why. * Struggle to change communication style depending on the audience. * Over complicate the work through bureaucracy or by focussing on multiple competing outcomes. * Struggle to adapt in response to learning, new information and/or service user needs. |

We have integrity

Having integrity means being as authentic and honest as possible about what is motivating us and what is driving our actions. It also means having strong moral principles which is likely to mean that we are focussed on the most humane response.

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| When we are working well and demonstrating integrity we… | When we are under pressure and it is harder to demonstrate integrity we… |
| * Seek good processes for decision making (i.e. we seek opinions/guidance/challenge) * Seek to understand as fully as possible the impact that our decision making will have on others * Are candid about why we have made decisions * Are clear and decisive as soon as we are satisfied about our decisions * Are less concerned about challenge than about having a good, authentic, moral rationale for the decision * Are focussed on the health, well being and safety of people using the service and staff | * Are not candid or transparent about what thoughts, feelings and experiences guided us when making decisions * Are more concerned about how decisions will be viewed than by having a good process for making the decision * Respond defensively to challenge |

We are caring

In this current crisis we may find that there are conflicting demands on our capacity to care for people. Some people may feel less cared for than others. We may feel that decisions we make are more caring of some people than others. We may feel that we are caring for one group (e.g. service users) but not others (e.g. our colleagues). These tensions are probably inevitable.

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| When we are working well and able to be caring we… | When we are under pressure and it is harder to be caring we… |
| * Seek to support, listen to, empathise and respond with humanity to service users and colleagues * Are able to listen to the concerns of people who feel less cared for * Have integrity and candidly and authentically explain why something has been decided that impacts more on some than others. | * Are more concerned with corporate demands than with the humanity of those we work alongside and provide a service to. * Struggle to listen to potentially difficult and challenging concerns from others. |