

Wellbeing Teams Values

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Talk of being 'values based' abounds: values based recruitment, values based leadership, values based coaching, values based strategic planning; it would seem that lots of organisations are now doing 'it' and that 'it' is the thing to do. So that's great – isn't it?

Thinking about the values to underpin Wellbeing Teams we wanted to make sure we understood what they really are, and to separate the truth from the hype. In this instalment Helen and Jackie describe the thinking and doing behind how we got to where we are just now.

First up Jackie.

It is true that every organisation, every group and every individual human being has values. It is also true that values are highly significant in every decision that is taken, be that individually or collectively. Whether it is as an employer issues of what to emphasise in the job advert, which questions to pose in the selection process, who to appoint at the end of the day: or whether as a potential employee it is how best to respond the advert, what to ask of the panel, or ultimately whether to accept the offer of a new job; it is true that our values are playing a pivotal role in which way we ultimately choose to go.

Is it also true that everyone can give us an accurate explanation of which values are at work in their thinking? And true they can explain how those values have shaped the results that we see? Not so much -unfortunately. In these muddy waters we will often hear words like 'beliefs' 'morals' 'ethics' and 'principles' being used and jumbled up with 'values' which makes trying to understand what's actually going on very difficult indeed.

We have encountered a problem of both meaning and consciousness.

The problem of meaning.

What are 'values' anyway?

Academics talk about 'abstract ideas' that represent concepts about ideal end states (Rokeach 1979) or desirable behaviours that transcend specific situations (Schwartz 1992). In everyday terms values show up as our personal preferences and priorities, they represent what is most important to us in life (Henderson 2003).

Values are not:

- morals – our adopted viewpoints on what is right and wrong
- ethics – an agreed code of behaviour within a group (often based on collective morals)
or
- principles – basic rules or natural laws which explain how things work (think Archimedes Principle)

Values do have a strong relationship with beliefs which are things about which we are highly certain and so treat as true or real. Based on what we are highly certain about (believe) we prefer and prioritise (value) certain ideas (values) about what to do and how to be (behave) in order to achieve the outcomes we seek. Having both clarity about what we mean when we talk about 'values': and being specific about what we mean by the values upon which we say we base our recruitment/selection/coaching/leadership; is vital for the whole thing to work effectively.

The problem of consciousness.

A simple model can be applied to whole organisations, small teams or individual people including ourselves. Consider this problem as somewhat akin to an iceberg.

All that we observe of others (and all they observe of us) is 'behaviour' which is made up of what is done – the action – and how that thing is done – the attitude.



This piece of our iceberg is above the water line and, in general, is all we have to go on in an effort to understand the bigger picture.

From what we see done, and the manner in which it is done, we form opinions about the nature of that organisation or team or person. What we cannot see is the drivers of that behaviour – the 'why' behind the 'what' – the stuff below the water.

Illustration courtesy of Annie Lawrenson of Communic'ART

Both beliefs and values lie deep within the unconscious.

Values are energy laden ideas that sit in the limbic area of the brain where there is no language. The limbic functions in terms of what it feels rather than what it 'thinks' or 'knows'. Together our beliefs and values function as a kind of background operating system. This gives us an internal autopilot sense of how the world works and where we fit in, enabling us to develop our own shorthand ways of navigating everyday events. It would be highly inefficient for example to have to figure out from scratch how to greet colleagues each morning.

You have probably noticed in different workplaces there are different rituals for how the morning starts. Some workplaces are quite low key and calm, everyone gets their own

individual brew and gets stuck in to the task at hand with apparently very little informal interaction. Other workplaces are noisy and sociable from the moment that two or more people are present, stories are shared and favourite mugs are remembered by whoever is putting the kettle on.

It is entirely possible that each team of people may have the same beliefs such as – our work matters and we are here to do our best – but if the teams then prioritise different values as the best way to get the work done well we will observe them behave differently. Our first team might value ‘hierarchy/protocol’ and knowing that everyone from top to bottom has a lot to do and so will not want to distract colleagues attention from the task: internally their behaviour is not seen as rude or cold but considerate. Our second team might value ‘peer support’ and feel that reinforcing the relationships between colleagues first thing makes the rest of day run smoother and more productively so this behaviour is not seen internally as time wasting or joking about but as friendly interest and concern for one another.

In theory the model is simple. Our beliefs about the world prompt us to value certain things above other things and in concert these two ‘forces’ drive behaviour. In practice working with the model can be a challenge. As beliefs and values are deeply encoded within our brains trying to put them into words is very hard and if we settle for the first thing that comes to mind it will almost invariably be not quite right as we can’t get down deep enough just by thinking.

Fortunately there are other ways to crack the values code.

What was the thinking behind the 5 core values for Wellbeing Teams?

Academics and psychologists have lively debates about values. Opinions vary about how many different human values exist, what they should be called and how they should be described. There are two things, however, about which everyone in this field currently agrees.

- First: values sit in clusters depending on the focus of their attention – so there are for example groups of values concerned with being safe, with belonging, with being productive, with developing skills or with helping others.
- Second: values sit in hierarchies – which is to say that our brains process them in terms of ‘either/or’ as opposed to ‘this and that’ – values are active in how we make decisions and there are always trade offs between different sought after ideas depending on the situation in which we find ourselves. We can’t hold two or more values as equally important in the same moment so the order in which we present values matters – it matters a lot.

We spent time, Helen and I, reflecting on the values which might most effectively inspire Wellbeing Teams to work in ways that resulted in self management, compassionate care and bringing the whole self to work. We paid closest attention to values that had their roots in positive and confident beliefs (as opposed to fear based or deficit model beliefs). We used the well established Minessence Values Framework as our reference point for surfacing values. We needed to articulate values that made sense when regarded as a set whilst being made up of distinct and relatable stand alone ideas in a sensible priority order.

To tackle this task we also had another precious resource: the individual and shared values profiles of one of the Wellbeing Teams. We were able to draw upon the theoretical framework alongside the real world priorities of people who wanted to do this sort of work in this sort of way; almost a reality check of theory against practice.

Finally we used the Buurtzorg Model as a tried and tested way to establish and develop effective self management. This model views independence as built upon values that support the ideas that:

- People want control over their lives for as long as possible

- People strive to maintain or improve their own quality of life
- People seek social interaction
- People seek 'warm' relationships with others

A rich variety of threads run through the whole Burrtzorg approach including things like 'humanity over bureaucracy', creating the conditions for 'entrepreneurship and freedom within the team' and 'building confidence through craftsmanship'.

It all went into a big mental melting pot and, after copious mugs of tea, we arrived here:

- **Compassion** means actively hearing and sensing others thoughts and feelings, being kind, and finding empathetic ways to support individuals and each other to achieve positive outcomes.
- **Responsibility** means initiating ways of working that dignify everyone at the same time as holding self and others accountable for actions and attitudes in relation to our shared purpose and values.
- **Curiosity** means feeling energised by discovering new insights, learning, finding answers to questions and wondering at the world.
- **Creativity** means exercising the capacity and ingenuity to respond appropriately to seize opportunities without needing to be directed or instructed by others.
- **Flourishing** means creating the conditions for thriving that reflect aspirations, remove barriers to connection and ensure people choose their own way forward.

Remember the iceberg? Values have their roots in beliefs. The beliefs which gave rise to the original five core values of Wellbeing Teams are:

- We believe that loneliness should not be an inevitable consequence of getting older
- We believe that older people can live well at home and be contributing members of their community
- We are passionate about older people living well in communities where everyone matters

Being able to see both underpinning parts of the iceberg together helps a great deal. The expectations of the employing organisation about how to behave – what to do and how to do it – make much more sense. As we worked with Wellbeing Teams over the following few months, we kept coming back to these values and beliefs, testing them against our lived experience and exploring how we could make sure that everything we do is rooted in them

Wellbeing Teams – what values looked like in early practice

Values and beliefs are powerful forces at work deep in our unconscious. Our everyday behaviours, choices and decisions all have their roots in these foundations irrespective of whether we know it or not. Becoming consciously values based creates fresh potential for us to be more deliberate, more mindful, in the actions we undertake and the attitude we adopt when carrying out that action. A values-conscious person is better equipped to reflect upon how likely it is that the behaviour they feel inclined towards will produce the results or outcomes they are seeking.

We wanted to make conscious concrete links between the core values and beliefs of Wellbeing Teams and the working culture we were seeking to nurture. Values are ‘abstract’ ideas – highly emotionally charged and rich in energy but abstract nonetheless. So the next step in making the values concrete was to work out what they look like ‘in practice’. All behaviours take place within situations and circumstances have an influence over how values are practiced.

Jackie, for example, values ‘simplicity’ very highly and gives this example.

Suppose someone has just spent what feels like a very long time describing a problem to me which can be boiled down into just a sentence or two. Will I automatically reply ‘so

basically you are saying that ‘this can’t go on and s/he needs to only make promises they can keep....’ ? Chances are, no I won’t.

To borrow an idea from Daniel Goleman, as human beings we are not just responsible for our actions we are also ‘response-able’, meaning we are able to choose how to act provided our capacities of our self awareness and self regulation are up to it. Now if this is one of my sisters and I have heard all this before (probably more than once or twice) I may jump straight in there. If, however, this is a prospective client with whom I am trying to build a connection then a different priority value of mine (which sits lower in my profile than Simplicity) – ‘transformative communication’ – will take precedence. I will ask a question or two of clarification to make sure I have heard the persons account accurately and then I will reflect back the essence of the situation and ask whether they have had chance to think about any simple changes that might improve things..... depending upon their response this may become the right moment to cut to the chase.

In order for me to feel that I have been true to myself, and to what matters most in the practice of a person like me, I will need to get the conversation to a point where I can explore the issue in its simplest terms. I know from experience that when I don’t honour my simplicity value it will later cost me time and energy in questioning whether I did my best or missed an opportunity.

When we behave in ways that align with our priority values we are kinder to ourselves and are significantly less vulnerable to second guessing our decisions.

As you have seen Wellbeing Teams started out with five core values: Compassion, Responsibility, Curiosity, Creativity and Flourishing. How would these show up in the daily life of the team?

Central to answering this question is the context in which the teams operate and most importantly the headline purpose of the team which is 'to support and connect older people with their community'. Helen developed ten key features of living the values and will take you through this next piece.

Each feature was described and illustrated in terms of what it means both for registered managers/coaches and for owners to not only crystallise the abstract values into concrete ideas, but also put flesh on the bones of what it looks and feels like to live the values in everyday work. Here they are (in italics), and for each one, why this is important.

What matters to us

1. Relationships are everything

We invest time and effort to develop great relationships, both with people who use our service and with our colleagues. We proactively support people to develop or maintain relationships – combatting loneliness and beating boredom.

We work together in ways are kind and thoughtful; by paying attention to what matters to each of us, communicating well, co-ordinating and working harmoniously in teams that bring out the best in each other.

This focus on relationships is at the heart of Wellbeing Teams and differentiates from a 'task and time' approach that is common in many services. The statements also relate to Atul Gawande's 'scourges of old age' – loneliness, boredom and helplessness and the explicit intent of Wellbeing Teams to contribute to addressing this.

Here the emphasis is also on relationships is with colleagues. Loneliness can be present in the workplace as well, and research shows that it not only impacts on people's individual performance but the performance of the whole team (Friedman, 2014). Some famous Gallup research revealed 20 questions that are widely (but not universally) regarded as the best

indicators of employee engagement. Question 12 is ‘Do you have a best friend at work?’. Friendships in work is one of the strongest predictors of productivity. Studies show that strong relationships at work means that employees are more focused, passionate, loyal to the organisation, get sick less often, stay with the organisation longer and result in more satisfied customers (Friedman, 2014). One of the interesting things about this is we are often drawn to forming friendships with individuals whose priority values align and resonate with our own – which begs the question whether adopting a values conscious recruitment process increases the likelihood that we will end up working with people we will feel friendly towards?

2. Wellbeing

Wellbeing matters – for the older people we support, and our own, feeling good about life and work, and everyone getting the support they need, when they need it.

Also central to Wellbeing Teams, as the name suggests, is the focus on wellbeing. Again, this is explicitly the wellbeing of people supported and the wellbeing of colleagues. The New Economic Foundation’s five ways to wellbeing demonstrate how they are associated with improved mental and physical to wellbeing. These are embedded both in the way that people are supported and in development sessions with the team – right from induction.

3. Person-centred support

We provide support that is designed and tailored to the individual, person-centred and flexible, delivered in a way that keeps the person at the centre. We support older people to be in control of their life and service, combating helplessness.

Co-production is the underlying theme in this statement. This means people having choices and control over decisions about their life and support – choosing what they want support with, when, where and how. This is both a policy imperative in health and social care (The Care Act, 2014) and seeks to address Atul Gawande’s third scourge of old age – helplessness.

4. Bringing our whole selves to work

Bringing our whole selves to work means actively using our strengths and interests in our roles: we all have family and friends and recognise that you may have caring responsibilities as well which we must be mindful of.

Fredrick LaLoux (Reinventing Organisations) describes bringing the whole self to work as one of the three features of what he calls 'teal' organisations. Knowing what matters to each other – from important relationships, hobbies and interests - is part of developing great relationships. It is also about knowing how to support each other well at work – to enable us all to bring our whole, best selves to work. This means we can then do a better job of matching to roles within the team (based on strengths) and to people supported (based on shared interests).

5. Appreciation and feedback

Giving each other feedback, about what we do well, and where we can improve, is a collective responsibility and critical to our success.

In many organisations feedback is limited to supervision, annual appraisal or in the context of a complaint. High performing organisations live off a diet of continuous feedback and this is taken to a new level in what are called 'Deliberately Developmental Organisational (DDOs)'. The authors, Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey, point out that talking about 'continuous improvement' is usually reserved for processes, not people, and in DDOs continuous feedback is central to that. Feedback can only be used if it is heard and makes sense to the person hearing it. We make sense of things through the lens of our values and our beliefs about our situation. Having concrete articulated beliefs and values for the Wellbeing Teams provides a shared basis or frame of reference for the purpose of feedback which gives it greater meaning and traction, than it might have as a passing observation.

6. Taking risks and learning

We want to keep developing and learning in our work, in teams and the organisation. This can involve taking thoughtful risks which may or may not work out. Experimenting is how we learn, grow and develop finding new ways to make things better.

In health and social care we are afraid of failure. The risk processes are there to limit any possible failure which also limits growth and development. However there can be no growth and learning without failure. Of course there are areas that we don't want people to experiment with or take risks in – for example, medication. Taking thoughtful risks is about being clear about what experiments are 'below the water line' as Charles Handy describes it, and therefore likely to impact on the boats survival, and which are above the waterline. Wellbeing Teams need to know the difference between the two. Taking risks and failure does not automatically mean that we learn – reflection must be built in to team processes and learning must be recorded too.

Relationships are important here too. Research with nurses by Prof Amy Edmondson showed that the better the nurse's relationship with their manager and their co-worker, the more errors they report. When people feel psychologically safe and mistakes are viewed as a part of the learning process, employees are less likely to cover them up. Google's [research on teams](#) showed that psychological safety was the most significant factor for successful teams.

7. Celebrating

There is much in life to be grateful for and to enjoy so celebrating who we are is part of what we do – the progress of the people we support, our achievements, birthdays, and the anniversary of you starting to work here.

Celebrating successes and appreciation is deeply counter cultural in most health and care organisational. It may happen occasionally after winning an award, and in Wellbeing Teams we want people to be taking notice of what is working well, as well as what needs to change. This is not commonplace, in fact Ron Friedman in his book *The Best Place to Work* says, "in many organisations recognition is rare. Some managers are so focused on preventing mistakes that

they neglect to pay much attention to when things are going right”. Recognising and celebrating when things are going right is at least as important as learning from mistakes.

8. Challenge and growth

Being happy at work includes challenge – the opportunity to stretch and grow, and we look for opportunities to challenge ourselves and develop, as individuals, in teams and in the organisation.

Mikel Csikszentmihalyi introduced the concept of ‘flow’ – when we are working at our best, engaged and absorbed in what we are doing. To experience flow we need to face challenges that match or slightly exceed our abilities. If work is too easy we become bored, too hard and we get discouraged, in Wellbeing Teams, having a challenge – whether that is the role that you in, or a new skill you are developing, is important.

9. Trust

We trust teams to manage themselves, review their progress and recruit their own colleagues. When decision-making is as close to the older person as possible teams have the autonomy and authority to use their resources creatively and flexibly, this is the best way to make the most of every moment, every opportunity.

This is the essence of self-management. Research at the University of British Columbia explored the impact upon employees of being trusted. They found that when trusted, employees were more willing to accept responsibility for group performance and were better able to make important decisions about their work.

10. Openly sharing information

We can only be successful if we are transparent and open and share all the information that people need to do their role brilliantly.

Aligning values and practice is a key step in enabling a coherent and stable team culture to evolve. One simple way to capture the alignment between core values and practice is to use a table. Here we have taken ‘what matters to us’ – the way we want it to work – and cross

referenced the practices to the ‘core values’ – the big energy laden emotionally rich ideas that unlock motivation.

Core Values → What matters ↓	Compassion	Responsibility	Curiosity	Creativity	Flourishing
Relationships are everything	√	√		√	√
Wellbeing	√	√			√
Person-centred support	√	√	√	√	√
Bringing our whole selves to work	√	√		√	√
Appreciation and feedback	√	√			√
Taking risks and learning	√	√	√	√	√
Celebrating	√	√			√
Challenge and growth	√	√	√	√	√
Trust	√	√			√
Openly sharing information	√	√			√

Not every value shows up in every practice which is fine. Some values are 'goal' values such as Responsibility and Flourishing that speak to how we want things to turn out in the end; while others are 'means' values, concerned with how we get to where we want to be such as Curiosity and Creativity. We would expect (hope), if we are the right track, that our number 1 value would have a role to play in every single practice and here we can see that Compassion does just that. For Wellbeing Teams to function effectively Compassion has to be their anchor.

As we have observed the extent to which organisations have clarity about their values is highly variable. Even when there are values listed they can be jumbled up with beliefs, morals, ethics and principles which makes understanding what is what pretty tricky. We hoped that being more explicit about how values show up in our work, through the 10 statements of 'What matters to us', would help both us and others gain and keep clarity.

Only time would tell whether we had articulated the values well enough for them to serve in this way.

The missing link – value number six 'Collaboration' - the story of that

Whether you are a start up as each Wellbeing Team is or an established organisation which is moving to being consciously values based it is not a safe bet that you will get a perfect iteration of what is truly core at the first attempt. Values are, after all, energy and emotion rich ideas which exist in abstract form in our unconscious, values are not neat little sound bite phrases which trip spontaneously off your tongue. So it is a good idea to live with your draft core values for a while, reflect on what life is like in trying to live them and pay attention to their effects and affects. Bearing in mind that chances of getting it 'right first time' can be good but are never a sure fire thing it is important to take stock and reflect.

After a few months Helen realised we had under stated something that turned out from lived experience of the early teams to matter a lot. Not only had we missed something but the

something that we had missed was absolutely central to the effective functioning of self management within Wellbeing Teams and that missing something was 'Collaboration'. Look in a dictionary at the definition of collaborate: my Chambers 2002 reprint edition says "to work in association with; to assist or cooperate" to be honest that just felt a bit lame compared to what collaboration looked like inside Wellbeing Teams. So we thought about the observed practice and what it was that team members were doing that resulted in 'assistance' being given.

Drawing on real life we realized that in Wellbeing Teams collaboration was alive and well and meant this:

"cooperating with others by sharing ideas and insights to find ways we can both individually and collectively achieve positive change"

It was October 2017 and Wellbeing Teams now had six core values:

Compassion Responsibility Collaboration Curiosity Creativity Flourishing

All there was left to do was make sure they were put into practice.

Values in practice – from intention to action

What is the road to hell paved with?

According to one well known saying it is paved with 'good intentions': we set out on a path with noble aspirations steeped in genuine intent to be and do better and yet it does not always turn out that way. I find this to be particularly true of organisational core values programmes.

Conducting the conversation or exploration to arrive at the emotionally rich, energy laden statements that make our collective corporate hearts beat in time is heady stuff. Then a day or a week or a month after the 'launch' the values are still on the paper they were first written on (maybe laminated too) but the same old same old is firmly back in place. There's a 'do-say' gap that no one appears to want to tackle. If you would like to read more on that idea try this [blog](#) by me for AllThingsIC.

Instead of bemoaning the bad practice that serves no one, here we are going to explore what 'good' could look and feel like and I am going to share my personal Three Golden Rules for expressing core values to lay the foundation for subsequent successful embedding and practice. As many readers will know Wellbeing Teams have six carefully crafted and mindfully articulated core values. They are Compassion Responsibility Collaboration Curiosity Creativity and Flourishing. They are always in that order of priority and this matters. We know from research that values are hierarchical: this means they sit one above another and it is not possible to hold two or more as equally important in any given moment. Now if values are truly core they will be honoured in any and every situation, even if it hurts, but the sequencing has an impact on the "feel" of the moment both for the people doing the doing and the people experiencing the impact or outcome of what is done.

Imagine being a family member of someone receiving support. You are anxious about what you see as unsettling changes to the care plan, even though you know the person being supported has co-produced the care plan and wants to try the changes. Now suppose a Wellbeing Team has its six core values but the order is a bit of a moveable feast and colleagues can activate which ever value/values they feel fit the situation. Now you speak to a Wellbeing Team member about your concerns. Their response springs from the Creativity value about how exciting all the new things are or it springs from the Collaboration value where (rather defensively to your ears) you get a long explanation about coproduction and the importance and choice and control.

Do you feel reassured?

In the world of our Wellbeing Teams the values sequence is locked down. First the team member will respond to your concerns with compassion, then they will explain where the vital responsibilities for ensuring success lie and how they will be achieved in collaboration with others, then you will be invited to wonder at just what might prove possible one day followed

by examples of the creative ways in which things can be tried, so that ultimately everyone flourishes.

Do you feel reassured now?

Golden Rule No 1: Set the order of your core values and always use them in that sequence
It is not just about sequence, meaning matters too.

Among those commercial and public service organisations that list their values there are many which provide a simple list of words with no explanation. You know the kind of thing: Integrity, Honesty, Teamwork. I have two comments to make on this.

First: a simple list of very generic terms does not help me differentiate your venture from any other and core values should be an expression of what characterises the way you approach the world and the work and sets you apart from the rest.

Second: words in isolation do not tell me what you mean by 'Innovation' or 'Quality' or 'Customer'. Nature abhors a vacuum and if you don't tell me what you mean I will have to decide for myself and I will base my definition of 'Innovation' on what it means to me and this will be different to what it means to you. There is also a risk here that if you have used a generic term like 'Integrity' with no explanation I may well also think to myself "that's one of the core values of Enron, G4S and Barclays before the LIBOR revelations – this is not a good sign".

Golden Rule No 2: Describe your values meaningfully

If you currently only have a list of terms, but it is your sense that people are very attached to those terms, then undertake a big conversation or storytelling project to explore and surface the meaning. When you do finally settle on a form of words to describe those big emotionally rich and energy laden ideas that are more important than a whole host of other ideas really try

and enable it to come across as a human thing to “be” as much as a human thing to “do”. By way of illustration compare these two descriptions of Compassion. The first from a large Hospital Trust and the second from Wellbeing Teams.

No 1 Compassion means “we use a person-centred approach in all our interactions with colleagues, patients, clients and their families.”

No 2 Compassion means “actively hearing and sensing another’s thoughts and feelings, being kind, and finding empathetic ways to support individuals and each other to achieve positive outcomes”

Nothing wrong with either and some description is far better than no description, particularly if arriving at the description has been a participatory process. That said, I don’t know about you but, I experience a much stronger draw towards the second than the first.

At their best core values enable the formation and strengthening of connections between organisations and everyone whose lives they touch whether internal or external.

Golden Rule No 3 Express your values in heartfelt terms

Once you have these three foundations in place you can turn your attention to really bringing those values to life. Whilst your values should have shaped and informed the approach and execution of your recruitment and selection for any new recruit the first time they really encounter your core values as something to live by will be during induction. So how do we do that in the world of Wellbeing Teams?

Values in induction

Like our recruitment process, we realised that how we approached induction would need to be very different. We wanted to create a process that built a team, got them started with self-management, and confident to support people at home.

When the new recruits arrive and the real work can begin in earnest. How much does it matter exactly what happens next? Various research studies suggest it matters a very great deal. Did you know for example

- on average new employees decided whether they feel 'at home' in their organisation in the first 3 weeks;
- around 20% of early leavers form an intention to leave within 45 days
- new employees who participate in a structured orientation are 69% more likely to still be in their job three years later than employees with little or no orientation
- new employees who are carefully orientated to both the job and the organisation reach full productivity 2 months earlier than employees with little or no orientation

Work by Kouzes and Posner exploring job satisfaction and employee commitment uncovered some surprising effects of values clarity. When organisations are clear about their corporate values and communicate these to employees but do not create time, space and means for employees to gain clarity about their individual, personal values then satisfaction and commitment fall. Conversely if organisations simply focus their efforts on supporting individuals to develop a conscious connection with their personal values then satisfaction and commitment go up: in fact up to 17% more commitment can flow from personal values connection. If an organisation goes the whole way and supports individuals to connect personally with their values and then communicates the corporate values in a meaningful way commitment and satisfaction can go up again; although in the interests of transparency I should admit that the jump from 17% to 19% is not statistically significant.

“Personal values drive commitment. Personal values are the route to loyalty and commitment, not organisational values.” Kouzes and Posner (The Leadership Challenge 2010, p56)

So thinking about Wellbeing Team new recruits this made the question how and when to begin to explore personal and shared values. Values sit in the Limbic system below the level of our conscious mind. To stand the best chance of generating useful insights for individual Wellbeing Workers and the group as a whole we needed an 'ipsative' instrument: something long enough and complex enough to mimic the 'structure' of values in the brain reaching through to unconscious preferences and priorities.

We turned to a leading online values profiling tool, the AVI which is the flagship of the Minessence International Co-operative and has been in use around the world since 1988. As part of their preparation for induction new recruits received an email containing a link and instructions for the AVI and were asked to make the time to complete their profile before the first day and everyone did.

There is, unsurprisingly, a lot of ground to cover when bringing members of a new team together to begin the task of working out how to work. The first time we used the individual and group values profile reports we settled upon the morning of Day 2 as an appropriate point. By this time work had begun on the team agreement and people were feeling more familiar with one another.

To encourage everyone to have the confidence to approach the values profiling with candour and an open mind we promised that the individual values profiles would be confidential between the individual and the facilitators – me and Helen. There was no expectation or obligation to show individual profiles to colleagues. Yet within 5 minutes of receiving their profiles everyone was sharing (and laughing).

There is no such thing as the 'right' or 'wrong' values. There just are values that we consistently prefer and prioritise over others. In the Minessence Values Framework which underpins the AVI there are 128 distinct and different human values. According to probability the chances of any one particular value appearing at random in say the top 5 shared values of any given group is 5

in 127 – and 0.039 is a very small chance. You can probably imagine the delight of the team (and Helen and I) when in the top 5 shared values for one of the first teams we found:

1. Human Rights
2. Human Dignity
3. Wisdom
4. Care/Nurture
5. Social Equilibrium

Now one of these values had profound possibly limiting implications for the team and how they would develop their own approach to self management. Remember that there is no such thing as the ‘wrong’ value. Each value has its own roots in our past experience and appears high in our priority list to serve a particular purpose. The wrinkle in this comes when we have one or more values that stimulate particular behaviours in situations where different behaviours would be more useful or appropriate.

The value we needed to look at was Social Equilibrium.

Nothing wrong with Social Equilibrium. This value says ‘to do what is necessary to maintain a peaceful social environment’. People and groups with this as high priority often have great rapport building skills and seem to have a gift for being able to sense the temperature of mood in a room in the blink of an eye. We are all aware that alongside strengths there are weaknesses: in fact weakness is a consequence of strength for example someone who values the quality of their work produces great stuff but is vulnerable to perfectionism even when the work they have done is already more than ‘good enough’.

What is the Achilles heel of Social Equilibrium? Peacekeeping.

When in unconscious peacekeeper mode individuals and groups may actively avoid conflict, placate or appease angry parties or even turn a blind eye to errors or misdeeds. At its extreme

peacekeeping can place such a strain upon an individual or group that things will look on the surface to be absolutely fine for ages and ages and then one day the whole thing simply explodes when the pressure finally becomes too much.

Not only was this a risk that was important to minimise it is also true that from debate, disagreement and challenge comes improvement and creativity: when everybody simply agrees all of the time very little innovation takes place.

So we explored with the team Social Equilibrium: whether they recognised it, what it looked like in their experience, and whether they wanted to keep hold of it in its current form.

This struck a cord with Annie. She talked about how she usually worked hard to keep the peace in her work relationships, and how this came at a price. We started to think together about what team agreements could look like that would support Annie to be able to ask for what she needed and address areas of difference or conflict with the team. As Wellbeing Teams are self-managing, it is even more important that teams are able to recognise and address issues and problems together. We support this through training in Non Violent Communication and a team meeting process designed to raise and address tensions, and through the team agreements.

When we (Jackie and I) facilitated the discussion around what could support Annie with this, James suggested a team agreement of 'No peacekeeping'. I have never seen this on any team agreement before, and can see how it is important for this team. Annie agreed.

Since then, in their team meetings, James would remind Annie of their team agreement. The team used this to actively support one another to speak up and speak out in pursuit of becoming the best self managing team they could.

From our first experience it became clear that maintaining the momentum of the values based recruitment and selection should be central to the overall design of Wellbeing Workers induction. It also felt important to ensure that values were not treated as a stand alone topic within a larger programme. The design approach we have since taken is to ensure that values

surface regularly throughout the process serving as a conscious framework upon which all the different elements hang together creating a coherent whole.

A number of Wellbeing Teams have now taken part in this Values Based Induction and to find out more about how that went listen here is a [podcast](#) Helen did with three team members after the second day of their induction.

BACKGROUND Our Living Values Advisor Jackie Le Fèvre

Jackie sits on my shoulder – she is my challenge and support around values. [Jackie](#) is our Advisor on Living Values, and is helping us ensure our values are alive throughout our work. She helped us to develop our value-based recruitment process and continues to contribute to conversations about values in confirmation practices, communications and marketing and in the development of Future Leaders. Here Jackie shares a little of what got her started on her values track.

“Why?”. It’s a big question and from an early age my absolute favourite.

Wondering why took me first into zoology: specifically behavioural ecology, exploring what lies behind the things that animals do in response to their environment and circumstances. For the first fifteen years after graduating I had an amazing time. Working with chimpanzees and frogs and ducks and geese and swans and flamingos (but not all at the same time) I wandered through the disciplines of project management, public relations, volunteering and education.

All that time there was something I never understood.

When I and others could see that Mother Earth was suffering ‘why’ did the majority of the population just carry on regardless. Finally, as Head of Education and Visitor Services at WWT Martin Mere, pulling together summer holiday projects with the help of local people who were gaining experience through an employment programme, the penny dropped. I lived in a different world. In spite of the fact that I had spent years seeking to ‘see’ through the worldview of different animal species: even though I had learned how to translate those lives for journalists or tourists or school pupils so that they could see what I could see; at the same time I had become oblivious to the way we human beings experience our respective personal worlds differently from one another, prompting us to behave in our own ways.

It was time for a change.

Six years at Sefton CVS followed. I looked after employment programmes under New Deal, lottery funded community development teams and became immersed in the worlds of Neighbourhood Renewal, ESF, ERDF, SRB and a whole host of other acronyms I shall not bore you with here. I learned a lot, won a bunch of awards, upset some apple carts and eventually, became so frustrated with (as I saw it) the unnecessary complexity of programmes and projects that, in 2004 I jumped ship to paddle my own canoe.

Paddling that canoe is where you find me now. It wasn’t until 2005 that I realised I had gone full circle: I was back working on ‘why’. As a freelancer I spent time with clients figuring out why things weren’t working or why partners didn’t play nice: why things were working and why stakeholders were supportive; why some people cared and some people didn’t. In the concrete jungle of human interaction the actual values of the people of the place were the root of the visible behaviour – the ‘why’ behind the ‘what’ and worldviews were key.

I love working with values. Why? Partly because we all have values so they have the potential to unite us. Partly because each of us has our own unique pattern of personal priority values so

they can also embrace our diversity and amplify our individuality. To be conscious of my values I find creates greater capacity to deliberately bring my best to my challenges, and to be kinder to myself if it doesn't pan out quite right.

Working with Helen on the good ship Wellbeing Teams is a joy. From a values perspective every person is unique and remarkable. Using conscious values practice we are striving for deep transparency in the work for both carer and cared for, to help create the conditions for human flourishing. With a little luck as time goes by, we'll be able to share with you through a values lens just 'why' it works in the hope that you might harness the insights we create to bring a little more flourish into your own world.....