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Managers, policies and story-telling

The effective management of learning disability services is sometimes seen as a separate issue from the ideals of rights, independence, choice and inclusion embodied in a policy like 'Valuing People'. In practice though, the day-to-day decisions made by managers at all levels have a major effect on how such a policy is implemented.

A third-year module on the management of change, part of the BA in Learning Disability Studies at the University of Manchester, aims to help students to work through the connections between values and practice, starting from their own experience of managing and being managed. The course gives particular attention to different ways of thinking about policy. Is policy something handed down to be followed slavishly? An unrealistic set of expectations to be dealt with as swiftly as possible? Or a set of opportunities to be grasped in changing the system for the better?

This session will focus on a story-telling activity within the course. This activity was designed to highlight the influence of policy on practice, and the need for managers to consider carefully the opportunities that policy provides, in the light of the commitments and values seen to be important. It is hoped that the session will stimulate others to tell more stories on this subject.

Policy and Partnership

- What is policy for?

- Who makes policy?

- How can we **<u>use</u>** policy?

Is policy something handed down to be followed slavishly?
Or a set of opportunities for changing the system for the better?

A story

conflict between a teacher and a child in his class

- The child is excluded from the classroom, and has nowhere to go.

- He leaves the school premises.

- He is very unhappy.

Interruption: Student Support Policies

Example 1: Divisional PASS team meetings of EWS, with Educational Psychologists, specialist teachers, PRU staff, Outreach, Behaviour support team members, Quality Assurance (advisory service) team representative are held once or twice in each term. The Pupil and School Support (PASS) team meetings review the practice of individual schools and identify areas where they may be cause for concern. One trigger is a rising rate of exclusion, or a school with attendance, or exclusion at variance from the remainder in the area. The meeting identifies the appropriate team member to provide support, and an action plan is drawn up with the school. These meetings have resulted in **action to prevent the situation in an individual school from deve**loping, to **support individual teachers or departments**, to provide guidance for all schools on exclusions, where it became evident that a number of schools were having difficulty in carrying out procedures properly.

But learning support policies – mean all sorts of things

Example 2: Renamed Comprehensive School
Please tick boxes as appropriate

Name …………………….. Form ………... Subject ……………………….. Teacher ……………………

CLASSROOM CONFORMITY This pupil:-	
Will not stay in seat	
Will not sit appropriately	
Will not stay in class	
Is often late to lessons	
Does not attend required lessons	
Enters classroom inappropriately	
Leaves classroom inappropriately	
Does not have required equipment	
Takes belongings of others	
Abuses school equipment	
Disrupts class if has to wait	
Needs constant supervision	
Talks constantly in class	
Interrupts teacher when talking	
Is verbally inappropriate to teacher	
Is physically inappropriate to teacher	
Does not accept changes to routine	
Is over-active in class	
Throws/flicks objects	
Is lethargic and tired in class	
Constantly seeks emotions/approval	
Will not accept responsibility for behaviour	
Fails to foresee consequences of behaviour	
Does not accept consequences of behaviour	
Does not describe his/her problems or feelings	
Does not fulfil contracts or commitments	
Does not learn from experiences	
Is not aware of acceptable behaviours	
Cannot cope with unstructured situations	
Does not offer help to adults	
Does not control use of bad language	

ACCEPTANCE OF AUTHORITY This pupil:-	
Has verbally abused teacher	
Has physically abused teacher	
Lies to teacher	
Deliberately provokes teacher	
Argues with teacher	
Tries to manipulate teacher	
Does not trust teacher	
Does not follow school rules	
Does not accept punishment	
Remains resentful of punishment	
Refuses to discuss problems	

SELF ESTEEM This pupil:-	
Lacks confidence in social situations	
Is negative about self	
Is unaware of own strengths	
Cannot accept peer criticism	
Cannot accept teacher criticism	
Cannot accept teacher praise	
Shows no pride in achievements	
Will not admit to being wrong	
Doesn't work hard to make progress	

EMOTIONAL CONTROL This pupil:-	
Is easily reduced to tears	
Is not willing to try new situations	
Cannot express feelings appropriately	
Cannot cope with social frustration	
Is prone to physical self-abuse	
Abuses own property	

PEER RELATIONSHIPS This pupil:-	
Physically abuses peers	
Verbally abuses peers	
Provokes peer conflict	
Provokes peer conflict verbally	
Fights with peers	
Spits at peers	
Abuses peer property	
Tries to determine peers	
Is rejected by peers	
Is not willing to share	
Does not borrow appropriately	
Does not forget peer disputes	
Manipulates peers	
Does not resist peer pressure	
Does not co-operate with peers in tasks	
Does not help peers	
Does not consider feelings of peers	
Uses inappropriate sexual behaviour	
Seeks attention of peers inappropriately	
Does not consider effect of behaviour	

TASK ORIENTATION This pupil:-	
Does not start on time	
Does not complete on time	
Badly presents/organises work	
Badly organises desk/materials	
Is easily distracted	
Shows lack of interest in tasks	
Lacks confidence in ability to do task	
Does not cope with task difficulties	
Refuses to work	
Is not willing to try new work	
Does not accept teacher's help	
Does not ask for help	
Does not correct work when asked	
Avoids work by loss/abuse of materials	
Uses work avoidance strategies	

(http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ibis/uploads/Example14a.doc)

2. The story continued….

- a policy for a student support centre is introduced.

- Conflict occurs again in the classroom.

- This time the child goes to the support centre to see the support teacher.

- She listens to him.

- the support teacher arranges a meeting between herself, the class teacher and the child.

- They draw up an agreed strategy for how to manage to work together.

- The child returns to the classroom.

- There is a much better chance of successfully sorting out problems between teachers and children.

From an original idea by June Barker and Louise Stillwell (students on the BA course)

Conclusions

- What are policies for?

- Who makes policies?

- How can we **use** policies?

Think about June's and Louise's story.
Think about your story.