

Empowering practice

STEPS

INTRODUCTION

Steps takes nine principles of partnership practice and asks the student to consider their relevance to a particular piece of work, and how they have been put into practice.

Purpose

Issues of power, oppression and discrimination have permeated the teaching and learning associated with all of the activities associated with modern social work practice. This section brings these issues together under the single notion of 'empowering practice', focusing on empowerment and partnership as essential aspects of the student's anti-oppressive practice.

Concepts like partnership and empowerment are easily voiced, but less easily made specific and put into practice. This module aims to explore these notions in more detail and encourage students to apply them in a practical way to their work.

Method

Use the nine *Steps* as a trigger to help the student consider what empowerment and participation mean. Are these principles which the student agrees with, or do they want to make some changes to them?

When the student is satisfied with their own *Steps*, ask for an audit of a piece of the student's work, applying these principles in a practical way.

Later in the placement, ask the student to review the principles with a view to adding any which have been triggered by their experiences on the placement.

Variations

Are the *Steps* universal to all aspects of social work? It is illuminating to work on this activity across settings if you have the opportunity to join with other practice teachers and students (for example, a practice teacher and student from a child protection team and from a community care setting). How commonly applicable are these principles?

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STEPS Activity

Take a piece of work you have been involved in and consider it in relation to these nine practical steps to partnership and empowerment.

Any other steps you want to add?

- 9 Records should form a principle means of sharing the purpose of intervention and of assessing progress for all parties involved
- 8 Active intervention should be brief rather than lengthy
- 7 Tasks should form the central working tool in the intervention
- 6 Goals should be negotiated, explicit and observable and be within people's capacity to achieve, with assistance of the workers involved
- 5 Problems should be fully agreed and be described in ordinary language
- 4 When an individual is cared for away from home, positive efforts should be made to maintain links with relevant family members and friends
- 3 People should be encouraged to be active participants in determining the service they receive
- 2 If there is more than one active worker in a case there should be a common understanding of the nature and scope of the work
- 1 Users and potential users should be clear about how to contact the necessary people in any service with which they are involved.

The principles above are taken from: Marsh, P. and Fisher, M. (1992), *Good Intentions: developing partnerships in social services*, York: Rowntree/Community Care.