Carers and Compassion

Jill Manthorpe and Jo Moriarty
‘The person who takes care of me, I think that [paid] carer should be compassionate’
What is it?

Why has compassion become more high profile? What is the relevance of our Longitudinal Care Work and Carers Studies for these debates? Where do we go from here?
Personal trait? Our work with carers shows that many people believe you either have it or don’t.

I think that’s probably one of the biggest things that’s necessary [is] really closely monitored training and to give [staff] knowledge about Alzheimer’s and dementia. If you haven’t got that then you’ve not got anything. You need that as well as the general compassion. They’re talking about nursing now and teaching them compassion. You can’t teach anyone compassion, they’ve got to have it haven’t they?
Compassion fatigue (form of burnout)

- Being aware of signs and symptoms
- (thinking, feeling, behaviour, physical, relational)

But if you have it maybe you can lose it by caring too much
Many employers want compassionate staff.

... But again it goes back to the compassion of individuals and I can’t leave her knowing that somebody has maybe got two or three hours left. Luckily, my whole staff team have that same thought. I think the only way to summarise it is, we don’t want them to be alone at that time, because it must be, ... nobody knows what ... people experience at end of life, but I think, or hope, that they will know that there is somebody with them in that room, regardless of whether they can hear, see or just maybe [having] that presence of somebody else would make that passing over a little bit easier.
But compassion or kindness?

• In social care it is comparatively uncommon to use word ‘compassion’
  • More likely to use related terms such as ‘kindness’
  • Or to refer to a specific example to describe is meant
  • More about the way care is delivered rather than what is done
  • Or omissions in care
• Carers – family & friends - want other people to show compassion – and maybe some need to show it too?
• Carers too get burnt out and upset
• Compassion to each other may be part of relationship oriented care (possibly replacing person centred focus?)
Strong theme of trait: more about identifying at recruitment stage than learning – and little on reclaiming it.

... I still think that it’s either a vocation for the individuals that apply, and they want to do that job for the right reasons, and indeed have the right values initially...
‘Values based recruitment’

Large companies had corporate approach to recruitment

Owner managers/small companies had own strategies
Translating it into action: eg the advent of the Care Certificate April 2015 for new staff new to care
Leadership:
How to sustain and reclaim compassion

Managers see their role as modelling desirable behaviour
Also ‘manage’ environment
Take Kelly…. What might help her be compassionate (and what gets in the way of this)?

• Generally works a 30-35 hour week from 6am-2.30 pm
• ‘Full time’ workers are expected to do 70-80 hours a week
• Sees an average of 15 clients a day
• Theoretically paid £6.45 per hour but is actually paid by the minute
• Average pay has gone down as although hourly rate has gone up, weekend rates have been cut
• No financial incentive to undertake training
Some days you could go in and the service user’s perhaps having an off day or whatever and they don’t want you. What do you do? Another day, perhaps [they are] having a down day and they just want to talk. It takes time. You are running over your time ... We are all human and everybody is different. It’s all down to minutes.
Compassion less frequently used in social care and social work than in health contexts (so be kind)
Is it a spottable part of character? – (maybe, but be open minded)
Probably not a cake
Less known how to keep it
And not much on how to get it back
Thank you for listening

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