‘How hard can it be’ - managing conflict in an interprofessional discharge team in England

Sharif Haider
The Open University
United Kingdom
Background

- Interprofessional vs Multiprofessional team – both health (psychiatrists, mental health nurses, occupational therapists) and social care professionals (social workers, housing officers, welfare rights officers).
- Mental Health – schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety, psycho-affective disorder, personality disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder etc.
- Discharge Team – to discharge patients promptly but safely.
- Acute care – mostly required urgent mental health care, 95% of service users are under Mental Health Act 1983 (amended 2007), detention.
# Nine Key Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost £300 a day.</th>
<th>Length of stay 90 days.</th>
<th>Homeless.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>Under Debt.</td>
<td>Lack of family support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved with wrong crowd.</td>
<td>Misuse of drugs and substances.</td>
<td>Involve with criminal activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conflict

- Robbins et al. (2001; 489) • “A process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about”.

- Martin and Fellenz (2010, 300) • “Refers to a situations in which the interests of different parties are not aligned. This frequently emerges when the differences between two or more groups or individuals become apparent”.

- Taylor (1999: 1) • “Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that what each wants is incompatible with what the other wants. Conflict arises when differences cannot be satisfactorily dealt with”.

- Dreu and Van de Vliert (1997; 1) • “Conflict occurs when an individual or groupa feels negatively affected by another individual or group”
Conflict is Inevitable

– Conflict is situational i.e. fluid in nature but a dynamic process.
– Different interests or incompatible interests or outcomes.
– Conflict is based on both real and perceived differences.
– In an interprofessional team – part and parcel of everyday life.

• Scare resources.
• Competing demands.
• Different strategic priorities.
• Different professional culture.
• Different professional values.
Research So far

- Dyad professional: mostly physicians and nurses.
- Physical health.
- Specific conflict management framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawing</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcing</td>
<td>Competing</td>
<td>Dominating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>Compromising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoothing</td>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Obliging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>Collaborating</td>
<td>Integrating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Conflict Management Strategies.
Research questions

– How the health and social care professionals confront and manage conflict in the inter-professional discharge team.
– Why health and social care professionals apply specific conflict management strategies to facilitate a safe and timely discharge from an acute mental health hospital.
– Focus: England
Research Methods

- Qualitative Approach.
- A Case Study.
- Purposive sampling strategy.
- Semi-structured Interviews (11 practitioners: 2 psychiatric consultants, 3 mental health nurses, 1 senior mental health nurse manager, 2 social workers, 1 social care worker, 1 housing officer, 1 welfare rights officer).
- Documentary analysis.
- Thematic Analysis.
Research Findings

– Different ways to manage the same conflict.
– Emotional spillover is the hallmark.
– Health professionals heavily relied on policies and procedures.
– Social workers starting point is collaboration.
– Both professionals use compromise and accommodating conflict management strategy.
– Unwritten rules - Reciprocal arrangement: I did it now it’s your turn....
Research Findings

Confront first, and management next.
Research Findings

Emotional
Flight
Freeze
Flight
Rational
Avoid
Policies
Third party
Accommodate
Compromise
Any Questions