

# key characteristics

## **Informed decision-making: derived from evidence-based practice (EBP)**

### **Introduction**

It is important to draw together *all* the relevant knowledge that is used in the decision-making process, to be clear about the thinking and be able to demonstrate it to others. We are calling this process *informed decision-making*.

### **Why do we need it?**

Social care workers and managers in the course of their everyday working life will be involved in decision-making that affects the lives of service users and their carers. The process leading to a decision should be transparent so that it can be confidently and clearly explained. It is vital to be able to describe the evidence drawn upon and the critical thinking that has led to the decision. This information should be able to be satisfactorily demonstrated to all stakeholders involved. Empowering service users and carers by involving them in decision-making is fundamental to good practice and acknowledges them as experts in their own lives.

*Note:* There is not always a neat, clear distinction between service users and providers: we may all be service users or carers at some time.

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### What is informed decision-making?

- It is the gathering of facts and information that may be relevant to the decision.
- It is then making sense of or interpreting that information through critical analysis.
- It is utilising all relevant sources of information and experience. These will include:
  - law and policy
  - user and carer views
  - messages from research – reviewed and appraised
  - knowledge from and about the community
  - professional wisdom and experience
  - training and examples from best practice.
- It is exploring and using both explicit/formal and implicit/tacit knowledge in social care. Implicit/tacit knowledge is sometimes described as 'gut feeling': as part of a critical thinking process, attempts have to be made to ascertain how we know what we know and why we do what we do.
- It is the best use of knowledge available at the time.

*Note:* Evidence and knowledge are not the same, and the following definition from Lewis is a helpful one:

Evidence = 'findings' + interpretation of the findings

Knowledge = evidence + practice wisdom + user experience.

### Useful reference

- Lewis, J. (2002) 'Research and development in social care: governance and good practice', *Research and Policy Planning*, vol 20, no 1, pp 3-10.