Learning outcome:

Be able to reflect on aspects of practice where development is required to improve services for individuals.

3.1. Explain the importance of reflective practice for practitioners.

Reflective Practice: Transcript

What is reflective practice, and why is it important in health and social care?

Reflection is an important part of personal development in any professional field, and also in academic studies. Reflecting means that we look at an experience – either good or bad – and ask ourselves what happened, what caused this, and what could we have done differently? The purpose of this is to learn, to improve ourselves, and to make us better prepared for the next time this situation happens.

In fact, we don't only reflect on real-world experiences, but also on aspects of our learning. For example, when we find something difficult in our learning, studying, or working practices, we can step back and try to work out why, and what we can change in order to address this difficulty. Sometimes we even do this subconsciously. However, by actively incorporating a system of reflection into studying and professional development, both individuals and organisations can show a commitment to continuously improving themselves. In your future training and career, you will probably be asked to reflect on your own performance, and perhaps to set some professional goals and targets to work towards, based on these reflections.

There are a number of established models that suggest HOW you can conduct reflective practice, and we'll look at them in a separate video. Here, let's think about some examples of situations that might prompt reflection.

You could reflect on something that did not go according to plan. This could be a meeting with colleagues, or a discussion with a service-user about their support plan. It could be a time when you struggle with learning something or passing an academic assessment. Or it could be a situation or series of situations that lead you to feel stressed in your work.

However, don't forget that you can also learn a lot by reflecting on your successes too. Think of examples like times when you receive positive feedback and praise from service-users or their relatives, or when you see a service-user making encouraging progress after receiving care and support. Think about the positive relationships you develop in your workplace, or any success you achieve in an assessment or on a training course. What about a time when you have applied a technique that you recently learnt about in your own practice? Ask yourself what worked or didn't work, and WHY? And if something has worked particularly well, how could you share this with your colleagues, in order to promote best-practice in the industry?

Reflecting on your own professional development will be expected in any line of work within health and social care. It is written into the Care Standards of the British Association of Social Workers, and is a highly-valued skill in all industries. Furthermore, it's essential to remember that as a carer, if you

can improve and develop yourself as a professional, then the service-users and the profession as a whole will also experience those benefits.