

The FCL Way -our values

Fylde Community Link shares core values with progressive, person centred learning disability services everywhere, but also embodies in its practice and approach some distinctives. This statement aims to give a comprehensive statement of what it is that underpins our claim to be “a provider of quality.”

We believe that the individual’s choice matters

The fact of disability does not diminish the right of a human being to exercise genuine choice. Real choices about where we live, who lives with us, what we do, how we behave, eat, drink, dress, travel, socialise, express our sexuality or politics are the things which add value to living. Whilst not every choice is achievable because of resources, the FCL way is to work hard to determine individuals’ choices, to push those forward and to make them realities. We aspire, therefore, to build a fully elective relationship between the individual and their physical environment. The right of an individual to choose may produce ways forward which are costly compared to solutions imposed by others - these may sometimes appear unwise or ill-advised. We are convinced, however, that good lives and personal happiness flow from the experience of choosing and so keep this at the heart of what we do.

We centre our practice on the individual

Whereas all commissioners and providers of services wear a “Person Centred” badge, the FCL way is to fit our working and our thinking to the individual in radical ways. We value difference and encourage expression of views and practices which challenge old established ways of doing things. We continually look for feedback from individuals and their advocates about how to improve, we monitor quality not because we have to, but because we want lives to be lived the best they can be lived. The only consideration when poor practice is discovered is how it can be done better, and this takes precedence over loyalties, friendships or egos.

We take responsibility for outcomes

Being passionate about the individual means taking responsibility for pushing towards positive outcomes - even, or particularly, when others do not do so. Although we value the input of commissioning, parents and carers, advocates, partner agencies, medical and justice services, there are times when only those close enough to the individual whilst remaining dispassionate can move situations forward. The FCL way is to “go the extra mile” to attempt to coordinate the web of agencies whose actions affect outcomes, and to seek to be the agency which gets things done, even if there is no recognition, financial recompense or commercial advantage in doing so.

We seek to be as invisible as possible

Because we support people to live ordinary lives, we pass over opportunities for publicity or profile for the agency as much as is possible, preferring verifiable quality of delivery to brand-building. Fleets of branded vehicles, for example, risk labelling those transported by them as objects of charity rather than valued citizens, so publicity materials, advertisements etc. underplay organisational profiling in favour of stating our values. Although activities work wear and vehicles will carry discreet branding to develop the service, we would never encourage individuals to shake collection cans in public places. Although we welcome talented people as Directors, we would not recruit celebrities in an attempt to create news, nor would we seek headline publicity except where this would be beneficial to individuals themselves. The ambiguity of marketing a service whilst seeking beneficial invisibility is a strength, not a weakness.

We understand community focus

We aim always to reflect and emerge from the community in which we work, employing local people with knowledge of community networks, placing offices and homes in places where transport links and facilities are good, finding governance among ordinary local people with appropriate skills and using local services, suppliers and facilities wherever possible. We strenuously avoid the use of Agencies to provide staff, preferring to earth the organisation in the sandy soil of the Fylde. This localism is not always the easiest nor the cheapest approach, but we believe it is the best and hope always to remain loyal to our roots in this Borough.

We value genuineness in partnership

FCL wants to be known as an organisation which does what it says it will do. We aim to act in a transparent way in all our dealings, preferring the truth (even when it shows us to have been less than perfect) to fudges or half-truths. Where there are problems with the way we have operated we will acknowledge this; equally where there are problems with how others have acted, we will point this out in a spirit of openness. When resources are scarce we will act to minimise waste and remove any unnecessary supports, but when need is established we will advocate fiercely for additional resources. It is our belief that this cooperative stance builds trust and adds credence to our requests. Seeing ourselves as equal partners, our attitude to commissioners and regulators is formed neither by fear nor seeking favour, but by an open, informed and creative approach to the challenges we all face. The FCL way is to meet opposition or heavy-handedness with an adaptive flair which offers usable, trustworthy solutions.

The same genuine approach underpins our dealings with our staff - seeking to deal honestly with our people, we want to build a trusting, collaborative employment relationship which benefits all.

We seek creative approaches

We are open to new thinking, new systems and new ways of working where these can bring benefit to individuals. We will invest time and effort in keeping abreast of best practice and emerging technologies, contributing what we can to the development of systems and approaches which work well. Our track record with costing, scheduling and other difficult issues shows that the FCL way is for tools to be shared widely for the common good.

Management, too, is at its best when seen as a collaborative, creative activity for solving problems rather than a hierarchy.

We respect one another

Our interactions with colleagues, people who use the service, staff of other agencies and others reflect the respect with which we view other human beings. Our offices and workplaces are respectful, valuing environments where people with particular needs or communication styles will feel welcomed, accepted and safe. We aim never to be “too busy” for a smile, a friendly word or an encouragement. Our communications with others seek to acknowledge the impact of what we have to say and to offer support as well as information. We are acutely aware of the privateness and privilege of much of the information we have about people, and want to use that well and safely at all times.

We are committed to permanence

Aware that we may offer support to individuals for the whole of life, we take seriously our sense of being “in it for the long haul” by building structures, relationships and plans which deliver long term benefit rather than instant gratification. Seeing senior staff of commissioning bodies come and go while we remain largely constant, we accept the challenge of permanence and the responsibility of being the people who know the history of situations when others do not. This approach informs practice at all levels: seeking staff who want careers rather than a job, purchasing items which will endure, identifying properties which will be usable decades hence, growing at a sustainable rate and making financial plans which safeguard the charity far in the future.

These are the values which define the edges of our shared life. These are the signposts on the FCL Way.