

CELCIS REACH: Andy Carter | Empowering and supportive relationships

Issue 10 | Spring 2018

Andy Carter of ThemPra Social Pedagogy explains the meaning behind the idea: enabling holistic learning and wellbeing through empowering and supportive relationships.

Unfortunately, the word is a bit of a barrier, however we have hung onto that because it actually translates to: to lead the child. In Greek history the pedagogue was responsible for learning of the child i.e. getting to learn, not the teacher. So social pedagogy is a relational approach to working with children and vulnerable adults as well. It works across the life course, it's not just young people. The developments at the moment are with young people, but there is also some work being done with older adults, which is obviously becoming a bigger and bigger issue across the four nations really. It's a relational approach to working with people and it gives people permission and theory to understand how that can work, and it's about changing some of the restrictions that people feel, in terms of; we are all people, we all take ourselves to work. And social work practice and residential practice perhaps separated that out little bit and we all bring really important skills and qualities to our job. It's how we use those to engage with the young people or the older adults or whoever we are working with, to actually develop meaningful relationships, and that's about being authentic and coherent about how we make those relationships with people. I'm sure everyone who has worked with young people knows they can tell when you're not being sincere. They see straight through that.

It's about giving people permission to do that and it's also about creating an environment where young people and adults feel it's okay to learn. To develop themselves to be the best that they can be. It's having expectations and also understanding the limitations that they might have as well - not over expecting. So we kind of offer an opportunity for people, in a very exploratory way, to look at how they do the job that they do, how the practice works and also simply support that with theory as to how it can be done. We find it frees professionals up. Some people describe it as proper social work - how it used to be - and that was relational. When I started training, the social worker was relational. You

built relationships with people over a period of time, developed trust and then you got into a position where you can actually work together and actually start to look at some of the issues for the person. So it's almost going back to go forward and moving away from the sort of technical, rational social work that we have and it's not just social work it's also residential work, we've done work with foster carers, they're a really good position to develop relationships and work with young people. It's about working with, it's not doing to. It's not this is how we do social pedagogy to you. It's actually working together with young people. So it's kind of going on a journey together, but it's also having the relationship net there to catch them when it doesn't work out and say 'yeah, that's okay. What can we learn from that? I'm here, let's work it out.' You know, you fell off a wall you split your head open, yeah it happens. What can you learn from that. Let's nurture you and sort that out and we can learn from that. Even though it's a crisis if it doesn't work out, if it's the right process there's a lot of learning there and a lot of relationship building there.

©CELCIS