

Living on Triangle Island

The traditional contrast

Michael Smull, the originator of Essential Lifestyle Planning, has usefully contrasted service-centred with person-centred thinking as shown in *Table 1* (Smull and Sanderson, 2005). The statistician George Box has been quoted as saying, 'essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful' (Box et al, 1987) and this simple insight draws our attention not just to the benefits of a model, but also to its flaws. Alongside the obvious benefits, I can see two flaws in Smull's model.

First, the language of Smull's framework implicitly invites us to condemn service-centred thinking. 'Service-centred' is a term that embraces all the harm that organisations can do through processes of institutionalisation, but in Smull's formulation, neglects more wholesome items such as rigour, stewardship and accountability. Agencies are implicitly invited to deny the justifiable agenda, priorities and duties that emanate from their status as an organisation, and, instead, speak and act as if such motivations were somehow suspect. Smull and other thoughtful proponents

Abstract

This article, the first of a three-part series, explores the relationship between person-centred approaches, social inclusion and community engagement in the context of mental health. It is a 'thinkpiece', and forms the first of a suite of papers on emerging ideas.

Key words

Person-centred, service-centred, engagement, empowerment

of person-centred approaches then suggest that the rift between 'person' and 'service' is healed through the development of person-centred organisations that rediscover positive ways for the two agendas to be blended. The result is a new organisational form that takes much better account of the individuals it serves.

An alternative to Smull's framework for contrasting service-centred and person-centred is to see them not so much as a bad option contrasting with a good one, but rather as a pair of viewpoints. Listening to people at each viewpoint will increase the chances of obtaining

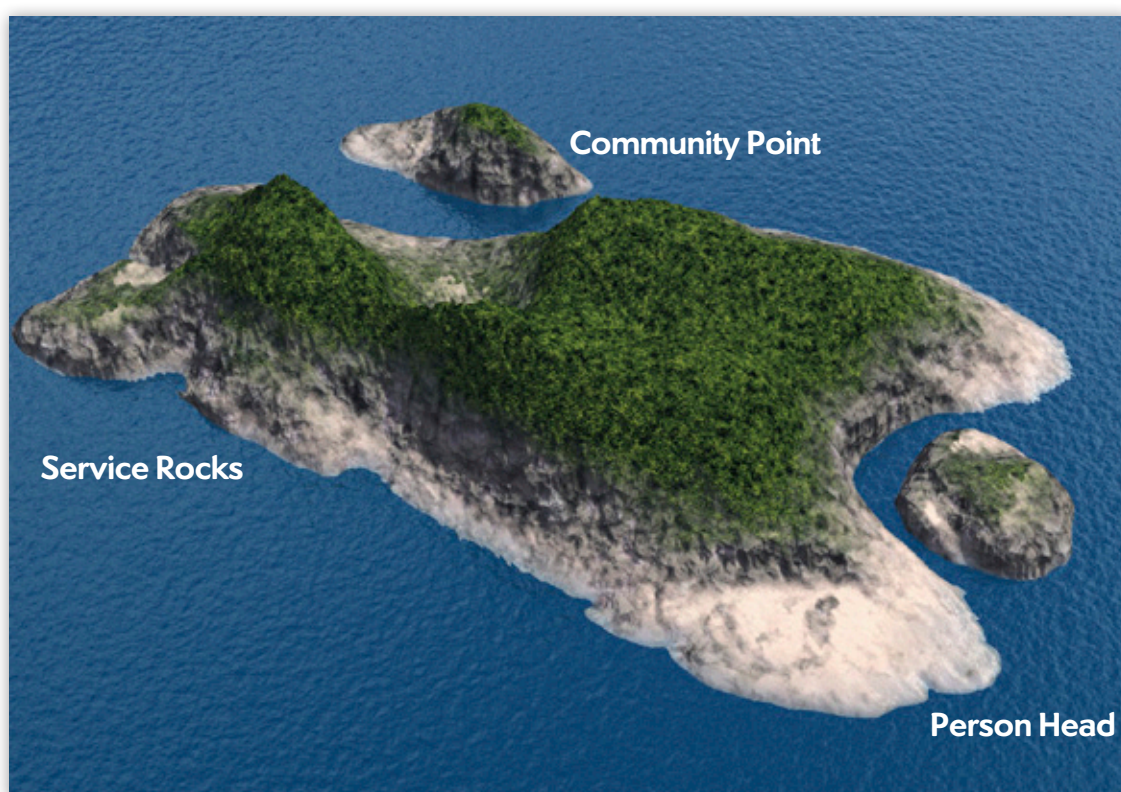


Figure 1. Triangle Island

Peter Bates

Head of Community Inclusion, National Development Team for Inclusion

Table 1: Smull's comparison of service-centred and person-centred thinking

Service-centred	Person-centred
Planning for	Planning with
Talking about you	Talking with you
Doing things to you	Doing things with you
Following a programme	Having a life
Live where you 'fit'	Live where you choose
Start with what's wrong	Start with what matters
Health and safety determine what you do	We find a way to do what you want safely
Words like 'let', 'allow', 'place	We suggest, you decide
Dead plans updated annually	Plans constantly updated
You learn the next step	We help you learn what you want in order to get what you want

Table 2. An attempt to view some themes from the three headlands of Triangle Island

Theme	Community Point ¹	Service Rocks	Person Head
What is focused on	Informal relationships	Organisations	Individual ambitions
Words such as...	Friends sharing together, us, relationships	Client, service user, contract customer, delivery, audit	Dream, ambition, support
Aim for more	Social capital	Good service delivery	Quality of life, sense of meaning and purpose
Measure of success	Communities are 'worth joining'	Intervention is effective	Personal satisfaction
Planning process	Citizens plan together	Staff plan your care	I plan my life
Planning mechanism	Local strategic partnership	Service level agreement	Person-centred plan
Where to begin change	Start with a widely shared view of how things can improve	Start with what's wrong	Start with what's important to the person
Health and safety	Shall we risk it together?	Assessed risk	Does it feel safe to me?
Theoretical base	Community development	Organisational development	Life coaching
Available resources	Our own efforts, and anyone and anything we can share or obtain	Service budgets, staff worktime plus any cross-agency agreements	My personal effort and resources and that of people who choose to care about me
Money comes from	Public and business funding	Commissioning	Personal wealth and income
Government bodies	Department of Communities and Local Government	Department of Health	Justice and rights enforcement

¹Communities are made up of informal networks and relationships and more formal organisations. The table emphasises the informal networks, affiliations and relationships to provide a contrast with the somewhat bureaucratic nature of services

a rounded view. Recording what they say may generate a rather different list of attributes under 'service-centred'—items that represent the ethical aspirations and activities of an organisation that is promoting person-centred lifestyles.

Adding a third perspective

The positive contrast of service-centred and person-centred perspectives opens the way to repair the second limitation of Smull's model. This is illustrated in *Figure 1* where the two viewing points have now become a triangular 'island' and, simply in order to bring the image to life, the nodes have been labeled as headlands. The orientation of the island can be changed, but it has been presented in this alignment so that the horizontal base reproduces the familiar service-centred/person-centred contrast. Activities can be placed within Triangle Island and will have elements of all three headlands. Some activities may be placed close to one headland. For example, creating a person-centred plan with a person using services is appropriately sited in the bottom right hand area of the island, although creating and following the plan will impact both the community and the service. Similarly, establishing a financial plan for the service or rebuilding a shopping centre for the local community will sit elsewhere but will impact both people who need support and service providers.

Can people living in one part of the island actually move to view things from another place? In *Moving to the Dance or Service Culture and Community Care*, Steve Dowson (1991) argues that people in organisations unavoidably see the world through the lens of their own values—values that include the beliefs that problems have to be understood analytically, and solutions found through conscious organised effort, driven by hierarchical command systems. When they use methods based on these values to empower community the result will be colonisation and disempowerment. Organisations that wish to acquire, adopt and control community activities will destroy the essential nature of those activities. Thus, the creativity of informal community-building activities and the personal focus of person-centred planning are both lost when these things are rolled out as government policy.

The implication, Dowson argues, is that organisations need to recognise their own limitations. They must respect the different ways of community life—helping communities to create their own places where they can flourish rather

than interfering and disrupting them.

We can try to climb the mountain at the centre of Triangle Island and view everything from above. But this view does not offer god-like omniscience, precisely because it—and indeed this article too—are based on the analytical problem-solving values of organisations. It is questionable whether ‘community’—a fluid, amorphous entity not given to ‘taking views’—has a settled perspective on service or person.

As with the earlier two-point model, it is possible to contrast the three headland viewpoints of Triangle Island on a number of dimensions. However, these will inevitably reflect the perspective from which they are being viewed. *Table 3* suggests some of these dimensions but they will inevitably be coloured by my perspective as someone involved in services. Other people may select different themes and content for the individual cells in the table.

Identifying relationships

The coastlines and beaches that join the headlands can be labeled too, as shown in *Figure 2*.

Empowerment Bay is a good place when frontline workers and people using their services negotiate a person-centred perspective, create opportunities for support and recovery; and avoid restrictive control.

Citizenship Coast is a good place when people with support needs are recognised as rightful members of their communities of choice, where citizenship rights and responsibilities are supported for all, and when communities offer respect and are welcome to all.

Engagement Sands is a good place when services are properly connected to the neighbourhoods they serve; when community priorities and insights assist in the delivery of specialist support and when the insights and perspectives of people who need support and their support agencies are taken into account in wider community life.

Some possible actions

Representatives of all three perspectives in a particular community need to be involved to obtain a full picture. *Table 2* is written from a service perspective and shows some possible actions that services might take to promote their own and other roles. It assumes that some progress has been made to promote a person-focused perspective, but the community-centred perspective is under-developed.

The next steps

As has been mentioned at the beginning of this paper, all models are flawed, and so the next task

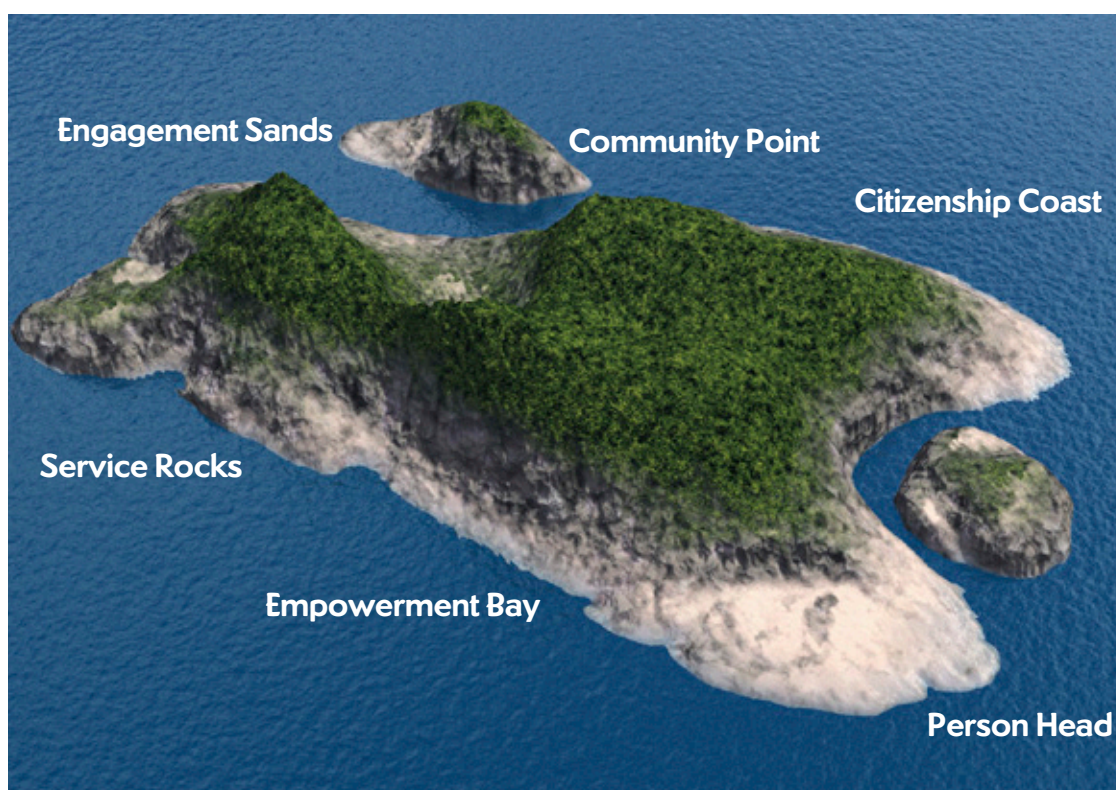


Figure 2: Identifying relationships on Triangle Island

Table 3. Possible actions for services from different viewpoints on Triangle Island

<p>Community Point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build alliances with universal community agencies and informal groups to help them design and develop ways to include people with mental health difficulties ● Value the contribution of carers and other informal and natural relationships where people with mental health issues are supported ● Promote positive skills and attitudes through Mental Health First Aid and similar programmes ● Assist communities to take a positive approach to sharing risk management with all citizens 	<p>Engagement Sands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assist communities to develop consultation systems that engage service users ● Attend local strategy meetings and get involved in democratic processes and community governance ● Invite community representatives to contribute to governance in mental health services ● Build a theoretical framework for how services view community that reaches beyond population health needs assessment to community wellbeing
<p>Service Rocks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Train mental health professionals in person-centred and community development interventions, especially where these traditions have disappeared from pre-qualifying training ● Reconfigure services to promote self-management and individualised budgets ● Develop outcome measures that include dimensions of personal agency and citizenship ● Promote hope instead of pessimistic responses 	<p>Empowerment Bay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deliver mental health care in ways that enable people to retain control over their own lives ● Acknowledge the tension between service-centred and person-centred agendas in resource rationing and compulsory treatment ● Signal a new power relationship between professionals and service users through the expert patient programme, service users as staff and trainers, service users on the board
<p>Person Head</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Redesign assessment and care management to promote person-centred, recovery-focused and positive risk-taking approaches ● Modernise congregate services by increasing individualised support — home treatment, inclusive day opportunities, supported living ● Provide good information about recovery and inclusion to service users and their allies 	<p>Citizenship Coast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build pathways for service users to move from activism in reform of mental health services to reform of communities ● Include work with community organisations in performance monitoring for frontline staff ● Improve the service's understanding of the interplay between the service user role and the citizen role and reduce the engulfment of the citizen role

is to seek out the weaknesses and limitations of Triangle Island, as well as try out some applications in specific areas. Possibilities for further development include:

- A critique of Triangle Island identifying what can go wrong if it is adopted without careful thought.
- A reflection on the role of care management or support brokerage as it would appear from the various viewing points on Triangle Island.
- Using Triangle Island to consider the balance of activity within a specialist mental health or other service
- Develop Triangle Island in a way that parallel's Eric Berne's 'parent-adult-child model to seek out the 'person in the service', the 'community in the service'

The implications of the Triangle Island will be explored in detail during the rest of this series of linked articles. The series continues by exploring engagement, empowerment and citizenship in the second article and some of the emotional dynamics at play when services reach out to communities in the third article. BJW

References

- Box GEP, Draper NR (1987) *Empirical Model Building and Response Surfaces*. Wiley, Hoboken, NJ
- Dowson S (1991) *Moving to the Dance or Service Culture and Community Care*. Values into Action, London
- Small MW, Sanderson H (2005) *Essential Lifestyle Planning for Everyone*. HSA Press, Stockport