



Why Values-Led Practice Matters

Reflections on what building The Village taught me about relational leadership, culture, and creating support that puts individuals before systems.

Four years ago, a small group of people came together to build what became The Village: a community shaped by and for parents with care experience. Looking back, one thing feels clearer than ever: the most important decisions we made were not about structure, delivery or process. They were about values and purpose.

Building from Values

From the outset, the aim was never to design another service. It was to create a space where stigma and discrimination were actively challenged, where strengths were recognised, and where relationships were built on dignity, trust and shared humanity. To build the most supportive social network we could.

That required more than good intentions. It meant being clear that values and principles would not sit on the margins of the work; they would define how the work was done.

When Values Are Absent, Systems Take Over

The language we use may evolve, but the principles behind The Village remain constant. If anything, time has only reinforced how essential they are to sustaining trust, shaping culture and making support feel genuinely human.

Values cannot be retrofitted. When they are treated as an add-on, systems and processes quickly become the main event. Structures matter, but they should support the work, not set its moral direction. If shared values are not visible in behaviour, partnerships and decision-making, they become performative. And when that happens, the focus becomes maintaining the system, people's individual needs inevitably come second.

The Culture We Chose to Build

At its heart, The Village was built around a simple but often overlooked idea: new and expectant parents with care experience should encounter support that is positive, non-stigmatising and genuinely relational. It should be recognised their needs were similar to every other parent in Scotland, however their support systems may not be as strong as people without experience of care. Creating a support system through an environment where people are and importantly feel valued, where strengths were



recognised, and where new skills could develop through trust and equality rather than hierarchy and judgement.

The original values that grounded this approach were:

- Respect
- Appreciation
- Inclusion
- Accountability

These values did not just shape intent; they shaped practice. They influenced how people were welcomed, how power was understood, and how trust was built across the community.

- We treated every person with respect, used language carefully, and considered how our actions affected others.
- We recognised each person's value and worked from a belief that people grow through understanding, encouragement, and support.
- We promoted inclusion by creating welcoming behaviours, inviting feedback, and paying attention to power imbalances.

Integrity and accountability mattered too. It meant doing what we said we would do, working transparently, and recognising that consistently modelling our values is one of the clearest ways to build trust.

How Those Values Continue to Shape the Future

Over time, those original values evolved into our mantra, a broader set of principles that continue to guide the culture, decisions, and relationships at the heart of The Village:

Show respect – Everyone deserves to be treated with respect. Stigma and discrimination have no place here, and we will work actively to eliminate both.

Be kind – We will treat others with kindness and use curiosity to understand different perspectives and experiences.

Promote the positives – We will focus on strengths, support learning, celebrate success, and recognise achievement.

Be human – We will acknowledge mistakes, take responsibility, learn from them, and support one another to grow.

Be ambitious – We will strive for excellence, identify the changes we want to make, and pursue them with determination.



Be allies – We will work with others to achieve our goals and support them in achieving theirs.

Champion individual growth – We will encourage personal development, create opportunities, nurture leadership, and empower others.

Keep it real – We will recognise the power of language, value every voice, avoid jargon, and use positive, inclusive communication.

Knowledge is power – We will share collective learning to support growth and understanding, without relying on individual case studies or asking people to retell personal stories.

Truly listen – We will listen to understand rather than respond, respect people's need for time, and move at their pace.

What This Means for Practice

The lesson return to is this: people do not experience values through statements; they experience them through culture. For anyone designing support, leading services or building partnerships, the challenge is not simply to name the right principles. It is to embed them so consistently that they are visible in behaviour, decisions and relationships every day. That means ensuring they thread through every policy, and procedure and are there for everyone who is part of or encounters the organisation. Values led practice is what makes support feel safe, credible and transformative for all. When we get it right, people thrive.