

# Person centred planning in Oldham

## Martin Routledge and Helen Sanderson from the North West Training and Development Team report on a serious attempt to introduce person centred planning within a large learning disability service

### Introduction

Person centred planning is increasingly promoted as a way for people with learning disabilities to explore and be supported to pursue the lives they wish to lead.

Previous ways of planning with people are seen to have failed in some important ways:

- They have concentrated mostly upon co-ordinating professional work towards achieving limited goals
- They have not put the dreams and wishes of the person being planned with at the centre of things
- They have reflected the power of the service and the professional in relationships with people and their families.

The thinking underlying person centred approaches is that people with learning disabilities have a right to powerfully influence their own planning and to be included in the mainstream of community life.

The methods used aim at sharing power much more than previous planning approaches. The results must be changes in people's lives, including real social inclusion.

There are real dangers though that only the language will change within service agencies, masking little real change in philosophy, goals and outcomes. This is already being seen in a number of places in Britain and other countries. For person centred planning to have a chance of supporting real change it must take place alongside strong commitment towards true inclusion for people with learning disabilities. There are dangers also that person centred planning will remain the property of professionals and agencies and not of people with disabilities, families and their allies. John O'Brien warned us about this in the last issue of *Community Living*

### Person centred planning and Oldham

Over the past four years the NWTDT has worked with Oldham Learning Disability Service (OLDS) in its attempts to learn about and start to use person centred planning. The learning from this work is reported in a new publication (Routledge and Sanderson 2000). The report is written for people interested in learning about developing person centred planning within organisations. It describes the challenges, successes and dilemmas experienced within OLDS as they try to make person centred planning happen throughout the organisation.

In particular the report explores the problems experienced with previous approaches to planning; why a structured approach was needed for the development of person centred planning and identifies three stages of development.

### What has happened?

Lots of staff have had some training in making the planning they do more person centred. Oldham decided to take what they called a "breadth and depth" approach (see below). This means that some people were given detailed training and other support in an approach called Essential Lifestyle Planning. Over time more people are being trained intensively in this and other approaches. They are starting to do planning with people and this is having an effect on the lives and services of these people. At the same time, large numbers of staff and now some families and people with learning disabilities are given less intensive training in a range of ways of making their planning more person centred. This means that while the service gradually learns about how to do in depth planning work and what this means for changing services and supports, lots of people can make their day to day planning better.

### Karen's story

Karen was 18 when a care manager started doing Essential Lifestyle Planning work with her, her family, teachers and others. She was due to leave school the following year. Karen has been described as autistic, and having severe learning disabilities. She had a reputation as "challenging" going back many years, has been worked with by many professional staff and excluded from a local school. In the past, people like Karen have often had to leave local districts to receive support as adults.

Karen's mum recently described the involvement of her and her family in the ELP work as "*The best thing we have ever done*". As the process has been worked through Karen is able to use local support

services that have worked hard to become increasingly geared to her and her needs. Part of the support is now also purchased through a Direct Payment which allows Karen to employ staff of her choosing to spend some time away from her family doing things that she wants to do. This has been achieved through the joint work and co-operation of a number of people and greatly aided by the ELP process. The care manager involved described the plan as “..having a feel of Karen, not like any other planning format. It put her behaviour in a real context – not just a focus on her behaviour, seeing her anew. There was a human touch in Karen’s plan that isn’t there in standard (care management) planning formats.”

There have been lots of developments and spins offs from the person centred planning training and support. These are linking with other changes taking place. For example

- Support for people leaving school and moving into adulthood has become more planned and creative
- Some people are starting to get support to live in situations more planned around them, rather than simply move into available places in group homes
- More flexibility is being introduced into the supports people receive for “day” activities, employment and short term support (not referred to as “respite” anymore!)

OLDS has learned lessons about some things it needs to do to ensure that all people with learning disabilities can be supported properly. This has applied in particular to people with significant health care needs or physical disabilities and people from South Asian Communities. OLDS has also been learning lessons about the use of person centred planning approaches within Care Management.

### **What does it take?**

One of the things that Oldham have found is that person centred planning can’t just be introduced in the way new policies have traditionally been implemented. OLDS found that:

- To introduce person centred planning properly needs leadership from senior managers and key people within the organisation to share the vision for change. This leadership has to be kept going over time. It has to be reflected in giving priority to training and development work around person centred planning and to finding enough funding and staff resources for this.

- Making person centred planning happen requires different approaches to the ‘cascade training’ often used with Individual Programme Planning and similar approaches. Facilitators need to be trained and supported differently. Person centred planning it is not simply a change in technique, but a different way of being with and supporting people. Therefore, the training and support for facilitators needed to include coaching and mentoring, a role that a Person Centred Planning Co-ordinator and others were beginning to carry out in Oldham.
- Balancing the enthusiasm of staff with the organisation’s ability to respond to the changes people want in their life is a challenge. As noted above, OLDS used what they called a ‘depth and breadth’ strategy. This meant that while work was going on to improve best planning practice starting with small numbers, larger numbers were taught practical approaches to improve general practice.
- Being linked with other changes in the same direction strengthens the introduction of person centred planning. OLDS was beginning to use person centred planning as a way of hearing how people who used the service wanted it to change.
- Person centred planning calls for a different approach to assuring and developing quality. This is an area for future development in OLDS.

### **Conclusions - Where next for Oldham? Beyond services!**

People in Oldham would agree that they are only at the beginning of a journey. So far, attention has been concentrated mostly on changing services and making them better through training and support for staff. Oldham should not apologise for this. Improving services is important as many people live within service settings and use a range of provisions. Increasingly though, people and families are getting their hands on person centred planning and opportunities for shifting from services to supports are emerging.

It is noticeable that there are increasing debates and some activity around making sure that person centred planning is not simply about making lives within services better. For example a group of staff, people with disabilities and others are jointly working through a development programme on ‘*Making Community Connections*’. There are an increasing number of examples where people are

managing to get lives which are not wholly dependent upon service supports.

It remains to be seen how far OLDS is able to/goes in shifting from making services better towards supporting people to build lives which are not lived wholly within services. There are some promising signs and Oldham know that they need to keep learning as they go, increasingly involving people with learning disabilities and their families truly at the centre of things.

**For more information**

The report *Work in Progress: Implementing Person Centred Planning in Oldham* by Martin Routledge and Helen Sanderson is available from the North West Training and Development Team priced £8 (£4 for small family led or advocacy groups).

The NWTDT have also published a guide to materials and resources on person centred planning by Helen Sanderson and Jackie Kilbane. This is also available, priced £5 (£3.00 for small family led or advocacy groups).

For both publications contact the NWTDT  
Telephone 01254-821-334.

