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## An overview of person centred planning

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During 2007 LDC Group undertook a number of projects that included consideration of individualised planning. Part of that work included undertaking extensive literature reviews on individualised planning, including person centred planning.

We take this opportunity to share some of our learning with the readers of LDC Quarterly. The following overview has been prepared by LDC Group researcher Judith Freidin.



Judith Freidin

#### What is person centred planning?

Person centred planning (PCP) is not so much a new technique for planning as a new approach to – or new type of – planning that is underpinned by a very exacting set of values and beliefs that may be different to the current norm.

PCP is planning that takes as its primary focus a person – as opposed to a disability or a service or some other particular issue. It is ‘whole person’ oriented as opposed to disability-management focused. It is about citizenship, inclusion in family, community and the mainstream of life and self-determination. PCP can therefore require some very fundamental changes in thinking and the established balances of power, the implications of which are potentially enormous and far reaching.

PCP is not assessment or service planning or Individual Program Planning for service users. Person centred planning seeks to:

- craft a vision for a person’s life as part of their local community and/or the broader mainstream of life; and
- describe the actions needed to move it in that direction.

PCP accomplishes this through:

1. discovering and responding effectively to the various aspirations, capacities and concerns of individuals with disabilities;
2. understanding and addressing the core issues for individuals – exploring where the person is now, how they would like their life to change and what bringing about that change might entail;
3. identifying and exploring choices available to the individual;
4. mobilising and involving individuals' entire social network as well as resources from the system of statutory services in responding to what is expressed and helping to bring about whatever changes are desired;
5. making arrangements to follow up on plans on a regular basis in order to go through them, review progress on putting them into action and update them;
6. discovering a way to record, on an on-going basis:
  - what has been learned about what is important to an individual and what is important for them;
  - what balance has been worked out between what is important to the person and what is important for them where there is a conflict between the two;
  - what others are expected to know about what is important to and for the person and/or what others are expected to do

to help the person get what is important to and for them;

- what needs to stay the same and what needs to change – and who will do what (by when) in acting on these;
- what is, in fact, staying the same and what is changing following the development of a person centred plan – and whether this is making a real difference to the person's life in either case.

### Who does person centred planning?

Person centred plans may be developed either within services or entirely independently of them. In either case, it is the person or family who is to be the focus of the person centred plan that should decide whether to develop one in the first place – and how and whether to pursue it once it is developed.

The person at the centre of the planning endeavour is commonly referred to as the 'focus person'. Where this person is being supported in the process of drawing up a plan and putting it into action, the individual supporting and guiding the planning effort is called a 'plan facilitator'.

The primary role of the plan facilitator is to help someone work out what they want and then help them work out how to attain/achieve it. Facilitators may also work as agents of plan realisation, liaising with relevant support or other service providers.

Whether specialist service staff, parents, family members, spouses, friends, advocates or someone acting independently on behalf of an individual and/or his or her family, it is extremely important that a plan facilitator is suited to the task in terms of their values, talents, capacities and skill-base. They should, normally, be formally trained and experienced in person centred planning philosophy, methodology, tools and techniques. They should also be familiar with any significant aspects of the focus person's background that are likely to impact on the person centred planning process.

It is essential that a plan facilitator operate entirely independently of any potentially vested interest in the process. Where a plan is being facilitated within a service, the autonomy of the plan facilitator in his or her role as plan facilitator must be adequately assured. It is also imperative that a plan facilitator should adopt, encourage and project an equal partnership approach to working with the person or family at the centre of the planning process.

The term 'circle or network of support' for plan development and realisation is used to refer to everyone a person might like (or need) to involve in developing and/or working out their plan: - family, spouses, friends, advocates, specialist and non-specialist service providers and local community groups, etc...

The initial and continuing involvement of any particular individual, group or

organisation in any part of the planning process should be in accordance with the wishes of the person at the centre of the planning endeavour – and that particular individual, group or organisation. The person responsible for driving the overall process is sometimes referred to as the 'PCP champion'.

Where a group of people decide to work together to drive the process, this group is sometimes referred to as a 'guiding coalition'. Every effort should be made to ensure that everyone involved is given whatever support they need to play their particular part(s). This includes developing an adequate system of communication that is fully accessible to all parties likely to be involved in the person centred planning process. It may also mean engaging in some preliminary groundwork on empowerment, relationship-building and advocacy.

It must be acknowledged that parents and family members can be a valuable source of information in developing plans and a great help in getting plans put into action. Regardless of whether they have been directly involved in the planning process, parents and family are frequently impacted by plans (sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly). The matter of consulting parents and family members on those parts of a plan that are likely to impact on them should be addressed as part of the planning process and the views of parents and family members on those issues should be sought, acknowledged and explored.

## What are the key principles of person centred planning?

The six key principles underpinning person centred planning are:

1. Person centred planning is planning from an individual's perspective on his or her life;
2. Person centred planning entails a creative approach to planning which asks 'what might this mean?' and 'what is possible?' rather than assuming common understandings and limiting itself to what is available;
3. Person centred planning takes into consideration all the resources available to the person – it does not limit itself to what is available within specialist services;
4. Person centred planning requires serious and genuine commitment and cooperation of all participants in the process;
5. Person centred planning is an art – not a science:
  - It is best viewed as an organic, evolving process which emphasises;
  - taking time to really get to know people and build relationships and rapport over time;
  - encouraging open and flexible attitudes in all participants in the planning process;
  - listening carefully, acknowledging and exploring various and, in particular, opposing perspectives;

- responding creatively, practically and reasonably to what is heard.

6. The development of a plan is not the objective of person centred planning: making real, positive differences to someone's life is.

## Existing person centred planning systems

A review of person centred planning undertaken by the NSW Government identified a large number of existing systems for person-centred planning. They include:

- Individual Design Sessions (1980)
- Getting to Know You (1982)
- Twenty-Four Hour Planning (1984)
- Personal Futures Planning (1988)
- Making Action Plans (1989)
- Personal Histories (1990)
- Families First (1990)
- Essential Lifestyle Planning (1992)
- Whole of Life Planning (1993)
- Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (1993)
- New Hats (1996)
- Group Action Planning (1996)
- It's Never Too Early, It's Never Too Late (Mount & Zwernik, 1988)
- Thoughts About My Life (Manning, Reale, Smull, & Obermeyer, 2000)
- Listen to Me (Smull, Sweet, Bolton, & Greene, 2000)
- It's My Choice (Allen, 2002) (NSW Department of Ageing and Disability and Home Care, 2004, available from <http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/dadhc/Publications+and+policies/>)

## References and resources

This article was adapted from Guidelines on Person Centred Planning in the Provision of Services for People with Disabilities in Ireland, National Disability Authority, Ireland.

Downloaded from  
[www.nda.ie/cntmgmtnew.nsf/](http://www.nda.ie/cntmgmtnew.nsf/)  
downloaded 29/3/08

Other useful websites include:  
<http://nps718.dhs.vic.gov.au/ds/disabilitysite.nsf>  
Victorian Government Policy including 'Planning for Individuals A Resource Kit and Implementation Guide for Disability Service Providers'

[www.valuingpeople.gov.uk](http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk) –  
resources and materials on Person Centred Planning

[www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/pcp/](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/pcp/) - Person Centred Planning education site with an online course

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