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An introduction to Person Centred Teams

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What are they?

Developing person centred teams involves

- ① 7 questions
- ① A range of person centred thinking tools to answer them
- ① A way of recording the answers in a person centred team plan

A person centred team is a team with a shared sense of purpose who know what is important to and for team members. In a person centred team roles and tasks are allocated based on team member's strengths and interests, and the team regularly reflects on, and shares, what they are learning. All of this information, about purpose, what is important to the team, action and reflection is recorded and updated in a person centred team plan. Teams can work through seven questions, each with a range of practical person centred thinking tools, to explore becoming a person centred team.

Why do we need them?

Implementing person centred planning and thinking in services is deeply challenging.

Person centred planning can be a life changing, enriching experience. It can also be a distressing disappointment if nothing changes. Lisa's plan described how she wanted to live by herself, ride a motorbike, have friends and go to Cyprus. She invited her sister and staff to plan with her. Then her key worker was moved to another staff team. Other 'priorities' engulfed the team and nothing changed for Lisa. She could not understand why she did not move immediately, and became angrier at having to continue to share a house. Lisa became violent. The psychologist was called in to help with her 'challenging behaviour'.

“Implementing plans means moving from planning to action, reflection and back to action.”

For every effort in planning there needs to be an equal effort in implementation or risk leaving people disillusioned and cynical. Or in Lisa's case, understandably bitter, violent and depressed.

Implementing plans means moving from planning to action, reflection and back to action. In our early efforts with person centred planning we assumed that the hard work was developing a creative plan that truly represented the person. We assumed the once you had the plan implementation would be straightforward. Our assumptions were wrong.

Person Centred Teams are a key to implementing person centred plans and person centred thinking. The concept was developed from research on person centred planning with teams providing support to people in the UK (Sanderson, 2000).

Being person centred with staff

Some of the fundamental principles of person centred planning are that we learn what is important to people, that people are involved in all decisions about planning, that plans reflect and build on peoples existing skills and interests, and people get the support they want and need. Developing person centred teams extends those principles to staff. This means that managers and team leaders need to:

- 🌀 learn what is important to staff
- 🌀 as far as possible involve support staff in decision-making that affects them
- 🌀 discover the existing skills and interests of staff and see how these can be used to support people using the service
- 🌀 find out what support staff need and discover the best way of providing it

This is a change in thinking about power. John O'Brien and Connie Lyle O'Brien suggest that when organisations operate by having 'power over' their staff, support staff typically mirror that relationship with the people they support, acting as if they are in charge of them. They suggest that all relationships within organisations need to be based on 'power-with' rather than 'power-over'. 'Power with' arises from mutual respect and a willingness to listen and learn from each other. It is about co-operation and sharing, questioning and negotiating. In management terms, this is described as using a participative approach and building semi-autonomous teams.

The crucial role of the first line manager

Retaining the right staff is a huge challenge across the UK and the States. 'First Break All the Rules' is based on research that says that the manager is key in whether staff stay or not, and this is much more important than other employee-focussed initiatives.



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"If she (your manager) sets clear expectations, knows you, trusts you, and invests in you, then you can forgive the company its lack of profit sharing program...It is better to work for a great manager in an old fashioned company than for a terrible manager in a company offering enlightened, employee-focused culture."

A staff members relationship with her manager will determine how long she stays and how productive she is while she is there.

In First Break All the Rules we have 6 questions that are strongly linked to retaining staff:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?
6. At work, do my opinions count?

Through developing person centred teams, you will have clearly, positively answered questions 1, 3 and 6, and have demonstrated caring about the staff member in question 5.

Building Person Centred Teams

The way to develop a person centred team is to explore 7 questions.

For each question we share a range of practical exercises that teams can use within team meetings, or in team building days. Each exercise takes between 30 - 45 minutes.

Each question may need to be revisited several times over a team's `life`. When existing team members leave and new people join, the first questions will need to be revisited. Question 3 is where the issues of person centred planning begin to be addressed.



Question	Ways to answer it
1. Why are we here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 Purpose poster 🌀 Success poster 🌀 Team mission statement
2. Who are you and how can we work together?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 Important to/for 🌀 Reputations 🌀 Good day/bad day 🌀 Communication Chart 🌀 Decision making matrix
3. What are we here to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 Core responsibilities/Creativity and Judgement (Doughnut) 🌀 Reviewing plans
4. Who is going to do what, when and where?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 Matching staff within a team 🌀 How can we ensure that the plan happens?
5. How will we know how well we are doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 Working and Not working (different perspectives) 🌀 4 plus 1 questions 🌀 Praise and Trouble
6. What else can we try?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 With the people we support – how can we keep supporting the person to have new opportunities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relationship circles ○ Community mapping ○ From presence to contribution ○ What works and does not work for the person's health ○ Gifts



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skills and interests ○ Hopes and dreams ○ How to provide good support ○ Communication chart, dictionaries and passports ○ How I spend my time ○ Personal Portfolios and sharing histories 🌀 as a team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Solution Circles ○ Action Learning Set process ○ Blue Skying
7. How can we record and share what we are learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌀 about the people we support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How will we share and record what we are learning about the person? ○ Learning Log 🌀 as a team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How can we share the successes and barriers of implementing plans with others in the service?

Describing the team and how it works: A person centred team plan

The person centred team plan captures what is learned through asking the seven questions. To be useful, it needs to be a living plan that is regularly reviewed and updated. A person centred team plan has the following section headings, but team plans will be presented differently, reflecting the diversity of teams.



Section of the person centred plan	Purpose of the section
Team Purpose	Shared understanding of the purpose of the team within the context of the organisations mission statement
What we like and admire about each other	To appreciate the qualities and strengths that individuals bring to the team
<p>What is important to the team about how we work together</p> <p>Clarity about the core responsibilities within our roles and where we can use creativity and judgement</p> <p>Clarity about how decisions are made and communicated</p>	<p>Ensuring that team members are clear about what is expected of them within the context of the services aims, objectives, policies and procedures</p> <p>Shared understanding that within core responsibilities individuals have room for creativity and judgement in implementation</p> <p>Clarity about responsibilities and accountabilities and how this is communicated between individuals, teams and organisations</p>
What is important to individual team members to enable them to work as effectively as possible	Understanding what matters to individual team members (for example about environments, structures and interactions)
What support we need as a team from others	Identifying what is required from other people to enable the team to work as effectively as possible
What support we need as individuals	Identifying what individual team members require from others to support them in their work
What is working and not working for us	The team's analysis of how they are achieving its purpose and how well the team is working together, from different perspectives. Identifying actions to maximise the teams effectiveness and working relationships
How we keep this team plan alive	Ensure that the plan is used, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

