

## READING ROOM

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[What is Person Centred Planning? \(Easy Read Version\)](#)

## What is person centred planning?

We all think about, and plan our lives in different ways. Some people have very clear ideas about what they want and how to achieve it, others take opportunities as they arise. Some people dream and then see how they can match their dreams to reality.

Sometimes it is useful to plan in a structured way, and person centred planning provides a family of styles that can help do this. Person centred planning is not just about services, or disability, it is something that everyone can use to plan their lives.

Styles of person centred planning share common values and principles, and are used to answer two fundamental questions:

- ① Who are you, and who are we in your life?
- ① What can we do together to achieve a better life for you now, and in the future?

Person centred planning is not simply a collection of new techniques for individual planning to replace previous approaches. It is based on new ways of seeing and working with people with disabilities, fundamentally about sharing power and community inclusion.

*"One of the most common misunderstandings of person centred planning is that it is a short series of meetings whose purpose is to produce a static plan. This misunderstanding leads people to underestimate the time, effort, uncertainty, anxiety and surprise necessary to accurately support people's lives over time"*

John O'Brien and Herb Lovett.

## The origins of person centred planning

Person centred planning may appear to be a relatively new, but its roots extend over twenty-five years, emerging from progressive changes in thinking about better ways to include people with disabilities in society.

In the wider community, person centred planning has been developed from philosophies underpinning:

- ① The social model of disability and the disability movement that demands a shift in the balance of power between disabled people and the services on which they rely.
- ① The inclusion movement that calls for a passionate commitment to diversity and for intentional community building.

Within services, person centred planning has been influenced and stimulated by:

- ⊙ Normalisation and social role valorisation that insists on people with disabilities having a quality of life and position in society which is equal to and would be valued by non-disabled people.
- ⊙ The accomplishment framework that focused services on five areas to improve peoples' quality of life within their community.
- ⊙ Dissatisfaction with earlier planning approaches leading people to develop creative ways of fully including people with learning disabilities.
- ⊙ Best practice in social work assessments which emphasised the assessor's expertise in negotiation and problem-solving and imaginatively designing solutions using available service and community resources

Person centred planning is not a fad from America. It has evolved from excellent practice and progressive thinking in communities and services.

### The values underpinning person centred planning

Person centred planning is:	Person centred planning is not:
a powerful way to support positive change	a cure-all
a different way of working together	just coloured posters instead of paperwork
a better way to listen and respond to people	just a more sophisticated assessment
different for different people	a standard package
an invitation to personal commitment	a service routine
working towards inclusive communities	just a better way to put together service packages
for anyone who wants it	just for those who are 'ready'

Person centred planning is based on an explicit set of beliefs and values concerning people with disabilities, services and communities.



*'All means all' means that it is morally unacceptable for people to be rejected by community services or excluded from community participation on the basis of the level or type of support they need.*

## All means all

Person centred planning is rooted in the belief that people with disabilities are entitled to the same rights, opportunities and choices as other members of the community. Disability does not justify poor treatment, low standards, injustice or oppression. Person centred planning starts from an assumption of common decency: 'What is a decent way for our society and our services to treat someone of this person's age, gender and culture in terms of their living arrangements, security and autonomy?'

Traditionally, services have gathered people with the highest support needs or the most challenging behaviour into large segregated facilities, while allowing those who require less support to live more independently in the community. Professionals have 'matched' people to different services along a continuum: the more support people are seen to require, the more strangers they have to live with and the more differences there will be between their home life and the lives of other people in their community

Person centred planning challenges the whole idea of batching people together on the basis that they are perceived as needing a similar type or level of assistance. It challenges the assumption that because someone needs a lot of help it is acceptable for them to have an impoverished or restricted life.

'All means all' means that it is morally unacceptable for people to be rejected by community services or excluded from community participation on the basis of the level or type of support they need. This means that people who practise person centred planning place a high value on loyalty and sticking with people over time, even when they test to the limit our capacity to accept, believe in and include them.

## Everyone is ready

The focus of professional effort in the lives of disabled people has traditionally been on the person's impairment. People are channelled into different services depending on the category of their impairment, for example, learning difficulty, sensory impairment or loss of mobility. This leads to a process of assessment which analyses and quantifies the impairment and its impact on the person's ability to undertake a range of tasks. This assessment results in a description of the person in terms of what she cannot do: her deficits.

Professionals then set goals for people to try and overcome these deficits. We have tended to focus on what people cannot do, spending years trying to teach people to clean their teeth or tie their shoelaces, to become more 'independent'.

The most serious consequence of this is that people's participation in ordinary community life is then seen as dependent on their success in



achieving these goals. People are only given opportunities when staff feel they are 'ready'. They have to earn the right to be part of their own community. People who expected services to help them to manage their own lives have instead become trapped in a world where others make judgements about their future.

Person centred planning starts from the other end. It asks 'How do you want to live your life? What would make sense for you?' before looking at 'How could we work with you to make this possible, given your particular situation and the things you need help with?'

It challenges the traditional notion of 'independence' in two ways. Firstly, it sees independence in terms of choice and control rather than physical capacity to carry out particular tasks.

*"Real independence is nothing to do with cooking, cleaning and dressing oneself. If you ask me what is my experience of being independent, I would not automatically think about self help skills but of being able to use my imagination to create fantasy, of enjoying music and drama, of relishing sensual pleasures and absorbing the natural life around me."*  
John Corbett.

### Person centred planning is not the same as...

Person centred planning is not synonymous with "needs led" or "client centred" or "holistic" assessment or care planning. These start with the individual but are not necessarily person centred. The definition of "needs" used in care management, for example, is a "system construct". Needs are defined as those things for which the person is deemed eligible according to interpretation of policy and the resources of the local social services department. Person centred planning goes beyond this definition of needs, considers people's aspirations, is not limited by entitlement to services and is not necessarily dependent upon professional involvement. Person centred planning is concerned with the whole of someone's life, not just their need for services.

Jean and her daughter Lucy prepared for Lucy's transition review by doing an Essential Lifestyle Plan. Great effort went into producing a really detailed picture of what matters for Lucy. Jean left the meeting feeling crushed and physically sick. Though several people at the meeting were really enthusiastic about the plan and said how helpful it was for them as professionals to think about their contributions to Lucy's future, the social worker was apologetic. She said "I'm sorry we don't recognise ELP. We don't have the resources to implement it. We can only meet needs not wants" The social worker was confusing assessment for council services and broader life planning. Jean and Lucy did not expect social services to deliver everything in the plan. They wanted the professionals to listen to



what was important to Lucy and her family and work out what they could do to contribute towards achieving these things. They also wanted help with problem solving other sources of support and resources.

## What can person centred planning be useful for?

- ① Help people to work out what they want in their lives
- ① Clarify the supports needed for people to pursue their aspirations
- ① Help to shape the contributions made from a range of service agencies to ensure these are effective in helping people meet their goals
- ① Bring together people who have a part to play in supporting people for joint problem solving
- ① Energise and motivate people based upon better understanding of and commitment to a person
- ① Show service agencies how they can adjust their activities at both operational and strategic levels in order to better support people to achieve their goals

It is equally possible to be “client centred” or “holistic” without being person centred. The key issues here are about who decides what is important in planning and the power balance within it. Professionals can undertake planning which is centred on an individual but where the focus is exclusively upon professional concerns and judgements.

*“Information gained from technical assessments can be helpful, but only in the context of a knowledgeable account of a person’s history and desired future”, John O’Brien and Herb Lovett.*



## Key features of person centred planning

Person centred planning has 5 key features:

### The person is at the centre

- ⊙ Person centred planning is rooted in the principles of shared power and self-determination. Built into the process of person centred planning are a number of specific features designed to shift the locus of power and control towards the person. Simple practical examples of this are that as far as possible the person is consulted throughout the planning process; the person chooses who to involve in the process and the person chooses the setting and timing of meetings.

### Family members and friends are partners in planning

- ⊙ Person centred planning puts people in the context of their family and their community. It is therefore not just the person themselves that we seek to share power with, but family, friends and other people from the community who the person has invited to become involved. Person centred planning starts from the assumption that families want to make a positive contribution and have the best interests of the person at heart, even if they understand those best interests differently from other people.

### The plan reflects what is important to the person (now or for the future), their capacities, and what support they require

- ⊙ In using person centred planning we seek to develop a better, shared understanding of the person and their situation. The planning process can be powerful - people's views change, new possibilities emerge, alliances are created, support is recruited, and energy is gathered and focused. The resulting person centred plan will describe the balance between what is important to the person, their aspirations and the supports that they require.

### The plan helps build the person's place in the community and helps the community to welcome them. It is not just about services, and reflects what is possible, not just what is available.

- ⊙ The focus of person centred planning is getting a shared commitment to action, and that these actions have a bias towards inclusion. In this context services are only part of what people want and need; and planning what services you need comes after planning what sort of a life you want.



The plan results in ongoing listening, learning, and further action. Putting the plan into action helps the person to achieve what they want out of life.

- ⌚ Person centred planning is not a one off event. It assumes that people have futures; that their aspirations will change and grow with their experiences, and therefore the pattern of supports and services that are agreed now will not work forever. Person centred planning is a promise to people based on learning through shared action, about finding creative solutions rather than fitting people into boxes and about problem solving and working together over time to create change in the persons life, in the community and in organisations. To fulfil this promise we need to reflect on successes and failures, try new things and learn from them and negotiate and resolve conflict together.

### Different styles for different purposes

There are several different styles of person centred planning that can help people to achieve different purposes. Each style is based on the same principles of person centred planning: all start with who the person is and end with specific actions to be taken. They differ in the way in which information is gathered and whether emphasis is on the detail of day to day life, or on dreaming and longer term plans for the future. The common planning styles in use in the UK include Essential Lifestyle Planning, PATH and Maps, and Personal Futures Planning. It is crucial not to divert energy into pointless debates about which is the best planning style. People should consider rather which style might be best used in which circumstances. Styles can be used to complement one another.

### The purpose of a person centred plan is to achieve one or more of the following

1. To develop a 'picture' of the person's desired future and describe the actions needed to move in that direction (PATH and MAPs are useful for this purpose)
2. To look at where the person is now, how they would like their life to change and mobilise and engage people to help the person to become a part of their community (Personal Futures Planning is useful for this purpose)
3. To learn and provide a single place to record, on an on-going basis:
  - ⌚ What has been learned about what is important to the person and what is important for the person
  - ⌚ What others are expected to know and/or do to help the person get what is important to them and what is important for them



- ② The balance between what is important to the person and what is important for the person where there is a conflict between them
- ② What needs to stay the same and what needs to change and who will do what (by when) in acting on these (Essential Lifestyle Planning is useful for this purpose)

Each planning style combines a number of elements: a series of questions for getting to understand the person and her situation; a particular process for engaging people, bringing their contributions together and making decisions; and a distinctive role for the facilitator(s).

PATH and MAPs focus strongly on a desirable future or dream and what it would take to move closer to that. In Essential Lifestyle Planning and Personal Futures Planning facilitators gather information under more specific headings. Particular sections - such as the section in Essential Lifestyle Planning on how the person communicates and the section in Personal Futures Planning on local community resources - ensure that someone gathers together what is known and records this information so that everyone can use it.

People may need to focus on different areas of their lives at different times, and therefore use one planning style at one time and another at another time. We need to learn what is important to people on a day to day basis and about the future they desire. Sometimes it is important to learn about the day to day issues first, and then move on the learning about a desirable future. In other situations we need to hear about peoples dreams, and later learn about what it is important on a day to day basis.

In considering what style to use facilitators need to consider the context and resources available to the person. Whether the person has a team to support her, or lots of friends and neighbours who want to get involved or a circle of support can influence the decision about which planning style to use. If the person has a team who do not know her very well, then starting with a planning style which invests a lot of time in really getting to know the person, for example Essential Lifestyle Planning, could be a useful place to begin. If the person has family and friends or a circle who know and love her, then starting with dreams through PATH or Maps is useful.

There are dangers in focussing too much on the process of planning to the detriment of the desired outcomes. In exploring the uses of person centred planning we must be really careful to keep our eyes on the prize of people getting better lives.

This does not mean that how planning is done is unimportant, but that it will vary in different circumstances. Long before anyone developed person centred planning some people were getting better lives when people listened to them closely and cared about them enough to act on what they heard, solving sometimes very difficult problems on the way. Person centred planning approaches are simply (sometimes very powerful) aids to doing this. Some people will benefit greatly using the methods of some



of the well-developed styles of person centred planning. Other people might plan or start to plan in less structured, "on the move" ways like Mike and Graham

Mike had spent many years in various institutions. He has autism and a bipolar disorder. He eventually was discharged at the age of 40 into a group home with 3 people from the institution randomly chosen to "get on with each other". He hated the home he lived in and the people he lived with. Several violent incidents at the home made him anxious and worried and he was eventually moved to another group home to share a double bedroom with another tenant and two other tenants in the home. He again had nothing in common with the other 3 men. When I met him he was confined to his room, indeed his bed, and refusing to participate in any outside activity. He was depressed and unwilling to engage in any planning about his future.

At the time a property became available to the charity that I work for as a short life property on lease from the Local Council. It needed a lot of work doing to it and, as it was only a short-term lease, we had much debate about whether we should take on the lease.

Mike agreed one day to come for a walk with my colleague and me to see this house. We had no intentions of Mike moving to the home but thought it would be good to get him away for the day from the place he was living. Mike went to the house with us, sat in a room with no television, bed, carpet and with a large hole in the wall and roof, and said he would like to stay there forever. That is how unhappy he was with his previous accommodation and life. His previous tenancy was at a place where he shared with people he did not like and which was run on quite an institutional basis with regular, stipulated meal times, bed times and personal support times. The place was attractively furnished and well maintained but it was not a home to Mike.

This was the first step of his person centred plan because Mike wanted to persuade us that the best course of action was for him to stay at this house with no facilities whatsoever. By listening to his stilted words charged with emotion and frustration we realised we had to help him do something in his own way and not impose our standards and expectations of appropriate housing on him. We compromised on another room, found a bed and some bedding and asked the full time resident caretaker, looking after the security of the property while it was being renovated, to "keep his eye on Mike".

Just to make sure we still had some "control factor in this" we agreed with Mike that he needed to go home to "his real home" when work was taking place and to get support from the staff at the home (he never went back once). We also insisted this was a temporary measure (that was seven years ago!).

Graham is a man in his early forties who lives in a small village. He has lived there all his life with his dad. Every weekday morning he is picked up



by the social work bus which takes him to a day centre in the local town. Graham knows everyone in the village. He goes to the local pub every Friday and shops in the post office almost every day. Recently his father was diagnosed as having terminal cancer.

It looked like Graham would have to leave the village and provision would have to be found for him elsewhere. Graham's social worker began looking at the options available in the local town.

At the day centre they knew that Graham would be devastated to lose both his father and his community at the same time. One of the support workers, Fergus, decided to see if anything else could be done. He travelled to the village one day and began knocking on doors. He explained to Graham's neighbours that he would have to move out into supported housing when his father died. Nobody wanted that to happen. Graham and Fergus called a meeting to which about twenty people came. Between them they sorted out how they could support Graham to stay living in his own home when the time came.

Two months ago Graham's father died. Graham feels the loss deeply but he has insisted on remaining in the house when he has always lived. He still attends the day centre and someone from his support circle meets him off the bus everyday and goes home with him to cook a meal. No one thought he would manage to sleep on his own but he does. There are fourteen people from the village in Graham's circle of support. Between them they are determined to ensure that he does not have to move away.

### Where is the evidence?

In public services, we are increasingly and rightly looking for evidence to justify expensive activities and interventions. Some have questioned the application of person centred planning approaches on these grounds. Obviously evidence of effectiveness is important and the Department of Health has recently commissioned a major study to be undertaken in the near future. Having said this, the key issue is not "should we undertake person centred planning?" but rather to establish how to make person centred planning most effective. This is because a key purpose of person centred planning is to find out what is important to people and to act on this knowledge. If we do not do this we must ask ourselves serious ethical questions about our activities as professionals, staff and managers.

In one local authority area recently a presentation was made to the Social Services Committee. The presentation was by a group of managers and staff from the Learning Disability Section of the SSD who had been introducing person centred planning for some of the people who use the service. The elected members were suitably impressed by the presentation but one asked a question along the lines of: "Let me get this clear, you are introducing an approach that finds out what is important to people so that we can make sure that services are responsive to them? You mean to say we don't do that for everyone already!". The surprise of the elected member reflects the views of many advocacy organisations and family groups who feel strongly that we need to get much better at



hearing and responding to people's concerns. We don't need evidence to know that we should do this.

## Summary

- ⌚ In it's fundamentals, person centred planning is a way of helping people to work out what they want, what support they require and then helping them to work out how to get it. It is about life not just services
- ⌚ Person centred planning has its roots in changing philosophies about people with learning disabilities and in better practice in supporting people
- ⌚ Person centred planning is not synonymous with "needs led", "client" or "patient centred" planning or "holistic" assessment
- ⌚ There are five main features of person centred planning. These can be used to test "person centredness"
- ⌚ Different styles can be useful for different purposes and in different circumstances
- ⌚ Though there are some well developed styles, it is vital not to undermine person centred work simply because it does not come under the name of these styles. Remember the goal is better lives
- ⌚ Equally, approaches that are fundamentally not person centred must not be re-labelled or tinkered with and presented as person centred
- ⌚ We need evidence about how to do good person centred planning, not about whether we should do it. This is fundamentally an ethical issue

Person centred planning should not be denied to any groups of people Helen Sanderson and Martin Routledge. With extracts from *People, Plans and Possibilities* by Helen Sanderson, Pete Ritchie, Jo Kennedy and Gill Goodwin. If you want to read more you can order *People, Plans and Possibilities* from [Inclusion Distribution](http://www.inclusiondistribution.co.uk)

