

HOUSING AND CARE FOR THE MOST  
VULNERABLE OLDER PEOPLE. WHAT CAN  
SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS AND OLDER  
PEOPLES' ORGANISATIONS DO TOGETHER?

A RESEARCH PROGRAMME FUNDED BY ORBIT  
CHARITABLE TRUST

PHASE 2 – CREATING FIT FOR PURPOSE ORGANISATIONS

REPORT ON PHASE 2 AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT FOR PHASE TWO	5
DEVELOPING A PERSON CENTRED METHODOLOGY	6
LEARNING TOGETHER: WHAT WORKS	7
KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER	8
COMMUNICATION	9
ORGANISATIONS HAVE TO BE TOTALLY COMMITTED	10
CHANGES DON'T HAVE TO COST THE EARTH	11
WORKING WITH NOT FOR – A POWERFUL PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE	12
PERSON CENTRED WORKING IS THE FUTURE	14
TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OURSELVES AS WE GROW OLDER	15
A NOTE FOR COMMISSIONERS AND FUNDERS	16
CONCLUSIONS	18
RECOMMENDATIONS	19

## INTRODUCTION

The report focuses on the main findings from Phase Two of a research programme funded by Orbit Charitable Trust to investigate the actions that older people's organisations and housing providers could take to better support vulnerable groups of older people. Phase one of the research drew together the issues and concerns being expressed about, by and for older people and also considered the challenges housing and older people's organisations were facing in their work to support particularly vulnerable older people. Phase one began in spring 2010 and ended in summer 2011. Phase Two began in September 2011 and is drawing to an end now in April 2012.

The work for Phase Two began with considering the research proposals agreed by the Expert Panel and Orbit Charitable Trust Trustees. The Trustees wanted the outputs to be practical and members of the Expert Panel shared their opinion. Consequently it was decided that the practical outputs would be aimed at housing organisations and older people's organisations and the purpose would be to help them become fitter for the future.

Central to the notion of becoming fit for the future were two things. First, the need for housing and older people's organisations to grasp the challenges of a growing older society and, second, the need for organisations to modernise and become person centred. We, the research team, were tasked with identifying a suitable methodology in order to carry out the proposals and hopefully deliver the desired outcomes.

The practical outputs from the project were always expected to include a guide or resource pack and a set of practice papers. This short report is an additional extra.

There are eight recommendations arising from the research:

1. Housing and older people's organisations should work more closely and more effectively together
2. Housing and older people's organisations should also work more closely with independent older people led organisations. They have particular expertise that would help housing and older people's organisations to improve their work with older customers, their knowledge about new markets and do better quality assurance
3. Knowledge transfer is an effective way to introduce learning and change and we recommend it provided that care is taken

over choosing organisations and time is allowed to build trust.

4. The tools and methods for doing person centred learning including experiential approaches were tried and tested with demonstration projects. We recommend their use
5. There is a need for housing and older people's organisations to critically review the methods they use to communicate with older people especially people with communication difficulties. Sharing good practice is recommended so all older people can communicate and be communicated with
6. We recommend housing and older people's organisations to look at the small, low cost and no cost but highly important changes they can make in their practice that will help them roll out person centred working
7. Person centred working is to be recommended for ethical and business reasons but organisations have to be serious about it and the investment in change that it will involve
8. We recommend that local authority and health commissioners work differently so they better support the development of person centred services.

*MOYRA RISEBOROUGH, ADRIAN JONES AND STEVE ONGERI.  
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## OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT FOR PHASE TWO

The research for phase two had the following parts.

1. Literature review – updated from a literature review in Phase 1
2. Collaboration with Dimensions (UK) Limited - a leading provider for people with learning disabilities on a journey since 2000 to transform itself into a person centred organisation providing bespoke services. Dimensions worked with the research team to pass on their learning and practice and help us to develop learning materials for a knowledge transfer. Dimensions also helped us critique the methods and approaches we developed.
3. Demonstration projects with Age UK Newcastle, Accord Housing and Age UK Walsall. The demonstration projects worked with the research team to explore routes into learning about person centred working and to test out different exercises and routines adapted from Dimensions and elsewhere.
4. Developing a guide or set of tried and tested resources. The demonstration projects provided the materials for most of the content of the resources pack.
5. A set of practice papers on topical and related subjects. These include:
  - Our experiences of doing a knowledge transfer project
  - Collaborative working between an older people's organisation and a housing organisation to develop new joint services
  - Improving communication with older customers
  - Diversity and its changing meanings in older age
  - Vulnerability and older age
  - Marketing and attracting new customers.

This report reflects on the main findings and key messages, beginning with the methodology developed for the research.

## DEVELOPING A PERSON CENTRED METHODOLOGY

Since we were involved in research to develop person centred learning and practice, it seemed fitting to develop a person centred action research approach. We came up with an approach incorporating elements of co-production, joint enquiry and exploration and co-learning.

The methods we decided on were desk research including a literature review, action research, action learning (also called experiential learning) and knowledge transfer. During the summer of 2011, we approached Dimensions (UK) Limited for permission to use their training and other resource material and to see if they would collaborate with us on a knowledge transfer exchange. We also approached Age UK Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Accord Housing in the midlands to see if they would work with us and be the sites for knowledge transfer demonstrations and exploration. Fortunately, permissions were given and we started the research in September 2011.

Co-production meant that we worked *with* the people in the demonstration projects to develop the learning materials and approaches. We, the research team, adapted training exercises from Dimensions, such as routines to encourage staff to identify with an individual the things the person thinks are important for their life, compared to the things the organisation tends to regard as important. We asked demonstration participants to try out the routines by thinking them through in their working lives. The feedback we were given helped us to make amendments and to work out the approaches that seemed to work best. We also shared learning between the demonstration projects by sharing critical feedback and suggestions for making improvements.

Some exercises and routines did not transfer easily from Dimensions to a housing or older people's organisation or they worked better in parts of an organisation. The people who participated in the demonstration projects worked with us to identify the reasons and this was also part of the co-production of knowledge from the project.

Action research techniques and the rationale that often goes with action learning were very helpful in thinking through what co-production means in practice. This was partly because action research tends to be inspired by a commitment to democratic values and co-working with an organisation or group of people so that they are part

of the research process, are fully informed and have opportunities to implement or practice the research lessons.

IT WAS FITTING TO DEVELOP A METHODOLOGY THAT SUPPORTED PERSON CENTRED THINKING AND WORKING. WE BENEFITED FROM THE EXPERIENCE AND IT TOOK US A FEW STEPS CLOSER TO DOING DEMOCRATIC AND PERSON CENTRED RESEARCH.

## LEARNING TOGETHER: WHAT WORKS

We were conscious of research on how people learn. We knew about active learning or experiential learning, which is sometimes also called 'learning by doing', as opposed to traditional passive forms of learning. The Dimensions (UK) Limited training material is based on a range of inputs using mixed media including short films and role play – a mix of formal and passive and active learning. We wanted to experiment with some of the learning material to see what worked best with people. Some of the material we were working with could have been communicated to people in formal presentations and through hand-outs – passive methods for giving information, but because we were interested in seeing what worked best with people, we broke down the material into different kinds of outputs.

We presented some learning via a formal presentation with a Question and Answer (Q&A) session afterwards. We also used learning material that required participants to think through how they would apply suggestions. Other materials asked participants to test out and explore different ways of doing person centred working. Overall, the learning material that actively involved people was most effective in terms of the impact it made on people. The learning materials people mentioned most, when asked, were exercises that asked them to think through how to do something in a person centred way or challenged their practice. However, it has to be said that we had highly motivated groups of participants so even the most formal presentations resulted in lively Q & A sessions.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IS AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING METHOD. IT IS MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN PEOPLE ARE LEARNING TO DO TASKS DIFFERENTLY AND WHEN REFLECTING ON WHAT PERSON CENTRED WORKING MEANS FOR THEIR PRACTICE.

## KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The knowledge transfer part of the research project was a useful conduit for focusing on the learning and training materials and cultural change approaches developed by Dimensions (UK) Limited. We describe our experiences of devising and working on knowledge transfer in a separate practice paper, but we note a couple of findings here. The first is that if organisations are serious about making changes to introduce person centred working, then knowledge transfer is a useful component. However, it has to be seen as part of a much bigger transformative process, so that the knowledge transfer encompasses cultural change and reinforces it.

A second finding is about the time, processes and resources required to do knowledge transfer properly. Our knowledge transfer project was really an exploratory affair, rather than a full blown project, yet it would not have worked at all if there had not been good relationships between members of the research team and the organisations concerned prior to the research. If the research team had been required to make relationships with organisations we did not know previously, it would have taken a long time to develop the trust necessary to begin working with them.

### TWO FINDINGS

IF ORGANISATIONS ARE SERIOUS ABOUT MAKING CHANGES IN ORDER TO INTRODUCE PERSON CENTRED WORKING THEN KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IS A USEFUL COMPONENT.

ORGANISATIONS THAT WANT TO HARNESS KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PROJECTS AS PART OF THEIR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS PERSON CENTRED WORKING SHOULD IDENTIFY ORGANISATIONS THEY CAN LEARN FROM THAT THEY HAVE GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH. ALTERNATIVELY, THEY NEED TO SPEND TIME LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER AND BUILD A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP.

## COMMUNICATION

Throughout the research programme in Phases One and Two, communication and the need to communicate better with *all* older people was a recurrent theme. The project has provided practical lessons on how to do communication better. We strongly believe that there are no excuses worth mentioning for doing it badly. Most organisations can and should routinely ensure that staff and volunteers use the range of communication methods and aids available, so they can communicate with older people who have communication difficulties and the older people can communicate in return.

A practice paper on the subject describes simple methods and more complicated high tech methods. Simple methods include asking people how they want to be communicated with and how they choose to communicate. Having this intelligence to hand should be a routine part of everyday work with customers.

As the number of older people with communication difficulties grows, housing and older people's organisations have to ensure they are able to communicate with their consumers and potential consumers.

Older people's organisations often lead the way in developing good communication methods and using aids to augment communication. In the demonstration projects, there was good practice on all sides in each organisation. It makes sense for organisations to share their learning and experiences and learn from each other.

## FINDING

THERE IS TREMENDOUS CAPACITY WITHIN SOME HOUSING PROVIDERS AND OLDER PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXISTS ON COMMUNICATING BETTER WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES. IT MAKES SENSE FOR ORGANISATIONS TO SHARE LEARNING ON COMMUNICATION PRACTICE AND MENTOR EACH OTHER.

## ORGANISATIONS HAVE TO BE TOTALLY COMMITTED

### ORGANISATIONS CAN'T DO A LITTLE BIT OF PERSON CENTRED WORKING AND EXPECT IT SPREAD – THERE HAS TO BE FULL SCALE CHANGE

Most texts on doing organisational change successfully emphasise that change can be a big bang or a slow, planned burn. Whatever technique is chosen, there is general agreement amongst management gurus that change doesn't just happen. It has to be led and cultural change across the whole organisation is often painful and takes time. Changing work processes and behaviours take a lot of time and thought. Not surprisingly then, Dimensions (UK) Limited, who started on their journey in 2000 towards becoming person centred, has a great deal to teach other organisations about the change process. Their example – while not perfect (as they indicate in the books about their experiences)<sup>1</sup> provides insights into how much time organisations have to invest in change.

The demonstration projects involved organisations that are already committed to person centred working. It would not have been possible to fully engage people in exploring different techniques and potential changes in their practice without that commitment. It meant that the learning gained through the demonstration projects was part of a bigger narrative and had somewhere to go – in the case of the

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<sup>1</sup> See making it Personal. A Providers Journey from Tradition to Transformation (2010) and, Making it Personal for Everyone: From Block Contracts Towards Individual Service Funds (2011) by Dimensions CEO Steve Scown writing with Helen Sanderson.

demonstration projects there was a bigger story about person centred working and a commitment to improving personal practice.

It is tempting as we all know to avoid new challenges when times are tough but the organisations we worked with Dimensions (UK) Limited, Accord Housing and Age UK Walsall and Age UK Newcastle are prepared to continue to meet new challenges and continue with person centred working.

## FINDING

PERSON CENTRED WORKING IS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT FULL SCALE ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE TO SUPPORT AND DRIVE IT. THE CHANGES HAVE TO INCORPORATE CHANGES IN STAFF AND VOLUNTEER'S PERSONAL PRACTICE.

## CHANGES DON'T HAVE TO COST THE EARTH

At a Housing Learning and Improvement event in April 2012, some housing providers commented that although person centred working is the way to go, it is in fact a luxury. In the face of public cuts for the services they run, it is now inconceivable that they can introduce bespoke services and fund a huge change programme.

People involved in the demonstration projects highlighted the fact that organisations cannot do a little bit of person centred working for some services and carry on with traditional services. The old style service would dominate. The whole culture has to be transformed. Yet the demonstration projects also illustrated that all changes don't have to cost the earth – small but meaningful changes can be made to promote the self determination of customers and support them to make informed choices.

A good example concerns staff working in an Accord residential care home, who noticed that they could make simple changes to give residents more choice and control over their lives. Changes included involving catering staff in discussions with residents about their likes and dislikes and the changes they would like to see, so they can have more variety and choice over when they eat or drink. Other changes included care staff spending a little time with service users to work out with the person how she or he wants to be bathed or dressed, including working with the person so she or he can put some clothes

on alone, or bathe on their own if they choose, with support if they want it.

Personal profiles for staff, volunteers and users, which we talk about in the resources collection, are other examples where changes can be made for relatively low cost but the benefits for staff, volunteers, service users and relatives are potentially huge. For staff, personal profiles give them the opportunity to say something more about themselves as individuals and to describe their qualities and skills. In this way, staff can be more personal and they can move away from the old-style distant behaviour or objectivity which used to be seen as being 'professional'. In modern, person centred practice, this kind of behaviour is out of place. For volunteers, personal profiles offer them the opportunity to say more about themselves than their qualifications and work skills. It makes it easier to match their interests and skills to those of an older person looking for support or friendship.

#### **FINDING**

ALL PERSON CENTRED CHANGES DON'T HAVE TO COST THE EARTH.  
SMALL CHANGES THAT COST LITTLE OR NOTHING ARE HIGHLY  
EFFECTIVE.

## **WORKING WITH, NOT FOR – A POWERFUL PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE**

Amongst the learning we adapted and explored with the demonstration projects were the Dimensions (UK) Limited 'working with not for' training and practice routine. Working with, not for, is used in Dimensions partly to make sure staff are taking on board the things that are most important to the customer as an individual in everything they do with the customer and partly to reflect on their own practice and improve it. Working with, not for, is in this way more than a work routine. It becomes part of "the way we do things around here" – in other words it becomes embedded in the everyday culture of the organisation - so it is very powerful.

We found that we could develop a working with not for exercise that got people thinking. It was especially useful for enabling participants to consider their practice and thinking and for working out how they could make changes in the way they worked to give more control to the

individual customer. For example, if someone is able to put their own socks on, or to make telephone calls, then the people who support them should encourage and support individuals to do the things they can do – rather than take control away from them.

The challenges include being ready to work through the options with:

- Customers who don't want to do things for themselves
- Customers who have grown used to being dependent and expect to go on being dependent
- Staff (paid and unpaid) and relatives who think they are being 'kind' or helpful.

The exercises we used involved very little in the way of resources, although the implications from changing practice and thinking in this way clearly have to be part of a process for change and learning. The organisation typically has to have in place processes to take on board changes in the way organisational learning is done, including bottom up learning. We think that in this way organisations can best capture the experiential learning of the kind we facilitated with the demonstration projects which develops greater self-determination and reflection amongst staff.

Some of the work we did with customer service staff and volunteers in Age UK Newcastle underlined how the working with not for routine caused them to be reflective and check their own practice. One member of staff noted that:

*"We have to be clear at the start with people – this is how we will work with you. We don't have to be any less empathetic or caring but it is different. It will take some time for us and the older people who use our service to get used to it"*

A member of the Accord staff was struck by the subtleties of the change in her thinking and what it could mean in practice:

*"We do ask people what they want and we encourage people to do things themselves but this is different – it means we have to say to people this is what we will do right at the start and it's so we will help you to do what you can for as long as you can and they know what to expect".*

## **FINDING**

**DOING WITH NOT FOR IS A VERY POWERFUL PHILOSOPHY AND TOOL FOR CHANGING PRACTICE TOWARDS PERSON CENTRED WORKING.**

## PERSON CENTRED WORKING *IS* THE FUTURE

The Expert Panel who guided the research programme includes individuals who are very committed to person centred working and have an eye on the human consequences of not working in this way. Expert Panel members are also involved as board members of housing associations and older people's organisations so they are mindful of the present tough funding climate and the impact on 'business' futures. They are in no doubt that good business practice involves working with the customer to deliver the services they want and person centred working is the way to work better with customers.

Throughout the research programme, we tested out ideas about person centred working and what they mean in practice. As we have said, working with not for people and supporting people to do what they can to help themselves are central to person centred working, but these ways of thinking when translated into practice are not necessarily what some customers want. On the other hand, by continuing to do things for people, organisations are arguably preventing older customers from learning to develop their knowledge or retain capacity and they are not helping them have control over their lives.

The demonstration projects suggest that person centred working has the capacity to provide different kinds of services that make public money and social time, including the investment from volunteering, go further. The changes involved have huge implications for the way organisations use resources and for their everyday practice. Theoretically, more can be achieved as a result, because resources can be concentrated on the minority of older people who really need a lot of support while the majority of people who can help themselves receive the right kind of support and information on the things they are seeking advice and information on, so they can make the decisions they choose.

The growth of self-funders and changing experiences of older age have also brought new opportunities. Housing and older people's organisations are in a good position to take advantage of these business opportunities. The intelligence on the older consumer is that consumers are becoming more discerning and sophisticated. They are highly diverse and want different things. Bespoke rather than traditional, and individual rather than block contracting approaches work best.

## THE MAIN FINDING

PERSON CENTRED WORKING MAKES ETHICAL AND BUSINESS SENSE.  
THERE IS THE CAPACITY TO MAKE THE PUBLIC POUND AND SOCIAL  
INVESTMENT GO FURTHER BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE, DOING PERSON  
CENTRED WORKING IS NOT WHAT ALL CUSTOMERS WANT.

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OURSELVES AS WE GROW OLDER

During Phase One of the research, older people who participated in the Big Conversations we held<sup>2</sup> talked about their experiences of growing older and what they wanted from housing and older people's organisations to enable them to live their lives. One of the threads of conversation which emerged in different Conversations was how little discussion there is in everyday life on getting ready for the older life. Changing perceptions about older life and actual experiences of better health and better living conditions have brought different ways of thinking about older age. It isn't by any means all gloom and doom and people don't necessarily experience later life as a downward spiral.

Walsall Older People's group in the Big Conversation in Birmingham were very clear that they wanted to have control over their lives for as long as possible and they welcomed opportunities to talk about later life provided that the organisations who were seeking their views listened to them. They also acknowledged that older people have to take responsibility for their lives as well.

The same theme was echoed by members of Newcastle Elders Council who have amongst other things contributed a great deal to knowledge on age friendly communities and regularly participate in City wide decisions about services and plans. Quotes from discussions at the Big Conversations underline the key points older people made and had to keep on making. It was striking how hard they had to work to really engage the interest of housing providers:

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<sup>2</sup> Big Conversations were held with housing providers, older people's organisations and groups of older people in York, Birmingham and London in 2011.

*"WE COULD DO WITH A ROUGH GUIDE TO OLDER AGE – SO WE CAN BETTER UNDERSTAND AND PASS ON WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT."*

*"ULTIMATELY WE HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OURSELVES AND MOST PEOPLE ACCEPT THAT."*

*"IT WOULD BE MUCH EASIER IF ORGANISATIONS WOULD LISTEN TO WHAT WE SAY. IT IS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE TO GET THEM TO HEAR – REALLY HEAR. THEY STILL TEND TO THINK THEY KNOW BEST – AND THEY DON'T."*

Older people acknowledge that they are part of the solution organisations are looking for when they develop new services or look for new markets. The trick is to acknowledge that ageing is complex, it isn't linear and different groups of older people experience ageing differently.

The Big Conversations and our work with the demonstration projects underlined the need for better dialogue between housing and older people's organisations and older people, particularly *older people led groups* like Newcastle Elders Council and Walsall Older People's group. They have a wealth of knowledge to bring to critiquing and commenting on services and plans for the future – why not use them?

## **A KEY FINDING FROM PHASE 1**

**OLDER PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS AND HOUSING PROVIDERS SHOULD WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH OLDER PEOPLE LED GROUPS TO DEVELOP BETTER DIALOGUE AND INVOLVE THEM IN IMPROVING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE.**

## **A NOTE FOR COMMISSIONERS AND FUNDERS**

The organisations that worked with us during the research, including the demonstration projects, pointed out that local commissioners often talk about person centred working or personalisation, but their actions don't match the words. Driving down costs and seeking ever more competitive bids in response to tightly prescribed tender documents

are taking organisations back to the bad old days. Attention to cost alone is against the spirit and practice of organisations working with commissioners to design and explore true person centred support. Some commissioners are listening to providers who are prepared to work in partnership with them, but a large scale change of heart is needed to prevent a drift back to old style mass contracting, where people are mere widgets in a machine.

Housing and support organisations, including older people's organisations that deliver care and support, described to us how hard it is to deliver a modicum of dignity to the people they support, when contracts specify funds to cover the costs of a worker for a ten minute 'pop in' which means there is only time to make someone a sandwich or take them to the toilet.

There is another way – commissioners can and should be talking to providers about the services they can provide for a given cost, and they should be listening to providers who are prepared to use their capacity and imagination to deliver person centred services for a given cost – without the tight specifications, but still with safeguards and good contract monitoring arrangements.

Housing and older people's organisations could also use their power and influence more to reshape cultures locally with commissioners and to lead on practice and demonstration projects. A Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) meeting in the Midlands, mentioned earlier in the report, included local commissioners prepared to discuss and consider commissioning practice with housing and support providers. This demonstrates that there **are** opportunities at local levels to change practice.

## FINDING

COMMISSIONING PRACTICE CURRENTLY WORKS AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSON CENTRED WORKING BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY. THERE IS SCOPE FOR IMAGINATIVE RETHINKING AND CO-WORKING BETWEEN PROVIDERS AND COMMISSIONERS. THE HOUSING LIN WHICH OPERATES IN MOST REGIONS IN ENGLAND CAN HELP BRING CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research programme for Orbit Charitable Trust touched on some of the most important and topical issues affecting older people and housing and older people's organisations. It identified ways that organisations can work better together and, of course, our recommendations from the evidence are that housing and older people's organisations should work more closely and more effectively together.

The research also explored and tested practical and helpful methods for learning about person centred working that makes sense for housing organisations and older people's organisations. Not surprisingly, the research indicates that the methods we explored and tested should be used by other organisations who are serious about learning how to do person centred working.

However, the report and other outputs from the research programme make it clear that person centred working is not an optional extra. It is either part of a complete change in how an organisation relates to the world, its staff and volunteers and its customers or it doesn't mean a thing. Old cultures and old ways of doing things will swamp new ideas unless there is a root and branch change. Yet not doing person centred working does not make good business sense – organisations therefore have to decide what they want to do.

Our modest research on knowledge transfer with the demonstration projects shows that knowledge transfer is a useful method for making the transition to being a person centred organisation, but it is a waste of time unless organisations are serious. Knowledge transfer projects also need a lot of time and effort to run and bed in and we could certainly have done with more time.

Colleagues in the demonstration projects provided many of the resources and the logistics to make things happen. So we know that co-production worked and it was helped along by having good relationships with the organisations concerned beforehand. As a result, we think that demonstration projects involving knowledge transfer are a good thing – they are useful and work well provided everyone concerned is prepared to put the effort in and therefore we would recommend them.

Most importantly we found that doing person centred work is not the same as pleasing the customer – there are dilemmas and challenges for organisations and there is no easy one off answer. Each organisation needs to explore the dilemmas and challenges for themselves. It was helpful for us to have different organisations involved in the research with us who were prepared to comment on

their learning and explore how they would apply person centred working in practice. Having a basis for comparison was useful for us but it also meant we could share information between the organisations and they could to a certain extent learn from each other. Looking back it would have been more effective if we could have brought both organisations together several times to reflect on learning and practice either in person or virtually.

Finally the research for phase two was ambitious. Were the objectives met? By and large they were, although we could have learned and achieved more if the timescale were longer. Have we added much to learning and practice on doing person centred working? We think we have made contribution to learning on the subject and we have produced some practical outputs as we were asked to do that were tested on the ground.

We are indebted to Dimensions (UK) Limited for working with us and to Orbit Charitable Trust for giving us the opportunity to investigate such a topical area of study. We are also deeply grateful to the organisations and the people who worked with us throughout.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Housing and older people's organisations should work more closely and more effectively together
- Housing and older people's organisations should also work more closely with independent older people led organisations. They have particular expertise that would help housing and older people's organisations to improve their work with older customers, their knowledge about new markets and do better quality assurance
- Knowledge transfer is an effective way to introduce learning and change and we recommend it provided that care is taken over choosing organisations and time is allowed to build trust.
- The tools and methods for doing person centred learning including experiential approaches were tried and tested with demonstration projects. We recommend their use
- There is a need for housing and older people's organisations to critically review the methods they use to communicate with older people especially people with communication difficulties. Sharing good practice is recommended so all older people can

communicate and be communicated with

- We recommend housing and older people's organisations to look at the small, low cost and no cost but highly important changes they can make in their practice that will help them roll out person centred working
- Person centred working is to be recommended for ethical and business reasons but organisations have to be serious about it and the investment in change that it will involve
- We recommend that local authority and health commissioners work differently so they better support the development of person centred services.