

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

BECOMING PERSON CENTRED: PRACTICAL RESOURCES
FOR OLDER PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS AND HOUSING
ORGANISATIONS

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FOREWORD

Orbit Charitable Trust (OCT) was formed in 1989 to be the charitable arm of the Orbit Group. Although the Group has changed much since that time, we continue to work together to improve the lives of the most vulnerable in society.



The aim of OCT is to support vulnerable and marginalised individuals and communities in order to sustain their well-being and quality of life. We have done this through the provision of grants, the telephone alarm service, working partnerships and by supporting other agencies.

OCT looks to reach all vulnerable groups – however the nation is getting older and need better prevention action and earlier care. The poorest areas, too often with the poorest health and the poorest care, are hard to reach and, at OCT, we are committed to address this.

We decided in 2010 that, as part of our work, we would commission fresh research that would offer practical solutions to enable organisations to improve service delivery and thus enhance the lives of vulnerable older people. This was a major step for us and it has been an interesting journey over the last 18 months.

Two reports, available on our website (www.orbit-trust.org.uk), outline how the research was carried out and the conclusions that the team, led by Moyra Riseborough, reached. This Resource Pack turns the research findings into a step-by-step guide for social housing providers and other organisations offering services to older people to test whether they are fit for purpose and delivering what their clients need and want.

We hope that you will find the guide useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'David Huckler'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a thick black horizontal line.

DAVID HUCKER
TRUST CHAIRMAN

INTRODUCTION

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE RESOURCES

Phase 1 of the research concentrated on talking to older people, older people's organisations and housing organisations to find out what they thought they could do to work better together. It was clear from the Big Conversations held in Phase 1 that housing organisations and organisations for older people could improve their practice by working with older people led organisations. This is particularly true for customer engagement. One of the suggestions was that if housing and older people's organisations are serious about improving their customer responsiveness they should engage with local older people's forums, such as Newcastle Elders Council or Walsall Older People's Forum for independent and feisty critiques.

Organisations can also learn from each other, for example by sharing practice or learning together. A good example for joint learning is developing person centred practice.

We, the research team, believe that being person centred enables an organisation to become age friendly – the twin ideas are mutually supportive and they underpin the whole philosophy of the work on the resources pack. Our conviction is supported by the Expert Panel who came together to guide the research and who at the end of Phase 1 of our work strongly favoured a practical project for the next phase, particularly one that focused on person centred working. Their preference was driven by a commitment to person centred thinking and working and by the knowledge that it made good business sense.

From the business perspective, there are more self-funders able to pay for all or some of the support and other services they want and a slow increase in the number of older people with individual budgets. Other services people want include gardening and domestic help and housing and older people's organisations are well placed to do this as trustworthy providers. Consumer expectations are changing too. People expect better services that are tailored to them as individuals and this is likely to become more common as the older population grows. Morally and ethically, everyone agreed that being person centred is the right thing to do and produces better outcomes for individuals.

Consequently the research in Phase 2 involved looking at some of the best examples of person centred working with Dimensions (UK) Limited and developing methods to transfer and adapt their knowledge and learning to demonstration projects focusing on older people. The demonstration projects were with workers, volunteers and some service users from Age UK Newcastle, Age UK Walsall and Accord

Housing. Phase 2 also involved researching complementary subjects, for example, the collaborative relationship that has been developed between Accord and Age UK Walsall and the lessons for housing and older people's organisations. The demonstration work was part of an action research programme and was carried out between September 2011 and April 2012.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BEING PERSON CENTRED?

The Department of Health defined person centred in health as:

“Activities that are based on what is important to a person from their own perspective” (DH 2001).

The Standards We Expect project carried out for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that person centred was more dynamic and personal saying that:

“It's not another job, it's the job. Person centred support is not another thing you have to do, it is what you have got to do”. (Practitioner quote in Findings, Standards We Expect, May 2011).

VALUES

Above all person centred working and thinking is based on a set of values, such as:

- Putting the person at the centre so services are designed to fit her or him rather than the other way around
- Treating people as individuals
- Making sure people actually have choice and control over the service/s
- Co-setting goals that people want to achieve from their support
- Emphasising the relationship between service users and practitioners
- Listening to customers and acting on their feedback
- Providing accurate information that is easy to access on appropriate services
- Being flexible
- Being positive and focusing on what service users can rather than cannot do.

BEING AGE FRIENDLY

The World Health Organisation provides the best definition of an age friendly community, in our view, saying that it is one in which service providers, public officials, community leaders, faith leaders, business people and citizens recognise older people's diversity, promote their inclusion and contribution to all areas of life, respect their decisions and lifestyle choices and anticipate and respond flexibly to ageing related needs and preferences.¹

HARD TO DISAGREE WITH DEFINITIONS YET...

It is hard to find fault with the definitions about being person centred and many organisations say something very similar when they acknowledge the need to work towards being person centred and or being older people friendly organisations. It is harder in real life though to change cultures and transform practice especially when organisations rely on a substantial amount of block contracting and have to, at least for a time, run old-style services along with bespoke person centred services. The present context, whereby local authority commissioners have reduced funds for services, is noted by people working in housing and support. According to one spokesperson, local authorities his organisations works with "have gone backwards in terms of their willingness to fund and commission person centred services" (a quote from a housing and support provider at a Housing Lin event, April 2012).²

The reality is that housing organisations and older people's organisations are working in challenging times, yet becoming person centred is still on their agendas.

ABOUT THE RESOURCES

The resource material in this pack were adapted or developed from other work by the research team. Most were adapted from original work by Dimensions (UK) Limited, whose staff in the north east region, particularly Regional Operations Manager Nick Ball, worked with us to pass on their knowledge and practice (see a practice paper on the knowledge transfer process for more³). Some material originally came

¹ See Towards More Age Friendly Cities: The Who Guide 2007.

² This quote was echoed by a number of people in the audience. Housing Lin event, March 2012, West Midlands

³ Riseborough M (2102) Knowledge Transfer: Learning from the Demonstration Projects. Practice paper 5.

from previous research and practice by members of the research team and or the Expert Panel who advised us in the research. We also included other resources which we found useful and some references to further reading.

We, the research team, took all the resources mentioned and developed and tested them with Age UK Newcastle and with Age UK Walsall and Accord in the midlands.

We also tested out different ways to deliver the training and learning materials. Workshops and democratic co production were key to this and we have therefore given some information on the way we devised the workshops and provided copies of the programmes.

We are very grateful for the assistance we received to set up the projects and to deliver the workshops. Accord, Age UK Walsall and Age UK Newcastle have reported that they found the techniques and ways of working we developed and tested with them were useful and they are in the process of applying most of them.

We hope you find the resources useful and we hope you give us your feedback so we can add to them and improve them.

THANKS

A big thank you to the members of the Orbit Charitable Trust Expert Panel for their comments, support and guidance throughout. Many thanks also to everyone who participated in the demonstration projects and made them possible especially Lynn Johnston and Kaye Turner, Maureen Bradley and Kim Yates, Davina Lytton and Dimensions (UK) Limited, Nick Ball.

MOYRA RISEBOROUGH, ADRIAN JONES AND STEVE ONGERI.

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THE WORKSHOPS

At the start we did some desk research looking at the training material Dimensions (UK) Limited produced, to see if it was relevant and potentially transferable to older people's organisations and housing organisations. We already knew about the work Dimensions (UK) Limited does and this helped a lot. For example, we were aware that Dimensions has been leading thinking and practice on person centred working and that the organisation began a process of transformation in order to become a person centred organisation for adults with learning disabilities in 2001. We were also able to call on the expertise of David Wolverson, Dimensions' former Chief Executive, who is a member of the research programme's Expert Panel.

We explored a set of techniques and methods that would support people in the organisations we were planning to work with, both of whom are committed to taking person centred working forward. It was important to us that we identified methods for learning and research that would work together so we could do action research and support people to learn at the same time or at least sometimes. We also wanted to work in open democratic ways because this is consistent with our preferred way of working and because people were willing to enter into a trusting relationship with us, so we wanted to make everything we did open to them.

Workshops provided a useful framework for us and 'workshopping' in the sense of providing a space and time for people to test out, share and reflect on ideas and tools became the chief way we all came together to work. We also communicated in other ways through telephone and email conversations and by commenting on documents and areas of practice. For example, the publicity Accord produces about each of its specialist housing schemes or residential care home and the training material that Age UK Newcastle uses for training customer service staff.

WORKSHOPS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES WITH AGE UK NEWCASTLE

With colleagues from Dimensions (UK) Limited, we planned and then ran a workshop with Age UK Newcastle's Senior Management Team in October 2011. Before the workshop participants were asked to complete a Progress for Providers assessment (see the references shown in the next few pages). This helped Age UK Newcastle to get an overall view about where the organisation was, vis-a-vis personalisation. The results which were collated later on showed that progress was patchy. This came as no surprise to the Senior Management Team.

The workshop drew heavily on training material developed for Dimensions and on change management work the organisation had developed. The Age UK Senior Management Team was interested in both the processes Dimensions used to transform itself into a person centred organisation *and* practice changes involving staff and customers. It was very helpful to have Nick Ball, Regional Operations Manager for Dimensions (UK) Limited, on hand, because he could explain the strategic and organisational changes as well as the practice changes. There was a lively exchange of views and the Senior Management team were introduced to most of the key tools and routines Dimensions use. We later went on to adapt and change the tools and routines.

After the workshop, Age UK Newcastle Senior Management team decided that they wanted to us to concentrate on working with their new customer service team. However, the organisation was in the early stages of working out the person specifications and restructuring was going on. This included offering existing staff the opportunity to apply for jobs in the new structure. The process went on for longer than anticipated and it wasn't possible to hold a workshop with staff and volunteers until April 2012. Copies of the programmes for the workshops and write ups from both are shown on the research pages on the website – go to www.orbit-trust.org.uk/research-project.

In between the workshops we carried out other activities including considering the training material for the customer service team to assess if it was person centred. A number of proposed ways of working and changes were suggested as a result and they were tried out and tested with staff and a volunteer in the April 2012 workshop.

WORKSHOPS WITH ACCORD HOUSING AND AGE UK WALSALL

Three workshops were organised with Accord housing and care staff and with the Chief Executive of Age UK Walsall Davina Lytton. A cross section of staff was involved from Accord including reception staff and care staff, catering and domestic staff and managers. Operational staff came from a residential care home in Telford and from an extra care scheme in Pelsall near Walsall. Some tenants from the extra care scheme also participated and one of the tenants continued to be involved by participating in a second workshop (the final one).

The first workshop was the first time these members of staff had all met together and the staff commented on how much they enjoyed being able to meet each other and visit each other's place of work. In the first workshop we explored person centred thinking and working with the participants and presented some of the thinking and tools

used by Dimensions. We also introduced the Progress for Providers checklist and considered how the materials we were presenting could be made relevant to Accord and Age UK Walsall staff and customers.

Over the next two workshops we asked participants to do some observations of their practice and to consider how they could change some of the things they did so that their practice was more person centred. We also talked about possibly using web cams or photographs to demonstrate what members of staff meant but it wasn't feasible to do this and the idea was abandoned.

The participants tried out and reflected on the tools we presented. Some of the exercises we devised to do this worked better than others. Lighter touch exercises and exercises that involved people thinking through a set of ideas so they explored their meaning and experienced them worked much better than those where we talked at people or only gave information. Short bursts of information and experiential learning were a good combination and most staff liked a structured approach but one where they had a lot of input.

The programmes from these workshops and the notes written after each workshop are also on the research pages website.

CHECKLISTS

CHECKLIST 1: WHAT ARE YOU AIMING FOR?

IDENTIFYING THE OLDER PEOPLE FRIENDLY AND PERSON CENTRED ORGANISATION

This checklist came out of work developed in Phase 1 and covers all the areas that older people say are important to them, support and promote their interests and indicate that an organisation is taking older people and person centred working seriously. We suggest that organisations use the checklist to identify areas where they can make improvements so they can develop a plan for the future.

GOVERNANCE

- Older people represented on board
- Sub- committee on ageing issues

HOUSING STOCK

- Housing designed to be accessible for residents and visitors
- Housing designed to Lifetime Homes Standard
- External environment accessible
- External environment designed to be dementia friendly

ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTING OR USED BY OLDER PEOPLE

- Age UK/ Age Concern
- Elderly Accommodation Counsel
- First Stop

COMMUNICATION

- Write for customers
- Communications delivered in older people's chosen media
- Written communications easy to read and reflect customers' likes
- Develop specific processes for listening to, recording and reviewing what people say they want
- Learn to use and record the ways in which people prefer to communicate
- Ensure that staff know what is important to individual older people
- Recognise the diversity of older people
- Make certain that customers know what staff do

SPECIFIC TRAINING FOR ALL STAFF

- All staff understand the principles of person centred communication

FEEDBACK

- Obtain, analyse and make use of customer feedback
- Specifically analyse what older people think works well and what doesn't work

INDIVIDUALS / COMMUNITY

- Recognise older people as individual consumers
- Recognise what is important to individuals
- Acknowledge the contributions that individual older people can make
- Enhance community and informal supports

CHECKLIST 2: IS YOUR ORGANISATION READY?

Checklist 2 (the Progress for Providers⁴ checklist) is concerned with working out what stage an organisation has reached. The demonstration projects used the checklist at the start to work out their base line and assess how much progress they were making towards personalisation. Dimensions (UK) Limited staff use the tool regularly both at an organisational level and as individuals. See for example the self-assessment report Steve Scown and Helen Sanderson give for Dimensions (UK) Limited in 2010 (page 63, Scown and Sanderson 2010).

The demonstration projects found that the Progress for Providers tool helped senior staff reach a cross organisational view and although the tool has some shortcomings the benefits mean it is worth using.

To download the tool, go to www.progressforproviders.org

⁴ Progress for Providers: A self-assessment tool for providers focused on delivering Individual Service Funds.

CHALLENGING PRACTICE: ADVICE AND INFORMATION

The demonstration project with Age UK Newcastle focused on customer services part of which also involves delivering an information and advice service. As part of the action research the research team looked at the principles that the organisation currently draws on to deliver its information and advice service and adapted them to be in line with person centred thinking and working. This work also drew on a recently completed review of the advice and information service.⁵

We followed the maxims practiced by Dimensions and in the Standards We Expect project (JRF 2011) about focusing on the things people can do rather than those they can't. Also on the idea that by not enabling people to learn on the grounds of helping people or being kind means they are being prevented from being adults. The end results were that we made some subtle changes to principles with the emphasis on 'doing with not for'.

We think the principles have a wider application and are relevant for many services.

PRINCIPLES OF BEING PERSON CENTRED IN CUSTOMER SERVICES AND ADVICE AND INFORMATION

- Enabling someone to tell her or his story in their own words and **valuing that** story – not translating it into something else
- Standing back and enabling rather than doing for
- Working with not for
- Working with her or him to identify the things that **the customers thinks** they want to resolve or understand or find the answer to if this is possible
- Working with the customer to identify pathways including information and other organisations that fit or shed light on the above
- Encouraging the customer to look at information sources – get familiar with them – even if it's the first time they have ever

⁵ Moyra Riseborough was commissioned by Age UK Newcastle's to review their advice and information services in 2011.

seen a website or a fact sheet

- Working out what the person can do for themselves and what they may need more information or advice in order to do – identifying those organisations that someone might visit or contact as well for more assistance or information
- Working with the customer to develop a priority list of things that the person might think about doing first (if this is appropriate).
- Working out an action plan the person is comfortable with and a loose timetable
- Encouraging the person to follow through – use information again – follow up potential links to other organisations, return to see you if they want to so they can report on their progress.

FIRST ENQUIRIES, PROMPTS AND SCRIPTS

Part of the work with Age UK Newcastle involved thinking about the way they currently deal with first enquiries – what is used now in the way of prompts, scripts and ways of behaving with the public and others. This work added to training scenarios developed by Age UK Newcastle.

PHILOSOPHY

The underlying philosophy is person centred thinking and working. Therefore the role of the member of staff (paid or unpaid) is to facilitate, encourage and enable the person to identify what it is he or she wants to know or resolve. Also to enable people to understand the information that is available to help them. Show people that they can come and use information if they want to.

You should signpost people if necessary to other sources of information and ensure customers have the information they need so the customer can take the next steps.

The customer should always be encouraged to take the next steps. You can opt to help her or him to make the call or write the letter but do not do it for them unless there are very good reasons.

WHY ARE WE DOING IT THIS WAY?

Learning theory - the way we all take in information and learn – indicates that human beings take in new information and learn if we do it by using more than one method – so by listening looking and doing and, we learn even better if we 'discover' things for ourselves. The experience of discovery also makes us more willing to look again when we need to find out something next time.

We are also using this method though because we want to encourage and empower people to help themselves if they can.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A NAME

Many people say they like to know who they are talking to and it is considered to be courteous to say who you are.

KEY INTRODUCTION PROMPTS

Hello my name is what can I do for you?

Hello my name isare you looking for that service for you or someone else?

SECOND PROMPTS

OK, I can go through some information with you now – do you have a bit of time to do that?

I can give you some basic information now on the phone. Is that OK with you? How are you for time?

I can go through some options and choices with you. Do you have a computer – we could go through the information together if you do. Or we can talk on the phone. What do you want to do?

THIRD PROMPTS

WHEN ENCOURAGING SOMEONE TO TELL THE STORY IN THEIR OWN WORDS, USE 'TELL ME' PROMPTS (USED IN NARRATIVE RESEARCH):

Tell me that in your own words

And

Tell me more about that.

WRITING UP AND GIVING THE CUSTOMER A RECORD OF THE CONVERSATION

PROMPTS

I am going to write up what we have been talking about. OK, so to recap, the main things you came in about were:

Let's list them

ACTIONS

You have a few things to do as a result and they are:

List

I said I would do a few things and they are:

List

NEXT STEPS

Is there anything else you want to talk about? Do you want my help with anything else?

Ok so I will write in the date and remind you of my name. I will send/email or give you a copy of our conversation now.

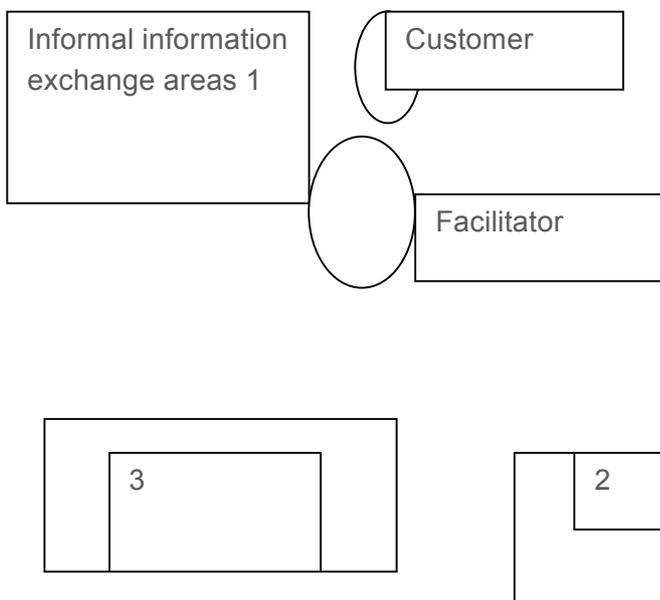
DEMOCRATIC AND SIDE BY SIDE WORKING

In some research work just before the demonstration projects for a First Stop pilot⁶ in Newcastle upon Tyne, some ideas were explored with housing advisers including officers working in housing providers, CAB, Shelter and Age UK Newcastle advisers. Ideas included showing customers the information that the adviser was using by turning their computer screens and laptops around so the customer could read them. This means that an adviser sat beside customers and gave them the opportunity to explore where information is kept about particular subjects and how to access the information. As a result, customers have the opportunity to help themselves and become part of the discussion instead of being passive recipients.

⁶ See Riseborough (2011) Rethinking housing information and advice for older people. Newcastle Quality of Life Partnership and Newcastle Elders Council for First Stop.

Age UK Newcastle also has a very good online information resource especially aimed at older people, called NOW Newcastle Older People's Website. Part of the First Stop work involved encouraging more people - advisers and older people - to use the information for themselves. Democratic working was successful and the Age UK and volunteers are keen to implement it.

USING SPACE AND SIDE BY SIDE WORKING



What can I do for you?

OK so you want to know about Is that right?

Let's look at some information that might give you some answers

Sit next to me and we can look at the information together.

Is this taking you closer to what you want to know or find out?

What else can I do for you?
Let's work it out together

OK I am going to write up what we have talked about so you don't forget. Do you mind if I keep this on the computer as a record? It means that if you want to contact me or anyone else here you won't have to start at the beginning again.

RECORDING ENQUIRIES AND ACTIONS

DRAFT TEMPLATE

YOUR VISIT/TELEPHONE CONTACT: NOTE OF KEY POINTS AND ACTIONS TODAY

Date

You talked to

YOUR ENQUIRY

Was about

ACTIONS

You are going to do these things:

I am going to do these things:

NEXT STEPS

AN IDEAL CUSTOMER JOURNEY IN A PERSON CENTRED ORGANISATION

The demonstration projects provided an opportunity for staff and volunteers to think about the 'journey' they want customers to have and how this would be different in a person centred organisation. There are many similarities in the views expressed by people from both organisations despite the differences in the work that each organisation does.

THE AIM

Above all the aim is to ensure that the outcome is a satisfactory one for customers so they are satisfied with the service and their experience of this even if this did not produce the answer the customer was looking for.

BEING PERSON CENTRED

Having a person centred approach means that staff and volunteers are more conscious and aware of the way they communicate and actively enable and facilitate customers.

Doing with rather than doing for is the key difference in behaviour. Doing with carries a risk – some customers may not want to do anything but being person centred means that customers are expected to do some things.

Encouraging customers to express their views and be active rather than passive and to be informed rather than uniformed are key objectives for staff and volunteers.

STEPPING TO A SATISFACTORY OUTCOME

We can break down the steps leading to a satisfactory outcome for a customer. For example, the steps below represent a customer's journey in an advice and information situation, but most of the steps would be relevant for customers in any setting:

1. Listening - encouraging and supporting customers to express their requirements from the service and person/s involved
2. Reflecting back to the customer to ensure that their views are understood by the member of staff/volunteer

3. Communicating options – having a conversation about the customer's requirements and the options available.
4. Explaining options and actions and encouraging the customer to make choices. Having considered the options the customer makes a selection. A number of actions will follow from any decision in order to make things happen. The member of staff or volunteer discusses the actions with the customer.
5. The customer and the member of staff make an action plan. The plan will identify who is going to do what task by when. (Note - the customer will have some actions to do.)
6. The plan is agreed by both staff and the customer and each have a copy.
7. Each carry out the tasks/actions as agreed. For example, phone calls or talking to relatives.
8. Check on progress. The member of staff and customer check with each other to see how much progress is being made and adjustments are made by the customer and staff/volunteers accordingly. Changes are made to the action plan and the timings.
9. Review. The member of staff or volunteer reviews the situation and the action plan with the customer. Together they consider the options and decide what to do next. For example, a new action plan may be made or the customer may decide to conclude matters.
10. Good outcome.

APPLYING PERSON CENTRED WORKING AND REFLECTION

Older people's organisations and housing providers can do a variety of things to apply person centred working. An important tool to encourage all of us to think about individual customers and make sure our practice reflects this is to ask how someone wants to be supported. Central to this are the important people in their lives and the events and experiences that shape people's lives.

Dimensions (UK) Limited UK calls these things:

- The circle of support
- My personal history

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

Circles of support are dependent on the situation and may involve different people for different activities. The results are more dynamic and helpful for customers, their friends and relatives and staff and volunteers who may work with them compared to the fairly standard 'next of kin' or "who would you like to be contacted in emergency" enquiries used by most organisations.

HOW TO START

Start by drawing a series of circles with the customer and call each circle a different activity. For example, domestic, leisure, financial arrangements, health and well-being. The customer has to be at the centre of each circle. Key questions to ask are:

DOMESTIC

- Who usually helps with your big shopping if you need help?
- Who do you usually ask to help with small bits of shopping?
- Who do you ask to help if you need help to move something in the house/flat or your room?
- Who would you ask for help with your spring cleaning or heavy cleaning?
- Who would you ask for help with every day tidying and cleaning?
- Who would you ask for help with changing a light bulb or a fuse?
- Are there other things that you sometimes ask people to help you with where you live? What kinds of things and who do you ask?

OTHER THINGS

.....
.....

THE PEOPLE I ASK ARE

.....
.....

LEISURE

- What do you like doing with your time?
- For example, walking, reading, sport, dancing, learning a language – other things?
- Who do you most like spending time with?
- Who do you actually spend most time with?
- What do you usually do with the person/people?

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Who do you ask to help you with paying bills when you can't get out and about to pay them yourself?
- Who would you want to be involved if you were unwell or couldn't deal with paying your bills?
- Who do you not want to be involved?
- Who would you ask to help you with your banking or getting your pension if you are not well or need some help to do these things?
- Who would you not want to help?
- Who would you talk things over with if you have to make a financial decision?

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- What do you like to do to keep you healthy?
- Who do you like to talk to about health concerns?
- What kind of support do you have if any?
- Who do you prefer to support you?

USE MY PERSONAL HISTORY

It can be difficult for any of us to give a fully rounded picture of who we are to people we only see now and then, or see in a professional, detached way. Being person centred is about taking down some of the barriers that were erected under the guise of being professional or detached.

A tool that can help older people and staff and volunteers explain a bit more about themselves is called 'My personal history', which gives a structure for people to say more about themselves, their achievements and wishes for the future.

WHO I AM AND WHAT IS IMPORTANT NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Key events in my life	What worked for me at the time?	What did not work at the time?	What do I want to happen?
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(Adapted from training material developed by Dimensions (UK) Limited.)

USING PERSON CENTRED LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATING BETTER

The demonstration projects explored what it means to use person centred language and also how they could communicate better. We looked at Dimensions (UK) Limited practice and we reflected on the small but important changes we could make to our everyday practice.

IDENTITY AND CHOICE

Accord staff working in a residential home talked about the need to always ask how people wanted to be referred to, bearing in mind that this will change depending on the circumstances. Some people don't like being referred to by their first names unless they have given permission to the person concerned. Some people have a nickname but only like a restricted circle of people to use it. When staff or volunteers overstep the boundaries, people can feel their identity is not in their control. It leads to tensions when other service users overstep boundaries.

TAKING RISKS AND MAKING DECISIONS

Risk and safety, and enabling and supporting people to make their own decisions attracted a lot of discussion. Much of it was prompted by some of the examples we looked at from work done by Dimensions (UK) Limited. Dimensions (UK) Limited staff often work with young people with learning disabilities who are making the transition into adulthood and they are trying to establish their personalities and identities. The views they can express and the things they want to do may be at odds with their parent's views and wishes. At the very least this causes tensions with parents and could pose dilemmas for Dimensions (UK) Limited staff.

However, Dimensions (UK) Limited staff aim to enable the young person with a learning disability and their family to work together to help the young person make a good transition into adulthood. Families are often understandably protective of their young people. Dimensions (UK) Limited aims to support people in families to have the conversations they need to have to enable a young person to live a life and learn how to manage risks. Doing these things well takes time and careful preparation. Dimensions (UK) Limited is very clear about the way they want to work with customers and families at the very start.

Accord staff talked about the parallel challenges they face, particularly when families want their older parent or relative to be protected, kept clean, kept warm and fed, but don't want them to take risks such as learning to dance or helping do domestic chores if they want to:

"ONE OF THE MEN LIKES TO HELP AND HE IS REALLY HELPFUL TO OTHER RESIDENTS TOO. WE AREN'T GOING TO LET PETTY HEALTH AND SAFETY RULES GET IN THE WAY BUT IT DOES MEAN WE HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THE RISKS ATTACHED TO THINGS AND WORK OUT A PLAN".

"RELATIVES CAN BE UNREASONABLE SOMETIMES. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME RELATIVES THINK THAT THEIR PARENT SHOULD BE DRESSED AND LOOKING GOOD EVERY TIME THEY VISIT AND GET ANNOYED IF THE PERSON IS STILL IN THEIR NIGHTWEAR OR WON'T LEAVE THEIR ROOM TO JOIN OTHER PEOPLE IN THE LOUNGE."

"WE TELL THEM IT'S THE CUSTOMER'S CHOICE - IF SHE DOESN'T WANT TO GET DRESSED OR GO AND SEE OTHER PEOPLE IT IS UP TO HER. IT IS HER RIGHT TO DECIDE. WE CAN'T MAKE PEOPLE GET DRESSED BUT SOME PEOPLE THINK WE SHOULD!"

A KEY IMPROVEMENT

A KEY IMPROVEMENT THAT ACCORD AND AGE UK WALSALL STAFF COULD SEE FROM REFLECTING ON THEIR PRACTICE IS BEING CLEARER AT THE START ABOUT THE WAY THE ORGANISATION WILL WORK WITH OLDER PEOPLE - TO HELP THEM STAY INDEPENDENT AND MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. THIS APPROACH WAS SEEN AS USEFUL IN ANY KIND OF HOUSING SETTING, ANY SUPPORT SETTING AND EXTRA CARE AND RESIDENTIAL CARE.

"We can explain when we are showing people round (before they move in) what our philosophy is - that way we might get everyone working together better" (Accord Extra Care member of staff).

IT'S MY LIFE

Age UK Newcastle staff talked about the difficulties older people can experience when they are dealing with a problem in their lives and they have to use the automated telephone service, where staff are patronising and won't listen.

We talked about the routine experiences older people have of ageism and the discrimination adults with learning disabilities regularly experience. We also talked about different strengths people have and how some people want to learn how to deal with problems and work out how to use the automated phone systems and others don't. We agreed it is too easy to 'take over' for someone because we think we are 'helping' when we may actually be preventing people from taking responsibility and learning.

It is possible to break down some actions and tasks to make them easier. It is also possible and perhaps good practice to support people while they make difficult telephone calls or at least take part in the process.

A KEY IMPROVEMENT

THE MESSAGE HERE IS THAT EVEN IF TAKES LONGER IT IS GOOD PRACTICE TO WORK WITH SOMEONE TO HELP THEM DO SOME DIFFICULT TASKS RATHER THAN TAKE OVER BECAUSE IT IS QUICKER OR EASIER FOR US.

SPENDING TIME WORKING OUT HOW TO COMMUNICATE

The Accord and Age UK Walsall staff looked at a presentation prepared by Expert Panel member Sylvia Cox on communication. The demonstration project staff were really interested in this subject because they are interested in improving their practice, particularly when working with people with dementia.

It was agreed that there are many useful tools around, such as talking mats and picture aids to enable people whose speech is poor or whose ability to choose parts of activities (such as what to eat) is enhanced when they see a picture or image. Staff use these tools but it became clear when everyone was talking that most of the staff who use such tools are care or leisure/activity and therapy staff. In other words, the domestic staff and the cooks and catering staff who play very important roles in people's lives don't know much about tools that can help customers communicate better.

It was also clear that catering and domestic staff had lots of information about people that wasn't being shared with care staff.

A KEY IMPROVEMENT

MAKE SURE THAT ALL STAFF COMMUNICATE AND SHARE INFORMATION THAT WILL MAKE IT EASIER TO SUPPORT A CUSTOMER AND THE WAY HE OR SHE WANTS TO LIVE.

DOING WITH, NOT FOR

Dimensions (UK) Limited UK have a practice routine they use to check and reflect on their practice called the 'doing with not for' routine.

Demonstration project participants looked at the idea which translates into co-working alongside people and working with them to do the things they should be doing and sometimes but don't always want to do. It became clear that doing with rather than taking over and doing for can be a highly challenging notion for practice.

Dimensions (UK) Limited staff face challenges when it comes to encouraging and supporting adults with learning disabilities to do things for themselves too, including things they may not want to do but which they can learn to do and should do. For example, ensuring that they follow a healthy diet and understand why exercise and moderation are important in order to stay well. The risk is that unless people's diets and exercise routines are strictly monitored, they will become overweight and it will exacerbate other health problems.

Yet, unless we want to return to the days of policing people with learning difficulties, it makes sense for adults with learning difficulties to understand the reasons for healthy living and to understand the downside if they don't take care of themselves. In this way, people have the opportunity, if they have mental capacity, to exercise self-control and monitor their food and exercise themselves.

Age UK Newcastle customer service staff explained that when they receive enquiries from older people they try to encourage them to first of all explain what the enquiry is all about giving people enough time to do this rather than hurrying them along. They also noted that it is possible after having heard someone's enquiry to explain what the person can do next rather than do it for them. There is always a risk that customers won't remember later on, or they are disappointed because they really want someone to take over for them. Age UK Newcastle staff, while feeding back their views, noted that doing the

working with not for routine will help them to reflect more on and improve their practice.

KEY IMPROVEMENT

EVEN THOUGH IT CAN BE CHALLENGING IT'S ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA
TO START FROM THE PREMISE OF DOING WITH NOT FOR.

INFORMING AND GIVING CONTROL

The idea of ensuring that people have the information about a situation or a set of choices is part of the doing 'with not for' concept. Accord staff and tenants in an extra care scheme, for example, talked about the fact that although there is a restaurant on site that is pretty well used, some tenants never use it. There was a little concern about this, especially from a tenant who feels that the restaurant might not be viable if the number of customers doesn't increase. After talking about the possible reasons why some tenants don't use the restaurant, or very rarely use it, it was agreed that tenants and local people who come in to use the restaurant probably need regular reminders, since it is easy to forget what is offer and to miss special offers.

We also talked about the fact that, for some tenants, not going to the restaurant was their choice.

ASKING NOT ASSUMING

After talking about ways to improve the way they communicated with people, Accord staff in a residential care home said that the most basic place to start was to remember to always ask rather than assume.

"I was chatting to one of our residents and noticed that she rarely eats her toast although she always asks for it at breakfast time. I asked her if there was something she didn't like. It turns out that she really prefers it cut into soldiers – she finds it easier to handle and more appealing. It's a small thing but important".

"I can't stand weak tea – I like it really hot as well and I get fed up when people don't think it matters or don't listen when I ask for a hot strong cup of tea" (Harry – an Accord tenant).

A member of the care staff in an Accord extra care scheme mentioned one of the older people she worked with who has strong preferences on the way she gets dressed.

“There are some clothes she can manage to put on herself and she likes to do that – she also likes me to put her socks on first because she gets cold feet. I don't think everyone knew about this before I asked her.”

THINKING CREATIVELY

There were lots of examples of people thinking creatively, but one of the examples that stays with us concerns kitchen and domestic staff at an Accord residential care scheme in Telford. As noted earlier, it became clear that the demonstration project gave staff across the residential care scheme an opportunity to share information in order to support customers better, but these opportunities did not usually occur, because people worked in different care or domestic or catering teams. The opportunity to share information brought some fast and creative solutions to human problems. One concerned people who often go to bed very early and consequently wake up very early, long before breakfast, and are extremely hungry by the time breakfast is ready. The care staff talked about this and suggested that it might be possible to get people some cereal or a cup of tea and a biscuit, if there was time, before everyone else started to wake up and the day began in earnest.

The catering staff listened to the discussion and to the problems associated with ensuring that everyone who needs support to use the toilet and be bathed and dressed receives that help. They also heard about the difficulties involved in getting all the customers who want to, into the dining room for breakfast. The catering staff suggested that they could provide a toaster and some spreads and they could leave some breakfast cereals etc. in the dining room, so people who currently wait in the room for the catering staff could at least have some food rather than be hungry. They also started to share information on customers' preferences and how they could accommodate them better.

KEY IMPROVEMENT

THE MESSAGE HERE SEEMS THAT STAFF HAVE SOME GREAT IDEAS IF ONLY ORGANISATIONS CAN HARNESS THE POTENTIAL AS ACCORD DID IN THIS CASE.

CHALLENGING PRACTICE

THE IMPORTANT TO AND IMPORTANT FOR EXERCISE

Dimensions (UK) Limited use routines and peer review to encourage staff to work with customers and check out how much of the work staff do is actually driven by the person. One of the useful routines we tested with demonstration projects was the important to and for exercise.

Important to me –is what the customers thinks is important to her or him personally. Important for are those things that an organisation regards as important for the customer – the two perspectives are often very different and give staff room for thought.

CHARLIE'S IMPORTANT TO AND IMPORTANT FOR RESULTS

The example here is Charlie's views about the things that are important in his life compared to the things he knows are done where he lives by Accord staff.

IMPORTANT TO ME

The things that are important to me are:

- Dancing
- Music
- Being busy
- Being nicely dressed and clean
- Playing whist with my friends
- Opportunities to talk about the past in the village
- Being able to take part – I am slightly deaf so people need to speak clearly and background noise is really confusing.

IMPORTANT FOR ME

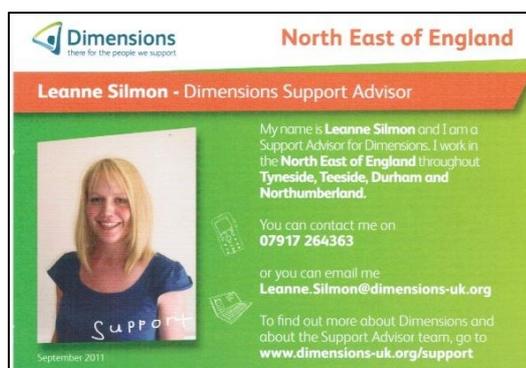
The things that are important for me are:

- The rules and regulations which keep me safe living here
- The training staff receive to keep them up to date with things they need to know about
- Being well looked after if I need to have that kind of help
- Being sure that help is on hand if I need it
- Having activities and other things that I can join in if I want to
- Being sociable and having somewhere warm and secure to live

PERSONAL PROFILES

Dimension (UK) Limited has introduced the idea of the personal profile so members of staff can describe themselves in more personal terms to potential customers. This is particularly important when customers are looking for people skills or specific activities that customers and members of staff enjoy. For example, a customer who enjoys running may want to identify a member of staff who can run with him or her. Similarly someone who enjoys dancing or going to the football may want these interests to be part of the person specification they have in mind when recruiting a member of staff.

The personal profile is presently used as a card – a bit bigger than a business card. It includes the person's photograph and contact details. The profiles can be used online too, to match people, at least theoretically since it is still early days and the personal profile is still being introduced particularly for people with Individual Budgets.



Accord staff and Age UK Walsall and Age UK Newcastle staff and volunteers liked the idea of the personal profile. They could see how such an idea could work for their organisations and they had a try at writing profiles. In practice it is harder to do than it seems. People found that they could make a start by working in small groups or pairs using the Dimension example as a template.

It was much more fun and easier to think about writing profiles after people used a few methods to help. One of the useful methods was the 'elevator speech'

THE 'ELEVATOR SPEECH'

A person is in an elevator going to the top floor and has a couple of minutes to describe their best qualities and skills to someone they really want to impress who might give them a job.

THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT EXAMPLES

KAYLEIGH

(PHOTOCARD WOULD BE INCLUDED HERE)

ACCORD CARE ASSISTANT AT OLD VICARAGE CLOSE

My name is Kayleigh and I like to be called Kay. I am a Care Worker for Accord Housing. I work in Old Vicarage Close Extra Care Scheme in Pelsall near Walsall in the West Midlands.

You can contact me on 03510364083.

ABOUT MY ROLE AS A CARE ASSISTANT

I listen to the way the people I work with want me to work with them. I ask about the way they want me to help them and about the things they prefer to do themselves. For example, some people who need help with showering like to do some of the showering themselves.

I think it is important to treat each person the way I want to be treated myself. I respect the views of the people I help and do everything I can to support them to be as independent as possible. Everyone living at Old Vicarage Close has a Support Plan so I will look at the Plan and we might through talking together update it from time to time.

ABOUT ME

I live in the Walsall area. I enjoy my job very much and I love meeting and talking to people here. I like Scuba Diving and like to socialise with my friends and go away on holidays. I hope in the future to become a diving instructor and to go further in my work as a carer. I am not keen on fruit but love vegetables and I hate it when people don't let me put my views across. My goals are to become a diving instructor and to go higher in my job after getting the right experience.

USING THE PERSONAL PROFILES

Age UK Newcastle intends to develop the personal profile idea and use them to create an online as well as physical display of the people who are members of the Customer Support Team. The idea will probably be rolled out across the rest of the organisation and this is likely to be in place within the year. There is also a lot of scope to use the approach to better match volunteers to skills and tasks required in the organisation, but also to make better use of people's skills and qualities which don't easily show up in interviews or assessment sets. These include skills such as being a good listener or having sensitivity and empathy, or having some of the same interests as customers, for example, dancing or going to the pictures.

Age UK Walsall saw similar uses and possibilities, particularly for seeking volunteers to work with particular older people.

Accord staff were keen on the personal profiles and wanted to develop them, particularly as part of an online set of information for customers, including relatives and a physical display that can be seen by customers and relatives in a care home or an extra care facility. It was less likely, though, that the personal profile would be given to customers in the same way that Dimensions does.

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For copies of documents including literature reviews 1 produced for Phase 1 and 2 and to see workshop notes and programmes go to www.orbit-trust.org.uk/research-project

