

# Partners for Inclusion

## Director's Blog

April 2011

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Hi Folks,

Time to write another blog, it has been a wee while since I have done one; I try to do them when I have stuff to say that you will be interested in...I hope!!!

So as usual I will share with you the things I have noticed that I think do and will make a difference. I also wanted to ask for your help with the Information Sharing process, particularly the focus groups.

I will start with a couple of stories which really made me think:

I heard a story about a member of staff in this organisation, I don't actually know who it is, but this person is also a neighbour or lives near one of the people we support who we shall call Mike (not real name). This person, who we shall refer to as Tom does not work with Mike, he is a neighbour. Tom works with another person supported by Partners for Inclusion. Anyway Tom wanted to be friends with Mike, but Tom was worried about this because he is a member of our staff and thought the Friends Policy would mean that he could not be friends with Mike. I use this story to illustrate what the intention of the Friends Policy is. The Friends Policy was written because at least one local authority who we work with was insistent that staff cannot be friends with people who they support. Now bear in mind at this point that Tom does not work with Mike, he is a neighbour. The purpose of the Friends Policy was so as people could actually be friends with people they support if this was what they and the person wanted, but this could be done in a way that is transparent, up front and open to scrutiny. This is the assurances that the local authority need to be sure that we are being thoughtful around the people we support.

The purpose of the Friends policy is to support people to be friends, NOT to get in the way and stop friendships happening. I would really urge people to go on the website or get the Friends Policy and read it again if you are at all unsure about what it says or means. If you are still unsure after reading it again, please, please speak to your line manager to clarify. We must not have policies within the organisation that stop the people we support doing things they want to do, our job is to help them to do this, BUT to do it safely and in a way that works for them.

An example of one reason for having the Friends Policy is a situation where a staff member introduces their family members to the person supported then spends time with them when they are on shift at the expense of the person being supported. Another unacceptable example would be if a member of staff on duty goes to their home with someone we support as they want to be at home or to look after children etc. These are just 2 real examples that have happened over the years, this is the reason we need to have a policy and stick to it, but this should not get in the way of people we support making friends.

Now back to the story, remember that Tom is Mike's neighbour so the Friends Policy does not apply. BUT like any situation we need to ensure that the people we support are kept safe so whoever the people we support are friends with we need to be vigilant that this is safe for them...this is simply our job!

My second story is about one of the people we support, who I will refer to as Bill. Bill spent many, many years in a hospital. We helped Bill leave this hospital about 8 years ago. Bill is someone who has fragile physical health, he needs help with most things in his daily life including personal care,

doing his housework, eating his meals etc. Bill does not use words at all to communicate...or so we thought for the first 7 years that we supported him.

His Team Leader was in my office the other day and proceeded to tell me, nonchalantly, that Bill is now using words to communicate, at present he has used 3 words. His Team Leader was telling me this as if it was no big deal. This is the most fantastic thing I have heard in a long time. The work and skill that it has taken to get Bill to this point by his team is phenomenal. I personally was blown away by this story and want to say to you all, this is the essence of our work and this is amazing and fabulous work!

I had a good week that week; I was then shown, by one of our Service Leaders, a recording of someone we support getting a train to Glasgow with his sister and his staff member. This is of course just really ordinary, and that is what we promise people, **Ordinary Lives**, but for the person supported this is the first time it has happened in 29 years, since he went into hospital. We have been supporting this person for 10 years at least and it has taken this time to get to this stage but again how fantastic and amazing! So well done to all of you and I really would love it if these people would share their stories at the conference we are doing later in the year.

Keep up the great work, you are making a real difference.

### **Information Sharing and Focus Groups**

I wanted to ask people if they could try to make a point of getting to the focus groups that will be happening in April. There has generally been poor attendance at these meetings and they are there for your benefit. The people running these groups put lots of time and effort into organising them so it would be really good if at least one person from each team would go and feedback to others who were unable to attend.

I hope you are able to do this and thank you in advance.

Below I wanted to share with people some information about a few things happening throughout the organisation.

#### **1. National Citizen Leadership Training Programme**

We had planned to hold a 2 day 'training the trainers' workshop around Citizen Leadership on the 21 & 22 March, unfortunately due to extremely low numbers we have had to postpone this. Our hope was that people we support and their families as well as support staff, would become more involved in promoting decision making and opportunities linked to citizenship. Citizenship is about all of us having our full rights and responsibilities as community members recognised. The workshop would have been about helping us all think about how to do this better.

Helping people gain the confidence, power and responsibility to make decisions and have some control over their own services is one of our main objectives. We need to be encouraging the people we support and their families to get involved and help shape our future.

#### **2. Circle of Support**

A circle of support/friends is an intentional way of helping address someone's loneliness or isolation. It's about physically setting up a group of people who meet together on a regular basis to help somebody accomplish their personal goals in life.

A circle of support/friends is a really good way for someone who finds it a bit more difficult to naturally meet and build friendships.

Having friends adds a richness, a texture and is a necessity in all our lives. We need to continue to work really hard to help the people we support make this happen.

Many of the people we support are still very isolated and don't have many people in their life that are not paid to be there. Looking through some of the people we support's planning days the majority stated that finding friends, a partner etc was one of their main aims. This is encouraging but we need to do a lot more to make this happen. So lets keep up the good work and keep moving forward with this.

### **3. Employment Champions**

Over the last couple of months we have employed two people we support to become employment champions. These people are helping us to help other people we support get jobs. They have been supported to go along to different events such as team leader's day and support workers day to speak about their journey in finding their job and what it has meant to them. We hope that they will over the coming months get a chance to speak to other people we support about getting jobs.

### **4. Independence**

NHS Ayrshire and Arran commissioned a 6 week course for Independence ( creative dance/ movement) inviting providers to be trained up to become facilitators and exploring the benefits of dance. The course objectives was to equip people with the basic skills and confidence to develop dance sessions within your work place and work in partnership.

Partners for Inclusion had the training assistant, person being supported and service leader attend the course. Just before Christmas we ran a 4 week trial session comprising of 1 hour per session. The first two sessions were very successful with staff and people being supported expressing themselves through dance (albeit staff were a little self-conscious however did get into the swing of it). Unfortunately due to the adverse weather this prevented the sessions continuing.

Feedback: We had a lot of positive feedback especially on the relaxation techniques we shared. We aim to be starting the sessions again in the spring and running block of 6 weeks at a time. The music for these sessions range from dance, to chill out to country to cheesy pop. The sessions will be open to everyone within the organisation or connected to the organisation. So watch this space as this would be a good way to dust away those winter cobwebs.....

As they say in the cartoons..." That's all folks".