



Working in a person-centred way

Training Aid 5

This training aid is designed to equip advocates and support professionals with practical guidance for implementing person-centred approaches. Emphasising the importance of respecting and valuing each individual's unique needs, preferences, and circumstances, this aid provides actionable strategies and examples to enhance your practice.

Core principles of person-centred practice

- **Valuing the person's identity:** Recognise and honour the individual's preferences and values.
- **Empowering decision-making:** Support individuals in making informed choices about their own care and lifestyle.
- **Respect and dignity:** Treat each person with respect and uphold their rights.
- **Holistic consideration:** Address all aspects of life, including physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.
- **Collaborative support:** Work alongside the individual, their family, and other professionals to create coordinated care.

Example scenario: Tom, a 70-year-old man with mobility challenges, values gardening as a therapeutic activity. When discussing his care plan, advocate Jenna ensures that Tom's wish to maintain access to the garden is prioritised. This leads to modifications in Tom's support plan to facilitate safe, assisted garden visits, reinforcing his independence and joy.

Benefits of a person-centred approach

- **Enhanced wellbeing:** Individuals feel valued and understood, fostering better mental and emotional health.
- **Satisfaction with services:** Support that aligns with personal preferences often results in higher satisfaction and trust.
- **Improved quality of life:** Tailoring support to what matters most to the individual contributes to overall life satisfaction.

Practical insight: A person-centred approach doesn't just benefit the individual—it can lead to smoother interactions and better relationships between staff and service users.

The role of communication in person-centred support

Effective communication techniques:

- **Open-ended questions:** Encourage detailed responses that reveal the individual's true thoughts and preferences.

- **Reflective listening:** Confirm understanding by paraphrasing what the individual has expressed.
- **Non-verbal cues:** Pay attention to body language, tone, and eye contact.

Active listening skills:

- **Full attention:** Focus on the individual without distractions.
- **Patience:** Let the individual finish their thoughts before responding.
- **Summarisation:** Echo back key points to ensure clarity.

Building trust and rapport:

- **Consistency:** Maintain reliability in your actions and interactions.
- **Empathy:** Show genuine understanding of their feelings.
- **Non-judgmental stance:** Approach interactions without preconceived notions or bias.
- **Respect for boundaries:** Honour the person's preferences for interaction and personal space.

Example case: Emma, an advocate working with Mrs. Green, an 82-year-old with mild dementia, uses active listening and reflective communication to build trust. By focusing on Mrs. Green's past preferences and involving her in creating an Advocacy Plan, Emma ensures that support is delivered in a way that respects Mrs. Green's autonomy.

Understanding life stories and values

Strategies for person-centred conversations:

- Use questions like, "Can you tell me more about your typical day?" or "What are some activities you enjoy?"
- Respect religious, cultural, and personal beliefs that shape the person's identity.

Example practice: Liam, an advocate for Mr. Patel, takes the time to learn about Mr. Patel's religious practices and ensures that any care plan developed incorporates time for prayer and specific dietary needs.

Recognising and valuing individual identity

Person-centred language:

- Use language that reflects the individual's preferences and identity.
- Show cultural sensitivity by understanding and respecting expressions of identity and self-perception.

Practical tips:

- Always address the person by their preferred name and title.
- Be mindful of how cultural factors can influence a person's comfort and engagement.

Case example: George, a 65-year-old who prefers minimal assistance, is visited by advocate Linda. Instead of suggesting help for all activities, Linda asks George what support he feels is necessary. By involving him in these conversations, Linda builds a collaborative support plan that aligns with George's comfort levels and supports his independence.

Key takeaways for advocates

- **Respect and empowerment:** A person-centred approach ensures that individuals feel respected and empowered to lead decisions about their care.
- **Collaboration:** Working with families and multidisciplinary teams enriches the support provided.
- **Adaptable communication:** Tailor your approach based on each individual's communication style and preferences.

Reflection prompts for advocates

- How can I better incorporate a person's values and preferences into their care plan?
- Are there ways I can improve my communication techniques to build stronger trust?
- How do I ensure that I am treating each person's identity and experiences as unique?

Person-centred advocacy is about seeing the person beyond their immediate needs. It's about building trust, understanding their life story, and collaborating to create a support plan that respects their rights and promotes well-being.



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