

Autumn 2008



Our North Wales reporter teams (L to R): Darren Whitby, Michelle Williams, Michael Gallagher and Tracy Austin.

Hunting out the good news

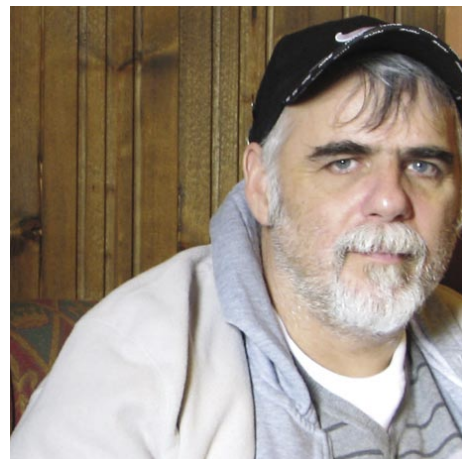
**Our reporter teams
want to hear your
successes!**



Cefnogwyd gan
Y Loteri Genedlaethol
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Thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund, ARC Cymru's Active Support project is helping people with severe learning disabilities to take a greater part in everyday life by offering training to staff and managers in learning disability services across Wales.



Although the project is in its final year, we are still keen to promote Active Support as a successful method, and are looking for good news stories about the positive effects of Active Support in people's lives.

Four issues of the newsletter are planned over the next 12 months, highlighting Active Support success stories from across Wales.

Tracking down the stories for us are 8 people with learning disabilities from North, South and Mid Wales, working as reporters or digital photographers.

They will be talking to managers, staff and service users across Wales about the positive changes Active Support has made, and their work will form a substantial part of these newsletters.

Clockwise from top left : Photographer Steven Coobes, Reporter Phil Glyn Williams, Photographer Malcolm Larman, Photographer Robbie Morris.

This ambitious "sub-project" is certainly challenging people in new directions, but it is proving hugely enjoyable.

Darren Whitby, who has received training from a professional photographer as part of the project said, "I learned lots of new things over the time and new skills and it has been great fun. It's very good because I like things to do, to save me being bored. I hope one day I will be very good in taking photos".

Michelle Williams, our reporter from Abergele, said "It has made me more aware of how by asking the right

questions I will be better prepared to do interviews. The support I've received has made me more confident and I am looking forward to going out to interview people".

We want to hear about the effects that Active Support has made to service users and staff in your organisation. If you would like to share your successes with other providers, please contact us at arc.cymru@arcuk.org.uk or call Philip Ware on 01248 361990.

A message from Christine



Welcome to the first edition of the Active Support Network News!

ARC's Active Support project is funded by the National Lottery, through the Big Lottery fund, offering free training and support to service providers across Wales to implement the Active Support model with people with severe learning disabilities.


Active Support, pioneered by the Welsh Centre for Learning Disability in the 80's, enables staff teams to identify and provide the correct level of support to enable people to take a fuller part in everyday life. It is person

centred to the core, encouraging staff to examine what each person needs to do, can do and could do, and changes the focus from 'caring for' or 'doing to' to a focus on 'supporting' and 'working with'. As a model it fits well with Positive Behaviour Support, Total Communication and Person Centred Planning.

There are many misconceptions about Active Support, and our hope is that this newsletter will break down such beliefs. It is certainly not about forcing people into domestic tasks or keeping them busy all the time. Nor is it somehow unsuitable for people with severe disabilities, complex needs, or challenging behaviours. However, it does challenge organisations to look at how engaged their service users are, and what their expectations are of those service users over time. Organisations across Wales who have accessed our 1-day Active Support training are already reporting how people they support are now living

fuller lives, taking part in a wider variety of activities in the home and in the community. We are also supporting managers to work with staff to help their understanding and delivery of Active Support with a 1-day Interactive Training and follow up visits to support them in the workplace.

To find out more about the project or to enrol your organisation, email me at christine.harcombe@arcuk.org.uk or visit our website at <http://www.arcuk.org.uk/wales/999095/en/active+support.html>

A photograph showing three people sitting on the floor in a lounge. On the left, a young man with a learning disability is sitting cross-legged, wearing a grey and yellow hoodie and dark blue trousers with white stripes. In the center, a man (Lee) is sitting cross-legged, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, smiling. On the right, a woman (Tracy) is sitting cross-legged, wearing a red top and blue jeans, looking towards the camera. The background shows a wooden table and some yellow flowers in a vase.

Lee and Tracy relaxing in the lounge with a service user

From caring to enabling

Lee Stoodle, a house manager with South Wales providers Ategi, is impressed by the difference Active Support can make to a motivated staff team, in even a short time, as staff become aware of the difference between 'caring' and 'enabling'.

Lee found ARC's Interactive Training to be particularly useful, helping him to work alongside staff and guide them to develop their skills in Active Support. The Interactive Training

helps managers to give constructive feedback and offer positive suggestions to encourage staff in their use of Active Support, which is fundamental to the success of the method. "I was really impressed," said Lee. "Even though I've had lots of Active Support training, the way in which the tutor put it across made sense and it encouraged me to bring it into the house and support the staff to use it with the service users".

The use of Active Support has made a huge difference in the house, helping the staff to have a clearer

sense of their role as enablers, rather than 'carers', working with the three people they support to develop their skills and become more independent.

Ex cancer nurse Sheila Coombs was used to working in an environment where 'caring' was central to her work, and has found Active Support helpful in providing clarity about the nature of 'support' in her work with Ategi. "There's a big difference between providing care and support. When you're supporting someone, you're helping them to become competent in their own way, to

become an individual and to do things for themselves. Being a cancer nurse was a completely different ball game altogether. Obviously you support people, but it was more about 'caring'. But there's a big difference between 'supporting' and 'caring'".

Although it can be difficult for some staff to give up the caring habit, the results of moving to enabling roles in the house that Lee manages have been very positive. He commented, "The difference it's made has been huge really. The service users are doing much more now – they're much more active and I'd say it's even developed their self-esteem. It's had a huge effect".

While Active Support has benefited all of the people in the house, the changes in one particular service user who has limited communication and very limited skills have been profound. Lee told us, "We could see how much we had been working on a 'care' basis with him rather than in a supporting role. Once we had that awareness we started changing the way we were working". Staff began to encourage J to become involved in everyday tasks, hand-on-hand.

Many providers using Active Support have commented that staff encounter challenging behaviour much less frequently, and both Lee and Sheila have noticed huge differences in one service user. Twelve months ago, K was living in isolation in the house, unable to mix with other tenants. Looking around

the comfortable shared living room, Lee commented that a year ago K's private living room was completely bare. "We couldn't even have a sofa. Now, even though it's still sparse, we can leave things on the table – well, actually we can have a table in here. Before we couldn't have a table, as it would have been overturned". Now K mixes and eats with the other tenants with few problems.

Everything has improved for him. He's much more settled. He takes much more of an interest in the things around him and, as far as I can see, he's improving every single day.

In a previous residence, K was assessed as needing 5 people to provide his personal care, because of his challenging behaviour. Personal care is now provided on a 1:1 basis, which is a huge achievement for K and for the staff team and is attributed to using Active Support and involving K throughout the process. At one stage, K was unable to feed himself, with staff needing to put the food in his mouth. Lee said, "We began to use hand on hand

techniques to involve him in feeding himself, and now he comes in, sits down and eats independently. I think the Active Support has been vital for his own independence. His challenging behaviour has decreased massively".

Taking a role in maintaining the household – dusting, hoovering and helping to cook – has made a big difference to K. Sheila, who has worked at the house since K moved in, said, "Active Support is certainly working for K. I've seen a great, great improvement in him from when he first came in. He's a completely different young man."

"Everything has improved for him. He's much more settled. He takes much more of an interest in the things around him and, as far as I can see, he's improving every single day".

The team are hoping that the increased interaction that K now enjoys will encourage him to overcome his fears about leaving the house, so he can take part in activities in the community and lead a more active life outside the home.



it put it in a system which I could put in place in the house. Rather than just being aimless there's measurable goals.

Have you had any problems in implementing Active Support?

To begin with some staff didn't understand what it meant and felt it was a bit cruel to be pushing people to do things for themselves when the staff felt that that person should sit there and relax while jobs are done for the house or decisions

Walking the Walk

An interview with Martin Skinner about the rewards of Active Support

Martin Skinner is 29 and has worked for Prospects in Aberystwyth for nearly 10 years, more than half of those as a house manager. He first came to work with people with learning disabilities as a student because, like many people, he wanted to make a difference and it seemed more worthwhile job than working in a supermarket.

We interviewed Martin about the gains he has seen in the house since introducing Active Support.

What first drew you to the idea of implementing Active Support?

I'd been working towards a lot of the principles of Active Support without knowing it, and I heard about the free ARC Active Support training from the Community Nurse. I got in touch with ARC and Christine [Harcombe, our Active Support coordinator] got in touch with me and we organized some training and it married all those ideas that I'd been aiming for with a few extra ones and

were made on their behalf to reduce anxiety. It also took a long time for the residents to buy into the thought that they could do things for themselves. It was run quite like a hotel and the men had actually lost skills they had used in the past. Getting those skills back took time.

How did you go about resolving those problems?

I worked with the team. At every team meeting we worked on aims and set out strategies. I had to revise my goals as they were too advanced for what the house could take to begin with. I had to take small steps instead of taking the bigger steps. I learned to break down my goals

into smaller goals, aiming to achieve them one at a time.

The men really started to respond well through a system of rewards. Initially, when I really went for the system I complemented it with a rewards system so when someone did a task they got a small reward to positively reinforce doing something. I didn't want to be standing there saying to people, "You've got to do this". I wanted people to want to do the cooking, to do the cleaning. Then I changed the reward to a sticker on a chart to say, 'You've done that' and eventually we got down to verbal praise. The staff began to appreciate that you don't want to be praising people through a task – just encouraging them: say, "Do this," or, "We'll help you with this," but when it's finished to say, "That's really good, that's brilliant! Well done, you should be pleased with yourself because you've done a good job."

Most of the staff came round. One or two staff moved on. I'm very careful about who I pick to come and work in the house. If I feel that someone is going to come in with their own ideas and won't adopt the Active Support approach I won't employ them in the house. I want people who are going to come in and say "What do we do? How do we do it?" I can show them how to do it and then they'll get on with it and do it in the same consistent way because it's consistency that gets results.

What difference do you think that Active Support has made to the people you support?

It's made a big difference. Behaviourally we've seen big changes. Only four or five years ago the house was deemed a challenging behaviour unit with three men who displayed challenging behaviour quite regularly. Since we've implemented the Active Support programme the challenging behaviour has dropped right off. Engagement in activities, allowing people to make more

of their own decisions, allowing people to make decisions that we don't agree with but supporting them to do it and just giving the support where needed instead of taking over things – it means the men accept it when we can't do some of the things they want to do. They're more engaged. They're not sat bored. They're not in their rooms for hours on end winding

themselves up while someone else cleans their house for them and makes their dinner.

The men have also developed skills and interests and have begun to do some of these things independently.

When you start with Active Support, you might clean the room with a person and you'd do a lot of the work and they might just stand there and help a little bit. Now I've got one of the men who does it without support. He came and got me the other day to show me that he'd cleaned out his wardrobe without being asked to because he thought it was messy. The men have gained a sense of pride and satisfaction from little things,



The staff can see it works. They find shifts more enjoyable so they're keen to try new things and develop new ideas.

, everyday things like being able to go shopping and choose what they want to buy, put it on a conveyor belt, pay for it themselves and put it in the bags rather than have someone do that. The staff just stand back. It's great!

We've got new interests because the men want to be involved in what's happening. We have to find new things to do to fill their time, which is great. It's what we're here for. We're not here to watch TV all the time with the men or to do the cleaning. We'll go for a walk or if we need some milk we'll walk to the shop instead of saying, "I'll get someone to bring a pint of milk in when they're in next". We'll ring people. We'll organize things. It's a better quality of life.

What effect do you think that's had on staff morale?

I think the staff find it hard work. Sometimes they're tired but overall I get a sense of purpose and a new sense of excitement from the team because it's a good team and they get a real kick out of seeing the men do things that they know they didn't do twelve months ago... six months ago even and seeing the joy that the men have in doing it. They do say to me at the end of a shift, "Oh, I've done loads today," but they're saying it with a big smile on their face. I don't have any problem retaining staff. I've never had someone leave and say, "I want to go and do a different job because I'm bored of this now," or, "It's not for me". It allows staff to bring their own interests because we're looking for new activities. That gives them a special job and they have a niche

within the team. Everyone brings a little something.

Can you tell us about someone who has particularly benefited?

I think that the resident who has benefited the most is a man called Michael [name changed]. Michael used to give you the impression he was quite happy to sit in his room and listen to his radio, watch his telly, not really go out much. Weekends would be spent maybe going out for a cup of tea on a Saturday afternoon and the rest of the time he'd be in his room. We brought Active Support in and he spends maybe twenty minutes a day in his room, if that. He wants to do the cooking. He wants to do the cleaning. He advocates for himself: "I want to go out". Even in his room he likes to clean his room and he likes to make coffee for himself and other people. There have been times when we've had problems because he feels he's not involved enough. He's standing there saying, 'Involve me now'. If we're with someone else we have to say, "We'll do something together when I've finished here." His demeanour has changed.

People comment to me who have known him for years that they've never seen Michael so happy, so involved. He does jobs in his day service placement and they've fed back that all of a sudden he doesn't just sit in a corner and watch people, he stands up and starts doing things. It's become a normal way of life for him and he loves the attention he gets from it. He loves relationships with people and talking and he's found he gets that from being involved in the tasks, so he also gets

fulfilment. He's really developed.

How do you think that the Active Support programme helps staff in their work?

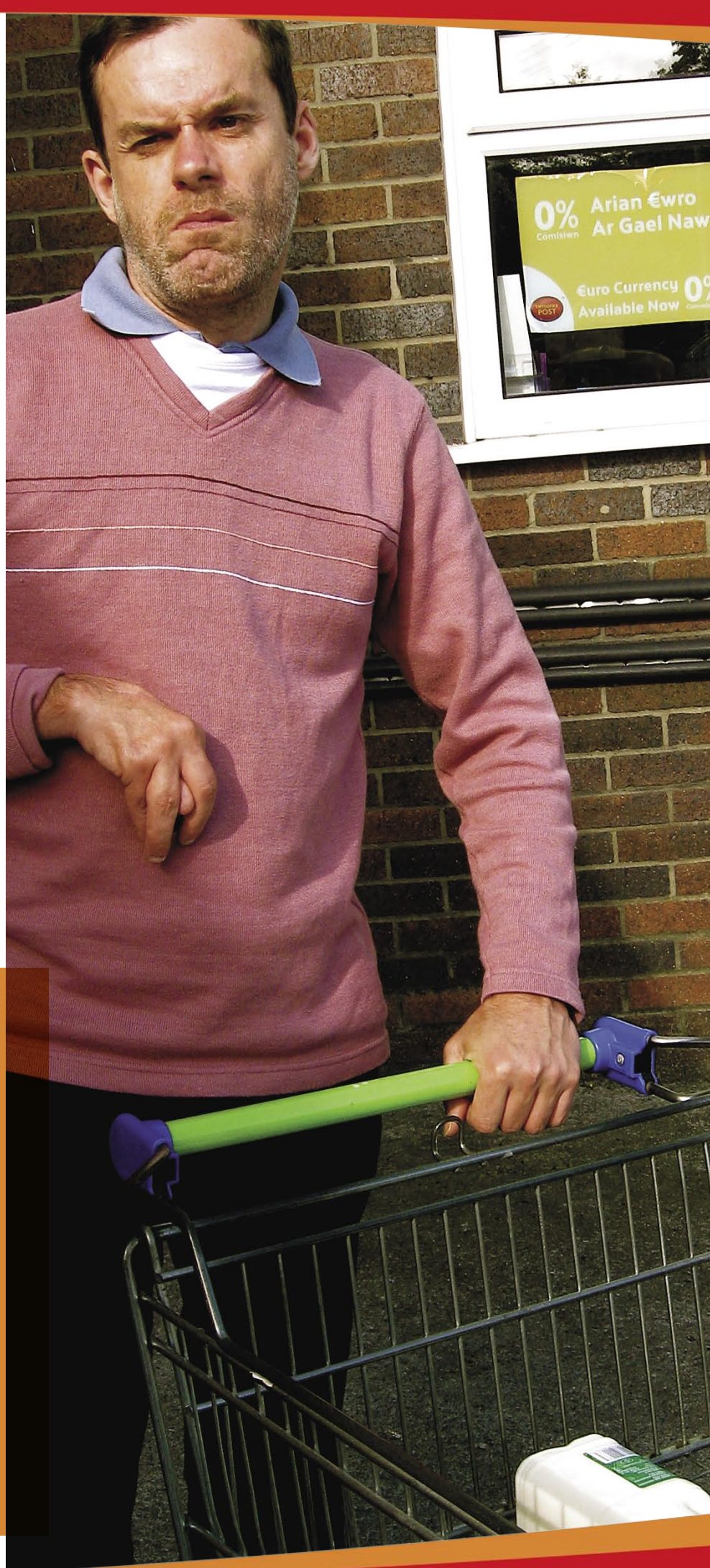
It gives the staff a platform to work from. It's about consistency. All staff need to be consistent in their approaches. With Active Support, they know we always approach a particular task in a particular way. It makes it easier for staff once they've learned how things are to be done. They have a greater sense of involvement because we're continually reviewing the support we're giving. There's no point me saying we have to give someone hand on hand support and then six weeks later that person can do it on their own and yet staff are still trying to do that because that's no good. So it gives staff a sense of value because they're saying, "so and so now does this in this way with me," so we as a team can all change and all do the same. It gives staff the opportunity to develop their own skills and interests with the men. Staff can set their own goals and they can also help set goals for the men and then there's a sense of achievement when you see someone doing better. It's about consistency. It's having the opportunity to feed back. It's the fact that the staff can see it works. They find shifts more enjoyable so they're keen to try new things and develop new ideas. They look forward to coming in to work. Work isn't easier for doing it, but it's more rewarding and that feeds back into the team.

Is there anything you think needs to be in a house before Active Support becomes effective?

Managers need to consider the equipment they're using. There's no point in asking someone to do a task and give them inappropriate equipment that they're never going to be able to use properly. If you're making a cake it's a lot easier to put the ingredients in a mixer and someone to push a button than to ask them to use a whisk or spoon and fold things in by hand. Likewise if someone struggles with a kettle you can get kettles with a push button like a water cooler which allows people to make cups of tea and coffee without being helped.

Keep your eye open for new equipment that will make things easier. Most of it's quite cheap and it makes a big difference. If you can get something that enables someone to do 90% of a job instead of the 50% they can do with the existing equipment then it's money well spent.

"The men have gained a sense of pride and satisfaction from little things; everyday things like being able to go shopping and choose what they want to buy."



I don't believe that there's a person that it wouldn't benefit... each person has so much to give and can achieve so much in spite of difficulties or disabilities and I think this programme is a platform for them to develop.



Have you got any advice for other managers who might be thinking of adopting Active Support?

I don't believe that there's a person that it wouldn't benefit. Some people might say "You don't know Johnny, he's got these difficulties or this disability," but it's not a panacea for everybody, it's a very individual programme and I think that managers owe it to the people they support to do that because each person has so much to give and can achieve so much in spite of difficulties or disabilities and I think this programme is a platform for

them to develop. It may be that you have to set very short goals that take a long time to do. It might be that in six months time you're only a couple of steps further on than you were but the key thing is you're further on and you will, if you keep on with Active Support, see a development. I would advocate it for anybody.

If managers do it properly and make sure it's being done consistently, you will see a change in the residents and you will see a renewed enthusiasm from your staff and you'll see growth of your service.

A view from Down Under

Since visiting you all in Ystrad Mynach in February, the rollout of Active Support training to staff within Yooralla (Victoria's largest non-government disability service provider) had its second birthday! In reflecting on what we've achieved over the last two years, and the barriers we have faced, it seemed a good time to share some of these reflections with you.

Our greatest challenge to date has been providing training to staff that are supporting people with a physical disability (without a cognitive impairment). Active Support was not intended for this group specifically,

yet the need to ensure that all people we support are experiencing a quality of life is no less important – engaging this group is not easy, in part due to the physical limitations of the individual restricting engagement in domestic activity (as well as the physical environment creating difficulties) and the staff sentiment being the classic: 'Yes, but if a client chooses to do nothing it should be respected' – when we know that a history of doing nothing, or poor support actually fosters that state of mind. However, if the rollout is successful we have paved a new path and to the benefit of those we are supporting.

Lastly, we recently had a shift in State Legislation with the introduction of the Disability Act, and one of the key focuses in this legislation is the importance it places on person-centred planning for all. This is our latest challenge and one we are approaching with keen enthusiasm as it will support the longer term approach of Active Support within our services.

Samuel Murray
*PCAT Team Leader &
Advanced Practitioner*

About Sam...

Sam Murray has worked extensively with young people with disabilities for almost 10 years and has a strong practical background in providing services within an Active Support paradigm. Sam has a special interest in Autistic Spectrum Disorder and complex communication, as well providing positive supports for those with significant problem behaviours. Sam has worked on a Pilot Program for Yooralla in Victoria, Australia, implementing Active Support in five residential services across the state, and has taken on the role of Team Leader & Advanced Practitioner for the longer term project in this area. He gave an inspiring presentation on the huge impact Active Support has made within Yooralla, to Active Support Network members at the meeting in S Wales in February 2008. You can download the latest Yooralla Active Support newsletter from <http://www.arcuk.org.uk/silo/files/566.pdf>



Sam Murray from Yooralla, Australia



'Help me use a spoon and I will eat'

Active Support – keeping up the momentum

by Stephen Jones



So you've done the training, understood the theory and the people you support are suddenly experiencing a whole new way of living, or are they?

Learning about the model is just the first stage of a long-term commitment and will be one of the hardest things any manager, company, authority or individual can expect of support staff.

'Active Support' by its very term suggests a way of doing things that is nurturing and assistive whilst at the same time dynamic and not remaining in one place.

Active Support can at first appear to be a very easy concept to implement, but requiring as it does a service model that is not based on passive controlled care giving, but

one that is based on the shifting, sharing, equality and ultimately the conceding of control, can mean a paradigm shift in the thinking, attitude and the ability of service staff. Culturally, this may not be the norm in some establishments or in longer serving teams and on-job coaching and re educating of staff will be the critical factor for success. For the newer team establishing an expectation level that is realistic and paced is often a requirement. Long term maintenance can be the most difficult element.

In every instance the role of the Active Support 'champion' is most important. Here I deliberately use the term champion rather than manager, as, whilst the ideal would be for every leader to be an effective implementer and enforcer of the Active Support model, the reality is

that the champions are often those individuals who through tough and tougher times carry on promoting the model as they have the skill to recognise the potential in everyone and inevitably a natural ability to coach others. They are often unsung heroes who carry on regardless. Where are these people? Well that is where the manager/company/committee/organisation comes in. If you are serious about adopting the model and wanting to improve people's lives, then the concepts of Active Support have to be endorsed not only in the way that the people who use a service are supported but also the way the service recognises and supports the staff providing the service. The power holders within the service must also be able and prepared to be nurturing and assistive, confident enough to relinquish controls to others, whilst

at the same time dynamic and not remaining in one place. Be all of this and you will find your champions. Active Support maintenance also needs direction. Sadly, for some leaders, all of this is just too big an ask.

Recognising the champions is a skill, nurturing and developing them is a task. These are objectives that have to be met as part of the implementation of the model. An Active Support champion cannot be nominated, delegated or picked in advance, they have to be sought, recognised and enabled. Champions are often uncut diamonds, they could just as easily be a new staff member never having worked in services previously or a diehard of many years, who suddenly finds a model that shapes their natural ability.

Recognising the champions is a skill, nurturing and developing them is a task.

The manager's role is to cast away any prejudgement or prejudices and be brave enough to promote these individuals as the 'implementers' providing them with the tools and time to help others to also develop their ability. This could be as simple as pairing them up as a 'buddy' with another staff member (role modelling) or it could be as complex as developing them as the primary persons responsible for taking the model forward. Finding

the champions is often the easy part; inevitably they identify themselves through their actions, attitude and commitment. Developing, nurturing and keeping them is the hard bit. Organisations implementing Active Support need to be mindful of the fact that once you have found your champions they may not stay; people will always move on and none of us is indispensable. Succession planning is therefore a factor to consider; always look out for those who will be nurtured to be the next champions and prepare them to be ready to step into the shoes when existing champions leave.

Sometimes Active Support fails to be embedded as expected practice, this is usually not a failure in adoption of the concept but a failure in the concept becoming the support context. Sometimes this happens not at the direct service delivery level but at the corporate level. The Corporate Body may not understand how to monitor progress or how to manage the cultural change that Active Support brings. Cultures can sometimes be rigid, overly hierarchical or too democratic and unable to provide direction. In each of these instances the 'values' of Active Support can be challenging and therefore difficult to manage and to maintain. Organisations adopting the principle and model of Active Support should therefore have a change management strategy ready and a vision of the support structure they will use to assist staff to work in a completely different way. Writing a Quality Assurance statement can be good start, building upon existing structures can provide reassurance and developing underpinning



STRATEGY

Monitoring of active support can be easy or complex. Unfortunately, too often, there is an inordinate concentration on ticking charts, staff setting the goals and creation of complex calculations, often at the expense of the root principle; engaging with and productively interacting with people receiving support.

evaluation processes which are snappy, productive, easy to understand and, ultimately, useful is vital.

When the initial impetus of using the principles of Active Support is complete it is important to step in

and evaluate the short term outcome of the implementation phase and feedback to staff. Organisations rarely do this well, even though it is a critical stage in the maintenance of the model. This is a time to allow staff to discuss difficulties, assess role modelling (interactive training and support) identify training needed and broadcast the good stuff. At the same time it is important to acknowledge difficulties and obstacles and commit to finding ways to address these. Review is the most important part of Active Support, without it the principles are lost, the skills of people receiving support and those giving it decline.

The initial review should identify targets and goals which can be built into business plan objectives, performance management targets or appraisal systems; these all contribute to maintaining and embedding Active Support. By structuring Active Support at the forefront of quality assurance systems the momentum

and motivation is assured. Active Support complements commissioner evaluation models, Inspectorate requirements, EFQM, IIP, HSC NVQ, ISO 9001. Active Support can also ensure that Person Centred Planning becomes Person Centred Action, structuring other people's activity around an individual as it does.

Monitoring of Active Support can be easy or complex. Unfortunately, too often, there is an inordinate concentration on ticking charts, staff setting the goals and creation of complex calculations, often at the expense of the root principle; engaging with and productively interacting with people receiving support. Tick boxes and complex administration can be great for well organised teams of staff working under the same manager, and will certainly provide solid data. Tick boxes, however, are often not user-friendly for the person receiving support, who, in the principle of Active Support, should be supported through creative means to self evaluate their own progress as well as assess their support teams performance and abilities to help them.



In today's commissioning environment, support to an individual is often likely to come in different packages, perhaps made up of volunteers, families, friends, carers and different professionals. Active Support therefore has to meet this challenge and also has to change be dynamic and not stay in the same place; If it doesn't it becomes an exclusive club available only to people in care homes or supported accommodation. Monitoring therefore has to take several forms and move with the times. Many options exist: managers or leaders walking the talk and directly observing paid staff catching them doing things right; Active Support functional role persons whose job it is to work with all of the people involved with an individual capturing progress from each; quality circles made of the persons receiving support and those providing it; formal service user committees empowered to comment upon and change individual and team performance; respect for, recording and validating of anecdotal evidence; developing video diaries and 'my life' books; using I.T. recording systems for staff; on-line support progress logs for multi-agency workers. Monitoring and evaluation needs to be ongoing and will always be critical to success, however one size no longer fits all.

Whatever qualitative or quantitative data collection methods are to be employed, one thing is for sure; those using them need systems and structures which are clear and understood, that are consistent and

provide regular feedback, that use simple and easily understood data capture methods. Together with a supportive leadership, these are the keys to keeping up the momentum.

I have seen Active Support produce the most life enhancing outcomes for people as well as providing great motivation and job satisfaction for staff. Over many years of using the Active Support principles I have acknowledged the detractors, listened to the academics, applauded the visionaries, worked with the sceptics. Through it all I still hold faith that the Active Support concept works and that the principle is simple: **"Help me use a spoon and I will eat."** **What better reason could there be?**



About... Stephen Jones

Stephen worked as a Surgical nurse in Orthopaedic Operating Theatre before specialising in Spinal injuries care for four years. Further to joining the Department of Employment Disabled Resettlement service he moved to the NIMROD innovation for Learning Disability services in Wales in the early 1980's. Stephen has continued working in the Social Care sector since.

Stephen has Nursing, Social Care, Teaching, Sex Educator, NVQ IV and management Qualifications and has worked in the voluntary, statutory and independent sectors.

Stephen subsequently has thirty-five years experience of working as a qualified nurse, Health and Social care Manager and Operational services Director.

Stephen is currently working in the field of Training and Development for staff supporting people using Mental Health and Learning Disability services.

In his own time Stephen is a Wales Cancer campaign Ambassador for Cancer Research UK.

Active Support Pioneer



Reporter Tracy Austin interviewing Dr Sandy Toogood

Sandy Toogood, a lecturer at Bangor University who also works for the NHS Trust in Wrexham spoke to our reporter Tracy Austin about his work as a pioneer of Active Support in the UK.

Sandy was working as part of a research team in 1981, looking for ways to help staff to support service users more effectively.

"People were spending long periods of time doing nothing and that seemed a bit of a waste of their life," said Sandy.

That work was really the basis of what later became known as

Active Support, and from these beginnings, Active Support is now used all over the world, in Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Japan as well as across the UK. It is also beginning to be used in the USA and Ireland.

So what exactly does Active Support mean to Sandy?

"Active Support, I think, is two things," he told us. "Firstly, it's a way of thinking about how to support people with a learning disability in community homes. It encourages participation and independence through taking part in activity. Secondly it's a set of procedures to

help staff organize themselves so that they provide effective support for each person."

Active Support is for people with all kinds of learning difficulties but is most effective when people have severe or profound learning difficulties. It is mostly used in community homes and in residential schools but can also be used in family settings.

"It's really about helping people to be busy and more independent," said Sandy. "Just everyday things like doing your own washing or doing your own shopping."



The Network Newsletter is produced by Active Support and ARC Cymru and supported by the National Lottery.

For further information about Active Support and ARC Cymru, or feedback about the newsletter (we'd welcome your comments and any ideas for articles) please contact:

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