



Active Support

# network news

Summer 2009



# Moving on!



Cefnogwyd gan  
**Y Loteri Genedlaethol**  
Supported by  
**The National Lottery®**



# Lessons to Learn



Overcoming obstacles and setting priorities: **Mandy Tilston-Viney** and **Christine Harcombe** provide a guide to active success

**T**he ARC Cymru Active Support project has been supporting service providers across Wales to take on new ways of thinking about the service they provide. In this article, we offer you some observations on the influences that can make Active Support stand or fail within a service.

The changing policy agenda of recent years has obliged all service providers to consider the right of each person they support to have a valued, ordinary life. Active Support, developed more than 20 years ago, is a method proven to increase the level of engagement in meaningful, everyday activities and, as such, promises much to the provider wishing to meet the demands of policy and inspection.

Although Active Support has been visited by numerous support providers over the years, many continue to find it a difficult model to embed. Organisations can invest huge resources in training, but the model may still fail to take hold, and

may develop a reputation for being 'too difficult' or inappropriate for a particular service user or branch of service.

But why do organisations fail? In the course of our work, delivering training and supporting providers to develop Active Support, we have observed many obstacles, which include the following:

- an incorrect understanding of the values needed for the work, or conflicting values within the team
- a lack of understanding or commitment to the process among senior managers and service managers
- a misunderstanding of the difference between engagement and activity
- the organisation being led by the demands of providing the service rather than the needs or wishes of the individual
- poor management skills (motivational, practice management and supervisory skills)
- an inability to adapt the model to imperfect circumstances, for example, insufficient staff
- staff who believe they are already using Active Support
- staff who do not understand their roles, the nature of support or the needs of the client group
- staff who do not understand what constitutes meaningful everyday activities and engagement
- staff inability to translate learning into practice
- staff failure to work as a team, or unmanaged conflicts within the team
- staff resistance to change – 'we know best'
- poor communication skills within the team and with service users
- lack of understanding about the meaning of challenging behaviour
- conflict with parents, who may prefer a 'hotel model' of care
- a reliance on the training to be sufficient in itself.

Last year, we were asked to conduct a review of a report by the Kent-based service provider, Avenues Trust, who had taken an organisational leap into Active Support and who had asked for an external evaluation by the Active Support guru, Julie Beadle Brown. Avenues Trust had embarked on a process of complete culture change in an attempt to avoid many of the challenges that can threaten a support model like Active Support. Their strategy was ambitious, and the efforts made to introduce and embed Active Support were impressive. The huge efforts made throughout the organisation to force this culture change were clearly worth it, for both service users and staff; a 94% increase in the time spent in meaningful activity spoke for itself.

The work done by Avenues Trust goes a great way to providing other organisations that wish to embed the model thoroughly with a blueprint for sidestepping some of the challenges. What was striking was the commitment shown to the process by Trustees and senior management, and the will for it to work that gave direction to the planning and implementation.

The key to their success was the depth of pre-planning and a system-wide approach. Presentations brought the whole organisation on board, and the method was promoted from the top down. Undertaking the evaluation in itself was a very positive step, enabling the whole organisation to see whether it was working or not, rather than senior managers believing that Active Support was happening because staff were being trained.

A further mechanism that can help organizations to embed the model is the adoption of ongoing informal feedback from service managers to staff, to complement the monthly formal feedback sessions. Any internal NVQ assessors, who would be ideally placed to observe and comment on practice, could also support the role.

But where do we go from here? How can we best support the continuing development of Active Support in the UK?

The work done by Avenues Trust goes a great way to providing a blueprint for sidestepping some of the challenges... the key to their success was the depth of pre-planning and a system-wide approach.

We feel that there are three priorities for further work. The first concerns the empowerment of the service manager.

Our experience is that the key determinant in the success or failure of Active Support is the effectiveness of the service manager. A de-motivated, unconfident manager who is unable or unwilling to distinguish between good and poor practice, and who lacks the supervisory skills to monitor

the translation of training into work practice, is in a poor position to lead.

A strong manager has the right skills to manage practice and supervise staff effectively from a level of experience and awareness above that of the support staff. They feel confident in making ongoing informal observations and adjusting team practice as needed, offering constructive feedback to encourage good working practice. They are also comfortable about using the disciplinary procedure to tackle recalcitrant staff.

When staff are not being led to work as a team, and when previous training (such as values, communication, person-centred working and positive behavioural support) is not being monitored and evaluated on an ongoing informal basis by the service manager, successful implementation of a systemic support method is almost impossible. Avenues Trust understood the key role played by service managers and the support they need from senior management, and sought to empower them in their roles as Active Support champions by developing the deputy manager's position to help balance paperwork with the operational role of the practice manager.

Our second priority would be development of practice management as a routine managerial function. While training is essential, it is not an end in itself. Equipping service managers with skills in observation and constructive feedback will enable organisations to evaluate whether



training is being translated into practice in the workplace. It is not enough to ask whether staff have been trained. What is needed is to observe that training is being put into practice, with planned strategies of support if it is not. The structured review and formal observation are essential to good management, but the Active Support model demands daily informal observation, because it is this informal observation that ensures consistency. Casual observation by a practice manager does much more to help embed the model than the less frequent formal sessions.

An organisation wishing to adopt Active Support will not need to embark on a radical change to management strategy if the practice management of training is already routine and the quality of service delivery is monitored and effective. For Active Support to work effectively, staff need to feel comfortable with their roles. Ongoing practice management in the workplace of all staff training would mean that service managers would be accustomed to observing and providing positive and constructive feedback. They would not be faced with feeling awkward when asked to implement observational supervision when an organisation takes on Active Support. Taking a step back to put in place the essential building blocks of good support may delay the actual implementation of Active Support, but it is preparation that will reap dividends.

There are huge benefits from becoming a 'learning organisation', where training is tailored specifically to fit that organisation's culture,

where staff with poor basic skills are individually monitored, where checks are made to ensure that a staff group has taken on and is using all previous training and that the organisational systems are in place: good quality supervision, good line managers and good senior managers who go into services and look at the delivery and support the service. The organisation will make the most of its training budget by ensuring that all training is understood and being acted upon from 'Day One, Week One'.

**Active Support is a method that challenges organisations to look again at their mission statements, and it deserves more than to be dismissed as 'something we did years ago'. It does work, it is worth the effort and it can work for you.**

Finally, we have been working in Wales to draw the attention of policy makers to the potential of Active Support. The English and Welsh Governments spend phenomenal sums on out-of-county placements, particularly when a service user has been labelled as having challenging behaviour. We would like the available evidence that demonstrates a reduction in incidence

of challenging behaviour after implementation of Active Support to be drawn together and taken to government with a request for political support. We also feel that Skills for Care in the four countries could do much to emphasise practice management and the concomitant skills when they review management training qualifications. The Inspectorate also has a role in becoming familiar with how a service looks when service users are increasingly engaged, and with what to expect from a model like Active Support that offers an inherent quality assurance mechanism.

Active Support is a method that challenges organisations to look again at their mission statements, and it deserves more than to be dismissed as 'something we did years ago'.

It does work, it is worth the effort and it can work for you.

**Contains extracts from: Commentary on 'A better life: The Implementation and Effect Of Person-Centred Active Support in the Avenues Trust' Tizard Learning Disability Review , Volume 13 Issue 4, December 2008 © Pavilion Journals (Brighton) Ltd**

# Making sense of it all

Does Active Support + sensory stimulation = greater participation?

**K**ari Bailey is the Managing Director of Cariad, offering a supported housing service to people with learning and physical disabilities in South Wales. Promoting independence in people who have learning disabilities has been a major part of her life for 28 years, and the Active Support model makes a lot of sense to her when it comes to increasing the independence of people with high dependency needs.

"Active Support works really well for people who have high support needs", she told us. "I think actively involving people becomes more important when it's people who have profound learning disabilities and physical disabilities, because their abilities can be overlooked".

"I trained as a physio so I was very much of the opinion that people should do as much as possible for themselves, but Active Support training did make me think more about what's being done to include people who are not usually able to take part", she said.

She has seen some of the people who they support benefitting enormously from Active Support:

"Louise\* is very keen to do any activities that are to do with her daily life. I started doing some ironing with her last year, which was something that she'd never done before because

people had been worried whether she'd burn herself and whether she'd really want to do it. But Louise loves doing it... she really enjoys taking part and now she does the ironing with staff every evening".

Kari is aware that, for some people with learning disabilities, the benefit of the activity may come more from sensory stimulation than from a sense of participation.



"John\* is very limited in what he can do independently. However, when the Hoover comes out, he knows exactly what to do... he enjoys the vibration and he understands what is happening which is important".

However, the sensory aspect of participation can work both ways. Some people with profound learning disabilities may enjoy the new sensory experiences, but others will be less comfortable.

"Quite often people who have a lot of physical difficulties don't often have to touch very much so their hands are quite sensitive and whereas you and I might be touching things all the time, other people who have sensory difficulties find it difficult to do particular things. Eileen\* for instance, didn't like to do the washing up at all. She would pull her hands away. She obviously didn't enjoy doing it and doesn't want to do it".

But there are other things that Eileen finds to be less of a sensory challenge.

"She made a sandwich the other day, with hand-on-hand support. She needs quite a lot of support but she's taking part in it and smiling and recognizing what needs to be done".

These are early days for Active Support within Cariad and, although she can see obvious benefits, Kari is aware that it will take time to turn it into the natural style of working.

"I'd like everybody to like it as much as I do! I know the staff find it difficult sometimes because they find it difficult to slow down in activities that might take longer. One of the questions that always gets asked is 'When do we do the Active Support?' But it isn't like that – Active Support should be done all of the time. Every day. Whatever we're doing. But it can be difficult for staff to recognize that".

\* – names have been changed.



Christine Harcombe,  
Active Support Co-ordinator

# A Message from Christine:

Are you just ticking another box or are you making a difference?

“If we aren’t measuring the outcomes for the people we support and the quality of our service after training has taken place, then the danger is that training will become just another box to tick”.

We all know by now that training alone does not work and Active Support training is certainly no exception. Simply sending staff on training and hoping that it makes a difference has never been enough.

Unfortunately, services are still expecting training to be sufficient in itself in enabling staff to turn the learning into everything we expect a good service to be. Commissioners, chief executives and trustees presume this ‘good service’ is happening because the paperwork says so and because they are investing thousands of pounds in training and in releasing staff.

If we aren’t measuring the outcomes for the people we support and the quality of our service after training has taken place, then the danger is that training will become just another box to tick.

Active Support is a team approach in which staff distinguish between engagement and disengagement, they revisit task analysis; positive behavioural support; person-centred planning; communication; the

importance of consistency; and what happens if we ‘do it my way’ within a team.

The manager’s role is to continue to support and mentor teams after the initial training. It is up to the manager to continue to support these changes from a ‘Can’t Do’ and caring for to ‘Can Do’ and enabling. This may mean one-to-one support from managers to support staff to unlearn poor practice, which some managers will find challenging!

Staff teams have come along to the Active Support training with different ideas and approaches to Active Support; from having strong views about what Active Support is and not always in a positive way. Fortunately, after the training, almost all staff had changed their perception of what Active Support is and how they could include the people they support to be more engaged in their lives.

Teams will still need support to make the links between what is set out in care plans, what the person aspires to and enjoys, and how to approach ideas for Active Support.

After the training almost all staff had changed their perception of what Active Support is and how they could include people they support to be more engaged in their lives.

So, how can you be sure that your Active Support training will have an impact on your service? Where teams are supported and led well they will build on the knowledge, gained by staff from Active Support training to develop their skill base and use the skills within the service. Managers will need to support the team to continually develop their communication skills, develop positive interaction, work in a person centred way, and so work towards better inclusion, independence, choice and engagement on a daily basis.

## Some of the views expressed by staff prior to Active Support training

- "Active Support takes away their choice if they don't want to do anything".
- "It caused challenging behaviour so we have stopped".
- "It's too tiring for them after the day centre".
- "Active Support is about programming people".
- "They might hurt themselves or others if we do that".
- "There's no point because they have forgotten it by the next time we do it, so we have to start again".
- "It's a good idea but we can't do it 'cos it's too much paperwork to fit in with the care plans / psychology plans / supporting people records".
- "We are always short staffed – in theory Active Support is great but in practice it is just impossible".
- "There is too much work for us to do already – it slows us down".
- "They learn all about this sort of stuff in the day centres. They just chill out when they come home".
- "We try and do it in our service but at day centre they have never heard of it – the service users are so wound up when they come home".
- "It raises unrealistic expectations".
- "It raised the expectation that we would have to let them in the kitchen".
- "We could work ourselves out of a job".
- "It's a fashion fad that comes and goes".
- "It's something that's OK for more able clients".
- "It's cruel".
- "It's not fair to expect older people to start doing things".
- "It's OK in small homes but we can't do it with the number of residents we have. It would cause chaos if they all wanted to be involved and do things".
- "We can't fit it into our daily planner as everything is scheduled to run like clockwork and that works really well here".
- "There's no support to keep it going so it fades away".
- "We used to do in the registered homes but nobody helps us do it when we provide domiciliary support".
- "It's easier and quicker to do it yourself when you have a list of things to do".
- "The person has peaked and we have tried everything".
- "The person I support chooses to stay in their bedroom all day they enjoy their own space".
- "We chill out on a Friday – its a relaxing day".
- "It is immoral to set plans".
- "The people we support are autistic and they don't like change".
- "It was better when the institutions were around. Everyone had friends then".
- "It is too dangerous to allow the service users to do ironing – what if someone was at the door or the phone went and I had to answer it?"

# A Strategy for the Future

## Prestwood plan to gain the full potential of Active Support

Interview: Michelle Williams. Photos: Darren Whitby

**A**ctive Support has been an entirely new concept to some of the organizations opting into our training and it is always fantastic to see the enthusiasm with which people take to it as the penny drops and they see the possibilities for their own services and service users. One such organization was Prestwood, and one such person was Jane Gibson, manager of one of their residential homes.

We caught up with Jane and some of the other managers after their training day. We asked her what she'd thought of the training.

"I think it's brilliant. I really liked it. I think Active Support gives people the guidelines and the structure about how to do their job, which is a difficult job, and if it's done well then people feel well supported and that's what we want the service users to feel; well supported and not guessing how they're going to be supported".

How did she think that Active Support would change the way that

Prestwood works?

"I think it will give the service users the same support on a daily basis so instead of thinking 'If so and so's on today, that is the way my day will go', they will think 'The day will go how I choose it to go because people will know how to support me. They will know how I like things to be done'", she said.

**"I hope that everything we do starts with Active Support so that, when new staff come, that's all they know so they pick it up quickly".**

"I think the staff will enjoy seeing some positive results and seeing service users being happy and that's what they come to work for so I think they'll get some job satisfaction".

She thinks it will be good for the people who use their services too.

"When we have difficulties with the service users it's because we haven't all done things the way we said we would and that causes people to feel frustrated, so I think they'll feel less frustrated with the staff and that's got to be good, hasn't it?"

Does she think that Active Support will help to get people with learning disabilities interested in trying new activities?

"Absolutely. I think the opportunity plan is going to make us think about that. Whereas before we might have been forgetful, we'll have paperwork that will make us think about what we can do that's new and try new things".

She hopes that Active Support will become a framework that guides the company's work in the future.

"I hope that everything we do starts with Active Support so that, when new staff come, that's all they know





ARC's Active Support Coordinator, Christine Harcombe with Prestwood Staff, Jane Gibson, Hayley Doyle, Sandra Parry and Genevieve Singabrayen

so they pick it up very quickly. And I hope the service users feel that they've now got the support that feels more like it's right for them and not what's right for the staff.

"I believe in it", she says, "I believe in its effectiveness so I will continue to work with Active Support and hopefully carry people with me".

It isn't just the house manager who has new food for thought. Also, Genevieve Singabrayen, the company's clinical psychologist, commented that the training had helped her to reflect back on her practice, and that she could see the possibilities for the service users and the staff.

"I think some staff, who are much more on the pragmatist learning side, will enjoy the fact that they have a clear guideline to follow. So for them their job description will be much more obvious and clear. It should help the managers, service users and other staff to work effectively and positively".

She also feels that Active Support has a lot of potential to provide inspiration in those times when staff feel stuck.

"I think it will help me to move forward with some teams. Sometimes I think we have tried everything, but I think that people with profound learning disabilities will benefit from

**Active Support has a lot of potential to provide inspiration in those times when staff feel 'stuck'.**

Active Support. Today my eyes have been opened a little more to other ways of introducing new activities".

# A Job Well Done

"This is Shell working as a reporter. She is interviewing some people for the magazine".

**F**or just over a year eight people with learning disabilities, trained as reporters and photographers, have been trawling Wales for good news stories about Active Support. Together, they have helped to bring you the stories and pictures that make up our newsletters, and which have attracted considerable praise from readers all over the world.

Now, with four newsletters under their belts and the end of the project in sight, we wanted to know what they thought about the experience.

Michelle Williams, one of our reporters, said, "At first I was nervous

but after a period of time having weekly training sessions from Philip Ware, Reporter Team Coordinator, I got more aware of how, by asking the right questions, I could be better prepared to do interviews. The support I received made me more confident and I was looking forward to going out to interview people.

"The interview I enjoyed most was visiting Aran Hall residential school in Dolgellau. The Principal Duncan Pritchard stated, following Active Support training for staff, the results have been impressive. Active Support works very well with the young people.

"My opinion of the Active Support project is one of praise. I have seen the difference that Active Support training given to staff makes to individuals with learning difficulties. I would like to thank Philip Ware and the rest of the Active Support team for giving me the opportunity to take part".

Darren Whitby, one of our photographers, said "I've learned how to take different pictures and how to edit photos. I've also learned to ask members of the public's permission





before I take a photo. I feel really chuffed to see the magazine”.

One of the managers from the service that supports Darren commented, “It’s the highlight of his week when the newsletter arrives!”

Learning new skills has helped him in other ways too. “I’ve become more independent and I’m able to change things for myself”, he said.

Michael Gallagher from Anglesey commented, “I’ve learned about the camera; to look around; nice walk; sunshine; fun”. The picture of New York is one he took whilst on holiday.

Tracy Austin, who worked as a reporter with Michael said, “The



*New York Skyline by Michael Gallagher*

new people all over Wales and interviewing them”.

According to his house manager, our photographer Malcolm Larman, from mid Wales, has really benefitted from the project.

“Malcolm was always sort of interested in photography but having the right equipment and being given a job to do has given him a purpose, and it’s developed into a real interest for him. This has become his ‘thing’ what he does, and he’s really proud of what he can do. We’ve teamed him up with a support worker who’s also a photographer and they go out on photography walks together. He’s really more motivated now. It’s really good”.

Robbie Morris has also been bitten by the photography bug, to the extent that his support providers are setting up a camera club so he can continue to develop his interest. Frank Morris, the Manager at his house, says that he is really pleased with Robbie’s

increased confidence with the camera and his levels of interest. Robbie has proved himself to have a good eye for an interesting shot, as can be seen from his photo of the pony below”.

When we asked Phil Glyn Williams whether he’d like to go out to interview people for us he said it was something he’d always dreamed of doing. So did the experience measure up to his expectations?

“It was interesting”, he told us. “I really enjoyed the social contact; especially the tea and biscuits everyone gave us”. When asked whether he felt he had increased his self-confidence, Phil said that it had and that wearing a suit and tie to conduct the interviews helped him feel very professional. He added, “I liked working in a team and would like to do it again”.

We are very proud of our Ace reporter teams. It’s not every day that the press gets such high praise, but in this case it’s very well deserved.



*Pony by Robbie Morris*

Active Support project has been beneficial for the last 12 months. I learnt some journalism skills over the year. The best things that I did during the year was meeting



*Stream by Robbie Morris*



# Natural Born Enabler

Building skills and success with Active Support

Photos: Robbie Morris

**Y**ou know how it is... a manager or a member of staff goes on a training course and comes back full of an evangelical fervour that quickly turns to bewilderment when the rest of the staff team respond with a less than enthusiastic response.

In terms of Active Support, that's probably no bad thing. One of the underpinning principles is that a consistent approach to every goal is essential. As we tell people, it's easier to train ten support workers to do a task in the same way than it is to train a service user in ten different ways to do the same task. A maverick approach with a single staff member trying to introduce a new and revolutionary method is a sure-fire way to doom Active Support to failure.

But can a person working alone use Active Support effectively and is it possible for them to be using Active Support without even realizing it? We think the answer is yes, particularly after having spent a few hours with

Mr Ken Mason, woodwork tutor, in his workshop at The Hub, Values in Care's resource centre in Cilfynydd.

Ken began by teaching woodwork to his grandson who has autism. "There wasn't much around for him to do, so I thought maybe I could broaden his outlook by doing woodwork to give him a new interest", he told us. Ken went on to teach woodwork to people with special needs as part of Rhondda Cynon Taff's services and he's been with Values in Care since he retired two and a half years ago.

He had noticed that people with learning disabilities and autism often showed a fascination for woodwork, partly because of its sensory nature.

"People start off very simply, perhaps with planing, because many people really like the noise of the shavings coming off. We start by making small things and then move on to more ambitious projects".



"I really noticed a difference in one person who, before he came along to woodwork, didn't show any interest in anything, and he became top of the class – he was absolutely brilliant, but it was because we'd found something that could keep his interest.

"I enjoy it, and they seem to enjoy it. You get to know people, know their weaknesses and know their fears – some people are really afraid to hear the electric drill going, so then we don't use the electric drill. We use the hand drill. Some people are afraid to use the jigsaw when they start, so they cut things out by hand and then plane it off. We don't ask anybody to do what they don't want to do but there's always a way round, no matter what".

There are up to eight people, with support staff, in Ken's classes but sometimes he runs sessions 1:1 to help build up people's confidence to go on to join the larger group. He expects the same quality of work from the service users as he would from anybody else – it just takes a bit longer. It's good quality stuff made the old fashioned way. Ken assures us that everybody is progressing, no matter what their ability. It's a lot more than just woodwork.

"Some people come to the one-to-one sessions and want to talk about a problem they may have. So we sort their problem out first and then get down to some woodwork. I give them the best advice that I can but the thing is, if they're troubled, they need to relax. And after that they're always willing".

"Some people have severe autism and they have a pattern of doing things. With one person, no matter what he's going to be doing, he has to use the brace and bit first, so I arrange that for him – let him use the brace and bit and then cut one piece with a tenon saw, and after that he's happy to focus on what I've got planned for him".

**"People build up their esteem. They build up their pride. Their parents get a lot from it too because maybe they've never seen their child making anything. Maybe they've never received anything from their son or daughter".**

"We introduce noise gradually. Some people just can't tolerate a lot of noise, so we start off one-to-one and build it up slowly. After that they get less sensitive to it".

"With one person, the first thing I did was to saw a piece of wood. He was out of the door because he couldn't stand the noise. So I went out and just put gentle pressure on his hand to calm him down and took him back in, and we built it up from there. Now

I can give him a hammer and he'll hammer nails in and everything else! But that took about 6 months to get to that stage".

"People build up their esteem. They build up their pride. Their parents get a lot from it too because maybe they've never seen their child making anything. Maybe they've never received anything from their son or daughter. One of the people took home just something small and he gave it to his Mam in the car, and when she took it out of the bag she burst into tears. She came in to thank me".

"Everybody gains. They gain in their muscle power because woodwork is obviously a strenuous thing – sawing, planing, everything. The staff do it all too – I want them to appreciate just how difficult it is for the service users, so they have to do it too. If the service user's making a bookcase, then they'll do half and the staff will do half. We have ten minutes every day of 'Name the Tools', and it's always the service users who know more than the staff".

Everything Ken told us could be related to Active Support – a person-centred approach to each individual, meeting people where they are, setting goals and looking for new opportunities to move them further, being aware of what people find challenging and looking for solutions, having high but realistic expectations of what is possible, and offering abundant praise and encouragement. It's Active Support alright, and we wouldn't mind one of those bookcases ourselves!



# FAMILY DIMENSIONS

Over the past three years of the project, several managers have mentioned in passing that parents and carers have been really pleased about the changes in behaviour and the growth of independence that they've seen in their sons and daughters as a direct result of implementing Active Support. To explore this further, we went down to Cardiff to meet two families whose daughters are supported by the organisation Dimensions.

Lyndon and Maureen Francies weren't aware of the Active Support method, or the planning and paperwork and co-ordination that goes into implementing it successfully. But when Paula Manfield, the service manager, explained that it was the method they used to structure their support for their daughter, they were full of praise.

Dad Lyndon told us, "If that's the way they've supported Wendy... well, she's a totally different girl now to what she was. When she was at home she wouldn't let her Mum out of her sight. Since she's been here she's changed completely. It's changed our life as well as hers. She's more loving now than ever before. So the Active Support thing is fabulous".

Paula explained, "We knew we had to help Wendy become more independent. The first twelve months was difficult for her because she was very routinised in what she did with Mum and Dad and we had to break down a lot of those routines, not because of what suited the service

but because it was essential to help her to become more independent. If Wendy wanted anything then Mum and Dad would get it for her. It was something she'd come to expect"

"But here, when Wendy was washing her own dishes, there was no present coming at the end of it... because it was like, 'They're your dishes Wendy and they need washing up'. All of us have to do our washing and make the bed and cook the meals and all of those things. I think Wendy did struggle initially because she looked for a reward at the end of each chore and the reward was simply, 'Well done!' Whereas now you just do it now, don't you?" said Paula.

Wendy tells us that she gets her breakfast now and regularly makes coffee for everyone.

Her Dad comments, "She used to come in from being out wherever and she'd put her Walkman on, or put the telly on and change into her pyjamas. It could be two o'clock in the afternoon – didn't make any difference. She doesn't do any of that now".

It might not be essential for the family to know Active Support by name but

Paula tells us that it's really important to work closely with the rest of the family when starting to work with Active Support with their son or daughter.

"When a person with a learning disability moves away from their family home, you can forget that mother and father and brothers and sisters have been shut out when a person moves into a service and it can be very isolating for both sides. All the concentration is on the person and I think that parents need to be kept up to date and up to speed and given time to speak. What I find working with parents is they'll say, 'I can't believe she'll do this or that!'".

Sheila Exton and Arthur Exton were also unaware that staff were using Active Support to help their daughter, but they too have noticed the difference.

Sheila told us, "It has made a tremendous difference to our lives and Tracy has got independence now and living a life away from us. I think Tracy is more settled now. She has to make more decisions on her own. She's more grown up.

"She's got her own life now. I mean we're obviously interested in what she does but at the end of the day the whole point of Tracy being independent is the fact that if anything happens to us, Tracy has got a life and won't be out on a limb which she would be if she was living with us.

"We're appreciating that Tracy is doing what she wants to do. She doesn't have to rely on us now. She lives an independent life and that's what we wanted for her anyway".

## A Parent's Perspective on Active Support

# ONS



"Tracy is more settled now. She has to make decisions on her own. She's more grown up".



# Next Steps

Where to now? Following the success of the project in Wales, ARC expands its Active Support Services across the UK.

- **Presentations** – on what the Active Support model is, specifically aimed at Senior Managers, Board of Trustees, Service Managers and National and Local Conferences.
- **Active Support Training** – exploring how teams are promoting choice, independence and inclusion for service users within the service and looking at areas of disengagement. The training is especially beneficial for staff working with people with severe and profound learning disabilities but equally for people with autism and mild to moderate learning disabilities.
- **Interactive Training** – supporting managers to become Practice Managers and support their staff teams

to incorporate the model in service delivery.

- **Work-based Coaching and Mentoring** – working alongside managers and staff in the workplace to give practical, hands-on advice, support and guidance.
- **Development of an Implementation Plan** – tailored to meet the needs of your organisation and what organisations need to consider.

## Want to know more?

To find out more about ARC's Active Support Services and/or request a costed proposal tailored to your organisation's needs, contact:

**Christine Harcombe**

**Tel: 07701099861**

**[christine.harcombe@arcuk.org.uk](mailto:christine.harcombe@arcuk.org.uk)**



Cefnogwyd gan  
**Y Loteri Genedlaethol**  
Supported by  
**The National Lottery®**



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

For further information about Active Support and ARC Cymru, or to feedback about the newsletter please contact:

**Christine Harcombe**

Active Support Trainer/Coordinator  
[christine.harcombe@arcuk.org.uk](mailto:christine.harcombe@arcuk.org.uk)  
Tel: 07701099861

**Mandy Tilston-Viney**

Project Manager/Editor  
[mandy.tilston-viney@arcuk.org.uk](mailto:mandy.tilston-viney@arcuk.org.uk)

**Philip Ware**

Active Support Reporter Team Coordinator  
[philip.ware@arcuk.org.uk](mailto:philip.ware@arcuk.org.uk)  
Tel: 01246 555043

**The Reporter Team**

Tracy Austin, Darren Whitby, Michelle Williams, Michael Gallagher, Malcolm Larman, Stephen Coombes, Philip Glyn Williams, Robbie Morris

**ARC**  
Cymru

**actXve**  
SUPPORT

