

Working with the positives in Plymouth

When stakeholders providing and receiving social care in Plymouth first came together in August '09 to map their journey towards 'Putting People 1st', the city council were considered to be behind in the national league tables. By February 2010, just 6 months later they were out ahead: recording their progress on film, enabling others across the city and beyond to quickly understand what was happening, and how to join in and contribute.

Together we reframed their challenges from deficits into possibilities. Under the banner of "Everyone's a Winner" the focus emerged as *Achieving Aspirations through self directed support*.

In four shared workshops the language people used changed the way in which they understood how to enable people requiring support and their carers to take control of their lives, think about what they wanted to achieve, then choose & manage the means of support that would enable them to do this.

From Them	To Us
Service 'users'	People being supported to live normal lives
Overwhelming needs	Achieving aspirations
Off the shelf services	Customised access to activities in communities
Employed 'carers' with fixed roles	People across the sector, both employed and voluntary, with flexible support roles
Increasing demands	Sharing responsibility for allocating limited resources

How did we work?

Using Appreciative Inquiry and other strength based dialogue & design tools we involved people who use services, carers, service providers and commissioners from across the city from the outset. Participants began with story telling, answering questions like:

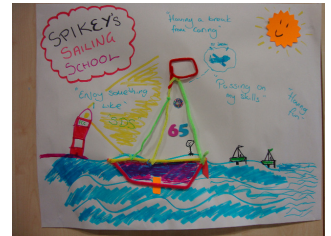
1. Tell a story about a time when you were successfully supported to achieve an aspiration, something that you really wanted to do.
 What happened? What did you do? What did others do?
 How did people behave? What made this so exceptional?

2. What do you value most about the ways in which you are currently supported?

3. If you had 3 wishes about the way you would really like to be supported in the future, what would they be?

4. You are already enjoying a renewed independence and are fulfilling all your own aspirations, & those of your family, friends and employer.

What are you doing? Who is involved? How is everyone behaving? How does it feel? What does it look like?



The principal of simultaneity – change begins from the first fateful question that we ask - played a big part in how quickly people moved forward together. Supported by the positive and anticipatory principals: positive emotions stretched people's thoughts, and actions, helping to identify and build enduring resources for the future; at personal, organizational and systems levels.

Creating an enduring Impact

People reflecting in the film of this innovative work talk about how rediscovering their own strengths and resources, **the things that they could and loved to do**, enabled them to find new ways to become the active determinants of their ongoing lives. Their stories continue acting as powerful and inspirational drivers for others.

Lesley Moore
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