

By Helena Gillis and Jeremy Weston

Background

Family Futures 2 is a partnership project, promoting joint working in Scotland between local authorities, the voluntary sector, parents and children and young people with special educational needs, and aiming to provide a forum for shared learning, lateral thinking and the innovative use of resources. The main activities of the project have been around person centred working, person centred planning and thinking differently about getting what we need to get a good life, not just good services. This was done through:

- Training into the values of person centred ways of working and an introduction to the tools of person centred planning
- Networks of person centred support
- Person centred plans for families
- An appraisal of what organisations need to do to support person centred ways of working, including person centred planning

Scottish Executive commitment to person centred ways of working

Given stated policy commitments of the Scottish Executive to person centred ways of working (through documents such as the *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill*, *Partnership for Care: Scotland's White Paper*, *The Same as You*, *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*, and *For Scotland's Children: Better Integrated Children's Services Report*) they need to ensure that strategies and financing are developed in a way that enable the different stakeholders (local authorities, voluntary organisations and service providers) to respond in a person centred way.

What do we mean by person centred ways of working and person centred planning?

In person centred ways of working people have rights and control over the services they receive and the lives they lead. In person centred planning¹ the aim is to enable the individual to play as central role as possible in planning for their present and future. The process seeks to build commitment to change from the people who love and support the individual, and the development of creative solutions to long-term problems.

Learning from the project and how to take this forward

Training

- The aims were to train mixed groups of parents and professionals around the values of person centred planning, and to provide them with person centred planning tools to use in their communities.
- Delegates tended not to be close work colleagues and so were unable to provide support to implement the training at work. Support at work from senior colleagues to implement the training has been varied - there is no 'top down' approach. In most organisations, the unequal power relationship of service providers and people who use services remains, limiting the impact of the training and resulting in very little joint work between professionals and parents. The greatest impact of the training has been a reflection on practice by professionals, and use of some of the planning tools to focus on the attributes of their clients. It is too early to tell whether

¹ Sanderson, H, Kennedy, J, Ritchie, P with Goodwin, G (1997) *People, plans and possibilities: Exploring Person Centred Planning*. Edinburgh: Scottish Human Services Trust.

this may lead to more fundamental changes to practice in the longer term. Not all delegates were left with a clear sense of what was meant by 'person centred' ways of working, given what some graduates have subsequently described in these terms. More support is needed for delegates to implement training after a course, both in terms of person centred ways of working in an organisation, and for non-professionals who do not have the support of an organisation.

- To address these issues, organisations need to see training in person centred support as part of a wider change programme. Resources must be provided for training providers to provide taster sessions in the values of person centred ways of working before recruiting delegates to longer courses. Service managers, people who use services and staff who work closely together need to attend training together to enable mutual support to implement training later. Training providers need to give delegates greater opportunity to think about what 'person centred ways of working' would mean within their own place of work, to help delegates to take the training forward. Organisations and experienced practitioners of person centred planning need to provide post-training support to delegates, including work around how to build partnerships with people who use services. Leadership development training may support non-professionals to implement their training. Independent banks of facilitators are required to support graduates to take forward their training and to allow control of a plan to be passed to the focus person of a plan.

Local and national person centred support groups

- The aims were to set up local and national networks with the intention of supporting people to take forward the Family Futures training in person centred ways of working.
- The local person centred support groups have a diverse membership, whose needs differ, and who want to proceed in different ways. These cannot be sustained without financial and organisational support in the long term. Groups need to be open to all graduates of training in a local area. Local banks of independent, experienced facilitators are necessary in local areas to support person centred planning, and to support graduates to implement the training.
- To properly support person centred ways of working, local authorities need to provide financial and organisational support for local person centred support groups. Local authorities must also provide resources to support national and international networking opportunities through sustaining the e-group, internet site, directory of planners, by holding events, or through meetings of the Family Futures partners. Steering groups that represent the diversity of membership should develop policies and action plans to take person centred planning forward in their area. Organisations that provide training should also support post-training support groups. Local groups should support banks of independent, experienced facilitators. Three of the Family Futures partners have made commitments to support local groups in their area, and a fourth partner will 'buddy' experienced facilitators with less experienced facilitators of plans. All four local authority departments aim to raise awareness through further training. Elsewhere, there are no resources available to sustain support groups in the long term, or any future work to take person centred planning forward or to support local banks of independent, experienced facilitators in their area.

Person centred plans

- The aim was to conduct research into the experiences of person centred planning for fifteen families, from parents and some focus persons' perspectives, as well as on the experiences of facilitators when working with these families.
- Families' experiences of planning have been overwhelmingly positive despite lack of support of organisations. There is a lack of general knowledge of person centred planning amongst families and organisations, as it is not available through services they provide or use. A lack of organisational commitment from services hampers expectations and experiences of person centred planning. Unequal relationships, that are not partnerships between families and service providers, obstruct families' control of their plans. Person centred planning is not a solution in itself, without services that are organised and work in a person centred way.

- To address these issues, resources must be provided to support further research and work with organisations to implement the major cultural change necessary, so that person centred planning is an automatic option available to families, whose services engage with as equals and partners. Organisations must give their commitment, borne out by action, to person centred planning and ways of working, to support this and families' control of plans. Resources should be made available for facilitators to access further training e.g. in Personal Futures Planning, and support from experienced facilitators. Funding must also be found to continue to support the planning for the families who have worked with the Family Futures project.

Organisations, person centred planning and person centred ways of working

- The aim was to conduct research on partner organisations' experiences of working to support person centred planning and ways of working in their organisations.
- Person centred planning and ways of working are not completely established in partner organisations' practice and there is also a lack of cross-departmental and cross-agency support of person centred planning, which compromises their support for person centred planning with families, and the impact of plans for families.
- Research must be resourced into what needs to happen for organisations to work in a person centred way that makes an impact, and to provide a set of examples of good practice, to resolve these issues. Partner organisations should build on some partners' experience of factors that work to support person centred planning and ways of working, such as: commitment across in a organisation (if this is true commitment backed by action); designated funding and personnel with the responsibility to do this; networks of multi-disciplinary working, and buddying of professionals and non-professionals.

Joint partnership projects

- These have not progressed as anticipated at the start of the project. Resources need to be provided for the continued support after the Family Futures project to partners who have begun some joint partnership work.

Key learning and the way forward

- Person centred planning has to happen in a person centred environment, but a lack of support from service providers for plans sometimes due to constraints from an organisation or management, a lack of support from senior management, and unequal relationships between people who use services and service providers prevent this from happening. Longer-term support after this project must be resourced for families who have had plans through this project. Greater support must be given to support delegates to take their training forward, through resourcing person centred support groups and local 'banks' of independent facilitators. Training for facilitators in a variety of tools must be resourced, to allow them to respond to individuals' needs flexibly. Without such flexible responses, individuals' needs are not met through person centred planning and arranging plans is difficult. It is too early to tell the longer-term impact of Family Futures 2 plans, and nationally there is a relative lack of evidence of the impact of person centred planning. Despite lack of support from organisations, in the shorter-term Family Futures plans have made a very positive impact on the families and continued support of planning is recommended.
- To move forward, resources must be provided for further work and research with organisations to support them in becoming person centred, and for further research on the impact of person centred planning. Support groups to facilitate delegates taking training forward have to be supported and resourced, by local authorities for example. Resources must be provided for more independent facilitators, and ongoing training, and the option of long-term support, from facilitators or other agencies, should be made available for families, if they require it.

Family Futures 2 performance indicators

Conduct an in-depth study of 12 plans.

- The researcher has followed 11 families from Family Futures 2 and 8 other families.

Project staff will plan with 15 families. Planners linked to the project via the network/project partnership will work with a further 200 families.

- The project has worked closely with 15 families, facilitating 9 plans.
- Planners linked to the project have worked with approximately 132 families.

Membership of the Family Futures network will be no less than 150 people. Two events will be held each year and a newspaper will be produced twice a year.

- Four national events and four newsletters have been produced.
- By the end of September 2003 there were 389 members of the network.

Set up at least three joint partner projects (ie. Local Authority, Voluntary Agency, SHS) to focus on specific areas of implication of person centred planning with children and young people.

- Two of our local authority project partners are in the process of establishing a Parents Reference Group.
- Family Futures chaired a cross-departmental, and cross-agency group meeting to look at how to take a coordinated approach to person centred ways of working in one local area.
- The Family Futures project is an advisory group member of a project established to support 'circles of support' for young people.

Train 75 facilitators (at least 30 to be non-professionals), and raise awareness of person centred planning with at least 400 people (including professionals and non-professionals).

- 8 training courses (147 delegates, including 56 carers) were held introducing the values of person centred ways of working and person centred planning tools.
- There has been awareness raising for 389 people through training events, and distribution of 1,000 newsletters.

Acknowledgements

Family Futures 2 is funded by the Scottish Executive's Special Educational Needs Innovation Grant Programme, from June 2002 to March 2004.

Family Futures 2 is a partnership between Scottish Human Services Trust, parent representatives, Fife Education Department, North Ayrshire Social Services, Moray Education Department, Dundee Education Department, Aberlour Childcare Trust and Circles Around Dundee.

We would like to acknowledge the help of the families who took part in the project. We would also like to thank our colleagues from SHS, Justine Davidson in particular, for their work throughout the project.

Further information

A full version, a summary version and a flyer version of this report can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.shstrust.org.uk>

You can contact us at: Scottish Human Services Trust, 1a Washington Court, Washington Lane, Edinburgh, EH11 2HA T. 0131 538 7717 Text T. 0131 477 3684 F. 0131 538 7719 E. general@shstrust.org.uk