

Independent Advocacy meets person-centred planning

(workshop report)

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This is a copy of a brief report which was written after a workshop of the same name which was held at the 2003 SHS conference.

This workshop was directed at people who had knowledge of person centred planning but little about advocacy, or vice versa. Consequently it begins with a very simple (and therefore incomplete) introduction to advocacy and to person centred planning.

Advocacy adds weight to what a person thinks and wants...

Independent Advocacy organisations find or provide people who can advocate for someone (here we're looking at advocacy by individuals for individuals rather than collective advocacy). Advocates fulfil some roles simply by being involved with a person, but they also act for them, pass on their wishes, views, hopes, ambitions or ideas to other people, and provide support for the person to express themselves. Unless the person can clearly instruct the advocate, the advocate needs to get to know the person well, and as much as possible about their aspirations, views and so on.

Person centred planning finds out what a person thinks and wants...

Person centred planning uses a range of techniques, tools and approaches to create an environment where a person and their allies can get to know the person better. One part of the planning investigates a desirable future for the person. Other parts support the development of support and action planning by the person and their allies.

There are links between the ideas, but few people know this...

Robert Weetman and Brenda Walker [NB: at the time working for SHS Trust] and Shaben Begum (Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance) used the 2003 SHS conference, to check out and clarify some thoughts about links between Independent Advocacy and person centred planning. We ran a workshop in which we talked about our ideas, asking for the input of participants as we went along.

We suggested that there were many potential links between the ideas and techniques used by advocates and those facilitating planning. We

were concerned that few people seemed to be talking about these. We said that to the best of our knowledge there were few people involved with planning who had a good understanding of advocacy, and few involved in advocacy who had a good understanding of planning.

The way forwards...

In general, workshop participants agreed with us and they were clear that our ideas were worth investigating further. Together we came to a number of further conclusions including:

- There are strong similarities in the perspective and aims of person centred planning and Independent Advocacy.
- It seems important to encourage those involved in one to find out about the other.
- Many of the tools and techniques used in person centred planning could be useful to those involved in advocacy.

Update (2006):

In the three years since this report was written some opportunities arose to invite advocacy organisations to send participants to a number of (partially grant funded) courses on person centred planning. More people from advocacy organisations are now involved in person centred planning. Participants were enthusiastic about the courses they attended.

Robert is keen to hear from Independent Advocacy organisations and groups which actively use person centred planning as part of their work.