DEVELOPING PERSON CENTRED APPROACHES IN SCHOOLS

What is a Person Centred Approach?

How can we prepare for Person Centred Reviews in schools?

How does this relate to Every Child Matters?

What are examples of good practice?

How can we build on what we are already doing?

How can we use Person Centred Thinking skills?

How can we develop one page profiles?

How can we adapt the curriculum?

What does Government Guidance say?

What shall we do next?

Pippa Murray
Helen Sanderson
This resource was written by Pippa Murray and Helen Sanderson
Design and layout by Julie Barclay

© Helen Sanderson Associates and ibk initiatives
2007

Helen Sanderson Associates
34 Broomfield Road
Heaton Moor
Stockport
Cheshire, SK4 4ND

ibk initiatives
Aizlewoods Mill
Nursery Street
Sheffield, S3 8GG
info@ibkinitiatives.com

ISBN 0 9550750 7 6

Published by HSA Press
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the young people and their families who share their experiences, Linda Jordan for supporting this work and all schools that have contributed to this resource:

Abbey Hill School, Stoke on Trent
Bents Green School, Sheffield
Bolling School, Bradford
Chapel Grange School, Bradford
Ellen Tinkham School, Devon
Hillcrest School, Bedfordshire
King Egberts School, Sheffield
Kingsmill School, North Yorkshire
Mill Water School, Devon
Norris Bank School, Stockport
Oakfield School, Wakefield
Sharrow School, Sheffield
Sunfield School, West Midlands
Contents

Introduction ................................................................................................. 7
A person centred approach ................................................................. 13
Section one: School Development ................................................... 25
Section two: Curriculum ........................................................................ 45
Section three: Reviews ........................................................................ 63
Examples .................................................................................................. 79
Legislation, policy and government guidance ......................... 115
And finally ............................................................................................... 131
Introduction

When I leave school, I want to…

…be a basketball player.
[Basim, aged 7]

…be a radio presenter.
[Jack, 16]

…build juggernauts in a nice way.
[Cole, 18]

…go to university. I want to be a journalist.
[Tanya, 17]

…be in Casualty.
[Lauren, 15]
This resource has come about in response to the learning of schools that have been involved in the person centred transition review programme\(^1\). As these schools extend the delivery of person centred reviews, they find they are making changes to all aspects of school life. For example, alterations to lesson plans allow for preparation for reviews to take place and cross curricular teaching methods enable a creative approach. The resource outlines many examples of such changes.

In addition to the specifics of reviews, enabling all students participate in their review has highlighted the necessity of taking an individual approach to teaching and learning. We address some of the challenging questions practitioners are asking and bring together some of the innovative practice we have seen over the past few years. We aim to support those people facilitating change in mainstream and special schools.

This piece of work reflects our knowledge at the present time: it is not the result of a comprehensive piece of research to uncover innovative practice. Rather it is the amalgamated findings from a variety of projects recently undertaken by Helen Sanderson Associates, ibk initiatives\(^2\) and Paradigm Consultancy and Development Agency\(^3\). We see this resource as a ‘first stage’ and invite you to contact us so that we can include your experiences and initiatives when we update this edition. We intend to build on this resource and report our learning back to you (see last page for contact details).

The examples we show have been developed as the result of the learning needs of particular children. They will work for other children, but they will not be appropriate for all children. We invite you to think about how you could make appropriate resources to meet the needs of individuals and groups you work with.

---

1 Valuing People Support Team commissioned Helen Sanderson Associates to deliver regional facilitator training for person centred transition reviews in schools across England.
2 ibk initiatives helps schools develop person centred approaches through a process of listening, consultation and facilitation.
3 Dynamite [2006-08] is a two year programme from Paradigm supporting the introduction of self-directed support and individualised funding specifically aimed at transition. As part of this programme, Paradigm worked with several of the schools featured in this report. www.paradigm-uk.org
We use the terms child and young person interchangeably. Although the majority of our work has been with Secondary Schools, some of our examples come from Nursery, Infant, and Junior Schools. The different sections that follow - school development; curriculum; and reviews - have emerged from conversations with practitioners. We have integrated participation - with students and their parents - into all sections because it is central to personalised learning.

Each section starts with an overview of legislation, policy and government guidance. We make suggestions for actions settings could take to implement the legislation and policy recommendations. We give examples of ways in which schools are putting person centred approaches into place. And we invite you to think about what you could do next.

The ‘Further information’ section at the end of each chapter includes contact details for materials and organisations referred to in the text. Details of legislation referred to can be found in the section ‘Policy, legislation and government guidance’.

The context map gives an overview of the work. With the aim of putting children at the centre of their education, we outline our foundations; the legislation and policy that will help us reach our goal; and give ideas for actions we can take along the way. We recognise we are on a journey together and look forward to the discoveries we will make along the way.
Values

2020 Vision

Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People
Valuing People

Every Child Matters
Removing Barriers to Achievement

SENDA
SEN Code of Practice
SEN Toolkit

Education and Inspection Act
Common Core of Skills and Knowledge

Involving Parents
Raising Achievement
Every Parent Matters

Person Centred Transition Reviews

Taking control—putting young people and families in control

Tools and Approaches

Tools and Approaches

Person Centred Thinking Skills

Voice of a Child
A person centred approach to curriculum development

A person centred approach
A person centred approach
This section sets the scene. We outline our approach and present a backdrop to the work.

Section one: School development
This section addresses the cultural change necessary to develop and embed a person centred approach. We look at ways in which schools are extending their capacity to listen to children through developing policies, extending training and forming partnerships.

Section two: Curriculum
In this section we look at ways in which schools are developing a holistic curriculum supporting rights, independence and inclusion. We look at ways of taking a person centred approach to assessment, planning, recording, and innovative ways of reporting back to young people and their families.

Section three: Reviews
Schools around the country have been taking part in a Valuing People initiative promoting the practice of person centred reviews at Y9. We report on the success of this initiative, giving examples from Y9 reviews and the recent development of person centred reviews at Y10. We outline ideas for making all reviews person centred.
Examples
We have included an examples section at the end of the resource giving details of materials used and referred to in previous sections. These examples, and others we do have not the space to include, will be shown on the following websites:

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk
www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

If you would like them on the website and/or in an updated publication of this resource, please send any examples that you would like to see included to: pippa@ibkinitiatives.com.

Legislation, policy and government guidance
We present a summary of the key documents promoting the development of a person centred approach. We outline the possibilities they offer to support development work and the requirements or expectations they place on schools.

And finally
We conclude with young people reminding us that they want school to equip them to lead ordinary lives.
a person centred approach

Young people leading
Positive regard
Trust in the capacity of others
Learning from our own experience
Networking
Creative action
Continuing process
Discrimination
Reflection
Discussion

Every child matters: at the centre of it all
Parents at the centre

Removing barriers
Children with special educational needs

2020 Vision: Personalised learning for all

Societies should be
Vale rights and equality of opportunity
Improving the lives of disabled people
“Tread softly for you tread on my dreams.”

WB Yeats
We are at a time of great change and innovation in education. The past ten years has seen an increase in the numbers of disabled children attending mainstream schools; many special and mainstream schools are in the process of co-location; the general increase in awareness about the rights of disabled people has led to an ongoing search for ways in which to improve learning outcomes for disabled children; and the children’s rights and participation agenda has highlighted the need to involve children and young people - including those with severe and complex impairments - in decisions regarding their own lives and about the development of services they use.

Social care is undergoing a similar transformation with the introduction of direct payments⁴ and individualised budgets⁵. Such changes are the result of the growing recognition of the rights disabled people have to live ordinary lives and the understanding that their exclusion is a loss for everyone:

Disabling barriers - such as discrimination, the built environment, and policy design - have a damaging effect on life chances and lead to many disabled people living in poverty, social exclusion and with low educational outcomes. The result is that many disabled people face social and economic marginalisation from society. These poor outcomes for disabled people create a high level of inequity.

This matters for disabled people themselves, as well as carers and families. It also matters for society as a whole, because we lose the talent and contributions of disabled people.

⁴ A Direct Payment is a payment to individuals who have been assessed as needing services, to arrange their own care.
⁵ in Control is a national programme to promote a self-directed support approach to social care.
Our schools are well placed to make a difference to this experience. But they bear traces from our long history of exclusion and discrimination:

Disabled people often do not achieve the qualifications that they could at school owing to a range of factors – including negative experiences of schooling, low expectations from teachers, special schools lacking an academic orientation, and a lack of education provision during hospital and other absences.

p.127 Improving Life Chances, 2005

This backdrop is forcing an examination of the barriers to learning experienced by disabled children:

...the SEN system is demonstrably no longer fit for purpose and there is a need for government to develop a new system that puts the needs of the child at the centre of the provision. ...the government needs to develop a child centred approach with regard to each stage of the statementing process: assessment of needs, allocation of resources and placement.

p. 6, House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006

Many of the practitioners we talked with reported they were engaged in an organic process led by children and young people and that their growing awareness is leading them to question the efficacy of the special education system. Those professionals working with students with severe and complex impairments told us how challenging it is to raise expectations at the same time as accepting the limitations of impairment. They acknowledged there is much they do not know, and perhaps can never know, when their pupils cannot express themselves through a recognised system of communication. However, as the examples in the pages that follow demonstrate, acceptance of not knowing, assuming competency, focussing on emotional well being and acting accordingly is key to the delivery of quality education.
As we move from a culture of dependency for disabled people to one of rights and independence, we are being forced to ask searching questions:

- How do we deliver a meaningful education to children and young people with severe impairments? How do we ensure that all students, including those with degenerative conditions, are appropriately challenged and stretched? How do we openly value the variety of contributions students make to the class/school?
- How can staff in our special schools support their mainstream colleagues? How do we ensure disabled children are fully included in mainstream schools? How do we raise standards to meet the ordinary aspirations of disabled young people?
- How do we improve outcomes for disabled students when they leave school? How do we prepare disabled children and young people for life after school? What are we preparing them for?
- How do we support families who are frustrated by the slow process of change? How do we support families whose view of the future might be different from ours?

In order to gain the maximum benefit from the sea of change, special school leaders have a unique opportunity to develop a policy of systematic innovation and support their staff to work creatively. Staff taking up this challenge are clear leaders of change in a position to develop expertise and confidence to be shared with their colleagues in special and mainstream schools. All those engaged in taking this work forward are making a contribution towards the dismantling of disabling barriers. As with any large scale change, we are at different starting points and face the tension between dealing with the overall culture and the specifics of organisation and system change.
Our approach to facilitating change

The foundation of our approach to facilitating change lies in our values. We believe that impairment is an ordinary part of our human experience and that children and young people with severe impairments, those who are perceived as being the most difficult to include within our present education system, have much to offer everyone. We have learned that when we include everyone, the system is better for all of us. The second value underpinning our work lies in our commitment to the values of a person centred approach. This approach, advocating positive regard for others at the same time as being true to ourselves, guides our ethics and provides our framework.

We know from our experience so far that this work is challenging. We aspire to a way of working that supports continual reflection on what we are doing and how we are doing it. We look at where we are now, decide where we want to go, and who we need to help us get there. We are prepared to challenge discrimination when we encounter it, and be aware of our own practice. As we walk alongside others, we do our best to engage in a continual process of self-reflection with regards to the way in which we are walking our talk - in relation to both the smallest
of details and the largest of questions. And in addition, the authentic hearing of children’s voices, especially those of children who do not use language to communicate, requires that we think carefully about the ways we hear those views and then respond. We need to be aware of our personal and institutional power and take the greatest of care not to abuse that.

With our foundations and process of reflection in constant awareness, we engage in creative action involving all key players as equal partners. Our actions reflect our principles: we frequently encounter barriers but that does not stop us - it inspires us to uncover creative solutions; we gather what we need to develop our work further; we share our learning and celebrate our successes; we learn about difference and commonality; we enjoy the connections we make along the way.

Our guiding principles
In order to ground practice in tried and tested theory we outline the six pre-requisites to the successful implementation of person centred approaches in education developed by Carl Rogers⁶:

1. Leadership - secure individual trusting in capacity of others. For example giving staff autonomy; sharing responsibility of learning process with others - staff, students and parents.

2. Facilitators provide learning resources from within himself and his own experience; from books, materials or community resources. Facilitators provide a facilitative learning environment - an atmosphere of realness, of caring and of understanding listening is evident.

3. Need for support groups for facilitators where they do not have to defend their point of view, can freely discuss successes or failures, problems faced, difficulties unresolved.

4. **Student develops own programme of learning** - alone or in co-operation with others. Exploring her own interests she makes choices as to her own learning direction and carries responsibility for the consequence of those choices.

5. **The focus is primarily on fostering a continuing process of learning with students developing self-discipline and setting their own goals.**

6. **Students should evaluate their own learning.** This will give them access to a deeper learning which will be pervasive in the life and behaviour of the student.

We discovered practical application of elements of this approach in all the schools we worked with and give examples of them throughout the resource. The greater extent to which a school, knowingly or unknowingly, is working to each of the six strands the greater success they appear to be having in giving pupils opportunities for developing decision making skills. All the examples throughout this resource reflect one or more aspects of these six guiding principles. We invite you to reflect on these principles, engage in discussion around them in your staff teams, looking at the ways you are already engaging with them and noticing areas you could further extend their application.

**Person centred planning**

In spite of the similarity in title, person centred planning with disabled people has had little connection to the work of Carl Rogers. Person centred planning in this context is more widely understood as the adoption of strategies and techniques putting the disabled person at the centre. Adopted by individuals and families in the UK who heard about techniques being successfully developed through the inclusion movement in the USA and Canada, person centred planning is now being widely promoted through the government White Paper, Valuing People, as a means of broadening participation and promoting rights, choice, independence and inclusion:
“Can my child’s review also be done in this way?” Mum
When we use the term ‘person centred’ we mean activities which are based upon what is important to a person from their own perspective and which contribute to their full inclusion in society. Person centred planning discovers and acts on what is important to a person. Person centred approaches design and deliver services based on what is important to a person.

...These approaches work to use resources flexibly, designed around what is important to a person from their own perspective and work to remove any cultural and organisational barriers to this. People are not simply placed in pre-existing services and expected to adjust, rather the service strives to adjust to the person. ... [Person centred approaches] strive to build a person centred organisational culture pp11 & 16, Valuing People, 2001

Valuing People makes it clear that person centred planning is limited and cannot substitute for quality leadership, adequate resources, skilled and energised staff or service development work and system changes.

**Personalisation of learning**
The move towards personalisation of learning lies in the context of a move towards personalisation in all services:

Overarching vision for delivering personalisation and empowerment: by 2015, all young disabled people will have the opportunity to be fully involved in the personalised planning of their future activities and provision. This includes getting the right support (including advocacy) at school, from child and adult health and social services (where appropriate), from an informed personal adviser, and from all other relevant agencies and individuals.

P141, Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People, 2004

Developments within special education are taking place at the same time as significant authority and responsibility has been devolved to schools. The call to place children at the centre of their learning is being hailed as the way forward to large scale improvements in our entire education system:
We need to provide a personalised education that brings out the best in every child, that builds on their strengths, enables them to develop a love of learning; and helps them to grow into confident and independent citizens, valued for the contribution they make.

p. 49, Removing Barriers to Achievement, 2004

And one which allows disabled children to be at the centre of innovative practice:

We will:

Put children with SEN at the heart of personalised learning, helping schools to vary the pace and approach to learning to meet individual children’s needs.

p. 50, Removing Barriers to Achievement, 2004

**Education for life**

The ethos behind our education system is that of providing young people with the skills they need for life. Improving Life Chances identifies four key areas as the most important determinants of disabled people’s life chances:

- Empowered citizens with choice and control over how additional needs are met
- Support for families with young disabled people
- Smooth transition into all aspects of adulthood, and
- Improved employability

p. 53, Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People, 2004

The five outcomes of Every Child Matters (2003) - being healthy; being safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution and economic well being – are central to this debate. An education for life means an education enabling young people make choices about what they want to do, where they would like to go, how they would like to live, how they stay safe, and who they would like to support them.

Many disabled young people need support to live the lives they choose.
The vision for the future of social care outlined in the 2004 Green Paper, Independence, Well Being and Choice, rests upon people who need services having more control over their lives, more choices about how they live, a say about the services they use and the way they are developed. One of the key proposals to deliver this vision includes the wider use of direct payments and individual budgets. It is essential that young people learn the skills and develop confidence to direct their support. And young people with complex impairments need to have confidence that the way in which they express their likes and dislikes is recognised and responded to.

**Further information**


*in Control*  
A key recommendation of the Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People was to pilot a new system of Individual Budgets. Based on the belief that people who need support can control their own lives and be full citizens, in Control is developing Individualised Budgets - people know what they are entitled to and can control their money as much as they want.  
www.in-control.org.uk

*Person Centred Thinking and Planning*  
For information go to www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk
Section one: School Development

What could you try?

1. Joint Vision
Develop a joint vision (it need only be about one aspect of school life); consult with the whole school community. Report back fully, making changes in light of findings and available resources.

2. Match skills and interests
Carry out an audit to find out the skills and interests of all staff (including auxiliary staff). Match these skills and interests to activities needed to support the pupils and school. Encourage staff to identify particular interests and where possible support their training. Support innovative practice by allowing staff to work creatively. Create opportunities for staff to share their learning with each other.

3. Working with parents
Host a parent support group and ask parents what training/information they would like. Keep abreast with parent support groups in the area, inviting them in to talk to parents. Produce a regular accessible newsletter for parents telling them about events, future plans etc. Support parents set up a forum to initiate and develop projects that benefit the whole school community.
4. Joint training
Provide staff, parents and governors with a variety of joint training opportunities including: communicating with, listening to and involving disabled children with complex impairments; working with parents; national initiatives linked to current legislation, policy and practice e.g. In Control, Dynamite, person centred approaches, transition pathways, Circles of Friends etc; local and regional initiatives; and more focussed sessions on particular topics as appropriate e.g. Makaton; PECS; ICT etc.

5. A practice based approach to training
Develop a practice based approach to professional development and training that is integrated with and running parallel to daily practice and comes from the particular needs of the children staff are working with.

6. Training on person centred approaches
Develop a package on person centred approaches for SENCOS to deliver as INSET training. (This could be done as a community of schools.)

7. Share and celebrate together
Create regular opportunities for pupils, parents, staff and governors to share learning and celebrate achievements!

8. Link Up and Share
Build links between schools – especially between mainstream and special schools - to share learning, training and staff development. Develop partnerships with local businesses, universities, school communities, voluntary agencies etc

9. Ask the children
Have an on going process of consultation with pupils. For example, have a poster on the classroom wall for ‘things we like/don’t like’
10. Research/evaluation/monitoring practice
Use the Self Evaluation Process (SEF) in ways that support strategic planning and professional development.

Examples of innovative practice
In order to build capacity for developing innovative practice supporting a sustainable person centred approach, the schools we talked with emphasised the importance of enabling a culture of change through:

- Strong leadership taking account of national initiatives.
- Embedding new developments within policies, protocols and practice.
- A rigorous programme of staff development.
- Involving students, including those with severe and complex impairments, in shaping the development of the school.
- Involving parents.
- Linking with partner organisations.

- Strong leadership taking account of national initiatives

Before personalised learning was put on the national agenda, the senior leadership team at one school recognised the importance of raising standards by allowing staff develop their own interests and work to their strengths. Commissioning external consultants from The Pacific Institute (tpi), staff take part in the Investment in Excellence Programme. This supports participants to think in ways to create success, set and achieve goals, understand how to make positive changes, how to enhance growth, learn to motivate and
engage others through providing positive feedback allowing them to also learn, grow and realise their potential at the same time. The training has given staff confidence to develop their own ways of working and to reflect on their practice. Staff then incorporate elements of this training into their teaching through the delivery of ‘Go For It!’ a tpi programme for 14 - 16 year olds.

Students and staff at a school in the North of England worked together, using a Y9 person centred review format, to review the entire school. The next step in this process is to feed the findings into the School Improvement Plan. And the school leadership team used the Y9 person centred review approach to review the staffing team. Their next step is for staff teams to develop Essential Lifestyle Plans.

- Embedding new developments within policies, protocols and practice

The 2006 – 07 School Improvement Plan at one secondary special school reflects their commitment to personalised learning in a number of ways:

**SIP objective:**

(a) Pupils have a personalised curriculum

(b) The school has a reliable and flexible bank of staff to aid in more person centred approach to learning, in addition to class teams.

**Action:**

- Staff audit of interests and skills
- Termly review of what’s worked and what hasn’t (in whole KS team) feeding into future planning
- Mentor training for LSAs and teachers
- Regular dedicated meeting time for mentors and staff member (mini-appraisal)
- Senior LSAs (grade 3) class based who would have additional responsibilities – link to improving classroom management

---

7 Essential Lifestyle Planning is a guided process for learning how someone wants to live and for developing a plan to help make it happen.