

choice and control for carers facilitator guide

learning outcome

Your staff will recognise the importance of choice and control in carers' lives and will be able to identify flexible solutions with carers which meet their own identified needs and aspirations.

learning method

Case studies and PowerPoint presentation.

time required

Approximately 1.5 hours.

facilitator notes

1. With the government emphasis on prevention, protection, partnership and personalisation, increasing numbers of carers are going to be called upon to provide care in people's homes. Adult Services will need therefore to ensure that self directed support is applied not just to the disabled person but to the whole family. This will involve thinking about how we can ensure carers retain choice in the way carer support is provided and encourage take up of Direct Payments and personal budgets. The practicalities involved in taking up personal budgets will need to be fully explained as well as the logistics of employing personal assistants/care assistants
2. Before embarking on this activity you are advised to familiarise yourself with the relevant government guidance on personalisation as well as background information on how this agenda impacts on carers. Possible sources include:

The principles of social care reform

www.dh.gov.uk/en/MediaCentre/Speeches/DH_117331

Putting People First Without Putting Carers Second

Available: www.princessroyaltrust.org.uk

Personalisation briefing: Carers and Personalisation

Available: www.scie.org.uk

Carers Assessment Guide

Available: www.carersuk.org

activity eight - level 2

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You will also need to find out how self directed support for carers is being embedded into your local authorities' policies and procedures.

3. Kick off your session by encouraging participants to discuss in pairs a situation of when they were denied choice or control over an important decision in their lives and where they were only offered a fixed solution. Ask participants the following questions:
 - How did this make you feel?
 - What impact did the lack or loss of choice and control have on you and others?

The aim is to help staff to recognise the importance of choice and control in their own lives and increase their understanding of how carers may feel when offered restricted 'choices' that do not meet their needs and preferences.

4. Use the slides contained in activity eight PowerPoint to draw out key learning points in relation to carers and the personalisation agenda, and how this relates to each participant's own experience of losing choice and control. For example you might wish to encourage participants to think about the problems they themselves experienced when being offered a limited choice and how this can also pose difficulties for carers e.g. when a carer is informed that they can only receive a carer's break in the form of regular residential care when what they really want and need is a one off holiday together with the cared for person.

Follow on with your own presentation on the range of services that are available to carers in your local area. Ideally you should include sources of support and information that are available:

- Across agencies e.g. local charters, carer strategies, Carers Direct, useful websites, information directories
- From the local authority e.g. carers assessments and carers personal budgets, carers vouchers, information packs, advice
- From health e.g. GP registration, emergency respite service
- From the voluntary sector e.g. local carers support projects/centre, carer support groups.

If time allows, you may wish to invite a speaker e.g. from a local carers project or voluntary organisation, to share information on what they provide and examples of how they have supported carers.

5. Ask participants to split into small groups. Each group to consider one case study included in activity eight handout (F, G, H and I). (Encourage participants to think creatively and to move away from the more traditional models of support to carers). Invite a volunteer from each group to provide feedback.

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6. In addition to the specific issues which each case study raises, you may wish to highlight a few key points that are common to all the case studies:
- Agreed solutions need to relate to the desired outcomes identified by the carer. Carers should not be required to 'fit in' with a set menu of solutions
 - With increasing pressure on public sector budgets a practitioner will need to work in partnership with the carer to think creatively about different options rather than fixed solutions. Carers themselves may often come up with a cheaper and more cost effective option to meet a particular need, for example the purchase of a single piece of telecare equipment might enable to carer to leave the cared for person for short periods and could prove a cheaper option than the provision of a sitting service. Some solutions can also be quite straight forward with no cost attached, for example providing a leaflet or a telephone number
 - It is essential to give the carer the help they need to have a voice so that they can express what is important to them. Bear in mind that what is important to you is not necessarily important to them
 - We cannot as practitioners make assumptions about a particular set of solutions for certain groups of carers. Family dynamics can vary depending on cultural backgrounds. Flexibility and creativity is therefore crucial. For example it may be appropriate to allow a member of the family to be directly employed where there is not other culturally sensitive service available
 - Carers perceptions, expectations and understanding of services will differ across cultures; therefore it is important that our processes are sensitive and enabling towards carers
 - Any information we provide on services must be clear and appropriate to the carer and we should check out that the information we have given to the carer has been understood
 - Finding the right solutions for a carer is not just down to social care. Often the right solution depends on the co-operation of other services eg. health, housing, education, leisure, libraries and transport. In the light of the Equality Act 2010 it is essential that all public authorities evaluate their current practices towards carers and ensure their rights are upheld where necessary
 - Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) carers may feel more comfortable accessing services provided by BAME community organisations, but we cannot assume this will always be the case.

What other approaches might I consider?

- Identify a DVD which will help participants to consider the importance of finding solutions which are tailored to the individual carer. Useful DVD resources/websites include:

Mutual Caring Multimedia Resources

Available: www.learningdisabilities.org.uk

SCIE TV: personalisation www.scie.org.uk

Listening to Carers

Available: www.hertsdirect.org

Mental Health: Ethnic Minority Carer Experiences

www.healthtalkonline.org

Common core principles covered by this activity: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8.