

## **Time, Ability, Motivation and Responsibility for the Provision of Quality of Life Care for the Residents of Supported Accommodation Group Homes**

Most people in the general community have an intellectual ability avenue far in excess of the time available in each day to use this. They are unable to implement but a fraction of the activities for which their intellectual ability allows. People frequently say, “I wish I had the time to do this or that”.

It is the complete reverse for people with almost any level of intellectual disability. They have limited intellectual ability to make meaningful use of but a fraction of the time they have in each day.

It is common knowledge that most people in the general community get bored and restless if they have few meaningful activities to occupy their time. People with an intellectual disability are no exception. When they have little to do, their behaviour frequently worsens, as they have insufficient intellectual ability to understand consequences.

Therefore, it is important that people with an intellectual disability are actively encouraged to engage in a range of activities to improve their quality of life, to enhance their skills and to help improve their behaviour.

The old Institutions were notorious places for the residents doing nothing all day and every day but look at four walls. Plenty Residential Services, at University Hill, Bundoora, is little different, despite being an up-market version of the old Janefield Institution. There is little sign on a Saturday or Sunday of the residents being just taken for a walk around the grounds. Clearly, they do little more than remain in their units looking at four walls.

Minder care, rather than quality of life care through the residents receiving consistent interaction, developmental and social activities either per se, or through a structured procedure called “Active Support”, is frequently the case in most supported accommodation group homes.

The department’s *Active Support Fact Sheet*” says, “Active Support” promotes levels of resident participation in meaningful activities through effective engagement between staff and residents. The Active Support Model provides a framework in which staff plan with and/or for residents in respect of their involvement in activities of daily living within their home and the community.

Studies both in the UK and NSW have demonstrated that the use of the Active Support Model significantly increases levels of resident engagement in activities of daily life.

Nothing will change with regards to staffing and rostering arrangements in the house. **It is only how staff time is utilised** and how events are recorded in the house.

The Active Support Framework provides a structure to support staff to plan for activity, support requirements and organisation more fully and effectively.

### **WHY IS ACTIVE SUPPORT IMPORTANT?**

**"Participating and contributing are important to people's sense of worth"**

All people spend most of their time participating in activities rather than doing nothing. Some of the things we do are chores or hobbies, some looking after ourselves, or helping others, some having a good time with our friends or having a well earned rest with a favourite pastime. We make choices, but rarely choose to do nothing.

**Such participation, or engagement, in activity is a big part of what we think of as quality of life. It:-**

- helps keep us fit and mentally alert
- allows us to express who we are
- establishes common interests with other people
- provides the basis for friendships and for living together
- develops our talents and allows us to show what we can do and,
- is the means by which we look after ourselves and our daily needs.

**People with learning disabilities need help to participate fully**

Having an intellectual disability often results in a lack of independence in arranging the activities of everyday life. There is a knowledge and skills gap which good support can help to fill. This means planning for the best use of time and giving people as much help as they need to get things done for themselves. With sufficient planning and support, everybody can:

- participate in activities and have a full day regardless of their ability
- contribute even if they haven't got all the skills needed for a particular activity
- take on their share of responsibility and,
- be involved in things they like to do and make informed choices.

**Planning is a way of helping people; it shows commitment**

**The Disability Services Commissioner says:-** *"Management must develop a culture of continuous improvement, more efficient and effective work processes and more time and resources spent on planning rather than reacting to problems and crisis".*

[http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au/downloads/dsc\\_strat\\_plan\\_web.pdf](http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au/downloads/dsc_strat_plan_web.pdf)

Most of us have a good idea of what we are going to do each day. We all make and use plans. We have a basic routine, we make appointments, we keep diaries, we make lists. We often feel like we've got too much to do, so we have to plan how to fit it all in. In contrast, people with learning disabilities often have too little to do. They spend time waiting, perhaps bored, for the next opportunity to do something constructive. Planning for a full day can help people lead more fulfilling and valued lives.

### **Providing support bridges the gap between what people can and cannot do**

It is easier for people to control their lives and meet their day to day needs when they are sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable to act independently. There are many things which people with learning disabilities cannot entirely do for themselves. Everyone, though, has skills and can be involved in every activity if given enough direct assistance. How to assist people who cannot do things independently and how to match the size of activity steps to their abilities is covered.

### **EXTRACTS FROM “BOUND TO CARE” AN ANTHOLOGY OF FAMILY EXPERIENCES BY RESCARE UK**

“It is a great shame when so much valuable time is spent on paperwork instead of where it really matters, providing a nurturing environment for our loved ones. Our family members are human beings, but because they serve no obvious useful purpose to the community, they are generally treated as second-class citizens.”

“There was a garden and play area, but it required staff to take the residents and stay with them. As the garden was out of sight of the house, this activity was never given high priority. Staff preferred to stay in the house and watch the television.”

“It has always been understood that caring for people involved encouraging social interaction, for example, through staff playing (interacting) with residents. Shortage of staff resulting from lack of resources was always blamed. **No one ever made it compulsory for staff to involve residents in activities.**”

“A social worker from a child assessment unit said, You'll have to get on our backs, if you want anything. I know it shouldn't be like that, but we only take notice of those who really shout for what they want.”

[http://www.field.org.au/sector/case\\_study/active\\_support.html](http://www.field.org.au/sector/case_study/active_support.html)

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