Person-centred and community based working

(strengths based approaches)

Foreword

Each time we breathe, we are reminded of what it is to be human. On the inbreath we encounter our deepest personal yearning for life, and both on the outbreath and inbreath we come face to face with our interdependence with the world that surrounds us.

We are all at once individuals with personal needs, and members of a wider community with irreplaceable gifts and contributions, to the wellbeing of the whole community and the natural world.

As we have personal and community natures, we can never be truly independent, unless we are also interdependent, put simply we need to be needed. We need each other and our natural surroundings to be healthy and safe and to live a ful lling life.

Living a full life is Person-centred Community Living in motion and this handbook of the same name is a practical guide as to how social care workers can cheer on the movement towards full citizenship for everyone. It provides a compass for those searching out practical ways of ensuring people have a life of their own choosing; not just a service that has been prescribed for them.

This handbook is for troublemakers, people who are interested in breaking people out of prison, people like the Biblical character of Joshua, who wanted to see the walls of institutionalism "come tumblin' down". It is also for people who want to create genuine and truly loving community alternatives to institutional programmes, while making sure that services are there in reserve when needed. It's for people like you, committed to ensuring that the will and preference of people who you support, people often at risk of not having their gifts recognised and received and not being fully heard and valued.

This is more than a practical guide or an easy to follow playbook for troublemakers and jailbreakers; it is also an acknowledgement of workers from a wide variety of disciplines who are committed to ensuring the full participation of the people they serve.

It is so refreshing to read a publication that says plainly:

that we love and value all our citizens equally;

that we will do what we must to ensure that everyone can participate at the centre of natural and diverse communities;

that the practitioners who walk alongside people who have been exiled to the margins are amongst our most prized national treasures and our torchbearers for a more inclusive future.

Onwards, and remember stay in trouble!

Cormac Russell, Managing Director, Nurture Development
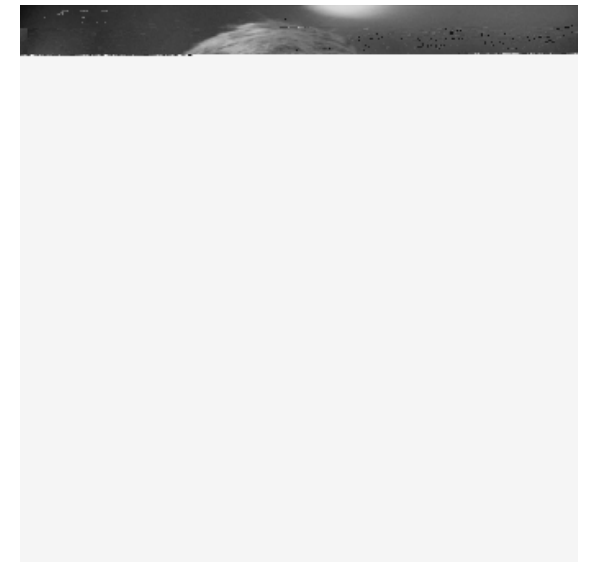
Acknowledgements

Skills for Care and North West Employers would like to thank the providers, community services and local authorities involved including:

Tameside Local Authority, Greater Manchester

The Grange, Benenden

Wargrave House, Newton-le-Willows

Introduction

Person-centred and community based working (strengths based approaches)

Skills for Care worked together with North West Employers and providers to learn more about what Person-centred and community based working means and why it's important. Focusing on a person's strengths is about what people 'can do' and what's important to them, rather than purely focusing on their care and support needs.

This resource contains information, ideas and bite-size learning for adult social care employers and their employees to learn about person-centred and community based working. We've used stories and examples of what providers told us works well and is important for people to live good lives.

You'll find key information about person-centred and community based working across social care settings including that focuses on the many benefits this can bring to people supported to have valued connections, reduce social isolation and promote good physical and mental wellbeing.

The guide is relevant for:

Contents

This guide is interactive so you can use the buttons below, buttons along the top and (purple) sub-menus to navigate through the document making it quicker and easier to find what you need.
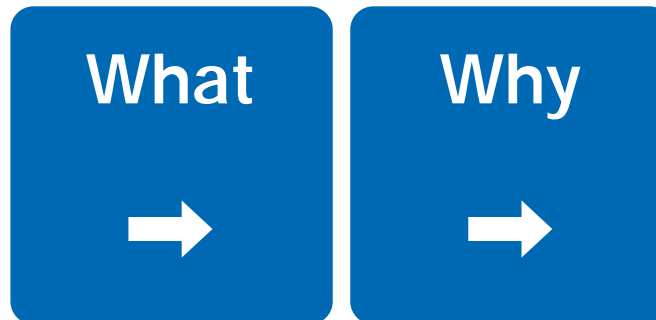
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What is person-centred and community based working?

Person-centred and community based working (strengths based approaches) Introduction

Person-centred and community based is about 'what's strong, rather than what's wrong'.

There are different ways of describing person-centred and community based working. You may hear people talking about using skills and talents, strengths and assets, place based approaches, building community capacity. All these terms have the same focus, which is to support people to live good lives, through what they are able to do for themselves, what their community can offer, as well as what they can offer the community.

It's also about the principles of autonomy, choice, self-determination, freedom and responsibility. These principles underpin being person-centred and taking a strengths approach, as well as being embedded in legislation in the Care Act 2016 (updated) and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Remember a community can be where a person lives, a community of interest, a faith community, a virtual online community, really anything that provides connection and a sense of belonging.

> We believe that being person-centred is also about being relationship-centred. We mapped our local assets to learn more about our relationships both inside and outside of the organisation. This really helped us to collaborate and connect the young people we support with local community groups.

Chris Powell, **Registered Manager Wargrave House, Newton-le-Willows.**

In this section:

[What are strengths and asset based approaches?](#) →

[What is a strengths based approach?](#) →

[What are 'assets'?](#) →

What are strengths and asset based approaches?

Exercise one - Valuing strengths ✏️

Focus on what's strong, not what's wrong.

Try this empowerment exercise either individually or with your team:

do you know the strengths, talents and abilities of your team?

take time to get to know each other. How is this recorded?

can you develop a 'skills and strengths team map?

how can you use the skills and strengths to deliver good care and support?

Exercise Introduction

1. **Think of a time when you used your own strengths, talents and abilities to solve a problem, do an activity or learn something new. Write down or discuss with a colleague how you felt.**

2. **Now think about a time where a situation in your life was seen as a problem that needed to be   xed by somebody else? Write down or discuss with a colleague how you felt.**

3. **Discuss the difference between the two scenarios. What does it tell you about focusing on what's strong, rather than what's wrong?**

4. **Now talk about what you already do to recognise the strengths, talents and abilities of people you support. How you can make changes to do things differently?**

What are 'assets'?

Assets can be a whole range of different things, a lot of people think about 'assets' as money or buildings. Here are some examples of the different types of assets.

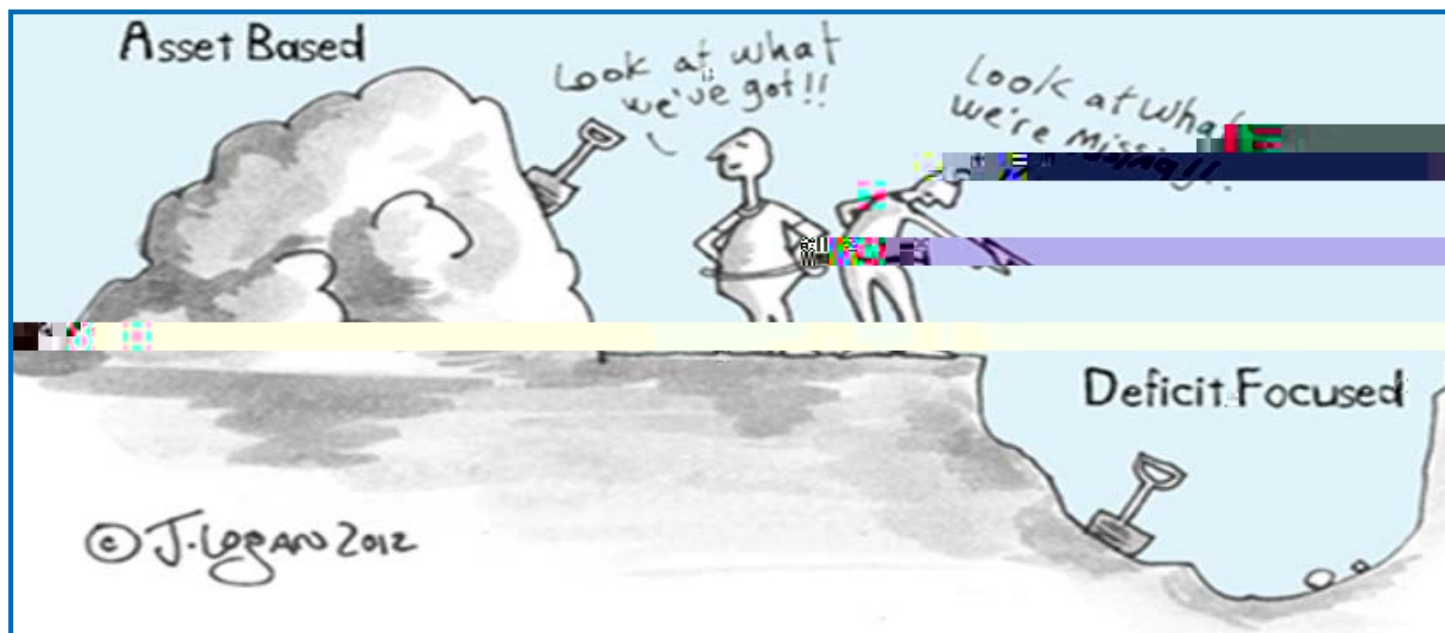| Personal assets e.g. the knowledge, skills, talents and aspirations of individuals	Social assets		
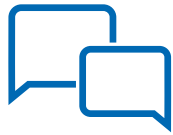
Group discussion

1. **What were your initial thoughts about the video?**
2. **Share any examples of how you have found what 'is all around you'.**

Take a look at the next exercise and plan how to nd out what's available in your area, bearing in mind that your 'community' may look and feel differently than in recent times.

Asset Based — Look at what we've got!!
Deficit Focused — Look at what we're missing!!
© J. Logan 2012

Exercise three - Your local community

Skills for Care have developed **this infographic**

Sector story - the work of Apples and Honey Nightingale Nursery

Intergenerational care and qualifications; young or old, we have much to share.

I can still picture the teacher at my primary school who taught us French. She was tall and with long black hair and pale skin. I remember very little about the lessons - I do remember her. Wind forward fifty years and Judith and I are talking about French lessons for the under-fives. Why not, I think; language and embracing different languages is a great way to bring down barriers and bring us together.

As we talk, Judith tells me all about the nursery she and Ali pioneered in the grounds of a nursing home for older people and how bringing the children and their community into the grounds of the home has had an impact on everyone's lives.

Take Alice (not her real name). When the nursing home became her home, she began to wonder what life was for anymore. Okay she was old and frail and blind, but was that the only way she would be seen by everyone from now on?

Alice speaks French and loves to share her love of French with others. Why not share this love with the children in the nursery and start them off with a lifelong love of language and the doors that language can open.

As Alice tentatively began to teach the children their first French words, Alice and the children start to blossom. Alice and the people she lives with have new reasons to get up every day. Purpose, reason and meaning to their lives. New friendships, new relationships, feeling healthier; mentally and physically.

Learning together at any age helps us all to be more rounded. Workers in the nursery and the nursing home have much to learn and share with each other that can benefit Alice and her peers and the children in the nursery. That's where the idea of an intergenerational qualification started.

There is a lot of overlap between the learning needs of workers working with children and workers supporting older people. It's a surprise

Why use person-centred and community based approaches?

Person-centred and community based working (strengths based approaches)
Introduction

By asking people what's important to them, linking people with their local community and focusing on what people want as well as understanding their needs, makes a real impact on people's lives.

Working in this way really values people accessing care and support and their families as experts about themselves and their lives, and what they can offer to the community.

Communities are full of people with diverse skills, qualities and experiences. Working together and connecting people can achieve positive health and wellbeing outcomes leading to a better quality of life.

Empowering people to use their own strengths, abilities and their local community can have wider benefits including:

  people remaining independent for longer

  reducing the impact of social isolation and loneliness

  delaying the need to larger package of care or hospital admission.

It's important to recognise that the time you spend with people is usually only a small part of their everyday lives. Wider social connections are crucial to keep people connected and understanding how your work ts within this.

> This resource is helpful when care workers are ready to deepen their person-centred knowledge on a more meaningful level. Managers and seniors can use these tools and tips to improve their own skills and share their learning with other.
>
> **Felicity White, Registered Manager The Grange, Benenden.**

In this section:

What are other bene ts to this approach?	→
The Care Act wellbeing principles	→
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What are other benefts to this approach?

By working in a person-centred and community based way, you will deliver good quality care and achieve better outcomes for people supported.

You can drive quality improvements through making a real difference to peoples' lives and this can help towards meeting the Care Quality Commission Key Lines of Enquiry and achieving good and outstanding ratings.

In 'responsive' the CQC states that people's care plans refect their holistic needs, including their interests and aspirations. Activities are socially relevant and people are encouraged and supported to make and main relationships within the service and the wider community.

The Care Act wellbeing principles

Improving and maintaining peoples' wellbeing is an important area of The Care Act (2016 update) which tells us to *'consider the person's own strengths*

Exercise four - The power of communities

Watch this 6 minute video about the power of communities and connecting people.

Play video ▷

Discussion

1. How did you feel about the impact of the 'grown-ups playground'?
2. What do you think the wider impacts of connecting with others can have on peoples' lives?
3. Can you think of any ideas how you can connect people using your service?

The power of culture and faith

People's cultural needs vary. These could be based on ethnicity and religion and also on other factors such as age, sex, sexual orientation or

Sector story - Staying connected with your community

Sometimes the simplest things can make a big difference to how connected we feel to our community.
Feeling that we are part of our community isn't always about a real time physical connection. Distance and other circumstances can mean that other ways to stay connected must be found.

For Teresa (not her real name), connections to her Jamaican heritage, through her mother and Jamaican food, were an essential part of who she was. Every weekend Teresa and her mum would cook and eat Jamaican food together at the care home where Teresa lived.

It wasn't possible for Teresa and her mum to meet, so the team supporting Teresa started cooking Jamaican food with her and using regular weekend and special occasion phone and video calls to keep in touch.

For Teresa and her mum this digital community connection has kept laughter alive and helped both feel less lonely, at a time when keeping that community connection alive could have easily broken down.

For the workforce and the people they support, they got to explore culture and tradition at a much deeper level than they would have done if things had carried on as normal. Keeping the family and the community engaged and connected gave everyone the chance to feel valued and happier.

Pamela Boney
Registered Manager, Apasen Lodge

https://www.apasen.org.uk/services/residential-respite/

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Sector story - Are you lonely tonight?

In a world of instant electronic communication, social media, and endless chat, the art of handwritten letters is alive and well.

Loneliness is a killer. The link between loneliness and physical and mental ill health is one of the social care challenges that needs to be faced. You can live in a community for many years, and as you get older you can feel less and less connected to that community.

Whilst you might think that it's easier to stay connected to your local community through the internet. This doesn't take account of people who can't, won't or are plain scared of the internet and all things driven by the silicon chip.

That's where the intergeneration pen-pal project comes in. Developed with ve schools in Bromley, children are being supported to connect with older people through letter writing.

For older people, the intergenerational pen pal project is helping them regain con dence in their community, getting to know young people beyond their front door and rekindling their local connections.

For young people the project is enabling them to develop their story telling skills, see older people as valuable members of their community and create new friendships between the generations.

Writing a letter, sending it, and waiting for a reply is a great way to bring communities together. Yes, you need to make sure you have the right checks and balances in place, but you would need these if the pen-pal project was digital. By helping young people and older people trust each other more, make friends, look out for each other and learn the art of letter writing together, the pen project has the potential to change how people think about each other and support each other. Watch this (handwritten) page.

How to use person-centred and community based approaches?

Introducing and embedding person-centred, community and strengths based working needs leadership buy-in and time to change culture and introduce new ways of working and thinking differently.

How to get started?

Here's a checklist with some questions to consider and suggestions how to get started.

✓ Do you have strong leadership buy-in?
Leadership buy-in is important both strategically to get started, as well as everyday leadership across the organisation

✓ Have you identi ed who will lead the process? Having a dedicated workforce group helps to focus on priorities and challenges.
What is your contingency plan if key people go on long term absence or leave the organisation?

✓ How will you communicate the intended shift and commitment to person-centred and community working?
How will you monitor and share progress?

✓ How will you identify and share what you are already doing well?
Share existing good practice where person-centred and community working is already happening and any lessons learnt.

✓ How will you engage others and keep the momentum going?

✓ How will you involve people supported and/or family members?

✓ How will you work with the wider system for better outcomes e.g. social workers, commissioner, social prescribing?

✓ Have you identi ed any barriers and how these can be addressed?

Person-centred approaches

A person-centred approach means working in a personalised and preventative way to engage and support people to live healthier and ful lled lives.

Working in a person-centred way means working in partnership with the individual to plan for their care and support. The individual is at the centre of the care planning process and is in control of all choices and decisions made about their lives.

The values of compassion, dignity and respect are essential when involving people in their own care.

Decisions should be shared decisions, with the individual seen as an equal partner in their care.

People should be involved in the design and delivery of the services they are accessing, and the public should be involved in decisions about what services are being provided for their community.

Person-centred planning is about discovering and acting upon what is important to the individual and what matters most to them in their lives.

Find out more

How? Through strengths based leadership

Effective person centred and community based working needs a whole system shift in thinking and culture to do things differently and work in an empowering and preventative way.

Any long term behaviour and culture change needs to be supported by the leadership and culture of the organisation and become 'the way we do things around here'.

If leaders adopt and model this approach, there is the opportunity to provide motivation and learning how to make changes to do things differently and deliver support in a strengths, rather than a de cit based way.

At a practical level, a strength-based approach places signi cant importance on all involved to work in a way that enables people to reach their potential of being capable, resourceful and empowered.

What

Why

How
By getting
started

How
By building
relationships

Video – Strengths Based Leadership Exercise about creating a movement

Watch this inspiring three minute video about leadership and creating a movement.

Play video ▷

Exercise   ve

1.   After watching the video use the top ten tips and discuss what you already do well and what might need to change?
2.   How can you encourage and nurture your   rst followers?
3.   What will you commit to doing next?

How? By having good conversations

By changing the way we have conversations, we can focus on peoples' skills and strengths and find out what really matters to them, what they can do for themselves and in which areas they need support.

Having strengths based conversations in social care is basically 'human to human connection'. We must never lose sight of that fact that people we provide support to are human and our conversations must be meaningful and authentic for all parties involved.

A person-centred approach respects that all conversations are two way and that the way in which the conversation happens can have an impact on those involved.

There are many things you can do to support good conversations by thinking about the way you ask questions, your body language, how comfortable the environment is. It's really important that people leave a conversation feeling more empowered and enabled than before.

Remember we are moving away from a deficit model of what's wrong and focusing on what's strong. It's really important to really listen and get to know people. These powerful words by self-advocate Christine Mayer encourage us to really listen.

Moving away from the deficit model...

What do we mean by this?

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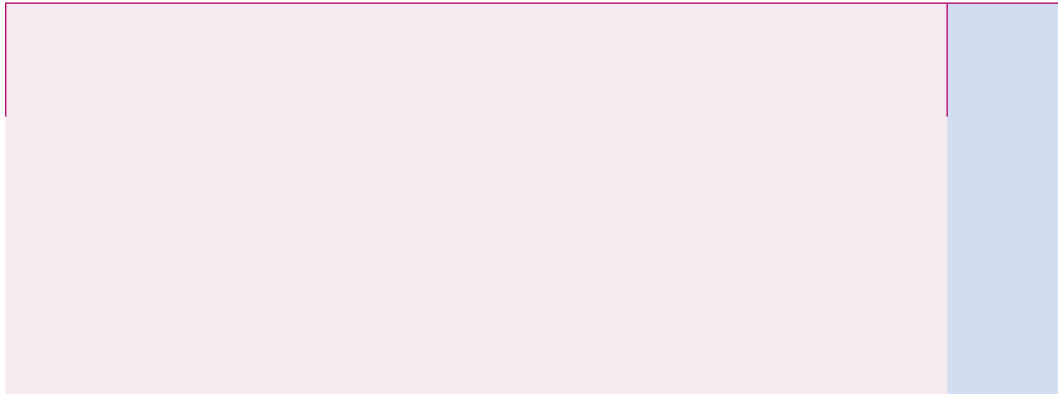
Top ten tips for everyday strengths based conversations

1. Smile and introduce yourself; 'Hello my name is…'.

2. Be aware of the environment, for example, the layout of the room, the level of privacy or other factors that can affect the other person.

3. Use active listening to really hear what the person has to say and give the conversation your full concentration. Show interest in the person their life and their community – see the SOLER model below for tips on active listening.

4. Use language and ways of working that the person prefers and understands.

5. Show empathy - this means seeing things from the individual's perspective, is 'being in their shoes' to try to understand them and how they see things.

6. Ask open questions to explore what really matters to the person and their community - see below for examples of open questions.

7. Be non-judgemental – show respect and preserve dignity - sensitively bring up topics that the person may nd challenging or uncomfortable.

8. Be honest about what you can and can't do and who else to involve.

9. Feel comfortable using pauses, silences and gentle cues such as nods as appropriate - be aware of your eye-contact, gestures, facial expressions and voice tone.

10. Be observant - notice clues that might lead to other conversations - check if there is something else the person wants to talk about.

Top ten things to avoid

1. Asking open questions then not using the information to shape the conversation.

2. Being distracted, with your mind on other things.

3. Sitting or standing and using your voice in a way that shows you aren't listening or are annoyed by the conversation.

4. Assuming people have understood each other without asking and checking.

5. Using complicated language or jargon.

6. Interrupting or rushing the conversation.

7. Using your body posture, voice or positioning to gain 'power' or advantage.

8. Communicating with the person's family or carer without asking including the person as it feels 'easier'.

9. Not giving the person an indication of how long the conversation is likely to be then suddenly ending it without warning.

10. Not giving the person time and opportunity to express their feelings, thoughts and opinions.

Exercise six - Active listening, open questions, strengths and skills

Using Open Questions

Using open questions can be helpful to encourage good conversations, here's some examples:

what's working well in your life?

if you could change anything about your life, what would it be?

what's important to you?

what makes you happy / smile / laugh?

what are you good at?

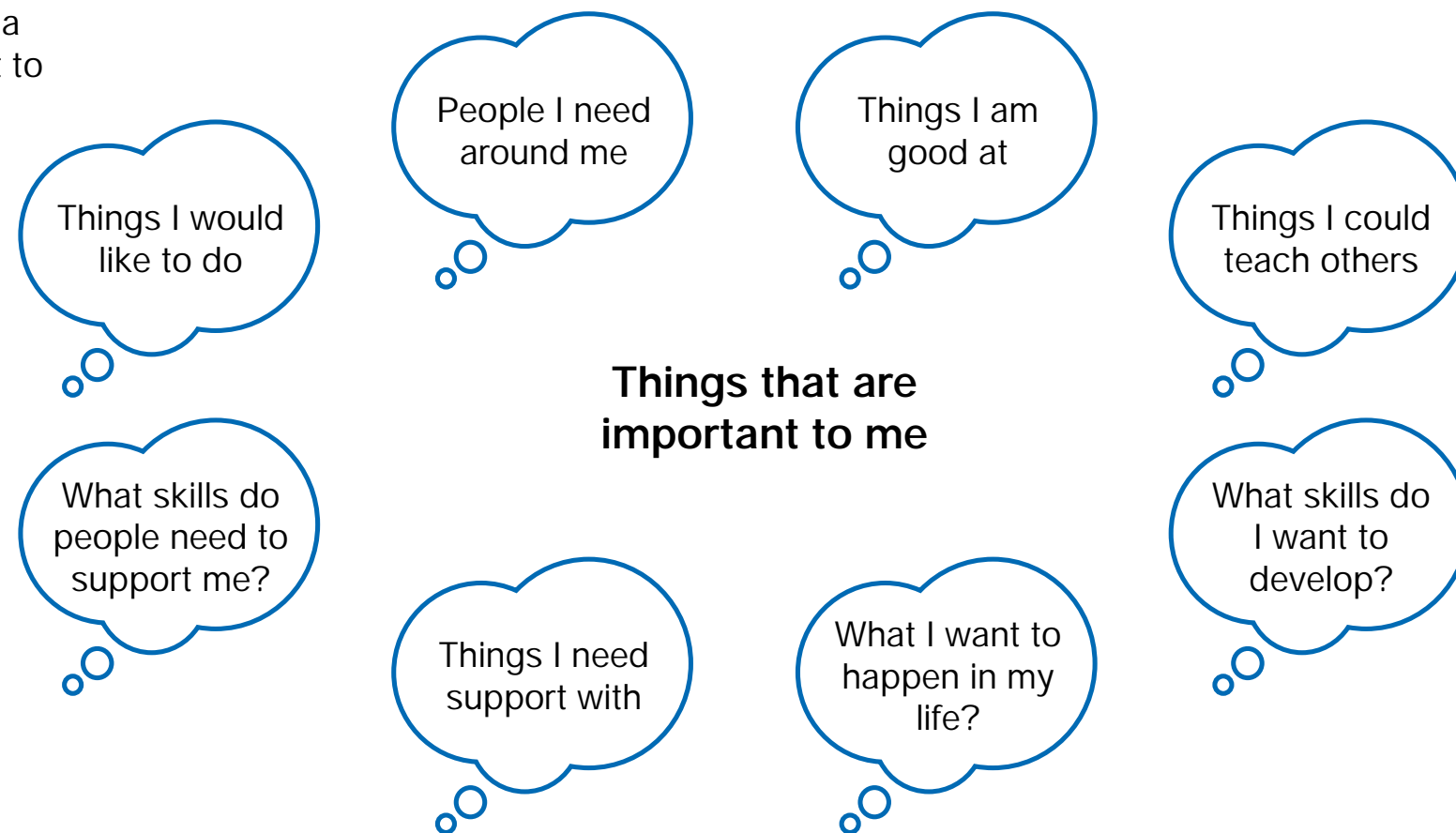who are the people in your life?

who's the most important person to you?

what would you like to achieve?

what would help you to achieve this?

what are your talents / skills / strengths?

This **Strengths and Skills Bubbles** is a useful tool to explore what's important to people and what they would like to do differently in their lives.

Things I would like to do

People I need around me

Things I am good at

Things I could teach others

Things that are important to me

What skills do people need to support me?

Things I need support with

What I want to happen in my life?

What skills do I want to develop?

Exercise seven - having good conversations

1. **In pairs or small groups, use what you've learnt from the top tips, things to avoid and the open questions above and have a 'good' conversation with your exercise partner to find out:**
   a. What are the top two things that are important to them?
   b. What are they good at?
   c. What is a key strength, skill or talent they have?
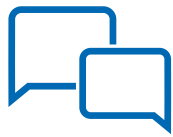
2. **Feedback how the conversation felt:**
   a. What was it easy or difficult?
   b. What did you learn?

3. **How you can apply the skills you have learnt when having conversations with people you support and/or their families?**

How? Conversations for assessment and care planning

In everyday life, conversation is the way we learn about people.

Having good conversations with people through the assessment, care planning and review process can help you to nd out all sorts of things that could be lost if you followed a standard form and set questions.

By using a person-centred conversation approach, you can nd out all sorts of things that

Top tips for having good conversations for assessment and care planning

1. Using person-centred conversations, build a picture of each person's individual strengths, preferences, aspirations and needs.

2. Provide any support needed to enable the person to express their views and participate in the conversations, including independent advocacy if required.

3. Involve the person's wider social network (carers, family, friends, advocates) if that's their wish and explore the support that it may offer.

4. Consider how to support and promote positive risk-taking.

5. Promote the person's interests and independence and their preferences now and in the future.

6. Step into their world and immerse yourself in their life in order to understand them – take a holistic approach and think about the 'whole' person.

7. Take time to listen to everything - every bit of information counts not just what you think is important (or your documentation thinks is important).

8. Acknowledge what the person is already doing for themselves, their efforts and achievements.

9. Record absolutely everything but let the person guide your conversation, not your completing documents.

10. Assume nothing and constantly challenge your own assumption.

Social prescribing in action – Brightlife Cheshire

Providing truly person-centred care … how do we do this?

To explain why person-centred care is so valuable to us and for the people we work with I will start at the beginning of Brightlife's story and tell you about our learning along the way.

Brightlife Cheshire was formed in April 2015 as one of 14 Ageing Better projects supported by The National Lottery Community Fund to help reduce social isolation and loneliness in people aged 50+.

Since then, our Social Prescribing team has worked closely with people to help them out of loneliness by connecting them back to their communities. We have a tagline on our   yers that reads 'the best medicine is a good laugh in friendly company' and I think that just about sums it up!

Why are we seeing so many great results?

We make time to explore what is right and build someone's con dence up until they are able to access their chosen activities. At the outset, this includes an accompanied visit, ensuring they receive a 'warm welcome', or providing a supported referral. The effects can be staggering… frequently resulting in continued independence, a healthier lifestyle, improvement in physical activity as well as new peer support networks they discover for themselves. I could tell you hundreds of stories … but I'd prefer you hear them rst hand from some of the people we've worked with who talk about their experiences on the video.

Play video

Sharing our learning

Our learning has centred around the relationships we build – with the referrers who have their own requirements, with the people who do not want

Introducing social work strengths based practice

[The Strengths based practice framework and handbook](#) - was published in February 2019.
This framework and handbook supports social workers and social care professionals to apply a strengths-based approach to their work with adults.

A strengths or asset based approach to social work practice aims to put individuals, families and communities at the heart of care and wellbeing, and in doing so strengthen relationships between members of that community.

The framework is based around the following areas:
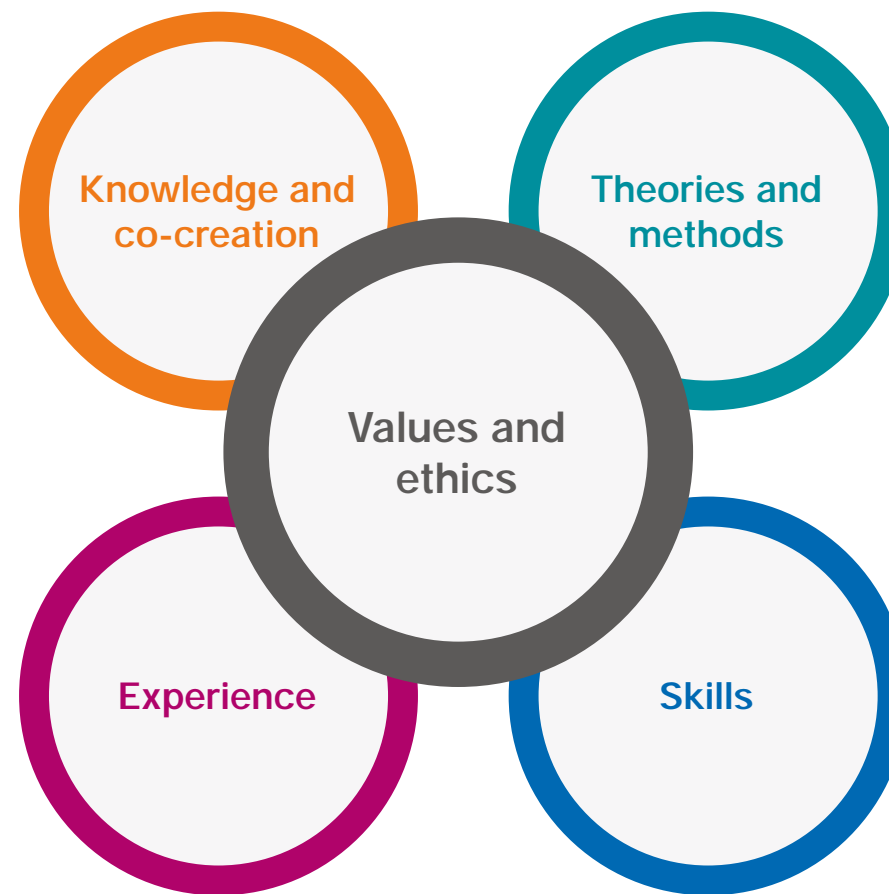
Strengths based social work in action

Rochdale Borough Council has formed neighbourhood teams which helps to develop more local knowledge. Social work teams have adapted assessments to include strengths elements including for example the question, 'what can you do for yourself?' to open up the discussion to what is already around them, who they can connect with and include conversations about what people can do to meet their own needs.

Commissioners, providers and communities working together

Some local authorities are taking a very proactive approach to commissioning in a strengths based way.

"Tameside Council, in partnership with the borough's six contracted Living Well at Home providers, are committed to changing the way people are supported to live at home."

Here's a short video which describes their approach to working together

Play video ▷

Sector story - Welly's Workplace

We all need a bit more 'welly' from time to time.

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Working with
others

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by learning
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How? By learning more - further reading and resources

Things to help

➡ **Evidence for strengths and asset-based outcomes**

➡ **TLAP - Building Community Capacity**

➡ **SCIE - What is a strengths based approach?**

➡ **Skills for Care Building community capacity**

➡ **Sustainable community development: from what's wrong to what's strong | Cormac Russell | TEDxExeter**