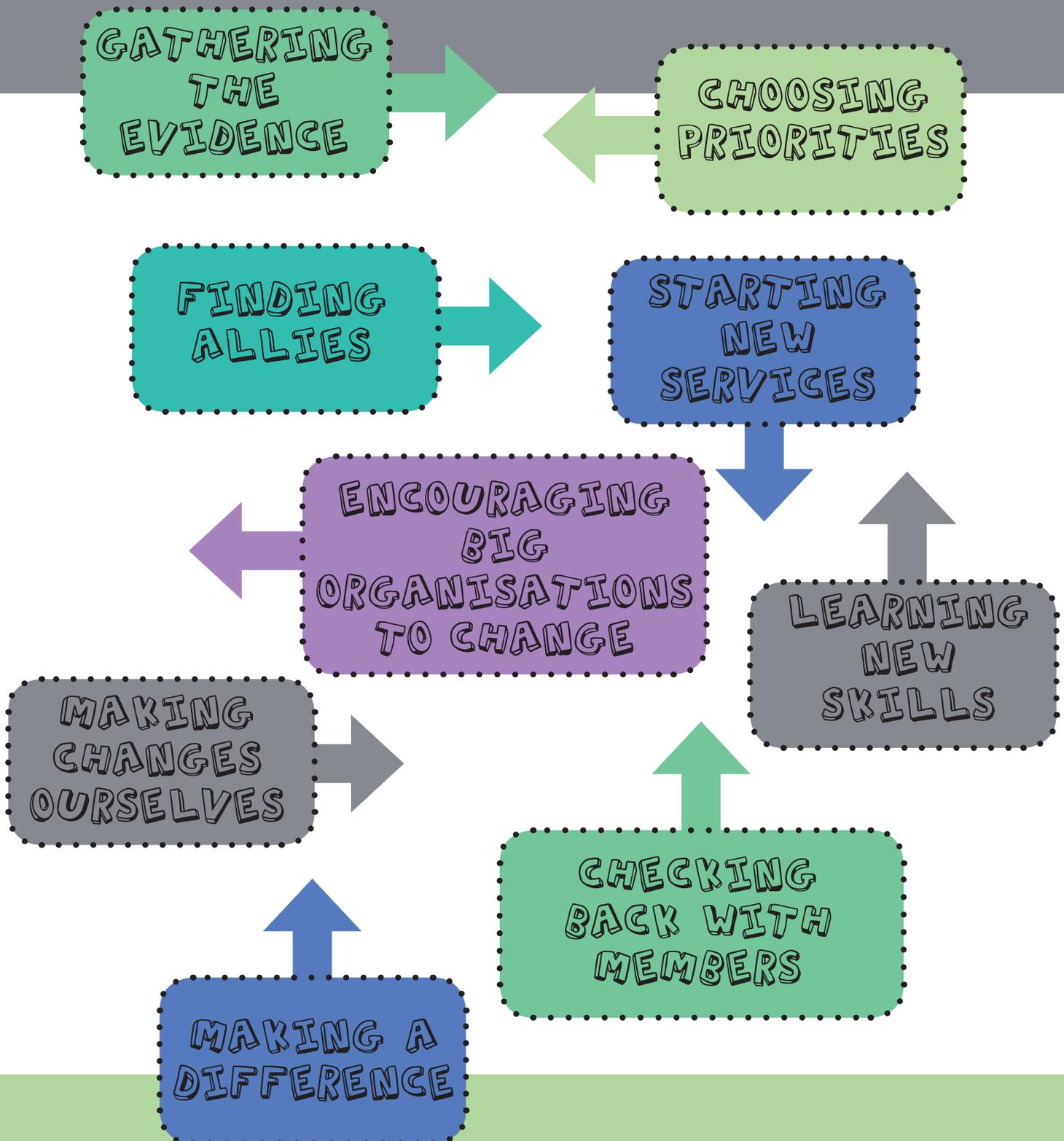


Influencing Change



Introduction

What this resource is about

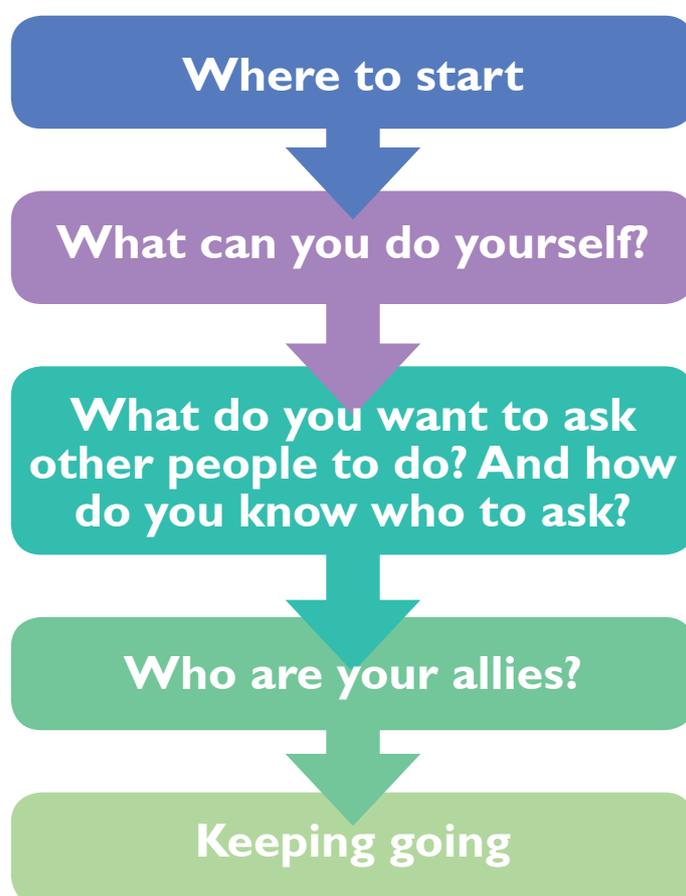
This resource explains how individual people or groups can make change happen. This can be when you start something yourself. Or it can be when you want to get an organisation that provides services to change the way they do something, or to start doing something different. Or it is when you want to influence the decisions that are made about services or policies that affect lots of people.

These are some of the people who will find the resource useful.

- Groups or people who have been thinking about the changes they want to make in what they do themselves.
- Groups which have asked members or other people in their community what they want, and now want to take these ideas forward.
- People who have taken part in a consultation by a local authority or another body that makes decisions, and now want to take on some of the things people raised.

What is in the resource

This resource is here to help you with making and influencing change.



TIPS AND HINTS

There are tips and hints and suggestions that you can follow. These bring together:

- The experience of many people and community groups who have been involved in making changes in their area.
- The recognised good practice around participation and making changes - including national standards that are there to help community groups and bodies such as local authorities and the NHS.

EXAMPLE

- These come from projects we have worked with and from other groups we know.

USEFUL SOURCES

These are places where you can find more information, ideas and advice.

There are some ideas in each of the sections. Here are some general sources which are good for all sorts of issues.

- The Working Towards resource on influencing your own support is useful for matters that affect individual people.
- Other resources Outside the Box has developed are good for helping groups influence things that affect lots of people. Look for the section on the website marked Participation.
- The material we developed with community groups to enable more people to take part in elections and get politicians to help them has lots of good ideas. It looks at how to decide what you want to get changed as well as who is responsible for what, and how to get in touch with them. This is the Our Vote Our Voice project.

You can get this material on the website: www.otbds.org

The Poverty Alliance in Scotland has the EPiC project.

www.povertyalliance.org/projects_detail.asp?proj_id=1

Tel: 0141 3530440

Email: Kathryn.collins@povertyalliance.org

There is a team in Wales which is developing lots of good advice and materials on many aspects of participation. It is Participation Cymru.

www.participationcymru.org.uk

Tel: 01970 631126

Email: participationcymru@wcva.org.uk

The Yorkshire and Humberside Empowerment Partnership supports community groups and participation in that area. Again, they have lots of good materials

www.yhep.org.uk

Tel: 0114 2687070

Email: mail@cogs.uk.net

“The main thing is not to set out with grand projects. Everything starts at your doorstep. Just get deeply involved in something... You throw a stone in one place and the ripples spread.”

(Bob Moses, American Civil Rights leader)

Where to start

The first step in influencing or making change is deciding where to start.

These are some things to think about.

- Which topic do most people think is the most important?
- Is there something that will be quick to do? For example, the local authority might want to move on that anyway because it is already one of their priorities.
- Is there something you can do yourself? That way, you are not affected by changes in other people's timescales and priorities. It gives you a sense of achievement. And it gives a message to other people that you are independent and know what you are doing.
- Is there something that other people can help you with? This is where finding your allies comes in useful.
- Are there people already doing something about a topic? If so, you can join them. But another option is to leave them to do this and you start working on something else.

“Some things are short-term and others take a long time
- such as changing underlying attitudes.
Often you need a combination.”

“Our advice is to try to get a mix of things you can
do yourself alongside the things you want other people to do.
It always feels good when there is something
you can get started on.”

TIPS AND HINTS

Deciding where to start

- Make a list.
- Don't try to do everything at once, especially if you are working on your own.
- Start with one or 2 topics. Then go back to the others on your list when you are ready. Or share them out amongst the members of your committee or group.
- If you are a group, spend a bit of time discussing where you want to start.
- BUT don't spend too much time and effort planning where to start. It's better to start on something, and get things moving, than to wait till you have the perfect plan.
- Once you decide, get started doing something on that topic.
- Sometimes the timing just isn't right. If you get stuck with one thing, it can be a good idea to just leave that for a bit and start on something else.

EXAMPLES

People with learning disabilities in South West Glasgow

In South West Glasgow, people with learning disabilities were consulted on what they wanted day services to be like in the future. The Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) brings together local authority and health care services. They wanted to hear people's views, to help them plan for future services.

Some people said that they wanted changes at the College. There were good courses, and they thought more people should know about them and have the chance to try these. Other courses could be better and people had ideas on how to improve things.

They told the CHCP and the senior staff at the College. The staff at the College agreed to look at getting more courses on and improve the information about what was available. That way, everyone with a learning disability who was interested in using the College got a better service.

They also made sure that the support workers and care managers asked people about what they wanted from College when each person had their own review. That way, each person got more choice on what was right for them.

The people who took part in the consultation also said there were a lot of problems with transport. There is already a group for the whole of Glasgow which is working to make transport better. It is a committee which brings together people from the local authority, people who have learning disabilities and relatives. The people in South West Glasgow got in touch with the Glasgow-wide group and told them about the problems. They asked the big group to tell them about the progress they made.

FAST Group

The West Dunbartonshire Alcohol and Drugs Forum is the strategic group responsible for planning local actions on issues regarding alcohol and drugs. One of the sub-groups is the Client Involvement Group – the Future of Addiction Services Team.

People in West Dunbartonshire said that out of hours support was one of the main gaps in local services. They also wanted to learn from people's experiences around what keeps people affected by addictions safe and well – both people with addictions and their family and friends.

These are some of their ideas.

- Learning about how to keep safe and well and look after your own wellbeing, as this will benefit lots of people.

- **A telephone support service available out of office hours.**
- **A booklet to encourage people to find ways to keep occupied - including using the ordinary services that are there for everyone such as swimming pools.**

They talked to the Council about getting the telephone support service started, as this was something that needed support from other people. The service was available 2 nights a week when it started and is now available 4 nights a week. It is based for now at West Dunbartonshire Council. The feedback is that the service has been a great help to the people who use it.

Since then, the FAST group have produced the booklet on using ordinary community resources as part of looking after yourself. This was something they did themselves. But they decided to recognise the support they have from West Dunbartonshire Council in the booklet.

There is a copy of the community resources booklet on the Outside the Box website.

West Dunbartonshire Mental Health Forum

West Dunbartonshire Mental Health Forum is a group of people who have experienced mental health difficulties and carers from West Dunbartonshire. They also welcome people who have an interest in mental health issues. The Forum provides a place for people to meet and share their thoughts and opinions on the mental health services throughout West Dunbartonshire. They try to influence the community and services.

They have a range of activities including regular meetings and an opportunity to become involved in newsletter and webpage groups.

They worked with other people to run a conference about Recovery in West Dunbartonshire. As part of this, they asked the people at the event what the Forum's priorities should be for the next year or so.

What can you do yourself?

There are 2 situations where you can do something yourself.

- One is where you get a change that benefits you - and it also helps other people.
- The other is when you decide to do something new, because other organisations are not doing it (yet).

Sometimes change starts with one person looking for something better for themselves. And then it spreads to being a change that also helps other people.

- You want to stay with the services you are getting, but ask for changes in the care or support you are getting for yourself and get more choices for other people.
- You want different types of services instead of - or as well as - the ones you get now.

“It began a few years ago. I just wanted to get better support for my mum. But when we asked, there wasn’t anything that suited her circumstances. After a bit of to-ing and fro-ing, the services changed what they did to be more flexible for her and it worked fine - no extra hassle for the staff. And then they found lots of other people wanted it that way too - so everyone was better off. It didn’t happen overnight, but it has happened. Mum and I are really pleased we helped other people too.”

Stay with the services you are getting, but ask for changes in what they do

Here are some examples where people wanted a college course to continue, but changed some aspects of how things were provided.

- Some people liked being at college but want to do different classes.

- They suggested changing the days a class is on, so people got more choice and more people could get to the popular classes.
- Some people wanted extra support with reading or typing.
- Some people asked for an extra class to improve one of their skills, such as computers, where they were good at it and wanted to get better.
- They thought that people should have the chance to try out a class or service before they committed to it.

TIPS AND HINTS

Things to think about for any change

- Why do you want to make this change?
- How will it affect you and the people you know?
- Who will you have to involve to make it happen?

TIPS AND HINTS

For people who want to change the services they get for themselves

This is to help you, or a friend or relative who is receiving services, to get what is right in your situation.

- Talk it over with a friend or relative, to get a clearer idea of what you want and how to explain it.
- If it would help, write down your thoughts, or ask someone else to write them down for you while you just talk about what you want.
- Find out if other people have asked for similar things.
- Talk to your key worker if you are already in touch with a service.
- Go with a friend when you meet with your key worker (or the tutor or whoever you need to talk to) if this will help you feel more confident or find it easier to remember what you want to say.

- Take your notes or list with you. That way you can refer to it if you think you've forgotten something, or are not sure where to start. And you can give a copy to the other person so they can see what you want to happen.
- Get help from an advocacy project to say what you want, if you think that will be helpful.

USEFUL SOURCES

An independent advocacy project helps people to have their voice heard. Sometimes it is really hard to say the things that you want to say. An advocate can attend meetings with you and work on your behalf to make sure that you get your point across.

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) is the organisation which supports advocacy projects across Scotland. There is a directory of Advocacy services across Scotland on their website www.siaa.org.uk

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
Melrose House
69a George Street
Edinburgh, EH2 2JG

You could also look at the other Working Towards resource which explains how to plan for your own future and get the support you need.

EXAMPLES

- **Getting different services**
- Many groups round the country have set up their own services. Here are some examples.
- Mums in Helensburgh have started their own small peer-support group to help women affected by post-natal depression. They meet regularly for coffee and help each other by chatting and offering advice.
- A group in Shetland set up a service which cuts the toenails of older people and people with disabilities who are unable to do so for themselves. They include a foot massage!

- Parents of children with disabilities in Bute wanted to have holiday activities that all their children could enjoy together. The first year, they ran a few activities over a week during the school holidays. Now Achievement Bute has activities all year round and other supports for parents. 10 years after the first families started to work on this, the children who were there at the beginning are now young adults and they are contributing their ideas too and getting involved as volunteers.

TIPS AND HINTS

For getting new services started

There are lots of different ways that you can go about doing something like this. Here is a basic checklist.

- Work out exactly what it is you want to change or develop. Think about the ways in which it isn't right just now and how it could be better.
- Take time to talk about it in your group, so everyone has a chance to feed in their experiences and ideas.
- Write it all down. This will help make it clear. If it helps, ask someone you trust to write it down for you.
- Don't try to do too much. Be clear about your goal. Make suggestions to fix one thing, rather than make lots of suggestions about lots of changes.
- Try and write down what you want in one sentence. This is a good way to check out if everyone agrees what you want. And it will be easier to explain things to other people if you can make it short and to the point.
- Find other people who want to help. You could do this by putting up posters asking people to get in touch with you, or by talking to people who use similar services.
- Have a meeting and decide the way forward.
- Split tasks among the group in a way that feels fair.

- Make sure that everybody knows what they are doing.
- Work out who you need to talk to. Then go talk to them.

EXAMPLE

The WIN Project

This project grew out of the experiences of people in South West Glasgow who had mental health problems. They wanted to make some changes in the opportunities they and other people have around getting back into work.

It began when one person from a Peer Support Group was looking for some help around getting back to work. She was offered a course - but it was designed for people with different disabilities and did not meet what she needed. She went back and told the others. They thought, "We could do better ourselves."

The group talked to 2 workers who they knew and trusted. One worked in a service that helped people with their mental health problems, and the other was the co-ordinator for a service that helped people get back to work - so they were in a good position to give the group advice and help them with the next stages.

Some members of the Peer Support Group and one of the workers went along to an Equal Access Re-Focus Event. Equal Access was the multi-agency employment initiative in Glasgow and this event was being held to encourage ideas for new initiatives that would develop the work of the programme. Equal Access took the idea seriously and put them in touch with other useful organisations.

It took a while, but the Peer Support Group started their own service, giving people with mental health problems the types of support they needed to think about work and build up the skills and confidence they needed. It is called the WIN project - What I Need in Life.

USEFUL SOURCES

The Working Towards Project has information about setting up or running your own service. There are also resources from other groups of people who are doing this sort of thing in other places. These are on the Outside the Box website: www.otbds.org

Talk for Scotland is a practical toolkit to help engagement of people with communication support needs. It has advice on how to engage with people who have different types of communication support needs as a consequence of their disability.

The toolkit was developed by the Communication Forum Scotland and is available from their website: www.communicationforumscotland.org.uk

What do you want to ask someone else to do?

These are the people and organisations who you might want to do something.

- You want an organisation which provides services to change their practices, so the service works better for you and for other people.
- People and organisations who decide what services will be available for a local area.
- People who make national policies, such as the Government.

TIPS AND HINTS

For getting someone else to change something

Make a list of what you want the person or organisation to do.

- Decide which one or two things on your list are the most important. Make these things your priorities.
- Be specific. Keep your ideas focussed by summing them up in only one or two sentences.
- Keep the focus on how they will make the change, not only on if they will make it.
- Make sure you find the right people to speak to. There is more on this later in this section.
- Check if there are already any strategies or plans for your topic. If so, refer to them when you are asking for a change: "It says that you aim to provide...I want you to provide that for me/my group."

TIPS AND HINTS

How to find the strategies

Look at the Community Plan for your area. This is available on the local authority's website, or ask the Community Planning section.

- Ask the person in the local authority or NHS who is the lead for services for people in your situation.
- Ask a local advocacy project or Community Care Forum.
- Ask the national collective advocacy project for people in your situation - see the part of this resource on who are your allies.
- If you go to the local library, someone there may be able to help you find what you need

TIPS AND HINTS

How to phrase questions

When you are talking to people and asking them questions, here are some things to remember.

- Take someone with you if you can. That way, one of you might remember something the other has forgotten. And if you want a minute to think, you can say something like: "My friend might have some more ideas on this."
- Find out as much as you can about the issue beforehand.
- Try and find examples of why the service should change. You could explain a problem you or another person have had (if it is someone else, make sure you ask the other person for permission to tell their story first). Do not get into too much detail of any one person's situation - keep the focus on the main point you want to get across.
- Explain why the changes you want would make the situation easier.
- Be clear and keep your explanations short and to the point.
- It can be worth emphasising that you are not making a complaint. You want to talk about doing things in a different way. (Later, if things don't work out and you do want to make a complaint, you can still do that.)

- If someone else has asked for a similar thing before and it has worked out, be sure to mention that it is not the first time it has been done. The example might be from another area or another organisation, so you can encourage the people you are asking to find out how the other people did it.
- Keep your questions open. This means asking questions that force people to think about the matter and to give longer answers. Don't ask a question that will give a "yes" or "no" answer. An example might be "How do you think the service could be made more flexible?", rather than "Can you change the service?"
- Don't be angry. This is one reason why having 2 people at the meeting can be a good idea.
- Listen to the answers you are being given. Sometimes the other person is agreeing with you quicker than you expected, or has agreed to part of what you have asked for. So now you need to move onto *how* the change is going to happen.
- Have the confidence to pick up on a point and ask a question back.
- Write out your questions beforehand to make sure you ask everything you want to.
- If you don't understand an answer ask for the person to say it again, more simply.
- Ask what you can do to take the issue forward. Show that you and your group want to be part of making things better.
- Ask what will happen next, and make sure you understand how long things are likely to take.
- Remember to thank the person for meeting with you.

“Our advice is to recognise when someone has listened to what you said, even if there is no change yet. Say thank you. You might have to go on working with them for a while, to get this change to happen. And they may be a good ally next time you want to influence change.”

EXAMPLE

PAGES

PAGES is a group of parents of children and young people who have an autistic spectrum disorder. They live in Formartine, which is part of Aberdeenshire. They wanted to get their own service that would provide separate leisure activities for their children.

They asked parents and the young people what they wanted, what worked well just now and what difficulties they had with access to existing services. The families described problems around leisure facilities. But they also described a lot of other difficulties too. The report they produced is **Field of Dreams** and it is on the **Outside the Box** website.

Many of the points that people raised could be met as well or better by existing services getting better at working with young people who had autism – becoming ‘autism-friendly’. These changes could also get implemented more quickly than finding the resources to convert a building. So the parents in **PAGES** decided to start with getting the other services to change what they did.

The parents have worked alongside staff who work in services that support people with learning disabilities and their families, who also wanted to see more opportunities for these young people. They have helped the discussions between **PAGES** and the staff who are responsible for the local services to get started.

Some of the changes that the families wanted are getting started quickly, while others will take a bit longer. But the parents and young people are now part of the process of developing and improving the services.

Who do you ask?

Knowing who to ask is the part that lots of people find confusing. You know what you want, but don't know who can make the changes happen.

- There are people who make the big decisions, about what happens in an area - so what types of services there are.
- Then there are people who deliver the services - so are responsible for the details of how or when they get delivered.
- But sometimes it's the same people who do both things!

Here are some examples of who to talk to.

People who provide that service



The care staff in a service that supports older people to be independent. They could be employed by a local authority, or a voluntary organisation, or a private company.

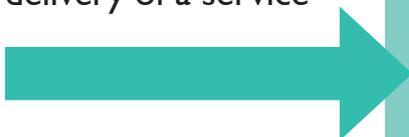
Tutors at college who teach the classes.

Social workers who help people plan what care they need.

Health care staff who give you treatment and care.

Bus drivers who can help people when they need a bit more time or support, and can be polite when someone needs longer to say what they want.

The boss who is responsible for the delivery of a service



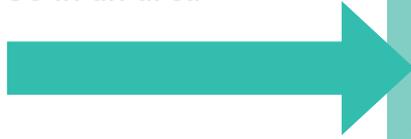
The owner of the bus company who sets the policies for the drivers.

The Principal at the college.

Head of social work, who decides the staffing levels and makes sure that people get the training and the supervision they need to do their job well.

Head of the Community Health Partnership, who is responsible for all the health care staff who work in the community for a local area.

People who make decisions about what services will be in an area

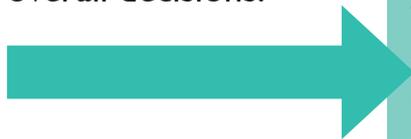


Local councillors: people who are elected to represent people who live in a small area and who make the decisions about what that local authority does.

NHS Board who make decisions about the health care for people living in a big area in Scotland.

Sometimes in practice the detailed decisions are made by the people who work in a local authority or NHS Board. But they are accountable to the elected members or the Board for that NHS area and those people have to confirm the final decision.

People who make the policies and overall decisions.



Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) - the people who are elected and set the policies for the Scottish Government, such as decisions about how much money should be spent overall on health services, and which types of services are the priorities.

Members of Parliament (MPs) who are elected to the Westminster Government and make decisions on things like employment and benefits.

Local Authority (Local Government, Council)

Local Councils are responsible for a wide range of local services.

- Development and Regeneration Services - such as walkways, listed buildings, neighbourhood planning, closed roads, trees.
- Direct Services and Care Services - such as janitors, homecare, overnight care, hospital discharge care, handy person services.
- Education Services - schools, nurseries, free school meals.
- Leisure and Culture - i.e. sports facilities, libraries.
- Land and Environmental Services - i.e. parks, roads, street lights, bins, street-cleaning, pest-control, public health.
- Social Work Services.

NHS Boards

NHS Boards are responsible for the health services for people living in that area.

- The quality and safety of health services.
- Making sure that resources are invested in a way that provides the best health outcomes.
- The accessibility and responsiveness of health services.
- Making sure that the public are involved in shaping their health services.
- Making sure that public money is spent well.

Community Health Partnerships (CHPs) and Community Health and Care Partnerships (CHCPs) have been introduced across Scotland to manage a wide range of local health services delivered in health centres, clinics and support to people at home.

They are part of the NHS and are accountable to the NHS Board. CHCPs are also accountable to the local authority.

Community Planning Partnerships

Community Planning Partnerships bring together key public, private, community and voluntary representatives with the aim of delivering better, more joined-up public services in their area. They are based in the local authority.

Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament is responsible for the overall policies and services on matters that directly affect people in Scotland. They do not deliver services themselves, but say what they should achieve and often say how much money should be spent on them.

- Education and training.
- Environment, agriculture, forestry and fishing.
- Gaelic.
- Health.
- Housing.

- The Scottish legal system.
- Justice.
- Local government.
- Natural and built heritage.
- Planning.
- Police and fire services.
- Social work.
- Sport and the arts.
- Statistics and public records.
- Transport.
- Tourism and economic development.

UK Parliament

The UK Parliament has a say in nearly all the decisions that affect people in all parts of the UK. Again, they do not deliver the service themselves, but say what the policies and priorities are. Some of the topics are:

- The benefits system.
- Defence and national security.
- Work.
- Pensions.
- International development.
- Foreign policy.
- Culture, media and sport.
- Energy.

European Parliament

The European Parliament is responsible for making laws that affect people all over the European Community, where countries have decided it is important that things should be fair for everyone.

- Environmental protection.
- Consumer rights.

- Equal opportunities.
- Transport.
- Letting people, food and other goods move between countries.
- Human rights.
- Giving money to local areas for some things, such as economic development.
- Subsidising some industries.

TIPS AND HINTS

Finding the right person

These are some questions to ask so that you can be sure you find the right person to speak to.

- What is your job?
- Which part of this are you responsible for?
- Who deals with the other bits?
- Can you give me their contact details?
- Do you have more information I could have?
- Is the information in a format I can use and understand?
- Are there other organisations that could help?
- Can you give me their name or details?

USEFUL SOURCES

You can find more help about which organisations are in charge of different things using the Our Vote, Our Voice materials. Part 2 of the pack has a whole section on understanding who is responsible for what.

The Checklists for Meetings that are on the Outside the Box website are written for people taking part in formal meetings where they are representing other people who use services or family carers. But they have some good tips on how to prepare for other types of meetings with people in bodies such as local authorities and the NHS.

Who are your allies?

Allies are the people who will help you to achieve something. You share some interests and want broadly the same thing. You may also each want some other things that are different.

- You can share the work out.
- You can give encouragement and support to each other.
- You can work together on one thing, then go your separate ways, and maybe come back to work together in the future.

These are the main groups of people who are likely to be your allies.

- People who also use that service more people asking for similar things.
- People and groups that represent people in similar circumstances or campaign on issues that people have raised.
- People and organisations that can give you advice and help on how to raise things.
- People and organisations that have a bigger external role, such as setting standards for services and seeing that they are good quality.

TIPS AND HINTS

Finding people who also use that service

These are some of the ways you can find out about, and contact people who use the same services you do.

- Take part in service user or public involvement opportunities that are already there.
- Find out about campaigning groups.
- Start your own group - find people by putting up posters, or writing a piece in a local newspaper or magazine.
- Ask the staff who work in services to tell other people they support about what you plan to do, or about your group - for example, by giving them a leaflet or postcard with

your contact details and a wee bit about you. Remember that the staff are not allowed to give you the names of the people they support. They will also use their judgement to decide which clients they will pass the information on to, in case it is not the right time for some people.

- Check if there are groups of people with similar interests in another part of your Council or NHS Board area, or served by that bus company, or whatever.

One easy way to find out information like this is to use the internet. If you don't have access to the internet, you could ask somebody who does to help you. Local libraries may have free computers that you can use, as well as classes to teach you how to use them and helpful people when you get a bit stuck. Librarians know lots of places to look for information and will be happy to help if you ask.

TIPS AND HINTS

Finding people and groups that represent people in similar circumstances

You can find and contact collective advocacy groups, such as People First Scotland which is the group led by people who have learning difficulties. The SIAA website is a good place to start.

- Contact national campaigning groups or consumer groups, such as the Poverty Alliance, the Cancer Campaigning Group, or Women's Aid. These groups often publish newsletters about things that they are campaigning for. They often hold meetings where people can bring up new topics.
- There are organisations such as the Scottish Consumer Council, which take up issues that affect people all over Scotland when they use services. Some of their recent campaigns have been access to post offices for people who live in rural areas and a fuel poverty campaign to get improved Government action for people who struggle to heat and power their home.

- You can ask the politicians who have been elected to represent you to take up the matter and work with you on it. The OurVote OurVoice material gives suggestions on how to do this.

EXAMPLE

Campaign against the Edinburgh retendering decision

Most people in a local area who need services to support them in their own homes get them from a service which the local authority has purchased. In Edinburgh, people who have learning disabilities, people with some other disabilities and people who have mental health problems got their services from about 30 different voluntary organisations, with the Council purchasing services from all of them. The Council decided to see if there were other organisations which could do the job: the aims were to save money and reduce the number of organisations involved. This is called a retendering process.

There were over 700 people getting care at home. Some of these people had been getting support from the same organisations for many years and knew the people at that service well. Some people who were worried about the outcome of the retendering process started going to meetings and getting involved through local groups led by people who have mental health problems and groups led by people with learning disabilities. Their families also got involved through carers' organisations.

The Learning Disability Alliance brings together organisations that provide services for people with learning disabilities, people who have learning disabilities, their families and other people who have an interest in getting good opportunities for people who have learning disabilities. The Alliance had been sharing information about retendering processes across Scotland, because different Councils have handled it in different ways. They helped keep people in Edinburgh up to date on what was happening, such as the timescales for the Council decision. They helped people work together and gave information to help people take up matters themselves.

These are some of the things that people did.

- People went and talked to their local councillors to tell them that they were worried and explain why they thought the outcomes would not be good.
- Others wrote letters to many councillors - councillors they knew were on their side already and the councillors they wanted to persuade.
- Some people gave interviews to the newspapers, to raise awareness about the issue.
- People with different disabilities came together, to show that the issue affects many people.
- There was a candlelight vigil outside the Council buildings when a lecture was being given by an important speaker. People took along banners.
- People asked if they could come and speak when the Council met - and the Council agreed to this.
- People in many groups held meetings to check what others in their group thought. That way, when a few people went along to speak they were speaking on behalf of many others.

The Council staff's recommendations were that there would be changes - only 8 organisations providing the services, and almost everyone would have a change, although some of the existing staff might be transferred over to the new providers. But when the matter was discussed by the elected councillors, the decision was stopped.

What happened next is even more complicated. There have been changes to how people get their care, and more people now use an arrangement called Self Directed Support which lets individual people choose the organisation that delivers the service to them. In the end most people's day-to-day care arrangements have not changed and people have the outcomes they wanted.

Many people who took part have described how good it felt to be working with other people as allies. It helped people get their voices heard, and it helped people deal with something that was all new to them.

You can read the story of what happened in a report called **We're not for sale** produced by the Learning Disability Alliance. It is on their website at www.ldascotland.org and there is a copy on the **Outside the Box** website.

Finding organisations that oversee quality of services

There are a lot of big organisations which have been set up to develop standards for services, to make sure that standards are maintained and that people have the right to speak out about things that they feel are wrong with their services.

These organisations can be useful allies when they are taking a similar line to you. They can even be allies and not know it – for example, when you quote from a report they have published.

These are a few of the organisations that the people who helped put this pack together have used to help them make a case. You will find others that have a similar role on other issues: ask the collective advocacy and co-ordinating groups for information on the organisation that sets standards for the type of service or issues you are interested in.

- The Mental Welfare Commission is responsible for making sure that people who are affected by the Mental Health laws have their rights respected. This includes their access to services. The laws cover people with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities, people who have dementia and people with an acquired brain injury.
- The Social Work Inspection Agency and the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (Care Commission) have responsibility for different aspects of how services for people who need extra help and support work. They are merging in 2011 and the new organisation will cover what they do now - which is setting standards for the services people get and checking that Social Work teams and care providers meet these standards.
- The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) was set up to promote and monitor human rights. They are also there to protect, enforce and promote equality across the seven “protected” grounds - age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. The EHRC can take up issues that affect people and sometimes take a test case to court, to establish exactly what people’s rights and others’ responsibilities are.

TIPS AND HINTS

Contacting organisations

Check it is the body which has responsibility for Scotland - some bodies cover all of the UK but sometimes there are similar but separate bodies for Scotland and for England and Wales.

- Write out what you'll want to say - this helps you keep your message clear. Use the question tips to get started.
- Find out who you are talking to and how to contact them again - especially when you find someone who is helpful.
- Find out if they have a local office, or local staff who might be able to meet with you.

Working with allies

Remember that you might be allies on one issue, but also each still have other things that you are working on separately.

- Spend a bit of time talking to each other about how you will work together - how you keep in touch and how you share the work.
- Tell each other if anything does not feel fair. Spreading the work evenly may seem fair at first, but not work out that way if one group is big and has lots of staff and the other is a small community group with a few members.
- Stop and reflect from time to time on what you are achieving.

“Having allies is good.”

“Sometimes you need a friend to help you keep going. We've found that applies for us as a group as well as for us as individual people.”

“Over the years we’ve learned to agree with other groups in our area on some things and to disagree with them on other things but still stay friends. I think the fact that we don’t agree on everything makes us even stronger on the issues where we do all come together.”

USEFUL SOURCES

Mental Welfare Commission
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh EH12 5HE

Tel: 0131 313 8777
Email: enquiries@mwscot.org.uk
Web: www.mwscot.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow G2 8DU

Tel: 0845 604 5510 - helpline
Tel: 0141 228 5910 (non helpline calls only)
Email: scotland@equalityhumanrights.com
Web: www.equalityhumanrights.com

Care Commission
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee DD1 4NY

Tel: 01382 207100
Tel: Lo-call: 0845 600 833
Email: enquiries@carecommission.com
Web: www.carecommission.com

If you go to their website or contact them directly they can give you the local contact information for your area.

Scottish Social Services Council
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee DD1 4NY

Tel: 01382 207101
Tel: Lo call 0845 60 30 891
Email: enquiries@sssc.uk.com
Web: www.sssc.uk.com

Social Work Inspection Agency
Ladywell House
Ladywell Road
Edinburgh EH12 7TB

Tel: 0131-244 4735
Email: swia@consol.co.uk
Web: www.swia.gov.uk

The Scottish Social Services Council makes sure that the people who work in social services have the right training and qualifications. The Care Commission makes sure that the quality of the service provided is of the right quality. Social Work Inspection Agency looks at the overall planning and availability of social work services in any area. These three organisations will be merging in April 2011. The new organisation will be called the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS). The websites and telephone details for all of the current organisations provided will make sure that you can get in touch with the SCSWIS when the merge is complete.

The Yorkshire and Humberside Empowerment Partnership has good case examples and lots of useful material about community groups working together as allies. There are also good examples of the ways community groups have worked with local authorities and her public bodies. These are on their website: www.yhep.org.uk and we have put some on the Outside the Box website: www.otbds.org

Keeping Going.....

Most people find that once they start working to influence change they want to keep going.

- Sometimes it is because the issue they are tackling takes a long time to get resolved.
- Sometimes it is because the first matter gets sorted - but then there is another one, and another.
- Sometimes people stay involved because they enjoy it - it is interesting and you meet nice people, and it feels good to make a difference in the world.
- Other people feel that once the matter they were concerned about is sorted, or at least started, they want to move on – but often feel it is good if other people get encouraged by their example and so the group goes on.

TIPS AND HINTS

For keeping going

Pace yourself. This applies both to individual people and to the group as a whole. Think of it as a marathon with bursts of fast running and some slower bits, rather than a sprint.

- Look after yourselves and each other. How you do things is as important as what you do. Live the values you want other people to follow.
- Make enough time for people in the group to get to know each other. The cups of tea and chats about last night's telly are a useful part of how a group of people learn to respect each other and work together.
- Spread the work in a way that feels fair. Be flexible and support each other - if someone says they'll do something and then their circumstances change, you want them to feel comfortable about saying this and handing the task on to someone else.
- Give new members a chance to contribute their experiences and skills as well as learning the skills of the existing members of the group.

- Try to get a mix of people - different skills and different reasons for people being involved. The experience of many groups over many years is that the groups which bring together a mix of people who are there for a mix of reasons are the ones that last longer and can cope better with the setbacks that inevitably come along.
- Celebrate your achievements - the small ones as well as the big ones.
- Think about the future for the group. Talk about who can grow into roles such as the organiser. Look for opportunities for people to learn and feel confident, such as training courses and spending some time with someone who has been doing this for a while.
- If it feels hard and that you are making little progress, take a break and breath. These are some things you can do: talk it over with someone, get someone fresh to come in and help, take a day out together and look at the problem from a different side.

USEFUL SOURCES

There are resources from projects we have worked with and from other organisations that support participation and local people making changes on the Outside the Box website.

“Stand back from time to time and think about what you are achieving. You can decide to change your approach or get someone to help you. Or decide that you are doing fine and just need to keep going.”

“Everyone has days when it isn’t going well. That’s normal. That’s life.”

“Remember that this really is hard. If it was easy, it would all be sorted already and they wouldn’t need you.”

“Don’t be too hard on yourselves. Enjoy each other’s company and have a laugh together, even when the issue is serious.”

Contact

Outside the Box
Unit 23, Festival Business Centre
150 Brand St
Glasgow G51 1DN

Tel: 0141 419 0451
admin@otbds.org
www.otbds.org

